

# An African Treasury

ARTICLES / ESSAYS / STORIES / POEMS

BY BLACK AFRICANS

SELECTED BY LANGSTON HUGHES



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**To the young writers of Africa**

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## INTRODUCTION

This is a very personal treasury—a selection gathered from several thousands of pages of writing by Africans of color that I have read during the past six years. Most of it was in manuscript, some in newspapers and magazines, and most of it had never been published in the United States.

My interest in native African writing began when I was asked by the editors of *Drum*, a Johannesburg magazine for nonwhite readers, to become one of the judges of a short story contest for indigenous South African writers. Some of the work that came to me contained pages which moved, surprised, and quite delighted me. I determined to see how much more writing of interest was being produced by black Africans.

To correspondents and to fans of my own work in Africa—where over the years my poems have been published and my “Simple” stories serialized—I wrote for the addresses of native writers. To Prime Minister Azikiwe’s chain of newspapers in Nigeria I sent a letter asking for contributions to a proposed anthology. My request was reprinted in numerous papers in other parts of Africa. Within a few weeks I began to receive floods of material from all over English-speaking Africa. Much that came was in longhand, often very hard to read. But nothing that arrived was completely lacking in interest. Even in the most amateurish writing, sometimes a line, a paragraph, even a whole page would come alive, achieve a character of its own, or make vivid some element of folk culture—only to bog down on the next page as the inexperienced writer continued his earnest attempt at communication.

To communicate in words is not always easy, especially when those

words must be put down on paper. To communicate from one land to another, one culture to another, particularly when the language is not one's own native tongue but acquired—as English and French are for some of these writers—presents its problems, too. Amos Tutuola, born in the Nigerian jungle, has had very little schooling; he earns his living working in metals. But Abioseh Nicol of Sierra Leone is a graduate of Cambridge and a practicing physician. Matei Markwei of Ghana, well in his thirties, is still studying for a college degree. But Wole Soyinka took honors in his youth at the University of Leeds. Peter Kumalo is a dock worker on the wharfs of Cape Province. But Benibengor Blay is a member of parliament at Accra; and Léopold Sédar Senghor, deputy from Senegal, has long held a seat in the National Assembly at Paris. Each of these writers, however varied their backgrounds, has the capacity for communicating in words—a capacity that comes from (I venture to say) innate talent. During the past decade there have been hundreds of books by white writers, but perhaps it remains for colored writers such as these, native to the soil, to tell us most faithfully what Africa is like today.

This collection in no way attempts to be comprehensive or all-embracing. There remains in my files of rejected material much worthy writing, which in some cases breaks my heart to return. There are excellent short stories that I feel are in some ways too special for American readers unfamiliar with the African scene. There are factual pieces of interest which will soon date—considering the rapidity of change in Africa. There are poems whose images are so native as to be obscure to people who have never been to Africa. And there are scholarly pieces whose interest would be confined mostly to academic readers, political experts or students of ethnic customs.

This volume is but a small sampling of the great variety of writing talents to be found in Black Africa today. Quite frankly, I have chosen to assemble here only those pieces which I enjoyed most and which I hope others will find entertaining, moving, possibly instructive, but above all readable. For me creative writing's first function is readability.

I hope, too, that this *TREASURY* enables the reader to share the joy I find in African usages of the King's English, which often can be described as nothing short of intriguing. Amos Tutuola especially

delights me. In writing him some five years ago, I suggested he send me a number of his stories for consideration. In due time, a *single* manuscript arrived in longhand, full of strange language structures. But his accompanying note was grammatical, brief and to the point. It said: "About sending several stories, when you send money I will send more." Another less businesslike young writer, however, advised me that he had had for weeks after receiving my letter, "a wide imagination and sweet thoughts." (He deluged me with manuscripts.) While a third, apologizing for sending his poems in his own hand, wrote: "But I hope soon to exploit the art of typewriting for the happy sake of the musical rhythms it produces when man beats the machine." Eventually he did learn to beat the machine, for his recent manuscripts arrived typewritten.

No collection of African material, no matter how personal its selection, can fail to reflect the massive conflicts going on today. That Africa is a changing continent, everybody knows, for the press and radio remind us of this continually. Entire countries change names, and it is difficult to keep maps—such as the fairly recent one provided elsewhere in the book—up to date. When I first began to gather this material, the term *negritude*—currently popular with African writers, especially poets influenced by Senghor—had not come into common use. But there was in most of the writing that reached me, an accent of Africanity—blackness, if you will—not unlike the racial consciousness found in the work of American Negro writers a quarter of a century ago. The Harlem writers of that period, however, had to search for their folk roots. The African writer has these roots right at hand. He is no outside observer. His tribal marks are sometimes still on his very skin. And, although some of the writers here assembled are colored—in the mixed-blood sense in which this term is used abroad—they are all Negro in the sense in which the word *Negro* is used in America.

Many of the problems, particularly those of the South Africans, are closely related to the problems of Afro-Americans, and their reactions are similar. The incident of *The Bench* could well happen in Alabama, but those of *New Life at Kyerefaso* and *Law of the Grazing Fields* could take place only in Africa. And only an African would be as

conscious of *negritude* as Francis Ernest Kobina Parkes when he writes:

*Give me black souls,  
Let them be black  
Or chocolate brown  
Or make them the  
Color of dust—  
Dustlike,  
Browner than sand.  
But if you can  
Please keep them black.*

Through most of the writing that came to me out of Africa—from Senegal in the north, Kenya in the east, to Cape Town in the south—there runs a pride of race which the long years of colonialism could not erase. This pride extends to a deep appreciation and understanding of folk life which mission schooling or European education did not diminish. For those who studied in Europe, perhaps distance only made the bush—the great jungle heart of Africa—seem fonder. Abioseh Nicol writes upon returning from a long sojourn in England:

*Go for bush—inside the bush  
You will find your hidden heart,  
Your mute ancestral spirit.*

*And so I went,  
Dancing on my way.*

Evident in most African writing, of course, is a pride in country, which underlies everything that is thought and spoken south of the Sahara today. It is an *African* pride, with a character all its own, which owes allegiance neither to West nor East but to its newly emerging self. Thus does Ezekiel Mphahlele remark, in his impassioned—and frankly opinionated—on-the-scene report of the historic Accra Conference of peoples from all over Africa: “Dr. Nkrumah spots the Tunisian ambassador in London . . . what an electric smile of recognition as the



Premier waves his hand. So spontaneous. As Tom Mboya later ushers him on to the rostrum, with his arm round the Premier . . . I realize all the more that this is Africa—an Africa with a totally different sense of convention from that of the West.”

It is healthy pride, without apology, and its expression ranges from the almost primitive evocation of a tribesman's love for his tribe—Onyenaekyea Udeagu's *Ibos as They Are*—to Peter Abrahams' polished writings. Abrahams' exciting piece, *The Blacks*, brilliantly illuminates the dilemma of Africa's intellectual elite such as Ghana's Premier Nkrumah and the celebrated Jomo Kenyatta who, as this is written, still remains in custody for the part he played in the Mau Mau uprisings. These men realize that Africa's task, indeed its mission, is to work out a fusion between tribal custom and modern ways.

Perhaps the phrase that best sums up this swelling pride and fierce insistence on individual identity is “African personality.” It is a phrase much used in writings coming out of Africa today. It finds expression in the ironic humor of Todd Matshikiza's monthly column “With the Lid Off” in *Drum*. It is expressed in Can Themba's nostalgic reminiscences of the shebeens of Sophiatown, which may remind American readers of the late John McNulty's pieces in *The New Yorker* about his favorite Third Avenue bars. It bursts forth in the bitterness toward the ousted colonial powers expressed in one portion of Abioseh Nicol's lovely lyric, *Return to West Africa*, and in the challenge posed by the Europeans who decide to stay on as future citizens—recently termed by Tanganyika's Julius Nyerere, “the new tribes,” as against Africa's indigenous tribes. It cries through protest pieces such as *Why I Ran Away*, Phyllis Ntantala's moving *Widows of the Reserves* and J. Koyinde Vaughan's challenging *Africa and the Cinema*. While it is a personality necessarily—and happily—as varied as the people of Africa, it is founded on a common bond, a common yearning that may best be described by the stirring, concluding response at the Accra Conference: *Mayibuye, Afrika!* Freely translated, that means “Long live Africa!” But the literal translation comes much closer: “Come back, Africa!”

“Is it really necessary for us to justify our demand for freedom?” asks Tom Mboya, Kenya's young and dynamic political leader. “If so,

to whom are we accountable and by what and whose standards are we to be judged?" So speaks the voice of New Africa. What white writers think of the once Dark Continent we long have known. These pages tell what black writers think.

L. H.

April, 1960  
New York

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# ARTICLES

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## Return to West Africa

ABIOSEH NICOL

### *Sierra Leone*

The plane bringing me back from England rose steadily over the West African forests and the air steward, a charming competent person in white uniform, his face not unpleasantly scarred with tribal marks, came round offering us free drinks. The landscape slowly unrolled beneath us, sometimes the pounding sea and white sands, sometimes endless acres of green forest. Then perhaps a neat, orderly town which may be French, British, Portuguese or Liberian, then the green forest again.

The passengers reflected a cross section of those on urgent business in West Africa, a few British officials, continental businessmen, a Japanese merchant deciphering a commercial telegram, an African barrister, a middle-aged Englishwoman who had just finished lecturing at one of the local universities, and an African missionary of some obscure religious sect traveling within the continent.

That week, in British West Africa, a white dentist had just lost a libel case where he had sued a political newspaper for writing that he hit an African woman over the head because she refused to have an infected tooth removed. He had resigned and was waiting to go home. The judge was white. Further down the coast, an international character, who had been arrested for trying to smuggle £40,000 worth of diamonds, had jumped his bail and left a distraught young Englishman to pay £10,000. None of the British or Africans were in any great sympathy, as all were fed up with diamond smugglers, black and

white, imperiling the country's finances. In the last sensational case before this one, another suspect had been arrested and searched, with nothing found on him. A Dublin-trained African doctor, struck by the stiffish gait of the suspect, had then thoroughly examined him with patience and skill, finally and triumphantly removing a large rectal suppository full of diamonds.

Further down the coast, in Ghana, Nkrumah, the prime minister, was visiting Kumasi, the stronghold of the opposition. The King of the Ashantis, the most powerful ruler in the country and, as some had thought, the spiritual head of the opposition, was going to be at the airport to welcome him and take him to his palace for a visit.

In Nigeria, the national leadership of Dr. Azikiwe (Zik), the prime minister of the eastern region, was being challenged again by one of his lieutenants. A challenge of this sort happens every two years, and Zik usually emerges triumphant. Everyone was now watching with interest to see if history would repeat itself. A few days later, it did.

From the moment one lands at any of the local airports, there is little doubt about where power lies. West African air hostesses trip the motley passengers across the Tarmac to the waiting room. African immigration and customs officials scrutinize briefly the faces of each entrant, usually reserving more concentrated examination for Lebanese and Indian merchants. Token British officials here and there hover round, appearing suddenly like magic to make a few conciliatory remarks to the African officials, in case some white traveler, fresh from Johannesburg, Léopoldville or London, begins to argue. The American passengers are usually subdued and wear a resolute expression of people determined not to make any more mistakes. The crowds part a little as an African cabinet minister, fresh from some conference or financial mission, strides by, accompanied by British officials and African party supporters and relations. A crowd of Europeans and Africans seeing off friends or waiting for arrivals, line the spectators' lounge. Some simply gather for the never-ending excitement of the great international planes disgorging the endless stream of businessmen, missionaries, wives and children, arriving from the other four continents.

I arrived at one of these airports, having casually sent ahead to an old African school friend, now a senior government official. He was there to meet me, and in exactly five minutes I had passed through all

the barriers and had been whisked off in a powerful car. I demurred a little at having been swept past the other dozen or so passengers, mostly European, who had automatically formed a queue and were filling forms, waiting. "Don't worry," he reassured me, "*they* used to do the same here eight years ago when they were in power. You are now in your *own* country."

My question had upset him a little. We ran down an unwary chicken and climbed up a hill steadily. He said he was going to buy a Mercedes Benz next. "The German salesmen are more deferential, and they make better cars," he said, "but I doubt whether they will again now that they have joined the arms race." We turned into the erstwhile European reservation. Now the houses and bungalows were apportioned to officials regardless of race.

My friend Jalloh said that when he was a boy he used to come up from the town and hide among the trees to watch the Europeans in their bungalows because the only Africans allowed in that quarter used to be servants. Now he lives in one of the houses himself. The exclusive European club was no more, as clubs with membership based on race were now illegal. "I don't like going to that club," Jalloh said, "but I do go, and I am a member, just to show there is no ill-feeling. And, in any case, all these European clubs were built with government money on Crown land." I asked whether this law against racial discrimination in club membership applied to African secret societies like the Ogboni in Yoruba land, and the Poro in Mende country. Jalloh's reply sounded very much like that which British officials gave ten years ago, on parallel occasions. "Good heavens, there's no racial discrimination there. In point of fact, thirty years ago, a district commissioner, an excellent chap, was actually initiated into the Poro society."

"You would say, though," I asked, "that the British have left a good civil service, as they did in India?"

"I expect you read that from books and newspapers," Jalloh said. "The British are always full of praise for themselves and their civil service. When I took over from my white predecessor, I found dozens of letters unanswered and urgent matters not dealt with. By 1963 we should have Africanized our civil service completely."

I said I seriously doubted that. Jalloh admitted that the technical services, engineering, medicine, agriculture and education, would still

need people from the overseas civil service. But not the administration. He was firm about that.

"Europeans are going to work *with* us and not over us. That is quite clear. You can never Africanize a department if you have a European at the head of it. Because they won't commit financial suicide."

"They say the British administration had integrity," I said.

"Some had," he admitted, fairly, "but others..." He threw both hands up; we swerved a little and I braced myself. He put his hands back to the wheel.

"What would you say," he continued, "of a director of engineering, a civil servant, who retires and joins the board of a firm to which he had given contracts when he was in charge. Or a retired governor, who joins the board of a mining company or trading firm, which had operated in his territory. Would you say their hands had been clean when they were in the administration?"

I said they might have joined the boards by invitation, because they had special knowledge of the territory, but I admitted that it was an open question and a controversial one, which was present not only in the colonial service.

"But we know who our friends are now," Jalloh said severely; "just come with me to fetch the children. I left them with neighbors."

We drove down a bougainvillea-lined road, and his children were playing with some white children, stripped to the waist. A sun-tanned young English couple came out and urged us in to drinks. Jalloh hesitated, as he was in a hurry, but finally came out of the car to show me he was broad-minded, and we went in. The Englishwoman pushed Jalloh affectionately into a chair while her husband mixed drinks.

"I bet Jalloh's been abusing the British again," she said, turning to me. "Every time he reads about some Jamaican being thrown out of a London pub or Negro children chased out of southern schools, I can see the hostile look in his face. I don't know if he thinks John and I run the British Government or are Governor Faubus."

"You are all the same," said Jalloh, sipping his iced beer contentedly, and basking in the warmth of their obvious friendliness.

We soon reached Jalloh's house, a large comfortable house, but with only two bedrooms. He explained that this was because the British never brought their children out in the old days, and all the houses



were for bachelors or single couples. He spoke with enthusiasm about the couple we had just left. "They are all right," he said; "they make an effort to learn the language and don't complain about native stewards the whole time. They live just ordinary lives as they did at home in England."

"Is that possible?" I asked.

He did not answer me but continued, "When Dr. Musa came back from England with the white woman he had married, they were the first to call and see them, whilst the others pretended Mrs. Musa did not exist. They hardly ever went to the European club in the old days," said Jalloh, giving the final mark of approval.

Over a large bowl of rice, okra and palm-oil chop, Jalloh spoke reflectively of his Cambridge days.

"How is Canon Raven," he said, "and how is Sheppard, the provost of King's? They and one or two others were the only ones who bothered with foreign students and came to some of our meetings."

"What else do you remember about your University days?" I asked.

"The Saturday morning lectures of Professor Harold Laski of the London School of Economics."

I remembered that the L.S.E. had been evacuated to Cambridge during the war.

"And the girls too, at the L.S.E.," Jalloh said reflectively, picking his teeth. "Weren't they nice and friendly? One of them actually asked me to be her escort at a ball," he added.

Jalloh's wife, a quiet African girl, spoke up for the first time.

"Perhaps no one else had asked her," she said, and lapsed back into silence.

"Don't you remember anything else?" I asked. "The other lectures? And what about the weeping willows by the river near Garret Hostel Bridge? Sunday evensong at King's College Chapel? The homemade cakes at the Whim?"

"Cambridge sponge cakes were good," Jalloh replied judicially, "but you can get all those others from picture books and gramophone records. Only human friendship matters."

“Oh, but those Russians were so kind, they were very kind, they were very, very kind.” He was a young West African student whom I had met casually on a bus. I had asked him if he had been abroad and he replied excitedly that he had visited Russia and Europe.

“These kind Russians . . .” I said, “do you think it was genuine?”

“Oh, yes,” he was emphatic about that. “And it was not organized. Everywhere we went,” he continued lyrically, “they entertained us so well, they crowded round us and they asked us to their homes. Everywhere, whether in Leningrad or Moscow, or in the very small villages.”

“Don’t you think,” I asked him, “it was because they had never seen black people before?”

“I don’t know,” he said, “but the fact remains that they were very kind to us. They treated us as very important people wherever we went. They gave us priority over most of the other delegations.”

Our bus ground its way with a terrifying screech up a low hill past the small village with the oil lamps flickering by the market stalls, where ground nuts and fried pancakes, open to the evening dust and the flies, were for sale.

“Did you visit other parts of Europe?”

“Yes, we did. Czechoslovakia was not friendly, but East Germany was very friendly. The difference between East and West Germany was marked. The West Germans were so cold, in fact, the more you moved west the colder the people became in their manner. In Britain they were coldest of all.”

“There are many who love you in Britain,” I told him, “and who work for us all the time.”

“I did not meet them,” he said simply. “I sat in an empty bus once,” he said, “and as the bus filled up the British people sat in every seat until the one next to me was the only one empty. Then they began to stand up, and still left it empty.”

I knew with the young it was always best to be truthful or they lost confidence in you. So I agreed with him.

“Casual encounters,” I said, “are bad in England; you have simply got to get used to it.”

“In Russia,” he said, “they were always kind to strangers and sometimes took you home for a meal.”

"The British are better when you know them more personally."

He looked at me slyly from the corner of his eye. "Are you married to an English wife, Sir?"

"No," I said, "my wife is as black as you and I."

"Ah," he said.

"Have you been to America?" I asked him. He seemed to have traveled a lot.

"I've no wish to go there," he said. "They say they treat black people badly there."

I said I'd been to America for three months and had been treated very well.

"You should go to Russia, Sir," he said. "Nkrumah should go to Russia too. Our important people must visit Russia. You must not believe the newspapers, Sir."

I said that you must not believe the newspapers about America too.

"America," he continued, "only gives scholarships to people who are already important," he said. "But the Russians say they will give scholarships to any of us who want to serve our people."

"But don't you meet any British people here?" I asked.

"The British Council men are very nice, but there are only two of them," he said; "and there are also a few religious ones."

He reflected for a while. "I did go to tea at one or two homes while I was in England. And also they have asked me to tea here."

"That's nothing like caviar and vodka," I said.

He laughed. "As a matter of fact, I don't drink. At these teas," he continued, with sudden vehemence, "they were so patronizing. 'Mr. Kanga,' they would ask me, 'you speak English very well; how old were you when you began to speak English? How old were you when you began to wear shoes?'"

"They don't mean any harm. At least I don't think so."

"One day," he said, "I told myself I would answer those questions by saying I was born talking English with shoes on... But those Russians were so kind," he said. "It was the first time that I had felt free and easy with white people."

So I said to him that it was not easy for the British and the Americans to be friendly overnight to their ex-servants and ex-slaves. "Give them time."

"A Russian woman told us they themselves had been serfs until Lenin came!"

I asked him what he thought of the American students. There were about seventy of them, about ten per cent Negroes and the rest white, who were spending their summer vacation in work camps with West African students. Kanga was enthusiastic about them. "Oh, they are good. They are friendly and they are tactful," he said. "And, can't they dance," he added. "They don't seem to have any race prejudice," he said, "but perhaps they have been warned."

I wondered myself bleakly why Oxford and Cambridge students did not organize work camps in Africa and Asia, but instead went off on expeditions to take television films of prancing tribesmen in remote parts of Africa and South America.

The bus stopped and we began gathering our coats. The rain outside was torrential.

"Tell me one last thing, my friend," I asked. "You think we would do better under the Russians than with the British or Americans?"

He smiled and showed very white teeth. "It does not matter who they are," he said. "Russian, British, American or French. The only government fit for Africa is an African government."

Two days later I met a university lecturer and asked him casually whether he knew a student called Kanga. "Oh yes," he said. "He is quite a leader; gets on very well with the other students. A pleasant sort of man."

"Is he a Communist?" I asked.

"No, there is no communism here," he explained. "They don't know the meaning of the word. Some of them call themselves nationalists."

The plane rose slowly and then bumped a little in that vast forest stretch over the Ivory Coast between Ghana and Liberia. There always seemed to be a thunderstorm whenever one passed this desolate patch after leaving Abidjan.

Soon by the end of the day we were getting past the edge of Africa. An Englishman chatted amiably with me and told me that West Africans were still too near the British Colonial administration to realize the good it had done for them. "On the other hand," he said,

fairly, "we British tend to take things too much for granted. We think our work is finished when we grant your people independence. It is then our work begins."

I said I thought the measure of the success of the western world in Africa depended on whether they were as good at being friends now as they had been at being masters. But I did not think they had too much time. He did not reply to that.

# Requiem for Sophiatown

CAN THEMBA

## *South Africa*

Realism can be star-scattering, even if you have lived your whole unthinking life in reality. Especially in Sophiatown these days,\* where it can come with the sudden crash of a flying brick on the back of your head.

Like the other day when Bob Gosani and I sneaked off toward our secret shebeen in Morris Street. We were dodging an old friend of ours whom we call the Leech, for he is one of those characters who like their drink—any amount—so long as someone else pays for it.

Well, this secret shebeen in Morris Street was a nice place. You take a passage through Meyer Street over haphazard heaps of bricks where houses have been broken down, you find another similar passage that leads you from Ray Street into Edith Street, where you find another passage, neater, having always been there, between the colored school and Jerusalem-like slum-houses, you go down a little, and suddenly there it is.

Quite a fine place, too. A little brick wall, a minute garden of mostly Christmas flowers, a half-veranda (the other half has become a little kitchen) and the floor of the veranda polished a bright green.

Inside, the sitting room may be cluttered with furniture, it is so small, but you sink comfortably into a sofa as one of the little tables that can stand under the other's belly is placed before you, and you make your order. Half-a-jack of brandyl

How often have Bob and I not whooped happily: "Yessus! the Leech will never find us here." So, though there were more direct routes

\* At the time this was written, the freehold area in the west of white Johannesburg, called Sophiatown, had been declared a "black spot" and was in the process of demolition—its black residents being forcibly removed to the regimented location of Meadowlands.

to this place, we always took the passages. They say these people can smell when you are going to make a drink.

But that day, as we emerged into Morris Street, it was as if that brick had just struck us simultaneously on our heads. That sweet, little place was just not there. Where it should have been was a grotesque, grinning structure of torn red brick that made it look like the face of a mauled boxer trying to be sporting after his gruel. A nausea of despair rose up in me, but it was Bob who said the only appropriate thing: "Shucks."

Here is the odd thing about Sophiatown. I have long been inured to the ravages wreaked upon Sophiatown. I see its wrecks daily, and through many of its passages that have made such handy short cuts for me, I have stepped gingerly many times over the tricky rubble. Inside of me, I have long stopped arguing the injustice, the vindictiveness, the strong-arm authority of which prostrate Sophiatown is a loud symbol.

Long ago I decided to concede, to surrender to the argument that Sophiatown was a slum, after all. I am itchyly nagged by the thought that slum clearance should have nothing to do with the theft of freehold rights. But the sheer physical fact of Sophiatown's removal has intimidated me.

Moreover, so much has gone—veritable institutions. Fatty of the Thirty-nine Steps. Now, that was a great shebeen! It was in Good Street. You walked up a flight of steps, the structure looked dingy as if it would crash down with you any moment. You opened a door and walked into a dazzle of bright electric light, contemporary furniture and massive Fatty. She was a legend. Gay, friendly, coquettish, always ready to sell you a drink. And that mama had everything: whisky, brandy, gin, beer, wine—the lot. Sometimes she could even supply cigars. But now that house is flattened. I'm told that in Meadowlands she has lost the zest for the game. She has even tried to look for work in town. Ghastly.

Dwarf, who used to find a joke in everything. He used to walk into Bloke's place, catch us red-handed playing the music of Mozart. He used to cock his ear, listen a little and in his gravel voice comment: "No wonder he's got a name like that." There is nothing that Dwarf loved more than sticking out his tongue to a cop and running for it.

I once caught him late at night in his Meadowlands house washing dishes. He still manfully tries to laugh at himself.

And Mabeni's, where the great Dolly Rathebe once sang the blues to me. I didn't ask her. She just sidled over to me on the couch and broke into song. It was delicious. But now Dolly is in Port Elizabeth, and Mabeni, God knows where.

These are only high lights from the swarming, cacophonous, strutting, brawling, vibrating life of the Sophiatown that was. But it was not all just shebeeney, smutty, illegal stuff. Some places it was as dreams are made on.

I am thinking of those St. Cyprian's School boys who a decade ago sweatingly dug out the earth behind the house of the Community of the Resurrection in order to have a swimming pool. It still stands, and the few kids left still paddle in it. Some of those early schoolboys of St. Cyprian's later went up to Father Ross or Father Raynes or Father Huddleston who wangled a bursary for them to go to St. Peter's, then on to Fort Hare, and later even Wits, to come back doctors.

Their parents, patiently waiting and working in town, skimped a penny here, a tickey there, so that they might make the necessary alteration to their house, or pay off the mortgage. And slowly Sophiatown was becoming house-proud.

Of course, there were pressures too heavy for them. After the war, many people came to Johannesburg to seek for work and some hole to night in. As they increased they became a housing problem. As nobody seemed to care, they made Sophiatown a slum.

But the children of those early Sophiatonians—some of them—are still around. It is amazing how many of them are products of the Anglican mission at St. Cyprian's. I meet them often in respectable homes, and we talk the world to tatters.

Mostly we talk of our lot in life. After all, too often we have been told that we are the future leaders of our people. We are the young stalwarts who are supposed to solve the problems of our harassed world.

"Not political unity, we need," one would say; "our society is too diverse and unwieldy for that. Just a dynamic core of purified fighters with clear objectives and a straightforward plan of action. That is all."

Another: "No! We must align ourselves with the new forces at play in Africa today. There already is the dynamicity. The idea of a



one Africa has never been put as powerfully as at Accra recently. You see, Africans, wherever they are, have not a territorial, a local loyalty: they don't feel that they belong to a South Africa or a Federation or a Tanganyika or a Kenya or a West Africa, but with Africans in the whole of Africa. In fact, many of us are wondering if Arabs and Egyptians are also Africans. They probably are."

Still another: "Ya. But this African Personality idea, how does it mean to us? What does it mean, anyway?"

"I'll tell you. In the world today are poised against each other two massive ideologies: of the East and of the West. Both of them play international politics as if we're bound to choose between them. Between them only. We have just discovered that we can choose as we like, if we grow strong in our own character. But there's more to this. The West has had a damned long time to win us. Win us over to western thinking. Western Christian way of living. Their ideas of democracy and their Christian ideals were wonderful, but they did not mean them.

"Let me explain. We are quite a religious people. We accept the idealism of Christianity. We accept its high principles. But in a stubborn, practical sense we believe in reality. Christian brotherhood must be real. Democracy must actually be the rule of the people: not of a white hobo over a black Master of Arts.

"To us, if a witch doctor says he'll bring rain, we not only want to see the rain fall, but also the crops sprout from the earth. That's what a rainmaker's for, nay? If the bone-thrower says he'll show up the bastard who's been slinging lightning at me, I expect him to swing that bolt of lightning right back. So if the priest says God's on my side, I'd like to see a few more chances and a little less white-man's curses.

"But in any case, Christianity is now an anaemic religion. It cannot rouse the ancient in me—especially the Chaka instinct I still have. Now, you and I are educated guys. We don't go for the witchcraft stuff. And we don't want to go for the jukebox stuff. But much as we deny it, we still want the thrill of the wild blood of our forefathers. The whites call it savagery. Ineradicable barbarism. But in different degrees we want the color, and vigor and vibrant appeal of it all. So the tsotsi seeks in the cowboy the way to strut across the streets with

swaying hips and a dangerous weapon in each hand. So the Zionist thumps his drum and gyrates his holy fervor up the streets. So you and I and these guys here discuss politics, teasingly dancing around the idea of violence.

"All it means is that in wanting to express her demand for democratic self-determination, Africa is also releasing her ancientmost desire to live life over the brim. That's how come we sometimes seem to talk in two voices."

"Wait a minute," another shrieks, "wait a minute. We're not all like that. Some of us would like to get things right, and start anew. Some piece of social engineering could get things working right, if our moral purposes were right, not just vengeful."

"Sure, but our masters have taught this damned thing violence so well by precept—often practice—that they get you to believe that it's the only way to talk turkey to them."

We do not only talk about this particular subject. Our subjects are legion. Nkrumah must be a hell of a guy, or is he just bluffing? What about our African intellectuals who leave the country just when we need them most? But is it honestly true that we don't want to have affairs with white girls? What kind of white supremacy is this that cannot stand fair competition? In fact, all those cheeky questions that never get aired in public.

But it always ends up with someone saying, "Aw shut up, folks, you got no plan to liberate us."

Somewhere here, and among a thousand more individualistic things, is the magic of Sophiatown. It is different and itself. You don't just find your place here, you make it and you find yourself. There's a tang about it. You might now and then have to give way to others making their ways of life by methods not in the book. But you can't be bored. You have the right to listen to the latest jazz records at Ah Sing's over the road. You can walk a colored girl of an evening down to the Odin Cinema, and no questions asked. You can try out Rhugubar's curry with your bare fingers without embarrassment. All this with no sense of heresy. Indeed, I've shown quite a few white people "the little Paris of the Transvaal"—but only a few were Afrikaners.

What people have thought to be the brazenness of Sophiatown has

really been its clean-faced frankness. And, of course, its swart jowl against the rosy cheek of Westdene.

Ay, me. That was the Sophiatown that was.

I shall have to leave these respectable homes of my friends and stumble over the loose bricks back to my den. I hear tell that Blackie is still about in his shack behind the posh house in devastated Millar Street.

Blackie's landlord is still facing it out, what the hell for? Most of the standholders have decided to capitulate. They are selling out like rats letting the passengers sink. Solly got caught in this—the newest racket. His landlord told him nothing. Waited for him to pay the next month's rent, although he knew that he was planning to sell out.

Solly was not at home when the landlord trekked. When he got there he found his furniture was left outside and a policeman was guarding the house. Poor Solly had to rush about looking for some place to put his stuff for the night. Half-a-dozen friends helped.

And still I wander among the ruins trying to find one or two of the shebeens that Dr. Verwoerd has overlooked. But I do not like the dead-eyes with which some of these ghost houses stare back at me. One of these days I, too, will get me out of here. Finish and clear!

# Ibos as They Are

ONYENAEKEYA UDEAGU

## *Nigeria*

It is not uncommon for people, including other Nigerians, to conceive of the Ibos as trouble-makers, thickheads and proverbial misers. Such misconceptions are never made by the good friends of Ibos who have taken the time to study them as they really are.

The Ibos of Nigeria are neither hostile nor disobedient. They are very generous and approachable, but much depends on the inquirer's outlook. Time was when the Ibos gulped the taunts and jeers of foreigners. Any manifestation of deceit or sense of superiority now by a foreigner is not only suspected but resented.

The population of Iboland is estimated at 6,000,000. It occupies the country bordering the River Niger, south of Lokoja to the Cross River in the east and from the swamps of Ikwerre Land to the grasslands fringing Ogoja in the north. The forests are mainly evergreen rain and deciduous types. This is chiefly responsible for Iboland's agricultural resources, and there is no spot on the earth's surface that can make its occupants happier. Yam, the pride of Nigeria, is about the best edible tuber in the world and no people cultivate more yams than the Ibos. There are all sorts of fruits, among which are oranges, limes, mangoes, peaches, bananas and plantains. Nuts of various sorts, including palm nuts, coconuts and groundnuts, provide products for world trade. The country is rich in resources, many of which are still untapped, which include the coal of Enugu, the gold, lignite and iron of Abakalik, and the gold and petroleum of Okigwi.

The forests of Iboland breed such animals as leopard, antelope, duiker, monkeys, buffalo and various rodents, most of which are killed as wild game. Fishes are abundant in Ibo rivers—the Imo, the

Oji, the Qua and some tributaries of the Cross River. There are also crocodiles, alligators and manatees. Other sea animals and fishes abound in the Atlantic sea creek which drains eastern Iboland at Port Harcourt. There are various snakes—the vipers, the boa constrictor, the cobra. Hardly any class of tropical fauna is lacking in Iboland.

The Ibos are of chocolate complexion. They are generally shorter and stouter than other Nigerians and are physically well built. They possess high aptitude for hard work and learning.

Before the coming of the British, the Ibos were enjoying a highly democratic government, and since its inception the native court system is maintained in quasi-democratic lines. The allegation that Ibos live in anarchy is a farce. The communities live under a government of elders who fix the laws and customs. Every family group has the right of selecting its eldest man, provided he is married, to be its council representative. If the eldest man is an idiot or has a mental deficiency, the immediate successor is selected in his stead. Quite often the representative is provided with an adviser. At the head of the council is a president or chief whose decision in cultural matters, laws and customs as handed down from the ancestors is final. There are no written laws or customs, but the men are full of memory and follow the trends of their fathers very carefully. The opinion of elders is not neglected in matters affecting the general well-being of the community. Privilege of suggestion (franchise) is given to every young man once he is married. If on the other hand he fails to marry when he has acquired his full maturity, he is often minimized.

Public works, such as the maintenance of roads and water supply, are done by different groups. The children maintain the streets. Meetings of the elders are arranged weekly in the buildings known as Obi or Agbala. If there is a meeting of two or three communities, the usual place for it is always the central market. Market days form the occasion for public holidays, and as market is often the center of general rejoicing in Iboland, market places are comfortably maintained. The middle-aged men and young men maintain the hygiene of the market. Always there are market groups which settle quarrels and prevent any discrepancies. Each market day has its ruling deity which is supposed to punish anyone doing harm to the attendants at the market.

Priests have little function in Iboland. They maintain the deities to

which they are assigned while the elders do the management. The management of public finance is maintained by a treasurer who must be a well-to-do and careful gentleman. A well-to-do woman may often hold the office.

The defense of every community is often given over to a body of youths of responsibility and discipline. Wrestling forms the best and most remarkable Ibo game. When a young man wins a match, he has the chance of gaining much favor and benefits. He is carried about the streets and the spectators sing merrily while girls wipe his face and give him presents. His parents always rejoice and give him presents of livestock and money.

Once a young man has attained the age of reason, his parents become strict with him. He is taught the value of a busy life. Every youth, even the son of the richest man of his community, must acquire the lifelong taste for manual work. You very rarely find an Ibo man or woman begging for alms. An Ibo prefers to die than to be idle. Even the lame and crippled work for their existence. The blind find themselves work in their communities. This pride enhances the prestige of an Ibo wherever he goes.

To strangers the Ibos seem to be a proud set of people. It is not uncommon to hear the European bosses say that Ibos are an argumentative set of people. During our military services in India and Burma the pride of Ibo soldiers amongst other African soldiers was proverbial. It was always, "Do you know you're an African?" In the company offices and orderly rooms the first few words from the officer trying an Ibo soldier was followed by "Don't argue, you!" or "You want to be too clever," and similar expressions. Their expressive mentality, which they enjoy in their culture at home, does not always allow them to gulp in false charges without defense.

The Ibo looks proud because he is bred in a free atmosphere where everyone is another's equal. He hates to depend on anyone for his life needs. He does not mind if others look proud. He has much to be proud of in his land. Nature has provided for him. He is strong and able to work or fight. He is well formed. He is generally happy in his society where no ruler overrides his conscience. He likes to advance and he is quick to learn. He likes to give rather than take.

Except for changes of the new era the Ibo woman is proverbial for

her modesty. That is the reason why old maids are inconsistent with the culture of Iboland; they are usually harlots in disguise. Before the European era, there was no harlot in Iboland. Every man and woman married and perpetuated that end which nature ordains for reproduction. There is no excuse for not marrying except extreme poverty and deformity.

Misogamy and prostitution are abhorred by the elders because they lead to the extreme peril of any society practicing them. Wherefore doth God say, "Increase and multiply . . ."? Will not God be displeased if His word is not carried out? Let the reader of this portion note that venereal diseases were unknown in the pre-European era because there was no prostitution or sources of promiscuous coition.

Before I came to know the principles of good feeding I thought that those who ate more tinned food and drink, more European imported wines and ales, had the best in life. But now, I come to know that our local foodstuffs, more or less regarded as a bushman's foods, are the best nature provides in the whole planet. Our forefathers were well nourished with the same bushman's foods. Why should we replace them with imported articles which are deficient in vitamins? How much better to take a jar of palm wine and get more yeast for our eyes than to drink a highly intoxicating bottle of gin and get a madden brain? Debt and poverty are certain goals of people who are famous for eating and drinking. Extravagance is always a bad master. An Ibo has strong aversion to scorn. Once his fortune is lost by faulty living he has to face taunts and jeers and has very little chance of help. But a good Ibo always avoids embarrassing his fellow man by asking for help.

# The Widows of the Reserves

PHYLLIS NTANTALA

## *South Africa*

Widowhood—a life of void and loneliness; a period of tension, unbalance and strenuous adjustment. And what can it be to those thousands of African women—those adolescent girls married before they reach womanhood, thrown into a life of responsibility before they have completely passed from childhood to adulthood; those young women in the prime of early womanhood left to face life alone, burdened with the task of building a home and rearing a family; those young women doomed to nurse alone their sick babies, weep alone over their dead babies, dress and bury alone their corpses? What can it mean to those young brides whose purpose has been snatched away, overnight, leaving them bewildered and lost, leaving them with a thirst and hunger that cannot be stilled?

And yet this is the daily lot of tens of thousands of African women whose husbands are torn away from them to go and work in the cities, mines and farms—husbands who because of the migratory labor system cannot take their wives with them and, because of the starvation wages they receive, are forced to remain in the work centers for long periods—strangers in a strange land—but equally strangers at home to their wives and children.

These women remain alone in the Reserves to build the homes, till the land, rear the stock, bring up the children. They watch alone the ravages of drought, when the scraggy cows cease to provide the milk, when the few stock drop one by one because there is no grass on the veld, and all the streams have been lapped dry by the scorching sun. They watch alone the crops in the fields wither in the scorching sun, their labor of months blighted in a few days. They witness alone the hailstorm sweep clean their mealie lands, alone they witness the wind



lift bodily their huts as if they were pieces of paper, rendering them and their children homeless. Alone they bury their babies one by one and lastly their unknown lovers—their husbands, whose corpses alone are sent back to the Reserves. For the world of grinding machines has no use for men whose lungs are riddled with t.b. and miner's phthisis.

For miles around throughout the country one sees nobody but these women—young and yet stern-faced with lines of care on their faces. This one climbing the slope with a bucket of water on her head and, if lucky, a baby on her back; that one going up the hill with a heavy bundle of wood on her head; another following behind a span of six oxen drawing a sledge with ploughing implements and only a youngster of ten or twelve years as her help; and yet another driving home a scraggy herd of cattle or a flock of sheep numbering twenty at the very most, with yet another small boy by her side.

In the ploughing season they are to be seen behind the span of oxen, holding the plough, leading the team of ploughing oxen. In the cold winter months, alone with young girls and boys they reap the fields, load the wagons and bring in the harvest. A poor harvest! What else could it be? "Bad farming methods of the native," is the official attitude of South Africa. But how could it be otherwise when the farming is left to women and children, when the whole task of home-building is on their shoulders?

At home in the morning these lonely women see to it that their children get ready for school—those underfed and scantily dressed children whose breakfast is a piece of dry bread, mealie-pap without any milk, and for many just cold mush and beans. Their desire to see their children educated is so great that the women themselves go out with the stock in order to keep their children at school—to give them the education that will free them from poverty, the education that has given the other races so much knowledge and power.

At the close of day they light their fires to prepare the evening meal. The fortunate ones milk and shut in the stock, but for most there is no stock to shut in, and their children do not know the milk from the family cow. For some there is a letter of good news from the father and husband far away in the work center—the long-awaited letter with money has come—part of the debt at the trader's will be paid off. There will be bread, sugar, tea and a few extras to eat for at least a

few weeks. For others it is bad news. The loved one far away is ill, has met with an accident, has been thrown into jail because he failed to produce his papers when demanded by some government official. Not that he did not have them, but just that by mistake he forgot them in the pocket of his other jacket. A black man in South Africa cannot forget! It is a sad day for this one. Her children look up anxiously in her face. They fear to ask her any questions, and she does not know how much to tell them. "Tata sends his greetings," she manages to say at last, "but says we will have to be patient about the money we asked for; he has had some trouble and has used up all the money." The rest of the evening is spent in silence. And when they kneel down to pray, this lonely woman sends to heaven a prayer without an "Amen." Small wonder most of them are old women at the age of thirty, emaciated, tired and worn-out.

Sometimes, in despair, they get caught up in the snares of unscrupulous men of means—the only people in the whole community who can relieve them of their burdens. These men alone are well-fed, full of energy to satisfy their sexual desires; these men alone have the money to satisfy the material needs of these women, clothe them and feed them and their children. Prostitution! Call it what you may. But if they be prostitutes it is not of their own choosing. It is the system that has kept them on starvation wages so that they and their children can perish slowly but surely; a system that has made them barren and their men impotent; a system that has demoralized and dehumanized a whole people—making the ratio of women to men in the Reserves as high as eight to one and so enabling the man who has the energy and the means to have as many women as he chooses; a system that has kept the men in the towns in a perpetual state of war, in battle-camps where masturbation, homosexuality and rape are the order of the day, turning otherwise decent human beings into beasts which see a woman not as a human being but as a source of sexual satisfaction alone.

Three things break the monotony of their lives. First is the Church where at least they can take a few hours off from their work, where they can sing and unburden themselves in prayer to a God who never seems to hear them; the church which promises them an abundance of life in the next world.

Second is the ceremonial feast—the marriage feast where they can sing and dance and laugh, rejoicing with the young couple. But it is a joy mixed with sorrow, for they know that the joy of the young people can but be short-lived, that they are entering upon a life without a future, a journey's end. And the initiation feast and the beer party—at one time occasions of great pomp and rejoicing—are today poor imitations of the ceremonies of the days gone by. For now the women sing and dance alone, with but the aged men, the blind and the cripples to join in the dance and song, and all miss the rich deep bass chorus of the men.

The third is the funeral—yes, the funeral—where they come together to weep and mourn over their dead, where again alone, except for the Mfundisi, the teacher, the cripple, the blind and the very aged, they accompany their husbands and fathers and brothers on their last journey. The countryside is today so empty of men that it is these women who keep vigil over the dead before burial—a thing once quite unknown in African society.

Tired of their hard life in the Reserves and in despair, they resort to all sorts of ways whereby they can get to the work centers in order to join their husbands. But the pass system which is used to control the movements of the whole African population throughout the country makes it well-nigh impossible for them to do so. Under the influx control regulations, all the railway stations have been instructed not to sell tickets to Africans proceeding to any of the major cities in the Union, unless such Africans produce exit and entry permits from some government official. If the permit is for the purpose of consulting a specialist in the major cities—the only places where such specialists are to be found—a doctor's certificate to that effect has to be produced. But sometimes even with the doctor's certificate, the official may refuse to grant such right of entry, if he is convinced in his own mind that the woman does not need specialist treatment. If the permit is for the purpose of tracing a lost husband, brother, or son, or rushing to the sickbed of a husband in the city, all relevant information—no matter how private and intimate—has to be given, and again it is the official who has to decide whether the matter is urgent.

To bypass the refusal of tickets at railway stations, these women fall victim to unscrupulous men who offer to carry them in their cars

and lorries to the cities where they can join their husbands. Is it the lure of city life that makes them abandon their homes—homes they have struggled hard to build; leave alone the lambs and calves they have brought up by hand; leave their children behind in the care of relatives and friends? Is it the talk of an easy life in town; is it the thought of the cheap jewels they will wear on their ears and round their arms that makes them pay huge sums of money to racketeers, run the risk of landing in jail for entering a proclaimed area without a permit? It is merely the will to live!

In the towns new difficulties arise. The police hound them and, should they catch them without the necessary papers, fine them or lock them up in jail and then truck them back to the Reserves. If they cannot get the papers legalizing their stay in the towns by fair means, then they get them by foul. Would-be helpers are not wanting here too; men who batten on their agony. These are willing to “help” them by selling them the papers at a sum of £15 to £25 apiece, though, for a woman with good looks, it may be much less—£5 to £10—if she is willing to add herself to the price.

Those of them who are lucky to get jobs on arrival in the city are tied down to their employers under unbearable service conditions. The pass laws, the influx control regulations and the contract system which give their employers the right to cancel their permits and have them endorsed out of the area, give their employers also the power to bully and blackmail, to offer them low wages and the worst of service conditions.

Even many of those who have slipped through are hounded out and sent back to the Reserves, leaving their husbands behind. And those of them who are in service are required to “sleep in,” while their children are sent back to the country whether or not there is someone to look after them after they get there.

In this way many African homes are broken up, families are split up. No wonder the people term the Women’s Registration Office in Langa the “Divorce Court.” And yet the Superintendent at Langa can say that he and his men will carry out this breaking-up of families as “humanely” as possible. But how can the splitting-up of families, the separation of wife, children and husband, be carried out “humanely”? How can anybody speak of acting “humanely,” when the breaking-up

involves so many thousands of women in Cape Town alone? Would these men consider it "humane," no matter how sweet and gentle the officials in charge, if it was their own wives and children who were being torn away from them? It is only in South Africa and when dealing with the blacks that anybody can speak of carrying out such a breaking-up "humanely"—an action that has brought suffering and misery to so many people, young and old. Back to the Reserves all these must go; back they must be sent to join those hundreds of others to whom each day is like another—one monotonous song of droning flies, sick babies, dying stock, hunger, starvation and death.

# Why I Ran Away

BLOKE MODISANE

## *South Africa*

When all the facts have been examined, the motives analyzed, the rationalizations equated, I still have to face my guilty conscience, my color and the commitment to fight the prejudices against it. And nagging at the back of my mind persists this confrontation: Were you not running away in deciding to leave South Africa? The fact is, I ran away. I am a coward. False heroics and rationalizations are unnecessary.

South Africa is a pigmentocracy, dedicated before God and the whole world to the proposition that "South Africa is the white man's country: it shall never be ruled by Kaffirs, Hottentots and coolies." White is right, and to be black is to be despised, dehumanized, classed among the beasts, hounded and persecuted, discriminated against, segregated and oppressed by government and by man's greed. White is the positive standard, black is the negative. Symbols of wealth, prestige and authority are allocated to the whites; and inferiority, humiliation and servitude are the lot of the black man. The society is divided into groups of "haves" and "have-nots." The "haves" want to keep on having and to see to it that the "have-nots" work for them.

Although the whites have their ideological differences, they are united in the broader concept of maintaining white supremacy and the furtherance of that state. There is a vital but small number of liberal South Africans who believed in a shared society with more concessions made to the Africans, who contend that race legislations should be more humane, just and Christian. They believe in the gradual integration of "responsible" Africans into the social, economic and political life of South Africa.

Under normal conditions, with a show of faith, this could be accept-

able to the responsible Africans. But the responsible African is a despised figurehead, and the reality lies in the recognition and acceptance of the irresponsible African, who does not want his freedom on the never-never scheme, but wants it now. This irresponsible African is the one to be reckoned with—while there is still time.

He is impatient, militant and a revolutionary. He is obsessed with freedom—that it is his historical right. He resents being told that as soon as power rests in his hands the minority races, the whites, will be oppressed. This I find fascinating. Why do these minority races believe that they have a moral right to oppress the Africans, when they, in turn, fear oppression directed toward them? Do they hold a world patent? The African knows what it is like to be oppressed—he is pre-occupied with canceling it and stamping it out from the face of the world. Oppression is not an expression of his life.

During moments of bitterness I have been known to blurt out that white South Africans need to be made to live through the humiliation of oppression, to be made to realize its total inhumanity. But oppression is something that cannot be wished on even one's enemies. This is what is so terrifying about being black in South Africa, this maniacal desire to revenge, but even more terrifying is the reality that the white South African, who counts, is determined to maintain the system. Denying the African all the civilized means, not only to change the system but even to protest against it in a democratic manner.

All the avenues of moral protest have been blockaded by legislation like the Natives (Prohibition of Interdicts) Act of 1956, by which the governor general can, by proclamation, order an African to leave a certain area. This the African must do, and no court of law may grant an interdict preventing such summary endorsement or an appeal for a stay or suspension of the removal order: this even if it is established as a fact that the order was intended for someone else and was served in error. The provisions of the Natives Labor (Settlement of Disputes) Act of 1953, stipulate that it is unlawful for an African to go on strike. He becomes liable, on conviction, to imprisonment for three years, to a maximum fine of £500, or a combination of the two. The Public Safety Act of 1953 empowers the governor general, or under special conditions the minister of justice, to authorize, by proclamation, any police constable to arrest any person and imprison him without trial.

This state of emergency may be invoked whenever the authorities hold that the safety of the public is endangered and the ordinary law is inadequate.

Euphemistically there is freedom of speech in South Africa, enjoyed in equal measure by all, even the African, so long as it is not used to criticize the government's racial policy. The Suppression of Communism Act makes such criticisms a treasonable offense. This Act enables anybody to be labeled a Communist who asserts that any form of government which withholds from a people the basic human rights is wrong and must be abolished. I believe that South Africa is a tyranny, that the system should be smashed—if not by moral protest, then by force. And so I have finally done it; I have committed treason against the legally constituted government of the state.

All these acts and prohibitions almost drove me to the point of being insensitive to oppression. I carried a pass because it was law, lived in a segregated location, used the "Natives Only" entrances into public buildings, used the "Natives and Goods" lifts, walked over to "Native Counters" in the post office and the bank, used the green "For Colored Persons Only" buses and allowed myself to be segregated and barely tolerated in the Indian-owned cinemas.

I locked myself up in my room to have that illegal drink, bowed to the Immorality Act of 1957, which lays down that sexual acts between black and whites are illegal, immoral and un-Christian. I permitted my labor to be exploited because I had to live. I accepted the discrimination against my skin as a physical reality I had to live with; accommodated myself to the humiliation of labels like "John" or "Jim" or "Boy" without strongly protesting. I stood by while a sidewalk bully pushed his finger into my nostril, spitting insults at me. Stood there suffocating with anger, afraid that any moment I was going to shout "Go to hell!" Restraining my fingers from closing round his throat and squeezing.

Then against my impulses would rise the voice of discretion: "Don't do it! You must not lose your temper. It's not worth it, bide your time." I would know the wisdom of it, and in the face of the gathered crowd I would apologize appropriately, plead with the white bully not to strike me. Some white gallants would smile acknowledgingly and the women would be sympathetic and advise me to go home, John.



I could not live with it any longer. I knew that I had to run, or lose my temper and even my sanity. I was not a dedicated platform politician, not even a member of the African National Congress. I was blinded by the violence of the oppression and could not reconcile my feelings with the ANC policy of nonviolence in the face of violence. The situation became unbearable to me as an individual. I felt stifled, unable to express and fulfill myself as an individual man. I felt the relentless inevitability of the clash, the direct immediacy of blood, in the resolving of the South African riddle. The prospect terrified me as I began to see this as the realism to which Africans are being driven. Because I am a coward, because I love humanity more than I hate oppression, I could not stay to face the possibility of slitting throats. I hate all violence, mental and physical, and no rationalization can cease its stark horror: I am a moral coward who cannot take a gun and go to war.

I know that the riddle of South Africa will have to be resolved in South Africa, perhaps without blood. But the possibility of bloodshed cannot be brushed aside, and I hope that through my writing I can yet make the world realize the danger gathering in the Union. That what will happen there will touch the rest of the world. For the world outside is responsible for the furtherance and continuance of the system. I indict the world. Every investment, every gold bar bought from South Africa helps to pay for the machinery of apartheid.

# African Freedom

*An Address by* TOM MBOYA

*Kenya*

I am glad to be in New York to launch today the world-wide celebration of African Freedom Day. April 15 was decided upon as African Freedom Day at the first Conference of the Independent African States held at Accra in April 1958 and was later endorsed by the first All-African Peoples' Conference also held at Accra. These conferences marked the discovery of Africa by Africans. This is in complete contrast to the discovery of Africa by Europeans in the nineteenth century.

What is this Africa and what do we mean by the word *Freedom*? This is what many of us are thinking and talking about today throughout the world. Africa is still associated in the minds of many people in the United States and some European countries with the nineteenth century. They think of the Dark Continent, the jungles, the wild beasts, the Africa as presented to them by Hollywood—the fierce, ignorant or merrily- and furiously-dancing tribesmen. Little is it realized that Africa too shares in what we call the twentieth century: modern cities, schools, roads, airfields, houses, cars and so on. As we celebrate this day, therefore, we might usefully stop and ponder these questions.

Africa desires to be understood and to be recognized from the viewpoint and perspective of her own people. Africa is no longer willing to be referred to as British, French, Belgian or Portuguese Africa. Africa must create and assert her own personality and speak for herself. She cannot be a projection of Europe nor any longer permit herself to be interpreted or spoken for by self-appointed interpreters. It was this conviction that moved African statesmen and political and trade-union leaders to hold the two conferences at Accra in 1958.

The Conference of Independent African States marked the birth of the African *personality*. The representatives of the African states at Accra unanimously agreed on the need for Africa to rise and be heard at all the councils of world affairs; and to effectuate this objective they created the Organization of African States, which now consults on all questions affecting Africa before the UN and which represents the united will of all Africans on such issues. Equally important was their decision that Africa's total liberation was the task for all Africans.

To implement the latter decision, nongovernmental representatives of African people from the entire continent met at the All-African Peoples' Conference in Ghana in December. That conference gave birth to the African *community*. By unanimous vote all five hundred delegates from political parties, nationalist organizations, trade unions and similar groups from every part of Africa agreed to work together in full co-operation for the total liberation of all Africa.

Thus both conferences were characterized by a spirit of unity based upon the same, predominant concepts and ideals—above all, those expressed in the common purpose: independence for all Africa. There was agreement that the independence of one territory is incomplete and meaningless unless it is accompanied by total independence for all territories. This, indeed, was but the practical application of the moral principle expressed earlier and more elegantly that “no man is an island,” and less elegantly but in language every American recognizes that “we must all hang together lest we hang separately.”

The year 1958 also saw the inauguration of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa at Addis Ababa in Ethiopia. This marked, in fact, the UN's functional recognition of Africa's legitimate place and role in the world's economic and social community and was another useful addition to the twentieth-century discovery of Africa. It provided a long-delayed vehicle for Pan-African economic planning and co-ordination.

There are those who complain that the discovery of Africa and the African personality and community by Africans is taking place at too fast a pace. Such people should be reminded that Africa is many years behind the rest of the world and that in these circumstances we cannot afford the luxury of wasting time. They might well remember the old but true adage that “he who is behind must run faster than he who

is in front." In the case of Africa we do not have only to run faster but we have, at the same time, to try to avoid the mistakes and pitfalls of those who "run before us," a considerable addition to our task. Lest any believe we are really running too fast, let me recall to them that colonialism has existed in Africa for over four centuries.

Most people seem to agree that colonialism is on its way out. It is, therefore, doubly difficult to understand why nations which are signatories to the United Nations Charter and which have committed themselves to the Declaration of Human Rights have not found it possible to give effective support to the African's struggle for freedom. Most of them have been noted for their compromising attitude and their desire to please the colonial powers or each other at the expense of democracy and human rights. How can anyone honestly believe that a compromise is possible where human rights, democracy and Christian ideals are concerned and still expect the African to have confidence and faith in him?

Of 220,000,000 Africans only 70,000,000 live in independent states free of white minority domination [figures as of April, 1959—ED.]. The rest have yet to be liberated from colonialism and European domination. Surveying the situation of the 150,000,000 people still not free one will immediately see what the African talks about when he condemns colonialism and European settler domination.

Africans are convinced that economic and social conditions cannot be considered apart from their political setting. Self-government and independence open great possibilities for economic and social development. Self-government permits people not only to embark on development programs serving purposefully the needs of their own country which they know best, but also enables them to establish relations with other countries on the basis of equality and to co-ordinate progressively the economy of their country with that of others. Full economic and social emancipation is not possible without political emancipation. Above all, it is through becoming masters of their own fate that the energies of the people are fully released for the arduous task of economic and social development.

The subjection of a people in any form, including forced labor, apartheid, or colonialism under the guise of assimilation, is wholly

inimical to economic and social development. This is our answer to those who argue that we must wait until we have a viable economy and have acquired enough experience before we have the right to demand our freedom.

This argument for delay, which smells of a passive betrayal of democracy, ignores the fact that, so far, experience has shown that it is only after independence that most of our countries have embarked on large-scale economic and educational projects and that in all cases it is only after independence that the world has begun to be conscious of our economic and social problems. In fact, the foundations for stable government have been laid only after independence, which makes nonsense of the plea of colonial governments that they are training us for self-government. In every case, colonial powers have left their African territories only when the organized pressure of our people has made it impossible for them to govern without serious consequences.

In addition to crying caution and go slow, opponents of African freedom have raised other objections. While most of the opposition arises from those who fear that independence will cost them status, economic advantage, or other special privilege, I would like briefly to consider the questions that are posed to me time and again by non-Africans.

For example, I have repeatedly been asked about the use of violence to achieve freedom. To this I can only answer that we are totally committed to nonviolent positive action. Nevertheless, I must call attention to the wise words of the great English reformer, John Bright, who in 1866 declared:

I have never said a word in favor of force. All I have said has been against it—but I am at liberty to warn those in authority that justice long delayed, or long continued injustice always provokes the employment of force to obtain redress. It is in the ordering of nature and therefore of the Supreme that this is so, and all preaching to the contrary is of no avail. If men build houses on the slopes of a Vesuvius, I may tell them of their folly and insecurity, but I am not in any way provoking, or responsible for, the eruption which sweeps them all away. I may say too that force, to prevent freedom and to deny rights, is not more moral than force to gain freedom and secure rights.

Secondly, there are those, perhaps affected by the guilty conscience which the general record of western colonialism must unfortunately lead to, who fear that we Africans may yield to the not unsurprising temptation to victimize minorities—particularly the formerly dominant whites—when we gain independence. To them I can only repeat what we resolved at Accra in December: Africa will be developed toward a democracy where *individual* rights will be recognized and guaranteed, regardless of race or color. Our quarrel is only with colonialism and European domination. With these we shall never compromise.

Lastly, there are some who are only too ready to try to make capital out of some of our teething problems. They expect perfection from us and lie in wait to ridicule our demand for freedom every time they see—or fancy that they see—any error or misjudgment by an African. I am flattered by these people because whereas they have not yet attained perfection themselves, they believe we are better fitted to achieve it before them. We have nothing to apologize for; but while we will always welcome constructive criticism, we do not and cannot allow interference with the sovereignty of our independent states. Any problems we meet during our early stages of independence reflect on the utter failure of colonialism as a training ground. We have no reason to believe that if the colonial governments had another hundred years the situation would be better.

But is it really necessary for us to justify our demand for freedom or even to answer as to our readiness to shoulder the responsibility of self-government? If so, to whom are we accountable and by what and whose standards are we to be judged? What right has any other person to set himself up as our tutor and judge?

I submit that we have a right to self-determination. It is a birthright which we need not either justify or explain. We know and understand our desires and responsibilities to our people, our countries and world peace. The other nations would do well to co-operate with us in our efforts instead of setting themselves up as our judges.

Too often we have heard of those who insist that African freedom involves a risk of communism. To them, all I want to say is that if they spent all their efforts in practicing the democracy that they preach they would have nothing to fear from communism.

Let us, therefore, join together and match the internationalism of

communism, item by item, with the internationalism of democracy. Let us co-operate in the effort to eliminate disease, poverty and ignorance from the face of the earth and we shall have dealt a deathblow to the root causes of most of the "isms" that currently bedevil the world.

To those who count upon military bases, established in colonial areas without the consent of—or even notice to—the local inhabitants, for security against the false prophets of the world, I commend a thorough study of recent events. Military agreements negotiated with colonial powers will necessarily be, as they are today in Morocco, subject to the will and the needs of the African people when they gain their independence. I humbly submit that only Africans, whatever their color, background or race, may rightfully decide matters which vitally affect the future of Africa. We African people seek the same peace, stability, security and well-being that all decent people seek the world over, and we are unwilling to be used willy-nilly as pawns in a great power struggle. For this reason we adamantly oppose the use of any African territory, even the most desolate wastes of the Sahara, as a testing ground by non-Africans of their new and ever more devilish instruments of destruction.

What specifically, therefore, is the task of Africans who seek to achieve that standard of well-being which is now recognized to be the decent and proper right of all peoples? It was clearly summarized by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, prime minister of Ghana, when he called upon the African peoples to aim at four stages of advance: the attainment of freedom and independence, the consolidation of that freedom and independence, the creation of unity and community among the Free African States, and the economic and social reconstruction of Africa.

To this great fourfold task we shall devote our full energies until a new, proud, free Africa is able to contribute constructively and equally to the great adventures before mankind.

# Accra Conference Diary

*The All-African People's Conference, Accra,  
Ghana, December 8, 1958*

EZEKIEL MPHAHLELE

## *South Africa*

SATURDAY MORNING, December 6. Heads of delegations met in the prime minister's office at Ministry of External Affairs. How awe-inspiring to see the whole of Africa contained in that room—from Algeria, Tunisia, United Arab Republic in the north to the South African sub-continent, from Somaliland and Kenya to the Congo. Sudan and Libya were the only countries not represented.

MONDAY 8. Let me bring you back to the conference this morning. The community center and the terraces flanking it are chockablock. It is a hot morning. There is an army of local and overseas newspapermen and photographers. Heads of delegations are on the platform facing the large audience. While we are waiting for the Ghana premier's arrival I have time to look at the slogans on the walls—like Dr. Kwame Nkrumah's "We prefer independence with danger to servitude in tranquility" and President Sékou Touré's "We prefer independence in poverty to servitude with plenty." Says a cabinet minister of Nigeria's western-region government which has been highly critical of Ghana lately: "These are the sort of words that breed so much trouble—independence with danger!" Depends on the meaning one reads into the slogan, doesn't it? I say. . . .

Ten-thirty. Prime minister arrives, accompanied by members of his cabinet. Youthful Mr. Tom Mboya, Kenya's strong man and chairman of the conference, introduces premier and gives his remarks on the significance of the conference. Dr. Nkrumah spots the Tunisian ambassador in London next to me. What an electric smile of recognition



as the premier waves his hand. So spontaneous. As Tom Mboya later ushers him on to the rostrum, with his arm round the premier while they whisper to each other, I realize all the more that this is Africa—an Africa with a totally different sense of convention from that of the West. All during the speech the feeling of self-confidence that Dr. Nkrumah inspires does not escape one. I look at his ministers and am struck by the same self-confident and bold, dignified facial features that characterize the Ghanaian of today. At close quarters you find it isn't conceit; it's something beautiful against the background of colonialism and all the servility it demands.

The prime minister says we should take courage from the achievements of Ghana in the fight for freedom. He hopes that colonialism will yet be overcome by nonviolent means. He is a metallic voice moving on with restrained impetuosity as he warns the imperial powers to pack up voluntarily rather than be forced out.

Afternoon. Committees mobilize themselves to prepare for the following afternoon's work. There are five committees: 1) Colonialism and imperialism in Africa; 2) Racialism and discriminatory laws and practices: land, franchise, Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations in relation to this; 3) Tribalism and religious separatism; traditional institutions under colonial rule and a free democratic society; 4) Adjustment of existing boundaries, amalgamation or federation or confederation of state groupings into an ultimate Pan-African Commonwealth of free independent states of Africa; 5) Setting up of permanent organization to pursue resolutions of conference, etc. The Steering Committee has made me convener of Committee two.

The Tanganyika delegates told us Alfred Hutchinson had been released and was waiting to be picked up by plane: We're wondering if Hutch will make it.

TUESDAY 9. Tom Mboya gives his address. "We are determined to free Africa, whether the colonial powers like it or not. What we are fighting for is nothing revolutionary; it was endorsed by the colonial powers as part of the United Nations Charter of Human Rights. Although we believe in nonviolence, we should not be provoked too far." He says time has come when colonial powers must scam out of Africa, seventy-two years after they sat in Berlin to plan their scramble for Africa.

Heads of delegations begin their addresses. There are about fifty delegations. Dr. Fouad Galal (U.A.R.) comes forward. We have become friends since the first meeting of heads of delegations, when he successfully urged deleting from the provisional agenda the item binding the conference to formulate strategy for the overthrow of colonialism on the basis of Gandhian passive resistance. It was agreed that it was not the responsibility of the conference to impose any method of struggle on any liberatory organization. Dr. Galal is a stocky Egyptian with a slow but vigorous manner about him. He has a study-group type of analytical mind. Already there is gossip outside conference that Cairo and Moscow want to take over the conference. I can't see it that way.

Dr. Fanoh Omar of Algeria is certainly the high light of the session. He does not mince words. What FLN man can afford the luxury anyway? Algerians have no other recourse but fight back, he says, and the FLN means to go through with it. In staccato French he carries his audience to the horrible scene of French atrocities on Algerians. The results of the French referendum, he says, were faked in part, and at best did not reflect the true majority opinion of Algeria. He gets the loudest and longest ovation of all the speakers.

I make my speech for the African National Congress. As I tell the story of the women's travails and struggles several people wipe tears from their eyes and many more are visibly outraged. Guinea and Algeria present a clear and definite case. Of course, the trusteeship territories of the Cameroons and Togoland too. It soon becomes evident that the delegations from the French colonies are represented by "minority" parties who lost the referendum to the yes-men. They are thoroughly bitter, but they disappoint me as political debaters. They beat the air about them, telling the audience that France should be "asked" to do this and that. In all this anti-colonialism talk I find it difficult to see what they suggest a Pan-African movement should do for their countries now committed to the French Community.

The Liberian delegation drags the tone down when its leader says it is evident that the conference wants to pull independent states like his into violence and thus interfere with the sovereignty of such states. The delegation of the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons—Dr. Azikiwe's party—walks out in disgust and protest.

Alfred Hutchinson stalks up the aisle, six feet of him, just like one of those outlaws on the screen who come to tame and civilize a noisy, lawless town of the Wild West. I rush from the platform to embrace him, beside myself with excitement. Mboya introduces him to the conference amidst loud applause. I miss the rest of the speeches because I'm absorbed in Hutch's tale of escape.

WEDNESDAY 10. The morning has a haze reminiscent of late autumn in South Africa. Speakers include those from Zanzibar, French Cameroons, Tunisia, United Party Opposition in Ghana, and the Rev. Michael Scott (51), who looks positively older than I last saw him during the "Tobruk" days at Orlando. But I think also he looks much steadier and more sure of himself, much less lonely. He is greatly honored with a loud applause. Yes, who doesn't know this man Scott? Dr. G. Kiano of Kenya comes up. He is uncompromising and says concepts of multi-racial society, apartheid, Bantustani are traps laid by the white man. Makes me realize all the more how difficult it is to tell the colonial African, who thinks of his problem in the simplest terms of Black versus White, about our fight in South Africa to set up a multi-racial community where all people shall govern on a basis of equality and where all people shall share the land. He cannot but think of South African whites as aliens who must quit. During Dr. Kiano's speech Kenyans rise and display banners which scream out: Free Jomo Kenyatta now!

Afternoon. We hear that argument is raging in Committee One on whether violence or passive resistance should be resorted to in the fight against colonialism.

Later in the afternoon I meet Mrs. Paul Robeson—a most charming woman with a brilliant intellect. Her smile and conversational manner fill you with a warmth you can't forget. I tell Mrs. Robeson how we still remember her husband's support during the hectic days of the Defiance Campaign.

THURSDAY 11. A bright morning. Mrs. William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, wife of the famous ninety-year-old Negro historian, reads her husband's message. He says in his typical forthright manner that Africa must seek an alignment with the East rather than with the corrupt West.

Afternoon. Committees work on resolutions. A preamble has now

been adopted by all committees which states *inter alia* that the conference supports organizations or peoples who have recourse to non-violent and constitutional means of attaining freedom, but supports no less those who, because constitutional channels are closed to them, feel compelled to retaliate against those who use violence on them. A resolution to dissolve the Central African Federation has also gone through.

FRIDAY 12. In committee as in plenary sessions I have seen something of the meaning of French assimilation politics. French West and Equatorial Africa do not seem to have produced many politicians of the stamp of Dr. Felix Moumie, Cameroonian now in exile in Cairo. Those in France's parliament are assimilated gentlemen who couldn't resist the lure of Paris lights. Those who revolt against the French community are but new in the game, untrained, noisy, prone to cavil about procedure, with something of the stiff-necked and severe attitude of a fellow who has just discovered a cause to fight for. Condemnation of South Africa's racial policy has come from Ghana, Nigeria, Ethiopia, East and Central Africa. A pamphlet has been passed round giving an account of the ghastly conditions in which Africans live in Angola, and a message has sneaked out of the country to the conference. Even Belgian Congo has made herself heard.

Afternoon. Heads of delegations meet to consider resolutions from all committees, among them: independent states to form a freedom army; a human rights committee of the conference to be formed to examine complaints of abuse of human rights in every part of Africa and take appropriate steps; rejection of plan to partition South-West Africa or to incorporate into South Africa's apartheid system any African land or people on its borders; refusal to recognize Portugal's claim that its colonies are part of metropolitan Portugal; condemnation of proposed nuclear tests in the Sahara and determination to resist the plan; to work toward a commonwealth of African states; setting up of a permanent secretariat to operate from Accra. There shall be a permanent organization called the All-African People's Conference to meet once every year.

SATURDAY 13. Full delegations confirm resolutions as above. Tom Mboya gives closing remarks. Dr. Nkrumah is on the platform. The

entertainment chief asks us to sing *Nkosi Sikelel'i* [God Bless] *Afrika* and *Morena Boloqa Sechaba* [God Bless Our Country]. I explain the reason for our thumb-raising, pointing to the large map of Africa drawn on the wall, and ask the audience to respond "Mayibuye!" [Long live; literally: Come back] to "Afrika!"

# The Blacks

PETER ABRAHAMS

## *South Africa*

It was a hot, humid, oppressive August day in Accra, capital of the Gold Coast that was to become Ghana. The air had the stillness of death. I walked down toward the sea front. Perhaps there would be the hint of a breeze there. As I neared the sea front I was assailed by a potent stench of the sea with strong overtones of rotting fish.

The houses were drab, run-down wooden structures or made of corrugated iron, put together any way you please. The streets were wide and tarred, and each street had an open drainage system into which young boys and old men piddled when they needed to relieve themselves. I have seen women empty chamber pots into these drains in the early morning. The fierce sun takes care of the germs, but God help you if smells make you sick.

In about eight minutes of walking, some fifteen "taxis" pulled up beside me: "Hi, massa! Taxi, massa! Me go anywhere you go cheap!" They are all private taxis with no meters and driven by strapping young men with flashing teeth. The place is full of taxi drivers willing to go anywhere and do anything cheap.

The street traders here are women. "Mammy traders," they are called. They trade in everything. They sell cigarettes, one at a time; round loaves of bread and hunks of cooked meat on which the big West African flies make sport. They love bargaining and haggling. They are a powerful economic factor in the life of the country. The more prosperous ones own their own trucks, some own fleets of trucks. These "mammy trucks" are the principal carriers of the country. They carry passengers as well as produce and go hurtling across the countryside with little regard for life or limb. Each truck has its own distinctive

slogan, such as: *Repent for Death is Round the Corner*, or *Enter Without Hope*, or *The Last Ride* or *If it Must it Will*. My own favorite—and I traveled in this particular truck—pleaded *Not Today O Lord Not Today*.

I passed many mammy traders, many mammy trucks, before I reached the sea front. I crossed a street, jumped over an open drain, and there was the sea. But there was no breeze, and no shade from the terrible sun. In the end I gave in to the idea of “taxi, massa, taxi” and looked about for one. But now there was no taxi in sight. Instead, I saw suddenly a long procession of many women and a few men. The procession swung round a corner and came into full view, twenty or thirty yards long. The women wore white flowing robes and white kerchiefs on their heads. Their faces were painted into grotesque masks made with thick streaks of black, red, white and yellow paints. The heavy thud of bare feet rose above the hum of the sea.

Then, all at once, the drums burst forth and there was no other sound about me. The marching women began to jig, then dance. As the tail of the procession passed me the drums reached a frenzy. A thin, pure note from a reed rose above the drums. The whole procession became a shivering, shaking mass. The reed note held longer than seemed human. And then, dramatically, there was silence. The thudding feet faded away out of sight and sound. There was silence and a slight racing of my heartbeat and the hum of the sea, and, of course, the overpowering fishy stench.

I thought of Richard Wright, with whom I had had breakfast that morning. This was his first visit to any part of Africa and he seemed to find it bewildering. Countee Cullen, the late American Negro poet, had speculated:

One three centuries removed  
From the scenes his fathers loved,  
Spicy grove, cinnamon tree,  
What is Africa to me?

Wright was finding the answers and finding them disconcerting. He had been astounded by the casual attitude to sex. There was, he had said, too much sex, too casually given and taken; so that it worked

out as no sex, with none of the emotional involvement associated with sex in the western mind. He shook his head with a slight disgust. The open drains into which young boys and old men piddled had led him to conclude that Africans piddled rather more than other people. The sight of young men dancing together, holding hands, disturbed the puritan in him. He expressed to me that morning what he later summed up in his book on the Gold Coast: "I was black and they were black but it did not help me."

What Wright did not understand, what his whole background and training had made difficult for him to understand, was that being black did not of itself qualify one for acceptance in tribal Africa. But how could he, when there are thousands of urban-bred Africans up and down the vast continent who do not themselves understand this? The more perceptive of the urban Africans are only now beginning to comprehend, but slowly.

Being black is a small matter in tribal Africa because the attitude toward color is healthy and normal. Color does not matter. Color is an act of God that neither confers privileges nor imposes handicaps on a man. A man's skin is like the day: the day is either clear or dark. There is nothing more to it until external agencies come in and invest it with special meaning and importance.

What does matter to the tribal African, what is important, is the complex pattern of his position within his own group and his relations with the other members of the group. He is no Pan-African dreaming of a greater African glory when the white man is driven into the sea. The acute race consciousness of the American Negro, or of the black South African at the receiving end of apartheid, is alien to him. The important things in his life are anything but race and color—until they are forced on him. And "Mother Africa" is much too vast to inspire big continental dreams in him. She is a land of huge mountains, dark jungles and vast deserts. In her rivers and in her jungles and in her grasslands lurk creatures that are the enemies of man: the leopard and the lion, the snake and crocodile. All this makes travel, by the old African methods, extremely difficult and makes for isolation between one group of people and another. The African who is in Britain is likely to be a deal better informed on what is happening all over the continent than would be his fellow African in any of the main centers



of both tribal and nontribal Africa. In terms of communications the man in the tribe lives in the Dark Ages.

Richard Wright was surprised that even educated Africans, racially conscious literate people, had not heard of him and were skeptical of a grown man earning his living by writing. They could not understand what kind of writing brought a man enough money to support a family. Wright really wanted to understand the African, but—"I found the African an oblique, a hard-to-know man."

My sympathies were all with Wright.

The heat and salty rancid fish smell had made me desperately thirsty. Across the way a mammy trader squatted beside her pile of merchandise: cooked meats, sweet potatoes—a whole host of edibles—and some bottles of opaque white liquid that could be either coconut milk or palm juice as well as the inevitable little pile of cigarettes priced at a penny apiece. I had been warned of the risks involved in eating anything sold by the street traders. But to hell with it, I was thirsty and not exactly a stranger to African germs. I crossed the street, felt the bottles and chose the one that seemed coolest and looked the least opaque.

"How much?"

"One shilling." The carved ebony face looked at me with dead eyes.

I pulled the screwed-up newspaper stopper from the bottle, wiped its mouth and took a swig. I could not decide whether it was coconut milk or palm juice. It had been heavily watered down and sweetened. But it was wet and thirst-quenching. I drank half the bottle, firmly ignoring the little foreign bodies that floated in the liquid. Then I paid her and drank the rest. I put down the empty and began to move away.

"You African?" she asked in her harsh, cold, masculine voice.

I stopped, turned and looked at her face. It was as deadly cold and impersonal as before: not a flicker of feeling in her eyes. Like an African mask, I thought. But unlike Wright, I did not try to penetrate it; I knew the futility of trying. She would show feeling if and when she decided, not before.

"Yes," I said, and added, "from the south. Far, far south."

She paused for so long that I began to move again.

"You like here?" Nationalism had obviously touched her.

I turned back to her. "No," I said.

"Why you don't like?"

"I don't say I don't like."

"But you don't like?"

I showed her my teeth, African-wise, which is neither smile nor grimace but a blending of the two. "*You like Africa?*" I asked.

Now it was her turn to show me her teeth. There was a flicker of feeling in her eyes, then they went dead again. She nodded. I had established my claim. Only outsiders—white people or the Richard Wrights—liked or disliked Africa.

I left the mammy trader and carried on up the smelly and hot street. Much and little had passed between us. Out to sea some fishing boats appeared on the sky line. About me were the citizens of Accra. Some wore the cloth of the country—the men looking like pint-sized citizens of ancient Rome painted black and the women looking extraordinarily masculine—and others wore western dress.

My thoughts shifted to my forthcoming meeting with Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's first prime minister. It was well over seven years since I had last seen him, in London. Then he was a poor struggling student; now he was the head of a state and the spokesman for the great Pan-African dream of freedom and independence.

I remembered our past friendship and wondered what changes I would find in him. Anyway, it was now 9 a.m. and my date with him was for 9:30. I would soon know.

A few minutes later I flagged a taxi and simply said, "Kwame's office."

A pale-brown West Indian miss was the prime minister's secretary. She welcomed me as though I was a V.I.P. The prime minister had not come back from a conference yet. This tribal business was taking up a lot of his attention. She told me with indignation how members of the Ashanti tribe had to crawl on their bellies for some twenty yards into the presence of their king, the Asantehene, and how tribalism had to give way or there would be no progress. If she was any indication, then Nkrumah was very worried about the opposition the tribesmen were offering his western-style Convention People's Party.

A number of officials came in. The lady stopped assailing the tribes. Then there was some bustle and the prime minister arrived. In something just over five minutes he had seen and dealt with these officials and I was ushered into his office. It was a big, pleasant, cool room.

Nkrumah came round his big official desk, took my hand and led me to a settee near the window. The now famous smile lit up his face. As we exchanged greetings, felt each other out with small talk in an attempt to bridge the gap of years, my mind went back to our London days. This poised, relaxed man, with the hint of guarded reserve about him, was a far cry from the friend I had last seen nearly eight years earlier.

For me, the most striking change of all was in his eyes. They reflected an inner tranquillity which was the one thing the Nkrumah in Europe never had.

Even his name had been subtly different then. He had been our friend Francis Nkrumah, an African student recently arrived from the United States, and he had not seen Africa for a decade and more. He had quickly become a part of our African colony in London and had joined our little group, the Pan-African Federation, in our protests against colonialism.

He was much less relaxed than most of us. His eyes mirrored a burning inner conflict and tension. He seemed consumed by a restlessness that led him to evolve some of the most fantastic schemes.

The president of our federation was an East African named Johnstone Kenyatta, the most relaxed, sophisticated and "westernized" of the lot of us. Kenyatta enjoyed the personal friendship of some of the most distinguished people in English political and intellectual society. He was subtle, subtle enough to attack one's principles bitterly and retain one's friendship. He fought the British as imperialists but was affectionate toward them as friends.

It was to this balanced and extremely cultured man that Francis Nkrumah proposed that we form a secret society called The Circle, and that each of us spill a few drops of our blood into a bowl and so take a blood oath of secrecy and dedication to the emancipation of Africa.

Johnstone Kenyatta laughed at the idea; he scoffed at it as childish juju. He conceived our struggle in modern, twentieth-century terms with no ritualistic blood nonsense. In the end Francis Nkrumah drifted

away from us and started his own little West African group in London. We were too tame and slow for him. He was an angry man in a hurry.

Then he went back to his part of Africa, and Francis Nkrumah became Kwame Nkrumah. He set himself at the head of the largely tribal populace and dabbled in blood ritual. There was some violence, a spell in prison, and finally Nkrumah emerged as the first African prime minister in a self-governing British African territory.

Tribal myths grew up around him. He could make himself invisible at will. He could go without food and sleep and drink longer than ordinary mortals. He was, in fact, the reincarnation of some of the most powerful ancestral spirits. He allowed his feet to be bathed in blood.

By the time I visited the Gold Coast the uneasy alliance between Nkrumah and the tribal chiefs had begun to crack. A week or so before my arrival he had threatened that, unless they co-operated with his government in turning the Gold Coast into an efficient twentieth-century state, he would make them run so hard that they would leave their sandals behind them. This was a calculated insult to the tribal concept that a chief's bare feet must never touch the earth.

That was the beginning of the secret war. Nkrumah thought he would win it easily. He was wrong.

And the chiefs have, negatively, scored their victories too. They have pushed him to a point where his regime is, today, intolerant of opposition. The tribal society brooks no opposition. Nkrumah's government banishes its most active opponents. As a modern socialist leading a western-style government, he justifies this as a temporary expedient. But his less sophisticated ministers frankly talk the tribal language of strength, frankly express the tribal impulse to destroy those who are out of step.

There was an air of delicacy about our conversation and we were both aware of this. We touched on local politics. He let off at full blast against the tribalist. I told him I had heard that the Accra Club was still exclusively European. His eyes lit up. "You wait and see," he said. Then, in relation to nothing either of us had said, he leaned toward me and exclaimed, "This place is rich! God, man, there's so much riches here!"—as though the revelation had just been made to him.

But always, throughout our talk, I sensed a new reserve, a new

caution that had not been there in the young student I had known in Europe.

As we talked in Nkrumah's cool office that hot August day in Accra, my mind kept slipping back to our mutual friend Jomo or Johnstone Kenyatta, now imprisoned in his native Kenya for leading the Mau-Mau movement. Significantly, though we mentioned many friends, both Nkrumah and I avoided mentioning Kenyatta. I had decided not to mention him first. I had hoped Nkrumah would. He did not.

A year earlier, I had flown up to Kenya from South Africa and visited Kenyatta. I felt terribly depressed as I got off the plane. Things had grown so much uglier in the Union. The barricades were up in the ugly war of color. When I had left South Africa in the dim-and-distant past, there were isolated islands where black and white could meet in neutral territory. When I went back in 1952, the islands were submerged under the rising tide of color hatreds, and I was glad to quit that dark, unhappy land which yet compelled my love.

It was in this mood that I got off the plane. I had not seen my friend Jomo for years. Now there he was, just outside the airport terminal building, leaning on a heavy cane, bigger than I remembered him in Europe, paunchy, his face looking puffy. And behind him was a huge crowd of Africans.

I began to move toward him when a lean-faced, lean-hipped white colonial-administrator type suddenly appeared beside me and said: "Mr. Abrahams."

I stopped and thought, "Oh, Lord."

Kenyatta also came forward. The two men ignored each other. Lean-face introduced himself and said the Colonial Office had alerted them that I was coming to do some writing for the London *Observer* and they had drawn up a provisional schedule for me. Had I done anything about accommodations?

Before I could answer, Kenyatta said, "You are staying with me, of course." The old detachment was back in his eyes. They seemed to say, "You've got to choose, pal. Let's see how you choose."

Lean-face said, "We've got something set up for you for tomorrow and—"

"I live in the bush," Kenyatta added.

It dawned on me that I had become, for the moment, the battlefield of that horrible animal, the racial struggle. I made up my mind, resenting both sides and yet conscious of the crowd of Africans in the background. A question of face was involved.

"I've promised to spend this week end with Mr. Kenyatta," I said.

Lean-face was graceful about it. I promised to call the Secretariat first thing on Monday morning. He gave me a copy of the schedule that had been prepared for me and wondered, *sotto voce*, whether I knew what I was letting myself in for. Kenyatta assured me that I would be perfectly safe, that nobody was going to cut my throat. I was aware that they were talking to each other through me. I was aware that they knew I was aware, and that made me bad-tempered.

"Then I'll say good night, Mr. Abrahams," Lean-face said pointedly.

As soon as he was out of hearing Kenyatta began to curse.

"It's good to see you again, Johnstone." I gripped his hand.

"Jomo," he replied. The hint of ironic speculation was back in his eyes. A slightly sardonic, slightly bitter smile played on his lips.

"Welcome to Kenya, Peter," he said. Then, abruptly: "Come meet the leaders of my people. They've been waiting long."

We moved forward and the crowd gathered about us. Jomo made a little speech in Kikuyu, then translated it for my benefit. A little old man, ancient as the hills, with huge holes in his ears, then welcomed me on behalf of the land and its people. Again Jomo translated.

After this we all bundled into the fleet of rattling old cars and set off for the Kikuyu reserve in the heart of the African bush. Kenyatta became silent and strangely remote during the journey.

We stopped at the old chief's compound, where other members of the tribe waited to welcome me. By this time the reception committee had grown to a few hundred. About me, pervading the air, was the stench of burning flesh; a young cow was being roasted in my honor. Before I entered the house a drink was handed to me. Another was handed to the old chief and a third to Kenyatta. The old man muttered a brief incantation and spilled half his drink on the earth as a libation. Jomo and I followed suit. Then the three of us downed our drinks and entered the house.

A general feasting and drinking then commenced, both inside and

outside the house. I was getting a full ceremonial tribal welcome. The important dignitaries of the tribe slipped into the room in twos and threes, spoke to me through Kenyatta for a few moments, and then went away, making room for others.

"Africa doesn't seem to change," Kenyatta murmured between dignitaries. There was a terrible undercurrent of bitterness behind the softly murmured words. I was startled by it and looked at his face. For a fleeting moment he looked like a trapped, caged animal.

He saw me looking at him and quickly composed his face into a slightly sardonic, humorous mask. "Don't look too closely," he said.

And still the dignitaries filed in, had a drink, spoke their welcome and went out.

The ceremonial welcome reached its high point about midnight. Huge chunks of the roasted cow were brought in to us, and we gnawed at the almost raw meat between swigs of liquor. Outside, there was muted drumming. Voices were growing louder and louder.

Suddenly, in the midst of a long-winded speech by an immensely dignified Masai chief from a neighboring and friendly tribe, Kenyatta jumped up, grabbed his heavy cane and half staggered through the door.

"Come, Peter," he called.

Everybody was startled. I hesitated. He raised his cane and beckoned to me with it. I knew that this would be a dreadful breach of tribal etiquette.

"Come, man!" he snapped.

I got up, aware of the sudden silence that had descended on the huge gathering. By some strange magic everybody seemed to know that something had gone wrong.

"Jomo," I said.

"I can't stand any more," he snapped. "Come!"

I followed him to the door. I knew the discourtesy we were inflicting on the tribe. I also knew that my friend was at the breaking point. We walked through the crowd of people, got into Kenyatta's car and drove off into the night. The African moon was big and yellow, bathing the land in a soft light that almost achieved the clarity of daylight.

He took me to his home. It was a big, sprawling, empty place on the

brow of a hill. Inside, it had nothing to make for comfort. There were hard wooden chairs, a few tables and only the bed in the bedroom. There were no books, none of the normal amenities of western civilization. When we arrived two women emerged from somewhere in the back and hovered about in the shadows. They brought in liquor, but I never got a clear glimpse of either of them. My friend's anguish of spirit was such that I did not want to ask questions. We sat on the veranda and drank steadily and in silence until we were both miserably, depressingly drunk.

And then Kenyatta began to speak in a low, bitter voice of his frustration and of the isolated position in which he found himself. He had no friends. There was no one in the tribe who could give him the intellectual companionship that had become so important to him in his years in Europe. The things that were important to him—consequential conversation, the drink that represented a social activity rather than the intention to get drunk, the concept of individualism, the inviolability of privacy—all these were alien to the tribesmen in whose midst he lived. So Kenyatta, the western man, was driven in on himself and was forced to assert himself in tribal terms. Only thus would the tribesmen follow him and so give him his position of power and importance as a leader.

To live without roots is to live in hell, and no man chooses voluntarily to live in hell. The people who could answer his needs as a western man had erected a barrier of color against him in spite of the fact that the taproots of their culture had become the taproots of his culture too. By denying him access to those things which complete the life of western man, they had forced him back into the tribalism from which he had so painfully freed himself over the years.

None of this was stated explicitly by either Kenyatta or myself. But it was there in his brooding bitter commentary on both the tribes and the white settlers of the land. For me, Kenyatta became that night a man who in his own life personified the terrible tragedy of Africa and the terrible secret war that rages in it. He was the victim both of tribalism and of westernism gone sick. His heart and mind and body were the battlefield of the ugly violence known as the Mau Mau revolt long before it broke out in that beautiful land. The tragedy is that



he was so rarely gifted, that he could have made such a magnificent contribution in other circumstances.

What then is tribal man? Perhaps his most important single characteristic is that he is not an individual in the western sense. Psychologically and emotionally he is the present living personification of a number of forces, among the most important of which are the ancestral dead. The dead have a powerful hold on the living. They control and regulate the lives and activities of the living from the grave. They hand out the rules and codes by which the living conduct their daily affairs. If there is a drought, if there is a famine, it is a sign that the ancestors are angry because someone has broken a rule of the tribe, a law laid down by the dead. There will be no peace, no order, no prosperity in the tribe until the ancestors are appeased.

So the chief calls the whole tribe to a meeting in which the guilty ones will be "smelled out." The procedure begins with the drums—a key factor in African life. Their insistent throbs call the people to the gathering on a placid, almost momentous key at first, but working on the emotions. Everyone in the village will be present; no man, woman or child would think of not obeying the summons. They form a circle, with the witch doctor or medicine man and the drummers to the fore. When all the people are assembled the throbbing of the drums increases. They beat in tune to the heartbeats of the human circle.

The witch doctor is dressed in lion or leopard skin, sometimes in monkey skin. His face is painted in bold streaks of color: white, black, red. There are crisscrossing lines on his body too. He wanders about the center of the circle, almost idly at first. Every now and then he pauses and looks straight into someone's eyes and keeps on looking. For the person looked at, this is an encounter with fate. Few stare back. Their eyes slide past his face or go glazed. They fear but are not supposed to fear. They know the ancestors are just, that the innocent are never punished. To experience fear, therefore, is an acknowledgment of guilt. It is not necessary to know the nature of your guilt; if you were not guilty, there would be no fear in your mind.

The tempo of the drums increases. The witch doctor begins to dance, slowly at first. He begins to talk in a high-pitched nasal voice; spirits

always talk through their noses. The drums and the incantations go on and on, getting faster and wilder, dominating the hearts and minds of all the circle. People begin to tremble and shiver. Some drop down in a trance and lie moaning on the ground. Everyone is possessed by the frenzy of the drums. The spirits of the ancestors are abroad.

Suddenly the drums stop. The witch doctor stands fixed for a dreadful moment that seems without end. Then he pounces. He grabs his victim and drags him or her into the center of the circle. The victim does not resist, does not protest. The ancestors are always just.

There may be one, there may be many victims. But once the victim or victims are "smelled out," the hypnotic spell of the drums is broken. People relax. Their hearts beat normally once more. Now the ancestors will be propitiated and the living freed of the evil which beset them. Now the famine or the drought or the plague or whatever had beset the land will depart from it. And so, while the victim or victims are put to death, the rest of the tribe celebrates the passing of the great evil.

Another key characteristic of tribal man is that his society is exclusive and not, like western society, inclusive. The lines are drawn very clearly, very sharply. Anybody not an "insider" is an enemy, actually or potentially—someone to distrust, someone to fear, someone to keep at bay. There is no choice, no volition about this. It is something ordained by the ancestral dead. The tribal society is therefore possibly the most exclusive society in the twentieth-century world. If you are not in the tribe, there is no way into it. If you are in it, there is no way out of it except death. Dissent is not recognized. To break the rules of the tribe is to court death.

Even the family, the foundation of the tribal in-group, is no simple affair. It is often a cluster of four generations. A man's family can be made up of his father, his father's first, second and third wives—there may be more—and the children of these. A man inherits the wives and children of his brothers who die before him. The wives then become his wives, the children of his brother become brothers and sisters to his own children by his own wife. Then there are the children's children. These and the old people, the grandparents, make up the immediate family, the heart of the in-group. Then there are the families related to one's family by blood ties—the families of uncles and cousins. These have the same complex structure of many wives

and brothers and sisters, many of whom are inherited. A group of such blood-related families makes the clan. Clans have been known to be big enough to fill whole villages.

Another and most vital factor in the life of tribal man is his attitude to life and death. Neither life nor death is ever wholly accidental. Disease is never natural. These are brought about by the good and evil spirits all around us. The evil spirits are preoccupied with bringing disaster on the tribe, the good with protecting the tribe. To achieve their malign ends, evil spirits enter the bodies of ordinary human beings. To fight the evil spirits, good spirits enter the bodies of witch doctors. Life and death are thus out of the hands of mortal men.

The world of tribal man is so dominated by the spirits that some tribes will not eat birds because of the spirits that dwell in them, some will not eat fish, some are vegetarians and some eat meat only.

Tribal man is hemmed in, imprisoned by his ancestors. His horizons are only as wide as they permit. He is also protected by them. The rules are such that there are no orphans in the tribe, no misfits, no neurotics. And of course, the ancestral dead are hostile to change.

This, then, is the "oblique, the hard-to-know man" whom Richard Wright encountered on his first visit to Africa. He is the man who raised Nkrumah to power. He is the man whose pressures led Jomo Kenyatta to the Mau Mau and then to his lonely prison-exile in a barren and isolated spot. He, tribal man, will have a crucial say in the future of Africa.

The ancestral dead notwithstanding, change is being imposed on him. How he reacts to the change will have a powerful bearing on tomorrow's Africa.

If the men inaugurating the new ways have the sense and the patience to preserve the finer qualities of the old ways and fuse these with the new, then we can expect something magnificently new out of Africa.

# Renascent Africa

FREDERICK S. ARKHURST

## *Ghana*

It is, perhaps, inevitable that Africa is today a center of world attention and interest. With Asia rid of colonialism, Africa has become the last continent over which western European nations still seek to perpetuate their control. Yet even in Africa dramatic changes are taking place which are rolling back the frontiers of imperialism. After tolerating European colonization and the arrogance of white settlers for scores of years, Africa is now reawakening and demanding those rights to which all men are heir.

The reawakening of Africa has found expression particularly at the level of political and constitutional advancement. But this will only come to fruition with the redefinition by the African of his real place in his continent—his role in the political, economic and social life of Africa. This redefinition is already taking place and it is quite clear today that the African knows that his destiny can only be decided by himself in Africa and not by foreigners in other countries. The Africa of today symbolizes hope; it is the continent of optimism and change. Indeed, not since the period which followed the signing of the Berlin Agreement of 1884 has the continent of Africa experienced such swift and dramatic changes as it has since the Second World War. The important problem now facing the African is to define his own political, economic and social objectives in these conditions of rapid change.

### *The Decline of Colonial Power in Africa*

The "scramble for Africa" which followed the Berlin Agreement resulted in the establishment of western European domination over most of the continent. But while that period was characterized by the

carving of the continent into a mosaic of meaningless enclaves, protectorates and spheres of influence, the upsurge of African nationalism and independence movements after the Second World War has marked the beginning of a rapid process of disintegration of European power on the continent, and the beginning of the end of the economic exploitation of the resources and peoples of Africa in the interests of western European nations.

The "revolution of rising expectations" which has fired the imagination of millions of Africans is the result of three major factors whose cumulative effect finds expression in the rise of new states in Africa and agitation by the still dependent territories for their political and economic emancipation. These factors are themselves in the process of evolution and thus defy evaluation in precise and concrete terms. First is the whole political and intellectual climate of the twentieth century which had its beginnings in western Europe and which finds expression in the concept of self-determination and the right of all peoples to govern themselves. It is also exemplified by increasing concern for the dignity of the human personality and the right of all men to equality of opportunity and treatment in all spheres in which they operate within the society, the nation or the international community.

This more enlightened atmosphere has made possible the full operation of a second factor: the increasing awareness of the African peoples of their potential and the translation of this awareness into effective positive action. Naturally, the type of action adopted by Africans in achieving their objectives has been influenced by the availability or absence of constitutional machinery, in any particular territory, for the redress of grievances and for the initiation of orderly political and constitutional changes. Where such machinery has existed and where the colonial power has been sensitive to the demands of the changing times, the transition from colonial rule to full sovereignty and independence has been comparatively peaceful and orderly. This is what happened in Ghana. On the other hand, where the colonial power has frozen its policies within the context of the nineteenth century, it has had to resort to repressive colonial wars to maintain its domination of an unwilling people. In this respect a lot of the discussion, particularly in the western press, on "nonviolent action" as the sole desirable method of bringing about change in a colonial environment, has been irrelevant.

The third important factor is the dramatic shift in the world balance of power following two world wars, which has resulted in the decline of the strength and influence of the western European powers and their replacement by new power structures. Western Europe no longer has the military and economic strength to perpetuate the imperialism which it has been able to maintain during two centuries by virtue of its military and economic predominance in the world.

### *Definition of African Objectives*

It is against this background of a receding colonialism still capable of vicious rearguard action that the peoples of Africa—especially those in the new independent nations—have to define the imperatives in the African situation and to decide upon the kind of realistic policies that must be adopted. The overriding objective of Africans is to ensure the earliest possible liquidation of colonialism and racialism from every corner of the continent. As Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the prime minister of Ghana, said on the occasion of the achievement of Ghana's independence, "The independence of Ghana will be quite meaningless unless it is linked with the emancipation of the whole continent." Africans are also anxious to impress upon the rest of the world that the days of the Berlin Agreement will never return. Henceforth, the future of Africa will be decided primarily by Africans in Africa. This is a very important fact which those who are disposed to be friendly to the new countries of Africa will have to bear in mind. They will now have to develop their policies toward Africa as a separate entity and not as a political and economic appendage of Europe. Africa will have to be regarded as a continent whose main interests and aspirations do not often coincide with those of the colonial powers. The quest for independence and racial equality by Africans is the expression of a universal desire for freedom and dignity. Once independence has been assured for all Africa the formidable task of promoting the economic and social advancement of the continent will become a more manageable problem.

For the achievement of these major objectives, certain prerequisites to effective action have to be clearly defined. First, the new states of Africa must safeguard their independence by strict adherence to the

principles of the United Nations Charter and by the development of strong ties of friendship, solidarity and unity among themselves. Individually, none of the new African states can exert significant influence in international affairs. Collectively, they form an important body of opinion which cannot lightly be ignored. The preservation of unity and solidarity will not come about by mere chance but must be the outcome of conscious effort on the part of all the states of Africa deliberately to make unity possible in spite of the differences which may arise in their day-to-day intercourse. The problem here will be complicated by those vested interests in Africa which will leave no stone unturned to disrupt good relations among Africans and to play one country against the other. This classic technique of imperialism will have to be constantly guarded against. Unity cannot be merely an inert state of existence; it must be a dynamic and positive force projected into all spheres of activity. This is the most effective way of developing an African outlook and an "African personality" in international affairs.

The other prerequisite to effective action in the achievement of African aims is the development of an independent foreign policy untrammelled by any commitments and alignments to great-power controversies. The reason for such a policy is that the new states of Africa are too small in terms of military and economic power to presume to judge between the great powers on an ideological basis. This does not, of course, mean that they may not have their sympathies. They may, and most of them certainly do. But they should be allowed to make decisions based on the objective assessment of the merits of a particular issue and they cannot be expected to take predetermined positions which may leave them naked in the cross fire of the cold-war conflict. There is an African proverb which says: When the bull elephants fight, the grass is trampled down. It may be advisable for all small countries to ensure that they do not get trampled with the grass. But such a policy does not prevent the firm and unequivocal stand to be taken on particular issues when necessary. In the United Nations some of these new states have taken such firm stands even at the risk of compromising their own immediate interests. This, after all, is the most that can be demanded of these nations, and it is under these conditions alone that genuine friendship among nations can properly develop.

*Progress Toward Unity—The African Conferences*

The development of closer association among the new African states is now a reality. In April 1958 a conference of plenipotentiaries was convened in Accra at the initiative of Ghana to find ways and means of bringing the independent African states closer together. The Accra Conference also decided that the eight independent African states—Ethiopia, Ghana, Liberia, Libya, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia and the United Arab Republic—should co-ordinate their policies insofar as the questions of colonialism and racialism are concerned. The conference also pledged its support to the United Nations Charter and to the principles enunciated at the Bandung Conference in 1955. All the resolutions adopted at this conference dealt with African problems in the wider context of international affairs. The significance of this conference lies in the fact that for the first time in the history of the continent Africans had come together in their own right to decide their future. The Accra Conference finally decided to establish at the United Nations Headquarters a permanent machinery composed of the permanent representatives of the participating governments to consult on all African matters, to examine and make recommendations on concrete and practical steps which may be necessary to implement the decisions of the conference and of similar future conferences, and to be responsible for the arrangements necessary for such conferences. In the autumn of the same year, missions composed of representatives of the eight independent African countries toured Latin America, Scandinavia and Canada to solicit support for measures aimed at resolving the repressive war in Algeria on an equitable and democratic basis. It was also decided at Accra that these conferences should be held regularly at two-year intervals without prejudice to the possibility of *ad hoc* conferences being convened as and when necessary.

The second conference to be held in Accra was the All-African People's Conference in December 1958. This conference, unlike the previous one, was attended by members of political parties and nationalist movements from all over Africa. It endorsed the resolutions of the previous conference and reaffirmed the determination of all Africans to ensure the liquidation of colonialism and racialism, in all their



forms, from every corner of the continent. The conference also resolved to give practical and concrete aid to all movements in Africa struggling to free their countries from colonialism. In line with these resolutions the trade unions of Ghana and Kenya have enforced a boycott of South African goods by refusing to handle any cargoes emanating from the Union of South Africa. It is interesting to note that immediately after this decision by the African trade unions was implemented, the trade unions of Jamaica followed suit. This is an encouraging example of solidarity which transcends the barriers of distance. It is the hope that in the near future all African trade unions and other sympathetic movements in other parts of the world will support this unique expression of the concern of many people regarding the racist policies of the South African Government.

In 1959 two other meetings attended by African leaders carried a stage further the ideas embodied in the resolutions adopted by the two Accra Conferences. From July 15 to 18 the leaders of Ghana, Guinea and Liberia—Prime Minister Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, President Sékou Touré and President William Tubman—met at Sanniquellie, a small village in Liberia, and decided that it was necessary to establish a community of independent African states. They proposed that this Pan-African community should be inaugurated at a special conference this year to be attended by representatives of all the independent African nations and the still dependent countries “that have fixed dates on which they will achieve independence.”\* This community is not intended to be a United States of Africa and would not involve the surrender of sovereignty on the part of its members. It would, however, have the overriding aim of ensuring closer contact and co-operation among its members and would also have its own flag which would be regarded by its members in the same way as the flag of the United Nations among member-states of the United Nations.

A conference on Algeria was also convened from August 4 to 8, 1959, and was attended by delegations representing nine independent African nations.† A delegation representing the Provisional Govern-

\* Nigeria, the Belgian Congo, the Mali Federation, the Malagasy Republic, and the Trust Territories of Somaliland, French Togoland and French Cameroons will achieve—or already have achieved— independence this year.

† In 1959 the former French colony of Guinea became independent and was admitted to the United Nations.

ment of Algeria was accorded full rights as an equal participating delegation to the Monrovia Conference. The aim of this conference was to explore the possibilities of bringing an end to the conflict in Algeria so that the people of Algeria can realize their legitimate aspirations for freedom and independence.

Apart from the concrete achievement of all these conferences, they also afforded opportunities to leaders and rank-and-file members of governments and political movements in Africa to get to know each other and to exchange ideas on common problems. This kind of person-to-person intercourse is extremely important and I hope that it will continue to develop not only among African leaders but also among all Africans.

### *Democracy in Africa—New Approaches?*

Another important preoccupation of the new states of Africa will be the development of a philosophical framework within which political and constitutional changes can take place. In short, these new nations will have to decide for themselves what type of Government will best suit their needs and be responsive to the aspirations of the majority of their peoples. This immediately raises the question of democracy in Africa. The new African governments have often been criticized, particularly in the western press, for certain acts which did not appear to the West to be in consonance with western forms and techniques of democracy. Most of these criticisms appear to be naïve. While it is true that most of the new nations in Africa have been introduced to modern forms of democracy and individual liberty through their association with the western world, it is equally true that the concept that a government must properly express the people's will is not alien to many of these countries. Certainly, among the "Akans" of Ghana forms of democracy existed long before the white man set foot in Africa. But while western democracy has, in theory, been atomic in the sense that it is supposed to revolve around the individual as the center of the political universe, political organizations in Africa have been geared essentially to the needs of the community as a whole. While the West begins from the premise that the totality of individual freedoms accrue to the benefit of the whole society or nation, the African idea presup-

poses that the greatest good of the community will redound to the good of the individuals who compose it. One can readily see that mechanical superimposition of the western on the African idea will, in the initial stages, result in conflict—conflict which no doubt can be resolved in time. But there need not be any fundamental difference in the end results of the two approaches. The main problem is whether effective techniques can be devised in either case to ensure that freedom for the individual and the achievement of the aspirations of the community are both realized. That is why it is so unrealistic to assume that the type of democracy which emerges in these new nations of Africa will be in the exact image of democracy as it is practiced in Great Britain or the United States. The new nations will have to develop their own institutions based on their experience, their traditions and their historical background. The development of democracy in any country is a slow and painful process. It took England several centuries of effort and suffering to evolve those democratic institutions which are today the greatest heritage of Great Britain. The new countries of Africa, on the other hand, have hardly been allowed enough time to work out their problems in this area and those of their friends who may have misgivings about the future may be drawing conclusions from insufficient evidence. It is quite obvious that there are no short-cuts to democracy; there is only a painful process of evolution, of trial and error.

The dynamism of change in Africa and the direction of such change is of great importance not only to Africans but also to all men of goodwill. Africans have the obligation to develop those policies which will command the respect of the world. Our friends in other parts of the world will also have to understand the real and staggering problems which face the peoples of Africa. The time at the disposal of Africans to develop their institutions in the depth and magnitude to meet our changing times is very limited, and for decades Africans will need the moral and material assistance of the advanced countries. More important still, the great powers must appreciate that the old order in Africa is dead. Any attempt to delay the process of change or to preserve the *status quo* in Africa cannot but lead to very strained relations between themselves and all Africans.



## MISCELLANEOUS

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### With the Lid Off

*(Extracts from a monthly column  
in the magazine, Drum)*

TODD MATSHIKIZA

#### *South Africa*

Me and a European lady did a non-European thing at Crown Mines. Crown Mines is outside Joburg and out of the way, so nobody saw us. We were safe. It was in a telephone booth near the Crown Mines Post Office. It was broad daylight. The booth is clearly marked *Non-Europeans Only*. We arrived at the place together. She went in first.

This is how it happened. I was in a hurry to phone my boss. The European lady was in a hurry to phone her ma. She was pushing a baby in a pram. She left the baby outside the booth.

She said, "I don't care. I've got to phone my ma. And if you don't like it, go and tell the postmaster."

When she came out, I said, "Missus, you know you breaking the law?"

She said, "Why?"

I said, "This phone is written *Non-Europeans Only*. The police will catch you."

She said, "Get away, you damned black Kaffir! I'm European. I can do what I damn well like."

The lady pushed the pram away. The baby made a *ga...ga...ga* sound. I hope it wasn't laughing.

This ain't a laughing matter.

\* \* \* \* \*

Language at work is fascinating. Language at work in Dube Township is highly fascinating. Language as worked by the new African Businessman's Consolidated is *fas...fas...fascinating*. This is a newly formed body to protect African business enterprise. There are more than one thousand Black shops around Johannesburg. They buy mainly on tick. So they got to be protected.

African Businessman's Consolidated has a prospectus. Same one they use for their constitution. If you want a prospectus and a constitution at the same time, you ask for the prostitution.

It is published entirely in Afrikaans. Explains carefully "die benefirs an' die dividend." Also that an African in Afrikaans is still an African.

In view of the many holdups in the townships, the A.B.C. sells funeral and burial policies in the event of the death of a salesman. In Benoni they have offices bearing the words "See us now before you are too late."

I went in for further details. I was asked, "In what language d'you want further details?" Then I was told: "The idea is to encourage Ama-Zulu to trade with Ama-Zula. Ama-Xhose with Ama-Xhosa. Abe-Suthu with Ba-Sutho. Africans with Africans you see, Mr. Todd, to remove language difficulties."

In Dube the lady-secretary of the A.B.C. only speaks when spoken to in case she uses the wrong language. The chairman explained to me, "It is highly offending to address an African in a language he does not prefer to be addressed in."

\* \* \* \* \*

We had it out bitterly, my pal Daya Govan Pillay and I, about Durban. I was telling him the management at that famous Durban non-European hotel separates the Africans from the Indians and coloreds at meal times. I told him my experience with Richard Sono and eight African families visiting the Banana City one time. We

were cut off from the other nonwhites like you cut off sugar cane from its roots with a hatchet, like this, "sshp, sshp, sshp, sshp."

The Indians and the coloreds were the privileged. They were ushered into the "Blue Room" at meal time. Only they could use the posh lounges. Us others lounged in the sun with the lizards. They could take their friends into the pub. We had to take ours to Fountain Lane. They could dance and romance in the dance hall. We had to dance and romance on the beach. We were the underprivileged.

"Donno," Daya says. "But you know, the African in Durban doesn't mind so much like you up-country types," he says.

"Types!" I ask him, wanting to ax him.

"Kinds," he says. "There are different kinds of Africans, you know." He says, "There are town Africans and country Africans."

I say, "And if you take the African out of the country?"

He says, "Ya, but you can't take the country out of him."

\* \* \* \* \*

A young lady told me a dainty story the other day. She says that their new priest from overseas was young an' bold an' brave about the sinfulness of the souls in his parish. He was grimly anxious to improve his colored congregation an' their morals, an' every Sunday he would grasp the pulpit in both hands an' say, "You coloreds drink! You coloreds drink! You coloreds haven't a chance in heaven. You coloreds this, you coloreds that, you coloreds have fish an' chips every payday."

This priest talked of his colored congregation among his white friends and said, "They don't know what it's all about. They, they they ..."

The colored congregation became cross. They went up to the priest an' said, "Now look, stop calling us 'you coloreds,' because we ain't goin' about calling you, 'you European.' This is Albertsville," said the congregation, "and we like you for a priest. But stop that finger-pointing business, an' stop throwing bricks made of 'you coloreds' or we'll mangle you, we'll hangle you, we'll make your life a bangle."

After this demi-semi-death, says my informant, the priest's sermons always began, "My beloved brethren."

# An African's Adventures in America

BABS FAFUNWA

## *Nigeria*

Since my arrival in this country to study, I have met over fifty African students during my vacations. In exchanging views with them I found that most of our impressions after arriving on the American soil are almost identical. Everything about him is new, the student finds out. He is mobbed by a group of inquiring reporters who ask: What is your name? Where do you come from? What is your impression about America? How many wives has your father? Are you married? Is it true that you buy women in Africa? Are you a prince? Is your father a king or a gold miner? The shooting of flash bulbs adds to the confusion. This barrage is an indication of what the student is to experience as he moves from one part of the United States to another.

One of my most exciting experiences happened when I arrived in New York City. On that day it had one of its greatest snowfalls, and what's more I had never seen snow in my life. That day, my heavy overcoat was no solution to my dilemma. As I stepped out of the airplane I was baptized with the unusually biting cold. I was shaken to the bones and all my limbs were trembling. The woman in me subdued the man and my eyes were shedding tears like an Arabian gum tree. That night I slept in my overcoat, suit and all. The temperature was 19° F. and the lowest temperature I have ever seen in Nigeria is 60°.

Till I landed in New York I had never met an American Negro. My impression was that since the Negro has been living there for the past three hundred years or more he ought to have intermarried with the whites so that his color should be at least lighter than my own. (By the way, I am ebony black and I'd like to be twice as



dark.) But when I landed I saw a Negro darker than myself. I thought he was an African who came a little earlier than I did. I rushed to him with all the happiness and the joy of finding a kinsman in this great metropolis. I said, "Hello, dear, when did you come?" He looked at me with cold surprise. I later found that he must have been here three hundred years for his speech is as entirely strange to me as mine to him.

The student who hails from the British sphere of influence in Africa finds on getting here that America's ideas of democracy are in conflict, in a way, to those of Britain's. The average Englishman admits that a Lord Jim is his "better." He does not resent his betters nor put himself on an equal basis with them nor does he wish to do so. The American, on the other hand, rejects all ideas of class. Everybody is "Hey" or "Say, Mister."

The student finds that democracy works fairly well in the North and otherwise in the South. He finds in the North that competition is tough, but in the South segregation and discrimination stare him in the face. I remember one day when the African students at Bethune-Cookman College in Florida were on their way back to school after giving an African program at a church. We stopped at a filling station for some refreshments. A policeman entered and said, "Where are you 'niggers' from?"

We quickly responded that we were not niggers but African students. "I say you are niggers," he shouted.

"No, 'officer of peace,' we are not."

"I say you are niggers," he affirmed and to make it more positive he rested his hand on his gun. Like cowards we had to admit that we were niggers—at least by keeping silent!

We have been turned out of restaurants in the South several times despite our appeal to the people in charge that we are strangers and that such action is un-American since it is bad public relations for America, the arena of democracy. It is very encouraging, however, to find that once in a while we meet people in the South who give us very good breaks, help and assistance. Once a white fellow gave me a ride, and as I entered I sat at the back, for you are not supposed to sit with a white. He said, "Come to the front—I am no chauffeur." I was amused indeed.

The denial of the ballot box to Negroes in some parts of the South makes the average African student become a little disillusioned about American democracy. He believed before coming to America that this country is an arsenal of democracy, but to his dismay he finds that America is just learning like Africa to be democratic. Who knows, the whole world might soon copy Africa as regards true democracy.

The student finds that the United States, unlike Africa, is a "woman's paradise." He becomes oriented to what is called "a woman's privilege." He discovers that fifty per cent or more of all the property in the United States is owned by women. In America when a man dies, he leaves all his wealth to his widow, for the son is expected to make his own way in the world. In case the property is divided among the children, the daughters have shares equal to—if not more than—the sons'. The student also finds that the parents are more inclined to educate the girl than the boy. All of these are just the opposite of the African custom.

This is not all. He finds that there are more divorce cases in America, where people marry but one. In Africa men have the privilege of marrying two or more wives, all depending on the husband's economic backstay. He finds also that American women are more jealous than their African counterparts when it comes to love affairs.

Once a friend said, "Babs, I learn that you buy wives in Africa." I replied: "Yes we do and that is why they are dearer to us than yours to you." But the truth is that the dowry a husband pays is a gift given to the parents as equipment fee for the bride. This amount is used to buy all the necessities a bride needs before her marriage. This particular aspect of our social life has been wilfully misrepresented and we hope our American friends will understand. We love our women as passionately as the Americans and we are not in the habit of ill-treating them or regarding them as chattels.

The first thing an African student is told is that he should get Americanized, socialize with the girls, forego the English wide trousers for the American narrow pants, his little coat for the long heavy coat. He finds that table manners in America vary considerably from what he had been used to at home. He used fork, knife, spoon, etc., while the Americans use the fork for everything on the table except soup.

He therefore has to unlearn what he had learned previously and get adjusted to the American way of life. But the pity is that he has to unlearn what he is learning now in order to fit into his own pattern on his return home: British way to American way back to British way again, while at the same time he has to take care of his culture the African way.

## COUNSEL'S OPINION

*(from a monthly column in Drum)*

*South Africa*

*Question:*

Our town is a very small, little dorp with too many legal problems, upsets, difficulties. I would like you to suggest and guide me against the following problem: how to sue a seducer who doesn't want to pay the damages for pregnancy or lobola or his monthly maintenance for the mother and the child.

*Answer:*

If any person wishes to sue a seducer, he must go to the Native Commissioner's Court to do so. According to the Native law, the guardian of the girl concerned is the only person who can sue for damages for seduction under Native law and custom, as he is the person who suffers because the lobola he will receive for the girl will be reduced as a result of her seduction and pregnancy. Alternatively, the girl herself can sue for maintenance for the child under Common Law and for damages.

## Girl About Town

(from a monthly column in Drum)

MARION MOREL

### *South Africa*

#### *Luminous Boys*

How does your boy friend dress when he comes to take you out? Does he wear luminous socks in colors that scream, a leather lumberjacket and a luminous tie with a nude girl painted on it who wiggles her behind with every breath he takes? If so, cure him or *get rid of him*.

I once had a guy who used to dress like that. He was crazy about luminous things in violent colors. It was a blessing in a way because you could see what he was up to in the dark. But that was the only advantage. It is infuriating after you have spent an hour or more preparing yourself in your best clothes to be called for by someone who dresses so casually and without taste, and then have to appear in public with him.

My boy friend, who dresses conservatively and well, thrilled me the other day by appearing in a new dark pinstripe balance-line suit, which is the latest style. I told him how much I liked it and admired the fit. I think girls can play a big part in helping men to dress well and tastefully by encouraging them and advising on correct color schemes—something women generally have more knowledge of than men.

#### *Toothless Idiots*

Meet the toothless little idiots. They are girls, and their ages usually range between 16 and 21. They are the ones you see walking around with no front teeth. It has suddenly become fashionable in Johannes-

burg to be without the four front upper teeth between the eyeteeth.

Kids are actually asking dentists to extract their perfectly good teeth to be in the fashion.

Can you believe it?

### *Petty Apartheid*

I hear a sad little story: Mother of a friend of mine has caused her engagement to be broken off because the boy friend is a shade darker in complexion than the daughter. They are both colored, but Mother wants her future son-in-law to be lighter skinned, or at least the exact same color as her daughter.

What a miserable old woman Ma must be. Don't we have to put up with enough already without making ourselves more unhappy by these petty apartheid divisions among ourselves?

## What Nkrumah Said to the U. S. Senate

*(The speech delivered by Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana before the United States Senate in August 1958)*

Mr. President:

Honorable Senators:

I wish to express my appreciation for your invitation to come here today. It is indeed a great honor to stand before a Senate whose deliberations have guided, and will continue to guide, the destinies of the American nation; and whose decisions affect people in every corner of the world.

I speak to you on behalf of the government and people of Ghana—one of the youngest of nations, but one dedicated to those same ideals of liberty and justice which have always guided your own great country. I trust that my visit, at the kind invitation of your great President, will strengthen the ties of friendship which already exist between your country and mine.

I have some appreciation of the weight of responsibility and the burden of work which presses on the distinguished members of this great Senate, and I, therefore, have no intention of talking to you at length. I simply wish to emphasize six basic points.

1) Like you, we believe profoundly in the right of all peoples to determine their own destinies. We are therefore opposed to all forms of colonialism—old or new—and we want to see all nations and their peoples genuinely independent and seeking a higher standard of life. In this respect we have a special concern for those of our fellow Africans whose countries are not yet independent.

2) Like you, we seek a world of peace where men and women may bring up their children in tranquillity and security. Our foreign policy is one of nonalignment, but let no one misinterpret our position in matters affecting the independence of our own nation or the independence of others. I know that you will always find us aligned with the forces fighting for freedom and peace.

3) We give our full support to the United Nations and its charter.

4) We pray that your deliberations may succeed in achieving some relaxation in world tension and thus ease the vast burden of expenditure on armaments which weighs so heavily on this country and others. If that can be achieved, we hope that part of the resources thus saved could be used to banish poverty, disease and illiteracy from the less fortunate parts of the world.

5) I pay tribute to you and your people for the wonderful generosity which you have displayed in assisting nations devastated by war, and the many other countries which have needed economic help. I am sure that this remarkable record will be enshrined in the history of the world for all time.

6) I do not come to the United States asking for direct financial aid. We need American investment—both Government and private—but only for projects which can stand on their own feet and ultimately repay the original capital with reasonable interest.

I thank you, Mr. President, and members of the Senate, for accord-  
ing me this honor. You can be assured of our enduring friendship  
and good will, and I am certain that the friendship which today exists  
between the United States and Ghana will endure so long as our two  
countries exist.



## African Lonely Hearts

*(Letters from the "Lonely Hearts" pages of the Johannesburg magazine, Africa)*

### *Find Her!*

Find me a lady of sober habits. I am 25 and single. At this stage I can only offer to correspond with her, but later anything can happen.

Timothy

### *Respect!*

People might find it hard to believe that at 18 I have never had a boy friend, but it is true. Now I would like young boys of my age to write to me. They should be respectable and respectful, otherwise I will not reply to their letters.

Dolly

### *16 to 60*

Still a bachelor, I'm 23, fond of reading, writing, music, dancing, cycling and exchanging views. Can't say I've given marriage serious thought but I'm nuts about girls. I take them from 16 to 60.

Lady's Man

### *Loneliest*

Being a sewing instructress at the social welfare center, I met a man who promised me all the love that men can give. But when he gave me a baby, he said he was too young to marry and that he wanted to further his studies abroad. From that time I became the loneliest girl in the world. I lost all interest in the cinema or any kind of enjoyment. My child is now three and she is all that matters to me. I now want a man to share my life by corresponding with me. I am a Kukuyu and I would like a man between 25-35 years of age. Preferably he should be one who has lost his true love, like myself.

Lucy

*Blues Got Me!*

The blues got me, got me bad, sister! I'm 22, a hot number, all set for getting hitched pronto, and no questions. The guy's gotta be 23 to 30, and maybe we could meet, but nothing doing till I've made the contact. Hey, boys?

Florence

*Rhodesian*

At 23, I am expecting my second child although I am not married. I have lost faith in the father of my children because he is so inconsiderate and selfish. I wonder if there is a chance of finding a suitable partner (preferably from the Rhodesias) to take me under his wing. The gentleman must be in the age group of 26-30.

Patricia

*Cinematic*

Johannesburg is a big city, but somehow I am terribly lonely. I am not a Prince Charming, but then again I am no Frankenstein either. My interests are quite simple—letter writing and going to the cinema. I am 22 years old and would like some teenage girls to write to me. They may smoke as much as they want but they should not drink. Snaps will be appreciated.

Abram

*Inspirer*

Being a student at the age of 25, I need a girl with some interest in me. She must help me and encourage me to be a prominent man in the future. I want to be a doctor and I need an inspirer. This lady should be about 18 to 20 years of age. She must be interested in house-keeping or can take on any other profession if she wants to work. She must remain with my relatives during the school terms. When the schools close, we can have all the happiness that is in the world. When I am away, she must not flirt with other men. I do not drink, gamble nor dance. I expect my spouse to have the same qualities.

Isaac

*African Wanted*

I am very unhappy because of loneliness. I am an Indian and have grown up amongst Africans. I am now so used to Africans that now I am more at home with Africans than my own people. I would like a beautiful young African lady between the ages 20-22 to correspond with me. After a while we can arrange to meet. I am capable of supporting her as I have my own business. She must have a sense of humor. I am definitely sure that a good home and secure future awaits the right girl.

Rod

*Indian Wanted*

I am very lonely and I would like to meet a young man with tastes similar to mine. I am 23 years of age. I am very fond of music, dance and bioscopes. I would preferably like to correspond with an Indian. I have lost faith in African men. The Indian should be 23-26 years old. I hope I will find Mr. Right.

Harriet

*Broadminded*

I believe in broadmindedness. I am an Indian, but I do not find enough broadmindedness amongst my people. Now, I've noticed how respectful and dignified are those African women who have not been spoiled by city life. So I want to marry an African woman who resides somewhere in a rural area. With me she would not have to live with in-laws, and I have sufficient money to make her happy. She must be about 23 years old.

Yosuf

# The Origin of Death

(*A Hottentot folk tale*)

The Moon, it is said, once sent an insect to men, saying, "Go to men and tell them, 'As I die, and dying live; so you shall also die, and dying live.'"

The insect started with the message, but, while on his way, was overtaken by the hare, who asked, "On what errand are you bound?"

The insect answered, "I am sent by the Moon to men, to tell them that as she dies and dying lives, so shall they also die and dying live."

The hare said, "As you are an awkward runner, let me go." With these words he ran off, and when he reached men, he said, "I am sent by the Moon to tell you, 'As I die and dying perish, in the same manner you also shall die and come wholly to an end.'"

The hare then returned to the Moon and told her what he had said to men. The Moon reproached him angrily, saying, "Do you dare tell the people a thing which I have not said?"

With these words the Moon took up a piece of wood and struck the hare on the nose. Since that day the hare's nose has been slit, but men believe what Hare had told them.

# The Greater Trickster

(*An Efik folk tale*)

A husband once told his wife that he was a more clever person in high tricks than his father-in-law.

The wife laughed loudly and replied that her husband was not serious. "My father," she said, "had an idea of high tricks long before your mother was born, so you cannot be more clever than he."

The young man argued no longer with his wife. He rather chose to test his father-in-law in order to prove his mettle in high tricks.

One day he sent an empty pot through his wife to the father-in-law, asking him to fill it with the sweetest wine imaginable. The wine, he warned, must neither be native palm wine nor the imported wine. He advised that as soon as the pot was filled, the father-in-law should please inform him.

This young man, of course, thought that it would take his father-in-law a long time to find a solution to this problem of a new wine.

To his great surprise, the young man's father-in-law lost no time, but sent a messenger to let his son-in-law know that the wine in question was ready.

The text of the message sent was: "Your wine is ready. You must send someone who is neither a man nor a woman to carry it to you."

On receipt of this astonishing message from his father-in-law, the young man perceived that it would not become possible for him to have the wine, as there was no such person in the world.

So, his father-in-law, without doubt, was a more clever person in high tricks than he.

Young men think that old men are fools, but old men *know* that young men are fools.

## The Butcher's Share

(*An Efik folk tale*)

Seven frogs were once hungry. They went in search of food in the forest. At length they saw the carcass of an antelope and were very happy indeed.

But it was unfortunate that they had nothing with which they could butcher their lucky find.

Not long after, a leopard arrived and assured the frogs that with his fierce claws, their problem of cutting the meat would be solved.

The wild leopard cut and collected all the best pieces of the meat for himself and called these the "butcher's share," thus leaving the bones to be shared among the seven frogs.

What could the hungry frogs do? They were at the mercy of this most rapacious and ferocious animal.

The seven frogs only looked at one another, said nothing, and did nothing.

Having completed his work, the leopard went to look for some leaves with which he might parcel up his meat to take it home.

During his absence, six frogs out of the seven, pretended to die in pairs, leaving the seventh one to wait and direct the leopard to pair up and die with him too.

On the leopard's arrival the living frog said, "Ah, come along, I am waiting for you." The leopard angrily asked, "What for?"

The frog retorted, "The others have died in pairs, and so I must pair up and die according to custom."

On hearing this and being confounded with the awful sight of the three pairs of dead frogs foaming at the mouth, the leopard threw away his leaves and ran away.

The six frogs were now told by the living one to wake up and together they enjoyed the "butcher's share."

To this day, the frogs are still laughing at the leopard.

Who laughs last, laughs best.

## Tribal Proverbs

A dog has never called a man and then beaten him.

*from the Kroo*

“My witness is in Europe,” says the Ewe liar.

Until you have crossed the river, don't insult the alligator's mouth.

The worst of some days is the best of others.

An animal with a long tail should never try to jump over a bonfire.

*from the Ewe*

Any man who attempts to swallow a large stone certainly has confidence in the size of his throat.

*from the Baronga*





## ESSAYS

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### Africa and the Cinema

J. KOYINDE VAUGHAN

#### *Nigeria*

Africa, known through the centuries as the Dark Continent, is in spite of the numerous journeys of film units south of the Sahara still a phenomenon rarely understood by people in Europe and America. The commercial cinema—feeding on and exploiting popular misconceptions—has created an Africa as far removed from reality as the tales of nineteenth-century travelers. Unable to understand the languages and customs of its tribes, film technicians refuse to see Africans as a people sharing basic experiences common to all peoples. They prefer to use Africa as an exotic backcloth, a reservoir of wild animals and painted “natives,” in which the inhabitants play a negligible role.

It is important we understand the ideas reflected in the feature films of the major film companies. Stories of nineteenth-century writers like H. Rider Haggard have clothed Africa with a mantle of mystery. These tales are of savage African tribes behind inaccessible forests and of strange rituals a thousand years old, and these ideas still linger in contemporary novels by John Buchan, Somerset Maugham, Graham Greene and others.

“There are unscalable mountains filled with djinn-guarded treasure and steep forests that harbor man-sized, scorpion-swallowing baboons in troops of a thousand that uproot cornfields and lynch leopards. The human bipeds are even odder and often more to be feared. One shudders at the thought of the phallus-collecting Danakil, at the mutilations,

castrations, infibulations and massacres. There are banquets of raw meat—washed down with mead from horns and calabashes—where the guests sink their teeth into the scarlet joint, then cut round with a knife. Monophysite monks dance endless cakewalks until begged to stop." Thus runs a review published in 1956 in the London *Sunday Times* of a then current book on Africa.

Right from the beginning the cinema was quick to realize the commercial potential of these fanciful ideas. H. Rider Haggard's *She*, a story of a curious African tribe with a white queen who remained ageless through the milleniums, proved so irresistible to Hollywood producers that two films were made of the same story. *King Solomon's Mines*, another romance of Haggard, received the same dual treatment. Here the theme was of untold wealth, amassed by a strange African tribe, and protected by a combination of witchcraft and savagery against four intrepid British adventurers. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer introduced yet another white queen into *Trader Horn*, equipping her with a cave furnished with human skulls and a retinue of painted natives, brandishing spears.

The commercial cinema also concerned itself with the beasts of the African jungle, who in many instances were treated with greater respect than the "natives." *Tarzan of the Apes* made in 1918 was the forerunner of an endless succession of Tarzan escapades, which have continued to the present day; and the early Martin Johnson animal epics (*Congorilla*, etc.) find a parallel in some of Walt Disney's African productions, such as *African Lion*.

Whether it was animals or natives, the formula used by scenario writers remained the same. Certain conventional ideas were superimposed upon real African scenery by a curious form of deductive reasoning. It mattered little whether the concepts fitted the reality. For an MGM African epic, animals were flown from New York City into east Africa to liven the action, and an assortment of gaudily dressed tribes provided the decor for a melodrama between two popular American stars. In these grandiose epics, the African people play either scenery props (picturesque crowds with spears) or curiously unintelligent menials.

Besides the preoccupation with this false exotic, there has been the other attitude to Africa—an attitude that has greater currency in

Britain—that Africans should be patronized, uplifted and governed. The white heroes are invariably condescending. Henry Scobie, the hero of Graham Greene's novel on life in Sierra Leone, *The Heart of the Matter*, is known as Scobie the Just.

“Sandy the Strong,  
Sandy the Wise,  
Righter of wrongs

Hater of lies” . . . sings the African chief, played by Paul Robeson, in praise of Sanders, the British district commissioner in *Sanders of the River*.

In all these films, there appeared the ultimate *raison d'être* for the continued presence of the British in Africa: The African was either simple and ignorant, and therefore in need of attention, or else malignant, requiring the force of law from above. Since Britain's role in Africa has been mainly imperialistic, the hero in her films on Africa differed from the individualistic law-defying hunter or lover of her American film rivals. British films extolled the virtues of her colonizers, police officers, district commissioners, civil servants and settlers.

*Sanders of the River* (1935) starred Paul Robeson in the role of Bosambo, a servile African king who saves a British commissioner's life and secures for his tribe the continuance of British rule. Here the theme of Britain's “imperial burden” in Africa dominates and illustrates how closely official ideas found reflection in the British cinema industry. It is significant that *Sanders of the River* was Robeson's first major appearance in British films. A man of his considerable talents was promptly put to the task of convincing the world that Africa needed the British. If “we could only give every subject race a native king with Robeson's superb physique, dominant personality, infectious smile and noble voice, problems of native self-government might be largely solved,” ironically was the comment of the *London Daily Herald*. After the film was released Robeson regretted his part and has never played a similar role.

In 1943 work was begun in England on a major film designed to bring serious contemporary problems in Africa to the screen. The result was the release three years later of *Men of Two Worlds*. It tells the story of Kisenga, an African composer and pianist (in the western idiom, of course) who after fifteen years in Europe gives up the con-

cert hall and returns to his people, the "Litu" (vaguely situated somewhere in British East Africa). He finds them under the spell of Magole, the witch doctor, with a benign British district officer unable to convince the people that they must move to escape death from the dreaded tsetse fly. The film is built around the conflict between Magole, the embodiment of dark, evil superstition, and Kisenga, the British-trained African. Magole is inevitably discredited, and the people save themselves by moving from the swamps. The film ends with Kisenga acknowledging his people's need for him and giving up his career in order to help them toward "progress."

This film was regarded as a landmark in British film production and was enthusiastically received by the British press. Even the American Negro magazine *Ebony* was moved to remark that "*Men of Two Worlds* marks the first break with past tradition, and pictures Africans with sympathy and respect."

Most Africans found this film offensive. Why was Kisenga the only African to receive sympathy and respect, and why were his people treated as pathetic morons? It appeared as just another attempt to put forward the official view that British exports, in the shape of an administrative officer and the British-trained Kisenga, were the ultimate solutions of Africa's needs.

The villagers in *Men of Two Worlds* were never developed as people and their feelings never communicated to the audience. A drama which could have been theirs was replaced by the conventional conflict between the familiar caricature of traditional Africa and a new era—claiming to be progressive—ushered in by a colonial power.

How different was the approach of John Steinbeck's *Forgotten Village* to the problem created by the impact of modern medicine on a superstitious Mexican village—a film released at the same time as *Men of Two Worlds*. The desire for change springs not from some outside source but from a boy who is a product of his own village. And the people are not shadows but full-blooded characters that command respect and sympathy. John Steinbeck in explaining the approach used in his film, where a family in the village was the focal point, stated that "we wished our audience to know this family very well, and incidentally to like it, as we did. Then from association with this little personalized group, the larger conclusion concerning the racial

group could be drawn with something like participation. Birth and death, joy and sorrow, are constants, experiences common to the whole species. If one participates first in these constants, one is able to go from them to the variables of customs, practices, mores, taboos and foreign social patterns. Such a method requires above all else, patience, tact and genuine liking for the people."

Since World War II more feature films have been shot in Africa. MGM's *Mogambo* was a steamy romance between a white hunter and a girl whose appearance was apparently occasioned by a chance date with a maharaja who never arrived. Here, as in *White Witch Doctor*—another saga of similar hue produced by Hollywood—the animals provided spectacle and the only excitement. The British productions *Where No Vultures Fly* and *Odongo* dealt exclusively with animals, with the natives rarely seen except accompanying them around the white man's "animal reserve." Toward the end of *Where No Vultures Fly* the hero makes an impassioned defense of Africa when provoked by a European elephant poacher who is only in Africa for what he can steal. "The black scum will kick us out soon," the poacher declares, so he advises making the best of the present. Our hero—only recently saved by an African villager from death by a cheetah—expresses hope for all, both black and white. There is nothing, however, in any of the previous scenes to suggest that this English hero in spite of his platitudes would regard Africans as equal partners in his land of hope.

A more recent film trend concerned the Kikuyu rebellion in Kenya, which provoked some vicious anti-African propaganda. In *Mau Mau*—distributed by United Artists—one African is savagely clubbed to death by another and bestiality appears the sole prerogative of Africans. The opening shots of *Simba*—a J. Arthur Rank production—are of an African peacefully riding a bicycle; when he hears the cries of a wounded European farmer, he calmly dismounts to finish him off with a knife.

The American film *Safari* carried these vicious ideas to their logical conclusion, and the result was an orgy of violence. The story tells of an American hunter who, leaving his young son to the care of an

aunt and "trusted" African servant in his bungalow in Kenya, returns to find both son and aunt slain by a "Mau Mau" gang led by his trusted servant. The rest of the film is dedicated to the hunter's revenge. Individualistic and reckless (personifying the American film-makers' concept of the ideal hero) and with a marked contempt for British administrative methods, he sets about his task of finding his son's assailants, killing as a by-product of his search a lion, buffalo, crocodiles and scores of African Mau Mau. In the end he finds his man and also manages, between killings, to find time for a successful love affair. "Africa does strange things to a man" is a comment in the film and one which a spectator could hardly doubt.

Perhaps it is unnatural to expect any other viewpoint on the upheaval in Kenya from the film industry. Its commodities are, in the main, either violence and bloodshed or lurid glamor. Since the majority of patrons of the cinema in Britain and America have not yet rejected these distortions, the film producers still find markets for their wares.

For many years the colonial office has pioneered different and more prosaic routes than has the motion picture industry. Small film units working within restricted budgets have faithfully reflected the psychology of the colonial power anxious to appear enlightened and able to guide her subjects along prescribed paths to "progress."

"Books are of little use to a people of whom more than ninety per cent are illiterate," reports the Bantu Educational Cinema Experiment (1935-1937), so "the moving picture offers a possible substitute." Films with the object of impressing the African mind have been produced in every British colony in Africa.

Over the years many difficulties have beset these film units: language problems, customs and taboos not readily understood by Europeans. The most formidable obstacle of all, however, continues to be the inability of minds bred in the atmosphere of a century of colonial rule to understand the African societies they film.

Apart from the documentaries which are made to illustrate "progress" under colonial rule, feature films were designed as a source of instruction, or to draw a moral. Between 1935 and 1937 the Bantu Educational Cinema Experiment made a number of films in east

Africa. They were a landmark in early colonial film production. *Soil Erosion, Food and Health, More Milk, Improved Agriculture, Coffee Marketing* and *Cattle and Disease* are examples of these films made for instruction.

*Post Office Savings* (1936) was designed to draw the attention of Africans in Kenya to the benefits of saving money in the post-office bank. Two Africans work on a European's farm. One of them buries his savings in a hole in his hut and later finds his money stolen. Information readily given by neighbors in the village concerning a suspicious stranger seen in the vicinity starts a search by our hero. During the pursuit he meets his friend and co-worker who takes the opportunity of explaining the value of depositing money in the post office, a course which he has found prudent. After the tedium of the first reel the stranger is caught sight of and the standard chase commences. The thief climbs a tree as he is pursued by our hero, who has drawn a knife. A branch snaps and the villain is fatally injured in the fall. The purpose for which the film was made, to publicize the post office, was lost in the resentment created among African audiences by the arbitrary treatment meted out to the felon; thieves in their society were never dealt with so harshly. This clearly illustrated an inability on the producer's part to assess audience reaction to his story.

The conflict between superstition and western ideas proved to be the favorite theme of colonial film producers. Such was *Amenu's Child*. Amenu, a villager in the Gold Coast, has a sick child. Friends, relatives and finally grandmother give advice, and the old traditional remedies are tried without success. The mother-in-law insists on a visit to a powerful witch doctor many miles away, so Amenu and his wife leave the village with the sick child, taking a live chicken as an offering. Quick cutting conjures up the macabre interior of the witch doctor's hut with its altar surrounded by strange carvings, which appear to be of Yoruba origin. The child is examined by the witch doctor who, mumbling an incantation, raises his hands for divine assistance to will the child back to health. Amenu, his wife and the child then take leave of the doctor—thanking him for his trouble—and the child dies on the way home. The futility of superstition established, the film proceeds in the second reel to provide the happy solution in the shape of the British-run dispensary even farther away from the village than

the witch doctor's hut. This naïve film, with its stereotyped characters and all-too-simple presentation of the conflict of ideas, gives as is usual with colonial-office films a rosier picture of life under British rule than the facts will allow.

It is interesting to recall the views of George Pearson, an Englishman engaged in the work of the Colonial Film Unit, on how much in the end would be comprehended by the people for whom these films were intended. Mr. Pearson said that "the accepted form of the commercial entertainment film of our modern cinemas was unsuitable, and equally so the advanced type of documentary. Both were too complicated by technical conventions related to time and place to be anything other than a wild kaleidoscope of pictorial patterns allowing the amazed spectator in the bush time only for a confused apprehension of something happening but no comprehension of what it was all about." He concluded: "A slow tempo of scene narration is essential; there must be ample time allowed in order that the intended message is appreciated. As scene changes to scene there must be some moving object or person passing from one to the other—thus holding eye and mind with interest sufficient to overcome the sudden mental reaction to a change in pictorial background. Without that original moving link, interest is aroused and confined by the new scene only, and probably lost in what has gone before." Any African might well be tempted to ask how much indeed was comprehended of African audiences by Mr. Pearson and his colleagues.

African film audiences, daily growing larger, when faced with the choice of seeing the "simplified screen narrative" and the foreign "commercial entertainment film" have overwhelmingly decided in favor of the latter products, in spite of their "complicated technical conventions." In towns like Accra, Freetown, Kumasi, Lagos or Nairobi, Charles Chaplin and many popular stars of the screen are household names.

It is in the anthropological films that the people of Africa spring suddenly to life on the screen. Here human activity is starkly recorded, free of the distortions of colonial propaganda or the sensationalism of the motion picture industry.



Jean Rouch, film specialist of the Musée de l'Homme, has devoted a great deal of attention to the Sonrai tribe—a primitive people living on the banks of the upper reaches of the Niger river. *Les fils de l'eau* shows the struggle of the primitive tribe for survival: Lacking resources that would invite European supervision in their economy this tribe lives as it has done for centuries relying mainly on maize and hippopotamuses.

The circumcision scenes are possibly the high light of *Les fils de l'eau*. Through the ceremony, young boys of the village are painfully initiated into manhood. We see the boys—most of them under fourteen—leave the village in the care of a few elders on the appointed day. After being circumcised they must show no pain, the expression of which is a sign of cowardice and therefore unmanly. Bleeding they sit on the ground, stoically beating the earth with small twigs. (Freudians draw a parallel in this beating of the earth with the beating of the mother.)

Rouch's *Les maîtres Fons* once more deals with the Sonrai, this time following the fortunes of those who emigrated south into the Gold Coast. The first few shots are of the new buildings and wide avenues of Accra. Annually a lorry is hired by this handful of Sonrai émigrés to transport them to a plot of land a few miles from Accra where they perform their secret ritual. There we see a hut and altar and discover that in this ceremony far from home they have adopted a new god—the governor general. They have also assumed a new nomenclature, each of the men acquiring a nom de plume for the day: captain, engine driver, general, etc. Before the ceremony begins, accusations are leveled against two of their members for seducing the lovers of other members of the émigré community. The spirit of mischief is exorcised from their bodies by commanding them to run round the bush, from which they return many minutes later foaming at the mouth, their bodies quivering under the spell of a self-imposed hypnotic trance.

The yearly ritual commences with macabre dances. The captain struts around in a comic parody of a colonial officer, the engine driver simulates an engine in motion, etc. The general completes the caricature. All foam at the mouth as they appear under hypnotic trances. At last the dance stops for the sacrifice. It is the custom of this tribe

never to kill a dog, but as émigrés they must assert their defiance of their formal customs. For this purpose they have brought a mongrel which they kill on the altar. Its blood is drunk by the prostrate men and its raw flesh devoured. Through this perverse ritual all the participants appear delirious, continually ejecting foam from the mouth. At sunset the ghastly ceremony ends and they leave their secret site to return to town. This anthropological film ends with the morrow when all the participants have returned to their normal occupations in the city, none betraying any sign of the ritual of the day before.

It is obvious that the anthropological film will deal only with aspects of Africa that provide it with data such as has been described. Its camera seeks out the primitive, shows a marked predilection for the past. The new, urban life in Africa—throbbing with vitality—finds little place in these films.

A question that naturally springs to mind is what attempt is being made to develop African cinema productions that will counteract decades of distortion. Future screen presentations of African life, with the infinite possibilities of dramatizing both the past and the present as well as communicating to world audiences African aspirations, can only be successfully achieved by Africans conscious of the great contribution we must make to the art of the cinema. It is clear that neither Hollywood nor the other commercial productions of the West can serve as a guide. Rather, local heroes, the conflict of ideas raging in African communities, and the wealth of imagery present in folklore will provide their inevitable inspiration.

# African Work Songs

TENNYSON MAKIWANE

## *South Africa*

At a Johannesburg timber yard a white foreman took on a job to “supervise” the hundreds of African laborers employed there. After watching the routine for hours the new “baas” shouted out to the workers to halt and gather round him.

He was boiling with rage when he said: “You Kaffirs, do you think you have come to a picnic here? Come on, get on with your job and stop that singing.”

The workers were silent robots as they off-loaded logs of wood from trucks and went about doing their work. Only the sound of the electric saws could be heard as they went “terrrrr . . . ,” slicing the timber.

Within a fortnight, however, the foreman found himself in the manager’s office. And this time he was on the receiving end as questions were fired at him as to why production had dropped. “Did you say you ordered them to stop singing?”

That was not the only time the work songs triumphed. There is another episode.

Some railway workers had to remove a heavy steel block. A batch of white workers who were at the job battled for a long time but in vain. A squad of African workers was then brought up to give it a go. Seeing this, passers-by stood around to watch what would happen now.

The workers started a song and reached for the load slowly, moving with the rhythm of the song. Whilst the soloist completed his part, the rest remained glued down on it. The chorus came and the solid steel moved as the workers thrust forward amidst cheers from the onlookers: “Hurray! Hurray!”

Our new foreman could not understand a simple principle. That a

group of workers performing heavy manual labor require the maximum co-operation amongst them.

We all know the common counting method of ensuring unanimous action: "One, two, three, heaven!"

African workers achieve this vital co-operation by using their talent for singing, and work to the rhythm of the songs.

A good example is a song sung by workers sliding a heavy object along the ground.

It says:

Watshitshiliz' umadala,

Watshitshiliz' umadala, umadala, umadala.

Let him slide along, the old man, this old man.

The workers push to the rhythm of "umadala, umadala . . ."

Similarly with this one:

Ayilvumi thela amanzi NYIKITHI,

Ha uthi NYIKITHI, NYIKITHI.

It refuses to budge, loosen it with water,

Nyikithi.

Shake it!

Usually a soloist starts the song, the rest of the workers reply and then they all join in chorus at the same time getting stuck into the job.

As in this Zulu road workers' song.

*Solo:* Kukhat' umabengwana. (At this stage the workers are resting on their picks.)

*Reply:* Wen' uzothini. (Lifting their picks.)

*Chorus:* Iyoo . . o . . oo (All bringing down the picks.)

The song simply means that "birds are singing overhead—how about us—we just have to struggle along (Iyoo . . oo . .)."

Many themes which come into these songs range from love to skits on various problems one comes across in the big city like the fact that you have to lock your house (a thing that does not happen way back in the reserve).

Here is one such song:

Nguban' ebevuli indlu yam,

ndingay' vulanga. Ngu kiya.

Ukiy' unetyala.

Who opened my room without my permission?

It's the key, blame the key.

By far the most inspiring, however, are the songs the workers have composed as a direct reaction to oppression, the color bar and so on.

There is the classic:

Abelungu ngodem, abelungu ngodem,  
basibiza ooJim, basibiza ooJim.

Be damn the whites, they call us Jim, they call us Jim.

In spite of the fact that they despise us, some of their women love us, the next verse goes on to say:

Umfazi womlungu, umfazi womlungu,  
bamthumel' ePitoli, bamthumel' ePitoli, ePitoli.

Recently one of them (the white women) has been jailed and sent to the Central Prison.

Then the various administrative formalities come under fire. There is the Sotho round entitled "He motsoala." My aunt went to lay a charge (in Pretoria) and she was made to sign this and that document and have it stamped. Then she stamped and signed the documents again and again.

"Ka saina, ka ba ka tempa,  
ka tempa, ka ba ka saina . . . .

One day South Africa will be like the other advanced countries and unskilled labor will be mechanized. Then work songs will be heard no more. Something must be done now to preserve this wonderful heritage of the working people.

# Funeral of a Whale

J. BENIBENGOR BLAY

## *Ghana*

There is great excitement in the ancient town of Missibi in Ghana.

The previous night had been wet and stormy and one which the fishermen were not likely to forget. Caught in the storm, their canoes had been dashed to pieces on the rocks and their nets swept away on the swift current. Only the fact that they were all strong swimmers had saved the men from drowning.

The sun is not yet up when they collect again on the shore to watch for their nets. The moon is still shining and little waves dance merrily on the strand, while the sea crabs scuttle among the scattered shells. But these things do not interest the fishermen, and even the search for nets is forgotten as they catch sight of a huge object, surrounded by a shoal of fish, tossing on the rolling sea. Their slow, questing advance is halted as a nauseating stench greets them. Fingers to their noses, they crane and peer. It is a whale—and judging by the smell, it has been dead for some days.

Now, such a sight is no mere spectacle to the people of Missibi. As descendants of a strong and virile race which long ago came by sea in great barge-like ships to settle in these parts, they hold to the tradition that the sea is their home and they worship it to this day. In any crisis—whatever its nature, whether drought or famine or war—they call upon the sea for help. The whale is the king of their sea. And it has been the custom, throughout their long history, to accord a ceremonial funeral to any whale that comes rolling ashore dead.

So, bound by tradition, the fishermen must bear the unhappy tidings to the ruler of the town. Their waists girdled with palm leaves and

fingers to lips as signs that their news is urgent, and as yet secret, they go on their errand.

The chief's advisers are called together by the court messenger for a palaver. Now the fishermen are permitted to tell their news. Only after the chief's bodyguards have visited the beach to confirm this statement may the townsfolk be told. It is now past eight o'clock in the morning. The state drums boom out the warning of great calamity. The people from the busy market place, the farmers, coconut breakers and rice growers who have risen at cockcrow and gone to the farms, all come trooping to the palace yard, agog with excitement.

The chief comes to the courtyard with his advisers and sits on the landing of the dais. His face betokens sadness. His attendants bow and leave the palace. The drums are still booming. Outside are packed lorries and cars from up country bringing loads of hawkers and buyers to the market while the occupants move in with the still surging crowd.

The court messenger comes into the yard, bows to the chief and courtiers, commands silence and after giving a brief survey of the history of Missibi and her connection with the sea, makes his announcement to the assembled throng.

"The State is in mourning. A whale is dead and has been washed ashore. The funeral will be held at two o'clock at Aposika where the king of the sea now lies."

There is no whisper nor laughter nor cough as the great crowd moves from distant parts, out of the palace. The market day is postponed. The school bell's tolling stopped. All is sad silence. Yet it is a great day for the hawkers from distant parts, for now they will see something of which so far they have only heard. To the aged of the town it is history repeating itself, and the announcement seems to bring back pictures of half-forgotten times.

By order of a committee appointed by the chief's advisers, funeral preparations are put in hand at once. Cases of gin, beer, kola and palm wine are brought from the stores and cellars. A body of young men is engaged in the erection of bamboo huts, and the bush around the area is cleared, while musicians polish their instruments in readiness. Word is passed to neighboring places and more people arrive to swell the numbers.

At two o'clock the procession leaves for the scene of the funeral, guns booming, state guns rumbling, ivory horn blaring. The chief and his counselors are dressed in red. The womenfolk, besmeared with red clay and wearing pieces of red calico tied around their hair, are in front with the children. The men bring up the rear.

The tail of the column is as yet only at the outskirts of the town when its head reaches the place where, a little off the beach, lies the great shapeless mass of the whale. Gallons of disinfectant have already been sprinkled around to kill the smell.

Now the chief's messenger calls for silence and orders the crowd to be seated. The chief steps forward followed by his advisers. Dropping the red cloth from his shoulder and gathering the folds in his left arm, with a glass of rum held in his right hand, he first raises his eyes to heaven then looks to the ground as he pours out a libation with these words: "Tradition binds us to the sea and the whale is king of the elements there. My people and I pay you homage and lament your death. How it happened we do not know. Whether it was in combat with your fellow kings, or whether it was inflicted by those who delight in making sport of you, or whether it was a natural death, we are afflicted all the same with a great sense of personal loss. We reaffirm our traditional ties with your descendants, will look to them in anxious days for help, and beg of you, who now belong to the ages, to release this land from starvation and sickness; leave in their place health and plenty. Rest in peace."

The funeral ceremony being declared open, the women like minstrels tell the story of the whale in parables; its connection with the state is recounted and the dead one praised. The chief and his advisers are head mourners and make themselves responsible for the fair distribution of drinks, providing food for those who have come from afar and recording donations received.

The young men keep order and play native instruments, while the old correct any departure from the traditional funeral procedure. Boys and girls play "Hunt the Slipper" and "Ampay." Hunters fire off guns and firecrackers at intervals in honor of the majesty of the dead. Fishermen fish in the waves and cast their nets on the beach; farmers sow their seeds on the strand, fetish priests play tom-toms and perform their feats of walking barefoot on broken bottles and gashing their



stomachs with sharp knives. Everybody, in fact, is doing something. And all the men are partly or completely drunk.

As the celebration continues, weeping becomes the order of the day; there is competition among the womenfolk in pitch, tone and rendering of phrases, and prizes are offered to those who maintain the high standard of wailing set by their ancestors.

Further away from the crowds a great number of seagulls gather. Some are twittering, others are flying around the whale. The tide begins to rise and the waves are swelling high. Deep clouds overshadow the clear blue sky, and for a while the heavens are pouring rain. It seems that nature, too, is paying tribute to the king of the sea.

At six o'clock, as the sun is setting behind the clouds, the celebrations reach their climax—the solemn spreading of a long white sheet over the whale. Now each mourner takes a pebble, a shell, a stick, a coin or anything handy and, whispering a few words, whirls it around his head and throws it in the direction of the whale. Then without a further glance, all return to town.

The funeral of the king of the sea is over.

# Akan Poetry

J. H. KWABENA NKETIA

## *Ghana*

In Akan society, the Ashanti, Fanti, Akim, and other tribes of Ghana, literary activity has until recently been carried on largely by word of mouth. The texts of Akan poetry, therefore, occur as language events, and some forms of it are not always readily recognized as poetry by those not thoroughly acquainted with our poetic tradition. Moreover the use of poetic expressions is not peculiar to the poem. The very names and the praise appellations which are given to people in Akan society have the feel of poetry:

“One who is restive until he has fought and won.”

“Dwentiwaa’s husband, and a man of valor.”

“Daughter of a spokesman who is herself a spokesman.”

“Karikari that weighs gold and gives it away, the benevolent one.”

These and many others have a highly evocative power for the Akan. No one says “The chief has died” if he knows our poetic habits. He says “The chief has gone to his village.” Incidence of hardship is described in terms of fire in the house going out.

Similarly the use of proverbs is not confined to the poem; they are quoted in many situations—in the home, at work, at the court. They are considered a mark of eloquence and wit, and anyone who is able to quote or use proverbs habitually may be regarded as a poet of a sort.

Like other African peoples the Akan are particular about their social greetings. These usually consist of a short sentence or two and lack the marks of a literary form. On the other hand, the same material could be worked out in a literary form, as in the following text of greetings to the chief of an Akan state on the occasion of the new year:

The year has come round.  
I have come to greet you,  
To shower blessings on you.  
Live long, live long, live long,  
Live to a good old age.  
The drummer of the talking drums says,  
He showers his blessings on you.  
Live long, live long, live long,  
Live to a good old age.  
The God of old says,  
He showers his blessings on you.  
Live to a good old age, chief,  
The Earth Amponyinamoá says,  
She showers her blessings on you.  
Live to a good old age.  
Live long, live long, live long,  
Live to a good old age.  
May years be added to your years.

The utterances of the text I have just quoted are rather like the texts of ordinary social greetings—"Live long, may years be added to your years"—but in a more elaborate form, and with additional expressions and repetitions not common in everyday greetings. There is a definite pattern which unfolds itself as the text enlarges. In the way it is arranged, it carries a far greater emotional force and aesthetic merit.

The development of the poetic tradition of the Akan appears to have followed four distinct courses, each one giving rise to a distinctive style of arrangement or delivery.

ORAL POETRY. First there is the tradition of oral poetry, or poetry which is recited and not sung. The greatest use of this is in connection with chiefship. At state functions special poems of praise are recited by minstrels to paramount chiefs. In these poems allusions to past successes in war, particularly the decapitations of enemy chiefs and potentates, are made. They are intended to remind the chief of his former enemies, to remind him of his power as war leader and to incite him to deeds of bravery.

He is one who hates to see an enemy return victorious.

He is bulletproof: when you fire at him, you waste your ammunition.

He catches priests and snatches their bells from them.

He is not to be challenged. If anybody dares him, the one is sure to lose his head.

He is like the tough tree as well as the old, wet half-dead tree, neither of which can be cut.

The delivery of the poems is very dramatic and expressive. There may be an introductory exclamatory lead, "He is the one [*Ono no*]," or a simple interjection for calling attention, "*Odee el*"

Oral literature has tended to give prominence to persons, interpersonal relationships and attitudes and values derived from our conception of the universe. We do not spend time on the daffodils or the nightingale or on reflections on abstract beauty, the night sky and so on as things in themselves, but only in relation to social experience. Our poetry is full of animals and plants, but these are used because they provide apt metaphors or similes, or compressed ways of stating bits of social experience.

RECITATIVE. The second tradition is that of verse which is half-spoken and half-sung—the recitative style used in dirges and the poetry of hunters' celebrations. A number of references are made which can be grouped around a few themes: the ancestor, the deceased or any particular individual, the place of domicile.

LYRIC POETRY. The third tradition of poetry is lyric: the use of the song as a vehicle for poetry. This tradition constitutes the bulk of Akan poetry. There is no uniformity of themes, for the songs are used in different contexts. Songs of worship and songs for particular ceremonies make their peculiar references, but the cultural value of these songs is not merely that they provide such data; they are statements of the poet, reflections of his vision. They are first and foremost poetry.

The structure of lyric poems in Akan society is greatly influenced by the musical requirements. Songs performed by individuals tend to have a sustained verse form with the minimum of wholesale repetitions, whereas those sung by solo and chorus tend to have some phrases

repeated over and over again. Poems in this tradition fall into various lyric types:

*Songs of prayer, exhilaration and incitement.*

*Cradle songs.* Introduction to poetry begins very early in life, long before one is able to understand the language. The tune, the sound sequences which form the words, and most important of all the rhythm evoke responses from the child, responses of excitement or of calm and repose, which lull it to sleep. There are, however, cradle songs which build up statements of wider meaning to the mother of older infants. In these songs there is always scope for the reflections of the mother or nurse, for allusions to the co-wife of a polygamous marriage, allusions to the treatment meted out to the woman by the husband:

Little child, come for a feed.  
 If you divorce me, you cannot take away my child.  
 Little one, come for a feed.

Someone would like to have you for her child  
 But you are my own.  
 Someone wished she had you to nurse you on a good mat;  
 Someone wished you were hers: she would put you on camel  
 blanket;  
 But I have you to rear you on a torn mat.  
 Someone wished she had you, but I have you.

*Songs from folk tales.*

*Warrior songs.*

*Maiden songs.* In Akan society maiden songs are sung on moonlight nights by women who form themselves into little performing groups for this purpose. The women in a group stand in a circle and clap their hands as they sing. Each one takes a turn at leading the verses.

The songs are used mainly for praising or making references to loved ones, brothers or other kinsmen or outstanding men in the community. In the past, anybody who was thus honored was supposed to give the women presents the following day.

He is coming, he is coming,  
 Treading along on camel blanket in triumph.  
 Yes, stranger, we are bestirring ourselves.  
 Agyei the warrior is drunk,  
 The green mamba with fearful eyes.

Yes, Agyei the warrior,  
 He is treading along on camel blanket in triumph,  
 Make way for him.

He is coming, he is coming.  
 Treading along on sandals [i.e. on men]  
 Yes, stranger, we are bestirring ourselves.  
 Adum Agyei is drunk.  
 The Green Mamba, Afaafa Adu.

Yes, Agyei the warrior,  
 He is treading along on camel blanket in triumph,  
 Make way for him.

THE POETRY OF HORNS AND DRUMS. The development of the poetic tradition has not been confined to the spoken voice. A great deal of our heroic poetry is conveyed through the medium of horns, pipes and drums. Although drums are used in Akan society for making a limited number of announcements, they are also vehicles of literature. Indeed, in view of the radio, the newspaper and other modern means of communication there would be no hope for the talking drum if its only function was to give information. On state occasions poems of special interest are drummed to the chief and the community as a whole. These poems run into many scores of verses and fall into four groups.

First there are the poems of the drum prelude called the Awakening, *Anyaneanyane*. When a drummer is playing these poems he begins by announcing himself, closing the opening with the formula: "I am learning, let me succeed"

or "I am addressing you, and you will understand."

He then addresses in turn the components of the drum—the wood of the drum, the drum pegs, strings, the animal that provides the hide of the drum: the elephant or the duyker.

Next he addresses the earth, God, the witch, the cock and the clock-bird, ancestor drummers, and finally the god Tano. The cock and the

clockbird are frequently referred to in drum texts because of the alert they give. They are like drummers who have to keep vigil while others are asleep.

When I was going to bed, I was not sleepy.  
 When I felt like sleeping, my eyes never closed.  
 All night he stood in his coop,  
 While children lay in bed asleep.  
 Early in the morning he was hailed:  
 "Good morning to you, Mr. Cock."  
 The Cock crows in the morning.  
 The Cock rises to crow before the crack of dawn.  
 I am learning, let me succeed.  
 Kokokyinaka Asamoa, the Clockbird,  
 How do we greet you?  
 We greet you with "Anyaado,"  
 We hail you as the Drummer's child.  
 The drummer's child sleeps and awakes with the dawn.  
 I am learning, let me succeed.

The second group of texts are in the nature of panegyrics or eulogies. Abridged forms incorporating the names, praise appellations of individuals and greetings or messages are used in social situations—for example in a dance arena. The chief use of these eulogies, however, is for honoring kings and ancestor kings on ceremonial occasions when their origin, parentage and noble deeds are recalled against a background of tribal history.

The third group of poems are those used for heralding the movements of a chief, for greeting people, for announcing emergencies and so on. When a chief is drinking at a state ceremony, the drummer drums a running commentary. If it is gin, he drums as follows:

Chief they are bringing it.  
 They are bringing it.  
 They are bringing it to you.  
 Chief you are about to drink imported liquor.  
 Chief pour some on the ground.  
 He is sipping it slowly and gradually.  
 He is sipping it in little draughts.

The last group of poems are the proverbs. These may be used separately or they may be incorporated into other poems or into drum pieces intended for dancing. Here are some proverbs of the Akantam dance:

Rustling noise by the wayside  
 Means what creature?  
 The wood pigeon, the wood pigeon.  
 Wood pigeon Seniampon,  
 He goes along the path eating grains of millet.  
 Condolences, wood pigeon.  
*Duyker Adawurampon Kwamena*  
*Who told the Duyker to get hold of his sword?*  
*The tail of the Duyker is short,*  
*But he is able to brush himself with it.*  
 "I am bearing fruit," says Pot Herb.  
 "I am bearing fruit," says Garden Egg.  
 Logs of firewood are lying on the farm,  
 But it is the faggot that makes the fire flare.  
*Duyker Adawurampon Kwamena*  
*Who told the Duyker to get hold of his sword?*  
*The tail of the Duyker is short,*  
*But he is able to brush himself with it.*  
 "Pluck the feathers off this tortoise."  
 Tortoise: "Fowl, do you hear that?"  
*Duyker Adawurampon Kwamena*  
*Who told the Duyker to get hold of his sword?*  
*The tail of the Duyker is short,*  
*But he is able to brush himself with it.*

The origin and storehouse of Akan poetry is the individual member of Akan society brought up on the traditions of his people, the individual who from childhood has been taught or has learned through social experience to use certain words and expressions, to regard some as beautiful, deep, proper, improper, correct, bad and so on; the individual who has been taught to understand and use the proverbs in his language, who has been taught to sing cradle songs, dance songs, war songs and love songs, to drum and dance or to appreciate drum-



ming and dancing; the individual who under emotional stress would quote a proverb, a familiar saying, a line or two of traditional oral poetry, just as some English people and Africans with English education would quote Shakespeare, Milton, Gray and others. Our poetry, therefore, is held corporately by many such individuals in our society. That has been the tradition.

Hence the process of transmission through education and social experience is as important in this respect as it has always been for other aspects of our culture. But the function of the individual was not merely to act as a carrier of a tradition. He was also to maintain it by using it, by re-creating it, for each time he performed his set pieces he was in a sense giving the poetry of his people a new life.

The poetic tradition is still being maintained, though not to the same degree. Some types of poetry, particularly those associated with the court, are not nearly as well-known as they used to be only a few decades ago. Many people, particularly those who have had the benefit of school education, cannot make any bold claim to a knowledge of the traditions. Nevertheless, poets and custodians of the tradition are still to be found creating and re-creating traditional poetry in appropriate contexts.



# STORIES

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## New Life at Kyerefaso

EFUA THEODORA SUTHERLAND

### *Ghana*

Shall we say

Shall we put it this way

Shall we say that the maid of Kyerefaso, Foruwa, daughter of the Queen Mother, was as a young deer, graceful in limb? Such was she, with head held high, eyes soft and wide with wonder. And she was light of foot, light in all her moving.

Stepping springily along the water path like a deer that had strayed from the thicket, springily stepping along the water path, she was a picture to give the eye a feast. And nobody passed her by but turned to look at her again.

Those of her village said that her voice in speech was like the murmur of a river quietly flowing beneath shadows of bamboo leaves. They said her smile would sometimes blossom like a lily on her lips and sometimes rise like sunrise.

The butterflies do not fly away from the flowers, they draw near. Foruwa was the flower of her village.

So shall we say,

Shall we put it this way, that all the village butterflies, the men, tried to draw near her at every turn, crossed and crossed her path? Men said of her, "She shall be my wife, and mine, and mine and mine."

But suns rose and set, moons silvered and died and as the days

passed Foruwa grew more lovable, yet she became no one's wife. She smiled at the butterflies and waved her hand lightly to greet them as she went swiftly about her daily work:

“Morning, Kweku  
Morning, Kwesi  
Morning, Kodwo”

but that was all.

And so they said, even while their hearts thumped for her:

“Proud!

Foruwa is proud . . . and very strange”

And so the men when they gathered would say:

“There goes a strange girl. She is not just stiff-in-the-neck proud, not just breasts-stuck-out I-am-the-only-girl-in-the-village proud. What kind of pride is hers?”

The end of the year came round again, bringing the season of festivals. For the gathering in of corn, yams and cocoa there were harvest celebrations. There were bride-meetings too. And it came to the time when the Asafo companies should hold their festival. The village was full of manly sounds, loud musketry and swelling choruses.

The pathfinding, path-clearing ceremony came to an end. The Asafo marched on toward the Queen Mother's house, the women fussing round them, prancing round them, spreading their cloths in their way.

“Osee!” rang the cry. “Osee!” to the manly men of old. They crouched like leopards upon the branches.

Before the drums beat

Before the danger drums beat, beware!

Before the horns moaned

Before the wailing horns moaned, beware!

They were upright, they sprang. They sprang. They sprang upon the enemy. But now, blood no more! No more thundershot on thundershot.

But still we are the leopards on the branches. We are those who roar and cannot be answered back. Beware, we are they who cannot be answered back.

There was excitement outside the Queen Mother's courtyard gate.

“Gently, gently,” warned the Asafo leader. “Here comes the Queen Mother.

Spread skins of the gentle sheep in her way.  
 Lightly, lightly walks our Mother Queen.  
 Shower her with silver,  
 Shower her with silver for she is peace."

And the Queen Mother stood there, tall, beautiful, before the men and there was silence.

"What news, what news do you bring?" she quietly asked.

"We come with dusty brows from our pathfinding, Mother. We come with tired, thorn-pricked feet. We come to bathe in the coolness of your peaceful stream. We come to offer our manliness to new life."

The Queen Mother stood there, tall and beautiful and quiet. Her fanbearers stood by her and all the women clustered near. One by one the men laid their guns at her feet and then she said:

"It is well. The gun is laid aside. The gun's rage is silenced in the stream. Let your weapons from now on be your minds and your hands' toil.

"Come maidens, women all, join the men in dance for they offer themselves to new life."

There was one girl who did not dance.

"What, Foruwa!" urged the Queen Mother, "Will you not dance? The men are tired of parading in the ashes of their grandfathers' glorious deeds. That should make you smile. They are tired of the empty croak: 'We are men, we are men.'

"They are tired of sitting like vultures upon the rubbish heaps they have piled upon the half-built walls of their grandfathers. Smile, then, Foruwa, smile.

"Their brows shall now indeed be dusty, their feet thorn-picked, and 'I love my land' shall cease to be the empty croaking of a vulture upon the rubbish heap. Dance, Foruwa, dance!"

Foruwa opened her lips and this was all she said: "Mother, I do not find him here."

"Who? Who do you not find here?"

"He with whom this new life shall be built. He is not here, Mother. These men's faces are empty; there is nothing in them, nothing at all."

"Alas, Foruwa, alas, alas! What will become of you, my daughter?"

"The day I find him, Mother, the day I find the man, I shall come running to you, and your worries will come to an end."

"But, Foruwa, Foruwa," argued the Queen Mother, although in her heart she understood her daughter, "five years ago your rites were fulfilled. Where is the child of your womb? Your friend Maanan married. Your friend Esi married. Both had their rites with you."

"Yes, Mother, they married and see how their steps once lively now drag in the dust. The sparkle has died out of their eyes. Their husbands drink palm wine the day long under the mango trees, drink palm wine and push counters across the draughtboards all the day, and are they not already looking for other wives? Mother, the man I say is not here."

This conversation had been overheard by one of the men and soon others heard what Foruwa had said. That evening there was heard a new song in the village.

"There was a woman long ago,  
 Tell that maid, tell that maid,  
 There was a woman long ago,  
 She would not marry Kwesi,  
 She would not marry Kwaw,  
 She would not, would not, would not.  
 One day she came home with hurrying feet,  
 I've found the man, the man, the man,  
 Tell that maid, tell that maid,  
 Her man looked like a chief,  
 Tell that maid, tell that maid,  
 Her man looked like a chief,  
 Most splendid to see,  
 But he turned into a python,  
 He turned into a python  
*And swallowed her up.*"

From that time onward there were some in the village who turned their backs on Foruwa when she passed.

Shall we say

Shall we put it this way

Shall we say that a day came when Foruwa with hurrying feet came running to her mother? She burst through the courtyard gate; and

there she stood in the courtyard, joy all over. And a stranger walked in after her and stood in the courtyard beside her, stood tall and strong as a pillar. Foruwa said to the astonished Queen Mother:

“Here he is, Mother, here is the man.”

The Queen Mother took a slow look at the stranger standing there strong as a forest tree, and she said:

“You carry the light of wisdom on your face, my son. Greetings, you are welcome. But who are you, my son?”

“Greetings, Mother,” replied the stranger quietly, “I am a worker. My hands are all I have to offer your daughter, for they are all my riches. I have traveled to see how men work in other lands. I have that knowledge and my strength. That is all my story.”

Shall we say,

Shall we put it this way,

strange as the story is, that Foruwa was given in marriage to the stranger.

There was a rage in the village and many openly mocked saying, “Now the proud ones eat the dust.”

Yet shall we say,

Shall we put it this way

that soon, quite soon, the people of Kyerefaso began to take notice of the stranger in quite a different way.

“Who,” some said, “is this who has come among us? He who mingles sweat and song, he for whom toil is joy and life is full and abundant?”

“See,” said others, “what a harvest the land yields under his ceaseless care.”

“He has taken the earth and molded it into bricks. See what a home he has built, how it graces the village where it stands.”

“Look at the craft of his fingers, baskets or kente, stool or mat, the man makes them all.”

“And our children swarm about him, gazing at him with wonder and delight.”

Then it did not satisfy them any more to sit all day at their draught-boards under the mango trees.

“See what Foruwa’s husband has done,” they declared; “shall the sons of the land not do the same?”

And soon they began to seek out the stranger to talk with him. Soon they too were toiling, their fields began to yield as never before, and the women labored joyfully to bring in the harvest. A new spirit stirred the village. As the carelessly built houses disappeared one by one, and new homes built after the fashion of the stranger's grew up, it seemed as if the village of Kyerefaso had been born afresh.

The people themselves became more alive and a new pride possessed them. They were no longer just grabbing from the land what they desired for their stomachs' present hunger and for their present comfort. They were looking at the land with new eyes, feeling it in their blood, and thoughtfully building a permanent and beautiful place for themselves and their children.

"Oseel!" It was festival-time again. "Oseel!" Blood no more. Our fathers found for us the paths. We are the roadmakers. They bought for us the land with their blood. We shall build it with our strength. We shall create it with our minds.

Following the men were the women and children. On their heads they carried every kind of produce that the land had yielded and crafts that their fingers had created. Green plantains and yellow bananas were carried by the bunch in large white wooden trays. Garden eggs, tomatoes, red oil-palm nuts warmed by the sun were piled high in black earthen vessels. Oranges, yams, maize filled shining brass trays and golden calabashes. Here and there were children proudly carrying colorful mats, baskets and toys which they themselves had made.

The Queen Mother watched the procession gathering on the new village playground now richly green from recent rains. She watched the people palpitating in a massive dance toward her where she stood with her fanbearers outside the royal house. She caught sight of Foruwa. Her load of charcoal in a large brass tray which she had adorned with red hibiscus danced with her body. Happiness filled the Queen Mother when she saw her daughter thus.

Then she caught sight of Foruwa's husband. He was carrying a white lamb in his arms, and he was singing happily with the men. She looked on him with pride. The procession had approached the royal house.

"See!" rang the cry of the Asafo leader. "See how the best in all the land stands. See how she stands waiting, our Queen Mother. Waiting



to wash the dust from our brow in the coolness of her peaceful stream. Spread skins of the gentle sheep in her way, gently, gently. Spread the yield of the land before her. Spread the craft of your hands before her, gently, gently.

“Lightly, lightly walks our Queen Mother, for she is peace.”

# Death in the Sun

PETER KUMALO

## *South Africa*

That day coming into Cape Town by bus with two friends, I saw the stark tragedy of the drama of Life and Sudden Death played out in reality below the precincts of District Six and with this new experience I felt naked and afraid.

Slowly moving off from a stop our bus approached Tennant Street and a man came dashing around that corner into the main road hotly pursued by a young fellow leading a gang of youths who followed some paces behind. They ran on for about thirty yards and the gang leader had almost caught hold of the fleeing man when he with amazing swiftness halted in his tracks, turned and struck at him and it was only after the action had been completed, when he lifted his hand, that we, watching in the bus, saw the knife and the shocking realization came to us that he had stabbed the young fellow. He then turned again and fled on and the stabbed fellow stopped, looked at his chest and it was as if he too suddenly realized what had happened to him in that split second and when he turned there was a growing red stain on his shirt and we could see the surprise on his face, shock, fright, the desire to go on living, not to die in the instant he faced our way. He shouted, "O God, help me!" and started running toward the rear of our bus while the blood ran streaming out from between the fingers of his left hand which he held to his heart as if to stem the flow—all the while the bus moving very slowly with only a murmur coming from its engine and the passengers petrified into attitudes of astonishment, unable to utter words.

Then we tried to get down from the upper deck where we had been sitting to the lower deck, but a passenger stopped on his way halfway down the stairs, halted by momentary shock at what he saw and we could get no farther until we had pushed him aside and forced our way through.

There was a patch of blood from the dying-man's hand on the shiny chrome-steel bar which he had clutched in an effort to pull himself onto the platform and he was now lying in the aisle on his back with his legs bent under him and his arms thrown back like a person who had been struck down while kneeling at prayer. His shirt was soaked red and his trousers and the seats and the floor were splashed with blood.

His chest heaved with a great effort as he breathed, his shirt drawing tight every few seconds along the edge of his rib-cage as he inhaled. In his open eyes, unstarving and looking at no one in particular, one could see emotional conflict and horror at the crazy and frightening knowledge that that amazing thing, Death, was so very near and that he was so very alone and that all the while his life's blood was steadily pouring out of his pierced heart. And, we, we felt so helpless, so terribly helpless because we could do nothing to save his young, tender life.

And death, when it came, was sudden—like the disappearance of the golden setting sun when one's back is turned, like the unexpected toll of a bell in the still of night and his body was that of a person from whom the personality had been erased, a corpse as lifeless as a dead, limp impersonal doll from which human blood frothed and left a crimson trail as it flowed on the floor and over the hard steel edge of the platform onto the hot surface of the asphalt road.

There was some panic among the passengers but some people, when the bus stopped, ran to get help, to telephone for the doctor, for the ambulance, for the police and a gaping, milling crowd gathered, people out of the slums from which this young man had come to meet death, tawdry, workworn, some dressed in soiled clothing, housewives with unkempt hair and dirty aprons, a few drunken men, barefoot children whose attention had suddenly been arrested from play, all excited, all curious and wanting to have a look and when they saw were hushed into an uncomfortable, questioning silence at this hostile, unwanted presence cast suddenly into their midst. And all the time there was a hum of conversation that was a quavering drone of excited voices above which rose certain questions and explanations, "Loep haal sy ma," said one woman's voice.

And others said, "Wat is sy naam?" and "Dis daai klong wat hier bo in Tennantstraat bly" . . . "Wattit gabeur" . . . "Haai, kyk die bloed!" But above all, "Is hy dood?"

And very few people certain enough dared to answer that he was dead because even they unconsciously were hoping that he was still alive, that he must still be alive so they hardly answered but kept silent unwilling tongues.

And then the gasping crowd's movement increased as more people tried to force a way through to the front and somebody said, "Vooitog, dis sy pa and ma."

And there were over-anxious, frightened, pitying looks on the faces of the people. A weeping child fought his way through the swaying mass and somebody else said, "Shame, that's his small brother," and he went into the bus to his dead brother, wanting him alive and finding him dead, almost maddened by his great grief, ran toward an approaching car in an attempt to destroy himself under its wheels but was pulled back. People struggled to move aside so as to make way for the dead youth's parents to come through who were sobbing and crying and who, when they saw their son, fell into paroxysms of hysteria and the mother in her agony tore at her hair like a demented being and friends of theirs tried to comfort them and to lead them away, but they would not go and leave the body alone.

The ambulance and the police arrived simultaneously with a siren blaring a way through and there were men in uniforms with authority in their voices, organizing and bringing order among the throng and asking questions and the body was picked up and taken away and then the police sped off to catch up with the mob who had gone to hunt for the murderer and which by now had long since disappeared down a side street by the market place in the distance. And when authority had gone and the cause of it all, the crowd broke up, gradually and unwillingly, still asking questions and latecomers listened hungrily to vague explanations from those who still stood about.

And the afternoon sun shone, a great glowing ball suspended in the afternoon sky, fierce in its summer heat, casting its warm radiant light like a golden mantle, but for a little group of three people its light had gone out suddenly as if a great black cloud had descended and they were left weeping in unbounded darkness.

# Ajantala, the Noxious Guest

AMOS TUTUOLA

## *Nigeria*

Once there lived in a village, a hunter, who had a wife. When she was under pregnancy old people of the village warned, "It is time now for you to suspend of killing bush animals, or if you continue to do so you will kill the baby that your wife is going to deliver when it is time and she will deliver of a terrible creature in form of a baby when it is time for her to deliver."

"That is a superstition," the hunter said after the people had gone back to their houses.

Other hunters used to stop killing animals entirely except after their wives had delivered so that they might not kill their wives' babies who had changed to the form of bush animals and after that went to the bush. And when it was the time, the wife of this hunter delivered of a male baby.

"Ha! ha! ha! this is how the world is! What did I come for then. I thought this world will be as beautiful as heaven from where I came! Look at everything how it is very dirty! Of course, I will not keep long before I will go back to heaven!" exclaimed immediately the baby came down from his mother's womb.

Having said like that, he stood up from the blood and was walking with trembling feet along to his mother's room.

"Ha! look at the baby, stood and walked at the same time he is born!" the whole people of the house exclaimed with embarrassment.

"Heigh! I never see a woman to born such a terrible baby as this one!" said the mother painfully.

And he took the sponge and soap, he washed all the blood away from his body. After that he wrapped his body with one of his mother's clothes, and then he sat upright on a very high stool and he was looking at everyone's eyes with his ungrateful eyes.

"Ha! I am badly hungry for food, what can I eat now!" And then he started to sniff the sweet smell of the food which was inside the room nearest to his mother's room.

"Yes, I am glad, I shall get better food from this room; I better go in now."

Without bearing fear of all the people's eyes which were opened wildly with wonder, he stood up and entered the room. He ate the whole food, that which had been prepared for twenty or more persons. After that he kicked all the plates and pots, and all broke into pieces. Having done all that he came out, he sat down in the middle of the people who were looking on with their withered lips and hands.

"Good evening to you, the mother of the newly born baby! Thanks to the god who has helped you delivered safely. Hope you have not any complaint after birth?" The people of the village had heard the news of the baby within one hour, and they came to greet the mother and to see how the baby was.

"There is not any complaint at all and thanks to the god for that, but—" replied the unhappy mother.

"Doubtless, this is not a real baby but a spirit or one of the animals which his father, the hunter, had killed," the people were saying so on their ways when returning to their houses.

In the morning of the seventh day that he was born, several old people gathered in his father's parlor, just to give him a name. For that must be done, though he was terrible.

Then he walked for himself and sat in the middle of the people, and he was looking at everyone's eyes as they were praying, "Long live the baby, and—."

But to their horror, when they were about to announce the name which his father, the hunter, wished the old people to give him, the baby himself announced loudly, "My name is AJANTALA and there is no need to give me another name after this."

The people sighed, and mumbled with wonder. Then the kolas, honey, a large quantity of alligator pepper and drinks as palm wine, guinea-corn wine, plantain wine, corn wine, and plenty of bitter kolas were brought before the people. For all these must be served at the naming ceremony.

But when they were about to start to eat the kolas, etc., and to drink

the drinks, Ajantala jumped high unexpectedly and pierced one of the people with a sharp iron. And when he turned to another man to pierce that one, again, the people rushed to the outside, all were running away as hastily as they could. And he chased them, to beat, to a short distance before he came back to the house.

"There is no wonder, the baby (Ajantala) must be a terrible spirit of a wild animal. Of course, we had forewarned his father to stop to killing animals, except after his wife has delivered, but he did not pay heed to the warning, and this is the result now," the people were saying about in the village.

"Oh, yes! this is a thick, long stick." Ajantala took it from the ground, he slammed the door and he began to flog his father and the rest of the family with the stick so severely that all of them did not know the right time that they forced the door open and then ran away. Of course, he did not touch his mother.

"What is more to do? Yes, there are still many more things to do."

Having remembered what was the next thing to do, he took one ax and started to cut down the wall.

"Ha! Stop that," his mother warned him.

"Oh! which means you too have no sense? All right, I shall teach you good sense now as I have taught the others."

And he gave his mother seven slaps on the face.

"Aha! Ajantala, you are a cruel boy, and you are slapping at your mother," exclaimed a man who stood at the outside, hardly finished in saying so when Ajantala left his mother. He jumped from the veranda to the outside and he gave seven slaps to that man.

"Ha! Ajantala, stop that!" another man who stood nearer exclaimed. But to everyone's surprise, immediately that man exclaimed "Ha!" his mouth cut open to his nape.

Now Ajantala became so fearful that the whole people of the village shunned to go near his father's house. And his mother had nearly died for all the troubles given to her.

At last, one morning, she took Ajantala to a very far bush. She gave him plenty of the sweet fruits.

"Please, Ajantala, stand near this tree and wait there until I shall come back and take you back to the village. For I am now going

farther in the bush to fetch for our food." And by a trick she left him there and came back to the village.

"Where is Ajantala?" his father asked softly.

"I have left the terrible boy in the bush."

"And he agreed to stay there?" the father wondered.

"Yes, he agreed, by my trick," responded the mother.

"I thank you for that. You see, it is helpful sometime to pay heed to the old people's warning."

"What do you mean by saying so, my dear?" his wife asked calmly.

"The meaning is that several old people had warned me to stop killing bush animals during the period you were under pregnancy. And Ajantala is the result of the warning, and I do believe he is one of the animals which I had killed during the period of your pregnancy."

"Ho-o-o! No wonder!" she discovered the reason why Ajantala was acting like that and then she believed that he was not a human.

After Ajantala had waited, waited, waited, and waited under that tree, but his mother did not return to him, he was wandering about in that bush and was looking for his mother, until he had traveled to the heart of the bush and came to a small house which was built there. A corn farm surrounded the house, and both house and the farm belonged to three brothers. Their names were Goat, Lion, and Ram who was the oldest. They were human beings in those days and were living together with comfort in that house.

"Good day, sirs," Ajantala walked zigzag into the house and saluted the three family who sat and were enjoying their leisure hours at the time he met them.

"Hello, good day, boy!" Mr. Ram returned the salutation while the rest two were looking at Ajantala and expecting what he wanted to say.

"Please, sirs, I am a wayfarer, and I cannot reach my destination today, even probably two weeks. Therefore, I shall be grateful, indeed, if you will allow me to stay here with you as your guest for a few days only before I will continue my journey," Ajantala asked for this obligation with due respect as if he thought he was a good boy.

"Of course, we may have mercy on you to let you stay with us for the few days you ask for, though you are very young," Mr. Ram said on behalf of the rest.



"Thanks, sirs, and god—" Ajantala prostrated.

So he was allowed to stay with them, he was eating and doing everything with them.

Having seen this luxurious living, a few days later Ajantala asked, "Please, sirs, I like to discontinue my journey but to be a servant for you, and I shall be complying with all of your orders," and these three brothers agreed.

The following morning, Ajantala followed Mr. Goat to the farm to fetch for their food. Having collected plenty of fruits into the basket, Mr. Goat told Ajantala to carry it.

"Oh! what do you say now, Mr. Goat?" And Mr. Goat repeated what he had told him to do.

"Ho! ho! ho! is that what you mean to do, all right, I shall teach you a sense now." And Mr. Goat was looking at him with the intention that Ajantala was so small that he could not do him any harm.

"Hanpa, hanpa, hanpa," Ajantala walked like a crab to a short distance. He came back with a handful of dust and he threw it into Mr. Goat's eyes suddenly. And as he was staggering about for help, he struck him at the forehead with a heavy stone and then he fell down. A large quantity of blood was dropping down from the head.

After a while, Ajantala helped Mr. Goat to stand up, he put the basket on his (Mr. Goat's) head.

As they were going along the way to the house he warned Mr. Goat not to tell the rest what had happened to him from the farm. Willing or not Mr. Goat agreed, otherwise he would harm him severely more than that.

"Ah! Mr. Goat, what has happened to your head and eyes from the farm?" the rest feared when he and Ajantala entered the house.

"It was a big stone fell upon my head," Mr. Goat replied and rubbed away the blood with his hand.

The following day, it was Mr. Ram's turn to go to the same farm for food. Ajantala followed him and he did the same to Mr. Ram. And so he did to Mr. Lion the day that he followed him to the farm.

Then these three brothers fed up to be living with Ajantala, for he was too terrible and powerful for them.

One night, when Ajantala had gone to bed, they did not know that he did never fall asleep. Then Mr. Ram first said, "I am afraid,

Ajantala is a noxious guest, and if we don't find one way or the other now to escape one day he will kill all of us."

"Certainly, he will kill all of us one day," Mr. Goat supported.

"But I suggest that the better thing to do now is to pack all our belongings and leave this house tomorrow morning. And I am sure, before he will wake we shall go as far as to a place that he will not be able to trace us out," Mr. Lion suggested quietly.

"Yes, you are right, Mr. Lion, and it will be better if we pack our belongings and food into one basket now, and by five o'clock in the morning leave here," said the rest two.

At the same time they packed all their belongings into one basket and put plenty of food in it which they would eat on their way.

Having done that, they went to the bed and slept.

But Ajantala who had heard all of their discussions, stood up cautiously, he wrapped himself with dried broad leaves and put himself at the bottom of the basket.

By five o'clock, these three brothers woke up, then Mr. Goat put the basket on his head and all left that house. They thought that they had saved themselves from Ajantala who was in the basket.

Having traveled about four miles, they came to a tree and they stopped under it to rest for some minutes.

"Eh! we leave our lovely house today and Ajantala will occupy the rest thing," said painfully Mr. Lion.

"Were you not the one who had agreed to Ajantala to be staying with us?" Mr. Ram said.

"Yes, you are the one, Mr. Lion, I believe," Mr. Goat supported.

"Ha! I were not the one, but Mr. Goat was the one," Mr. Lion denied.

"Ha! ha! ha! not me at all, but you were the one, Mr. Lion," exclaimed Mr. Goat.

"Shut up there, Mr. Goat, I am quite sure you were the one," roared Mr. Lion.

"Ha! ha! ha! don't tell lie against me, Mr. Lion."

"I say, shut up your mouth and if you don't admit now that you were the one, I shall kill you and eat your body at once, especially this moment that I am badly hungry for meat," Lion roared again.

"All right, if I were the one who had approved Ajantala's request

to be with us, let this ground on which we stand now split, and then swallow me. But if I were not the one, let something bring Ajantala to us now to scatter all of us.”

Mr. Goat hardly finished this curse when Ajantala jumped out of the basket, and they could not even glance at him when they scattered to the different ways for fear.

Mr. Lion escaped to the forest while Messrs. Goat and Ram escaped to the village, and then became domestic animals, from that day.

And it was from that day they became the enemies of themselves. And that was the reason the lion is killing goat or ram whenever it sees one of both for the lie they had told against him in the past.

Thus Ajantala separated the three brothers.

# The Bench

RICHARD RIVE

## *South Africa*

“We form an integral part of a complex society, a society in which a vast proportion of the population is denied the very basic right of existence, a society that condemns a man to an inferior position because he has the misfortune to be born black, a society that can only retain its precarious social and economic position at the expense of an enormous oppressed mass!”

The speaker paused for a moment and sipped some water from a glass. Karlie’s eyes shone as he listened. Those were great words, he thought, great words and true. Karlie sweated. The hot November sun beat down on the gathering. The trees on the Grand Parade in Johannesburg afforded very little shelter and his handkerchief was already soaked where he had placed it between his neck and his shirt collar. Karlie stared around him at the sea of faces. Every shade of color was represented, from shiny ebony to the one or two whites in the crowd. Karlie stared at the two detectives who were busily making shorthand notes of the speeches, then turned to stare back at the speaker.

“It is up to us to challenge the right of any group who willfully and deliberately condemn a fellow group to a servile position. We must challenge the right of any people who see fit to segregate human beings solely on grounds of pigmentation. Your children are denied the rights which are theirs by birth. They are segregated educationally, socially, economically...”

Ah, thought Karlie, that man knows what he is speaking about. He says I am as good as any other man, even a white man. That needs much thinking. I wonder if he means I have the right to go to any bioscope, or eat in any restaurant, or that my children can go to a white

school. These are dangerous ideas and need much thinking. I wonder what Ou Klaas would say to this. Ou Klaas said that God made the white man and the black man separately, and the one must always be 'baas' and the other 'jong.' But this man says different things and somehow they ring true.

Karlie's brow was knitted as he thought. On the platform were many speakers, both white and black, and they were behaving as if there were no differences of color among them. There was a white woman in a blue dress offering Nxeli a cigarette. That never could have happened at Bietjiesvlei. Old Lategan at the store there would have fainted if his Annatjie had offered Witbooi a cigarette. And Annatjie wore no such pretty dress.

These were new things and he, Karlie, had to be careful before he accepted them. But why shouldn't he accept them? He was not a colored man any more, he was a human being. The last speaker had said so. He remembered seeing pictures in the newspapers of people who defied laws which relegated them to a particular class, and those people were smiling as they went to prison. This was a queer world.

The speaker continued and Karlie listened intently. He spoke slowly, and his speech was obviously carefully prepared. This is a great man, thought Karlie.

The last speaker was the white lady in the blue dress, who asked them to challenge any discriminatory laws or measures in their own way. Why should she speak like that? She could go to the best bioscopes and swim at the best beaches. Why she was even more beautiful than Annatjie Lategan. They had warned him in Bietjiesvlei about coming to the city. He had seen the skollies in District Six and he knew what to expect there. Hanover Street held no terrors for him. But no one had told him about this. This was new, this set one's mind thinking, yet he felt it was true. She had said one should challenge. He, Karlie, would astound old Lategan and Van Wyk at the Dairy Farm. They could do what they liked to him after that. He would smile like those people in the newspapers.

The meeting was almost over when Karlie threaded his way through the crowd. The words of the speakers were still milling through his head. It could never happen in Bietjiesvlei. Or could it? The sudden

screech of a car pulling to a stop whirled him back to his senses. A white head was thrust angrily through the window.

"Look where you're going, you black bastard!"

Karlie stared dazedly at him. Surely this white man never heard what the speakers had said. He could never have seen the white woman offering Nxeli a cigarette. He could never imagine the white lady shouting those words at him. It would be best to catch a train and think these things over.

He saw the station in a new light. Here was a mass of human beings, black, white and some brown like himself. Here they mixed with one another, yet each mistrusted the other with an unnatural fear, each treated the other with suspicion, moved in a narrow, haunted pattern of its own. One must challenge these things the speaker had said... in one's own way. Yet how in one's own way? How was one to challenge? Suddenly it dawned upon him. Here was his challenge! *The bench*. The railway bench with "Europeans Only" neatly painted on it in white. For one moment it symbolized all the misery of the plural South African society.

Here was his challenge to the rights of a man. Here it stood. A perfectly ordinary wooden railway bench, like hundreds of thousands of others in South Africa. His challenge. That bench now had concentrated in it all the evils of a system he could not understand and he felt a victim of. It was the obstacle between himself and humanity. If he sat on it, he was a man. If he was afraid he denied himself membership as a human being in a human society. He almost had visions of righting this pernicious system, if he only sat down on that bench. Here was his chance. He, Karlie, would challenge.

He seemed perfectly calm when he sat down on the bench, but inside his heart was thumping wildly. Two conflicting ideas now throbbled through him. The one said, "I have no right to sit on this bench." The other was the voice of a new religion and said, "Why have I no right to sit on this bench?" The one voice spoke of the past, of the servile position he had occupied on the farm, of his father, and his father's father who were born black, lived like blacks, and died like mules. The other voice spoke of new horizons and said: "Karlie, you are a man. You have dared what your father and your father's father would not have dared. You will die like a man."

Karlie took out a cigarette and smoked. Nobody seemed to notice his sitting there. This was an anticlimax. The world still pursued its monotonous way. No voice had shouted, "Karlie has conquered!" He was a normal human being sitting on a bench in a busy station, smoking a cigarette. Or was this his victory: the fact that he was a normal human being? A well-dressed white woman walked down the platform. Would she sit on the bench? Karlie wondered. And then that gnawing voice, "You should stand and let the white woman sit!" Karlie narrowed his eyes and gripped tighter at his cigarette. She swept past him without the slightest twitch of an eyelid and continued walking down the platform. Was she afraid to challenge—to challenge his right to be a human being? Karlie now felt tired. A third conflicting idea was now creeping in, a compensatory idea which said, "You sit on this bench because you are tired; you are tired therefore you sit." He would not move because he was tired, or was it because he wanted to sit where he liked?

People were now pouring out of a train that had pulled into the station. There were so many people pushing and jostling one another that nobody noticed him. This was his train. It would be easy to step into the train and ride off home, but that would be giving in, suffering defeat, refusing the challenge, in fact admitting that he was not a human being. He sat on. Lazily he blew the cigarette smoke into the air, thinking. . . . His mind was away from the meeting and the bench: he was thinking of Bietjiesvlei and Ou Klaas, how he had insisted that Karlie should come to Cape Town. Ou Klaas would suck on his pipe and look so quizzically at one. He was wise and knew much. He had said one must go to Cape Town and learn the ways of the world. He would spit and wink slyly when he spoke of District Six and the women he knew in Hanover Street. Ou Klaas knew everything. He said God made us white or black and we must therefore keep our places.

"Get off this seat!"

Karlie did not hear the gruff voice. Ou Klaas would be on the land now waiting for his tot of cheap wine.

"I said get off the bench, you swine!" Karlie suddenly whipped back to reality. For a moment he was going to jump up, then he remembered who he was and why he was sitting there. He suddenly

felt very tired. He looked up slowly into a very red face that stared down at him.

"Get up!" it said. "There are benches down there for you."

Karlie looked up and said nothing. He stared into a pair of sharp, gray, cold eyes.

"Can't you hear me speaking to you? You black swine!"

Slowly and deliberately Karlie puffed at the cigarette. This was his test. They both stared at each other, challenged with the eyes, like two boxers, each knowing that they must eventually trade blows yet each afraid to strike first.

"Must I dirty my hands on scum like you?"

Karlie said nothing. To speak would be to break the spell, the supremacy he felt was slowly gaining.

An uneasy silence, then: "I will call a policeman rather than soil my hands on a Hotnot like you. You can't even open up your black jaw when a white man speaks to you."

Karlie saw the weakness. The white man was afraid to take action himself. He, Karlie, had won the first round of the bench dispute.

A crowd had now collected.

"Afrika!" shouted a joker.

Karlie ignored the remark. People were now milling around him, staring at the unusual sight of a black man sitting on a white man's bench. Karlie merely puffed on.

"Look at the black ape. That's the worst of giving these Kaffirs enough rope."

"I can't understand it. They have their own benches!"

"Don't get up! You have every right to sit there!"

"He'll get up when a policeman comes!"

"After all why shouldn't they sit there?"

"I've said before, I've had a native servant once, and a more impertinent . . ."

Karlie sat and heard nothing. Irresolution had *now* turned to determination. Under no condition was he going to get up. They could do what they liked.

"So, this is the fellow, eh! Get up there! Can't you read?"

The policeman was towering over him. Karlie could see the crest on his buttons and the wrinkles in his neck.



"What is your name and address! Come on!"

Karlie still maintained his obstinate silence. It took the policeman rather unawares. The crowd was growing every minute.

"You have no right to speak to this man in such a manner!" It was the white lady in the blue dress.

"Mind your own business! I'll ask your help when I need it. It's people like you who make these Kaffirs think they're as good as white men. Get up, you!" The latter remark was addressed to Karlie.

"I insist that you treat him with proper respect."

The policeman turned red.

"This...this..." He was lost for words.

"Kick up the Hotnot if he won't get up!" shouted a spectator. Rudely a white man laid hands on Karlie.

"Get up, you bloody bastard!" Karlie turned to resist, to cling to the bench, his bench. There was more than one man pulling at him. He hit out wildly and then felt a dull pain as somebody rammed a fist into his face. He was bleeding now and wild-eyed. He would fight for it. The constable clapped a pair of handcuffs on him and tried to clear a way through the crowd. Karlie still struggled. A blow or two landed on him. Suddenly he relaxed and slowly struggled to his feet. It was useless to fight any longer. Now it was his turn to smile. He had challenged and won. Who cared the rest?

"Come on, you swine!" said the policeman forcing Karlie through the crowd.

"Certainly!" said Karlie for the first time. And he stared at the policeman with all the arrogance of one who dared sit on a "European bench."

# Mista Courifer

ADELAIDE CASELY-HAYFORD

## *Sierra Leone*

Not a sound was heard in the coffin-maker's workshop, that is to say no human sound. Mista Courifer, a solid citizen of Sierra Leone, was not given to much speech. His apprentices, knowing this, never dared address him unless he spoke first. Then they only carried on their conversation in whispers. Not that Mista Courifer did not know how to use his tongue. It was incessantly wagging to and fro in his mouth at every blow of the hammer. But his shop in the heart of Freetown was a part of his house. And, as he had once confided to a friend, he was a silent member of his own household from necessity. His wife, given to much speaking, could outtalk him.

"It's no use for argue wid woman," he said cautiously. "Just like 'e no use for teach woman carpentering; she nebba sabi for hit de nail on de head. If 'e argue, she'll hit eberyting but de nail; and so wid de carpentering."

So, around his wife, with the exception of his tongue's continual wagging like a pendulum, his mouth was kept more or less shut. But whatever self-control he exercised in this respect at home was completely sent to the wind in his official capacity as the local preacher at chapel, for Mista Courifer was one of the pillars of the church, being equally at home in conducting a prayer meeting, superintending the Sunday school or occupying the pulpit.

His voice was remarkable for its wonderful gradations of pitch. He would insist on starting most of his tunes himself; consequently they nearly always ended in a solo. If he happened to pitch in the bass, he descended into such a *de profundis* that his congregations were left to flounder in a higher key; if he started in the treble, he soared so high

that the children stared at him openmouthed and their elders were lost in wonder and amazement. As for his prayers, he roared and volleyed and thundered to such an extent that poor little mites were quickly reduced to a state of collapse and started to whimper from sheer fright.

But he was most at home in the pulpit. It is true, his labors were altogether confined to the outlying village districts of Regent, Gloucester and Leicester, an arrangement with which he was by no means satisfied. Still, a village congregation is better than none at all.

His favorite themes were Jonah and Noah and he was forever pointing out the great similarity between the two, generally finishing his discourse after this manner: "You see my beloved Brebren, den two man berry much alike. All two lived in a sinful and adurturous generation. One get inside am ark; de odder one get inside a whale. Day bof seek a refuge fom de swelling waves.

"And so it is today my beloved Brebren. No matter if we get inside a whale or get inside an ark, as long as we get inside some place of safety—as long as we can find some refuge, some hiding place from de wiles ob de debil."

But his congregation was by no means convinced.

Mr. Courifer always wore black. He was one of the Sierra Leone gentlemen who consider everything European to be not only the right thing, but the *only* thing for the African, and having read somewhere that English undertakers generally appeared in somber attire, he immediately followed suit.

He even went so far as to build a European house. During his short stay in England, he had noticed how the houses were built and furnished and had forthwith erected himself one after the approved pattern—a house with stuffy little passages, narrow little staircases and poky rooms, all crammed with saddlebags and carpeted with Axminsters. No wonder his wife had to talk. It was so hopelessly uncomfortable, stuffy and unsanitary.

So Mr. Courifer wore black. It never struck him for a single moment that red would have been more appropriate, far more becoming, far less expensive and far more national. No! It must be black. He would have liked blue black, but he wore rusty black for economy.

There was one subject upon which Mr. Courifer could talk even at home, so no one ever mentioned it: his son, Tomas. Mista Courifer

had great expectations for his son; indeed in the back of his mind he had hopes of seeing him reach the high-water mark of red-tape officialism, for Tomas was in the government service. Not very high up, it is true, but still he was in it. It was an honor that impressed his father deeply, but Tomas unfortunately did not seem to think quite so much of it. The youth in question, however, was altogether neutral in his opinions in his father's presence. Although somewhat feminine as to attire, he was distinctly masculine in his speech. His neutrality was not a matter of choice, since no one was allowed to choose anything in the Courifer family but the paterfamilias himself.

From start to finish, Tomas's career had been cut out, and in spite of the fact that nature had endowed him with a black skin and an African temperament, Tomas was to be an Englishman. He was even to be an Englishman in appearance.

Consequently, once a year mysterious bundles arrived by parcel post. When opened, they revealed marvelous checks and plaids in vivid greens and blues after the fashion of a Liverpool counterjumper, waistcoats decorative in the extreme with their bold designs and rows of brass buttons, socks vying with the rainbow in glory and pumps very patent in appearance and very fragile as to texture.

Now, Tomas was no longer a minor and he keenly resented having his clothes chosen for him like a boy going to school for the first time. Indeed on one occasion, had it not been for his sister's timely interference, he would have chucked the whole collection into the fire.

Dear little Keren-happuch, eight years his junior and not at all attractive, with a very diminutive body and a very large heart. Such a mistake! People's hearts ought always to be in proportion to their size, otherwise it upsets the dimensions of the whole structure and often ends in its total collapse.

Keren was that type of little individual whom nobody worshipped, consequently she understood the art of worshipping others to the full. Tomas was the object of her adoration. Upon him she lavished the whole store of her boundless wealth and whatever hurt Tomas became positive torture as far as Keren-happuch was concerned.

"Tomas!" she said clinging to him with the tenacity of a bear, as she saw the faggots piled up high, ready for the conflagration, "Do yah! No burn am oh! Ole man go flog you oh! Den clos berry fine!

I like am myself too much. I wish"—she added wistfully—"me na boy; I wish I could use am."

This was quite a new feature which had never struck Tomas before. Keren-happuch had never received a bundle of English clothes in her life, hence her great appreciation of them.

At first Tomas only laughed—the superior, daredevil, don't-care-a-damn-about-consequences laugh of the brave before the deed. But after hearing that wistful little sentence, he forgot his own annoyance and awoke to his responsibilities as an elder brother.

A few Sundays later, Tomas Courifer, Jr., marched up the aisle of the little Wesleyan chapel in all his Liverpool magnificence accompanied by a very elated little Keren-happuch whose natural unattractiveness had been further accentuated by a vivid cerise costume—a heterogeneous mass of frill and furbelows. But the glory of her array by no means outshone the brightness of her smile. Indeed that smile seemed to illuminate the whole church and to dispel the usual melancholy preceding the recital of Jonah and his woes.

Unfortunately, Tomas had a very poor opinion of the government service and in a burst of confidence he had told Keren that he meant to chuck it at the very first opportunity. In vain his sister expostulated and pointed out the advantages connected with it—the honor, the pension—and the awful nemesis upon the head of anyone incurring the head-of-the-family's ire.

"Why you want leave am, Tomas?" she asked desperately.

"Because I never get a proper holiday. I have been in the office four and a half years and have never had a whole week off yet. And," he went on vehemently, "these white chaps come and go, and a fresh one upsets what the old one has done and a newcomer upsets what he does and they all only stay for a year and a half and go away for four months, drawing big fat pay all the time, not to speak of passages, whereas a poor African like me has to work year in and year out with never a chance of a decent break. But you needn't be afraid, Keren dear," he added consolingly, "I shan't resign, I shall just behave so badly that they'll chuck me and then my ole man can't say very much."

Accordingly when Tomas, puffing a cigarette, sauntered into the office at 9 a.m. instead of 8 a.m. for the fourth time that week, Mr. Buckmaster, who had hitherto maintained a discreet silence and kept

his eyes shut, opened them wide and administered a sharp rebuke. Tomas's conscience was profoundly stirred. Mr. Buckmaster was one of the few white men for whom he had a deep respect, aye, in the depth of his heart, he really had a sneaking regard. It was for fear of offending him that he had remained so long at his post.

But he had only lately heard that his chief was due for leave so he decided there and then to say a long good-by to a service which had treated him so shabbily. He was a vociferous reader of halfpenny newspapers and he knew that the humblest shop assistant in England was entitled to a fortnight's holiday every year. Therefore it was ridiculous to argue that because he was an African working in Africa there was no need for a holiday. All his applications for leave were quietly pigeonholed for a more convenient season.

"Courifer!" Mr. Buckmaster said sternly. "Walk into my private office please." And Courifer knew that this was the beginning of the end.

"I suppose you know that the office hours are from 8 a.m. till 4 p.m. daily," commenced Mr. Buckmaster, in a freezing tone.

"Yes, er—Sir!" stammered Courifer with his heart in his mouth and his mouth twisted up into a hard sailor's knot.

"And I suppose you also know that smoking is strictly forbidden in the office?"

"Yes, er—er—Sir!" stammered the youth.

"Now hitherto," the even tones went on, "I have always looked upon you as an exemplary clerk, strictly obliging, punctual, accurate and honest, but for the last two or three weeks I have had nothing but complaints about you. And from what I myself have seen, I am afraid they are not altogether unmerited."

Mr. Buckmaster rose as he spoke, took a bunch of keys out of his pocket and, unlocking his roll-top desk, drew out a sheaf of papers. "This is your work, is it not?" he said to the youth.

"Yes, er—er—Sir!" he stuttered, looking shamefacedly at the dirty, ink-stained, blotched sheets of closely typewritten matter.

"Then what in Heaven's name is the matter with you to produce such work?"

Tomas remained silent for a moment or two. He summoned up courage to look boldly at the stern countenance of his chief. And as he

looked, the sternness seemed to melt away and he could see genuine concern there.

"Please, er—Sirl!" he stammered, "May—I—er—just tell you everything?"

Half an hour later, a very quiet, subdued, penitent Tomas Courifer walked out of the office by a side door. Mr. Buckmaster followed later, taking with him an increased respect for the powers of endurance exercised by the growing West African youth.

Six weeks later, Mista Courifer was busily occupied wagging his tongue when he looked up from his work to see a European man standing in his doorway.

The undertaker found speech and a chair simultaneously. "Good afternoon, Sah!" he said, dusting the chair before offering it to his visitor. "I hope you don't want a coffin, Sah!" which was a deep-sea lie for nothing pleased him more than the opportunity of making a coffin for a European. He was always so sure of the money. Such handsome money—paid it is true with a few ejaculations, but paid on the nail and without any deductions whatsoever. Now with his own people things were different. They demurred, they haggled, they bartered, they gave him detailed accounts of all their other expenses and then, after keeping him waiting for weeks, they would end by sending him half the amount with a stern exhortation to be thankful for that.

Mr. Buckmaster took the proffered chair and answered pleasantly: "No thank you, I don't intend dying just yet. I happened to be passing so I thought I should just like a word with you about your son."

Mr. Courifer bristled all over with exultation and expectation. Perhaps they were going to make his son a kind of undersecretary of state. What an unexpected honor for the Courifer family. What a rise in their social status; what a rise out of their neighbors. How good God was!

"Of course you know he is in my office?"

"Oh yes, Sah. He often speaks about you."

"Well, I am going home very soon and as I may not be returning to Sierra Leone, I just wanted to tell you how pleased I should be at any time to give him a decent testimonial."

Mr. Courifer's countenance fell. What a comedown!

"Yes, Sah," he answered somewhat dubiously.

"I can recommend him highly as being steady, persevering, reliable and trustworthy. And you can always apply to me if ever such a thing be necessary."

Was that all! What a disappointment! Still it was something worth having. Mr. Buckmaster was an Englishman and a testimonial from him would certainly be a very valuable possession. He rubbed his hands together as he said: "Well I am berry much obliged to you, Sah, berry much obliged. And as time is short and we nebba know what a day may bring forth, would you mind writing one down now, Sah?"

"Certainly. If you will give me a sheet of paper, I shall do so at once."

Before Tomas returned home from his evening work, the testimonial was already framed and hanging up amidst the moth-eaten velvet of the drawing room.

On the following Monday morning, Courifer Jr. bounced into his father's workshop, upsetting the equilibrium of the carpenter's bench and also of the voiceless apprentices hard at work.

"Well, Sah?" ejaculated his father, surveying him in disgust. "You berry late. Why you no go office dis morning?"

"Because I've got a whole two months' holiday, Sir! Just think of it—two whole months—with nothing to do but just enjoy myself!"

"Tomas," his father said solemnly, peering at him over his glasses, "you must larn for make coffins. You get fine chance now."

*Sotto voce*: "I'll be damned if I will!" Aloud: "No thank you, Sir. I am going to learn how to make love, after which I am going to learn how to build myself a nice mud hut."

"And who dis gal you want married?" thundered his father, ignoring the latter part of the sentence altogether.

A broad smile illuminated Tomas's countenance. "She is a very nice girl, Sir, a very nice girl. Very quiet and gentle and sweet, and she doesn't talk too much."

"I see. Is dat all?"

"Oh, no. She can sew and clean and make a nice little home. And she has plenty sense; she will make a good mother."

"Yes, notting pass dat!"

"She has been to school for a long time. She reads nice books and



she writes, oh, such a nice letter," said Tomas, patting his breast-pocket affectionately.

"I see. I suppose she sabi cook good fashion?"

"I don't know, I don't think so, and it doesn't matter very much."

"What!" roared the old man; "You mean tell me you want married woman who no sabi cook?"

"I want to marry her because I love her, Sir!"

"Dat's all right, but for we country, de heart and de stomach always go togedder. For we country, black man no want married woman who no sabi cook! Dat de berry first requisitional. You own mudder sabi cook."

That's the reason why she has been nothing but your miserable drudge all these years, thought the young man. His face was very grave as he rejoined: "The style in our country is not at all nice, Sir. I don't like to see a wife slaving away in the kitchen all times to make good chop for her husband who sits down alone and eats the best of everything himself, and she and the children only get the leavings. No thank you! And besides, Sir, you are always telling me that you want me to be an Englishman. That is why I always try to talk good English to you."

"Yes, dat's all right. Dat's berry good. But I want make you *look* like Englishman. I don't say you must copy all der different way!"

"Well, Sir, if I try till I die, I shall never look like an Englishman, and I don't know that I want to. But there are some English customs that I like very much indeed. I like the way white men treat their wives; I like their home life; I like to see mother and father and the little family all sitting down eating their meals together."

"I see," retorted his father sarcastically. "And who go cook den meal. You tink say wid your four pound a month, you go able hire a perfessional cook?"

"Oh, I don't say so, Sir. And I am sure if Accastasia does not know how to cook now, she will before we are married. But what I want you to understand is just this, that whether she is able to cook or not, I shall marry her just the same."

"Berry well," shouted his father, wrath delineated in every feature, "but instead of building one mud hut you better go one time build one madhouse."

"Sir, thank you. But I know what I am about and a mud hut will suit us perfectly for the present."

"A mud hut!" ejaculated his father in horror. "You done use fine England house wid staircase and balustrade and tick carpet and handsome furnitures. You want to go live in mud hut? You ungrateful boy, you shame me, oh!"

"Dear me, no, Sir. I won't shame you. It's going to be a nice clean spacious mud hut. And what is more, it is going to be a sweet little home, just big enough for two. I am going to distemper the walls pale green, like at the principal's rooms at Keren's school."

"How you sabi den woman's rooms?"

"Because you have sent me two or three times to pay her school fees, so I have looked at those walls and I like them too much."

"I see. And what else you go do?" asked his father ironically.

"I am going to order some nice wicker chairs from the Islands and a few good pieces of linoleum for the floors and then—"

"And den what?"

"I shall bring home my bride."

Mr. Courifer's dejection grew deeper with each moment. A mud hut! This son of his—the hope of his life! A government officer! A would-be Englishman! To live in a mud hut! His disgust knew no bounds. "You ungrateful wretch!" he bellowed; "You go disgrace me. You go lower your pore father. You go lower your position for de office."

"I am sorry, Sir," retorted the young man. "I don't wish to offend you. I'm grateful for all you have done for me. But I have had a raise in salary and I want a home of my own which, after all, is only natural, and"—he went on steadily, staring his father straight in the face—"I may as well tell you at once, you need not order any more Liverpool suits for me."

"Why not?" thundered his irate parent, removing his specs lest any harm should befall them.

"Well, I am sorry to grieve you, Sir, but I have been trying to live up to your European standards all this time. Now I am going to chuck it once and for all. I am going back to the native costume of my mother's people, and the next time I appear in chapel it will be as a Wolof."

The very next Sunday the awful shock of seeing his son walk up the aisle of the church in pantaloons and the bright loose overjacket of a Wolof from Gambia, escorting a pretty young bride the color of chocolate, also in native dress, so unnerved Mista Courifer that his mind suddenly became a complete blank. He could not even remember Jonah and the whale, nor could his tongue possess one word to let fly, not one. The service had to be turned into a prayer meeting.

Mista Courifer is the local preacher no longer. Now he only makes coffins.

# As the Night, the Day

ABIOSEH NICOL

## *Sierra Leone*

Kojo and Bandlele walked slowly across the hot green lawn, holding their science manuals with moist fingers. In the distance they could hear the junior school collecting in the hall of the main school building, for singing practice. Nearer, but still farther enough, their classmates were strolling toward them. The two reached the science block and entered it. It was a low building set apart from the rest of the high school which sprawled on the hillside of the African savanna. The laboratory was a longish room and at one end they saw Basu, another boy, looking out of the window, his back turned to them. Mr. Abu, the ferocious laboratory attendant, was not about. The rows of multicolored bottles looked inviting. A Bunsen burner soughed loudly in the heavy weary heat. Where the tip of the light blue triangle of flame ended, a shimmering plastic transparency started. One could see the restless hot air moving in the minute tornado. The two African boys watched it, interestedly, holding hands.

"They say it is hotter inside the flame than on its surface," Kojo said, doubtfully. "I wonder how they know?"

"I think you mean the opposite; let's try it ourselves," Bandlele answered.

"How?"

"Let's take the temperature inside."

"All right, here is a thermometer. You do it."

"It says ninety degrees now. I shall take the temperature of the outer flame first, then you can take the inner yellow one."

Bandlele held the thermometer gently forward to the flame and Kojo craned to see. The thin thread of quicksilver shot upward within the stem of the instrument with swift malevolence and there was a

slight crack. The stem had broken. On the bench the small bulbous drops of mercury which had spilled from it shivered with glinting, playful malice and shuddered down to the cement floor, dashing themselves into a thousand shining pieces, some of which coalesced again and shook gaily as if with silent laughter.

"Oh my God!" whispered Kojo hoarsely.

"Shut up!" Bandle said, imperiously in a low voice.

Bandle swept the few drops on the bench into his cupped hand and threw the blob of mercury down the sink. He swept those on the floor under an adjoining cupboard with his bare feet. Then, picking up the broken halves of the thermometer, he tiptoed to the waste bin and dropped them in. He tiptoed back to Kojo, who was standing petrified by the blackboard.

"See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil," he whispered to Kojo.

It all took place in a few seconds. Then the rest of the class started pouring in, chattering and pushing each other. Basu, who had been at the end of the room with his back turned to them all the time, now turned round and limped laboriously across to join the class, his eyes screwed up as they always were.

The class ranged itself loosely in a semicircle around the demonstration platform. They were dressed in the school uniform of white shirt and khaki shorts. Their official age was around sixteen although, in fact, it ranged from Kojo's fifteen years to one or two boys of twenty-one.

Mr. Abu, the laboratory attendant, came in from the adjoining store and briskly cleaned the blackboard. He was a retired African sergeant from the Army Medical Corps and was feared by the boys. If he caught any of them in any petty thieving, he offered them the choice of a hard smack on the bottom or of being reported to the science masters. Most boys chose the former as they knew the matter would end there with no protracted interviews, moral recrimination, and an entry in the conduct book.

The science master stepped in and stood on his small platform. A tall, thin, dignified Negro with graying hair and silver-rimmed spectacles badly fitting on his broad nose and always slipping down, making him look avuncular. "Vernier" was his nickname as he insisted on exact measurement and exact speech "as fine as a vernier

scale," he would say, which measured, of course, things in thousandths of a millimeter. Vernier set the experiments for the day and demonstrated them, then retired behind the *Church Times* which he read seriously in between walking quickly down the aisles of lab benches advising boys. It was a simple heat experiment to show that a dark surface gave out more heat by radiation than a bright surface.

During the class, Vernier was called away to the telephone and Abu was not about, having retired to the lavatory for a smoke. As soon as a posted sentinel announced that he was out of sight, minor pandemonium broke out. Some of the boys raided the store. The wealthier ones swiped rubber tubing to make catapults and to repair bicycles, and helped themselves to chemicals for developing photographic films. The poorer boys were in deadlier earnest and took only things of strict commercial interest which could be sold easily in the market. They emptied stuff into bottles in their pockets. Soda for making soap, magnesium sulfate for opening-medicine, salt for cooking, liquid paraffin for women's hairdressing, and fine yellow iodoform powder much in demand for sprinkling on sores.

Kojo protested mildly against all this. "Oh, shut up!" a few boys said. Sorie, a huge boy who always wore a fez indoors and who, rumor said, had already fathered a child, commanded respect and some leadership in the class. He was sipping his favorite mixture of dilute alcohol and bicarbonate—which he called "gin and fizz"—from a beaker. "Look here, Kojo, you are getting out of hand. What do you think our parents pay taxes and school fees for? For us to enjoy—or to buy a new car every year for Simpson?" The other boys laughed. Simpson was the European headmaster, feared by the small boys, adored by the boys in the middle school, and liked, in a critical fashion, with reservations, by some of the senior boys and African masters. He had a passion for new motorcars, buying one yearly.

"Come to think of it," Sorie continued to Kojo, "you must take something yourself, then we'll know we are safe." "Yes, you must," the other boys insisted. Kojo gave in and, unwillingly, took a little nitrate for some gunpowder experiments which he was carrying out at home.

"Someone!" the lookout called.

The boys dispersed in a moment. Sorie swilled out his mouth at

the sink with some water. Mr. Abu, the lab attendant, entered and observed the innocent collective expression of the class. He glared round suspiciously and sniffed the air. It was a physics experiment, but the place smelled chemical. However, Vernier came in then. After asking if anyone was in difficulties, and finding that no one could momentarily think up anything, he retired to his chair and settled down to an article on Christian reunion, adjusting his spectacles and thoughtfully sucking an empty tooth-socket.

Towards the end of the period, the class collected around Vernier and gave in their results, which were then discussed. One of the more political boys asked Vernier if dark surfaces gave out more heat, was that why they all had black faces in West Africa. A few boys giggled. Basu looked down and tapped his clubfoot embarrassedly on the floor. Vernier was used to questions of this sort from the senior boys. He never committed himself as he was getting near retirement and his pension, and became more guarded each year. He sometimes even feared that Simpson had spies among the boys.

"That may be so, although the opposite might be more convenient."

Everything in science had a loophole, the boys thought, and said so to Vernier.

"Ah! that is what is called research," he replied, enigmatically.

Sorie asked a question. Last time, they had been shown that an electric spark with hydrogen and oxygen atoms formed water. Why was not this method used to provide water in town at the height of the dry season when there was an acute water shortage?

"It would be too expensive," Vernier replied, shortly. He disliked Sorie, not because of his different religion, but because he thought that Sorie was a bad influence and also asked ridiculous questions.

Sorie persisted. There was plenty of water during the rainy season. It could be split by lightning to hydrogen and oxygen in October and the gases compressed and stored, then changed back to water in March during the shortage. There was a faint ripple of applause from Sorie's admirers.

"It is an impracticable idea," Vernier snapped.

The class dispersed and started walking back across the hot grass. Kojo and Bandele heaved sighs of relief and joined Sorie's crowd, which was always the largest.

"Science is a bit of a swindle," Sorie was saying. "I do not for a moment think that Vernier believes any of it himself," he continued. "Because if he does, why is he always reading religious books?"

"Come back, all of you, come back!" Mr. Abu's stentorian voice rang out, across to them.

They wavered and stopped. Kojo kept walking on in a blind panic. "Stop," Bandele hissed across. "You fool." He stopped, turned and joined the returning crowd, closely followed by Bandele. Abu joined Vernier on the platform. The loose semicircle of boys faced them.

"Mr. Abu has just found this in the waste bin," Vernier announced, gray with anger. He held up the two broken halves of the thermometer. "It must be due to someone from this class as the number of thermometers was checked before being put out."

A little wind gusted in through the window and blew the silence heavily this way and that.

"Who?"

No one answered. Vernier looked round and waited.

"Since no one has owned up, I am afraid I shall have to detain you for an hour after school as punishment," said Vernier.

There was a murmur of dismay and anger. An important soccer house-match was scheduled for that afternoon. Some boys put their hands up and said that they had to play in the match.

"I don't care," Vernier shouted. He felt, in any case, that too much time was devoted to games and not enough to work.

He left Mr. Abu in charge and went off to fetch his things from the main building.

"We shall play 'Bible and Key,'" Abu announced as soon as Vernier had left. Kojo had been afraid of this and new beads of perspiration sprang from his troubled brow. All the boys knew the details. It was a method of finding out a culprit by divination. A large doorkey was placed between the leaves of a Bible at the New Testament passage where Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead before the Apostles for lying, and the Bible suspended by two bits of string tied to both ends of the key. The combination was held up by someone and the names of all present were called out in turn. When that of the sinner was called, the Bible was expected to turn round and round violently and fall.



Now Abu asked for a Bible. Someone produced a copy. He opened the first page and then shook his head and handed it back. "This won't do," he said, "it's a Revised Version; only the genuine Word of God will give us the answer."

An Authorized King James Version was then produced and he was satisfied. Soon he had the contraption fixed up. He looked round the semicircle from Sorie at one end, through the others, to Bandele, Basu, and Kojo at the other, near the door.

"You seem to have an honest face," he said to Kojo, "Come and hold it." Kojo took the ends of the string gingerly with both hands, trembling slightly.

Abu moved over to the low window and stood at attention, his sharp profile outlined against the red hibiscus flowers, the green trees, and the molten sky. The boys watched anxiously. A black-bodied lizard scurried up a wall and started nodding its pink head with grave impartiality.

Abu fixed his aging bloodshot eyes on the suspended Bible. He spoke hoarsely and slowly:

"Oh Bible, Bible, on a key,  
Kindly tell it unto me,  
By swinging slowly round and true,  
To whom this sinful act is due..."

He turned to the boys and barked out their names in a parade-ground voice beginning with Sorie and working his way round, looking at the Bible after each name.

To Kojo, trembling and shivering as if ice-cold water had been thrown over him, it seemed as if he had lost all power and that some gigantic being stood behind him holding up his tired aching elbows. It seemed to him as if the key and Bible had taken on a life of their own, and he watched with fascination the whole combination moving slowly, jerkily, and rhythmically in short arcs as if it had acquired a heart-beat.

"Ayo Sogbenri, Sonnir Kargbo, Oji Ndebu." Abu was coming to the end now. "Tommy Longe, Ajayi Cole, Bandele Fagb..."

Kojo dropped the Bible. "I am tired," he said, in a small scream. "I am tired."

"Yes, he is," Abu agreed, "but we are almost finished; only Bandle and Basu are left."

"Pick up that book, Kojo, and hold it up again." Bandle's voice whipped through the air with cold fury. It sobered Kojo and he picked it up.

"Will you continue please with my name, Mr. Abu?" Bandle asked, turning to the window.

"Go back to your place quickly, Kojo," Abu said. "Vernier is coming. He might be vexed. He is a strongly religious man and so does not believe in the Bible-and-key ceremony."

Kojo slipped back with sick relief, just before Vernier entered.

In the distance the rest of the school were assembling for closing prayers. The class sat and stood around the blackboard and demonstration bench in attitudes of exasperation, resignation, and self-righteous indignation. Kojo's heart was beating so loudly that he was surprised no one else heard it.

"Once to every man and nation  
Comes the moment to decide . . ."

The closing hymn floated across to them, interrupting the still afternoon.

Kojo got up. He felt now that he must speak the truth or life would be intolerable ever afterwards. Bandle got up swiftly before him. In fact, several things seemed to happen all at the same time. The rest of the class stirred. Vernier looked up from a book review which he had started reading. A butterfly, with black and gold wings, flew in and sat on the edge of the blackboard, flapping its wings quietly and waiting too.

"Basu was here first before any of the class," Bandle said firmly.

Everyone turned to Basu, who cleared his throat.

"I was just going to say so myself, Sir," Basu replied to Vernier's enquiring glance.

"Pity you had not thought of it before," Vernier said, drily. "What were you doing here?"

"I missed the previous class, so I came straight to the lab and waited. I was over there by the window trying to look at the blue sky. I did not break the thermometer, Sir."

A few boys tittered. Some looked away. The others muttered. Basu's breath always smelt of onions, but although he could play no games, some boys liked him and were kind to him in a tolerant way.

"Well, if you did not, someone did. We shall continue with the detention."

Vernier noticed Abu standing by. "You need not stay, Mr. Abu," he said to him. "I shall close up. In fact, come with me now and I shall let you out through the back gate."

He went out with Abu.

When he had left, Sorie turned to Basu and asked mildly:

"You are sure you did not break it?"

"No, I didn't."

"He did it," someone shouted.

"But what about the Bible and key?" Basu protested. "It did not finish. Look at him." He pointed to Bandele.

"I was quite willing for it to go on," said Bandele. "You were the only one left."

Someone threw a book at Basu and said, "Confess!"

Basu backed on to a wall. "To God, I shall call the police if anyone strikes me," he cried fiercely.

"He thinks he can buy the police," a voice called.

"That proves it," someone shouted from the back.

"Yes, he must have done it," the others said, and they started throwing books at Basu. Sorie waved his arm for them to stop, but they did not. Books, corks, boxes of matches rained on Basu. He bent his head and shielded his face with his bent arm.

"I did not do it, I swear I did not do it. Stop it, you fellows," he moaned over and over again. A small cut had appeared on his temple and he was bleeding. Kojo sat quietly for a while. Then a curious hum started to pass through him, and his hands began to tremble, his armpits to feel curiously wetter. He turned round and picked up a book and flung it with desperate force at Basu, and then another. He felt somehow that there was an awful swelling of guilt which he could only shed by punishing himself through hurting someone. Anger and rage against everything different seized him, because if everything and everyone had been the same, somehow he felt nothing would have been wrong and they would all have been happy. He was carried away now

by a torrent which swirled and pounded. He felt that somehow Basu was in the wrong, must be in the wrong, and if he hurt him hard enough he would convince the others and therefore himself that he had not broken the thermometer and that he had never done anything wrong. He groped for something bulky enough to throw, and picked up the Bible.

"Stop it," Vernier shouted through the open doorway. "Stop it, you hooligans, you beasts."

They all became quiet and shamefacedly put down what they were going to throw. Basu was crying quietly and hopelessly, his thin body shaking.

"Go home, all of you, go home. I am ashamed of you." His black face shone with anger. "You are an utter disgrace to your nation and to your race."

They crept away, quietly, uneasily, avoiding each other's eyes, like people caught in secret passion.

Vernier went to the first-aid cupboard and started dressing Basu's wounds.

Kojo and Bandle came back and hid behind the door, listening. Bandle insisted that they should.

Vernier put Basu's bandaged head against his waistcoat and dried the boy's tears with his handkerchief, gently patting his shaking shoulders.

"It wouldn't have been so bad if I had done it, Sir," he mumbled, snuggling his head against Vernier, "but I did not do it. I swear to God I did not."

"Hush, hush," said Vernier comfortingly.

"Now they will hate me even more," he moaned.

"Hush, hush."

"I don't mind the wounds so much, they will heal."

"Hush, hush."

"They've missed the football match and now they will never talk to me again, oh-ee, oh-ee, why have I been so punished?"

"As you grow older," Vernier advised, "you must learn that men are punished not always for what they do, but often for what people think they will do, or for what they are. Remember that and you will find it easier to forgive them. 'To thine own self be true!'" Vernier

ended with a flourish, holding up his clenched fist in a mock dramatic gesture, quoting from the Shakespeare examination set-book for the year and declaiming to the dripping taps and empty benches and still afternoon, to make Basu laugh.

Basu dried his eyes and smiled wanly and replied: "'And it shall follow as the night the day.' Hamlet, Act One, Scene Three, Polonius to Laertes."

"There's a good chap. First class, Grade One. I shall give you a lift home."

Kojo and Bandlele walked down the red laterite road together, Kojo dispiritedly kicking stones into the gutter.

"The fuss they made over a silly old thermometer," Bandlele began.

"I don't know, old man, I don't know," Kojo said impatiently.

They had both been shaken by the scene in the empty lab. A thin invisible wall of hostility and mistrust was slowly rising between them.

"Basu did not do it, of course," Bandlele said.

Kojo stopped dead in his tracks. "Of course he did not do it," he shouted, "we did it."

"No need to shout, old man. After all, it was your idea."

"It wasn't," Kojo said furiously. "You suggested we try it."

"Well, you started the argument. Don't be childish." They tramped on silently, raising small clouds of dust with their bare feet.

"I should not take it too much to heart," Bandlele continued. "That chap Basu's father hoards foodstuff like rice and palm oil until there is a shortage and then sells them at high prices. The police are watching him."

"What has that got to do with it?" Kojo asked.

"Don't you see, Basu might quite easily have broken that thermometer. I bet he has done things before that we have all been punished for." Bandlele was emphatic.

They walked on steadily down the main road of the town, past the Syrian and Lebanese shops crammed with knickknacks and rolls of cloth, past a large Indian shop with dull red carpets and brass trays displayed in its windows, carefully stepping aside in the narrow road as the British officials sped by in cars to their hill-station bungalows for lunch and siesta.

Kojo reached home at last. He washed his feet and ate his main meal for the day. He sat about heavily and restlessly for some hours. Night soon fell with its usual swiftness, at six, and he finished his homework early and went to bed.

Lying in bed he rehearsed again what he was determined to do the next day. He would go up to Vernier:

"Sir," he would begin, "I wish to speak with you privately."

"Can it wait?" Vernier would ask.

"No, Sir," he would say firmly, "as a matter of fact it is rather urgent."

Vernier would take him to an empty classroom and say, "What is troubling you, Kojo Ananse?"

"I wish to make a confession, Sir. I broke the thermometer yesterday." He had decided he would not name Bandele; it was up to the latter to decide whether he would lead a pure life.

Vernier would adjust his slipping glasses up his nose and think. Then he would say:

"This is a serious matter, Kojo. You realize you should have confessed yesterday."

"Yes, Sir, I am very sorry."

"You have done great harm, but better late than never. You will, of course, apologize in front of the class and particularly to Basu who has shown himself a finer chap than all of you."

"I shall do so, Sir."

"Why have you come to me now to apologize? Were you hoping that I would simply forgive you?"

"I was hoping you would, Sir. I was hoping you would show your forgiveness by beating me."

Vernier would pull his glasses up his nose again. He would move his tongue inside his mouth reflectively. "I think you are right. Do you feel you deserve six strokes or nine?"

"Nine, Sir."

"Bend over!"

Kojo had decided he would not cry because he was almost a man. Whack! Whack!!

Lying in bed in the dark thinking about it all as it would happen

tomorrow, he clenched his teeth and tensed his buttocks in imaginary pain.

Whack! Whack!! Whack!!!

Suddenly, in his little room, under his thin cotton sheet, he began to cry. Because he felt the sharp lancing pain already cutting into him. Because of Basu and Simpson and the thermometer. For all the things he wanted to do and be which would never happen. For all the good men they had told them about, Jesus Christ, Mohammed, and George Washington who never told a lie. For Florence Nightingale and David Livingstone. For Kagawa, the Japanese man, for Gandhi, and for Kwegyir Aggrey, the African. Oh-ee, oh-ee. Because he knew he would never be as straight and strong and true as the school song said they should be. He saw, for the first time, what this thing would be like, becoming a man. He touched the edge of an inconsolable eternal grief. Oh-ee, oh-ee; always, he felt, always I shall be a disgrace to the nation and the race.

His mother passed by his bedroom door slowly dragging her slippered feet as she always did. He pushed his face into his wet pillow to stifle his sobs, but she had heard him. She came in and switched on the light.

"What *is* the matter with you, my son?"

He pushed his face further into his pillow.

"Nothing," he said, muffled and choking.

"You have been looking like a sick fowl all afternoon," she continued.

She advanced and put the back of her moist cool fingers against the side of his neck.

"You have got fever," she exclaimed. "I'll get something from the kitchen."

When she had gone out, Kojo dried his tears and turned the dry side of the pillow up. His mother reappeared with a thermometer in one hand and some quinine mixture in the other.

"Oh, take it away, take it away," he shouted, pointing to her right hand and shutting his eyes tightly.

"All right, all right," she said, slipping the thermometer into her bosom.

He is a queer boy, she thought, with pride and a little fear as she watched him drink the clear bitter fluid.

She then stood by him and held his head against her broad thigh as he sat up on the low bed, and she stroked his face. She knew he had been crying but did not ask him why, because she was sure he would not tell her. She knew he was learning, first slowly and now quickly, and she would soon cease to be his mother and be only one of the womenfolk in the family. Such a short time, she thought, when they are really yours and tell you everything. She sighed and slowly eased his sleeping head down gently.

The next day Kojo got to school early, and set to things briskly. He told Bandele that he was going to confess but would not name him. He half hoped he would join him. But Bandele had said, threateningly, that he had better not mention his name, let him go and be a Boy Scout on his own. The sneer strengthened him and he went off to the lab. He met Mr. Abu and asked for Vernier. Abu said Vernier was busy and what was the matter, anyhow.

"I broke the thermometer yesterday," Kojo said in a businesslike manner.

Abu put down the glassware he was carrying.

"Well, I never!" he said. "What do you think you will gain by this?"

"I broke it," Kojo repeated.

"Basu broke it," Abu said impatiently. "Sorrie got him to confess and Basu himself came here this morning and told the science master and myself that he knew now that he had knocked the thermometer over by mistake when he came in early yesterday afternoon. He had not turned round to look, but he had definitely heard a tinkle as he walked by. Someone must have picked it up and put it in the waste bin. The whole matter is settled, the palaver finished."

He tapped a barometer on the wall and, squinting, read the pressure. He turned again to Kojo.

"I should normally have expected him to say so yesterday and save you boys missing the game. But there you are," he added, shrugging and trying to look reasonable, "you cannot hope for too much from a Syrian boy"



# Law of the Grazing Fields

CYPRIAN EKWENSI

## *Nigeria*

This is the law of the wandering cattlemen of the savanna: that a man may elope with the woman of his choice, maiden or matron, wife or spinster. But woe betide him if he is caught on the run. Yet all is well if he can but get his beloved home without being caught.

On the evening of our story a brother and sister were quarreling. Modio, the brother, had just pushed Amina, the sister, violently.

"Kai!" Amina shouted, springing deftly backward, "Take your hands off me." Her lips were parted, but not in a smile, and her full breasts heaved so that the necklaces of silver and fruit seemed to come to life. Amina just managed to retain her balance by clutching at the wall of the grass hut. "Don't you dare touch me again!"

"By Allah," Modio raged, "I'll teach you some sense."

She glared at him. He was crouching before her, his hands curved like the claws of a hawk about to strike, his muscles tense. "You'll go nowhere!"

"You lie!" she cried. "This night I will be with Yalla. He's the husband I've chosen."

"What of Jama, the husband our father chose for you? What of the cattle Jama's been paying?"

"That is your affair," she said. "Did you— Oh, let me go, you devil. Are you mad?"

She felt the stroke of his rough hand across her mouth. His arm tightened about her waist and she was struggling as he carried her out to his own hut. With his bare foot he kicked open the door; dust rose in a cloud. He thrust her in. She fell forward on her face in the dust and lay there, her body heaving with sobs. Amina was young and

in the fullness of her bloom. Her long hair, unplaited, fell over her back and lay buried in the dust. Tears mingled with the red cream she had painted on her cheeks.

"You wretch," she heard her brother say from the other side of the door. He was fastening the door and presently she heard him stamp away, cursing her.

She let the tears flow freely as if tears alone could heal the ache in her heart, the desire for the man she had chosen. But there must be hope, she thought. No one, nothing could shut her away from Yalla forever. She must go to him, she *must*.

Hatred burned within her breast. Was it her fault that she did not like Jama? Her father had accepted the cattle first and told her about him later. He turned out to be a weak-kneed, effeminate man. A man who could not weave mats or take the cattle out to graze. A coward who had wept and begged as they flogged him at the *sharro*. He had taken his flogging, it was true, but he had not taken it like a man and it would be humiliating to marry him. Her father might give her away to Jama, but he would not be present when the other maidens would taunt her with having married a coward: "And how's your husband? The one who stays in bed till sunrise, who must not be soaked by the rain? Ha, ha! A husband, indeed!"

The mistake had been Yalla's, for he had not honored the arrangement in full. It had been a simple arrangement. She and Yalla were to escape from the camp before Jama brought the bulls that were the final installment of the bride-price. Yalla was to have come to the hut at the hour when the hyenas begin to howl over the grazing fields. He was to screech in the manner peculiar to the gray hawk that steals chickens and she would then know that he was waiting for her under the dorowa tree.

She had waited for Yalla's screech. In the early hours of the evening before the hyenas slunk out of the rocks, she had thought about her man—tall, wide-shouldered, with a copper ring in his plaited hair, a man who could break a stubborn bull or calm the wildest pony in her father's stables. Yet when he smiled or held her hand, his face was so gentle and so sweet. She liked to place her head against his deep wide chest and look up into the darkness of his brown eyes. He was fond of playing with her ears, and sometimes he irritated her and she would

threaten to go to Jama. What a contrast Yalla was to Jama. Jama, the coward. Could Jama protect a home from the gales that swept the grazing fields? Could he outwit the wild dogs, and the hyenas, the leopard and the lion, when they came to raid the herd?

A husband indeed. She had been his "wife" ever since she could remember. Five hundred head of cattle was a good price, but she was no article for sale.

Early this evening Yalla had come up to her father's settlement. He had stood outside near the dorowa tree and had whistled to her. She had been very excited. To think she was leaving her home for good. There could be no good-bys, no tears. She was running away with a man they would gladly kill. There was dead silence over the veld. Amina had peeped out cautiously. There was the veld before her. It was all hers and Yalla's if only they would dare. The stunted trees, bowing in the cold wind, the rushing streams, the rocks, the thorn forests. They were all calling out to her and to Yalla to go forth and conquer them; to begin their own camp with a group of bulls and cows—their own. Yalla had screeched again, impatiently, and this time he did sound like the gray hawk. She had not hesitated.

She ran. She took nothing with her, not even one of the wooden ladles that her mother had given her for stirring the milk. And that was when her brother had intercepted her. She did not know that he had been hiding all the while in a nearby tree. He had a pack of wild cattle-dogs with him, and these he at once unleashed on Yalla. He had seized Amina and had laughed at her threats and clawings and curses. For Yalla and Amina the law of the grazing fields was broken.

Now she was a prisoner in the hut, but Amina found it impossible to imagine that Yalla never would be hers. There must still be a chance. If only he could somehow manage to free her from this prison and take her to his hut before Jama paid the full price of five hundred cattle, she could still be Yalla's by right of his might. No one could deny this law of the grazing fields. All cattlemen knew it and respected it. But how was Yalla to know where she was, or when Jama would be coming. Everything was over, Amina decided with a fresh burst of tears.

"Oh, Yalla, my Yalla! Come and save me, Yalla. I am yours and you are my man!"

She pushed and screamed and threatened until her brother warned her to be quiet. But how could she be quiet when her body itched from the dust and the thorns? Oh, death! It were better to die than to live as Jama's wife.

Already she could hear an argument about the saddling of the horses. Her other brothers had returned from the fields. One of them said she must wear a black veil, and the other said a white one was the custom. Such trifles! The eldest brother said he would ride behind the bride; he couldn't trust her for a moment after what she had been through with Modio. And all this because of five hundred head of cattle.

Quite suddenly she became conscious of silence. The chattering ceased and the coarse jokes. A fearful pause lay over the veld. She began to cough. The air in the little room hung heavy and thick. And then her brother's voice cut in hoarsely.

"Fire!" he shouted. "Fire! . . . Yes . . . whoo . . . fetch water . . . Fire!"

Amina started. Heavy fumes began to fill her little prison. She was coughing and gasping fearfully. Desperation gave her the strength of ten. She flung herself at the door. The fumes were now pouring in through every crack in the hut. The boys outside shouted and yelled, keeping the cows from panicking. Their shouts beat dimly against her ears. She was choking. Did they not even remember her? Could they be so cruel? Were their cows more valuable to them than her life?

A rough hand thrust open her door, and a man's gruff voice urged her, "Follow me. It's Yalla."

Her heart gladdened, but no words came to her choking lips. The man's arm circled her waist and swept her off her feet. The thatch caught her hair, and the man's hands detached the burrs tenderly. She must be dreaming. She felt the air rush into her throat. She saw the yellow sheets of flame shoot skyward in dazzling columns. And, as she raised her hand to shield her eyes from the glare, Amina saw her brothers dashing here, there and yonder, collecting sleeping mats, money purses, milk bowls. It was a dream no longer. That voice—it was real.

"There she is! . . . Brothers, there's our sister. Catch her! . . ."

"Yalla," Amina sobbed, "what shall we do? They are coming."

"Let them try. My hut is five miles from here. It will be a good race."

She felt herself carried across the encampment and saddled on to a horse.

"Away, now!" Yalla shouted. "Away. . . ."

Every forward leap of the horse jarred her bones. Her hair streamed in the wind. Behind them came her brothers. Relentless, cunning riders, angered beyond repair. Amina could clearly hear the clatter of the pursuing horses. By Allah! What could she do?

Twang.

That was an arrow. Best to give up now.

"Oh, Yalla, let us get down and go back home. It's useless running in this manner."

The man's laugh, big and thunderous, made her feel silly. Was he laughing at the poisoned arrow that might have stiffened his back and sent him coughing and clutching to his death? What a nerve! Their horse had begun to pant under the combined weight. They were now in a part of the scrub with few trees and many rocks and hills. This was where clever horsemanship would tell. This was where this thief would lose her or gain her forever. She held her breath. Her body prickled with a thousand pains but she knew the prize that lay ahead and it gave her courage.

The horse labored. Even Yalla, man that he was, ground his teeth in pain and weariness, urging his steed ahead with a slashing whip.

"Yee-who!" he shouted, the sweat running down his face and falling into Amina's eyes. "Yee-who! . . ."

She was the first to see the light in the distance.

"My hut," Yalla said. "My lonely hut!"

"Our hut, you mean."

He laughed again.

Twang! And Yalla moaned. "They've shot me! My back . . . Allah save me, I'm dying. . . ."

Before the words were out of his mouth, Yalla was sliding down the saddle, for an arrow's poison acts fast. Yet more arrows twanged past even as the distance between them and their pursuers narrowed.

"If I die, you go ahead. They can't touch you once you're in my hut. It is the—the . . ."

Terror, panic. Amina looked over her shoulder and saw her elder brother's figure looming out of the darkness. Yalla had barely enough

strength to crawl. Amina dragged him on. She was a girl of the veld, fresh, strong and brave. His strength waned fast. Ahead of them, the cows in the gloom bolted out of their paths. Rams bleated anxiously. A cock cackled, waking all the rest which now set up a deafening crow. They were actually in Yalla's settlement, but not in the hut.

"You thief!"

A few yards behind the paddocks, just beyond the poultry yard, Amina bent down. With all her might, she seized Yalla and pushed him into the hut, falling in after him.

He breathed a sigh of relief.

"My wife!" he moaned. "Mine at last! . . . But first, this arrow. You can still save me. . . . The antidote . . ."

Amina's brothers drew up before Yalla's hut.

"You thief!" they raved. "Give us our sister."

"Thief?" he sneered. "You are the thieves. Have you not stolen the bridal horse?"

"Our father, Jama, will know no rest till you've compensated him his cattle."

"Leave that to me," Yalla said. To Amina he murmured, "Oh, my back. The antidote . . ."

The brothers wheeled their horses and cantered slowly back to their own camp. One of them said: "That lad, Yalla, he is a man. Setting fire to our camp, stealing our sister, and then calling us thieves for taking back our own horse which we saddled for another bridegroom! The law of the grazing fields. He's won."

# Anticipation

MABEL DOVE-DANQUAH

## *Ghana*

Nana Adaku II, Omanhene of Akwasin, was celebrating the twentieth anniversary of his accession to the stool of Akwasin. The capital, Nkwabi, was thronged with people from the outlying towns and villages.

It was in the height of the cocoa season, money was circulating freely and farmers were spending to their hearts' content. Friends who had not seen one another for a long time were renewing their friendship. They called with gifts of gin, champagne or whiskey, recalled old days with gusto and before departing imbibed most of the drinks they brought as gifts. No one cared, everyone was happy. Few could be seen in European attire; nearly all were in Gold Coast costume. The men had tokota sandals on their feet, and rich multi-colored velvet and gorgeous, hand-woven kente cloths nicely wrapped round their bodies. The women, with golden ear-rings dangling, with golden chains and bracelets, looked dignified in their colorful native attire.

The state drums were beating paeans of joy.

It was four o'clock in the afternoon and people were walking to the state park where the Odwira was to be staged. Enclosures of palm leaves decorated the grounds.

The Omanhene arrived in a palanquin under a brightly-patterned state umbrella, a golden crown on his head, his kente studded with tiny gold and beads, rows upon rows of golden necklaces piled high on his chest. He wore bracelets of gold from the wrists right up to the elbows. He held in his right hand a decorated elephant tail which he waved to his enthusiastic, cheering people. In front of him sat his "soul," a young boy of twelve, holding the sword of office.

After the Omanhene came the Adontehene, the next in importance.

He was resplendent in rich green and red velvet cloth; his head band was studded with golden bars. Other chiefs came one after the other under their brightly-colored state umbrellas. The procession was long. The crowd raised cheers as each palanquin was lowered, and the drums went on beating resounding joys of jubilation. The Omanhene took his seat on the dais with his Elders. The District Commissioner, Captain Hobbs, was near him. Sasa, the jester, looked ludicrous in his motley pair of trousers and his cap of monkey skin. He made faces at the Omanhene, he leered, did acrobatic stunts; the Omanhene could not laugh; it was against custom for the great Chief to be moved to laughter in public.

The state park presented a scene of barbaric splendor. Chiefs and their retinue sat on native stools under state umbrellas of diverse colors. The golden linguist staves of office gleamed in the sunlight. The women, like tropical butterflies, looked charming in their multi-colored brocaded silk, kente and velvet, and the Oduku headdress, black and shiny, studded with long golden pins and slides. Young men paraded the grounds, their flowing cloths trailing behind them, their silken plaited headbands glittering in the sun.

The drums beat on. . . .

The women are going to perform the celebrated Adowa dance. The decorated calabashes make rhythm. The women run a few steps, move slowly sideways and sway their shoulders. One dancer looks particularly enchanting in her green, blue and red square kente, moving with the simple, charming grace of a wild woodland creature; the Chief is stirred, and throws a handful of loose cash into the crowd of dancers. She smiles as the coins fall on her and tinkle to the ground. There is a rush. She makes no sign but keeps on dancing.

The Omanhene turns to his trusted linguist:

"Who is that beautiful dancer?"

"I am sorry, I do not know her."

"I must have her as a wife."

Nana Adaku II was fifty-five and he had already forty wives, but a new beauty gave him the same new thrill as it did the man who is blessed—or cursed—with only one better half. Desire again burned fiercely in his veins; he was bored with his forty wives. He usually got so mixed up among them that lately he kept calling them by the



wrong names. His new wife cried bitterly when he called her Oda, the name of an old, ugly wife.

"This dancer is totally different," thought the Chief; "she will be a joy to the palace." He turned round to the linguist:

"I will pay one hundred pounds for her."

"She might already be married, Nana."

"I shall pay the husband any moneys he demands."

The linguist knew his Omanhene: when he desired a woman he usually had his way.

"Get fifty pounds from the chief treasurer, find the relatives, give them the money and when she is in my palace tonight I shall give her the balance of the fifty pounds. Give the linguist staff to Kojo and begin your investigations now."

Nana Adaku II was a fast worker. He was like men all over the world when they are stirred by feminine charm: a shapely leg, the flash of an eye, the quiver of a nostril, the timbre of a voice, and the male species becomes frenzy personified. Many men go through this sort of mania until they reach their dotage. The cynics among them treat women with a little flattery, bland tolerance, and take fine care not to become seriously entangled for life. Women, on the other hand, use quite a lot of common sense: They are not particularly thrilled by the physical charms of a man; if his pockets are heavy and his income sure, he is a good matrimonial risk. But there is evolving a new type of hardheaded modern woman who insists on the perfect lover as well as an income and other necessities, or stays forever from the unbliss of marriage.

By 6 p.m. Nana Adaku II was getting bored with the whole assembly and very glad to get into his palanquin. The state umbrellas danced, the chiefs sat again in their palanquins, the crowd cheered wildly, the drums beat. Soon the shadows of evening fell and the enclosures of palm leaves in the state park stood empty and deserted.

The Omanhene had taken his bath after dusk and changed into a gold and green brocaded cloth. Two male servants stood on either side and fanned him with large ostrich feathers as he reclined on a velvet-cushioned settee in his private sitting room. An envelope containing

fifty golden sovereigns was near him. He knew his linguist as a man of tact and diplomacy and he was sure that night would bring a wife to help him celebrate the anniversary of his accession to the Akwasin Stool.

He must have dozed. When he woke up the young woman was kneeling by his feet. He raised her onto the settee.

"Were you pleased to come?"

"I was pleased to do Nana's bidding."

"Good girl. What is your name?"

"Effua, my lord and master."

"It is a beautiful name, and you are a beautiful woman too. Here are fifty gold sovereigns, the balance of the marriage dowry. We will marry privately tonight and do the necessary custom afterward." Nana Adaku II is not the first man to use this technique. Civilized, semi-civilized and primitive men all over the world have said the very same thing in nearly the same words.

"I shall give the money to my mother," said the sensible girl. "She is in the corridor. May I?" The Chief nodded assent.

Effua returned.

"Nana, my mother and other relatives want to thank you for the hundred pounds."

"There is no need, my beauty," and he played with the ivory beads lying so snugly on her bosom.

"They think you must have noticed some extraordinary charm in me for you to have spent so much money," she smiled shyly at the Omanhene.

"But, my dear, you are charming. Haven't they eyes?"

"But, Nana, I cannot understand it myself."

"You cannot, you modest woman. Look at yourself in that long mirror over there."

The girl smiled mischievously, went to the mirror, looked at herself. She came back and sat on the settee and leaned her head on his bosom.

"You are a lovely girl, Effua." He caressed her shiny black hair, so artistically plaited.

"But, my master, I have always been like this, haven't I?"

"I suppose so, beautiful, but I only saw you today."

"You only saw me today?"

"Today."

"Have you forgotten?"

"Forgotten what, my love?"

"You paid fifty pounds . . . and married me two years ago."

## Episode in Malay Camp

PETER ABRAHAMS

### *South Africa*

The warmth had gone out of the air, and slowly winter had come to Malay Camp, to Vrededorp, to Johannesburg. The days were cold now, and the nights were bitterly so. People wrapped themselves up warmly and snuggled closer to their fires. People slept close together to be warmer. Particularly in Malay Camp and Vrededorp.

Xuma had been in the city three months now. It was Saturday night and in spite of the cold the streets were crowded. He went up the street and walked in the direction of the heart of Johannesburg. He passed a couple under the lamplight. The man had his arms round the woman. The woman was laughing into the man's face. He looked away and hurried past. And everywhere he saw couples. They walked close together to keep out the cold. And they all seemed so happy. Only he walked alone.

His shoes were thin and the cold came through. His toes began to ache. But there were others who passed him who did not even have shoes. And many without coats and one could see it in their eyes, so it was not so bad. But even those whose eyes showed how cold they were were not alone. Most of them walked with a woman. Others had men friends. Only he walked alone.

He neared the heart of Johannesburg and the people grew fewer. There were more white people now and they were different. They did not walk or look like his people and it was as if they were not really there. He stepped aside for them to pass and he heard their voices, but they were strangers. He did not look at them or watch them carefully to see what they said and how their eyes looked and whether there was love in the eyes of the woman who hung on the arm of the man. They were not his people so he did not care.

He passed the window of a restaurant. Inside white people sat eating and talking and smoking and laughing at each other. It looked warm and comfortable and inviting. He looked away quickly. In another window there were cakes. He stopped and looked at them. He felt a tap on his shoulder and turned. It was a policeman. Without a word he fished his pass from his pocket and gave it to the policeman. The policeman looked at it, looked him up and down, and returned the pass to him. Xuma could see he was a kind one.

"Where are you going, Xuma?"

"I'm just walking."

"Ah, hah! Why not go home and sit in front of the fire with your beer?"

Xuma smiled, "You want me to go to jail?"

The policeman laughed, "All right, but behave yourself."

Xuma watched him go. Not a bad one at that. Maybe he's new. He carried on up the street and turned down Eloff Street. This was the heart of the city and the crowd was thick. It was difficult to move among all these white people. One had to keep stepping aside and to watch out for the motor cars that shot past.

Xuma smiled bitterly. The only place where he was completely free was underground in the mines. There he was a master and knew his way. There he did not even fear his white man, for his white man depended on him. He was the *boss boy*. He gave the orders to the other mine boys. They would do for him what they would not do for his white man or any other white man. He knew that, he had found it out. And underground his white man respected him and asked him for his opinion before he did anything. It was so, and he was at home and at ease underground.

His white man had even tried to make friends with him because the other mine boys respected him so much. But a white man and a black man cannot be friends. They work together. That's all. He smiled. He did not want the things of the white man. He did not want to be friends with the white man. Work for him, yes, but that's all.

Xuma crossed the street and wended his way back to Malay Camp. Gradually he left the heart of the city behind him. The white people thinned out. And more and more he saw only his people. And more and more the feeling of watchfulness and alertness to step out of the

way left him. Now he rubbed against people and did not step out of the way. He bumped against them and felt their warmth and softness. It was all right here. This was Malay Camp. And the few white people here were Syrians who sold wine to the black people and colored people. And one did not treat them like white people. Why, some of their women even did business sleeping with black men. They were all right. He turned down Jeppe Street. Lower down the street a crowd of people stood. They were looking upward. He hurried down. When he got to the people he stopped and looked up. There was nothing to see.

"What is it?" he asked a man beside him.

"I don't know," the man said.

Xuma edged away, still looking at the rooftops. He bumped into a woman.

"What is it?"

"There is a man up there," the woman said, "and the police are chasing him."

"Where?"

The woman pointed. He looked closely. Yes, there he was! He was crawling along a slanting roof, and close behind him was a policeman. Xuma held his breath. The roof sloped steeply. One wrong move and the man would plunge down, either to death or a broken body. And for the policeman it was the same too.

A yell of fear rose from the crowd. The man had lost his hold and was slowly sliding down the sloping roof. Down he came. Down. Down. Now he was at the edge of the roof. If he could not stop himself he would plunge to the ground. One leg came over the side of the roof. Then the other. He was going to fall.

Xuma held his breath. His heart pounded furiously.

The man got hold of the edge of the roof with his hands and swung there. A tremble of fear passed through the crowd. The policeman edged nearer.

There was a bustle in the crowd and a slender, well-dressed man pushed his way to the fore. He was dressed in the clothes of the white people and behaved like the white people. He pushed people out of the way. Unwillingly the people shifted their gaze from the man swinging on the side of the roof and looked at the man. "Who is he?" they

asked one another. "And what does he think he is?" yet others asked.

And someone whispered to his neighbor, "That is the doctor. Doctor Mini." And the whisper was carried along and passed round the crowd. Xuma looked at the doctor.

The doctor stared up at the swinging man.

"Who is he?"

No one answered the doctor.

Again the doctor spoke in his sharp, thin voice:

"What has he done? Did anyone see?"

"He was playing dice," a ragged man said sullenly.

A woman cried out. The policeman who was edging nearer had been joined by another. Both were edging nearer. Carefully and slowly. But it was not that that had made the woman cry out. She had seen one of the man's hands slip. He was now holding on by one hand only. The crowd was tense. This was the kill. Automatically they moved forward in a body. The doctor was in the lead. Xuma pushed forward.

Then the man up there, hanging between the sky and the earth, let go his grip as though he were tired. There was a space. Then with a dull thud he was on the ground. For a minute he lay still where he had dropped. The crowd was rooted to where it stood.

Then the man moved. The crowd became individuals again. The doctor ran forward and knelt beside the man. The crowd pressed around.

"Give him air," the doctor said.

Xuma pushed the crowd back. "Give him air," he repeated.

The doctor felt the man's body all over.

"It's all right, only his arm is broken."

The doctor looked at Xuma.

"Help me get away," the man whispered.

Suddenly the crowd parted and moved back. Policemen pushed through.

"Stand back," the foremost shouted.

Xuma moved back with the crowd. Only the doctor remained.

"You!" the policeman said to the doctor. "Didn't you hear?"

The doctor got up and looked at the policeman.

"I'm Doctor Mini."

The policeman laughed. Another behind him pushed forward and smacked the doctor in the face. Xuma bunched his fist and took a deep breath.

"You'll hear about this," the doctor said.

The second policeman again raised his hand.

"You'd better not," another policeman said and stepped forward. "He is a doctor."

The other two looked at the older policeman. There was disbelief in their eyes.

"It's true," the older policeman said.

"I want to take this man with me," the doctor said, looking at the older policeman. "His arm is badly broken and he's got to be looked after."

"No bloody fear," the first policeman said. "He's going where he belongs, in jail."

The doctor took out a card and gave it to the older policeman. "I'm attached to the General Hospital, and this is my home address if you want me.

The policemen looked at each other nonplussed. There was an obstinate look in the eyes of the first. Fear was showing in the eyes of the second. The older man looked tired and weary. He took the card from the doctor's hand and nodded. The first one opened his mouth. The second one shook his head. The first one kept silent.

"Will someone help me carry him to my car?" the doctor said.

The first policeman swung round and looked at the crowd. There was a threat in his eyes. He held his club menacingly. The crowd remained where it was.

The doctor tried to lift the man but could not.

Xuma took a deep breath, bunched his fists, and stepped forward. The policeman tightened his grip on his club and waved it from side to side. He stared hard at Xuma. Xuma returned the stare and kept going forward. He pushed past the policemen. The doctor looked up and smiled.

"Lift him but be careful of that arm."

"Just a minute," the first policeman said and prodded Xuma with his club.



Xuma got up. His body trembled. His fists bunched into hard balls. "Where's your pass? Let me see it."

Xuma took out his pass and gave it to the policeman. The policeman looked at it for a long time then returned it.

Xuma picked up the wounded man. The crowd made a passage. The doctor led the way through. Xuma followed him. The doctor opened the door of his car and helped Xuma to ease the man gently on to the back seat.

"Can you come with me to help carry him in?"

Xuma nodded.

"Get in there beside him and hold him so that his arm does not bump against anything."

The doctor shut the door then got into the front and started the car. Before the car moved off the doctor turned his eyes and looked to where the crowd had been. Xuma looked too. The crowd was scattering in all directions. The two policemen were chasing them. Only the older one stood where they had left him. Stood with that weary look on his face.

The car moved off, slowly and carefully.

The doctor took out a cigarette and handed the packet to Xuma.

"What's your name?"

"Xuma."

"Been in the city long?"

"Three months."

"I see."

For the rest of the way they drove in silence. Xuma kept looking from the man by his side to the man in front. They were both his people but they were so different. For the one by his side, he didn't have much respect. There were so many like him. They drank and they fought and they gambled. And there were so many like that in the city. He had watched them. He knew them. But this other one was different. Different from all the other people who had stood around there. Even the white people saw the difference and treated him differently. No one Xuma knew could have done what this one had done. And yet this was one of his people.

At the other end of Malay Camp the doctor pulled up. Between them they carried the man into a house.

A colored woman who was almost white and who was dressed like the white people, met them at the door. And inside the house was even more beautiful than the place of the Red One. There were all the things he had seen in the Red One's place and even more.

They carried the man into the surgery. The woman helped the doctor to take off his coat and gave him a thin, white one.

Quickly, deftly, carefully the doctor worked on the man's arm. And all the while the woman was there, giving him things and helping him and talking to him. Xuma sat on a little chair and watched.

Maybe the woman is his wife, Xuma thought.

And when they had finished bandaging the man and the doctor had washed his hands and the woman kissed him, Xuma knew she was his wife.

"There!" the doctor said and smiled at Xuma.

The woman smiled too. Maybe I should go now, Xuma thought.

Another woman, a black one, came into the room with a glass. She made the wounded one drink out of it. The wounded one sat up.

"Thank you, Doctor," he said, "Maybe I can go now."

"No, not yet. I told the police to come in an hour. I don't think they will come, but it's best to wait and see. You lie down and get some of your strength back."

"But they will arrest me."

"If they do I will charge the policeman who assaulted me. But if I let you go I'll get into trouble."

The wounded man looked round the room but said nothing.

"Perhaps you will wait too, Xuma, then you can be my witness. You saw everything."

Xuma nodded.

The colored woman put a blanket over the wounded man.

"Come, Xuma, we will have some tea," the doctor said.

They went out and left only the wounded one behind. In the other room there was a big fire. And there was a radio too, and light that one put on by pressing a little thing in the wall. No oil lamp and candles. Xuma looked round the room. The doctor followed his gaze and smiled. Xuma looked at him and saw the smile. He felt as he had felt in the place of the Red One. As though he did not belong there and it was wrong for him to be there.

The doctor saw the shadow pass over his face.

"What is it?"

"This is like the white people's place."

The doctor and his wife laughed.

"No, Xuma," the doctor said. "Not like the white people's place. Just a comfortable place. You are not copying the white man when you live in a place like this. This is the sort of place a man should live in because it is good for him. Whether he is white or black does not matter. A place like this is good for him. It is the other places that are the white people's. The places they make you live in."

"Doctor! Doctor!"

The black woman came into the room. There was distress and agitation on her face.

"What is it, Emily?"

"The one you were bandaging has gone, Doctor. He has gone out through the window."

"Oh..."

Xuma watched the doctor's face. For a minute there was sadness and hopelessness in it. Like the faces of the men who had worked on the pile of fine, wet, white sand that would not grow less. It was there for a minute, then it was gone, and his face was again cold and calm and hard to make out.

The doctor got up and went to the surgery. The others followed him. The blanket was on the floor. The window was open. A cool breeze blew in. The man had gone.

The colored woman took the doctor's arm. Emily went and shut the window.

"You can go now, Xuma," the doctor said harshly without looking at him.

Xuma felt hurt. He had done nothing. He had stayed because the doctor had asked him, and now, because the other man had gone, the doctor spoke to him in a hard voice. He was angry, but more than the anger he felt the hurt.

He turned abruptly and walked to the door. The doctor's wife followed him. She held out her hand and smiled at him.

"Thank you very much," she said.

Xuma took her hand. It was soft and small like a white woman's.



## POETRY

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### African Heaven

FRANCIS ERNEST KOBINA PARKES

#### *Ghana*

Give me black souls,  
Let them be black  
Or chocolate brown  
Or make them the  
Color of dust—  
Dustlike,  
Browner than sand.  
But if you can  
Please keep them black,  
Black.

Give me some drums;  
Let them be three  
Or maybe four  
And make them black—  
Dirty and black:  
Of wood,  
And dried sheepskin,  
But if you will  
Just make them peal,  
Peal.

Peal loud,  
 Mutter.  
 Loud,  
 Louder yet;  
 Then soft,  
 Softer still  
 Let the drums peal.  
 Let the calabash  
 Entwined with beads  
 With blue Aggrey beads  
 Resound, wildly  
 Discordant,  
 Calmly  
 Melodious.  
 Let the calabash resound  
 In tune with the drums.  
 Mingle with these sounds  
 The clang  
 Of wood on tin:  
*Kententsekenken*  
*Ken-tse ken ken ken:*  
 Do give me voices  
 Ordinary  
 Ghost voices  
 Voices of women  
 And the bass  
 Of men.  
 (And screaming babes?)

Let there be dancers,  
 Broad-shouldered Negroes  
 Stamping the ground  
 With naked feet  
 And half-covered  
 Women  
 Swaying, to and fro,

In perfect  
Rhythm  
To "*Tom shikishiki*"  
And "*ken*,"  
And voices of ghosts  
Singing,  
Singing!  
Let there be  
A setting sun above,  
Green palms  
Around,  
A slaughtered fowl  
And plenty of  
Yams.

And dear Lord,  
If the place be  
Not too full,  
Please  
Admit spectators.  
They may be  
White or  
Black.

Admit spectators  
That they may  
See:  
The bleeding fowl,  
And yams,  
And palms  
And dancing ghosts.

Odomankoma,  
Do admit spectators  
That they may  
Hear:

Our native songs,  
The clang of wood on tin  
The tune of beads  
And the pealing drums.

Twerampon, please, please  
Admit  
Spectators!  
That they may  
Bask  
In the balmy rays  
Of the  
Evening Sun,  
In our lovely  
African heaven!



## Spirit of the Wind

GABRIEL OKARA

### *Nigeria*

The storks are coming now—  
white specks in the silent sky.  
They had gone north seeking  
fairer climes to build their homes  
when here was raining.

They are back with me now—  
spirits of the wind,  
beyond the gods' confining hands  
they go north and west and east,  
instinct guiding.

But willed by the gods  
I'm sitting on this rock  
watching them come and go  
from sunrise to sundown,  
with the spirit urging within.

And urging, a red pool stirs,  
and each ripple is  
the instinct's vital call,  
a desire in a million cells  
confined.

O God of the gods and me,  
shall I not heed  
this prayer-bell call,  
the noon angelus,  
because my stork is caged  
in singed hair and dark skin?

# Forefathers

BIRAGO DIOP

## *Senegal*

Listen more often to things rather than beings.  
Hear the fire's voice,  
Hear the voice of water.  
In the wind hear the sobbing of the trees,  
It is our forefathers breathing.

The dead are not gone forever.  
They are in the paling shadows  
And in the darkening shadows.  
The dead are not beneath the ground,  
They are in the rustling tree,  
In the murmuring wood,  
In the still water,  
In the flowing water,  
In the lonely place, in the crowd;  
The dead are not dead.

Listen more often to things rather than beings.  
Hear the fire's voice.  
Hear the voice of water.  
In the wind hear the sobbing of the trees.  
It is the breathing of our forefathers  
Who are not gone, not beneath the ground,  
Not dead.

The dead are not gone forever.  
They are in a woman's breast,  
A child's crying, a glowing ember.  
The dead are not beneath the earth,  
They are in the flickering fire,  
In the weeping plant, the groaning rock,  
The wooded place, the home.  
The dead are not dead.

Listen more often to things rather than beings.  
Hear the fire's voice,  
Hear the voice of water.  
In the wind hear the sobbing of the trees.  
It is the breath of our forefathers.

## Return: Two Poems

ABIOSEH NICOL

### *Sierra Leone*

#### UP-COUNTRY

Then I came back  
Sailing down the Guinea coast,  
Loving the sophistication  
Of your brave new cities:  
Dakar, Accra, Cotonou,  
Lagos, Bathurst, and Bissau,  
Freetown, Libreville.  
Freedom is really in the mind.

Go up-country, they said,  
To see the real Africa.  
For whomsoever you may be,  
That is where you come from.  
Go for bush—inside the bush  
You will find your hidden heart,  
Your mute ancestral spirit.

And so I went,  
Dancing on my way.

## ON AN AFRICAN BEACH

Here I stand  
On the white-fringed edge of the world:  
Its limits are my mind.  
Let your white sun  
Wash my strong brown body.

I feel the crinkle of your golden sands  
Under the yellow soles of my feet.  
If I lose this certain grip,  
If this blue sea washes all of you away,  
I will have been widowed  
By the moon's rising tide.

I have taken you for better or for worse,  
Yet between the thick and the thin  
Of this ebbing flow I cannot form a whole.

But if with love again  
I turn my face towards you, Africa,  
Turning away from the faithless horizon,  
Your green mountains will give me  
My fulfillment.

## The Serving Girl

AQUAH LALUAH

*Ghana*

The calabash wherein she served my food  
Was polished and smooth as sandalwood.  
Fish, white as the foam of the sea,  
Peppered and golden-fried for me.  
She brought palm wine that carelessly slips  
From the sleeping palm tree's honeyed lips.  
But who can guess, or even surmise  
The countless things she served with her eyes?

# Play Song

PETER KUMALO

## *South Africa*

Let's go up to the hillside today  
to play, to play  
to play.

Up to the hill where the daisies grow  
like snow, like snow  
like snow.

There shall we make a daisy chain  
One tomorrow and tomorrow again  
There where the daisies grow like snow  
There's where we will go.

Let us go down to the little bay  
to play, to play  
to play.

Down to the bay where the children swim  
like fish, like fish  
like fish.

Down to the bay where the children swim,  
Down to the bay where the white yachts skim,  
Or up to the hill where the daisies grow,  
There's where we will go.



# That Heavenly Moment

DEI ANANG

*Ghana*

That heavenly moment in your arms  
When I trembled so,  
And held my breath,  
Wild nature, too,  
Stood still.  
The soft-throated cuckoo  
Ceased to croon.  
And the rustle of leaves  
Died down.  
No whistling palms  
Maintained their singsong sounds.  
The sea forgot its mighty roar,  
That heavenly moment.

# Life in Our Village

MATEI MARKWEI

## *Ghana*

In our little village  
When elders are around,  
Boys must not look at girls  
And girls must not look at boys  
Because the elders say  
That is not good.

Even when night comes  
Boys must play separately,  
Girls must play separately.  
But humanity is weak  
So boys and girls meet.

The boys play hide and seek  
And the girls play hide and seek.  
The boys know where the girls hide  
And the girls know where the boys hide—  
So in their hide and seek,  
Boys seek girls,  
Girls seek boys,  
And each to each sing  
Songs of love.

# Flute Players

JEAN JOSEPH RABÉARIVELO

## *Malagasy Republic*

Your flute

you carved from the shinbone of a strong bull  
and polished it on barren hills beaten by sun.

His flute

he carved from a reed trembling in the breeze  
and cut its little holes beside a flowing brook  
drunk on dreams of moonlight.

Together

you made music in the late afternoon  
as if to hold back the round boat  
sinking on the shores of the sky  
to save it from its fate:  
but are your plaintive incantations  
heard by the gods of the wind,  
of the earth, of the forest, and the sand?

Your flute

throws out a beat like the march of an angry bull  
toward the desert—  
but who comes back running,  
burned by thirst and hunger and defeated by weariness  
at the foot of a shadeless tree  
with neither leaves nor fruit.

**His flute**

is like a reed that bends  
beneath the weight of a bird in flight—  
but not a bird captured by a child  
whose feathers are caressed,  
but a bird lost from other birds  
who looks at his own shadow for solace  
in the flowing water.

**Your flute and his**

regret their beginnings  
in the songs of your sorrow.

# Vultures

SIMON PEDEREK

## *Ghana*

Bald pate,  
Scrawny neck,  
Lawyer's rig  
And hammer beak,  
You find us repulsive,  
Ugly, fit  
Only for hatred—  
Eaters of filthy meat?

Yet we,  
From your rejected street  
In easy flight,  
Enjoy the plains  
You ache for,  
View, possess  
The visitations of the moon—  
Peace of the  
Wilderness.

# Two in London

WOLE SOYINKA

## *Nigeria*

### THE IMMIGRANT

Knowing  
(Though he will deny it)  
That this equation must be sought  
Not in any woman's arms  
But in the cream-laid  
De-Odo-ro-noed limbs  
Of the native girl herself,  
He scans the gaudy bulbs  
(For the fiftieth time)  
Of dancing Hammersmith Palace.  
Then, desperately  
(Although his swagger belies it)  
He tries his manhood  
On the triteness of—  
"May I . . . ?"  
And waits upon the languor of  
Her bored appraisal.  
They would have paired each other  
To an even point  
(Even though her stare confounds it)  
Her gown, fashion wise  
But body foolish,  
Beggars his flashy  
Incredible tie.

Her face exchanges  
Vulgarity  
For his uncouthness.  
And the plumb of their twin minds  
Reads Nil.  
And yet her answer, given negative,  
Was barbed with  
(Albeit ill-fitting) contempt.  
Without  
Even the usual palliative  
False-bottom smile,  
Her eyes had said,  
“You? Not at any price!”  
He felt the wound grow septic  
(Hard though he tried to close it)  
His fingers twitched  
And toyed with the idea,  
The knife that waited on the slight,  
On the sudden nerve that would join her face  
To scars identical  
With what he felt inside.  
The blade remained  
In the sweat-filled pocket.  
He ran a gauntlet of milling couples  
And they all seemed  
To know  
To jeer at his defeat.  
He knew now the fatality  
Of his black, flattened nose,  
—Not at any price?—  
The fingers shift  
From blood  
To feel the folded  
Shrewish savings of his menial post.  
His little brain seeks  
Factual negation of her estimate

Seeks  
Quick revenge  
Lusts for the act  
Of degradation of her sex and race.  
Failing to find  
A difference in the street-lamp faces  
(He had sought the very best)  
He makes his choice at random  
Haggles somewhat at the price,  
Then follows her, to pass  
The night  
In reciprocal humiliation.

....AND THE OTHER IMMIGRANT

My dignity is sewn  
Into the lining of a three-piece suit.  
Stiff, and with the whiteness which  
Out-Europes Europe,  
My crisp Van Heusen collar  
Cradles an all-wool Tootal tie,  
Turning respectful eyes towards  
I, Me resplendent in my three-piece suit.  
My dignity I rescue  
From the shop assistant's levity  
From the raucous laugh  
Of the unmannered station guard  
(Who hasn't learnt his place)  
From the familiarity  
Of the Cockney taxi man  
Who thinks I'll bandy jokes with him,  
A mere  
Public servant—  
One and all,  
They wilt at the touch of ice.



My mouth is shaped perpetually  
Upon the word "riff-raff."  
The stowaway is a crook  
The steerage passenger  
Beneath my notice  
And nomad is  
A dirty word.  
I do not shrink from conflict, but  
I think exposure  
To the merest chance of  
A slight, an insult of indignity  
Mere foolishness.  
My victory is the proof  
That I can "do without them."  
I keep among my kind  
For I condemn  
All whiteness in a face.  
My mind would open to  
The niceties of judgment,  
To fine distinctions in a thought  
If such things did exist.  
But only fools can doubt the solve-all  
Philosopher's-stone attributes  
Of Up-Nasser-Freedom-for-Africa  
The height and end of all  
So shout with me!  
Let pedants tease their pompous heads  
While to my repertoire I add  
(The sound, if not the spirit of)  
Our new-coined intellectuals' slogan—  
*Negritude.*  
Untouched I float  
Upon the crest of an alien, white society,  
My weekly dues are met  
(Upon my fourth, hire purchase  
Three-piece suit)

With proud regularity,  
Ensuring round-the-year entombment  
Winter or blazing summer,  
(And sacrifices are gladly made  
Like two square semolina meals a day)  
By thinking of the government house.  
Senior service car,  
And hordes of admiring women awaiting me,  
Where the one-eyed man is king.

# To the American Negro Troops

LÉOPOLD SÉDAR SENGHOR

## *Senegal*

Formerly, I did not recognize you in the prison of your tight drab uniform.

I did not recognize you under your gourd of a plumeless helmet.

I did not recognize the tremulous neighing of your iron horses that drink but do not eat,

Lacking the nobility of elephants, possessing rather the barbarous clumsiness of antedeluvian monsters.

Behind your strong face, I did not recognize you.

Yet I had only to touch the warmth of your dark hand—my name is  
*Africal*

And I discovered lost laughter again, and heard old voices, and the roaring rapids of the Congo.

Brothers, I doubt it is you who bombed the cathedrals that are the pride of Europe,

Or that you are the thunderbolt, in the hands of God, that smote Sodom and Gomorrah.

No, you are messengers of mercy, the breath of spring after winter. To those who have forgotten how to laugh—who manage only an oblique smile,

Who know only the salt taste of tears and the harsh odor of blood—  
You bring the springtime of peace and hope at the end of hope,  
And refresh again their night with the sweetness of milk.

And blue fields of the sky are covered with flowers,

The silence sings softly. You bring them the sun.

The air is alive with liquid murmurs and crystal chirpings and the soft beat of wings,

And ethereal places become warm nests.  
Down flowing streets of joy boys play with dreams.  
Men dance in front of machines and, astonished, burst out singing.  
The eyelashes of students are sprinkled with rose petals.  
Fruit ripens in the breasts of virgins,  
And the hips of women—oh, how sweet!—handsomely grow heavy.  
Oh, black brothers, warriors whose mouths are singing flowers—  
Delight of living when winter is over—  
You I salute as messengers of peace!

# Song of the Poor Man

ANONYMOUS

## *Zanzibar*

Give me a chair  
and let me sit in your midst  
and praise poverty  
and want.

The face of a poor man  
stays all crumpled up  
by reason of the hunger and thirst  
which are in his stomach.

A poor man knows not  
how to eat with a rich man.  
When he starts eating fish  
he eats its head.

Go and invite him  
who has no bread  
to come and eat crumbs  
and thorns in the platters.

A poor man is nobody  
because he has nothing.  
Though nobly born  
he is granted no favor.

A poor man is a snake—  
his brothers avoid him  
because of the misery  
of the poverty-stricken

But when a poor man is ill,  
it leads his people  
to show him kindness;  
when a rich man is ill,  
to light a lamp  
he must wait for a slave.

## Weapon

I. W. W. CITASHE

### *South Africa*

Your cattle are gone,  
My countrymen!  
Go rescue them! Go rescue them!  
Leave the breechloader alone  
And turn to the pen.  
Take paper and ink,  
For that is your shield.

Your rights are going!  
So pick up your pen,  
Load it, load it with ink.  
Sit in your chair—  
Repair not to Hoho,  
But fire with your pen.

## Biographical Notes

- PETER ABRAHAMS *South Africa* lives now, an exile from apartheid, in Jamaica. Africa's most famous writer of color, his numerous books include an autobiography, *Tell Freedom*, *Return to Goli* and various novels published in both England and the United States.
- DEI ANANG *Ghana* who studied at Achimota and the University of London, is now a senior government official at Accra. His volumes of verse include *Wayward Lines From Africa*, *Cocoa Comes to Mampong* and *Africa Speaks*.
- FREDERICK S. ARKHURST *Ghana* served as the First Secretary of the Permanent Mission of Ghana to the United Nations. A graduate of Aberdeen University in Scotland, he did his army service in Australia, and is now attached to the U.N. Economic Commission for Africa.
- J. BENIBENGOR BLAY *Ghana* has traveled in both Europe and the United States. He is now a member of parliament at Accra. His short stories are widely popular in Ghana where he has authored nineteen books and numerous radio scripts.
- ADELAIDE CASELY-HAYFORD *Sierra Leone* of Fanti and English ancestry, studied in England and Germany in her youth. She established with her sister a school in Freetown in 1897, married a distinguished Gold Coast lawyer, traveled extensively and lived for more than two years in the United States. Shortly before her death in 1959 at the age of 91, she wrote her autobiography.
- I. W. W. CITASHE *South Africa* is now deceased. He lived at Uitenhage, Cape Province, was of the Xhosa tribe and wrote largely in that language.
- MABEL DOVE-DANQUAH *Ghana* was the first woman to be elected a member of any African legislative assembly, that of Ghana. She has studied in England, traveled in the United States, and was formerly the editor of the *Accra Evening News*, but now devotes her time to free-lance writing.
- BIRAGO DIOP *Senegal* was born at Dakar, studied in France and is now chief veterinary surgeon for the Upper Volta. He is both a poet and a storyteller. His *Tales of Amadou-Koumba* was published in 1947.
- CYPRIAN EKWENSI *Nigeria* is of the Ibo tribe, educated at Ibadan and in pharmacy in England. His *People of the City*, concerned with contemporary life in Lagos, has been hailed as the first modern novel by a Nigerian writer.
- BABS FAFUNWA *Nigeria* studied at Bethune-Cookman College in Florida and, while a student there, wrote a series of newspaper articles concerning his observations in America.



- PETER KUMALO *South Africa* is both an artist and a writer. He has twice won awards in the annual *Drum* Short Story Contest, but he earns his living as a worker on the docks at Simon's Town, Cape Province.
- AQUAH LALUAH *Ghana* who died at Freetown in 1950, studied in Wales, vacated with a jazz troupe in Berlin, then became a teacher at the Girls' Vocational School in Sierra Leone. Her first poems appeared in *Atlantic Monthly*.
- TENNYSON MAKIWANE *South Africa* is a journalist and political commentator now living in London.
- MATEI MARKWEI *Ghana* an ordained minister, is a recent graduate of Lincoln University (Pennsylvania) with a scholarship for further study in theology at Yale University.
- TODD MATSHIKIZA *South Africa* besides being a journalist, is a highly talented musician who in 1956 was commissioned to write a choral work with orchestra for the Johannesburg Festival. He composed the score for the hit musical, *King Kong*, and this year collaborated with Alan Paton on a new show, *Mkhumbhane*.
- TOM MBOYA *Kenya* famous as a leader of independence movements, is general secretary of the Kenya Federation of Labor and one of the first black Africans to become a member of the Kenya Legislative Council.
- BLOKE MODISANE *South Africa* has taken refuge from his country's oppressive racial policies in London where he now lives by writing.
- MARION MOREL *South Africa* a columnist for *Drum*, is one of Africa's most popular women journalists of color.
- EZEKIEL MPHAPHELE *South Africa* taught school in Johannesburg, worked on *Drum* magazine, and is now an instructor in English at the University College of Ibadan. His autobiography *Down Second Avenue* received critical acclaim and his short pieces have appeared in America and England.
- ABIOSEH NICOL *Sierra Leone* was educated in Nigeria and as a physician at Cambridge where he has recently completed further study as a Research Fellow in biochemistry. He is now senior pathologist in the Sierra Leone Medical Service. His short stories, articles and poems have appeared in numerous English publications.
- J. H. KWABENA NKETIA *Ghana* spent a year in the United States on a Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship. He has published twelve books in the Twi language, and in English, *Funeral Dirges of the Akan People*. An accomplished musician, he now teaches at the University College of Ghana.
- KWAME NKRUMAH *Ghana* is a graduate of Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, a distinguished African independence leader, and now prime minister of Ghana.

PHYLLIS NTANTALA *South Africa* writer and journalist, is active in racial reform movements.

GABRIEL OKARA *Nigeria* is of the Ijaw tribe whose folklore he is engaged in translating. In 1953 his poetry received a top award at the Nigerian Festival of the Arts. He is currently on the staff of the Information Service of Eastern Nigeria.

FRANCIS ERNEST KOBINA PARKES *Ghana* is a graduate of the school at Adisadel. After a brief period of newspaper work he has been since 1955 associated with Radio Ghana.

SIMON PEDEREK *Ghana* is a young Ashanti poet.

JEAN JOSEPH RABÉARIVÉLO *Malagasy Republic (Madagascar)* committed suicide in 1937 at the age of thirty-six. Before his death he had achieved great popularity in his native land and had published seven books, including one in Brazil, another in Tunisia.

RICHARD RIVE *South Africa* while a student at the University of Cape Town, became an outstanding track star, but limited because of apartheid to non-white meets. He is now a teacher of English and Latin at Cape Town's largest high school for colored students.

LÉOPOLD SÉDAR SENGHOR *Mali Federation (Senegal)* has published four volumes of poetry, many articles, and edited an anthology of African poetry. He has been deputy from Senegal to the French National Assembly in Paris and recently served as president of the Mali Federal Assembly.

WOLE SOYINKA *Nigeria* after having taken the Honors Degree at Leeds University in England, taught for a while in London, but has recently been appointed information officer at Ibadan. Two of his plays were performed in 1959 at the University College of Ibadan.

EFUA THEODORA SUTHERLAND *Ghana* studied at Cambridge. She became a teacher and aided her American-born husband in the recent establishment of a school in the Transvolta. She writes for children as well as adults, and much of her work is broadcast on *The Singing Net*, a popular West African radio program.

CAN THEMBA *South Africa* was a teacher in Johannesburg when, in 1953, he received the first prize in a *Drum* short story contest. Shortly thereafter he became a member of that magazine's editorial staff.

AMOS TUTUOLO *Nigeria* born in the jungles north of Lagos, had only a few years of schooling. He became a blacksmith then a metalworker, and is now employed in the government labor department. His books include *The Palm-wine Drinkard*, *Simbi and the Satyr of the Dark Jungle*, and *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*.

ONYENAEKEYA UDEAGU *Nigeria* of the Ibo tribe, has written a short history of his people and their customs—published at Lagos in 1947.

J. KOYINDE VAUGHAN *Nigeria* was born at Lagos in 1927, studied law, and as a sideline has written extensively on the Negro in motion pictures.



