

BLACK ORPHEUS



A JOURNAL OF AFRICAN AND AFRO-AMERICAN LITERATURE

A JOURNAL OF AFRICAN AND AFRO-AMERICAN LITERATURE
edited by Ulli Beier and Janheinz Jahn

BLACK ORPHEUS COMMITTEE: Geormbeeyi Adali-Mortti, Marcelino Arozarena,
Adeboye Babalola, Aimé Césaire, M. F. Dei-Anang, J. A. Ramsaran, Léopold
Sédar Senghor, Paul Vesey.



PUBLISHED BY THE GENERAL PUBLICATIONS SECTION, MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
IBADAN, NIGERIA.

Printed by the Nigerian Printing and Publishing Company Limited, 172 Broad Street,
Lagos - 10418 - 1m/5c - 6/6/58.

Cover silkscreened by the Federal Information Service, Lagos.

CONTENTS

No. 4 October 1958

		Page
PAUL VESEY	Georg Dickenberger	5
SEVEN POEMS	Paul Vesey	9
'MISTER JOHNSON' RECONSIDERED	Gerald Moore	16
THE SUITCASE	Ezekiel Mpahlele	24
SHANGO SHRINE	Ulli Beier	30
EWE POETRY	Geormbeeyi Adali-Mortti	36
MIGRANTS WITH MANUSCRIPTS	Randolph Rawlins	46
BOOK REVIEWS	E. Bevan, J. A. Ramsaran, Akanji	57



PAUL VESEY

BY GEORG DICKENBERGER

Paul Vesey is an outsider among the Afro-American poets of the United States. He is an outsider, because to him Africa is not merely a romantic background to his metaphors, but a genuine and essential element of his poetic forms and associations.

In analysing Paul Vesey's work, we shall try to discover where America ends and where Africa begins in his poems. Paul Vesey's poems are almost inaccessible at first. Hardly a single image occurs, that he has not examined, destroyed and rebuilt with his highly sensitive visionary power. The interpretation is very difficult for the unprepared reader. One searches in vain for the familiar models, motives, or categories. The African reader may have an advantage, because the poetic method of Vesey is not so foreign to him; he must only try to understand the peculiar situation of the North American negro and to familiarise himself with the subjects and images that are derived from everyday American life or the Biblical similies that are such an essential part of all North American negro poetry: the captivity of Israel in Egypt, Jesus carrying the cross, and so on.

In European and American poetry an image stands for the object it describes. Only in surrealist poetry an image is used to stand for an object normally unrelated. This peculiar feature of surrealism causes the confusion in the mind of the average reader, but it also heightens and intensifies the attraction for the more sensitive reader. In no case, however, does the surrealist poet refer to a definite, defined world that exists behind the temporary world of everyday. The apparently magical aspect arises naturally and logically out of the arbitrary interchangeability. Occasionally, of course, some strange new relationship or correspondence arises out of this arbitrary interchanging—and a new light may illuminate the subject, a new understanding may be produced. Perhaps this is why sensitive Europeans feel so much attracted by obscure poetry. They always hope that a truth may suddenly be revealed in the incomprehensible.

African poetry has this in common with surrealism, that the image does not merely stand for what it describes. But at the same time it differs from

it, because there is no arbitrary interchanging, the image always symbolises the reality that lies behind the temporary world. Léopold Sédar Senghor has expressed this as follows: "The image is not an equation, but an analogy, a super-real image. An object does not mean what it represents, but what it suggests, or what it creates. Every conception is an image. And the image is not an equation but a symbol, an ideogram."

To Paul Vesey Africa is not "so long, so far away," that there are "not even memories alive." Unlike Langston Hughes (whose "Afro-American Fragment" I have just quoted), Vesey speaks of himself as an "exile" from his "shrouded country". The term "exile" combines a confession and a demand. The "exile" still identifies himself with his country and wants to be reunited with it. Yet this "outsider" Paul Vesey is obliged in many ways to use the images of North America. When he uses this American imagery with an African technique as analogies and symbols, a strange new world is created for the reader, a world that is difficult to interpret and that is close to the realms of magic. The first reaction of the reader maybe confusion. At the same time one becomes immediately aware of Vesey's isolated and highly individual position.

Vesey was born in America, and brought up with American ideas, prejudices and patterns of behaviours. Yet in his poetry he experiences the Africa of his forefathers, and transformed by his poetic vision the idea of Africa becomes as real to him as the everyday "reality" of New York. In Vesey's poetry "Glele" and "umba, ba himba lumba mumba": "the glistening ebony of his great black face" and "the shrine rich in palm oil"; "monkey cock and snake" and the "mess of stars and sand beneath the red sun" mean as much (and perhaps more) than the images he derives from everyday life in New York; the barber in his shop; the underground train, the sky scrapers and all that. Through this fusion of images a new strange world is created that confuses and attracts us. It confuses the African as well as the Westerner, because in Vesey's poetry the two worlds meet—or rather they are being smashed together. Two elements are being fused together under heavy pressure into a new star. Vesey calls this new star: the New Africa.

Many prominent negroes in United States, like Richard Wright, regard Africa like a thing of the past; a past moreover of which one feels ashamed. But for Vesey Africa is something present. It is a living heritage, more than that it is "home". It is true that there remains in Vesey an element of the typical sadness we associate with North American negro poetry and that he has not yet freed himself from the traditional biblical form elements. But these things carry little weight in the face of the new consciousness and the new pride, which are so consistent that they can confront and oppose the spirit of "Americanism" to which nearly all other negro writers have succumbed.

It is a new consciousness that has found expression in Vesey's language. A consciousness whose imagery is both African and occidental but whose mixed heritage confronts us as a unit. For this new world, this third way of life we have so far only the term "négritude", with which the Martinique poet

Césaire defined this poetic magic that springs from a defiant consciousness. For Paul Vesey, the mercantile values of American civilization have no more validity. He confronts them with a glowing spirit that addresses itself to the human as such. This new consciousness that creates a new culture out of the clash of two old ones, provides the basis for a new universal poetry that will be equally accessible to both the African and the Western World. In Africa itself and in the Carribean this phenomenon has already produced a style that has formed a number of authors. In the U.S.A. there appears to be but a single poet who masters the Afro-American culture conflict: Paul Vesey. The phenomenon is basically the same as with Senghor, Césaire and the other poets of the "négritude", but Vesey has a different starting point from these writers: different geographically and therefore culturally.

This has made Vesey's poetry so unyielding, so impenetrable. Sometimes it seems deliberately obscure and enigmatic—as if to keep out unwanted intruders. An example of this deliberate obscurity is the poem "The Death of Uncle Tom" in which the "censor of the unconscious" has turned the white man into a metisse, because in the U.S.A. a negro cannot kill a white man even in a poem. Such transpositions are not mere literary tricks, they enable Vesey to coordinate statement and new consciousness in an almost magical process. They moreover make it possible for him to manifest himself against the oppressing circumstances under which the negro lives in North America. Similar transpositions are made with the figures of Greek mythology. Thus Jason "banned to a foreign shore", resists the "reigning North".

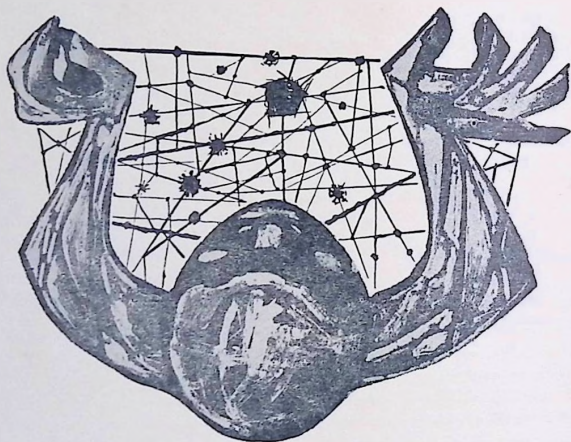
In Greek legend Jason was the hero whom Pelias had deprived of his heritage, who was driven to foreign coasts, to acquire the golden fleece, that would bring its owner courage, and the magical power to rise to the heights of the sky. Jason finally returns to take vengeance on Pelias. In Vesey's poem Jason is being reinterpreted as the black hero who suffers "nailed on the northern cross", but who is "whetting the blade of his approaching hour." Jason is Vesey himself who, "banned to foreign shore" prepares for the great moment is "forging the mail". Just as the fleece gave power to Jason to overcome Pelias, so Vesey forges the mail that will give strength to "him that was rent" for the "approaching hour" of the "huge grey belching". Terms like "I", "he", "Jason"—any personification in fact are not the expression of an individualism; they stand for a group, they stand for all the suppressed, the suffering, the tormented. In this respect Vesey is like Césaire, Senghor and the other poets of the "négritude," and he departs here from traditional American negro poetry, in which the statement is more limited, more restricted. Thus in Langston Hughes' famous poem "Brass spittoon", the spittoon cleaner is touching and moving, but he remains a *single* individual. He may represent a social class, but he does not *speak* for all. His suffering is plaintive but does not rise to the new confidence that Césaire and Vesey have in common.

Vesey has overcome the conflict and the complexes. He becomes firm, almost invulnerable:

Jason stand
Stand — stand Jason!
On the peak of the cross of the reigning north
Jason stands who was rent."

"Who was rent" in other words, he is rent no longer.

What is it then that produces the obscurity of Vesey's verses and makes the understanding so difficult at first? There are a number of poems that express clearly and without compromise the rejection of the West and the inclination towards Africa, but they operate with images, some of which cannot now be interpreted. Neither an African nor a Westerner can sound the full meaning of these images yet, because Paul Vesey is the first of a new generation, he is the representative of a culture of the future.



SEVEN POEMS

BY PAUL VESEY

JASON STANDS WHO WAS RENT

The incorrigible tar broke silently across the surf
and there athwart the great oaken beam of the main sail
struck the benevolent mate to port
sweeping him into the depth.
Incorrigible still but strained
he feigned some amusement.
Banned to a foreign shore
he stubbornly rode the waves toward his death
curving a bow, whetting a blade
eyeing the huge grey belching.
But this, through it all, yielded magnificent return,
though fetched far afield for his rallying
laboring, in stall, and faltering
whetting the blade of his approaching hour.
Jason Jason on the mast
Jason — rent, nailed on the northern cross of the rack
struck full the bellows of his pit
forged in mail, O Jason that was rent
that was rent, at the apex of Jason.
Jason stand
stand — stand Jason!
On the peak of the cross of the reigning north
Jason stands who was rent.

EYES WATCH THE STARS

Eyes watch the stars
they are not higher than the year is high.
Casting shadows from midnight
stands a caravan upon the sand.
The waters falter and turn back
cringing from swift terror in the husk.
A blanket will encompass all of them
and a world besides.
I personally look for little from this mess of star and sand
the silver dries beneath the red sand.

THERE ARE NO TEARS

See the sky scraper
there before you she stands
gazing calmly down upon your cries for the ancient moorings.
Consider the irrefactible steel
regard the assured hulk
see her feet immovable in the deep earth.
Not her's are the dark uncertainties
nor her's the lonely cry for the lost old gods
nor the frenetic night of your pursuit of the bright new gods.
She is:
a great gray monolith, stands
massive in repose against the deepening sky
defiant even of the slow mole of time
boring its campaign of attrition.
Tall and cold she stands
a stranger to regret
there are no tears.

THE DEATH OF UNCLE TOM

In the darkness lighted here and eerily there
 among the magnolias
The warning fled through the terrible night
Out of town! Out of town!
Flee! Run! Fly! for your life!
Your life your life your life
Fly fly fly for your life.
On the ancient moss the serpents circled from their mounds
For your life
Fly fly
For your life.
Through the huge heavy leafed bayous
 For your life your life your life
Through the canefield
The crib of his victimization
Through the cottonfield the white bolls bobbing jagged
 under the ribald rising moon
Past the pit, at the edge of town, of his own misapprehension
On, on, greater than the fear
 greater than the pain
 greater than the threat
Mounting to horror and its ineradicable dread,
The obscene whisper warning shout rode through the terrible night.
I HAVE COME BACK
I HAVE COME BACK TO THIS DISASTER
LET MY PRIDE DRINK DEEP IN THE DARK ROARING BLOOD
 OF THAT CASTRATION
THE FEAR OF THE KNIFE THE DREAD OF THE ROPE
 THE TERROR OF THE HISSING FAGGOT
DRINK DEEP O DEEP OF THE LOST DRAINED BLOOD OF MY FATHER
 BLED IN THIS DISASTER
Through the night the warning sped
And behind they came
Swift
Sure
Deadly
Through the white fields of cotton
 BACK, SON!
The bolls bobbing the faces white in pursuit in the night
I saw the sheriff's face high among the trees
 riding the vengeful night.
 GO ON BACK, SON!

I saw his companion

The big sloping shoulders, the huge pistols, holsters at their belts
Fools! fools! they cried, that he should flee.

They descended for a moment to plan the chase.

They gathered in an opening near a cluster of tall green lichened trees
At once grey haired and faithful Tom sloped forth

with a prudent black companion
leashhound of his people.

They circled around above as the white masters talked.

Tom's wallet fell from his pocket

and dropped with a declaratory clap near the pursuers

Tom zoomed down to retrieve it,

But as he stretched his arm

The voice came hard and commanding,

Stop, black son of Ham, let me have this wallet

And all the famed ruse and guile of Tom went into play.

The two began a grotesque march around the white men,

stooping in a row

bending low

grinning, and again they go

around and kettle stiff and slow

before the masters with a bow

to scuttle away flapping and batting their wings among the trees.

But then I heard him.

The dollar, Tom cried, it is mine!

Keep back, Tom, the white man called.

The dollar, I say, it is mine, Tom cried, advancing menacingly.

Back, black boy! Back! Are you mad!

The tall muscular black, leashhound of his people stepped between.

I say, master, look, there is no cause for worry

And he flashed a roll of dollar bills.

Tom was on the red coaled grill, speaking with rage and fury.

Accusing, castigating

Never noticing the flame.

Tom's black face dropped great beads of sweat

His short fat fist beat on the grill

His words tumbling out in a ferocity of accusation.

The tall prudent black sat watching by.

The white man rose without a word and left.

Tom followed.

I could see him draw his rifle, aim, fire — once, twice, three, four
and five times, bucking as the heavy gun recoiled.

The metisse fell, he groaned, he seized his knife,

with effort slowly rose in pursuit of Tom.

After a moment the two returned in their death agony.

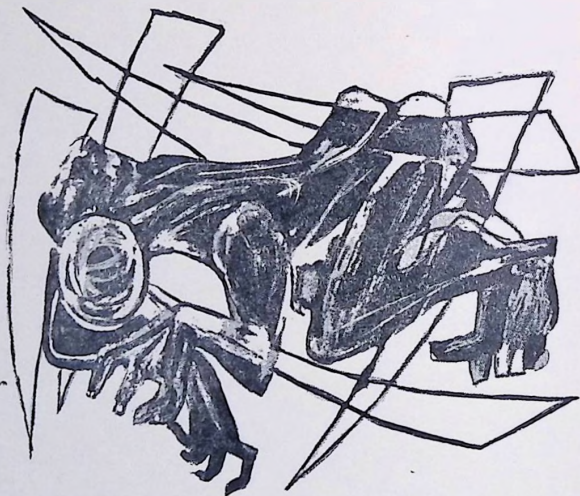
The metisse protesting, why did you do it

I heard about this in the war
But we don't have it up here.
And Tom dying, sobbing,
I put a stop to it
At last I put a stop to it
Now maybe someone will keep it up.
And he came to me and placed his dying head upon my shoulder,
And I cried out, What have you to do with me?
And yet I comforted him,
And with a groan
He gave up the spirit.

(The censor
of the poet's subconscious transforms
the white man into a metisse, —
thus preventing the tabooed
killing of the former).

INCONSOLABLE

Pale and uncertain
ending in death
the ivory tusks they do not want.
The bleached sands sweep my eyelids,
heavy with revolving doors
I turn and turn again
but I am yet not comforted.
I seek the solace of the circling fangs
but I will in no wise be comforted.
I drink huge vats of blood
I devour houses gleaming in the sun
twining green with vine
and I am yet not comforted.
Inconsolable inconsolable inconsolable
all is that matters lost
ice ages of days
and I will not be comforted.



NESSHOUE

This day I acknowledge Nesshoué
as the goddess of the river
Her shrine shall be rich with palm oil
And her Legba shall I crown with plumes.
She is the handmaiden of Maou
And will intercede for me in the day of evil
She will keep off the evil spirits
And famine shall not come to this land.
In battle shall she lead us, and shall be stronger
and more cunning than the magic of the enemy,
His warriors shall fall into our hands
And swell the bubbling pots of victory.
These things do I pray in the name of the great Maou
and his handmaiden Nesshoué,
who dances by the river.

HIS MAGIC GONE

Agassou, they cried
Has not seen the famine
Does he not know the murder that
stalks this land
The forest is red in the night
Red with the blood of our priests
Red with the fires of the marauders
And tears stream down
upon this land.
Maou has frowned, and hides his face
And Lissa, his handmaiden, is silent
She turns from the death that moves into this dominion.
Agassou sees
But snarls in his frustration
His magic gone
His power a tottering throne.

'MISTER JOHNSON' RECONSIDERED

BY GERALD MOORE

Nearly twenty years have passed since Joyce Cary published *Mister Johnson*, the last and finest of his novels of West African life. At that time the number of English readers who had even a passing acquaintance with West Africa was minute; England was not yet 'Africa conscious', and to choose such a setting for a novel was bold and unusual. Since 1945, however, British West Africa has been constantly in the news. The development of air travel has made it possible for thousands of experts, travellers, journalists and politicians to pay at least a short visit to the Coast, whilst a great number and variety of Europeans have been drawn into the many new enterprises springing up there, compared with the handful of officials, missionaries and traders who made up the pre-war white population. As a result of this invasion the market has recently been deluged with African novels; some of them thinly—disguised travelogues or documentaries; others lurid and melodramatic tales full of juju, erotic dances and scenes of violence; a few earnest but dull. Above this flood of ephemera a novel like *Mister Johnson* shows like a rock and every year seems only to add to its stature. It is the one West African novel we are already tempted to call 'great' (if we exclude *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*, which is a visionary epic rather than a novel), just as Cary himself is the one English novelist since Joyce and Lawrence whose major status now seems assured.

All Cary's novels are distinguished by an astonishing power of imaginative projection. He is able to enter imaginatively into situations and characters remote from his own, to depict the world as seen through the transforming eyes of his hero, without surrendering his right as a novelist to show that hero and his world "in the round" and to set them in dynamic contrast with the very different worlds of the other characters. Tragedy in Cary (and his novels are nearly always tragic, despite their brilliant fantasy and humour) arises from the hero's bewilderment at finding that other people do not see the world in his terms, but in some equally arbitrary terms of their own. Collisions between these worlds are not, therefore, incidental, but fundamental and usually destructive.

It is part of the strength of *Mister Johnson* as a book that Cary does not regard his African hero as presenting a radically different problem from the heroes of his other books. There is a discernible kinship between Johnson, the uprooted African clerk, Charley Brown, the young London evacuee of *Charley Is My Darling*, and Gulley Jimson, the outcast painter of *The Horse's Mouth*. Each is distinguished by an extra-ordinary personal force, resilience and energy; each lives entirely according to the law of his own nature unmodified by any understood social code or convention; each dominates those around him by his superior imaginative power but without ever winning any permanent loyalty or understanding from his followers. At this level of creation an African hero does not constitute any "special problem", but this does not mean that Cary subscribes to the sentimental fallacy that Africans are just the same as Europeans "underneath", which they are not. They inhabit the same human scene, however, and consequently their lives are often twisted into similar patterns.

Mister Johnson is, in Cary's own words, "a young clerk who turns his life into a romance, he is a poet who creates for himself a glorious destiny". Though at first lonely and bewildered when uprooted from the South (where he has had a fragmentary Christian education) to a remote pagan community ruled by a reactionary Moslem Emir, he quickly finds means of imposing a temporary domination over the various worlds which impinge on his own. Thus he succeeds in marrying Bamu, the beautiful pagan ferry-girl; he rules Fada township for a while as the all-powerful District Clerk (Mister Rudbeck's friend); he quickly establishes a strong position in Sargy Gollup's store; and he is the main inspiration behind the completion of Rudbeck's road. But he never comes to understand the terms on which this domination is achieved, and the reverses of fortune always find him surprised and injured. Thus he is unable to grasp that to Bamu and her family he is not a person but a mad foreigner who is tolerated just so long as he appears to be solvent and in a good position with the authorities; he cannot understand why the mysterious official rules which the A.D.O. Rudbeck himself has broken almost with impunity should be invoked to crush him completely; he is astonished when the scheming Waziri, who has toadied to him while he was in a position of power, has him flogged almost to death as soon as he is out of favour. The dynamics of power escape him, for Mister Johnson is so ready to be a friend to all the world and to spend his last shilling in buying it a drink that he never understands how to Fada he is merely a source of diversion and wonder, of lavish parties and mysterious semi-official jobs, but not a person entitled to any friendship or consideration once he ceases to provide these things.

But Johnson's incomprehension is fully matched by the bewilderment of those around him. Bamu's brother Aliu, for example, does not even attempt to understand Fada township and its ways:

Authority, as he knows it, is always dangerous, selfish, inexplicable. It looks after its own mysterious affairs in a dark privacy. It never explains. Its servants, even the most approachable, like store clerks, resent nothing so much as a request for explanation. Even when they do give it, it is generally false But he feels no grievance, because he fully understands

that this is the way things and people are. All things are stubborn and dangerous; all men, except one's own family, find their chief pleasure in tormenting the helpless stranger.

As for Bamu herself, her absolute passivity is the frightening thing about her. She turns to her family for advice because she is accustomed to do so, and whatever their advice may be she will accept it. Thus, if they had told her to stick to Johnson through thick and thin, she would certainly have done so; but when the fugitive Johnson comes to her for help she consults Aliu and is quite happy when he treacherously clubs Johnson from behind while he is eating and hands him over to the police.

Most of the people of Fada, however, have discovered the limits within which they can operate without too much antagonizing the forces that surround their lives. Mister Johnson's fellow Southerners, for instance, the store-clerk Ajali and the postmaster Benjamin, have no moments of glory such as those created by the artist Johnson, but neither are they overwhelmed, as he is, by repeated disasters. Of all the African characters, perhaps only Waziri really understands how everything works in Fada, and nothing would alarm Waziri more than to find himself the object of any special glory or favour.

Rudbeck is really just as bewildered by his situation as anybody else in Fada but his position protects him from the real consequences of his incomprehension and stupidity. Like all officials, his motions are mysterious to others partly because he does not fully understand them himself. His bewilderment finds an outlet in a boyish passion for road building, which he feels to be at least a visible symbol of something achieved in a frustrating, alien land. Rudbeck does not fully understand why he wants the road or what its consequences will be, but he is a person given to action rather than speculation. Hence he abandons his station—where the real work of the District needs to be done—for months on end, while he lives the life of a road pioneer far away in the bush. In the circumstances it is hardly surprising that the affairs of the station get out of hand and even the honest Benjamin begins "fiddling" with the Post Office receipts.

Cary's close and intelligent interest in the problems of African government is nicely expressed in the song sung by Rudbeck's finished road:

"I'm smashing up the old Fada—I shall change everything and everybody in it. I am abolishing the old ways, the old ideas, the old law: I am bringing wealth and opportunity for good as well as vice, new powers to men and therefore new conflicts. I am the revolution. I am giving you plenty of trouble already, you governors, and I am going to give you plenty more. I destroy and I make new. What are you going to do about it? I am your idea. You made me, so I suppose you know".

This song celebrates a problem which has beset colonial administration ever since the idea of 'development' became officially current. Many things were embarked upon as ends in themselves—roads, tin-mines, literacy campaigns, missionising by a hundred conflicting orthodoxies, without any intelligent attempt to foresee what their final social or political effects might be or to make provision for such effects. The proposition was seldom; "We are trying

to produce such and such a social change in this area, therefore let us build a road as a means of assisting it". More often it was simply, as with Rudbeck: "Let's build a road and see what happens".

Among the victims of Rudbeck's road is Johnson, the man who was largely instrumental in getting it finished. It was Johnson who first threw out the idea that it might be possible to link it up with the distant main Kano road; it was Johnson who suggested a way of creating an illicit Road Fund by anticipating next year's vote; and it was Johnson who produced the vital voluntary labour from the pagan villagers to get the road finished before the rains, urging them on with songs full of brilliant fantasy and improvisation:

Bow down old lords of the world,
Put your green heads in the dust.
Salute the roadmen, children of the sky;
Come sun and moon, walk now in the dark wood,
Walk in Rudbeck's road with your long shining feet.

Yet Rudbeck at first snubs the suggestion that the road can be carried so far. He goes off on leave and never thinks of the possible consequences to Johnson when the illicit Road Fund (created on Rudbeck's authority) is discovered by the professional climber Tring, who takes over the District. In the event Johnson is dismissed and spends most of Rudbeck's leave starving and in rags, the wretched road treasurer Audu is flung into prison, whilst Rudbeck, after a few pleasant months in England, returns to receive a mere official reprimand and Tring is actually commended. Rudbeck has no conception how important a figure he is in Johnson's life and he does not feel the real warmth of the boy's devotion. When his wife christens Johnson 'Mister Wog' he does not rebuke her; indeed, he casually adopts the unpleasant, contemptuous nickname himself for domestic use. But he does take Johnson on again, in a semi-official capacity, to assist with the road. When he runs into difficulties with the more remote villagers, who refuse to assist with the clearing of the forest, it is once again Johnson who suggests a way out—free beer will do the trick. Again Rudbeck snubs the idea, but it does not occur to him to wonder why the villagers suddenly begin to come forward in hundreds and enlist the road's cause as their own. When he discovers that Johnson has been levying an illegal tax at the zungo (the travellers' inn at Fada) he does not connect the two events, but acts with a bullish stupidity and impetuosity. He dismisses Johnson with anger and disgrace, refusing even to look at the little sixpenny account book in which Johnson has kept a record of his peculiar transactions. He does not reflect that his own conduct over the Road Fund has set Johnson a poor example of respect for official regulations, nor does he understand that, if Johnson has spent some of this money on himself, his wife and his friends, he has spent far more of it on Rudbeck's road.

By this action Rudbeck smashes the myth which Johnson lives by—"Mr. Rudbeck my friend, he loves me too much". Johnson's life becomes purposeless and he quickly blunders into murder. It is now that Rudbeck vindicates him-

self as a man. Johnson is convicted and sentenced to execution by hanging, but he begs Rudbeck to shoot him with his own hand. Faced with this direct human challenge, Rudbeck steps outside his own world for a moment; he shoots Johnson in the head while he is kneeling in prayer. But this act, which makes Rudbeck a man and re-establishes his human link with Johnson, isolates him as completely as a classical tragic hero. For it is not done, especially in the colonies, to step outside one's world or to ignore the limits of the code one lives by. Consequently the whole station, including his own wife, looks upon Rudbeck as something between a murderer and a traitor:

He is surprised at himself, but he doesn't feel any violent reaction. He is not overwhelmed with horror. On the contrary, he feels a peculiar relief and escape, like a man who, after a severe bilious attack, has just been sick.

He is mildly surprised to notice the sentry's nervous gesture as he takes the carbine and almost lets it fall; and to hear the sergeant's voice crack as he shouts some incomprehensible order.

The anxious young sergeant has lost his head. Although he has already once turned out the guard, he turns it out again. It is perhaps an instinctive gesture of terror and respect. The men, surprised and alarmed, rush together and present arms. Their movements are ragged but they stand at the present with backs so hollow that they seem to be dislocated. You can see right down their hairless nostrils; but their eyes are not looking to their front; they are all fixed on Rudbeck. His teeth are bared, his eyes are like bull's eyes with a ring of white all round. Beyond the sergeant the whole population of the barracks and station, the constables, the barrack women, the little market women, are standing in a crowd, pressed together like one animal, and quite still. Not a rag moves. But all their eyes are fixed on Rudbeck with the same expression of greedy interest.

Joyce Cary's agile sympathy enables him to write at once subjectively and objectively. What other word than 'subjective' can we use for the extra-ordinary feeling and insight with which Johnson is created *from inside*? It is here that I must disagree with Dr. Davidson Nicol, who has said in his lecture *On Not Being a West African* (Ibadan University Press, 1955):

Johnson is an improbable figure caught in circumstances in which anyone could have escaped. Cary, in trying to project himself into his chief character, has not entirely succeeded because he does not know enough of the world of clerks to know what Johnson should do next off-duty. In Johnson's relationship with Rudbeck, the D.O., Cary is on safe ground because he has doubtless come across many such clerks himself; but when Johnson leaves the European presence, authenticity vaporizes and he becomes conjectural. In Cary's defence, we may ask ourselves how many of us know what our junior clerks, laboratory assistants and office messengers do between two in the afternoon and eight in the morning.

The last sentence is something of a give-away, for we may go on to wonder whether a highly-sophisticated modern African like Dr. Nicol is really in a

better position than Cary to know how Johnson would have spent his time in a Borgu township forty years ago. As a European, I feel some deference about disagreeing with Dr. Nicol on this issue, but I must record that in my opinion Johnson is a far from improbable figure (allowing for the legitimate use of creative fantasy in building a fictional hero—Gulley Jimpson no less than Johnson). Also it is quite irrelevant to say that his are circumstances which "anyone could have escaped". One does not write tragic novels about people who escape moral dilemmas, but about people who are involved in them. In short, I believe Dr. Nicol has fallen into the same trap which awaits many European readers of the book; he believes the satire to be largely at Johnson's expense, that we are being invited to laugh at this figure of exaggerated fun. Such a judgement entirely misses the real quality of the novel, for in fact Johnson, despite his weakness, is far and away the dominating figure in it. His imagination is creative and often beautiful—witness his songs for the roadmen—and he is the only character whom Cary may be said to love. Rudbeck's moment of glory comes when he recognises Johnson as a unique human being and no longer simply as a clerk.

But we are not shown only Johnson's world, we are also shown the world of Rudbeck, of Waziri, even of Bamu, and Cary's satire plays around them all. The objective Cary is shown splendidly in the handling of Rudbeck's wife Celia, whose picture-postcard idea of Africa causes her to be first over-stimulated, and then rapidly bored, by the reality:

Fada is the ordinary native town of the Western Sudan. It has no beauty, convenience or health ... It is a pioneer settlement five or six hundred years old, built on its own rubbish heaps, without the charm even of antiquity. Its squalor and its stinks are all new ... Fada has not been able to achieve its own native arts or the characteristic beauty of its country. There are no flowering trees or irrigated gardens; no painted or moulded courtyard walls ... The young boys, full of curiosity and enterprise, grow quickly into old, anxious men, content with mere existence ... An English child in Fada with eyes that still see what is in front of them, would be terrified by the dirt, the stinks, the great sores on naked bodies, the twisted limbs, the babies with their enormous swollen stomachs and their hernias; the whole place, flattened upon the earth like the scab of a wound, would strike it as something between a prison and a hospital. But to Celia it is simply a native town. It has been labelled for her, in a dozen magazines and snap-shots, long before she comes to it. Therefore she does not see it at all. She does not see the truth of its real being, but the romance of her ideas, and it seems to her like the house of the unspoilt primitive, the simple dwelling-place of unsophisticated virtue.

Against the irony and realism of this may be set a passage in which Cary conveys something of the strange excitement instilled by the human geography of Africa:

One day a party of hoemen are working about ten o'clock near their own village. They have fifty yards of ditch to finish and they work like fury. Every now and then one of them, straightening his back for a moment, and flicking the sweat from his neck, looks up and down and repeats the formula, 'Allah, what a road'. Then all stand and answer with some current phrase, 'It is a road', or, 'A road, friends, yes, a road', in a high-pitched tone of wonder.

The road, at this place, is merely a long narrow strip of hard mud, littered with half-burnt chips, which passes out of sight in both directions into the high, primeval bush, familiar to them all.....

The little group of hoemen, their bodies glistening with sweat, who stand under these enormous vaults in the hot gloom, are at home. They smile at the road, because they have made it and sung of it, but they have no idea of its beginning or end. They are still like men brought up on a forgotten island far from ship routes, to whom the rest of the world is as much a mystery, a blank inhabited by monsters, as to their ancestors of the Stone Age..... Suddenly, in the immense silence of the morning, familiar as the forest twilight, which seems like the very substance of it, they hear a strange noise, between drumming and gunfire. It increases quickly. Two of the pagans dart among the trees and disappear into the silence. The rest stiffen. They do not seem to move, but each muscle is tense; their eyes open widely and stare with fixed and blank apprehension.

A lorry comes pounding out of the shadows, and at once they know what it must be. Two or three voices together cry, 'Motor!'

All grin with astonishment and delight. They lift their hoes and rush forward shouting greetings. The lorry driver, a tall Yoruba in blue dungarees, with a stub of cigarette stuck to his lips, pays no attention to them. He clanks and rattles past and disappears from sight. He doesn't even know he is the first man to drive over the Fada road.....

This is the world, complex rather than primitive, in which Joyce Cary sets his novel; a world where pagan democrats are ruled over jointly by Moslem autocrats and English bureaucrats; a world where cultural disruption and decay move hand in hand with new wealth, new opportunities. It is a world where uprooted individuals struggle to find their moral bearings in strange surroundings; a world swept over by successive waves of change—half plotted, half accidental—whose full consequences no-one has foreseen. And here a word of warning is necessary. Joyce Cary writes of the Africa he knew forty years ago. African readers should not, unless they are old men, judge the fidelity of his description by their own knowledge of modern Nigeria. Unimaginable changes have passed over the land since Cary rode and trekked through the then remote provinces of Borgu, the Middle Niger and the Cameroons. But the human situation has not changed. Africa still has its tragedies of misunderstanding, its overlapping circles of resentment and irritation, cut through occasionally by flashes of sympathy or acts of human generosity. It is still a land where the individual is stranded in a new situation which tests him morally and emotionally without mercy.

The time has come when Africans will probably wish to face and study their own past, distracted neither by shame nor by a wish to gloss it over

with a varnish of sentiment. In that judgement the African novels of Joyce Cary will be vital documents, for the Nigeria of those days has no other chronicler who writes with comparable understanding and compassion, with keen critical intelligence yet with love. Few writers at any time have so combined a serious interest in the problems of government with a huge delight in the variety and energy of human nature. It is the perfect combination for the subject (though it must have made him a very unusual Political Officer) No-one else evokes so well the queer excitement which hangs over that great land in its most baffling or exasperating moments.

* Joyce Cary's African novels are as follows: *Aissa Saved* (1932), *An American Visitor* (1933), *The African Witch* (1936), *Mister Johnson* (1939). All are published by Michael Joseph, London.



THE SUITCASE

A SHORT STORY BY EZEKIEL MPAHLELE

One of these days he was going to take a desperate chance, Timi thought. He would not miss it if it presented itself. Many men had got rich by sheer naked chance. Couldn't it just be that he was destined to meet such a chance?

He sat on a pavement on a hot afternoon. It was New Year's Eve. And in such oppressive heat Timi had been sitting for over an hour. An insect got into his nostril and made him sneeze several times. Through the tears that filled his eyes the traffic seemed to dance about before him.

The grim reality of his situation returned to him with all its cold and aching pain after the short interlude with the insect. Today he had been led on something like a goose chase. He had been to three places where chances of getting work were promising. He had failed. At one firm he had been told, "We've already got a boy, Jim." At the second firm a tiny typist told him, "You're too big, John. The boss wants a small boy — about eighteen you know." Then she had gone on with her typing, clouding her white face with cigarette smoke. At the third place of call a short pudgy white man put down his price in a squeaking voice: "Two pounds ten a week." Three pounds ten a week, Timi had said. "Take it or leave it, my boy," the proprietor had said as his final word, and snorted to close the matter. Timi chuckled softly to himself at the thought of the pudgy man with fat white cheeks and small blinking eyes.

He was watching the movements of a wasp tormenting a worm. The wasp circled over the worm and then came down on the clumsy and apparently defenceless worm. It seemed to stand on its head as it stung the worm. The worm wriggled violently, seeming to want to fly away from the earth. Then suddenly the worm stretched out, as though paralysed. The winged insect had got its prey. Timi felt pity for the poor worm. An unequal fight, an unfair fight, he thought. Must it always be thus, he asked — the well armed and agile creature sting the defenceless to death? The wasp was now dragging the worm; to its home, evidently.

He remembered he had nothing to take home. But the thought comforted him that his wife was so understanding. A patient and understanding wife. Yes,

she would say, as she had often said, "Tomorrow's sun must rise, Timi. It rises for everyone. It may have its fortunes;" or "I will make a little fire, Timi. Our sages say even where there is no pot to boil there should be fire."

Now she was ill. She was about to have a baby; a third baby. And with nothing to take home for the last two months, his savings running out, he felt something must be done. Not anything that would get him into jail. No, not that. It wouldn't do for him to go to jail with his wife and children almost starving like that. No, he told himself emphatically.

A white man staggered past him, evidently drunk. He stopped a short way past Timi and turned to look at him. He walked back to Timi and held out a bottle of brandy before him, scarcely keeping firm on his legs.

"Here, John, drink this stuff. Happy New Year!" Timi shook his head.

"C'mon, be—be a s-sport, hic! No p-police to catch you, s-s-see!"

Timi shook his head again and waved him away.

"Huh, here's a bugger don't want to have a happy New Year, eh. Go t-to hell then."

The white man swung round, brandishing his bottle as he tripped away. If only that were money, Timi thought bitterly.

He remembered it was time he went home, and boarded a bus to Sophiatown. In the bus he found an atmosphere of revelry. The New Year spirit, he thought; an air of reckless abandon. Happy New Year! one shouted at intervals.

Timi was looking at a man playing a guitar just opposite him across the aisle. Here a girl was dancing to the rhythm of the music. The guitarist strummed away, clearly carried away in the flight of his own music. He coaxed, caressed and stroked his instrument. His long fingers played effortlessly on the strings. He glowered at the girl in front of him with hanging lower lip as she twisted her body seductively this way and that, like a young supple plant that the wind plays about with. Her breasts pushed out under a light sleeveless blouse. At the same time the guitarist bent his ear to the instrument as if to hear better its magic notes, or to whisper to it the secret of his joy.

Two young women came to sit next to Timi. One of them was pale, and seemed sick. The other deposited a suitcase in front between her leg and Timi's. His attention was taken from the music by the presence of these two women. They seemed to have much unspoken between them.

At the next stop they rose to alight. Timi's one eye was fixed on the suitcase as he watched them go towards the door. When the bus moved a man who was sitting behind Timi exclaimed. "Those young women have left their case."

"No, it is mine," said Timi hastily.

"No. I saw them come in with it."

This is a chance

"I tell you it's mine."

"You can't tell me that."

Now there mustn't be any argument, or else

"Did you not see me come in with a case?"

I mustn't lose my temper, or else

"Tell the truth, my man, it bites no one."

"What more do you want me to say now?"

The people are looking at me now. By the gods, what can I do?

"It is his lucky day," shouted someone from the back, "let him be!"

"And if it is not his, how is this a lucky day?" asked someone else.

"Ha, ha, ha!" A woman laughed. "You take my thing, I take yours, he takes somebody else's. So we all have a lucky day, eh? Ha, ha, ha." She rocked with voluble laughter, seeming to surrender herself to it.

"Oh, leave him alone," an old voice came from another quarter, "only one man saw the girls come in with a suitcase, and only one man says it is his. One against one. Let him keep what he has, the case. Let the other man keep what he has, the belief that it belongs to the girls." There was a roar of laughter. The argument melted in the air of a happy New Year, of revelry and song.

Timi felt a great relief. He had won.

The bus came to a stop and he alighted. He did not even hear someone behind him in the bus cry, "That suitcase will yet tell whom it belongs to, God is my witness!" Why can't people mind their own affairs? He thought of all those people looking at him.

Once out of the bus he was seized by a fit of curiosity, anxiousness and expectancy. He must get home quickly and see what is in the case.

It was a chance, a desperate chance, and he had taken it. That mattered to him most as he paced up the street.

Timi did not see he was about to walk into a crowd of people. They were being searched by the police, two white constables. He was jolted into attention by the shining of a badge. Quickly he slipped into an open back-yard belonging to a Chinaman. Providence was with him, he thought, as he ran to stand behind the great iron door, his heart almost choking him.

He must have waited there for fifteen minutes, during which he could see all that was happening out there in the street. The hum and buzz so common to Good Street rose to a crescendo; so savage, so cold-blooded, so menacing. Suddenly he got a strange and frightening feeling that he had excited all this noise, that he was the centre around which these angry noises whirled and circled, that he had raised a hue and cry.

For one desperate second he felt tempted to leave the case where he squatted. It would be so simple for him, he thought. Yes, just leave the case there and have his hands, no, more than that, his soul, freed of the burden. After all, it was not his.

Not his. This thought reminded him that he had done all this because it

was not his. The incident in the bus was occasioned by the stark naked fact that the case was not his. He felt he must get home soon because it was not his. He was squatting here like an outlaw, because the case was not his. Why not leave it here then, after all these efforts to possess it and keep it? There must surely be valuable articles in it. Timi mused. It was so heavy. There must be. It couldn't be otherwise. Else why had Providence been so kind to him so far? Surely the spirits of his ancestors had pity on him; with a sick wife and hungry children. Then the wild, primitive determination rose in him; the blind determination to go through with a task once begun, whether a disaster can be avoided in time or not, whether it is to preserve worthless or valuable articles. No, he was not going to part with the case.

The pick-up van came and collected the detained men and women. The police car started up the street. Timi came out and walked on the pavement, not daring to look behind, lest he lose his nerve and blunder. He knew he was not made for all this sort of thing. Pitso was coming up the pavement in the opposite direction. Lord, why should it be Pitso just at this time? Pitso, the gasbag, the notorious talker whose appearance always broke up a party. They met.

"Greetings! You seem to be in a hurry, Timi?" Pitso called out in his usual noisy and jovial fashion. "Are you arriving or going?"

"Arriving." Timi did not want to encourage him.

"Ha, since when have you been calling yourself A.J.B.?"

"Who says I'm A.J.B.?"

"There my friend." Pitso pointed at the large initials on the case, and looked at his friend with laughing eyes.

"Oh, it's my cousin's." Timi wished he could wipe a broad stupid grin off the large mouth of this nonentity. He remembered later how impotent and helpless he felt now. For Pitso and his grin were inseparables, like Pitso and his mouth. Just now he wished he wouldn't look so uneasy. "I'm sorry, Pitso, my wife isn't well, and I must hurry." He passed on. Pitso looked at his friend, his broad mouth still smiling blankly.

The Chevrolet came to stop just alongside the pavement. Then it moved on, coasting idly and carelessly.

"Hey!" Timi looked to his left. Something seemed to snap inside him and release a lump shooting up to his throat. "Stop, jong!" The driver waved to him.

There they were, two white constables and an African in plain clothes in the back seat. Immediately he realized it would be foolish to run. Besides, the case should be his. He stopped. The driver went up to him and wrenched the suitcase from Timi's hand. At the same time he caught him by the shoulder and led him to the car, opening the back door for Timi. The car shot away to the police station.

His knees felt weak when he recognized the black man next to him. It

was the same man who was the first to argue that the case was not Timi's in the bus. By the spirits, did the man have such a strong sense of justice as to call God to be witness? Even on New Year's Eve? Or was he a detective? No, he could have arrested him on the bus. The man hardly looked at Timi. He just looked in front of him in a self-righteous posture, as it struck Timi.

Timi got annoyed; frantically annoyed. It was a challenge. He would face it. Things might turn round somewhere. He felt he needed all the luck fate could afford to give him.

At the police station the two constables took the case into a small room. After a few minutes they came out, with what Timi thought was a strange communication of feelings between them as they looked at each other.

"Kom, kom, jong!" One of them said, although quite gently. They put the case in front of him.

"Whose case is this?"

"Mine."

"Do you have your things in here?"

"My wife's things."

"What are they?"

"I think she has some of her dresses in it."

"Why do you say you *think*?"

"Well, you see, she just packed them up in a hurry, and asked me to take them to her aunt; but I didn't see her pack them."

"Hm. You can recognize your life's clothing?"

"Some of it." Why make it so easy for him? And why was there such cold amusement in the white man's eyes?

The constable opened the suitcase, and started to unpack the articles singly.

"Is this your wife's?" It was a torn garment

"Yes."

"And this? And this?" Timi answered yes to both. Why did they pack such torn clothing? The constable lifted each one up before Timi. Timi's thoughts were racing and milling round in his head. What trick was fate about to play him? He sensed there was something wrong. Had he been a dupe?

The constable, after taking all the rags out, pointed to an object inside. "And is this also your wife's?" glaring at Timi with aggressive eyes.

Timi stretched his neck to see.

It was a ghastly sight. A dead baby that could not have been born more than twelve hours before. A naked, white, curly haired image of death. Timi gasped and felt sick and faint. They had to support him to the counter to make a statement. He told the truth. He knew he had gambled with chance; the chance that was to cost him eighteen months' hard labour.



SHANGO SHRINE

OF THE TIMI OF EDE

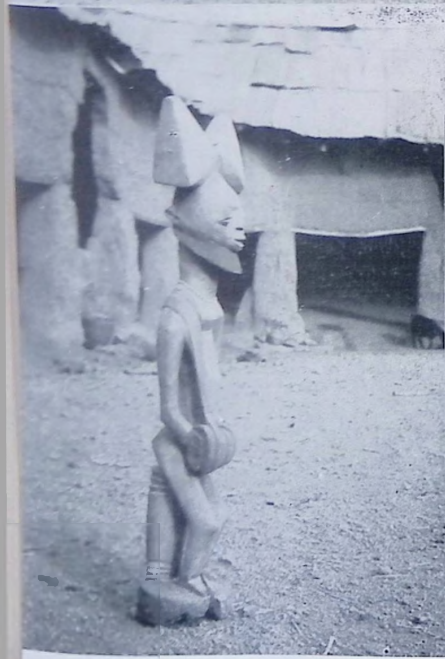
BY ULLI BEIER

The European art critic and art lover often seems to think that individualism in art is a European invention. "Primitive" art is said to be completely conventionalized. The carver is said to express a common accepted concept of his subject and not his own personal one. We tend to forget that European artists too worked within certain set conventions, except perhaps during the last half century. To an African observer Michaelangelo, Raffael and Leonardo all look very much alike, because he will at first only notice the things they have in common, such as proportions, anatomy or perspective which are all strikingly different from their own art. In the same way the European looking at African art sees first of all only that all figure carvings seem to have very large heads, that all human forms are stylized and partially abstracted, that there is a certain limitation of movement and gesture and so on. But the trained observer finds no difficulty in distinguishing the hand of different carvers, and where sufficient specimens from one artist have survived it is even possible to trace the carver's development and the different 'periods' in his creative life. In this number of "Black Orpheus" we publish photographs of carvings that are all in a single shrine in the Yoruba town of Ede. There are twenty four figures in this shrine, and although nobody now remembers who carved them and how old they are it is easy to see that they come from four different workshops.

The Yoruba are a tribe of prolific woodcarvers, who live in Western Nigeria. Traditional woodcarving has very nearly died out but thousands of carvings can still be found in the shrines of the traditional gods, who are still being worshipped. Among these gods "SHANGO" the thunder god is perhaps the most colourful of all. His power and force are symbolized by thunder and lightning which are said to be expressions of his wrath. He is also identified with one of the founders of the Yoruba nation: Alafin Shango, one of the early kings of the mighty town of Oyo. A vast body of mythology is woven around this deified king who is said to have been a splendid but tyrannical



THE SHANGO SHRINE OF THE TIMI OF EDE



ruler. He was a magician of great power, but accidentally destroyed his palace by thunder, killing most of his wives and children. Then he hanged himself in great despair². But a few of his friends remained faithful to him even after his tragic death. They began to worship him. Significantly the Yoruba expression for worship is "to make a god", which means roughly to build up his power. A Yoruba "orisha"³ or deity cannot exist independently of men. It is the intensity of worship that makes him a great god. From the songs and prayers and praise names of the worshippers, Shango emerges as a tremendous personality. He is wild and always eager to fight ("he kills the sheep and washes in its blood") and in his moments of sudden unpredictable anger he is feared by worshippers and non worshippers alike. Though he is quick-tempered he is also very generous ("he lends money and forgets to ask for its return") and he freely gives children, wealth and power to the worshippers. Although he dislikes and punishes liars and thieves ("he wrinkles his nose and the liar runs away") he is not a moral god. The Yoruba conceive their gods not as moral or perfect beings, but as sources of power. The purpose of worshipping Shango is not to become a perfect human being but to live a fuller, intensified life. It is interesting to note that this enhancement of life actually takes place. Today where there are many Yoruba who are Moslem or Christian the "orisha" worshippers stand out as powerful and highly sensitive personalities. They live at different levels of consciousness at the same time. Telepathetic communication, a rare occurrence in Europe, is common among them. They can induce trance states at will and thus open up to themselves realms of human experience that are closed to most other men. These trance states, in which the worshipper is "possessed" by Shango, or whoever happens to be his 'orisha', are meant to change the personality of the worshipper. They gradually turn him into a person of the "Shango type." Extrovert, bold, unpredictable, generous, imaginative, colourful: those are the characteristics that spring to mind, when one thinks of a Shango worshipper. But the trance states have the added purpose of extending the worshippers psychic experience and of opening up realms of "knowledge" to him that are closed to him in a state of normal consciousness. At times the so-called "prophecies" of the possessed may be nothing but vague and general pronouncements about the future of the town and the community. But very often they are detailed analyses of personal relationships. Tensions that exist in the town, between different factions or between important people are suddenly seen and explained in their true significance and remedies are suggested. I have even known people in trance warn others of their own secret intentions. In the state of trance, furthermore, the worshipper experiences states of exultation that no person living exclusively at the national level could take part in. Thus the heightened existence becomes indeed a reality to the worshipper.

It was necessary to deviate into these religious questions in order to explain the function of the carver in Yoruba society. From the foregoing it is already clear that the worship of Shango is a highly complex spiritual process that has nothing to do with "fetishism" or "idol worship". These are meaningless derogative terms invented by ignorant and unsympathetic European observers. A carving in a Shango shrine is not worshipped. Shango himself is practically never represented. The carvings are mostly identified as the gods' wives, priests, followers and initiates. In the case of the Ede shrine the original identity of the twenty-four figures has been lost and they are now vaguely described by the aged priestess as people killed by lightning. This may have applied to some of the figures, but others were definitely identified as priests by the carver. (The figures on Plate II top right are wearing the hairstyle of Shango priests and one is holding a Shango priest's staff, in the shape of a double axe.) The figures have no direct function in the worship. There are Shango shrines without such carvings and the weekly and annual ceremonies go on just the same. The more sacred symbols of Shango are in fact flint stones and celts who symbolise his thunderbolts, and similar objects. The purpose of the carvings is difficult to define. They are more than mere decoration. They are intended to create an atmosphere, a feeling of heightened reality which is conducive to worship. One or two carvings are functional in the sense that they are used to support the calabash in which the sacred thunderbolts are kept. But the majority act through their mere presence. They help the worshipper to achieve the calm state of concentration, and the condition of receptiveness that is necessary if the god is to manifest himself during the ceremonies⁴. Let us examine now with what stylistic means this end is achieved.

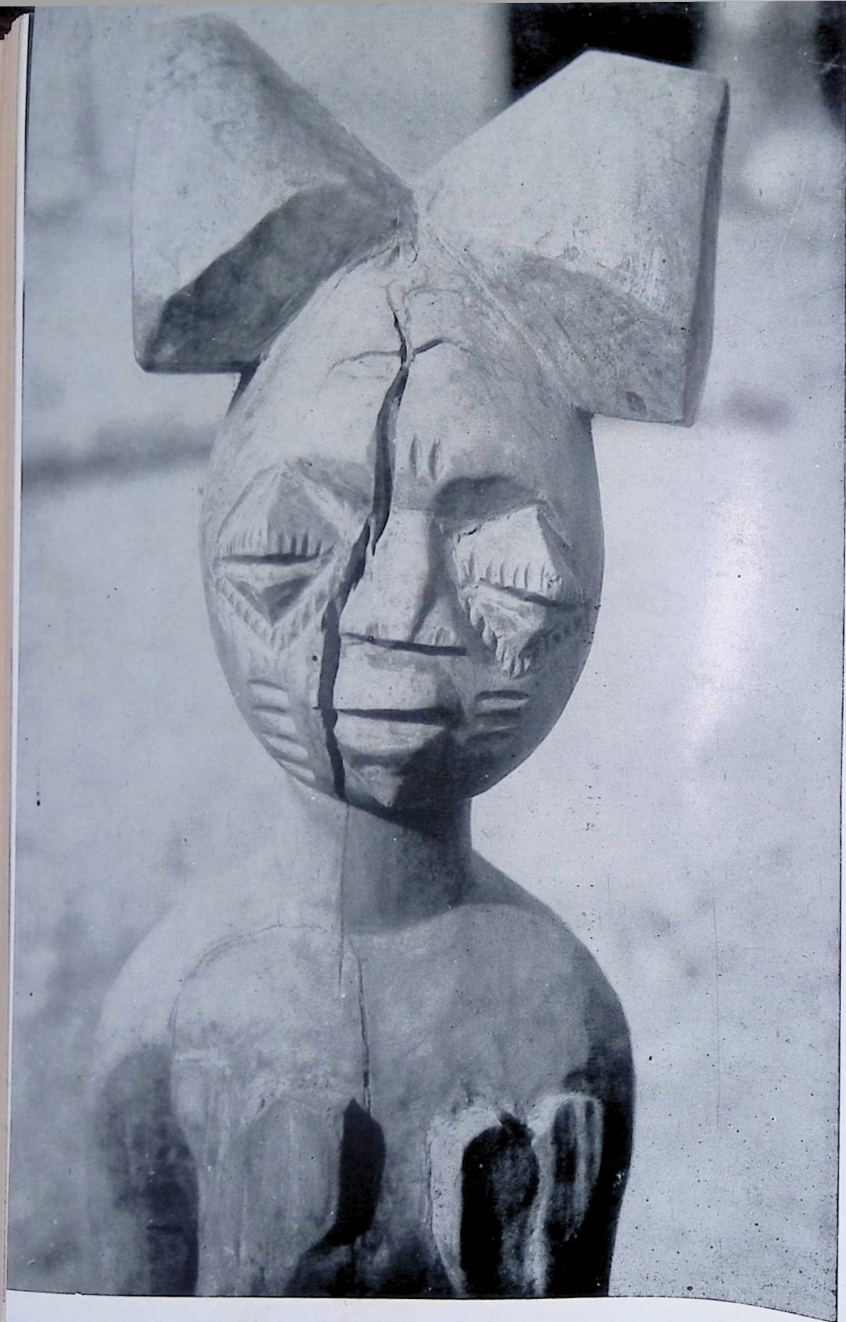
An examination of the photographs will show that all the carvings adhere to a set of conventions: the figures are static and do not depict any movement. They stand solidly on both feet, with the weight evenly distributed. No turning or twisting of the body is attempted, that would cause a shifting of the vertical axis. The head is proportionately large, the eyes are bulging and the head is carved with greater care and detail than the body. The legs are short and the carving of the feet is comparatively rough. The basic forms are organic. Anatomical features are clearly recognizable: cheekbones, eyelids, lips are often delicately carved. But the basic forms have been stylized to a high degree, sometimes approaching abstraction. (The eyes on Plate V for example have been dissolved into a series of triangles.) The features of the carvings indicate types rather than portraits. The figures from one carver usually show a very strong family likeness. It has been said by an authority on Yoruba art that Yoruba carvings have "no expression". This is true in the very limited sense of the word, that they are not shown laughing or weeping, or being angry, or smiling. But there is an expression, in fact a very powerful one. It has been said that they reflect "dignified repose", but this is rather an understatement. I would rather call it "powerful concentration". The Yoruba carver represents his figures perfectly static and completely vertical and without conflicting



PLATE III.







diagonals. But the calm harmony which is achieved in this way is not the serene detached harmony of, say, ancient Greek sculpture. The bulging forms of Yoruba art seem to suggest a forceful pressure from within pushing to the outside. It is as if an extremely powerful emotion was deliberately controlled. It is an expression which is familiar to all who have witnessed orisha worshippers during ceremonies. There is a popular belief that "pagans" let themselves go and become frantic during their worship. This is completely untrue. The mounting emotional tension is completely controlled and there is a tremendous feeling of concentration. Even the "possessions" do not take place at random, but they occur at precisely fixed moments during the ritual and mostly to specially chosen people. The Yoruba carver represents this heightened state, this intensified experience which is the purpose of "orisha" worship. The final impression of harmony which the carver achieves is the result of controlled tension, of rigid form imposed on the pressure that seems to come from inside the carving.

It is possible to generalise to this extent about the carvings in the Ede shrine and in fact these remarks would apply to most Yoruba woodcarving.

But within the limits set by this convention, there is still a great deal of room left for individual interpretations and highly personal styles. In the Shango shrine in Ede four carvers were obviously at work. The first artist produced two carvings of kneeling women, each holding a flat round disc on her head. (Plate II top left. Also detail on Plate III). Both of these carvings are used in the shrine to support the calabash holding the "thunderbolts". Their style can easily be differentiated from the rest. The head is even larger in proportion to the body and the eyes are even bigger. The head and body are bulky, the breasts very long, pendulous and tight. By contrast the limbs are small, thin, and angular. This contrast between the large, soft, round bodies and the undersized, almost crippled limbs gives the figures an appearance of tenderness and gentleness, almost helplessness. This is the gentlest of the four artists. His gentleness is also expressed in the soft, bulging form, the mild curves of the face. Notice the broad and high forehead bending smoothly. The protruding, ball like eyes, that do not focus on anything but seem to be turned inward. The soft, broad nostrils, the wide sensitive mouth. Deep incisions giving hard shadows are carefully avoided and the surface of the figure is treated with much delicacy. The forms, particularly the faces are slightly more naturalistic and less geometrical than in the other carvings. They are warm, fullblooded, motherly figures.

Almost in complete contrast is the work of the second carver, who is represented by four figures in the Ede shrine. (See Plate II top right and Plate VII right. Detail of a head on Plate V. The four figures can easily be picked out on Plate I.) If the first artist expressed the humanity of the orisha, this one expresses his power. The four figures have massive, solid bodies, and stand heavily on short, thick legs. They have square shoulders like a fighter. They

all wear the traditional headdress of Shango priests. The faces express extreme concentration, energy and power, reminiscent of a priest possessed by Shango. The figures are boldly carved, conceived in large geometric shapes. Very deep incisions are made that create deep black shadows. The eyes are popping out of the head like those of a man in trance. The mouth expresses tension—the lips bare the teeth. Although the figures are as vertical and static as any as the others, they are so laden with energy that they seem ready to break out into a wild dance.

The third carver is represented by ten carvings in the Ede shrine. These include a horseman and the dog of Shango. (See Plate II bottom right, and Plate VII left. Details of head Plate IV. Detail of horse Plate VIII top left; dog Plate VIII top right, child Plate VIII bottom right).

This carver has the most spiritual conception of Shango. The figures are extremely tall and slender and for a Yoruba carving the head is relatively small. The figure seems to rise elegantly from its base. More than the other artists this one has dispensed with the basic anatomy of the human figure. Note the long steep, sloping shoulders, from which the arms grow without a joint. Compare the delicate slender neck with the massive necks of the second carver. The body of the carving on Plate VII seems to disintegrate under the delicately slender form imposed by the artist. There is an almost Gothic feeling of transcendentalism. The eyes of the carving are half closed by Yoruba standards, the face is serene, though calm. The face of the horseman (Plate IV) looks remarkably introvert, if compared with the head on Plate V by the second carver. It is interesting to note, that not all the ten carvings express this same concept. On Plate I one can see three carvings side by side at half-back view standing in the foreground, right. Of these only the central figure, with a child on her back, has the same proportions as the horseman and the figure on Plate VII (left). The others are shorter, plumper, heavier. Yet they all come undoubtedly from the same workshop. Note such details as the way in which the line from the chin is carried round behind the neck; the stylization of the ear; the sloping shoulder. It is possible that these carvings represent two phases in the same artists work. But it may also be, that they are carvings by different artists working in the same workshop. Woodcarving was a family tradition in Yorubaland, and usually a father would train one or two of his sons. Unfortunately nothing is known about the artist. Nor have I seen carvings by any of the three artists discussed so far in any shrine except the one in Ede.

The work of the fourth carver on the other hand can be found in various places in Ede, and specimens of his smaller carvings (Ibeji twin figures and Shango priest's staffs have been seen up to sixty miles away from Ede.) There are eight of his game like figures in this shrine. (See Plate II bottom left: detail of head Plate VI; detail of child Plate VIII bottom left.)

In some respects these figures are the most stylized of all. The face on Plate VI bears less resemblance to a human face than any of the others. The head is conceived as a perfectly smooth eggshape into which the features have





been cut. The features are completely geometrical. The eyes are diamonds, the nose is a triangle. the lips two heavy parallel lines. There are no anatomical features in the face. Cheekbones and forehead have become quite unrecognizable. The only naturalistic features are perhaps the tribal marks and the eye-lashes, but these have been retained clearly for their decorative value. The strange shape on top of the head does not represent a cap, but the double axe of Shango. The double axe is a stylization of ram's horns. The ram is Shango's sacred animal, because of the quick "lightening" movements of its head. This double axe usually decorates the staff of a Shango priest. It is unusual to find it on a large figure like this. The total effect of this carving is unreal, spirit-like. This artist does not express the humanity, the power, or the trance but the magical aspect of the worship. Shango worshippers are great magicians. Not only are they said to be able to control lightening, but on the great annual festival they perform breathtaking feats, driving nails through their tongues and knives into their flesh. The Shango priest is able to perform such feats, because he is living in such close contact with the spirit world.

In this way the four carvers, while moving within the traditions and accepted conventions of Yoruba art express their own personal concept of "orisha" worship. Although none of these carvings represents an "orisha" himself, yet they reflect the artist's attitude to the god and his interpretation of his worship.

NOTES :

- 1) TIMI is the title of the king of the town of Ede. According to tradition he was a general of Alafin Shango, who later became an independent chief. There are many shrines of Shango in Ede, the figures discussed here being from the King's own shrine. Although the present holder of the title is a Christian he must perpetuate the worship of Shango in the interest of his subjects.
- 2) The myths relating to Shango's death have been written down so many times that I have refrained from repeating them here. Readers could consult: Frobenius: "The Voice of Africa", Verger: "Les Dieux d'Afrique" or Beier: "The Story of Sacred Wood Carvings from one small Yoruba Town".
- 3) The Yoruba believe in a supreme God Olorun, who is however not worshipped directly. An "orisha" is usually an ancestor who achieved supernatural status even during his life. An "orisha" is not the equivalent of God, but he personifies certain aspects of the divine being. For a fuller definition of the "orisha" and their relationship to the supreme God see: "The Story of Sacred Wood Carvings from One Small Yoruba Town": A Nigeria Magazine Production, Lagos 1957.
- 4) In some shrines the figures are symbolically "fed" during a sacrifice. After the "orisha" has received his share, each carving has a little blood smeared on the mouth and little bits of meat and yam placed in front of it. This is a way of indicating that the spirits of the deceased priests are asked to participate in the ceremony. It is perhaps this practice which has given rise to the myth of "fetishism".

EWÉ POETRY

BY GEORMBEEYI ADALI-MORTTI

The Ewe country makes exacting demands on its people. Out of the sweats of their brows, the Ewes eke their bare livelihood, literally so. Their part of the country has no gold and diamonds and timber as have some parts of Ghana.

But, the people have an extraordinary gift for music and drumming and dancing. How, otherwise, could the people of Eweland have maintained such good humour and optimism in the face of hardship!

The poems which follow are words of folk songs. Not mummified folk songs dug out from an archaeological pile; but living songs which, like farmers of old, the farmers of today are singing at work, as they clear the bush, plant the crops and harvest them: while they weave the cloths they wear, carve the stools they sit on or build the houses they live in.

They are above all songs which are sung to honour a departed one, and to mourn his loss.

When were they composed,—these songs? And who composed them? No one knows. What is known is that they are almost as old as the Ewe people themselves. Containing some of the richest literary pieces in the Ewe language. The songs are highly charged with emotion and, in Shakespeare's words, with "wise saws and modern instances." And the thoughts are condensed in terse language, making their translation into English a hazardous venture!

The choruses have a definite, recognisable pattern; but the solos are such that there is a wide room for creative improvisation.

Nye m'be drɔ̄ kum mele dee,
Drɔ̄fenyawo dia de kodzogbe (Bis)
Atamgbadee Drɔ̄fenu:
"Drɔ̄fenyawo metsia 'me si o.
Adze daa wole!"
Nenye drɔ̄fenyawo dede e,
Ne menya ahalifenyawo vɔ̄!

"Nye m'be dr5 kum mele dee,
Dr5fenyawo dia de kodzogbe..."

This is a poem in classic Ewe. I shall try to give its approximate meaning: I can do no more. The reader must supply the atmosphere and the background without which even an Ewe, well-versed in the language, would miss the meaning.

Here it is:

Methinks it's been a dream;
But the dream has come to life!
Atangba's son, Drofenu, says:
Believe them not:
A dream's a dream.
No more!
Truly, had dreams been real,
Death, I'd have fathomed death.

A study of Ewe traditional songs is a study of the philosophy of life, and of the values of the Ewe people. Above all, it is a study in sweet sorrow. Overlaying and underlying rural life is a vague, all pervasive sadness. The fields may laugh in the rain and the sunshine; but, they adjoin the brooding woods and hills. The birds twitter with glee on the tree tops; but below them, the moody four-footed animals prowl in dread through the thickets. To man and animal alike, there is the haunting uncertainty of the day to come: the fear of the future; the sudden disaster; the caprices of the weather; the deep mystery of natural phenomena — all this finds an echo in the songs.

Here is a poem which exemplifies what I mean. It tells the story of a man who has lost his relatives through death. He alone of the clan is left behind. He bemoans his fate. But behind his moaning lies stoical strength and fortitude.

Ame vovɔe botoe mexe - e.
Nasi agble botoe ne meu lo!
Yã mewua 'me, dzi gakua 'me o!
Yã wu amea dewo vi
Dzi le wokuu dzi.
Hlovovɔe dzunamelawo,
Mibia miafe agbedifiawo sea?

Chorus: Ne medo wome asi mɔ nu de,
Dze maku, mayowo de?

Last remaining, last to go:
A border mark I stand.
Were I a boundary post
On the farm's edge,
I'd heave myself
Aside and free me.

What can't be cured, must be endured.
 Some folk unwisely fret
 Under ills they can't prevent.
 You who mock my loss of kin,
 Know you the will of Fate?

If you could follow the words of the Ewe version you would notice, strangely enough, a good deal of sophistication. Such typical forms as rhythm and rhyme, metre, and stress are there represented.

The Ewe word for the animal trap which is made from a raft is "Aza". Bamboo sticks are cut to size and bound together into a raft. On the back of the raft large stones are piled. With one end of the raft on the ground, the other is raised some two feet from the ground and suspended by means of a rope and lever. This lever triggers the trap if a hapless animal should go under the raft to disturb it.

Now, the following song is about a certain man who has learnt, perhaps, too late, that a brother is very like a raft trap. You cannot stand in the distance and know the real condition of a trap. How do you know that its lever has not got entangled? Seen from afar, the trap, now defective, might appear to be functioning still! In human terms, a brother is much too dear to be kept in a distance. You can only know the real needs of a person, by living intimately together with him. It may be too late to help a distant brother.

Here are the exact words:

Amenovi azā ye:
 Womeŋoa adzɔgbe
 Hena ekpo o lo.
 Wolegbe tse eda xixa,
 Ayumawo!

The next song is an allegory told around the figure of an army of driver ants. We all know that few animals, snakes included, can fall among driver ants and survive the experience. So destructive are these creatures.

The song tells of a person who, having the misfortune of blinding his way into an army of driver ants, gets bitten by a snake, the least likely company in which to encounter a snake!

Medo alɔlɔwo me xe da dum lo!
 Womeŋoa alɔlɔwo me da gaɖua 'me o.
 Nye ya medo alɔlɔwo me xe da dum,
 'Lee mawo o, naviwo.
 Mm-m-m.

The next poem is "Adzia tso-to-do mewoa lā o." The child who is brought up under a father's supervision has no cause to grow to be a fool. "Why," explains the singer, "not being orphans, why do some folk behave so foolishly?" The actual words are:

Adzia tso-to-do mewoa lã o!
 Tse ta 'me 'dewo tso to do, tso no do
 Kafe gale lã woo le dza'
 Nye, Patipre-novi gototro anunnyam'
 Yã gbã ye: ame 'dewo tso to do, tso no do
 Kafe gale lã woo, koiba lo! Aã-aa!
 Naviwo, milõe nam dzro' Aã-aa!
 Hexowo gboa lo! Aã-aa!

In traditional folk songs, the words are given prominence over the sound. Though the melody may be charming, it is kept very simple. The sound gives colour and depth to the words. The sound embellishes the ideas, and gives them a pleasing background.

In the following song you will notice a shift of emphasis. The rhythm has become more definite and more pronounced.

It is a song which compels the accompaniment of a drum. The very words themselves are clearly emphatic:

Ati to hexoawo f'ade.
 Miyo ha yeyewo neva...

A stick has pricked the tongue of the
celebrated singers.

Call forth younger singers to sing us new songs!

I am not able to analyse the form of these poems in terms of Western poetry. Yet they definitely have form, they adhere to certain conventional patterns. And yet these songs are not sung exclusively by specially endowed and trained people. Everybody joins in the refrain. Thus the sensuality of the euphony of words is being appreciated and cultivated even by ordinary people.

Pleasing language, worthwhile ideas, balance of arrangement, measured form in which all this is expressed—these then are the qualities we find in the poems. Yes, though not having the means by which to recast an idea; to see what comes of a first attempt; to reject this wording here, that idea there, and replace them with a better,—nevertheless the songsters of our "rude forefathers" knew how, in their minds, to choose the colourful, the rich, the refined word and phrase, and so to place them in juxtaposition one with the other that the final product is genuine poetry.

It is true that a string of words can be poetical without having much to say: like traditional cradle songs and nursery rhymes—both of which abound in our various communities in West Africa.

But, our ancestors who composed and sang funeral, farming and hunting songs were concerned with the deepest things in life—the profound feelings

which moved them. All around them was a wealth of material—life as they led it, death, the cycles of the farm year, animals and trees, the supernatural agencies, love and hate, kindness and cruelty ... The allusions and imagery of the poems were drawn from this rich environment and from the social background of the people.

These poems cannot be sung, except on the appropriate occasion. One does not sing a mourning song, unless a death has actually occurred. Even to sing a farming song at home in the village, or to sing a hunting song without a cause, one has to apologise first to the gods. It is sacrilegious to sing these when feelings have not been aroused or when it is not intended to arouse feelings.

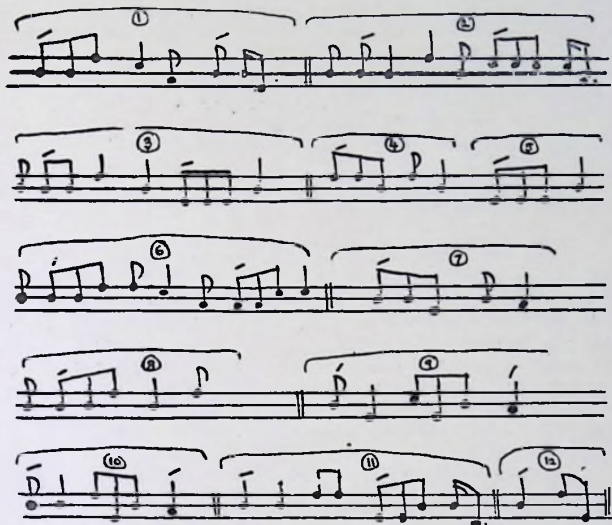
The poems were cast in rhythms all their own, making them truly West African.

Whatever differences of detail we may find between these poems and Western poetry—one unmistakable quality links them together—beauty of language and discipline of form: "the art of assimilating phenomena, whether works, images, emotions, or systems of ideas, to the deeper innate cravings of the mind." The combination of these in such a way that they are capable of evoking emotions of one type or another.

Let us analyse some of these poems:

1	Dzodzo 'uālā nye tu dēe	a
2	Afo mato yi vua dzi dēe?	a
3	Amenovi-ɲutsu, glimetie:	a
4	Ne mele asiwō o	b
5	Gliwō mū lo!	b
6	Amenovi-nyonu, aɖadzadōe ye	a
7	Ne mele asiwō o	b
8	Avuvu wō wō kpoo.	b
9	Tōko mele ɲunye o;	b
10	Nōko mele ɲunye o	b
11	Mee madō nyanyeawo na o?	b
12	Navie!	a

Where did the accents fall? Like most of our traditional music, the tune is complex double time. Some of the beats have one, some have two and some have three syllabic units. But, in Ewe, the units as such are of equal accentuation. Therefore, the English accented and unaccented syllable pattern does not apply. Neither does the metrical arrangement depend on a regular form of high-and-low sounds. The rhythm of the spoken piece, spoken in the dialect of the locality from which the song derives, is as follows:



Lines 6 to 8 repeat lines 3 to 4 with a minor variation in 8.

The tempo then slows down considerably, and the metrical pattern changes to:

Tɔkɔ mele ŋɛnye o.
 Nɔkɔ mele ŋɛnye o...

The rhythm of the last line, slower still, is a pathetic symbol of resignation: "Mee madó nyanyawo ra o!" "In whom shall I confide?"

The rhyming pattern is: a a a b b a b b b b b a. The sound "o", as an ending to the lines, predominates. Nor is this its only role. O's are to be heard in every line. Has this any significance to the theme of the poem? Turn to the English version for a moment:

1. My wings are plucked; — woe's the day'
2. Shall I ascend the tree by foot?
3. A buttress — that's a mother's son:
4. If you haven't it,
5. Down falls your house.
6. All-purpose cloth — a mother's daughter is:
7. If you haven't it,
8. You're cold-exposed.
9. Relations on the father side,
10. Relations on the mother side,
11. None. In whom shall I confide?
12. Oh, Brother!

A song of lament. Here is a lonely soul — without relations on the mother side or on the father side. Can you imagine a calamity graver than that in a traditional African community! The song mourns this fact. And the one sound that predominates over all others in vocal mourning in Eweland is "o".

Note how the ideas have been arranged in pairs. 3 & 6, 4/5 & 7/8. 9 & 10. Other alliterative devices besides those of ideas have been employed. The "wing" (with which to fly), the "buttress" (no doubt of a mud wall), the all-purpose (loin) cloth (which alone some mothers owned) — all this is likened to the role a brother or a sister plays in one's life.

We shall next analyse another piece — one of the most touching poems of lament I've seen.

Na ye e e!
 Na mumūa na 'mela
 ƉaƉa na 'mela
 Na mlenudee
 Na yɔ mele!
 Azi favi megbea na yɔɔ o.
 Mele na yɔɔ metɔa nam o.
 Dzre wɔɔ mīle dzā?

Mother dear.

Mother, who freely gives of what she has:
 fresh food and cooked meals alike.

Mother, who never deserts the hearth.

Mother, hearken to me!

The crying child will call after its mother.

How is it that mother does not answer me when I call. —
 Are we quarrelling?

Note the way pathos is engendered by the use of "Na" (Mother) in all but the third and last lines, and the evocation of the idea of a helpless child, yearning for her mother. More than any other of these poems, the rhythm of this one is so varied from line to line that it conveys a jagged impression. The rhymes of the couplets serve to bind the irregular rhythm together. It seems that the anonymous bard made the rhythm deliberately uneven in order to emphasise the gasping, choking wail of a person bereaved. A mother is here presented to us as the Giver. She is mirrored as sharing food in the farmstead, then in the hut back home; and then we are made to picture her in the kitchen. And the definition on the canvas on which this is done is very sharp indeed!

In contrast with the image of a living mother is that of a mother, lying in state — present but unseeing, unhearing, unheeding any more. "Are we quarrelling?" the singer asks the corpse. The superb touch of a skilful composer lies in the manner in which all this is subtly conveyed — "I'm calling mother! She heeds me not!" And then the down-to-earth, heart-breaking line: "Are we quarrelling?"

Note, too, the highly compressed language:

- mumdanamela — a giver of the food that can be eaten raw;
- dadanamela — a giver of the cooked food;
- mle nudee — one who sits by the cooking stove.

Other poems in our list illustrate this form of condensation of thought and expression.

Let's go back and take another look at the poem 'Nye m'be dro kum mele dee...' "Methinks it's been a dream..." That's to say, what was feared has come to be; that which was merely imagined, has turned out to be a reality; the news I hoped would prove untrue is a fact, alas! Like many poems of this nature, the various concepts and figurative speeches are not given a chance to fade smoothly one into the other: they are introduced, as it were, in flashes, in clearly defined abruptness, in sharp contrasts. And the flight of thought and emotion are expressed by sudden alternations of metaphorical motifs.

In this poem, however, the metaphor of a dream theme has been sustained throughout, broken by the conflict between what is generally believed: *dreams are a phantasy*; and the deviation of what is generally accepted to be true: *a dream has come true*. And yet, the speaker still feels that if all he had known in dreams were the reality, he would have known all there is to know about the hereafter. The hereafter, "ahali", has been personified in order to heighten the vividness of the conception. "Ahali" is an affectionate name for death.

This is a poem which while telling a story, also probes the philosophical foundations of life.

Nye ya mezu ada denutome:
 Menye nono ta de meva o lo!
 Miatsi (miagblo) na naviwo be
 Tseta wosea 'haha!'
 Henoa sisii le dzã!

Miatsi na wo be
 'Haha,' meɖua 'me o lo!
 Nye ya mezu sɔa denutome
 Menye nono ta de meva o,
 Akpiniawo!

One of the first songs I know is the following:

I have recited it time and again, but never tire of it.

The setting is a wooded country, watered by a stream. On the banks are a few grass plants. Imagine a grass plant bending over a running water, as it flows over a river bed strewn with rounded pebbles and stones. Momently, as the stem of the grass sways in the breeze, the tip of the hanging blade of grass bobs and dips in and out of the water. And, as if making sure that its intentions are not misconstrued, the grass says, "You know full well that a plant doesn't drink through its leaves. If then my leaves should lave in the stream, know, they're not there for the selfish reason of assuaging their thirst. I'm only a blade of grass in a stream."

Literally translated, the poem continues, "Do ask my people, why it is they flee by hearing a mere 'haha' (alarm)." The onomatopoeic word "haha", the sound used by a person to scare another, has been employed instead of a word like "threat", "bark", or "intimidation".

A blade of grass in a stream — no more:

I haven't come to drink.

From mouth to mouth pass down the word —

No need to flee at mere alarm.

Mere noise devours no one.

I'm no more than a blade of grass

A-laving in a stream, — come not to drink.

(Over to you) Akpiniawo!

The general feature of these poems is that they are short, unlike the drum history of Northern Ghana which relates the history of a clan or tribe or extols an ancestor or a ruler. Another common characteristic is the extreme economy in the use of words. And the words used conjure up the gamut of tribal usage, history, values and physical environment. There is frequent use of quotations from celebrated minstrels and people reputed for their wisdom. Even the themes prattling bird Patipre's relation "Anikagro" has been quoted. While the themes are philosophical in character, the treatment of them is rather secular — employing as they do practical situations and material objects. Where reference to the spiritual world is made, the singer immediately returns to the material world.

The field from which I have drawn these songs is a deliberately limited one. The songs are those sung among the people inhabiting the valley and the

plateau of the Togoland range of mountains some twenty miles in radius around my village, Gbledée, from where these collections were made. The means of travelling in this area is still the bush paths, some of which have recently been widened to permit of an occasional truck to venture over them.

Only as recently as my boyhood days, most of the food and shelter which these people used were produced by themselves. As such, the wealth of our past in song and dance and customary usage has not yet entirely been lost. But, time is running out, both in my country and in the other West African societies. There is much left which we can still retrieve, if we tackle the job of study and research and collection, now. In the literary field, are many precious pieces in folk tales, madrigals, songs sung by children at play in the village square when the moon supplies a light, drum songs and language, hunters' songs, lullabies and cradle songs, songs for out-dooring a maiden, songs to illustrate stories, songs of asafos (youth's warrior organisations) and songs of battle, songs of challenge and of abuse, words of libation, religious prayers and songs.

It is out of the materials contained in these and their study from which modern creative writing can be built, if it is to be distinctly original and West African. There is a form of West African poetry — we must find it out.

All this confronts us with a challenge! There is, too, the challenge posed by our complete dependence on foreign books for our schools. Foreign books, we must read; but, to make text books meaningful to our children and new literates, the background must be familiar. In the matter of general literature too, we owe it to our country and to the world to make our own distinctive distribution. *The task of interpreting ourselves and our culture can best be done by ourselves.*

MIGRANTS WITH MANUSCRIPTS

NON-BRITISH WRITERS OF THE WEST INDIAN NOVEL.

BY GORDON ROWLANDS

In the course of his essay on Rudyard Kipling, the late George Orwell commented on what little literature colonial countries had produced. Orwell had an interesting explanation for this. Within the British Empire, he argued, creative writers being unable to stay near the metropolis. They could do so because the Empire was largely familiarised and controlled by the Navy. In the Russian Empire, on the other hand, a system of military conscription had served to compel all types of young Russians into the Czar's far-flung ramparts. Thus, like Tolstoy, they could brood and write.

The more troubling thing about this argument is the fact that Orwell, ordinarily a perceptive, seemed to have entirely overlooked the creative possibilities of the indigenous peoples themselves. He was writing in 1942. Within ten years English language literature was to be enriched by a flood of writing from West Indian soil, above all, from the West Indies. This seems to destroy the theory completely — until we consider two facts. Creative literature arose when these territories had ceased to be colonies; moreover the writers had their recognition and, indeed, in most cases taken up residence in London.

The case of the West Indian novel is a matter of the last four years during which a small dozen novelists with two dozen works have established the novel as one of our most successful forms of cultural expression. To-day the profession of literature in one to which the young West Indian can aspire if in Jamaica there is no publishing house in the West Indies; nor is there a ready, public large enough to support a writer. And, so, many a migrant wends his way here with a manuscript in his suitcase.

The statement has been written indeed. As recently as 1950, say, the most generous reader would hardly recall the names of two West Indian authors. During these backward years of the British connection some literature had been

produced. But it had largely been what may be called utilitarian literature as contrasted with the creative literature of to-day. It was directly political or descriptive; the typical work was a polemical tract, or a history, or an estate manual or a travel journal. Around the 1830's, when the abolition of slavery was being debated, utilitarian writing reached its highest peak. It reached another peak in the 1930's when a group of West Indian intellectuals centred around the International African Bureau in London attacking the colonial system and its works.

Two books of that age are likely to outlast the whole body of utilitarian literature. The *Black Jacobins* written by C.L.R. James appeared in 1937; it was an epic history of the Haitian Revolution and a brilliant Marxist study of the mechanics of revolution. *Capitalism and Slavery* by Eric Williams, published in 1945, was based on an Oxford dissertation presented in 1937. One of Dr. Williams's conclusions attacked the conventional view that slavery was abolished because of the humanitarian campaign. He maintained that the humanitarian campaign only succeeded when it became apparent that slavery, as an economic system, was unprofitable. If James created an epic, Williams destroyed a myth; both wrote with a polemical vigour and sense of contemporary parallels rare in scholarship to-day. But both books were, in the final analysis, works of scholarship with relatively small appeal. From the pens of other West Indians, however, poured a stream of more popular if more ephemeral works on the colonial question. The ferment of the 1930's was almost as great as that of the 1830's. In this context therefore the West Indian novel is seen to be no exotic blossom springing up wondrously from wasteland. It is a new bloom from old roots.

Of course there is no sharp dividing line between the political writer and the novelist, between the age of political concern and the age of imaginative creativeness. C.L.R. James, author of "*Black Jacobins*" also wrote a novel "*Minty Alley*", the only West Indian novel published in England during those days. John Hearne, himself among the most distinguished of our novelists, today, has written two political novels which recall the mood of the 1930's and remind us of André Malraux. That is true, too, of the poetry of Martin Cartar. There is no sharp dividing line, but there is a link between the two outlooks. Victor Reid's "*New Day*" is a historical novel about Jamaica, published in 1950. It deals with the fortunes of the Campbell family between 1865 and 1944. In 1865 the Morant Bay insurrection led to the withdrawal of Jamaica's constitution, in 1944 self-government with universal suffrage was granted. The novel is a good synthesis of Jamaican history, after the Whig style. But it is more than fictionalised history; for Reid has taken the bold step of writing throughout in Jamaican dialect. It makes for hard going, even to fellow West Indians, but it shows a preoccupation with style, with purely literary considerations, which foreshadowed the coming of the novelist. And come they did, in 1953 the year which saw the publication of George Lamming's "*In The*

Castle Of My Skin", Sam Selvon's "A Brighter Sun", Roger Mais's "The Hills Were Joyous Together", and Edgar Mittelholzer's "Morning at The Office", Mais was to die shortly after with three rather uneven works to his credit. In the four years which have elapsed three more names have been added, John Hearne winner of the Poyws Award with his first novel "Voices Under The Window"; E. de Boissiers, a Trinidadian resident in Australia, whose "Crown Jewel" was published there and in East Germany. Finally a few months ago came Naipaul's "Mystic Masseur" a comic novel, second of its type.

What then has led to the rise of the West Indian novel? In the first case, there has been a liberation of abilities once the political issues of the thirties had ceased to bedevil our writers. Then it is clear that once a certain level of literacy and self-consciousness were reached the West Indian could be counted on to make his contribution to thought or creativeness. The Caribbean is the Mediterranean of the New World. Like the ancient Greeks the Caribbean people live at the cross-roads of the world. Here England, the U.S.A. France, Holland and Spain have erected the outward forms and institutions of their culture. But the Africans, Asians and Europeans who lived beneath these flags have remoulded the forms to their hearts' desire. To the educated class the gulf between external model and internal adaptation is today a never ending source of wonder, as it was once a source of distress.

In his last two novels, both slightly mystic in tone, Roger Mais has given a moving picture of West Indian Non-Conformist Christianity. Selvon and Reid have utilised West Indian English with its visual imagery, directness and new rhythms. Political life once meant sudden explosions of violence after long periods of need and frustration. That is the background to De Boissiere's "Crown Jewel" and to Hearne's "Voices Under The Window". Society has been divided and sub-divided on the oddest criteria, of skin, colour and hair texture. This Mittelholzer has dissected with the skill of a detached foreigner. Slavery, now viewed across the years, is the backdrop to some of his works. And then there is migration, a chronic theme in West Indian history, a theme in the history of many of our writers. The West Indian abroad is the core of Lamming's "Emigrants", of Selvon's "An Island is a World". But all this can only be part of the explanation, for most of these themes have always been at hand. One needs clues that are more limited and, perhaps, lowly, but more precise. They lie in certain developments that have taken place during the post-war years.

There has been, for example, the B.B.C. Caribbean Voices, a programme beamed to the West Indies and serving as a training school for many of our writers. More important, there has been a newly awakened general interest in the colonies, one felt by British publisher and reader alike. The change from colonies to self-governing dominions has been a political fact driven home by the popular press. This change has been the background for several novels by English writers. The novelist, when an ex-colonial himself, can also bring to life the people behind the new parliaments and constitutions. With his unique

power of entering into men's minds and turning them out for our inspection he can explain more palatably than any journalist or historian the new citizens of the strange new countries. But one hand cannot clap, as the West Indian proverb says. The more important hand, the writing hand, is in the West Indies, and it is there that the really vital development has taken place.

Self-government and Federation have led to an unprecedented outburst of political activity. West Indians have become conscious of their responsibilities, of their problems, and so, ultimately of themselves. While the West Indian people have grown self-conscious, the educated West Indian has learnt self-esteem. He has started to cast his eyes about his own world appreciatively, exploring to identify himself, recording how West Indians live, discovering what is a West Indian. The well-known novel "In The Castle Of My Skin" is concerned with such a process of self-discovery. For the educated West Indian to take his world so seriously is a minor psychological revolution. His attitude to most things West Indian had ranged between indifference and contempt. Professor Simey once described the West Indian middle-class as Victorian. It has been Victorian in the sense of trying to be proper.

You will recall that I described how the mass of people had altered European languages and religion. Their folk songs were often bawdy, their dances were viewed as erotic. Among them illegitimacy was rife. The educated class sought to disassociate itself from these slipshod, tropical deviations. The educated West Indian had gone to school in England and would go back for his holidays. He belonged to a recognised church. He spoke properly and dressed properly wearing serge suits in the noon-day sun. This attitude goes back to the days of slavery. Between white masters and black fieldhands there had been an intermediary group of freedmen, usually of mixed bloods, growing in numbers and in wealth. Though free, they were second-class citizens. In Trinidad they were tried before a special court; in Jamaica they could inherit but so much land; in British Guiana they could not hold militia commissions. Before slavery was abolished this group fought and won their own struggle for first class citizenship. Thus they were set apart from the masses of people by legal status, by wealth, by colour and by education. Inevitably they sought to emphasise all these indices of difference. Political life might have bridged this gap by provoking the educated elite into closer contact with the masses. But representative institutions were withdrawn two decades after abolition. Under the Crown Colony system the English Governor was the apex of society, English life the model.

To-day the wheel has turned almost full circle. The calypso and steelband, carnival and interpretive dancing are accepted as bona fide cultural expressions. We recognise and accept our world; the novelist is only one among its entranced explorers. The main reason for this change has been the fact of self-government and full internal suffrage. External ties and values are cut away; we have to live together and with ourselves. The war too has played its part, by transporting many West Indians, including at least three of our novelists, to the world

outside whence our society could be more clearly seen. It has brought the world to us too as Selvon has shown in his "A Brighter Sun" where the American base-builders shake up the whole pattern of village life.

I have dwelt at some length on our social history not only because it explains the rise of the novel but also because it is paramount to any understanding of two significant works. In Jamaica the educated middle-class is known collectively as "brown men". In the novels "Voices Under The Window" and "Stranger at the Gate" the hero is a 'brown man' in politics leading a mass party. He is killed in the line of duty; killed because he is not really trusted by his followers. Though he himself is aware of this distrust and does not merit it, he accepts it. They are more than political novels. They are our morality tales. Their tragic theme is this: rejection and betrayal in the past is repaid by rejection and betrayal in the present.

Fortunately our political life to-day does not justify such pessimism. One index of our break with the past is the rise of the novel. One architect of a brighter future is the novelist himself.



BOOK REVIEWS

THE BRAVE AFRICAN HUNTRESS
BY AMOS TUTUOLA

Illustrated by Ben Enwonwu.
Faber and Faber, 1958.

When Tutuola's first book, "The Palm Wine Drinkard", appeared in 1952 an eminent British critic wrote: "The first paragraph knocks one flat". And what a magnificent opening it was indeed:

I was a palm-wine drinkard since I was a boy of ten years of age. I had no other work more than to drink palm-wine in my life. In those days we did not know other money except COWRIES, so that everything was very cheap, and my father was the richest man in our town.

Who could fail to be intrigued by this opening paragraph, who could resist the slow rhythm of these sentences? And the book amply fulfilled the promise of this opening. The language of the "Palm Wine Drinkard" is quaint, but it is rhythmical and poetic, and the tale is a strange mixture of vision, humour and myth. How disappointing, in comparison, is this last book of Tutuola, "The Brave African Huntress". Just compare the opening paragraphs:

I, Adebisi, the African huntress, will first relate the adventure of my late father, one of the ancient brave hunters, in brief:

My father was a brave hunter in his town. He had hunted in several dangerous jungles which the rest hunters had rejected to enter or even approach because of fear of being killed by the wild animals and harmful creatures of the jungle.

The rhythm and the magic are gone. The sentences do not flow. As prosaic as this opening paragraph is the whole book. In vain one searches here for the poetry and vision of Tutuola's earlier books. Adebisi, the brave huntress goes to the bush of the pygmies and overcomes there a series of horrible giants. But none of the creatures she meets are as memorable as "the complete gentleman", or the "red fish", "the four hundred dead babies", "the flash eyed mother" or the "satyr" of his earlier books. It is as if his vision had failed him. Compare the description of this monster from "The Brave African Huntress" with the "red fish" from the "Palm Wine Drinkard":

It was as big as an elephant. I had never seen the kind of this animal before. Because he had a very big head. Several horns were on his forehead. Each of the horns was as long and thick and sharp as cow's horns. Very long black and brown hairs were full this head and they were fallen downward, they were also very dirty. All the horns were stood upright on his forehead, as if a person carried a bunch of sticks vertically. His beard was so plenty and long that it covered his chest and belly as well.

Tutuola goes on to describe this animal for half a page, but in the end we fail to "see" it, and therefore we are not horrified. How much more visionary is this description in the "Drinkard":

His head was like tortoise's head, but it was as big as an elephant's head and it had over 30 horns and large eyes which surrounded the head. All the horns were spread out as an umbrella. It could not walk, but was only gliding on the ground like a snake and its body was just like a bit's body and covered with long red hair like springs..... All the eyes which surrounded its head were closing and opening at the same time as if a man was pressing a switch on and off.....

This failure of vision is noticeable not only in the descriptions and the imagery but also in the tale itself. "The Palm Wine Drinkard" is full of symbolism. (For an analysis of this I must refer the reader to Gerald Moore's article in "Black Orpheus" No. 1). The closing chapter describing the conflict between heaven and earth rises to the level of a great universal myth. The whole book, in fact, has a kind of cosmic setting, and Gerald Moore did not exaggerate when he classified the "Drinkard" as a variant of the great heroic monomyth. "The Brave African Huntress" has lost all mythological significance. There is no symbolism, it is a mere adventure story, or rather a string of adventure stories, very loosely knit together. Surprisingly, there is even very little humour in the book, nothing to compare with the conversations between Simbi and the Satyr in Tutuola's preceding book. The lack of inspiration which is so noticeable may be due to the fact that Tutuola has derived nothing from Yoruba folklore in this book. (The story of the king of Ibebe town being the only exception.) He apparently tries to make up for this by quoting many Yoruba proverbs, and attempting to coin some new ones as well. This is quite a charming innovation. Unfortunately the proverbs are not always very meaningful to non-Yorubas in Tutuola's translation. For example:

The thief who steals bugle. Where is he going to blow it?

In this world of the white men or in heaven?

The joke is rather lost on anybody who does not know that "bugle" is Tutuola's translation for "kakaki trumpet", an instrument that can be played only for the king.

Finally a word about the editing. We appreciate the fact that the publishers do not wish to tamper with Tutuola's style. To translate "The Palm Wine Drinkard" into "correct" English would mean to destroy the rhythm of it. One of the great excitements of reading Tutuola is in fact his fresh West African idiom, the colour and imagination of his language. But it is rather unfair on the part of the publishers to leave even spelling mistakes uncorrected. Tutuola's language will lose none of its poetry, his style will not lose character if he is told that "gourd" is not spelled "guord". It is mere sensationalism on the part of the publishers not to correct a mistake like the following: "I thank you all for the worm affection you have on me." The publishers are in this case no longer interested to preserve Tutuola's originality, they are inviting the readers to have a good laugh at his expense. I wonder whether the publishers realise how much harm they do to Tutuola's reputation in West Africa through this kind of thing? There has been a great deal of opposition to Tutuola on the part of young West Africans. They suspect that his success in Europe is not based on literary merits but on his curiosity value. They feel that Europeans merely

laugh at the "funny" language and the "semi-literate" style of Tutuola. The publishers attitude confirms these suspicions in the eyes of the younger generation and helps to blind them to Tutuola's genuine literary merits.

One also fears that this new book will confirm Tutuola's critics in their view that his books are mere hackneyed story telling. But those who say "Let us have books about real people at last from West African authors" I advise to go back and read Tutuola's first three books again after reading "The Brave African Huntress". Nothing could be more "real" than Tutuola's great creations of the imagination. "Death" digging up the yam garden, "earth" sending a sacrifice to heaven, "Child-Wiser-than-his-father", "the beautiful superlady", "the skull", "the silvery-ghost" and the "flash-eyed mother" have rather more life than the "real" people in the "real" town of Lagos in "People of the City". Tutuola at his best is not a mere story teller but a creative poet whose creations of imagination are unforgettable.

AKANJI

PEOPLE OF THE CITY
BY CYPRIAN EKWENSI

Amos Tutuola may be the first West African to have published a novel in English, but his marshy world of fantasy and nightmare, of ghosts and spirits, is very different from the one described in Cyprian Ekwensi's "People of the City". Ekwensi is a pioneer because he is the first West African to write a modern novel about contemporary life. This is the beginning of a new literature and almost certainly of greater interest to West African readers than Tutuola's mixture of fantasy and tradition. Posterity will thank Tutuola for recording a phase of West African life before it disappears for ever. Judgment may be harsher on Mr. Ekwensi in the final analysis, but now, in this day and age, he has something important to contribute. This is the first time that we have seen life in the Big City from the West African point of view; no European could have the same particular insight or knowledge of Lagos life—for what other city could this be? No European could have quite the same spontaneous affection for the warm teeming mass of humanity spilling out into the city streets.

The hero of the story is Amusa Sango, described on the first page as "a most colourful eligible young bachelor." Sango has come from the Eastern region to make his fortune in the big city. He has a job as a crime reporter on one of the leading papers, and spends his spare evenings leading a dance band at a night club. These two occupations afford him access to the whole range of Lagos and are the background to his love-life. This background takes predominance over any plot or character development. The main theme is the story of a young man educated to matriculation standard, who comes to the big city; through ignorance and inexperience he finds himself involved in various ordeals and disturbing emotional adventures. Eventually, however, he attains some sort of wisdom, spurred on by the love of a Good Woman and we leave him thus rewarded, about to start out on a new career in Ghana.

The action of the book centres round the three women in his life and the events which spring from his associations with them.

The first is Aina, full-blooded and sensual, attractive to Sango and in love with him—after her fashion. Aina is uneducated and lives in squalor and poverty, and the ambitious Sango though physically involved cannot afford to take her too seriously. She is imprisoned for petty theft and on her release blackmails Sango. At about the same time, Lajide, Sango's wealthy and unscrupulous landlord turns him out of his lodgings. In his efforts to raise more money for Aina and find accommodation in the overcrowded city, the process of self-mortification begins for Sango. He becomes aware that he must re-assess his own standard of values. He is deeply shocked, for example, by a visit after-dark to Aina's grasping old mother, he finds her in a room whose "entire floor was covered with sleeping bodies. There must have been a hundred or more in this bedless dormitory. Everyone but the old woman slept on the floor. Old, young, lovers, enemies, fathers, mothers suckling babies, they all shared this hall."

Beatrice is the second woman, a sophisticated gleaming little beauty who comes to the nightclub where Sango plays. He falls in love with her and she professes to love him. She is already the mistress of an Englishman and a wealthy Gold Coast timber merchant but goes to live with Lajide in order to get a good apartment and leaves him sporadically for a rich Lebanese, thus it is hard to understand the use of the word "Love". Through Sango's eyes, Ekwensi seems to accept the more blatant sexual values and so obviously revels in lush descriptions of feminine attractions that it is hard to be convinced when Sango falls in love with his future bride's beautiful soul. She is referred to as Beatrice the Second, since—rather unfortunately—she has the same name as the girl of the nightclub. At the end of the book, after they are married, Beatrice asks Sango to take her back to the lagoon where they first fell in love, and Sango promises her a life full of "opportunity" and "freedom of expression" when they return from the Gold Coast. He has lost his job as a reporter after writing an indiscreet report. Beatrice replies: ".....Let us snatch happiness from life, now-now, when we're both young and need each other".

On this spurious note of sentimentality we can almost hear the Hollywood choir of synthetic angels singing in the background as Beatrice, in her lady-like way, allows a "tiny pearl of a tear" to steal down her cheek.

During the course of these affairs, Sango has many adventures and is exposed to many social and moral problems. The plot is loosely strung together, however, and there is a complete lack of character development. This is, I think due to Ekwensi's inability to convey emotion at different levels. The heights and depths of passion are never reached because he leaves out the infinitesimal shades of meaning which make up the fabric of our daily lives. Is this because the author lacks perception or because he lacks the ability to express himself with greater sensitivity? The same question arises in relation to Ekwensi's attitude to the social problems he exposes, and makes the book difficult to evaluate. We are not quite sure what the author wants to say, it is

not surprising that reactions to the book (which was published in 1977) varied. Some find the author's implied acceptance of shoddy values disappointing; others regard the book as an important social document which aims at stimulating people into improving city conditions. The truth probably lies somewhere in between and the result is to some extent obscured by the style which shows a lack of experience and technical skill despite a flair for vivid description.

Ekwensi skims over the surface of human relationships; he gives more thought to social and moral problems, but I do not think he intended himself to be taken too seriously. He wished to expose the bribery and corruption, the quack doctors and loose women, the terrible housing conditions and unscrupulous landlords. He wished to provoke thought and possibly action on these things. But most of all he wanted to paint the life of the city people he knows and loves, and this he has done brilliantly. He covers the whole fascinating range from petty traders to the smart, white-uniformed girls who serve in the big stores; from Lajide, surrounded by his eight wives, to Beatrice the Second in her respectable surroundings—"no rent-grabbing house but a real home." He describes street drumming parties and the sinister Umfe Society, a kind of Free Masonry which guarantees financial security for its members but demands a human sacrifice in return.

He is particularly good at describing the clothes people wear and the significance they have. Take Bayo the Spiv, for example:

"He had a habit of dropping in on Sango whenever he felt like jazz. Sometimes he came alone, sometimes with his friends, who also wore narrow trousers, thick crepe soles and dark sun-goggles."

— and his girl friend Dupeh —

"Put her on the Marina in her pink silk frock with its lace frillings, give her a red handbag and high-heeled shoes and let her walk in the sun. Then you would be meeting the exclusive "city girl".

He tells us that a smart girl wears the "latest thing in specs" and that men cannot resist earrings, glittering and swinging provocatively. It is these details which build up the whole complex structure of the city life Ekwensi puts before us; for anyone interested in the development of West Africa today it is a fascinating study.

ELIZABETH BEVAN.

A WREATH FOR UDOMO by Peter Abrahams Faber and Faber 1956.

"A Wreath for Udomo" is the only novel in the English language that deals with nationalism and politics in West Africa. Yet very few Nigerians seem to have read it. For all its shortcomings this is an important book and it is above all important that West Africans should know it, should react to it and reply to it. It is for that reason that we discuss the book amongst our reviews, two years after publication.

The first part of the novel is set in London where Udomo, the hero helps to form a nationalist group that plans the liberation of his country "Panafrika". Udomo finally returns home and starts a nationalist newspaper. But his hands are tied by the compromising business men who own the paper and suppress his more radical articles. Finally he uses the occasion of a dock strike to call the people to revolt. The market woman Selina proves a powerful ally. She manages to circulate the paper illegally and when Udomo is arrested and imprisoned for "sedition" according to plan, Selina rallies the people and builds up Udomo as a martyr and a hero. The British finally grant a new constitution and Udomo is elected whilst in prison. He is released and leads his people into independence. The position of the national leader becomes difficult, however. His friend Mendhi, a native of Pluralia has taken refuge in Panafrika. Mendhi uses Panafrika as a base for organising riots in Pluralia where the Africans are greatly suppressed. The leaders of Pluralia demand the extradition of Mendhi from Udomo. Unfortunately they are just about to give a large loan to Panafrika, and they have promised to help build a huge industrial project and supply the technicians. Udomo very reluctantly betrays his friend to the enemies.

But Udomo's greatest conflict is with the forces of reaction and tradition. He is accused of destroying the old ways of life, and of having brought more white men to the country than there had been in the times of colonialism. A conspiracy headed by Selina ends in Udomo's murder. But the author gives us to understand: Udomo's work can no longer be undone. He has pushed his country along too far on the new road—there is no way back. The new Africa has become a reality.

The two main problems discussed here seem to be: the conflict going on in Udomo's mind between political necessity and the demands of his conscience, and the external conflict between Udomo as the fighter for new ways of life and Selina the representative of tradition.

In the first conflict Udomo is made to let political ends get the better of his conscience. Personally he betrays his best friend Mendhi to the Pluralians. Being accused by their common friend Mabi of murder, Udomo replies:

"I had to! We can't allow personal feelings to interfere with duty. Duty to Africa! Her people! My people and yours! The future! You want to be a patriot provided you can safeguard your precious soul. You know I had to. Only, no dirtying of hands for you! Leave that to the foul Udomo

I have to deal with realities, not your fancies."

There is undoubtedly logic in his reply. But it is the logic of a dictator. Dictators have always looked upon themselves as martyrs, left to do the dirty work for everybody else. This argument is a dangerous one, because it can be used to justify any action, it puts the leader of the state outside morality. For a while it is not clear where the author's sympathies lie in this argument. But in the last pages of the book he comes down heavily in favour of Udomo. It seems, that Peter Abrahams, like Richard Wright, believes in dictatorship for West Africa.

Whatever we may think of Peter Abraham's judgment here, we must admit that he treated the situation convincingly. Udomo appears like a plausible and real character in this conflict, whom we can pity even if we cannot justify him.

In his treatment of the second conflict Peter Abrahams is much less successful. It is clear enough what ideals and concepts Udomo stands for, but the forces of opposition are never really described or explained. Such phrases as "tribalism" and "old ways" and "putting the clock back" are newspaper jargon, propaganda clichés. In what does the alleged evil of this "tribalism" consist? We are never told, we are never allowed to witness the life of the non-progressive Africans. Udomo therefore appears to be fighting against some bogus enemy and his downfall in the book comes as a surprise. Udomo speaks pathetically about the worst enemy of his people: the past. The past, which is a worse enemy even than the white man. It is really absurd, that the nationalist leader who drove out the white man from his country should at the same time succumb to the prejudices of the white man. As if an African could be respected as a human being only after he has been made to work in a factory. As if the talking drums of the Akan or the bronzes of Benin were symbols of an undignified unhuman existence. Peter Abrahams has succumbed to the white man's myth of the "primitive" negro.

He fails to recognise the real forces at work. The so called "old ways" of life are being destroyed in Africa largely through economic factors. It is the big European trading houses that have destroyed, for better or for worse, traditional ways of living. Politically, the old ways of life are not a force. The illiterate farmers and their chiefs are no game for the modern politician, who is backed up by administrative experience and a police force. There has never been political organisation in West Africa whose purpose it was to "put back the clock". The opposition parties in all West African territories are led by intellectuals of the same class and hold basically similar beliefs as the representatives of government. The only real opposition which is sometimes met by the politician from the illiterate farmer manifests itself in a certain reluctance to pay taxes. Peter Abraham's conspiracy of "tribalism" is rather fanciful.

The real conflict between old and new ways of life in West Africa takes place on an entirely different plane. It is a gross simplification to describe a battle between two neatly divided camps. The conflict goes on in the mind of every individual and will go on for a long time. The illiterate farmer being

There is a great deal of valuable material in this volume: a scholarly article by Mr. Nketia on "The Poetry of Drums" opens the anthology. There is much and varied poetry: the sophisticated, polished Albert Kayper Mensah contrasts with Israel Kafu Hoh who never fails to charm through his very simplicity. From the large number of poems the following linger in the mind: Efaa Sutherland's "New Life at Kyerefaso", Adali-Mortti's "Tumble Down Woods", A. A. Opoku's long decriptive poem "Afram" and Frank Parks "African Heaven".

The prose writing on the whole is rather less successful. There is a lot of good descriptive prose writing in this volume, pleasant little genre pictures of Ghana life. But the language is extremely conventional and shows as yet none of the freshness and originality that one associates, for example, with West Indian writing.

Another surprising fact about this anthology is that there is no controversial subject treated in it at all. One would have expected young Ghanaians to be absorbed by basic questions of identity at this stage: what *is* in fact a Ghanaian? What do traditional African values mean to him? And to what extent must he accept the cultural values of the foreigners whose political domination he has just shaken off? How does he assert his nationalism culturally? These problems are not touched upon in this anthology and one wonders therefore whether this selection of Ghana writing is typical? It is difficult to believe, that the Ghanaian writers are unaware of the problem, that they bask in the achievement of political independence, unawares that a greater, more important type of independence has to be won: cultural independence.

We look forward to see more important writing coming from Ghana. We look forward to see writers who will force the English language into a Ghanaian mould, instead of merely using conventional language efficiently. We look forward to seeing writers who will re-examine the foreign values that were forced upon them, and will discover in themselves the values of African culture.

One final word about the production of the book. We are sorry to see that such an important book was given such an unattractive production. Surely the Government of Ghana could afford to employ a modern typographer? The looks of this publication are quite unworthy of its contents.

AKANJI.

How to Obtain Black Orpheus:

NIGERIA:

University Bookshop, University College, Ibadan, U.T.C. Ibadan and Lagos.
Gabriel Okara, the N.B.C. Enugu.

GHANA:

University College Bookshop, Accra.

SIERRA LEONE:

C.M.S. Bookshop, Freetown.

KENYA:

Samuel Mbiti, P. O. Kitui.

U.S.A.:

Samuel Allen, 49 Berkeley Place, Brooklyn 17, New York.

ENGLAND:

"Better Books", 94 Charing Cross Road, London.

FRANCE:

"La Joie de Lire", 40 rue Saint Severin, Paris 5e.

GERMANY:

Horst Noack, Herrenstrasse 1, Offenbach, Main.

HOLLAND and BELGIUM:

W. A. Braasem, Laan van Meerdervoort, 541, den Haag.

ITALY:

Sna. Christiana Brambilla, Piazza Grandi 3, Milano.

SWITZERLAND:

Franz Niederberger, Biel Bienne, Höheweg 25.

PRESENCE AFRICAINE

The Cultural Review of the Negro World
published every two months articles in French and in English
Nr VIII-X: Full account of the 1st Conference of Negro Writers and Artists
(Paris, September 1956).

Nr XII: Yesterday Gold Coast, To-day Ghana.

Nr XIV-XV: Contributions to the Conference.

Nr XVI: The Negro man of culture and his People.

Forthcoming issues:

Nr XVII: Questions on African linguistics.

Nr XVIII: The 'loi-cadre' in French Africa.

Subscription rates: U.S.A. surface mail \$4 England £1. 7s.
air mail \$9 Overseas £2. 5s.

17 rue de Chaligny, Paris XII (France) — C.C.P. Paris 59.36.25.

PRESENCE AFRICAINE

Books of the year:

Mamadou DIA: Réflexions sur l'économie de l'Afrique Noire.

Mamadou DIA: Contribution à l'étude du mouvement coopératif en Afrique Noire.

Abdoulaye LY: Les masses africaines et l'actuelle condition humaine.

J. RICHARD-MOLARD: Problèmes humains en Afrique Occidentale.

Basil DAVIDSON — Le réveil de l'Afrique.

Editing firm, 17 rue de Chaligny Paris XII (France) — C.C.P. Paris 59.36.25.

ODU

A JOURNAL OF YORUBA AND RELATED STUDIES
from the contents of No. 6

GELEDE MASKS

THE HISTORY OF WESTERN NIGERIA

THE NEW DISCOVERIES AT IFE

YORUBA MUSICIANS IN ACCRA

WALLS, PAVEMENTS AND WATERPATHS

U. Beier
Dr. S. O. Biobaku
Frank Willet
Kwabena Nketia
Prof. Goodwin

General Publications Section, Ministry of Education, Ibadan, Nigeria.

A forthcoming publication by the General Publications Section
Ministry of Education, Ibadan, Nigeria.

OLOKUN

A Literary Journal in Yoruba.

This new Journal that will appear shortly will be written entirely in Yoruba.
It will appear quarterly and contain articles, short stories and poems by contemporary Yoruba writers as well as traditional texts.

CONTRIBUTORS TO THE ISSUE:

GEORMBEYI ADALI-MORTTY

born 1916(?) at Gbledee in Togoland. Has been a teacher, social worker and is now an Adult Education Organizer in the Institute of Extra-Mural Studies, University College, Ghana. Has travelled to Britain, Brazil, Ceylon and the United States. Has contributed articles on education to various magazines and poems to "Voices of Ghana" an anthology published by the Ministry of Education, Ghana. Is well as a broadcaster in Ghana.

"AKANJI"

describes himself as a "detrribalized Yoruba". Born abroad he lived most of his life in Europe and the Near East. He has recently returned to Nigeria in order to "rediscover his lost Yoruba self". He teaches literature. His most absorbing interests at the moment he describes as Beethoven's music and the worship of Sango.

ELIZABETH BEVAN

has lived in Nigeria since 1953. She teaches French at University College Ibadan, where her husband is Professor of Chemistry.

GEORG DICKENBERGER

was born in Frankfurt, Germany. He is known as a broadcaster, writer and painter.

EZEKIEL MPAHLELE

born in Pretoria, and grew up in its slums. His mother managed to get him through High School on her small earnings. While teaching he acquired an M.A. degree with private study. He is now teaching English in the CMS Grammar School, Lagos, Nigeria. Was fiction editor of "Drum". Contributed several short stories to South African journals, some of which were translated into German, Dutch and Italian. "The Suitcase" first appeared in "New World Writing", in New York. His autobiography is now being published in London by Faber and Faber.

RANDOLPH RAWLINS

a West Indian born in Trinidad. Has lived in South America and studied in the U.S.A. and in England. Was sub-editor on the Trinidad Guardian. Took an Honours degree in Modern History specializing Latin-American Studies. Now teaches in London and does free-lance writing.

PAUL VESEY

born 1913 near Savannah, Georgia, U.S.A. Grew up in Michigan. Worked in the Ford factory, as a government official, finally became a free-lance writer. His poems were first published in a bilingual edition in Germany. ("Elfenbeinzähne"; Ivory Tusks. With translations by Janheinz Jahn. Rothe Verlag, Heidelberg, 1956.) The following poems are reprinted by permission of Wolfgang Rothe: "Inconsolable"; "Jason"; "Eyes Watch the Stars", and "There are No Tears". The other poems are first published here.

THE ARTISTS

Cover design after a Warega carving by WENGER.

RU VAN ROSSEM did the illustrations in the text. They are all illustrations to poems by Paul Vesey.

Ru van Rossem was born in Amsterdam and is now a Head of Department of Graphic Art in the Tilburg Academy of Fine Art. He had one man exhibitions in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, London, New York, Trento etc. His work were acquired by the following Institutions: Stedelyk Museum Amsterdam, Boymans Museum, Rotterdam, Rockefeller Collection. Museum of Modern Art, New York and many others. The drawings reproduced here were inspired by the following poems of Paul Vesey: page 2 "A higher Summons"; p. 4 "The Staircase"; p. 8 "Eyes Watch the stars"; p. 14 "Inconsolable"; p. 23 "The dog stalks forth"; p. 29 "In a strange Land"; p. 50 "The mules of Cesar"; p. 64 "Willie Mac Gee" (The poems not printed in this issue can all be found in "Elfenbeinzähne" Rothe Verlag, Heidelberg.)



BLACK ORPHEUS



A JOURNAL OF AFRICAN AND AFRO-AMERICAN LITERATURE

A JOURNAL OF AFRICAN AND AFRO-AMERICAN LITERATURE
BLACK ORPHEUS COMMITTEE: Geormbeeyi Adali-Mortty, Marcelino Arozarena,
Adeboye Babalola, Aimé Césaire, Léon Damas, M. F. Dei-Anang, J. A. Ramsaran,
Léopold Sédar Senghor, Paul Vesey.
EDITORS: Ulli Beier and Janheinz Jahn.



CONTENTS

No. 6 November 1959

Page

BAMBARA KNIGHTS	Mallam Hampate Ba	5
SIX AFRICAN POEMS	Léon Damas	13
BRION AND THE FLAMES (Short Story)	E. A. James	16
THE IMMIGRANT (Poem)	E. Mphahlele	23
TWO YORUBA PAINTERS	Ulli Beier	29
TWO POEMS	Gabriel Okara	33
DISCUSSION ON CAMARA LAYE	Janheinz Jahn	35
	J. A. Ramsaran	38
GEORGE LANMING	Helmut Günter	39
FOUR SPIRITUALS	Frank Martinus Arion	44
BOOK REVIEWS		47



BAMBARA KNIGHTS

THE VALIANT KNIGHTS KALA N'DJI THIENI AND KALA N'DJI KOROBBA

A BAMBARA TALE RECORDED BY
MALLAM AMADOU HAMPATE BA

What I am about to relate, Sine Koumare told me, is a true account of what took place in the land of Kala, which extends between Sokoto and Sandanding, on the left bank of the Niger. Sassa, Souakou, Sagala, Markadougou, Seribala Tiemedala, etc. are some of the villages in this province celebrated in the history of the Sudan.

It was into Kala country that Toro Koro Mari, the brother of Baa Ali, the Emperor of Segou, retreated to continue the struggle against the Toucouleurs of Ahmadou Cheikou, the King of Segou.

There were in Kala two warriors, two warriors equally brave, brave in every sense of the word. They were generous, utterly without affectations and always making fun which was never malicious.

In the town they would permit a "Bilakoro" (an uncircumcised babe) to tweak their ears and even their beards. They would only laugh till they cried, in sheer indulgence. But as soon as the war drums, the trumpets and the metal bells shouted their confused alarm and when the powder of the assailants sounded eloquently from afar, they became once more their true selves: fearless knights, invincible warriors, scattering all before them in a great wave which mowed down the grass and everything which ventured to appear above ground.

The elder of these warriors was called Kala N'dji Korobba, that is to say: "The eldest of Kala", and the younger Kala N'dji Thieni, which is to say: "The youngest of Kala".

Kala N'dji Thieni had, for his part, the vigour and fearlessness of youth. He had the ambition of one who believed himself born to conquer all that was most precious and most rare upon the earth. He believed that the turtle dove cooed amongst the branches simply to salute his passage . . . And that the bugle bird only opened her beak to chant his praises . . . And that the flowers of the deepest jungle, just as those of the rolling plains, opened their petals only to smile upon him and perfume his path . . . The local people used to say: Kala N'dji Thieni is so brave that every morning he wakens Death from his bed by pulling his tail!

As for Kala N'dji Korobba, he was a master of arms and a matchless marksman. He was also the calmest man in the whole world, a man whose heart could not be moved!

Kala N'dji Thieni had only to see an opponent to measure himself against him, and Kala N'dji Korobba never measured himself against an opponent without making a corpse of him.

Kala N'dji Thieni pounced upon the enemy with the speed of a falcon dropping on a bird. Thus it often happened that he hurled himself upon some

difficult customer who caused him to lose quite a few hairs into the bargain, but without ever succeeding in vanquishing him. As for Kala N'dji Korobba, he was like a lion, trained in the chase. He well knew how to avoid an aggressive leap and how to rebound upon someone wishing to parry his attack. His prudence, however, did not in the least prevent him from being, on the field of battle, a somewhat disdainful "lion", who is wise enough not to give in to impetuosity.

Kala N'dji Korobba : Sakanapat-ti (Good God!) ! He never pointed his gun except to press the trigger and his weapon was never aimed upon someone without spitting out death propelled by a divine fire. The shots fired by Kala N'dji Korobba were invariably applauded by a monstrous echo whose intensity and duration set the monkeys and the squirrels dancing for long afterwards among the tufted tree tops. If Kala N'dji Korobba saw a man right in front of him he only missed killing him out of pity and also in order that he could put out one of his eyes, thus adding to the number of one eyed men whom the superstitious try to avoid seeing first thing in the morning when they get out of bed.

But be that as it may, there was no-one who did not know him and some even said loudly : "There is not one in all of Kala who would dare to pit himself against Kala N'dji Korobba, apart only from Kala N'dji Thieni. He is, after all, the only one who is fit to wear the cast off sandals of Kala N'dji Korobba".

Such a comparison was not calculated to please Kala N'dji Korobba ! And so he said one day in public : "If the people of Kala continue much longer to compare me with Kala N'dji Thieni, that stripling of Kala, popularly known as "The Last Born of Kala," I shall turn him front to back and back to front until there is nothing left of him !" But . . . in spite of this declaration, the heart of Kala N'dji Korobba continued to be tormented by the voice of the Tempter, urging him in a whisper to cut off Kala N'dji Thieni in the midst of his days, that little kitten who wanted to play at being a tawny lion.

The friends of Kala N'dji Thieni, having had wind of the declarations of Kala N'dji Korobba, informed Kala N'dji Thieni, so that he might know what the heart of the old lion had in store for him.

Kala N'dji Thieni said to his friends : "I must thank you for your warning, but be reassured. Kala N'dji Korobba shall never have my life! On the contrary, let me assure you that though the whole world trembles in the presence of Kala N'dji Korobba, when I am before him I feel myself only in the presence of a hero whose exploits and paths I wish to imitate and pursue. To be sure, I would be the last to deny that the moustache of Kala N'dji Korobba is bristly and his beard is dense. But who has been telling you that I shall for ever remain innocent of moustache or beard? Furthermore, I should point out to Kala N'dji Korobba that he ought never to forget that the great baobab tree, which even the elephant respects in the heart of the forest, has sprung from a grain scarcely bigger than a little Bamiko bean."

Thus defiance was hurled and accepted — in words. Who would be the first to translate it into action? Kala N'dji Korobba could not — tradition forbade it — provoke a younger brother. So he would be obliged to await a propitious moment. And that moment was not to be long in presenting itself.

There was in Kala a young maiden called Tene Thiigni (Pretty Monday). She was a childhood friend and, by repute, the "Ton-Moussonin" of Kala N'dji Thieni. Each youth selected for himself a girl whose chosen knight he became. He defended her upon all occasions. He had prior right to flirt with her and she was in fact his platonic love or Ton-Moussonin.

Kala N'dji Korobba married Tene Thiigni.

The friends of Kala N'dji Thieni began from that moment to tease their

companion. They composed a dialogue which two of them would recite together whenever Kala N'Dji Thieni happened to be with them.

And this is how it went:

"Tell me, O Zan, do you by any chance know of a young maiden by the name of Tene Thiegni?"

"I know her very well indeed, my dear M'pe".

"Will you kindly describe her to me, then, because I, you must believe me, I do not know her at all".

"By all means. Tene Thiegni, as her name suggests, is a veritable 'Pretty Monday'. A beauty with firm, round breasts! By Allah, she is beautiful; beautiful in profile, beautiful from the front, beautiful from the back and beautiful from every angle! A nymph with white teeth like the cowries of the Orient, her lips moulded like those of the fair women of the distant east".

"And her buttocks?"

"O Zan, the buttocks of Tene Thiegni are the finest in the whole world, and no-one could ever succeed in reproducing her curves, for the mould used to make them was brought by spirits from the very dome of the heavens where souls in the moment of incarnation may admire it".

"O Zan, in the name of Allah, for God's sake, pray tell me about her bearing".

"The bearing of Tene Thiegni. Such allure, such poise! The graceful movement of her haunches is not even equalled by the languorous female ostrich as she makes her leisurely way to an amorous assignation atop a white sand dune of the Sahara".

"I have heard it said that Tene Thiegni can wriggle her whole shape superbly too. Is it so?"

"To be sure, it is the sober truth. Let Tene Thiegni but roll her hips before the most faithful of husbands and you will see him make off pell-mell, or rather run, indeed . . . what am I saying . . . gallop off like a colt which has never before felt the saddle".

"And what would a chief sacrificial priest do before her?"

"If Tene Thiegni, smiling, and especially if accompanying her smile with a come-hither look, said to the sacrificial priest: 'If you want me, take this knife to pieces and give the bits to me', with his right hand the priest would offer Tene Thiegni the sacred blade whilst with his left hand he gave her the consecrated hilt".

"Eh! And where actually is Tene Thiegni now?"

"Alas, Tene Thiegni at this moment is to be found upon an iron barque and this heavy vessel floats upon a lake which is of great depth and infested with crocodiles. This lake itself is in the midst of a dense forest which strikes terror even into the heart Koro Diarra, the grand father lion, King of the Jungle.

"No-one will ever be able to see Tene Thiegni again nor to chat with her as when, in days gone by, by the light of the moon, she used to dance the Ko Pili with her two long cotton lempe bands trailing behind her as the symbol of her virginity".

"And how came this change for the worse?"

"Because Kala N'Dji Korobba has married her, in accordance with the most rigid rules. He has paid the colas and killed the marriage ox. He has given the portions of sacramental salt. He has performed the traditional ceremonies in her parents' fields. And I can vouch for it that a select procession escorted Tene Thiegni and Kala N'Dji Korobba and the latter has known a good fortune which will certainly have the effect of augmenting his courage and prolonging his days. Tene Thiegni will never again be known as the Ton-Moussonin of any man."

"Who is the one who is lost and 'dead' in this story?"

And then all the friends would chant the chorus in unison like this:

"It is Kala N'Dji Thieni who is lost and dead. And why? Because he alone had the privilege of frequent tetes-a-tetes with her. He was the knight of the fair Tene".

After which they would all clap their hands, repeating:

"A lost knight, a suitor spurned for ever!"

Kala N'Dji Thieni was dying of love. He had always longed to see his friend once more, the damsel he had hoped so fervently to be able to wed but whose hand he was unable to obtain as his first wife on account of the edicts of tradition.

The long separation merely served to reinforce the love of Kala N'Dji Thiene for Tene and the mockery of his companions caused him to lose his head completely. He made up his mind to violate the dwelling of him whose very name could put to flight a band of highwaymen and even warriors of great renown.

In the meantime, the troops of Kala were setting out towards the site of an invasion which was taking place against that region.

After a march of ten kilometres the commander of the expedition decided to call a halt and await the evening.

Kala N'Dji Thieni set to thinking on the one he loved, the beautiful Tene. Finally he said to himself: "He who goes to war may return but he may, on the other hand, just as well end his journey in that mysterious country from which no traveller returns. Death is the inevitable end of every living being; I do not regard death as something horrible. But to die without having ever seen Tene Thiegni again without proving to my jealous and teasing friends that I can confront any danger whatsoever for her sake, that indeed would be insupportable.

"In fact", he concluded, "I must see Tene again, come what may."

Kala N'Dji Thieni waited for darkness to fall.

The sun kissed the earth, then withdrew his rays, like a weary beast of prey pulling in his claws.

Kala N'Dji Thieni's impatience for dusk prevented him from fully appreciating the immensity of the solar disc plunging into the shades of awakening night. When darkness had completely dispelled the light of day and when the hyenas and the lions came out of their dens, and when each thicket took on the aspect of a monster lying in wait, Kala N'Dji Thieni decided that the time had come for him to return to the village and see at last, and perhaps for the last time, the beautiful Tene, that young and delicious Bambara damsel with her blue lips painted by an inspired tattoo.

Kala N'Dji Thieni arose with the greatest care. Then he sneaked silently out, grabbing his saddle on the way, to remove the fetters from his horse's legs. Silently he saddled the horse and, still without making a sound, mounted and disappeared as stealthily as a thief, into the shadows which were so dense at this phase of the month, into a moonless night with no bright star to illumine his path.

Kala N'Dji Korobba was not asleep. He kept wondering what ever could have made Kala N'Dji Thieni set off like that, at one bound. To him it seemed as though this man, so full of the ambition of youth but also possessed by a mad imprudence, must undoubtedly be looking for a way of surprising the enemy and either attacking him single handed or, at least, being the first to assail him, in the conceited urge to add one pinnacle to the facade of his glory. In Kala N'Dji Korobba's eyes such a purpose was a trifle too spectacular. So

he said to himself, "I shall not permit this young fool to commit an irreparable blunder. He is such a rare specimen in Kala that it behoves me to follow him. So then, if he falls into difficulties, he will learn that the lioncub always has need of lessons but above all needs the assistance of the old lion."

So saying, Kala N'Dji Korobba in his turn saddled his mount and, taking with him weapons of defence and of attack, he set out to follow Kala N'Dji Thieni, at a respectful distance so as not to be seen.

Such a precaution was quite superfluous, for Kala N'Dji Thieni, going at a fast gallop, was not in the least concerned about whom he might encounter. He never once glanced behind him and seemed to disregard all danger which might overtake him from the rear. He hummed a war chant as he rode, interspersed with haunting fragments of songs of ill-starred love.

Imagine the stupefaction of Kala N'Dji Korobba when, arriving at the cross-roads, he beheld Kala N'Dji Thieni choosing the path which led to the village.

"Where the devil can he be going now?" exclaimed Kala N'Dji Korobba. Has he perchance omitted to make the propitiatory sacrifice before climbing into the saddle? Has he possibly forgotten to take his most marvellous gris-gris? Can he have been invited to an amorous assignation . . . All the same, I shall follow him and see with my own eyes", so Kala N'Dji Korobba continued his monologue.

Once arrived in the town the young man did not hesitate or search long for his route. He took the little road which could lead nowhere but to Kala N'Dji Korobba's house. When he saw this, the heart of the Red Beast was thrown into terrible confusion, the hair of his head rose up on end and every hair upon his body bristled too. And in the twinkling of an eye, Kala N'Dji Korobba had made one thousand and eleven suppositions, some better and some worse than others, and in the words of the proverb dear to Sudanese storytellers, "the two groups of ideas did battle within the four chambers of the heart of N'Dji Korobba". The worst ones overcame the good and in the end the latter were expelled and blown out through Kala N'Dji Korobba's hugely distended nostrils. Kala N'Dji Korobba loaded his gun. As he crossed the street he endured every variety of horror, from those which one can feel and tell to those which only the red devil of the baobab tree inflicts upon unfortunates who catch him stealing his mother in law's chickens.

Kala N'Dji Korobba cursed the day of his birth; likewise he cursed his eyes and his ears for allowing him to see and hear what he ought never to have seen or heard.

"Of one thing I am certain", he said to himself "that today I shall do two irreparable wrongs. I shall kill a man and I shall dishonour a woman, if my worst fears are realised."

Convinced that he would learn of his dishonour and that he would be obliged to do all that was required of a dishonoured husband, Kala N'Dji Korobba bit his lower lip fiercely between his teeth. He screwed up his countenance, adopting such a scowling, ferocious glance that anything passing across his field of vision appeared to him fantastically doubled.

Kala N'Dji Thieni indiscreetly fastened his mount to a stake fixed at the entrance to Kala N'Dji Korobba's house and, without hesitating or waiting in the vestibule, penetrated right into the inner courtyard.

"Tene Thiegni, Tene Thiegni", he cried.

Tene, after a short silence during which she was presumably putting on her wrapper, replied:

"Who is it?"

"It is I, Kala N'Dji Thieni. I have come to see you. If you can come out it will afford me the greatest pleasure".

"To see me, at such an hour? You must have come with bad news, if so, please, I pray you, let me know the worst".

"No, Tene Thieni, I am no messenger of misfortune; on the contrary, I come to say a few private words to you concerning myself alone. I shall have to go back almost at once."

"I don't care who comes", Tene declared.

She brought out a Macina mat which she threw on the ground and placed at each end of it decorated leather cushions which were stuffed with sweet smelling herbs. She lit an oil lamp, took out her basket of cotton and sat down at one end of the mat.

Kala N'Dji Thieni took his place opposite her. "Why is it you have come to see me?" Tene Thiegni asked once more.

"Tene Thiegni . . . We were childhood friends, weren't we? I have always held you in respect and defended your honour. Inviolable I met you and so I shall return you to whom you belong".

"You speak truly", she acknowledged. "But", she went on to say, "what I cannot understand is why you, who were always so respectful and correct when I was available and at your mercy, should wait until I am become the sacred property of someone else, and of such a one . . . to come by night, against every of rule of Bambara morality and the proprieties of Kala country, to force my door. No, my dear brother Kala N'Dji Thieni, make haste to tell that you are come to inform me of my husband's death and that you only wish to prepare me for my misfortune before announcing it. I am deeply touched by your concern but I should prefer to know the whole truth, and the sooner the better".

"Only God, who created him, can kill your husband," replied Kala N'Dji Thieni. "He is a warrior" At this word Kala N'Dji Thieni stopped as though pulled up short . . . He took out his pipe which he proceeded to fill casually, extracted from a little woven cotton purse a flint, an iron all ready and some tinder. He then selected a morsel of tinder, held it near the flint and struck twice upon the middle of the iron. The sparks emitted from the flint set the tinder alight and Kala N'Dji Thieni lit his pipe. He inhaled two puffs which he then blew up into the leaves of the porch under which he sat opposite Tene Thieni. He gave her a long, devouring glance and sighed profoundly.

Kala N'Dji Korobba stationed for some time past within the porch, covered the two young people with his rifle, then raised his weapon and still waited, without quite knowing why. Meantime he was listening intently, so that nothing passing between the two lovers — for Tene was the lover of Kala N'Dji Thieni, — should escape his ear.

Tene went on spinning her cotton, as was the custom and Kala N'Dji Thieni worked without interrupting her.

In the meantime Tene's cat came out of the house. Arching his back he turned round and round his mistress as though placing her at the centre of a charmed magic circle. Presently he went and lay down between Tene Thiegni and Kala N'Dji Thieni, right in the middle of the mat.

Tene said to Kala N'Dji Thieni: "I have always heard it said by the servants and slaves that you and my husband are equal. Nevertheless, how actually does my husband bear himself in the wars? I should so much like to hear your appreciation of him".

"The slaves and servants of the compound are unmitigated liars. They say just so much as it pleases them to say, but verily they say little of truth. They know the black lie better than the white truth. If you want to know the truth about your husband, know that" At these words a slight unexpected

sound came from amongst the wood and straw of the porch roof. Tene's cat raised his eyes. His gaze caught that of a mouse who was squabbling with some others in the straw. The unfortunate one lost his balance and tumbled down, right between the paws of the cat which straightway strangled him without the slightest difficulty.

Kala N'Dji Thieni said in an urgent tone: "Tene, did you see how your cat treated the mouse?"

"Yes indeed, I saw it perfectly, and their struggle was brief", declared Tene.

"Well", continued Kala N'Dji Thieni, "Thus it is that your husband will treat any man who dares to confront him. He is indubitably the most valiant of the children of Kala. He is the model whom we imitate. He has never been known to glare upon a man without causing him to piss with terror".

"I am proud of my husband and I am also proud of you, who know him so well and are yet prepared in spite of it all to violate his home".

A moment or two later Tene resumed, saying to Kala N'Dji Thieni, "My brother, so far you still have not told me the reason for your nocturnal visit which is tarnishing the good name of us both and which may open two cold tombs?"

"Very well, Tene, I have come this evening to bid you farewell. Tomorrow we advance to the attack. When the enemy appears I shall certainly kill many of them but equally, perhaps, I may be killed myself. Yet to die without having heard your silvery laughter, to die without acquiring a store of your gentle words, would be to condemn myself to die daily in that country where there is no death: in the other world".

So the talk continued, without the two young people betraying by the slightest gesture any intention capable of alarming a husband's heart.

Tene Thiegni, without exciting in her lover even any of those gestures which a well brought up young man might show in the presence of an appetising female, said:

"Are you certain, Kala N'Dji Thieni, that you have not come here to possess me?"

"No Tene, I have not come to take you. I still continue and I shall for ever continue to respect the woman whom I have always loved and respected, even when she was at my mercy."

"You must be truly mad to venture into a house whose proprietor, as you yourself said, can make others piss with terror by his mere glance. You must be well aware that my husband would not hesitate to dispatch you to the other world should he surprise you in his house, beside his wife".

"Yes, Tene, I know all that and I must confess that, in truth, I am mad. Simply realise that it is in the nature of certain fools to penetrate, at the risk of their lives, into forbidden territories, merely to pause there and admire things which they desire though they may never possess.

Thus you are for me an inestimable treasure, which it pleases me to gaze upon at the risk of my life, but I shall never steal it. Besides, the purple dawn will before long transform the colours of nature and the gentle night will deprive us of his aid; I must needs go. I do not wish my elder brother Kala N'Dji Korobba to be aware of my escapade. He will believe me dead and is capable of scattering many skulls to avenge me".

At these words Kala N'Dji Korobba rapidly rejoined his mount and disappeared.

And a few moments later Kala N'Dji Thieni did likewise.

The following morning the two heroes of Kala attacked the enemy. They

wounded many, killed many also and led back a long train of war captives.

Several days after their return from the wars, Kala N'Dji Korobba caused a superlative mead brew to be prepared and he invited Kala N'Dji Thieni to come and drink with him whilst playing M'Pari. This game, very popular amongst the ancient Sudanese, is played just like chess. Little sticks of wood and straw replace the pawns. The board is supplied by a square traced out upon a patch of sand or dust.

Kala N'Dji Korobba invited Tene Thiegni to stay near at hand so as to be able to serve drinks to his guest.

It is the custom, amongst the players at M'Pari, to make certain exclamations. The words pronounced are often in the nature of observations, sometimes purely poetical, some times more or less provocative and often constituting a direct challenge to a duel which may be confined merely to unkind remarks. It is not uncommon, however, for the words pronounced during a game of M'Pari to be settled by recourse to arms.

Tene served the first calabash to the two friends. Kala N'Dji Korobba, after emptying his cup cried, "Thirst quenching and, at the same time, obnoxious liquid which can make a man feel that he speaks with the voice of a king."

Thus speaking, Kala N'Dji Korobba seized between two fingers of his right hand two wooden sticks and place them in one of the positions of the game. Then he said, looking pointedly at Kala N'Dji Thieni, "Drink, my guest." Addressing the pieces: "Be off there, into that hole, to signify to whoever has ears to hear that, several days ago, at Kala, beneath a porch, at an advanced hour of the night, by the light of a lantern, certain words were exchanged. If they had not been pronounced Kala would be now be turned upside down. Such fear and turmoil would reign there that a pregnant camel would be seeking escape through the eye of a needle".

After which he added, "Kala N'Dji Thieni, my younger brother, let us drink! The youth who declines a drink will never accept a challenge".

Kala N'Dji Thieni understood the allusion full well. He wasted no time in trying to discover how Kala N'Dji Korobba had learnt of his interview with Tene nor, which was more important, how he had managed to overhear their conversation. He replied promptly, placing two straws in a chosen hole upon the board: "Straws of brisk repartee, plant yourselves there, straight as a young palm tree whom the impetuous winds cannot bend. And say, to whoever cares to hear that, if whoever pronounced those words beneath the porch where he sat by the most beautiful and adorable woman of Kala had suspected his words were being overheard by another, Kala would now find itself turned upside down: even if Kala and the whole world with it were so upset that the Niger returned to its source, the words which then were offered would never have been spoken".

Tene said, as she served the second calabash to the two men, "Is not he who finds a fortune without owner and guards it intact until the proprietor arrives a man worthy of trust and admiration?

But be that as it may, I declare that a woman who would give herself to any man with whom she spoke or laughed, merely out of courtesy, would be no woman worthy of the name but only like a well at the entrance to a caravan-serai, open to the mercy of travellers of all sorts, conditions and castes."

Translated by Una Maclean.

LEON DAMAS

SIX AFRICAN POEMS

DEAD-BORN LOVE.

Haven't you seen the woman who looks for Aouagbé
Who makes Aouagbé run away as soon as she comes
A torn loincloth which cannot cover the body
Does not even resemble a loincloth
I Aouagbé say :
I'm fed up having you always at my heels
Shrew-mouse
I don't like your smell
And I avoid it.
Woman
You are like a butterfly now here, now there
And everywhere
The whole country knows you
We, your people, know you well enough
You and your false promises of love
Like a trap missing its prey she did not get me
And
Taking up my song again to end it
I say :
Haven't you seen that woman who runs after Aouagbé's love
Who makes Aouagbé run away as soon as she comes
A torn loincloth is not a loincloth
The shrew-mouse who never washes herself always leaves a strong smell
When she passes.

SPITE.

Deny me everything I want of you, beauty !
Deny me your body as much as you like.
Refuse it !
The maize your people eat are human eyes
The cups from which your people drink are human skulls
The potatoes your people roast in the fire are human fingers,
Refuse me as much as you like
Deny me everything as much as you want
None but me would be willing to have you !

SERENADE.

The sky is sombre like a dark blue loincloth
Mist falls like drops of fresh milk
The hyena laughs and makes the lion roar in **rage**
How sweet then to unfold.
To the woman of red skin.

IDYLLE.

I was drawing water from the well
When suddenly he looked at me ---
I was so moved
That I let slip the rope.

CUCKOLD CONTENTED.

My wife told me
I go to the market
I too went the market
Where I did not
Where I did not find my wife.
My friend told me
I go to my shop
I too went to the shop
Where I did not
Where I did not find my friend.
Walking at the beach
At the end of the day
I see the friend
Stretched out
On top of my wife.
With a thrust of my knife
I could have certainly
Certainly killed him
If he would not just in time
Just in time have awoken.
Just to give me
To give me five pounds
Five pounds which I took
And taking back with me
Taking back with me my wife.
Because water takes off the scent
The scent of love
And money doesn't smell
And money smells of nothing.

THE SORROW OF KODIO.

We were three women
Three men
And myself, Kodio Ango
We were on our way to work in the city
And I lost my wife Nanama on the way
I alone have lost my wife
To me alone such misery has happened
To me alone Kodio, the most handsome of three men such misery has happened
In vain I call for my wife
She died on the way like a chicken running
How shall I tell her mother
How shall I tell it to her, I Kodio, when it is so hard to hold back my own pain.

These adaptations of traditional African poems first appeared in "Poèmes nègres sur des airs africains", published by GLM, Paris 1948.

Translations:

*Idylle, Spite, Serenade, Sorrow of Kodio and Cuckold Contented
were translated by Miriam Koshland
Dead-Born Love by Miriam Koshland and Joel Heimann.*



BRION AND THE FLAMES

BY E. A. JAMES

Brion strode resolutely in the pitch dark night. He strode as if it was daytime when he could see hindrances at once and clear, so that there was no reason for him to be afraid to stumble over hidden obstacles, a lost sheep or something like that or to get tripped up by loose barbed wire. He hummed a tune and thought — 'What an evening! Moonless. Such nights are always lovely; the prettiest time of the day. An evening with moonshine is false, would be. The moon is a traitress. I'll never forget how disgracefully she betrayed Louisa and me that night. She is inquisitive and immodest—a Nosy Parker. What had she to do with Louisa and me? She is suspicious too or she wouldn't want to light up everything. And how? With false light, incomplete and without sense of proportion. The glutton, she lightens every dark spot and causes a lot of ugly shadows. You can't move or she exaggerates it to the revolutionising of your surroundings. Tonight she isn't here. It is dark fortunately'.

The kerosene lamps in the houses were putting on a brave air. From far and near you could see the little flames. Brion looked agreeably about him. He admired them.

'The moon would fade them away, degrade them'.

He was near Farmer Alwright's house now. He could see the flame in the lamp very clearly. Like a merry lamb it dallied its heart out. Each time some wind reached it, it flickered with gay bows, fluttered like a ground dove, fell as if going out, then a little while later it rose straight as a pole beaming very much alive. Brion had his laugh over the flame.

'How pretty a thing fire is'.

He had heard that in the far world, further than where Segundo had been, is a place where a kind of being lives that likes fire very much; fireworshippers they call themselves. He had not quite understood what sort of creatures they were.

'If I could've had my way, I'd never had become a farmer, Grandfather has struggled to keep the cattle alive. After he passed away Father has fought with some success against their death. Since Father can't keep up the fight any longer, I'm pushing it on. All of us have done it skilfully notwithstanding this the breathing skeletons that have survived in spite of the last eight years, are rather corpses than living animals. Being a farmer is being dependent on the weather. This year the rain washes everything away, the next year not a rain-cloud to be seen; then even weed refuses to grow. If I could choose what I'd be? I'd be a . . . I'd be a . . . a . . . a fireworshipper. That's a nice thing to be. Every day I'll sit by the fire, say a rosary now and then and swallow dainty bits of fire in due time; nothing like hunger any more. That's life! No drought! Bah! Year after year drought! drought! drought! nothing but drought. How happy I'll be as a fireworshipper. Louisa? She'll have to be one too. We'll

squat by the fire, eat tasty mouthfuls of it and tell our beads at time. Where do they live? In some hidden place in the deep world. Will Segundo know where their home is? No. Even he hasn' been so far. If it wasn' so far I'd go there to join them. They are kind, they'll accept me and allow me to eat of their fire and recite the rosary.

Brian drugged down the dry road, a cloud of dust went up in the darkness behind him. Eight years in succession no rain had fallen; the year before these the rain came down in torrents, like ill fated manna it smashed itself to pieces on the slime. It never stopped pouring. Four weeks, months, the whole year the sky emptied its entire capacity on the earth. The cisterns, tanks, and all those thousands of panlike objects the population kept in order to save as much water as possible were soon running over. Spouts, gutters, the water drainage could not get through their work, consequently the upper stratum of the earth was washed away in a wink, and completely. After this the water first made reservoirs of each article shortly afterward it began to rise. Though this disaster was already a murdering blow to the water poor country, yet the wind sprang up in gale force. Trees were jerked out of their foundations; roofings, tiles, slates, zincplates dashed on rambling through the air, doors, windows, pans and chairs skimmed the earth. The best part of the cattle was bound to perish in such a gale: the poor people were left in a state of beggary.

After this calamity had passed, the wind did not scrub the island any longer, lightning did not rip the sky open, thunder did not make the houses tremble, the destruction itself, the politicians Segundo and Primero set foot ashore of the island.

Both had left the island when they were but toddlers. Their parents had taken them to another island of the Caribbean, a richer one, where their fathers were employed by the oil refining works. Afterwards the boys went to Europe to study. Now that they have finished they have come back to their native island determined to help it and its population.

The two politicians demonstrated in turn:

'The disaster the hurricane had caused can be prevented; this has to be done. I'll see to it that this evil can't occur again. In order to carry this into effect I need your help. You can help me to better your position; firstly by not paying attention to the other scourge which has arrived here; secondly by voting for me'.

Thus began after an immense catastrophe the first election in the history of the island. The sophisms were as at all political meetings full of hot tempered curses. One evening when Primero suffered under a lack of tricks, he squalled, alluding to Segundo, whom he regarded as a dry stick, 'We'll wade into the dry plague, and once and for all settle account with this public enemy, so that after the result of the poll he'll not trouble us any more'.

The farmers who were always up against the drought thought that he was aiming at this everlasting enemy. They applauded enthusiastically and called for more of such language. When Primero learned which phrase enabled him to draw down such storms of cheers, he laughed and from then on he trespassed upon their slip of mind and upon their pure intentions. Above all he was a good politician. 'We'll beat the drought' became the exciting closure of his harangue, Segundo had not a dog's chance against this slogan. He got one vote; Primero's.

During his four year's term of office the pinching dearth of water grew more and more wretched. One time it threatened to rain, just for a while, but the menace passed by and things went on as before.

Segundo understood that if he wanted to get in office he should have the drought instead of Primero as antagonist. When polling time was there again

he promised that if they should vote for him he was going to suck rain at each desirable day by a scientific meteorologic procedure out of the sky. He submitted a five year plan to the island; this was a smash hit; the day was his.

In these years Primero had got a little nearer to what he experienced as the spring of richness and of esteem. The tendency of his attempt was most likely limited to this goal.

Tonight Segundo's term of service came to an end; tomorrow one of them will be

'No. I wouldn't be a fireworshipper. I'll be fire. Yes fire itself. Then I shan't need to eat, nor go hungry nor say the rosary. I'll have a swell time. I'll trush my tongues into the air, twist them in, swing them to the left and to the right, whirl a blue round a green, push these two on a red one in the air, floep! draw in the blue all at a sudden, and zigzag a purple round the others. I'll leave a long snake-like tongue creep over the ground and then send his head straight into the air. Yes I'll be fire. I'll be the best time of my life'.

Brion reached Alwright's house. He knocked at the door and went in. The others were there already. Eleven men were sitting there, waiting, perceptibly impatient, for him. Brion was much younger than the rest of the men. Sixteen. He tried to walk on to the back-room to Louisa, but Alwright stopped him by getting up and saying:

'Friends, now Brion has come at last, we won't waste any more time; let's get to action'.

He indicated six men; They got up and formed a row. Brion, Alwright and the other four lined up opposite them.

Brion, was a round, stout young man. He was standing between two tall slender confidants, this made his appearance seem shorter. Compared with his neighbour over the way, a fantastic long fellow, a Goliath with derricks for limbs, he was but a dwarf with stumps.

Alwright gave a sign; the men approached one another; each one gripped the arm of his mate facing him. In rhythmical staccato they recited together:

My loyal friend
your benediction is ours
my deed is ours
my arms your true friend.

The last words were scarcely out of their mouths and with a strong pull they wrenched the limb out of the body of their loyal friend. For a while they had but one arm and held their neighbour's in their hands. In the same rhythmical staccato:

To me is duty bound
and victory your hand won.

And they wriggled the arm in their armpit. They seized the other arm of the comrade:

My loyal friend
your benediction is ours
my deed is ours
my arms your true friend.

This one was pulled out of its legal place too; and once more:

To me is duty bound
and victory your hand won.

Again it was squeezed into a pit in which it did not quite fit.

It was an absurd sight, the short Brion with grotesque limbs, hanging below the calf of his legs, and his lanky companion with wings not reaching further than his hips.

'If everything runs as smooth as this we won' have cause to complain. You know your job'. Alwright said nodding to the other row.

'We'll fix that', Brion's neighbour answered.

'Let's get moving'.

The twelve men left the house. At the end of the main street in the village they separated. Brion and his group turned down a road leading to that part of the town that was built at the foot of the hill, the other group took a path that conveyed them to the districts situated on the slope and on the top of the hill.

Brion and his men reached a house which seemed to be their destination. Alwright knocked at the door. A man appeared in the window.

'Hello Segundo', Alwright said.

'Hello Alwright. Hello boys. You fellows come to see me? Come in. Come in'. The man spoke very cheerfully, obviously very pleased to see the callers. He disappeared from the window to open the door. Three of them went in. Alwright, Brion and an old man, who had been keeping up a steady conversation with Alwright all the way. This in contradiction to his habit for he was not a talkative man at all. Yet he had been speaking passionately; like a gentle man trying in vain to convince his friend of the wrong and of the cruelty he is about to commit. The others stayed outside, they knew their job.

'Tomorrow is polling day, Segundo', Alwright started.

'It surely is, and I'm putting my trust in you again. I'm sure you are not thinking of letting me down'.

'A friend who haven' leave us in the lurch can be sure we'll never leave him up to the sharks'.

'When ya na put close outside ya na a-look for rain', the old man backed up Alwright.

In fact this old gentleman was Alwright's father-in-law. He was one of the old stamp. and was undoubtedly a queer member. When he did speak, you could count ten to one it was a proverb. He himself called them parables. He had never been to school therefore had not learned any European proverbs, consequently he used those he had at his disposal, the rural ones. This in contrary to the younger generation, which had had a little book-learning. They used unfortunately very few of these expressions but still more than Brion's which had passed through an elementary school. Segundo and his confidants knew none they borrowed and hired from Europe. When the old man would say: 'Pa far ochreo spoil' or 'Ya na know where water—a walk a-go ah pumpkin belly' they had to turn to Europe to point out: 'The eyes of the master fattens the cow', and to Shakespeare for: 'There are more things in heaven than you have dreamt of in your philosophy'.

Segundo hesitated for he had not expected the parable speaker to partake in the talk. At last he replied:

'Yes I know that! I know you boys are made of the right stuff. I like to hear you speak that way. Let us toast to that. What you want to drink?'

'Rhum!' Brion called out and he came forward swinging his jibs. 'Rhum!'

'Segundo', Alwright tried again.

'Wait a minute man, wait a minute. Rhum first. I must have fire inside of me. First fire inside, then fire outside,' Brion interjected still swinging his branches.

Segundo filled their glasses. Standing they drank to their victory. 'The day is ours,' Segundo cried out.

'We'll beat the day,' affirmed Brion picking up the bottle to refill his glass. Segundo noticed his ape-like limbs.

"You have long arms Boy. I haven't seen a man with such bats in all my life."

Brion drank hastily. He was making sure of his fire on the inside. No sooner was his glass empty than he held it up for Segundo to fill it, and chuckled.

"Those are gorilla's arms, you are turning into a gorilla, man," Segundo said joking.

"That's why we're here, all of us are turning gorillas and the ground is getting bone-dry, so the gorillas will soon see if things keep on like this. There must be some change. Something ought to be done Segundo. Yesterday one of my cows drop down again, tomorrow one of my children going to drop down too. Diagnosis? Lack of liquid. Water! water! we need water. I'm telling you Segundo, there must be a change for the better."

"Sure, you are right, there must be a change for the better, and there will be. How can it come off? That is very simple. Go to the ballot box tomorrow and vote for me. I'll take care the reformatations come about. I'm putting my trust in you and you must put yours in me. Now boys promise me you'll vote for me tomorrow. Promise me that."

"We always keep our promises Segundo but what about you? You promised us rain."

"It is rain you want? You'll have your rain! As much as you like. Plenty of rain! Elect me and you'll have it!"

"Your parents were borned here, they fled from the drought,"—"Goat Son stray if ee get grass ah ee yard."—(The old man of the parables crossed this argument to illustrate it with one of his proverbs. A thing, had he not been so excited, he would never have done. All through the lapse of the following conversation he put forth a proverb, more frequently than Brion could pick up the bottle.) Alwright continued: "By some fortune they succeeded in scraping up some money, sent you to Europe to study, now you come back here preaching a lot of nonsense about capitalist, communist, automist, meteorolist,—"pretty doesn' go in pot."—Just like that other fool Primero who're always gassing that he too is a politician, a communist. We think nothing of those things. They are of no use to us. A fly has more value than them. Perhaps they worth the devil down there where you take them from. You should have leave them there and you should have brought us that kind of rain you used to talk about. A good or bad kind hat doesn' mind, as long as it's rain. We want the ground moistened so yams and sweet-potatoes can grow, we want to see grass for the sheep and goats on the slopes of our hills instead of compitalist and such stuff."

"Now you are mixing up everything again. That scamp Primero is not a communist he is a capitalist, that means he is selling you out. He promises a thousand things he knows can't come into being. You must not believe him. He can't manage anything. Centuries ago he has had his time. Now he is done for. He is lying on his back and he knows that he can't get up, that the grave is his next haunt, he is only afraid to concede it. He knows it, he knows he has bloomed and is now drying up. He is in an agony of death; we should have pity on him, the malefactor, slavedriver, colonial! If you make a mistake and elect him you'll be putting back the time, this is against nature," Segundo finished with a mild reproach.

"All right! All right! What you say will be true we don' know. We ar'n speaking about him, he don' count, he's null and void,—"Gully na dey deep 'nough for hide worthless family" — if we considered him worth as much as a louse we'd have gone to him ourselves. But you! You don' venture to speak one nasty word of him. He and you are one. — "All tief know their border

foot-print in de san'." — You are of the same kind. What you say of him fits you too. He is the funeral-car and you the cadaverous smeil. — "Calabash na a-bear pumpkin." — Brion this man here and I we're farmers we're one, no slandering, among us. Only to Brion I have to speak some hard words, sometimes, not even so often, because he won' leave my daughter Louisa alone. — "Family cutlass don' cut deep" —

"I have long arms and want another drink", Brion interrupted him, he refilled his glass, swallowed the rum quickly, filled all the glasses, drank his and Alwright's. "I wish I was outside to polish off that nice piece of work. I can' go outside to see to the fire?" he asked. Nobody paid attention to him. Alwright finished with:

"You are bordering us in with the whole boiling of European nonsense but you don' fulfill your undertakings." — "Word ah mout'na load ah head." — "For heaven's sake Alwright use your common sense. How do you expect that scoundrel to try to accomplish his promises.—" Stranger na know burial-ground"—. He is gulling you. He has nothing to offer, he can't work, he is not a whale at work not even a scrub. — "Nothin' good a-come out a black hen chicken." His whole tirade is a bunch of lies. In this balloon he is superfluous ballast. He must be cast out. Hold him by the scruff of his neck and fling him out. Your worn shoes? You throw them away, don't you. Do the same with this mongrel. His is a pair of worn shoes, throw him away, don't let him hurt your feet. I'll

"O.k! O.k! You are right. He has deceived us. He promised he was going to diminish the drought, we believed him and elected him. For four years he was allow to sit in the golden chair. In those days no rain fell. Not even a rain-cloud passed. Not even the seawind which had once lost its way that day didn' drop a nipple of salt-water. Nothing! nothing looking like rain. We know we were looked upon as fools. — "Ashes col' puppy lay down." — The next time we voted for your rain. You chased him out of the big chair and got into it. The rain held off all the same. You was to make us prosperous by . . . with by . . . a new kind of rain you had got to know of back in Europe. How you called that rain Brion, wet . . . meto . . ."

"Metecorological rain, I want another drink."

"Yes that was it. What about that."

"You want rain? It is rain you want! Elect me and you'll get more than rain."

Alwright looked hard at Segundo, he said angry:

"No polling tomorrow. You have been sitting for four years in the big chair the only thing we got was drought. Since you two came here with your capinist and the rest of your twaddle, you have chased every good thing. With you came the drought and deceit."

"I know. I know that old crow has deceived you but I'll"

Segundo retreated to his old friend rhetoric. He began to oblige with one of his bombastic sophisms. This did not suit Alwright. Annoyed he stopped him with:

"Of course you are right Mr. Segundo."

He got up and left the house. His comrades followed him. Brion took the bottle along with him. He slammed the door behind them.

At this sign flames whirled about the house, they blazed up, occupied the doors and made a good guarded place of the window. The dry wood groaned and grated, the fire crashed and crackled. Brion was in air. He wished he was one of those flames.

Of the hill between the dancing little flames of the kerosene lamps, there where Primero's house stood, jaunty flames leapt to heights. The fire had started

its benediction or destruction up here first, consequently, those flames were brighter and had more colour variations. Brion liked both of them. He could not decide which he should admire. His friends left the yard. They trudged along the stone-dry road to their farms, dust following them. — How you got to be a fireworshipper? Where do they live? I can' ask Segundo no more. I'll have to remain a farmer. Such nice flames! Such beautiful colours. This is something like a fire! —

Joyfully he ran round and round the house in order to see the fire from all sides. He forgot the drought and hardly realised his arms were borrowed.



THE IMMIGRANT

BY EZEKIEL MPHAHLELE

Northern Wind
sweeping down from Sahara
flings a grey scarf round me on and off,
the car torpedoes through the smoky haze:
I wonder what you do to my interior —
burning dry the mucous
piercing
scouring
my lungs —
savage harmattan!

Northern wind
filtering
through tree and grass and me
you hear my windows open
with a creak of hinges —
windows that were shut so long
oh, so long
in the painful south of the south,
and you laugh at me —
rollicking harmattan!

Northern wind
smelling of what I cannot smell
reminding me of things I can't or daren't remember,
what is it you do to me?
If it's remaining embers your
wasted fingers
fumble for
or violence
you're whipping me into,
groping
among slumb'ring drives of long ago down
in the cellar of the brain —
ah, save your breath;
I feel a certain void
now my enemies are out of sight;
only distant sound of long-tongued hounds
I hear
across the Congo and Zambesi and Limpopo
down in the painful south of the south,
and my anger

is a sediment
in the pit of my stomach
waiting
for Time's purgative or agitation —
harrowing harmattan!

Northern wind
all I know
is that you numb and jolt me
lash the water off my flesh
and fill me with a sense of insufficiency,
vague longings and forlorn moments and
brittle promises — maddening!
Twelve months I heard of you
there in the humid side of your native sands
where heat
oozed
from under me,
denuded
some of the lump of southern pain:
you did not come,
I came so far to meet you.
Yesterday I watched the leaves
go fluttering
down
down
to kiss the ground before your majesty —
pretentious thing!

Northern wind
now whimpering
whining
now lispig
dead prophecies
collected from ruins of lost empires,
you weave
knotted fingers
through tree and grass and me
blowing down the serest:
stop,
tremble
when you see the savage green of us
beyond the touch of you!
Not like the lusty August winds
of the vibrant painful south of the south,
spinning us into
desperate tears and laughter
anger, hope —
blistering interlace —
still pushing us on to hell or heaven,
we running fighting running,
straining
like a universe of bending reeds.

Rather that,
northern wind,
than the long hours of sleep,
oh, so long,
that make a yawning descant
to your impotent howling,
the long mental sleep
that knows no longing
for even the now unattainable,
no unfulfilled urges
heartburns and lingering angers,
no fires kindled by wanton men
beaten out
in psychotic panic
left smouldering smouldering smouldering
in the negro heart
in the agitated painful south of the south.
When will you stifle
this yawn of ancient languors
in the range of your compass ---
indifferent harmattan?

Northern wind
while I've been talking
I've become aware of one thing
I had only surmised
since I left the
palpitating painful south of the south
they've done it to me ---
taught me the violence,
revenge of Europe,
uncivilized me
by the law of
paper
gun
baton,
made me lie to them and smile,
made me think
anger and bitterness
and running fighting running
were man's vital accessories.
Now here I fume and dig and paw the earth,
bellow
poised panting like a bull for th' encounter and ---
ah, no visible foe,
resistance none,
no dazzling red;
Ah the aching void in me,
neutralized acidity of my slime!
Now you know
the unsteady fulcrum of an immigrant!
Tell me,
is this divine indolence ---

this
the horizontal sleep of the north?
the secret of the urge to be
only to be?
or just the great immensity of Northern Sleep?
Is it Tao's sweet narcotic wisdom —
spirit of harmattan?

Northern wind
you know nothing.
Only, since morning
I've ridden layer after layer of grey
my nose is dry
your load trapped in my hair.
You've followed me all day
relentlessly
into the catacomb of night
and still I feel
th' unholy hounds of the
bleeding painful south of the south
chasing after me,
you flapping about my head
gyrating like a pack of idiots
in and out between the running wheels —
Enough!
I shan't be wooed:
Shelley's long long dead,
no messages thrown to the winds anymore
Enough
of dehydrated kisses,
barren maid,
no night club this!
But now I think of it
I'll stop at the roadhouse here
for a beer
just for a while —
the immigrant's journey's a long long one,
heavy.
He tunnels through
back again
beneath
pounding footsteps of three decades and more of hurt
on the beaten road above
weighing down
down on him.
When I burst into the dawn of brooding questions
I shall yet look at more butterflies, moths and leaves
you nailed
on my radiator
like a lover of curios who wants his pieces
dead and flat.

Morning!
New dawn tells me
that void can never last,
for the immigrant's journey's a long long road.
Over centuries
they scrambled
for my Mother
from across the frontiers of snowbound boredom
decay
stale wines and bodies,
clawed down her green innocence
mauled her limbs
sold her shrines
planted
brass and wooden crosses
knocked them down at skittles
gaming for the land
while hungry eyes transfixed on a miracle
high on Calvary.
I'm a leopard
born of
a Mother
a God in torment,
converging point of centuries of change,
a continent of test-tubes.
My claws have poison :
only let me lie down a while,
bide my time,
rub my neck and whiskers,
file my claws and remember.
Then my mind can draw the line between
the hounds and hunted of the lot
in the blazing painful south of the south;
use their tools and brains —
thanks for once to ways of white folk.
And in yonder land of peace and calm,
you think I'll change my spots?
No matter,
no regrets :
the God of Africa
my Mother
will know her friends and persecutors, civilize the world
and teach them the riddle of living and dying.
Meantime,
let them leave my heart alone !



TWO YORUBA PAINTERS

BY ULLI BEIER

Painting is not an important form of traditional African art. The Yoruba form no exception in this. Their genius was mainly expressed in woodcarving and bronze casting, and although they used to paint the walls of their shrines with decorative designs, these murals cannot compare with Yoruba plastic arts, either in the perfection of technique, the richness of styles or the power of expression.

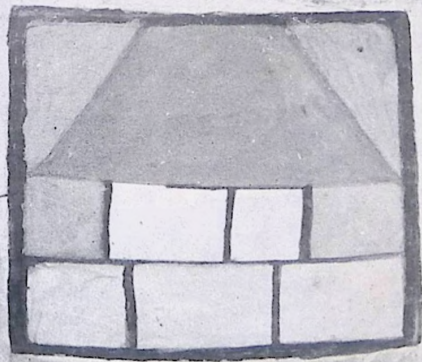
One reason for this is, that fast colours were not readily available. The different chalks and ochres, the camwood and indigo are usually washed away from the walls by the first rains. Moreover painting was never practised as an end in itself, but was always seen in relationship to architecture on the one hand and to religion on the other. Usually the paintings consist of a series of sacred signs and symbols, arranged in an ornamental pattern, so as to decorate the wall. (See ODU: a journal of Yoruba studies, No. 8: YORUBA WALL-PAINTING.) As a means of self-expression, painting was never used.

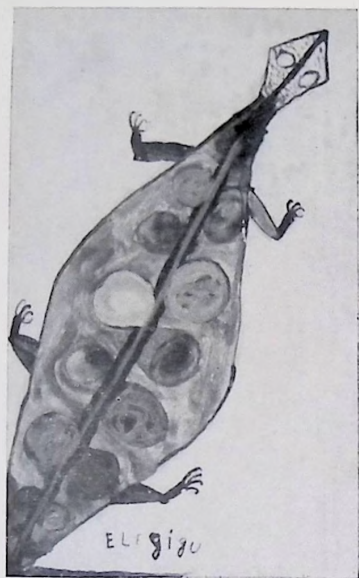
One should have thought that the contact with European civilization might have freed the latent African talent for painting. A new generation of Yoruba, that was no longer in the rigid social and religious context of the traditional pattern could conceive of painting as an end in itself, as an individual, non-functional pursuit. New materials had also become available, and a stimulus could be provided by examples of foreign art. But so far, the new school of Yoruba painting has failed to appear. With very few exceptions the genius of the younger generation seems to apply itself to literature and music rather than to the visual arts. This is perhaps not very difficult to understand. The greatness and power of traditional art looms large over them. Yet it is in an art form they do not wish to draw inspiration from. It is a way of life they wish to break away from and with which they do not wish to be identified: for so powerful was European prejudice towards the African way of life, that the younger generation of Africans now has been infected by it. To many, traditional religion is still suspect as "idol worship" and traditional African art is associated in their minds with the (meaningless) word "fetish". No wonder, that whenever they venture into the field of painting they aim at a superficial realism which is "safe" and socially acceptable. This tendency is further helped, because the tastes of most Europeans in Africa who are likely to influence them is singularly Victorian. The road from traditional African art to modern European art is almost a sort of short cut, but nobody seems to guide the young African in this direction. Instead he is led into the blind alley of nineteenth century realism and he is content to *report* instead of to *interpret* the world. I know there are some exceptions to the general rule, but on the whole new African painting is imitative and inhibited. I believe, however, that this is the result of misdirection and not of inherent lack of originality.

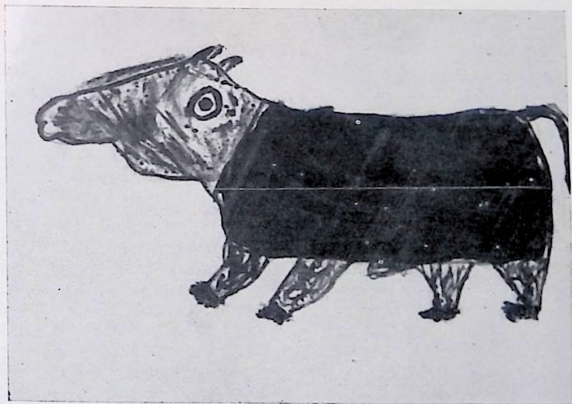
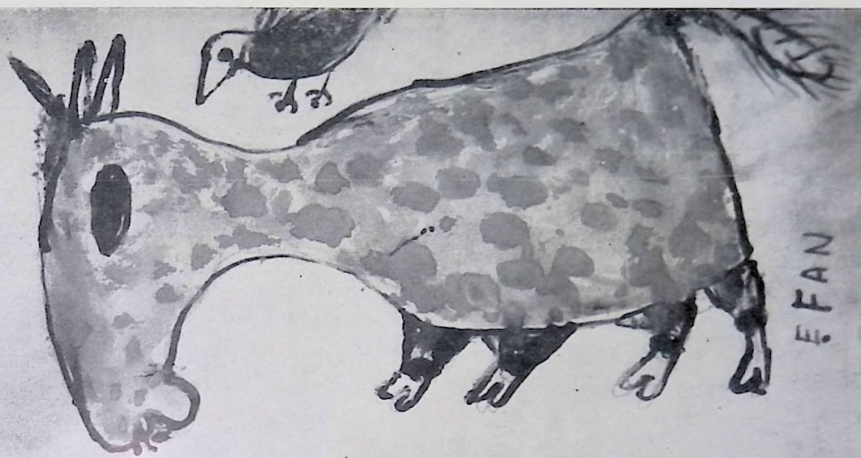
I received something like a proof, when some years ago Susanne Wenger and myself incited a number of patients in the Abeokuta mental home to paint. We were by no means attempting to dabble in "art therapy" which we were quite unqualified to do. We had come to the mental home purely by accident. We had been asked by a friend to visit a patient there. We were intrigued by some of the people we saw, and were looking for an excuse to see them more often. We had been excited by the complex, fascinating personalities of some of these men.

We took great care not to *teach*, but merely to encourage. Painting was something completely new for the patients, they had never handled a brush and had never seen paintings or pictures, except for the glossy magazines that benign nurses circulated in the home. To our astonishment more than half of the people who tried (the work was of course completely voluntary and some showed no interest) turned out to be gifted artists. Each one of them developed a completely individual style. The painters did not copy each other, nor were they influenced by photographs or adverts in the magazines, that provided their only outside influence. Our own job consisted merely to create an atmosphere in which the artists could feel happy and free to produce whatever they liked. Thus these artists were able to produce highly original work, because there was neither an inhibiting social pressure, nor had they been prejudiced towards tradition by a form of Western education, because they were all more or less illiterate. Another impressive fact was that the artists did not only find their own personal style, but also their own technique, suited to express their ideas. Here again they were not taught, but evolved everything themselves.

Out of the large number of artists we present two in this issue of "Black Orpheus". Painter T. had an exceptionally tragic life. Six years before we met him, he had killed a woman, but however hard he tried he just could not remember it or any details leading up to the tragic event. Being considered "unfit to plead" he was sent to the mental home. When we met him, he was a sad, but completely normal person. He was extremely kind, always helping his companions in the home. He was generally liked by patients and wardens. Like nearly all the patients he had never held a brush in his hands. In spite of this he worked with astounding confidence and sureness right from the start. I remember our first painting session. T. went straight to the paints, and while the other artists were still hesitating, and wondering what it was all about, he had already produced a large composition of a palm tree with two snakes and a Fernand Leger. During the first period of forms and the sureness of touch of bold, decorative manner. He produced simple but very striking compositions, his favourite subjects being snakes, birds and lizards. (See Plate II) There was a cool elegance in his forms during this period, that could have made him an ideal designer of posters or covers for "Vogue". The masterpiece of this period was undoubtedly the large horse on Plate I. This shows an almost sovereign assurance, and has a most exciting, original treatment of the head. At the same time, this painting shows the beginning of a new period. The treatment of the head showed that T. was a more complex person than one might hitherto have guessed. So far his painting had been formal and decorative and distinctly aloof. He never put any personal feelings into his pictures, he was merely interested in design. This painting shows the first attempts to develop a new technique. T. shows new interest in the use of colour, particularly in the body of the horse. Up till then, colour had always been of secondary importance in his work. Now he began to produce rich effects by working in several layers of paint, one on top of the other, always allowing the bottom layers to slightly shine through from underneath.









OWAWA



9Di
ADIYE



EKUN



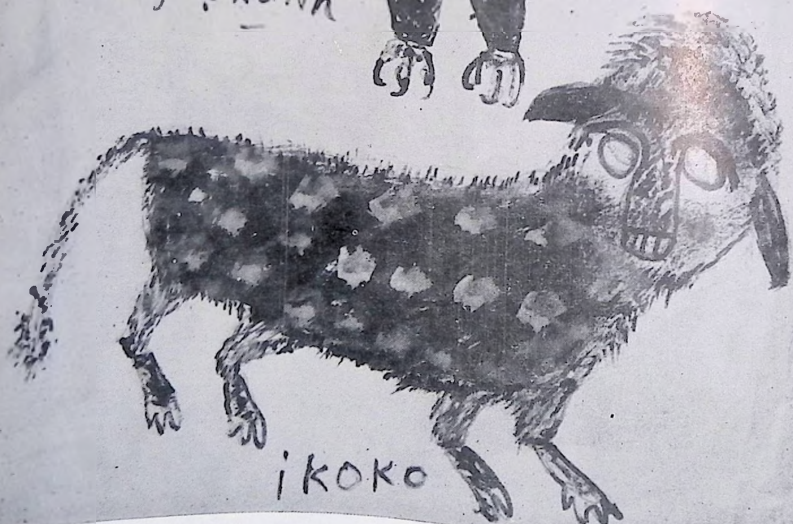
KINUHUH
KINNIHUY



owli wi



EKUNH



IKOKO



Q.M.O.

KiNNUH







By now T. felt sufficiently at ease with us and with his new profession of a painter, to slightly relax the austere aesthetics of his earlier work. With his newly developed technique he now began to paint a large series of animal pictures: the buffalo and the boar (Plate III) the tree bear (Plate IV) the leopard (Plate V and VIII) and the lion (Plate VI), were his favourites. The elegance now begins to vanish, so does the confidence and the aloofness. The pictures become intimate and human. They reveal now an extremely tender person, The buffalo for example is painted with gentle affection. But there is also torment (the leopard on Plate V) and fear (the tree bear with two horrible claws gripping for him.) There is something infinitely pathetic about the two toy lions on Plate VI. Suddenly the artist reveals his own character in his work, we feel something of his affection and longing, and also of his melancholy. But in spite of the obvious sadness in the cat (Plate VII) these were the happiest days of T. He found great satisfaction and relief in painting. Perhaps it meant more to him than to any other patient. Unfortunately this situation was not to last. T. was certified "sane" and declared "fit to plead". So incomprehensible is the law in these matters, that he was now given a life prison sentence for the deed that had been committed seven years earlier, and of which he still could remember nothing. During the last months in the mental home gloom and depression set in, as the artist knew of his impending transfer to prison.

And once more his style and technique change. Suddenly it is people he is interested in, not animals. Sad, disillusioned people, like the policeman and the king on Plate X (top). His technique has become simpler, too. He has hard outlines, and simple, loud colours. There is bitterness and suffering in his pictures. Really frightening is the man holding a cross in a monstrous animal claw. (Plate X bottom right.) It is almost like an indictment of our double-faced culture, that talks of Christianity and love, but knows no mercy. His final phase is most pathetic. During the last few weeks he painted figure compositions, that express a terrible sense of frustration and loneliness. The people are all depicted in tense and frustrating situations. They are either fighting, or punishing, or somehow failing to communicate with each other. (On Plate XI top right a ball is thrown from one person to another, but will evidently fail to reach its destination.) The figures are all moving on different planes, which is also symbolical of frustration and isolation. The colours have become extremely simple, almost coarse. He has given up his subtle technique of painting. There are no more subtle layers of paint and complex effects. He now uses black, and rickets blue, and lemon yellow and a "poisonous" green. All colours are applied solidly and harshly juxtaposed. There are very hard black outlines to the figures, and sometimes the whole picture is enclosed in a heavy black frame that weighs down on the figures and seems to suggest extreme depression. A wavy line at the back of the figure's head represents the brain. The artist's worried state of mind is thus exteriorised. These were his last pictures. The transfer to prison has ended his career as a painter. Much though we tried, we were not allowed to continue a painting class in prison.

So moving and touching is the story of this remarkable artist, that I have here related it as a background story to his work. But this should not lead one to regard his paintings merely as documents of psychological or psychiatric interest. This is no more justified in his case, than, say, in the case of van Gogh. T. is an artist of great originality and his work must be judged as art, not as a documentary "case history". Every human being has a "case history". But in the end it is of little interest whether Dostoyewski was an epileptic or not — all that really matters is that he was a great writer. Artists can come from any walk of life, and they can be healthy or diseased, but such circumstances are really of secondary importance.

T.'s work which is reproduced on the centre plates of this journal can be compared and contrasted with another painter, D. of whom we show nine pictures on pages 2; 4; 15; 22; 28; 32; 43; 46; 60: There is a very superficial resemblance with the work of T. The artist's favourite subject are animals, Horses, birds and various bush animals are his favourites. His drawing is bold and firm, in fact energetic. His colours are nearly all earth colours, browns and ochres, with the exception of a dull ultramarine, which forms a strong contrast. (The bird on page 4). But these animals are quite different from the gentle, suffering creatures of T. On the contrary they seem to be endowed with incredible vigour and energy. There is a wonderful sense of movement and activity in these pictures. The creatures are running, eating and excreting all at the same time. D. is a painter of vitality, of power, of life force. There is a dynamic explosive quality about all his work. Although his animals are highly stylised, they give an extraordinary impression of reality. They are organic, full-blooded creatures quite unlike the dreamy, imaginative lions and leopards of T. The animals of D., highly decorative as they are, they yet seem to jump out of the page to assume an independent life of their own. Rather different is the man in the boat (see below). This motive was treated several times by the artist. There is here the same vigour of design and the same sense of movement. The gesture of the oarsman is highly dramatic. Yet there appears an added sense of sadness. Involuntarily the man in the boat makes one think of Charon, the classical symbol of death.

D.'s personal history is of no consequence for the appreciation of his pictures. It is, however, of interest to know that he was a highly religious person, who derived his strength and vitality from a sense of unity with God and the world.

T. and D. are immensely sympathetic artists, of great originality and considerable power of expression. It is strange to think that they might never have touched a brush in their lives, had it not been for our chance meeting. How much talent, how much genius must there be latent in this country!



GABRIEL ORARA

TWO POEMS

PIANO AND DRUMS

When at break of day at a riverside
I hear jungle drums telegraphing
the mystic rhythm, urgent, raw
like bleeding flesh, speaking of
primal youth and the beginning,
I see the panther ready to pounce,
the leopard snarling about to leap
and the hunters crouch with spears poised;

And my blood ripples, turns torrent,
topples the years and at once I'm
in my mother's laps a suckling;
at once I'm walking simple
paths with no innovations,
rugged, fashioned with the naked
warmth of hurrying feet and groping hearts
in green leaves and wild flowers pulsing.

Then I hear a wailing piano
solo speaking of complex ways
in tear-furrowed concerto;
of far away lands
and new horizons with
coaxing diminuendo, counterpoint,
crescendo. But lost in the labyrinth
of its complexities, it ends in the middle
of a phrase at a daggerpoint.

And I lost in the morning mist
of an age at a riverside keep
wandering in the mystic rhythm
of jungle drums and the concerto.

NEW THINGS AND LAUGHED AND
LAUGHED
In your ears my song
in motor car misfiring
stopping with a choking cough;
and you laughed and laughed and laughed

In your eyes my ante-
natal walk was inhuman passing
your 'omnivorous understanding'
and you laughed and laughed and laughed.

You laughed at my song
you laughed at my walk.

Than I danced my magic dance
to the rhythm of talking
drums pleading, but you shut your
eyes and laughed and laughed and laughed.

And then I opened my mystic
inside wide like
the sky, instead you entered your
car and laughed and laughed and laughed.

You laughed at my dance
you laughed at my inside.

You laughed and laughed and laughed.
But your laughter was ice-block
laughter and it froze your inside froze
your voice froze your ears
froze your eyes and froze your tongue.

And now its my turn to laugh;
but my laughter is not
ice-block laughter. For I
know not cars, know not ice-blocks.

My laughter is the fire
of the eye of the sky, the fire
of the earth, the fire of the air
the fire of the seas and the
rivers fishes animals trees
and it thawed your inside,
thawed your voice, thawed your
ears, thawed your eyes, and
thawed your tongue.

So a meek wonder held
your shadow and you whispered:
"Why so?"

And I answered:
"Because my fathers and I
are owned by the living
warmth of the earth
through our naked feet."

DISCUSSION ON CAMARA LAYE

CAMARA LAYE: AN INTERPRETATION

BY JANHEINZ JAHN

In No. 3 of "Black Orpheus" Mr. J. A. Ramsaran gives an interpretation of Camara Laye's symbolism in "The Radiance of the King". Mr. Ramsaran relates Laye's symbolism to Kafka, and he looks to Christianity and Islam for further comparisons. But I think that we could find a more convincing explanation nearer home: in African thinking. I should like to consider here Camara Laye's two books, because the first is a key to the second. In "The Dark Child" Camara Laye shows his understanding and respect for African traditions, and in "The Radiance of the King" he makes this tradition work on a stranger.

In "The Dark Child" Camara Laye shows the new spirit of French West Africans towards tradition. He did not consider his African childhood as something remote, primitive, something to be ashamed of. On the contrary: looking back on it from a distance, and having learned the technical skills European education had to offer, he discovered that these skills had been animated, and had been more closely related to man in his native civilisation. In his novel he describes lovingly the work of his father, a goldsmith, who was in his way a technician, but who is helped by the praise-singers while he works.

Listen how Camara Laye describes the actual smelting of gold: "My father used to utter actual words at this time, I know that he was uttering them in his mind. I could see it by his lips. What were the words my father's lips were forming? I do not know, I do not know for certain: I was never told what they were. But what else could they have been, if not magical incantations? Were they not the spirits of fire and gold, of fire and air, of fire born in air, of gold married with fire — were not these spirits he was invoking? The operation that was going on before my eyes was simply the smelting of gold, but it was something more than that: a magical operation."

"During the whole process of transformation the praise-singer had kept on singing his praises, accelerating his rhythm, increasing his flatteries, as the trinket took shape, and praising my father's talents to the skies. Indeed, the praise-singer participated in a curious — I was going to say direct, effective — way in the work. He, too, was intoxicated with the joy of creation, he declaimed his rapture, and plucked his harp like a man inspired; he warmed to the task as if he had been the craftsman himself, as if the trinket had been made by his own hands."

This scene illustrates and emphasises the importance and the quality of the word in Africa, the effective power, of the creative word, which has such importance in African philosophy. Senghor, the famous poet and philosopher from Senegal, in one of his essays comments on the scene: Laye's father is forging a golden jewel. The prayer, or rather the poem, which he recites, the

song of praise which the Griot sings as he works the gold, the dance of the smith at the end of the operation, it is all that — poem, song, and dance — which, more than the gestures of the craftsman, accomplish the work, and make it a work of art.

Thus finally all human doing and creating is a kind of magic, and a formula of chemistry, a calculation of statistics, what else is it than a magic formula, the right word in the right moment to accomplish a creative mystery. Camara Laye although an engineer, remained related to his African tradition and thus did not lose his soul in the technical environment because he was able to give to those abstract formulas a spiritual meaning, the living meaning of a symbol.

In his second book, "The Radiance of the King" he does even more. The whole book is full of symbolism. It usually is considered as an ingenious allegory about man's search for God. But I think that the book cannot be seen in this sense only, it is ambivalent, even multivalent, as Senghor says of all African art. The hero of the book is Clarence, a European, who finds himself without the help and support of his countrymen in an African environment. He is without money, without hope of outside help. He is thrown exactly into that position in which many Africans often find themselves in the European world. He has to conform. And thus he becomes gradually initiated. The whole book can be considered as a lesson in African wisdom.

Clarence concentrates his hopes on the African king. He stands in the dust of the street and watches the king pass. A beggar who is also watching promises to put in a good word for him, so that Clarence might get a job. When the beggar reappears, Clarence was trying to read the beggar's face, but he could make out nothing at all: he had been too short a time in this country to be able to decipher the expressions on the black men's faces. "Well," he asked. — "I am sorry," said the beggar. "There is no post available for you." — "But I would have accepted any post whatsoever!" — "I know, but there are no posts available." — "I should have been satisfied with the humblest situation," said Clarence. "I could have . . ." he said. But what could he have done? Had he the least idea? "I could have been a simple drummer boy . . ." — "That is not a simple occupation," said the beggar. "The drummers are drawn from a noble caste and their employment is hereditary. Even if you had been allowed to beat a drum it would have had no meaning. The white men think they know everything, and what do they know, when all's said and done? Perhaps I should not have announced that you were ready to accept any kind of employment whatsoever, perhaps they were suspicious of a man who was ready to accept just any kind of employment, feeling that such a one would be incapable of doing anything."

Thus is the beginning of this European's education. He gets one lesson after the other, most of them painful. At a Law Court he is treated like Africans were at times treated at colonialist Law Courts: his evidence has no value and he cannot get justice. Only the beggar helps him on, his art of begging supplies enough food while they go South where the king is expected. Clarence does not see that they move on, he believes he is tricked, that they go the same way every day, so unchanged is the landscape to him, the forest that never ends. In a village Clarence does not want to go on, the beggar sells him there, getting a woman and a donkey for him. Clarence does not know that he has been sold, his life is comfortable, he is not supposed to work and gets a nice companion to sleep with him in his hut. But sometimes he has the impression that his woman is different, that the woman he has in the night is not his woman. He worries, he wants to find out though he is told that it is better for him not to know. But as a white man he cannot leave any secret untouched, he wants to know the truth. He finally finds out that he is used as a stallion to mate with

the wives of the naba, the chief. Knowing it, makes him more unhappy than before, seeing his pride in his white race reduced to nothing but a biological difference whimsically used by a naba to make his offspring look different from other offsprings.

Even his humanitarian ideals, his Christian pity is shown to be worthless and harmful. The Master of Ceremonies has done wrong in letting Clarence into the secret, and as a punishment the Master of Ceremonies gets whipped. Clarence attending the scene is torn by his conscience, mutters "Savages!" and stops the whipping. But not even the whipped Master of Ceremonies thanks him for his interference, because the Master of Ceremonies will enjoy no respite now. If the display had been allowed to pursue its rightful course, he would have been able really to enjoy the respite, the sense of relief that the conclusion of a well-regulated torture always affords. Whereas now he has to drag himself around as if he had never received a single stroke.

Clarence's preconceived ideas are altered, his prejudices torn. None of the persons who surround him is wholly reliable, but all are human, neither good nor bad but both.

Noaga and Nagoa, the two boys who accompany Clarence all the time, are neither good nor bad. At any time, they take their chance, they steal where there is an opportunity. Clarence is often worried about them, at times he is shocked, at times compelled to admire. They never consider life too seriously. There is no question whether they are to be redeemed by the king or not. "Tomorrow we go with the king", they say. Their redemption is not a question of good or evil, they cannot be rejected by the king, because already they live life as a unity. Clarence on the other hand can only be redeemed after he has learned that his moral problems are not essential. This is one of the strongest arguments against the Christian interpretation of the end of the book.

Clarence learns, and learns gradually to become one of those around him. human himself, humble at last when all his preconceptions are gone. It is again a smith, Diallo the blacksmith, who gives him the most worthy lessons. One morning he learns about the essence of African art when Diallo says:

"But what is an axe? I have forged thousands of them, and this one will undoubtedly be the finest of them all; the others will have been no more than experiments I made in order to forge this one perfect axe. So this will be the sum of everything I have learnt; it will be like my life and all the effort I had made to live it well. But what does the king want with an axe? . . . He will accept it; at least I hope he will accept it; and perhaps he will even deign to admire it; but he will accept it and admire it only in order to give me pleasure. After all what sort of pleasure could he take in it? There will always be axes that are finer and more deadly, more murderously sharp than any I can fashion . . . Yet I go on forging it. Perhaps I can do nothing else. perhaps I am like a tree which can bear only one kind of fruit. Yes I am like that tree . . . And perhaps, in spite of having so many faults, perhaps because I am like that tree and lack the means to do anything but this; in spite of everything, the king will give me credit for my good will . . . But as far as the axe itself . . ."

Thus not the purpose of the axe is important but its meaning. The process of creation is more important than the created object. In itself it is not worth much, its worth lasts as long as the artist creates it doing his best to justify his own life. And as soon as it is finished he starts to forge a new one, a better one again, and each one is the sum of everything he has ever learnt. And the former axes are destooled works of art, they are of no value to him, they become mere tools which the farmer may use now.

Finally Clarence is redeemed after he has learned that all his former scales of values are wrong. When finally he has learned to have visions, when he even

has understood that what he thought to be sin is not sin but life, that by all his errors there is nothing that really counts but his good will, then the king draws him to his breast. Like everything in this novel this king is a symbol too. He is fortune, merit, favour, mercy, he is king and redeemer. Camara Laye gives the sum of all religion, of all humanity in this novel. And he shows that here, finally, all religion is one. Various symbols of different religions are used to fuse them into a uniform concept of Religion.

Mr. Ramsaran sees the novel as a "strange mixture of two qualities, the sensual and the spiritual." But the sensual and the spiritual are one in African thinking. It is Clarence the European hero of the novel who separates the two. For Clarence the mixture is strange. He tries to split these forces, until he is redeemed and has learned that there is no split. Unity is not a final synthesis for Laye, it is the original state.

The end of the novel, often misunderstood, means that even the white man in Africa can be redeemed and accepted when he shows his good will to learn and not only to teach. And that Camara Laye in all his lessons does not consider the African way of faith and redemption the only one imaginable and superior. He wants to say that it is the only right way for Africa and that it is of equal value with any other way of mankind.

SYMBOLISM IN "THE RADIANCE OF THE KING"

BY J. A. RAMSARAN

I find Mr. Jahn's interpretation of Camara Laye's novel most interesting though not entirely convincing. His close study of African life obviously gives him an advantage over any reader with no knowledge of African thought. But I would suggest with due deference to his experience of things African that he is perhaps a little uncritical about what he calls "African thinking" when he implies that such a philosophy is common to all Africans and that Monsieur Laye has written a novel the meaning and implications of which he himself was conscious of all the time even before he set pen to paper. When Mr. Jahn says that the book is "ambivalent, even multivalent" I am in perfect agreement with him if he will admit that the ambivalence derives from the author's own search for self-knowledge, his own questionings of both European and African values as they appear to the twentieth century intellectual of either culture; for the African intellectual is as much a "split" personality as his European counterpart, is as much in need of integration on a different level from the unity that obtains, if it does obtain, in the unsophisticated African society.

Camara Laye, sensitive and percipient, has realised with the acuteness of a poet that mankind as a whole is suffering from a spiritual malaise and that a nostalgia for what seems a lost innocence infects the intellectuals of today. *The Radiance of the King* is Monsieur Laye's expression of this awareness in a work which is like all art "multivalent" — it can mean several things the author himself might not have been conscious of when he embarked on the novel; it disturbs, it excites, it holds out some promise of a vision that will explain the mystery of our being; but it does not fulfil that promise. Mr. Jahn seems to think it does, but I am still not sure although his interpretation helps me in the enjoyment of the novel.

GEORGE LAMMING

BY HELMUT GUNTER

In a German newspaper I read an essay of the English writer, Harold Champion, entitled "The West Indies — A Growing Nation". It says: "On the 22nd of April 1958 Princess Margaret opened the first Federal Parliament of the West Indian Federation. On this day a constitution passed into law that closely resembled the previous constitution of the individual islands and even the constitution of Great Britain itself. The islands Jamaica, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Monserrat, Antigua, St. Kitts, Nevis, Anguilla, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Trinidad and Tobago have formed a new state. A long development was needed to achieve this degree of political maturity on the islands." The article gives an exact outline of the political structure of the new state. But nothing is said about the people and their culture. For the author the West Indian Federation is just an English speaking part of the British Commonwealth. In reality this is a state of Indians, Chinese and above all, black people. It is an Afro-American state. The people of these islands have achieved a new spiritual and political confidence. Their culture is already influencing the rest of the world.

The wave of calypso music that has recently swept over the world is only the harbinger of the cultural encounter between the West Indies and the rest of the world. Music and dancing, the most basic and human of all the arts, usually come first. Afro-American culture first effected the western world through jazz, then through Afro-Cuban music, the tango and the rumba. Since 1940 literature from the West Indies is making its mark. At this moment the islands are becoming part of world culture.

One of the most important representatives of West Indian literature is George Lamming, who was born in 1927 on Barbados. He writes in English. English is his mother tongue. He is a film and book critic on the BBC and his novels have appeared with the London publisher Michael Joseph.

English critics see in Lamming a sort of phenomenon. They praise his new vision (which is in reality very ancient), the power of his language, the richness of his poetic imagination. From a European point of view Lamming is indeed something new and strange: both a volcano and a source of lyrical fairy tales, Lamming writes a magnificent English, the kind of English that has not been written since Francis Thompson, whose poem "The Hound of Heaven" he once quotes. But Lamming does not really belong to English literature; but to those Afro-American authors in whom the African spirit has rediscovered itself. Lamming is a product of the highest contemporary education. He has absorbed Faulkner and Sartre. He also knows the French surrealists. But the wealth of his imagery has nothing to do with surrealism. His images have not been stuck together artificially; they form a whole and spring from a common source. The agitated world of Lamming's novels is not the arbitrary, torn world of civilization. In Lamming we find the whole world, and for Lamming the world is a whole. Everything is related to everything else. For Lamming, therefore, there is no such thing as absolute freedom; freedom is ecstasy and bliss; and man's to be part of a whole, to be receptive to the breath of the world.

It is true that Lamming fights against suppression and colonialism, and for

the political and social freedom of his people. He is a rebel and a nationalist. But political freedom is only a means to achieve the great freedom of man as such.

In the novel "Of Age and Innocence" the black writer Mark says:

"Nationalism is not only frenzy and struggle for the destruction of those forces which condemn you to the status we call colonial. The national spirit is deeper than that. It is the private feeling you experience of possessing and being possessed by the whole landscape of the place where you were born, the freedom which helps you to recognise the rhythm of the winds, the silence and aroma of the night, rocks, water, . . . the temper of the sea and the mornings arousing nature everywhere to the silent and sacred communion between you and the roots you have made in this island . . . And the freedom you sing . . . freedom . . ." (Page 174).

Lamming is an important novelist, because he is a modern individual and at the same time lives as part of all things and all forces. African culture has comprehended what is the supreme happiness of man. The basis of African culture is the dance; the mysterious union of ecstasy and form, of ego and world, the experience of the great freedom. Lamming has once described the happiness and freedom of the dance in the following words:

"There was only the body which was the dance itself, regulated, informed, nourished and dictated not only by its blood, but by some pervasive, measureless source of being that was its own logic of receptivity and transmission, a world that could be defined only through the presence of others, yet remained in its definition absolute, free, itself. The body was part of the source of its being and at the same time its being. It was within and outside itself simultaneously. Free, yet subject to the compulsion of its freedom, it strained beyond the limit of its resources." (The Emigrants).

Humanity and love are the powers behind any kind of poetry. That is why Lamming is both rebel and dreamer, politician and poet, like all the great modern African poets. (Césaire and Senghor, for example.) The poet is the voice of world and of man. Politics and poetry are one and the same thing for Lamming. Politics creates the space in which man can be a human being, that is a free being that is in contact with all the forces of the world. Politics without religious and poetic roots is meaningless. But poetry without topical human and social reference is empty. If we separate poetry and politics in the following we merely show two sides of the same thing.

THE THEME: POLITICS.

Lamming's theme is of extraordinary simplicity: It is West Indies and England, black and white. Lamming describes the rise of his people. His novels form a trilogy. In his first book "In the Castle of my Skin" (1953), Lamming describes his childhood: a legendary world, mythical, biblical without a sense of history. On the one side the feudal landlords, on the other the black people who own nothing but the fairy tales, the myths, and the biblical hope:

"Like children under the threat of hell fire they accepted instinctively that the others, meaning the white, were superior . . . This world of the others' imagined perfection hung like a dead weight over their energy. If the low-down nigger people weren't what they are, the others couldn't say anything about us. Suspicion, distrust, hostility."

But already there is lightening on the horizon: unrest, strikes, first political leaders. The War opens the eyes of the black people. Up till then they had been ashamed to be black. But a man who had emigrated to the United States brings home the new message: the message of the great Jamaican M. Garvey who proclaimed the unity of the African peoples. He is the first man on the island who speaks of black men as "My people, the negro race . . ." But he had to emigrate to discover himself.

The second novel, "The Emigrants", describes the mass migration of West Indians to London. They seek their fortune there. They know no hatred against

white people. England is their hope, their dream. Barbados has always been proud to be called "Little England".

Barbados or Little England was the oldest and purest of England's children, and may it always be so. One day before time changed for eternity, Little England and Big England, God's anointed on earth, might hand-in-hand rule this earth... Big England had only to say the word and Little England followed. Big England had the strongest navy, and Little England the best fishermen in this God's world. Together they were mistresses of the sea, and whenever, wherever, the two met on the same side, war or peace, there was bound to be a victory."

England is the big friend, the educator, the helper. The coloured West Indians want nothing but understanding and love. England is their rightful heritage. England, oh England! But England turns out to be the enemy. England, oh England? They live in caves and holes under the ground, but they do not give up their hope. They have ceased to look for England now. They want to discover themselves. What they are really looking for is not merely material fortune, but recognition as human beings. Thus England becomes merely a diversion on the road home; it becomes the school in which they are taught to prove that they are West Indians and want to be West Indians. That is why they don't give up. There is a conversation between the emigrants on the boat. Somebody says:

"West Indies people, whatever island you bring them from, them want to prove something. . . . Me serve in the R.A.F. three years, an' de only thing that West Indians in de R.A.F. dint want to prove, de only thing him feel no need to prove is his capability wid a bottle or a blonde. . . . In everything else, him feelin', him searching. An' if you ask what it is them want to prove the answer sound a stupid answer. Them want to prove that them is themself. Them is West Indians."

Lamming's third novel, "Of Age and Innocence", is located on an island called San Cristobal. The name is invented but the island is real enough. The coloured people on this island, negroes and Indians are fighting for victory. The world has changed radically. The old people, particularly the mothers, are still living in a world of dreams, of legend and the Bible. But the two men who are the real heroes of the book have just returned from England. They have both lost contact with their people. Mark, the black writer, has experienced the isolation and solitude of the modern European. The woman he loves is English. After twenty years of absence he is returning home: and here at last he rediscovers his identity, his objective existence. In the same way Shepherd, who becomes hero and saviour of his people, was driven into politics only by the disappointment of a "white" love. Colonial rule is coming to an end. Its last weapons are terror and murder. Shepherd arouses his people to "a new conception of itself". (p. 85) Now everything is Politics. The individual fate of the various characters is tragic. The last chapters tell of violence and fear, of death and tombs. Shepherd is dead. The bayonets and the tanks rule once more. There is a state of war. But the young generation will continue the fight and the victory is certain.

THE POET AND THE WORLD OF IMAGES

Lamming writes novels, but he is not a novelist in the European sense of the word. Of course he describes an historical world that is fixed in space and time and he has action. In "Of Age and Innocence" he even has a sort of plot. There are quite realistic scenes and discussions, very many in fact. But Lamming is never satisfied to merely tell a story and to copy reality. He does not merely want to report, he wants to conjure the world in words, like a true African. In European terms, Lamming is an epic and a lyrical writer and a novelist all at once. He is an excellent story teller. His books abound with humorous anec-

... and some adventures. He can tell real thrillers with murder and flight. He can also create the individual fate of his various characters with great success. But these individual characters are merely parts of an all embracing knowledge world. That is why the author must again and again break through the framework of realistic prose. Lamming fully masters the technique of the modern novel, but he knows that in this way he can only touch the surface of the world. What he really wants is to conjure the world in its entirety in pictures. In pictures he reveals the unity of the world, the interrelationship of all things. That is why Lamming's language is often heightened into poetry, for example in the description of Paddington Station in London. That is why Lamming's most beautiful characters are the mothers who are still living in myths and images. In the novel "In the Castle of my Skin" there is Ma, the oldest woman on the island. But the most beautiful of all Lamming's characters is that other Ma, the pious mother of the rebel Shepherd. All these women carry on an unhistorical existence being part of the whole. Their language is therefore always poetical and mythical and conjuring in the African sense.

"Their language seemed to give everything the sound of ritual, and there was no end of ritual in San Cristobal." ("Of Age and I. p. 85) Pa and Ma ("In the Castle of my Skin") speak in biblical language about the first leader of the island. Thus says Ma:

"Seems to me you see Yuh salvation in Mr. Slime. He's get a chance to go to Yuh head like rum to a next man's an now you hear the shout you can't think or say nothing that aint bound up with him. But I tell you already, an I 'tell you again, I wont store no riches here on the earth, Pa. I wont store no riches here where we see when we least expecting flood, famine an all the pest' lence that God flict the earth with. It aint no place to store riches, Pa." (Page 87).

Or listen to this old fisherman:

"I enter the ocean at an early age, a strip of a boy beside my father, helpin' to raid the fish of the sea, all class of fish in every kind of sea-water. No fish none of you can name that I din't down with harpoon or hook or haul flyin' in with these said same hands you see here . . . Night and day is two sides of the same coin, one side maybe is heads, the next side maybe tails, but the same coin, an' 'tis the same with every man who chase fish, maybe 'tis nightlight, maybe 'tis daylight, but there's only one time, that's fishing time."

That is the world, the language, the poetry, from which Lamming has come. Even for him, the modern intellectual, the world is still mythical and magical, a world of images and secret relationships. Everything is alive, full of divine power. The boldest example is perhaps in "The Emigrants". There he says of the newly gained freedom of a young colonial:

"I felt this freedom. It was a private and personal acquisition, and I used it as a man uses what is private and personal, like his penis."

For the true poet, who thinks in images and in contexts there is nothing individual, nothing separate. The world is a stream of powers. Lamming does not merely give a series of images, nor does he merely draw on the African mythical world of the mothers, but his novels move on in large general images into which the individual characters have been woven. The progress of time is expressed through the change of images in space. Time is expressed through space. Space and time thus appear as the manifestations of a single living force. Even the human beings, who are acting in this time-space, are cosmic forces, who are endowed with spirit and freedom. But a plot that progresses merely in time, can never exist in Lamming's work. Because a plot dissolves the unity of the world into single actions and moments. Lamming always presents large images. Within these images there is no chronological progression of action.

Always an entire world is presented — the ship, or London, — a world in which everything forms a unity. Even modern London becomes in Lamming's work a magical space, a space in which everything is united by basic links. A separate individual action cannot exist here. The action is jerky. But the unity of space and time is never destroyed. Of course, even in Lamming's novels the different images must succeed each other in time. But that merely follows from the technique to which every writer is subjected. A painter, like Picasso, can represent the different aspects of a subject and a picture simultaneously. The writer must present a sequence of time and space. But Lamming tries again and again to dovetail the different images and scenes in order to create the impression of a uniform, compact world. Past and present overlap. All spaces in the world are simultaneous. Everything is eternal, in the same time and the same space. This is just like the poetry of the great contemporary negro poets, for example Césaire. Everything is ever present. The poet is master of the world and at the same time its smallest part. In Lamming's work, therefore, the political fight in time is "a great and extreme change" but in reality everything amounts to a return to the deepest sources of the world. For the Afro-American writer Lamming, poetry is politics and politics is poetry. That is why he can live simultaneously in the most modern forms of modern civilization, and in the age old myths and images of his Afro-American homeland.



FOUR SPIRITUALS

BY FRANK MARTINUS ARION

transl. from the Dutch by Estelle Debrot

I hear the stampers and rattling gourds
these stampers, this sound
of a hundred feet, these gourds
this tamtam, tamtam, o this tamtam
of these stampers, these stampers
long after my eyes are closed
in the shivering dance of death
these stampers will stamp
grind food, cassavas and corn :
long after my eyes are closed
in the shivering dance of death
these stampers will stamp
I'll stay here, on this beach
I'll stay here, on this beach
Stampers stamp
tamtams tam
gourds rattle
still in the shivers of my death.

I am invited for the feast
soon to take place up there
for the feast in heaven
I am invited
I am invited for the feast
for the feast I am invited
I may sit at the banquet
I may sit at the banquet
for the big feast I am invited
the feast with black angels all around
O I am invited to be a guest
at the feast up there in heaven
but I have lost the invitation
that invitation I have lost
black angels are waiting for me in vain
they wait for me in vain
they await me in vain

I need so very little
so little that counts
to go on living
but before that little
that hardly counts
reaches me from far horizons
I'll have collapsed like a skyscraper
before that little that does not count
is placed into my hands
from the hand of a creature
I'll be a rotting palm
deep in the swamp.

I need so very little
to live in the world that's lost.
but that very little
I'll probably never live to see
I'll remain a guide for others,
who go the way I show
That very little
I'll never live to see.

Believe me I'm made of mischief
my creator is most mischievous
just yesterday I went out
with words to seek
him and his creation
I threw the words up
hard as stones
but today they come clattering
down upon my own head
not even the leaves
have fallen
not even the trees
have been struck with all my words
not even the clouds
not even the winds
they hover over me
clatter down on my head
and become wounds, wounds
Believe me I'm made of mischief
my creator is mischievous.



BOOK REVIEWS

DOWN SECOND AVENUE

by Ezekiel Mphahlele. Faber & Faber, 1959
Price 18/-.

Ezekiel Mphahlele's autobiography is at once a personal anecdote and a social comment, a factual statement and cry from the heart. The thirty seven years of life of one black South African, it is the memoir of an individual and the story of thousands of the stifled coloured people of his country.

Mr. Mphahlele is a writer of considerable ability possessing a fluent ease that makes absorbing reading. He gives a vivid and realistic description of urban South Africa; the vitality of the African slum, the misery of poverty and overcrowding, the brutality of the police and yet in spite of all, the vigour and resilience of the African character are revealed through the incidents of childhood with startling clarity.

"The water trickled down into tin containers. It seemed an age waiting for a four-gallon tin to fill up. More and more people came to wait, the queue got longer, stretching down in snaky fashion. A few of us small boys were also in the queue.

"It trickled into a bucket, or a dish, and the queue grew longer, not able to hear itself any more. You could hear a click of the tongue from the many souls waiting there; a click of helpless disgust and impatience. A pilgrimage at a communal water tap. It was like this in Second Avenue, you knew it must be like that at every communal tap in Marabastad.

"Sometimes the people quarrelled, then they laughed, then they eavesdropped and they gossiped. Some sat on their tins. One or two suckled their babies while they waited. The tins filled up at their own good time.

"Tck, tck, so much water in the seas, but none in Marabastad," said someone. Another tightened her large jaws and clapped her hands and clasped them behind as if to say, 'Wait and despair'. And you knew she had a capacity for waiting.

"Time ran out with the same slow, relentless and painful flow of tap water. If you watched the water long enough, it gave the illusion that it was running out faster. But the illusion soon

passed. We all waited with dry patience. Often I imagined the Leshoana river running down Second Avenue. With more water than we could ever need. I thought of those abundant springs on the mountain side. Sitting on my tin, I might doze off and dream of the torrents of rain in northern Transvaal. Rains that came down with a fierce purpose and made you so wet that you didn't bother to stop to urinate: you just let off while you walked."

Buffeted as he is by the government doctrine of white supremacy, Mphahlele's reaction is emotional and he draws the slights, the humiliations, the terror into himself as a personal hurt too deep to reason with. He cannot detach himself from his experience: he experiences with his emotions and this, coupled with his acute power of observation, his eye for humour and pathos give a hint of an agile creative writer. Aware that in South Africa he was mentally crippled by the fight for survival, he finally departs with his family to West Africa in the search for freedom to think. Born under a different star, Mphahlele would never have taken the political stance into which he was driven, but by virtue of his skin even acquiring an education — which he did with distinction — resolves itself into a political struggle.

The young Ezekiel's story is the individual intimate example which complements the thousands in Father Trevor Huddleston's political and Christian cry of protest "Naught for your Comfort"; he fulfills Father Huddleston's hopes for African youth by his academic prowess, and his fears by abandoning the Christian faith. As a tale of childhood and of a unique society in Africa *Down Second Avenue* makes fascinating reading; as a measure of human beings outraged it cannot fail to move the least committed reader to compassion and a deep and lasting anger and a thankfulness that he was not born into that part of Africa where, by the chance of birth, he is either oppressed or oppressor.

By its personal appeal, the book will reach a wide and general reading public and the author renders a great service to his people in increasing the amount of informed opinion abroad. He is

at the same time becoming an important name in the literary world, and his future work will be anticipated with the greatest interest.

Diana Speed.

THE HIT by Julian Mayfield.

Michael Joseph, 1959. Price 13/6.

By comparison with the negro in Johannesburg, the negro in New York's Harlem lives a paradisaical existence. Nevertheless, in *The Hit*, a light novel written by an American negro about American negroes, a very clear impression of his defensive attitude is given. He anticipates every insult and resists authority in order to defend the honour of his black skin. The plot is of little consequence but the character studies are excellent. The author gets inside the mind of each of his characters in turn and they really live as entities, each with his share of meanness, honesty, selfishness and stoicism brought out not just in a patterned set of actions but in the thinking that takes place during the course of an ordinary working day.

The pathetic little Hubert warped by his obsession to win big money, the silly ineffectual woman on whom he depends to complete his dream and his weary steadfast wife present the state of mind of middle aged existence against which the feckless taxi-driver son and his girl open up a wider, shifting picture of the youth and bustle of city life.

The conflicts and struggles are of a working-class community; the flavour is American rather than negro and the controversies are not of colour but of humanity and the universal personal problems of ordinary people in an urban setting.

"Noon eased itself into the Manhattan streets. The sun hung high over Harlem, and its heat was heavy as a white cloak over the flat roofs and the grey streets. Children sought the coolness of dark basements and dank hallways. The old people sat near their windows and looked with indifference out on to the shimmering streets. Behind the lunch counters brown girls and yellow girls, irritated by the heat and their own perspiration, grouchy served up frankfurters with sauerkraut, hot sausages with mustard and relish and onion, milk shakes, malteds, coffee, and orange juice; served these to impatient clerks and labourers and helpers' helpers, to shoppers, policemen, and hack drivers. Preachers napped and dreamed of churches larger than the Abyssinian. Lawyers

and petty real-estate brokers planned and schemed and gamblers figured. Madame Lawson shuffled her cards, Madame Fatima stared into her silver crystal ball, and turbaned Abdul Ben Said of the ebony skin mumbled an incantation to the black gods of old, and lo! all of them saw glory in the morning if not sooner. There, near the top of Manhattan Island, Harlem sizzled and baked and groaned and rekindled its dream under the midday sun."

It is a book about people and as such it is convincing. It is pleasing to read with many humorous touches, and written in an easy style of English with a minimum of American slang and tough talk.

Mr. Mayfield is already known as actor and playwright but this is his first novel, and published while he is still only thirty years old, shows promise of a bright future.

Diana Speed.

THINGS FALL APART

by Chinua Achebe Heinemann 15/-
"Things Fall Apart" tells of how the new came to replace the old in the village of Umuofia. On the one hand, the Old, with its colour, its deep meaning, its poetry, its immence and its intimate ring; on the other, the inevitable change: the creeping overgrowth of a functional New.

Chinua Achebe's powerful gift of narration brought out the harshness of some of the old usage along with the beauty and charm of the fading traditional way of life.

With equal impartiality and graciousness he described the benefits, as well as the hollowness, of the white man's ways which missionaries and colonial adventurers had offered in place of the old.

There is something refreshingly new in this Achebe's first novel. It is not just another well-written book: a spokesman of the publishers and many of the book's readers consider it the best which has come out of West Africa. It is certainly an intriguing piece of creative work, the full appreciation of the merits of which will only come with time.

The theme of the novel is the kind which, while having a clearly recognizable local setting, breaks loose from its place limits. It is West African; it is African; and yet it is even more universal than that. The Ibo village of the story might well be any village of rural Africa

And the conflicts of cultures are universal and timeless.

The occult forces which are at work in our various communities—the beliefs, fears, social customs, religious rites — all this formed the raw material with which the story is woven.

The flow of the story resembles that of Camara Laye's "The Dark Child". The tenor of the narration is unhurried. One might liken the flow to the running of a river along a gentle undulating African parkland: pleasing but unobtrusive landscape; gurgling wavelets around rocks on the river-bed, but no rapids; surprises here and there, but no promontories of tense excitement. The climax: the emptying of the river into the sea.

A sense of drama is achieved by the interplay of conflicts of interest in terms of human situations and opposing philosophies of life.

The canvas is narrow; and the actors in the story are few; unlike the panoramic canvas and the galaxy of actors in French and Russian novels.

The finely drawn characters in "Things Fall Apart" were done with sympathy and humanity. The reader is made to like and to identify himself with them. The women are tender and graceful; the children sweet; and the male characters are honest to goodness.

Mother-child relationship is intimate, confidential and affectionate. The dialogues between Ezinma and her mother, Ekwefia, are among the loveliest you can find anywhere. Frankly, Ekwefia imparts to Ezinma knowledge about propriety, sex, domestic accomplishments and the world around through folk-lore, proverbs and coded concepts in the form of taboos.

Okonkwo, the central character in the story, has been sharply projected: a gaunt man of title, self-made, proud, violent; a man of action who was the best wrestler in his day. Though tender and kind of heart he thought it unmanly to show soft emotion. He was fearful of failure and spiteful of the weak and the poor such as his father had been before him.

The title of the book was derived from W. B. Yeats' "The Second Coming": ". . . Things fall apart: the centre cannot hold . . ."

The story opened with life in a dynamic and vibrant village — one of seven villages. The cycles of the market week, the farming seasons, the harvest ceremonies, marriage, birth and death rites came and went. The woods and the hills, and the spirits which inhabit them — each

had its apportioned role and place. The ancestral gods interfered little, so long as their biddings were obeyed.

But, this placid life was not to be for longer. The inexorable wheels of Time and Change, harbingered by a white man on "an iron horse", would not let it be. This first visitor with a bleached skin for whom the villagers had an utmost contempt was killed. The visit and the killing were what brought disaster in their train. The rest is present history.

The tragedy of Okonkwo's destruction was but a personification of the collapse of tribal life. He, the man, who carved his own destiny, and whose palm-kernels were not "cracked for him by a benevolent spirit", was hurled to catastrophe as much by his own folly as by the alien forces over which he had no control.

Achebe, again like Camara Laye, is a man of scholarship. He knows and uses English with consummate skill. To this is added an inherited knack for story telling with which Africans are endowed. His language has the ring and rhythm of poetry. At the background of the words can be heard the thrumming syncopation of the sounds of Africa — the gongs, the drums, the castanets and the horns. You can hear the metal gong: gome! gome! gome! and Ekwe, the hollowed-out wooden instrument: go-di-di-go-go-di-go!

The writer lets untranslatable words explain themselves, e.g., obi (a hut, a husband's bedroom, symbol of authority in a village compound), chi (the undying essence of man, the ego, the soul, one's personal fate, all in one).

Proverbs, which according to Ibo, "are the palm-oil with which words are eaten", stand out as gems on a string of beads in Achebe's prose. Of the hankering after the days of youth which old men and women feel on starry nights he quoted an Ibo proverb: "When the moon is shining the cripple becomes hungry for a walk."

Sentences like: "the faint and distant wailing of women settled like a sediment of sorrow on the earth" give one a feeling as when one walks through a cool stream on a hot day. Achebe does not say "when the heat of the sun abated": he says, "when the heat of the sun began to soften." Okonkwo, tired and forlorn, is described as "a drunken giant walking with the limbs of a mosquito."

When comments on the content and the style of the book have been exhausted, its intangible beauty remains. Some may call it the magic;

ashes the halo, the aroma, the charm, or the unassailable quintessence which binds everything together in harmony and unity.

G. Adali Mortty.

THE LION AND THE JEWEL and **THE SWAMP DWELLERS**, two plays by Wole Soyinka performed at the Arts Theatre, University College Ibadan, Nigeria, by the Students Dramatic Society, February 1959.

This first performance of two African plays at University College Ibadan was really an important event in the literary history of West Africa. West Africans have produced quite a few novels so far, and a large number of poets, but all attempts at serious drama, even in the French territories have been rather immature. There has evolved in recent years a tradition of musical plays, mostly in the vernacular, some of them extremely valuable, but there had not been any drama in the Western sense at all. Now here at last is a young West African dramatist of promise.

There may be a lot to criticise in these first two plays, but one feels nevertheless to be in the presence of a born dramatist. Wole Soyinka has an instinct for the stage and the dramatic situation. He can create convincing characters and he has a superb sense of humour. His language has wit and sparkle, and is often poetic.

THE LION AND THE JEWEL is a hilarious comedy about a proud young village girl, Sidi, who is finally brought to fall. Sidi is wooed by the school master, who talks to her of romantic love and other things he considers "civilized" — but all this is lost on Sidi who merely wonders why he has failed to produce the dowry if he is so keen to marry her. His attempts to kiss her she finds repulsive: "I tell you I dislike this strange unhealthy mouthing you perform."

The schoolmaster with his muddled ideas about "civilization" is a tragicomic figure. He does not really know what he is talking about, yet he feels infinitely superior to the "bush" people in the village, to whom he announces the inevitable coming of "progress":

Within a year or two, I swear,
This village shall be civilized.
Bride price shall be a thing forgot
And wives shall take their place by men.
A motor road will pass this spot
And bring the foreign ways to us
The men will dress in city suits
And women paint their lips in red.
No man shall take more wife than one
That's why they're impotent so soon.

The ruler shall possess a car
Or a bicycle at the very least.
We'll burn the forest, cut the trees
Then plant a modern park for lovers.
We'll print newspapers every day
With pictures of seductive girls.
The world will judge our beauty contests

.....
We must be Christian in our lives
Or they will call us primitive.

And so he goes on and on — the only trouble is that nobody will listen to him. He and Sidi talk at cross purposes. Sidi has always been dubious about the schoolmaster's advances. Now she decides to discard him, because her picture, taken by a travelling European, has appeared on a magazine cover. She leaps to sudden fame in the village as a result of this. Even the aged chief, the lion of the village now desires to marry her. But Sadiku, elated by the fame of her beauty spurns him:

Compare my image and your lord's —
An age of difference!
See how the water glistens on my face.
Like the dew moist leaves on a morn of
Harmattan.

But he — his face is like a leather piece
Torn rudely from the saddle of his horse.

.....
I am the twinkle of a jewel
But he is the hindquarters of a lion!

Baroka the chief schemes how to get his own back on her.... but we must not give away the plot. **THE LION AND THE JEWEL** is a very successful play. The author keeps his audience laughing all the way through and he manages to give his plot a number of surprising turns, that keep the audience in suspense. There is no hero and no villain in this play, but all the characters are successfully ridiculed and made fun of.

THE SWAMP DWELLERS is a more ambitious play. While **THE LION AND THE JEWEL** is content with making a humorous comment on village life, the **SWAMP DWELLERS** purports to be a play with a message. Unfortunately the "message" gets swamped half way through the play in a series of confused emotions.

The play is set in the Niger delta and its superb opening scene shows Makuri and Alu an ageing couple. They are worried about their son Igwezu who has just returned from the city, but has gone out to the swamps and keeps late returning. They converse with each other in a nagging tone, but underneath all the bickering a very great affection and attachment are beautifully and subtly suggested. Footsteps are heard, but it is not the son entering, but an

unexpected visitor from the North: a blind beggar. The introduction of the Moslem Hausaman into the world of the swamps is dramatically very effective. He being a complete outsider, can make detached but significant comments on the emotional tie up of the people of the swamp into whose society he has suddenly entered. But this possibility is only sparingly exploited by the author. Instead the beggar is used to introduce some strange symbolism. He is a beggar with a vision of a new life. He is no longer content to live on alms — in fact he queries the age old religious institutions that make him, the afflicted, a sacred person. He has decided to become a farmer, he believes that his suffering hands have acquired a special power to wring life from the soil. So he has wandered from the far North, following the river. Now he has reached the end of his journey. He has reached the swamps, no man can go beyond this point. So here he must settle and start his new life. The blind beggar is an impressive figure, in his earnest insistence on his "new life". But unfortunately his ideas do not prove very relevant to the plot of the play.

A far less successful character is Igwezu, the son. Igwezu has returned from the city, where he has been pursued by bad luck. He lost his money and his wife, who has been seduced by his own twin brother, who is a successful businessman and pitiless towards his brother. In desperation he has borrowed money from his wicked brother, giving as security the harvest of his farm in his native village. He comes home to claim his crop — but discovers that the rains have destroyed all the crops that year. Igwezu indulges in a lot of sentimental, self-pitying talk, about the wickedness and loneliness of town life. But all his hatred is suddenly turned against the village priest the "Kadiye". With a somewhat primitive logic he reasons that the Kadiye has let him down. Did he not bring all the sacrifices, as prescribed by the priest to the "Great Serpent" the deity of the swamps? Why then did the rains not stop? Is it not because the Kadiye was corrupt, and fattened himself on the sacrifices? The Kadiye finally appears to announce that the rains have finally stopped and that he can now have his beard shaved off at last; for he had vowed not to shave until the floods subsided. Igwezu is asked to shave the Kadiye. Razor in hand he now insults the priest in a rather melodramatic scene. He reproaches him as being an impostor and

he threatens to kill him. The priest is finally released and he retreats cursing. Igwezu draws the conclusion that he can no longer live in the village. He must return to the city, even if life there is hard and corrupt, it is his life. The beggar wishes to follow him, but is told to stay behind and look after the farm.

The clash between Igwezu and the Kadiye seems to stand for the conflict between city and village life, between "progress" and "tradition". But the author has deflated the potential dramatic situation by turning the Kadiye into a grotesque caricature of a priest — the only clown in a group of deadly serious characters. By exposing the Kadiye, therefore, Igwezu has proved nothing — except that the village needs another Kadiye. If Igwezu had returned from the city to find the traditions of his village completely intact, if he had found the Kadiye a sincere man, who interpreted the ancient myths that explain man's relationship to the divine forces of the universe — then there would have been a genuine conflict situation. Because however great the wisdom and the beauty of the Kadiye's world might be, it would no longer be acceptable to Igwezu.

But instead of giving us a confrontation of two ways of life, the author has given us a sentimental hero and a grotesque villain, thus turning his poetic play into a melodrama.

Tribute must be paid to the performances of the students of University College Ibadan, who fully rose to the occasion. These were the best students' performances seen so far in the University. Geoffrey Axworthy's production did full justice to the poetic possibilities of THE SWAMP DWELLERS, and succeeded in creating a truly enchanting atmosphere.

Sangodare Akanji.

TO SIR, WITH LOVE, by E. R. Braithwaite 1959

This charming book about a school in the East End of London, is written by a negro from British Guyana. Mr. Braithwaite describes how he drifted into teaching not because of a sense of vocation, but because of the necessity of finding a job. Though he is a trained scientist, no industry seemed willing to employ a coloured man immediately after the war. To the author this discrimination came as a great shock. Like most West Indians he had believed all his life in the "British way of life" and had come to look upon England as his home. His war service in the Royal Air Force had left his ideals completely intact. People seemed to see only his

uniform and not the colour of his skin during those days. Then, when he was demobilized, everything seemed to change. Firms badly in need of qualified men refused to employ him. Landladies looking for lodgers pretended their rooms had already been taken. There were little insults in buses, in restaurants — people seemed quite unpredictable. Confused and embittered he came to the conclusion that "all the big talk of democracy and human rights seemed as spurious as the glib guarantee with which some manufacturers underwrite their products in the confident hope that they will never be challenged."

But Mr. Braithwaite never allows bitterness to get the better of him. He has far too human and warm a personality, and his whole attitude to life is much too positive. Moreover, in spite of his disappointments his belief in traditional British values remains unshaken.

Having tried in vain to find a job in his own profession, he is finally persuaded to become a teacher. He is employed by the LCC and his first assignment is a school in the East End of London. It is a tough job, even for an experienced teacher. The children have a very low academic standard. They come from unstable homes and they are aggressive and tend towards delinquency. The author is at first bewildered by the school and the children. He brings with him very "British" and middle class attitudes. He has very rigid ideas of what is "proper" and "respectable". And naturally he is at first shocked by the children. But his humanity is always stronger than his attitudes and soon he begins to understand these children and to love them. He becomes completely involved in his new job. While at first he had started to teach merely to earn a living, teaching and the children now become the contents of his life. His description of how he slowly gains the children's confidence and affection makes fascinating reading and is most touching.

Mr. Braithwaite is an excellent storyteller. His language has neither the powerful individualism of Lamming, nor the colourful charm of Selvon, but he certainly knows how to bring his characters to life. Right from the first page one is enchanted—his description of a group of cockney charwomen in a London bus is a real gem. The teachers and above all the children are drawn with great sympathy and understanding. Every single character of the book is convincing. But the most likeable of the all the

characters that emerge of the autobiographical novel is that of the author himself: very sincere, full of sympathy and enthusiasm, and irresistibly charming.

Sangodare Akanji.

ONE MAN ONE WIFE by T. M. Aluko
Nigerian Printing and Publishing Co. Lagos 1959

In a country that has only produced two novels the arrival of the third is indeed a great event. In this case it is particularly exciting, because it is the first novel published by a Nigerian publisher! It is unfortunate, therefore, that the novel is extremely disappointing.

The book describes the conflict between Christians and "heathens" in a Yoruba village community. The story is packed with incident and action. There are marriages and divorces and abductions. Court cases, violence, disease. Somebody is struck dead by thunder, people die of small-pox, one man turns mad. The only connecting link in all this confusion of action is the struggle of the Christians to assert themselves in a community that is "steeped in the worship of streams and tree." In the end one of the characters, Jacob, becomes a prophet and reveals to the villagers his vision of the new life. Through him Christ finally triumphs over the "idol worshippers".

The author leaves us in no doubt where his sympathies lie. Any reference to traditional religion is clothed in abusive language! The Shango priest is said to put on his "juju apron". The worshippers sing "weird" songs. The priest of Shonponna is carrying on a "weird and unintelligible one way conversation with Shonponna." Yoruba religion is defined as the "worship of idols and trees". The chief is described as an "indolent old potentate". Marriage is defined as the "purchase of a woman", while the purpose of marriage is alleged to be the satisfaction of the "cravings of the flesh". The most sensationalist European traveller could not have used more abusive language to describe what is after all one of the greatest cultures of West Africa.

Mr. Aluko's harangue against the "pagans" is based on complete ignorance of the facts. He uses imperialist vocabulary, like "juju" and "idol". These words have no descriptive value at all, they have no meaning in Yoruba religion, they should in fact be scrapped from the West African vocabulary.

It is easy to prove Mr. Aluko wrong on a number of details. Shango is *not* the Yoruba

creator God, as is suggested once. When thunder strikes, people do not call out "Shango" but "Kabiyesi!" Completely absurd is the statement: "The God Shango hated familiarity, even in his own priests." If the author had ever attended a Sango ceremony he would have seen a great deal of familiarity. One laughs with Shango; one drinks with him; one can even abuse him. I have often heard some old women say something like this: "You ragged old fellow; I am angry with you. You have not given me another child as I asked you. I am going to find myself a new husband. What shall I do with an old fellow like you!" Such joking abuse is common, particularly in Shango worship. But Mr. Aluko has obviously never attended a Yoruba ceremony. In his book he describes church services and revival meetings, but we are not shown a single Yoruba ceremony. Shango is abused; but we do not see his priests dancing and performing their incredible tricks on the market place. We are not shown a single throwing of kola nuts, we do not experience a single sacrifice. In fact the author once refers to the "slaughtering of dogs" to Ogun. Yorubas never slaughter anything! Not even a chicken can be killed just to fill one's belly! The spilling of blood is always a serious thing, and cannot be undertaken lightheartedly. Only Christians slaughter. A so-called "pagan" can only sacrifice. The author is equally wrong in his interpretation of Shonponna. A patient stricken by smallpox is told by the priest "Confess your sins, what have you done to incur the displeasure of Shonponna?" The word "sin" is singularly inappropriate here! Besides the author does not realise that the stricken patient is being honoured for his disease. He carries the God in him. And he is also believed to divert other misfortune from the community. How little the author knows about the Yoruba *orisha* can be seen from the fact, that while his book is literally studded with Christian songs and hymns, there is not a single praise name of Shango; not a single song for Shonponna quoted.

We hear nothing at all about the complex relationship of the Yoruba gods to morality; and the role of the cult in integrating the human personality is completely ignored. One suspects that all the author knows about Yoruba religion are the wild denunciations that were pronounced from the pulpit of his village church when he was a little boy.

One might be more willing to forgive the author for misrepresenting Yoruba religion, if he had given us at least an impressive picture of Christianity. But the Christianity preached by Mr. Aluko's heroes is of a rather objectionable kind. The chief argument against "heathenism" is this: "Why follow a god who has no power to save you from the scourge of small-pox?" It is unfortunately true that many missionaries use such *rational* arguments against Yoruba religion; do they not realise that this is an argument against *any* religion, including Christianity?

The vision of the new life given by the prophet at the end of the book is particularly objectionable:

"I see people casting their idols into the flames and turn their backs against their sordid past." (sic!)

"I see the pupils teach their parents what Teacher teaches them at school — that guineaworm comes of bad water and tapeworm of bad meat, that dirt is the great enemy in the home and that cleanliness is of God and is second to Godliness."

In this blasphemous statement the gospel has been confused with hygiene and the prophet is not a prophet of Christ but a prophet of disinfection!

Unfortunately the language of the novel has little to recommend it. It is full of clichés: like "to drink from the fountain of knowledge". Often the language is ridiculously incongruous. The wrapper of a Yoruba woman is described as a "sarong". The great God of thunder is addressed as "Shango m'Lord". Sometimes the language becomes downright ridiculous. The following passage is the beginning of a fairy tale, told by an illiterate Yoruba girl in Chapter 2. (The italics are mine):

"Nikun was the most beautiful *damsel* on earth. Her hair was of black *silk*; her teeth were as white as *snow* and looked like *pearls*."

In the whole book there is only one character that sticks in the mind. That is Royasin, the village schoolmaster, who is disgraced and dismissed and sets himself up as a letter writer. Royasin who renames himself Royanson in his new profession is a full blooded character, drawn with a kind of humorous indulgence. His stilted language is beautifully imitated by the author. This character indicates that there is a lot more to Mr. Aluko than this present novel indicates. One can look forward to better work from this author. But this time he set out to write a

novel about the conflict of cultures in an African village; but instead of a novel his book has become an harangue that ends with a sermon.

Ulli Beier

I WAS A SAVAGE by Prince Modupe
Museum Press, London, 1958

The title of this book is meant to be ironical. The author, describing his childhood in Guinée, tries to show that life in the Sousou community does in fact make sense, and that it is anything but savage. He claims to be the son of a Yoruba trader and a Sousou princess.

The book describes his childhood, life in the Sousou family, marriage, religious ceremonies, initiation schools, the coming of the missionaries, the author's experiences in a mission school and finally his leaving for America. One thinks immediately of Camara Laye's "The Dark Child", which is also the description of a childhood in Guinée. But the difference in the two books is immense. Camara Laye's book is delightful, not because he gives us a lot of anthropological information, but because it abounds in vividly remembered detail. Camara Laye does not pretend to "understand" all the things he remembers. He makes no attempt to analyse some of the stranger things he remembers. But he is able to recreate a number of people and incidents for us. His father smelting gold, his mother beating a snake to pulp, his own fear on the eve of the initiation school — these things are quite unforgettable. In "I was a Savage" on the other hand no incident and character really comes to life. The author "knows" about the things he writes about, but he does not "see" them. Sometimes his analysis of a religious ceremony is interesting and convincing:

Deeply felt silences may be said to be the core of our Kofon Religion. During these times, the nature within ourselves found unity with the nature of earth. This is not "closeness to nature" but rather an immersion in the common nature which pervades all life — plants, animal, human.

But nothing in this book seems to be told from personal experience, everything is based on a knowledge of facts. The author wrote this after thirty six years in America. He was away for too long to be able to conjure up the vision of his home. The result is a book that could have been written by a European anthropologist making up a "typical" story of a Sousou youth. This book could have been compiled even without first hand knowledge of the Sousou people.

merely from book knowledge. If this book was really written by an African (which seems doubtful) he must have supplemented his weak memory with knowledge gained from books. Just listen to this:

"Since I cannot begin to relate the marvellous things which I saw our medicine men achieve (that would be an entire book in itself), I will mention only one, I have chosen it, not because it is greater than any of the other discoveries, but because it is well documented in the writings of several white doctors who have lived in Africa."
(italics are mine)

In spite of all this the book is quite acceptable and often interesting up to the point where the author describes the coming of the first missionaries. This chapter seems to be invented from beginning to end! I sympathise with the author's disapproval of missionary techniques, but I find it difficult to believe that the missionaries converted his native village by making everybody drunk on whisky. He further wants us to believe that the people of his village had never seen any white being before:

"There were a few other white or nearly white things in our lives — cotton, white chicken, white cola, grubs in rotten stumps, white ants . . . but a white human was beyond simple imagining."

This is an incredible statement, because albinos are so very common in West Africa, that the author must have seen many humans who were much whiter than the missionaries. We are furthermore supposed to believe that the author mistook the blond hair of the missionary's daughter for real gold ("she must have been immensely wealthy to have goldstuff for hair") and that he scooped up a bit of the missionaries' spittle and swallowed it in order to gain some of his power!

It is significant for this book that where the author tries to give a description of remembered incidents (as above) it is extremely poor and sometimes completely incredible. But when he gives a reasoned and considered opinion, that is not necessarily based on personal experience, he is quite intelligent.

It is impossible to accept Prince Modupe's description of the arrival of the missionaries, but there is much sense in many of the things he says about missionaries later. For example

"Why was every good act held to be exclusively Christian even when it had a counterpart in tribal life? All tribal things were denounced as bad — "the bad old ways." Confusion sat on me. If the teacher had said, "A Christian treats all men, everywhere, as though they were members of his own tribe," that would have made clear sense.

I would have gained some concept of the Christian ideal.

Parts of this book could have been turned into an excellent article but as a biographical sketch of the author's childhood it is a failure.

U.B.

DARKNESS AND LIGHT: compiled and edited by Peggy Rutherford Faith Press, London & Drum Publications, Johannesburg. 18s.

It is a disturbing commentary on our aesthetics that a great many people still come to our continent with either an exaggerated sense of mission or an excessive love of the exotic for its own sake. *Darkness and Light* is a victim of the latter.

The thing that strikes the reader most in this anthology of African writing is the volume of antiques that have crowded out a good deal of creative literature which might have represented the multi-coloured tapestry that is our continent. Indeed Mrs. Peggy Rutherford, the compiler, makes us suspect that she supplies so much legend, myth and ancient African wisdom — good in themselves — as an apology for the all too little creative stuff she exhibits. But not even her rhapsodies about African storytelling which preface the anthology can conceal the paucity of the writing.

The prose and verse here represent South, Central, East and West African writers. Perhaps if the compiler had arranged her material not according to geographical divisions from which it came, but according to content or tone or intention or an aggregate of these, she would have had something better to offer. Such critical sifting would have got rid of a good deal of the rhetoric and versification which we find. She would have brought down to a minimum the statuesque pieces — to only that quantity which helps us to appreciate the bearings (if any) of tradition on our creative writing.

As it is, we find ourselves pleasurably jolted by such imagery as, "The gate of polished reed closes behind them, / And the west is let in" — from a Central African poem by James D. Rubadri about the explorer Stanley's reception. We are kept buoyed up by the Madagassy, Jacques Rabemananjara; by David Diop's lament,

"My women crushed their painted mouths
On the thin hard lips of the steel-eyed conquerors
And my children quit their peaceful nakedness
Donning the uniform of iron and bloodshed".

We are delightfully entertained by the Guinean Camara Laye's light hearted short story of the stolen jacket; by the South African William Modisane's satire about the beggar, and by Abiosch Nicol's ably-handled character sketch, *The Devil at Yolahun Bridge*. And then we feel terribly let down by such prose as the following, from a piece by Oscar Ribas:

"Like glow-worms in the fastness of night doubt: stabbed the fog of sadness. Alas, who knows whether they will come back? How many mothers will be bereft of their sons, how many wives without their husbands? How much joy, how much sorrow, will the separation bring? Will they be happy in those lands of fever? Will they find work there, riches and dignity? God would surely help them in their desires? Another siren is heard. The air weeps; love weeps within the heart. Handkerchiefs flutter more anxiously still, waving 'Farewell! Farewell!' Now, those who remain hold council with themselves. Grief is swallowed into the deep distance".

The sentimentality and pretentiousness in this piece make for its bad tone. There is too much of this kind of prose chaff and space is wasted by the inclusion of sheer folk-like versification. e.g. "*The Water Seeker*:"

"She descends
with clumsy care,
catching
time and again
with one hand
one the aloe leaves
smooth and pointed,
with the other
she holds the earthen pitcher...."

What a pity to represent Léopold Sédar Senghor by the Congo poem. Of course, phrases like "queen of tamed Africa" that have come to characterise the cinema handbill cannot escape the compiler who looks for the exotic — in the derogatory sense of the term.

There is a good deal of better writing from South Africa — some dating as far back as 1880 — than Can Temba's magazine potboiler with its theatrical characters. There is simply no point in including Francis Oluka's sketch, *The Return of the Soldier*: it says nothing.

It is regrettable that Mrs. Rutherford traversed so many miles of African soil, collected, as she tells us, much more material than she cared to use, only to bring us so many echoes and such few genuine voices, so much lumber and so few evergreens.

Ezekiel Mphahlele.

"O PAYS MON BEAU PEUPLE"

by Sembene Ousmane (Amiot Dumont, Paris)

The novel in French West Africa has often been used as an instrument against colonialism. The great Cameroonian writers Oyono and Beti have tried to explode the myth of "France Outre Mère" in their books, but none has shown as violent hatred of the white man as Sembene Ousmane. This book is about an African who has served in the French army during the great war and returns to his home in Senegal with a white wife. The book sets out to describe the difficulties the hero encounters with his own people, who object to his European wife and look with suspicion on the new way of life he is trying to introduce. It also attempts to show the conflict between the hero Faye, and the white rulers of the country, who think that he is undermining their position of prestige by living with a white woman. Faye himself is described as a rather Europeanised character:

In many ways Faye had adopted the way of thinking and the reactions of white people, while his innermost being had preserved the heritage of his people. During the years he had stayed in Europe, he had seen and learned much. Many changes had taken place in him and he had even arrived at a point where he could look critically at his own race.

Whatever the author means by saying that he preserved the heritage of his people in his innermost being, is difficult to say. For Sembene Ousmane does not show us much in his hero that is African. He has pride in being an African, but his way of thinking is completely European. He returns from Europe with ideas of self-help, and a kind of pioneering spirit. Although he comes from a fisher-man's family he starts a kind of model farm, to set an example to his country men and he gathers around him the young people of the area with whom he discusses progressive ideas.

His family look with suspicion on his activities, particularly his father who is a Moslem preacher and resents the fact that his son avoids the mosque. He is bitterly opposed to the European wife of Faye.

Tell me, how are you going to live here? Are you going to eat corn? Will your wife carry water? Will she pound millet or will you have to do it yourself? In these coming days you will not be able to eat at our table, because we only have one type of food and one bowl for all. If she does not despise us too much, do you think she might dip her white hand into our bowl . . .

The conflict with the family is convincingly described by the author. The lack of under-

standing between father and son, the emotional opposition of the mother, whose sympathy is finally won when she learns that the white woman is going to bear a child to her son, these are among the best things in the book. There are some interesting glimpses we catch of the traditional life in the authors home, although clearly he has no sympathy at all with the past and everything that represents it. Islam is to him just an obstacle to progress and when he describes a local chief, the representative of the old way of life, his hatred and contempt are unconcealed:

The king was a man who could only live sitting down. His loins were hidden in a mass of flesh that was oozing out in all directions. To make things worse his neck was hidden between a tiny head and an enormous belly, that was disfigured by navel rupture. When Umar saw him, he asked himself whether this man was capable of thinking at all. He squatted on a clumsily carved stool. A loincloth that covered his nakedness, partly disappeared in the folds of his body.

The author is even less convincing in his handling of the conflict between Faye and the white people in the colony. We can understand the hero's pride only too well. What he resents most, is the fact that the European only appreciates an African when he imitates the European:

Sometimes they ask you: "Where did you learn your French? How is it that you speak it so well?" He believes immediately that it is the civilization of the white man that has made you a useful person; only because of it you are able to react, to judge, even to feel — and so they regard you as their creation.

It is also clear that Faye, having a white wife, will suffer more from the hostility of colonialists than other people. In addition they begin to fear him, because he becomes a more and more important man in the local community and the farmers begin to look on him as their leader. Already they begin to sell their crops to him, rather than to the big European trading houses and Faye seems to dream of some large co-operative movement that will break the foreign trade monopolies.

One might well believe that the foreign traders would attempt to wreck Faye financially, but the author resolves the conflict between the progressive African and the Europeans who try to keep him down into a Wild West type of violence. In the very opening scene of the novel super-man Faye punches a white man into submission and on the next occasion he successfully fights the entire crew of a ship single handed!

His sense of justice is so strong, that he uses his fists whenever he sees injustice or exploitation, and needless to say, he always floors his opponent. The white victims of his fury try to retaliate at first by attempting to violate his wife. Finally they manage to hire some Africans who attack Faye in the night and kill him.

The improbability of all these scenes make it impossible for us to accept Faye as a martyr. The author thinks of Faye as a tragic hero. Although he is killed in the end, his spirit lingers on and the work he began is continued by his people. Unfortunately this ending falls rather flat. One feels that the conflict between Faye and the colonialists would have taken a rather more subtle form — which does mean that it would have been less dangerous.

This cannot be called a successful novel, taken all in all. But there is much in it that is worth our attention and the author shows ability and promise. We look forward to see his future, more balanced work.

U.B.

MUNTU by Janheinz Jahn

Eugen Diederichs 1958.

There are those who believe that the impact of Western technology will completely destroy all African cultures and that the final result will be a new Africa that is completely assimilated to European life and have lost its identity completely. Mr. Jahn in this study of neo-African culture suggests on the other hand, that the result of the culture conflict will be a third culture, a neo-African culture, that derives equally from European thinking and from traditional African philosophy. He sees the beginnings of such a culture in the writings of the great African and Afro-American writers like Senghor and Césaire, all of whom still embody certain elements of traditional African culture. Mr. Jahn asserts that African culture did in fact form a unity with certain distinct common traits. He sets out to prove this, by analysing Alexis Kagame's famous study of Bantou philosophy and then trying to show that many of Kagame's findings in Ruanda Urundu could equally be applied in other parts of Africa. He investigates traditional African religion, music, art and literature in order to find the common denominator and then goes on to show to what extent these basic elements helped to create what he defines as neo-African culture. This book will find few friends among anthropologists and ethnographers, who have been stress-

ing more and more the differences between individual cultures, rather than their common elements. They feel on the whole, that there is such a rich variety of patterns in African communities that only a highly specialised study can hope to penetrate into the spirit of these cultures. Since Frobenius, the great theories that try to build everything into one big imposing picture have become suspect. Yet here such an attempt has been made again, once again by a German writer, and the result is certainly intriguing. Undoubtedly a book that is trying to comprehend the entirety of African cultural manifestations on two continents is bound to contain errors in details, and is bound to dissent facts in order to fit them into the general patterns of the theory. On the other hand such a study, in what might be called "the grand manner" opens up many new vistas, that would remain closed to the anthropologist who loses himself in a lot of detail. And it cannot be denied that Mr. Jahn's juxtaposition of the most heterogeneous African cultures, and their classification and definition with the help of Bantu terminology derived from Kagame, shows up surprising relationships and similarities. His method sheds a great deal of light on the vast number of monographs and detailed studies that exist in the field of African studies.

More important than to the Africanist and anthropologist is this book to the young African nationalist. For the last fifteen years or so we have been talking a lot about the African personality, without being very sure what we mean by it. At the basis of it was a rejection of the increasing tendency to assimilate European culture, and a desire to discover African values and African culture — whatever they might be. But those of us who believed that some of our traditions should be preserved as a kind of anecdote to the overwhelming influx of European culture were often denounced as "tribalists" by our brothers.

Now here Mr. Jahn in his book "Muntu" offers a solution: a neo-African culture which is inspired by the common elements in our traditions.

There is no doubt that this is an extremely controversial book and that many of Mr. Jahn's ideas and theories are open to attack. The experts will tear it to pieces, but it will remain an important pioneering work.

Omidiji Aragbalu.

OTHER PUBLICATIONS BY THE GENERAL PUBLICATIONS SECTION
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, IBADAN, NIGERIA :

YORUBA POETRY

A collection of traditional Yoruba poems in English translation. Including examples of Ijala, the poetry of hunters; Iwi, the poetry of maskeraders; Odu, the poetry of the oracle and Oriki, the praise names of gods and kings. Collected and translated by Bakare Gbadamosi and Ulli Beier. With eight screen prints and ten vignettes by Susanne Wenger.

ODU

A JOURNAL OF YORUBA AND RELATED STUDIES
edited by Dr. S. O. Biobaku and Ulli Beier

Nr. 7 contains articles on Yoruba drumming, the dances of the Western Ibes, the ancient wall of Ijebu Ode, the Okosi festival at Epe, and the Yoruba attitude to dogs.

With line drawings by D. D. Simmonds.

A NEW PUBLICATION BY THE YORUBA HISTORICAL RESEARCH SCHEME,
IBADAN

OLOKUN

Edited by A. Akinjogbin.

A literary journal in Yoruba.

Olokun contains Yoruba short stories, poems, folk lore articles and criticism.

It is the first journal of its kind.

No. 1 out December 1959.

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

FRANK MARTINUS ARION

was born in Curacao in 1936, the biggest of six islands that form the Netherlands Antilles. His parents are descendants of negro slaves that were imported in the 17th century. At the moment he is a student in Germanic languages, (Dutch) at the University of Leyden, Holland. He published an allegorical play in papiament entitled "Three Antillian Pearls," (1956) A collection of poems written in Dutch is entitled: "Stemmen van Afrika."

MALLAM AMADOU HAMPATE BA

is widely known in French West Africa as "the sage of Bamako". He is a leading Moslem theologian as well as an authority on traditional African religions. (Fulani and Bambara.) He worked many years for IFAN, but is now in charge of cultural programmes of Radio Bamako. He adapted the Fulani language to Arabic script. He published many books, the most important being: "The History of the Peulh Empire of Macina" and a biographical work: "Tierno Bokar — the Sage of Bandiagara."

LEON DAMAS

born 1912 in Cayenne, French Guayana. Now lives in Paris. Published the following works: "Figments" GLM Paris 1937; "Retour de Guayane" Jose Corti, Paris 1938; "Veilles Noires", Stock, Paris 1944; "Poèmes nègres sur des airs africains", GLM, Paris 1948; "Graffiti", Collection PS Pierre Segners, Paris 1952, "Black Label", Gallinard, Paris 1956.

HELMUT GUNTER

professor of literature at a girls secondary school in Germany. Writes literary criticism.

EUGENE ADOLPHE JAMES

born 1928, St. Martin, West Indies. Now living in the Netherlands. Has published poems and stories in magazines. Two of his poems appeared in the Dutch Anthology "Dichters van Morgen".

COVER DESIGN

by Susanne Wenger after a Senufo mask.

MANUSCRIPTS

the editors will be pleased to consider poetry, prose fiction and criticism for publication in Black Orpheus. Manuscripts can be sent to: Ulli Beier, P.O.B. 68, OSHOGBO, NIGERIA or Janheinz Jahn, Hospitalstrasse 8, OFFENBACH, Main, GERMANY.



BLACK ORPHEUS is published by the General Publications Section,
Ministry of Education, Ibadan, Nigeria
And printed by the Nigerian Printing and Publishing Co. Lagos-03463/59.

AMERICAN SOCIETY OF AFRICAN CULTURE
P. M. B. 2814
4/6 OIL MILL STREET
LAGOS

BLACK ORPHEUS



A JOURNAL OF AFRICAN AND AFRO-AMERICAN LITERATURE

A JOURNAL OF AFRICAN AND AFRO-AMERICAN LITERATURE
BLACK ORPHEUS COMMITTEE: Geormbeeyi Adali-Mortty, Marcelino Arozarena,
Adeboye Babalola, Aimé Césaire, Léon Damas, M. F. Dei-Anang, J. Jahn
J. A. Ramsaran, Léopold Sedar Senghor, Paul Vesey.
EDITORS: Ezekiel Mphahlele, Wole Soyinka and
Ulli Beier.

BLACK ORPHEUS is published by the General Publications Section
Ministry of Education, Ibadan, Nigeria.

Printed by the Times Press, Kakawa Street, Lagos - W/T5065/60.

CONTENTS

No. 7 June 60.

		Page
HICCUPS	Léon Damas	4
RUMBA	Jose Zacharias Tallet	6
THE NAME	Nicholas Guillen	8
EAST INDIANS AND WEST	Gerald Moore	11
SOUZA	Omidiji Aragbabalu	16
A GLASS OF WINE	Alex la Guma	22
ANANCY	Andrew Salkey	26
OBATALA		
5 Myths about the Yoruba Creator God	Ulli Beier	34
Note on Susanne Wenger's Exhibition in Lagos	Sangodare Akanji	
SIX POEMS	Mason Jordan Mason	36
DRUMS AND VOICES	Cyprian Ekwensi	40
DEVELOPMENT OF THE LITERARY IDIOM IN HAITI	Miriam Koshland	46
SIX POEMS FROM HAITI	George Castera, Roland Dorcelay, Carl Brouard, Gerard Daumec and Jacques le Noir	57
BOOK REVIEWS		61



BY LEON DAMAS

In vain I swallow
three or four times daily
seven mouthfuls of water
yet my childhood comes up in hiccups
and shakes my instinct
like a policeman a ruffian

Catastrophe

tell me about the catastrophe
tell me how

My mother wanted a son with good table manners
hands on the table
the bread is not to be cut
the bread is to be broken
the bread of the Lord is not to be wasted
the bread of the sweat of your father's brow
the bread of bread

A bone has to be gnawed with moderation and restraint

the stomach must be content with little

a moderate stomach behaves and does not belch

a fork is not a toothpick

one does not blow one's nose

in front of everybody

and then keep upright

do not wipe the plate with your nose

and then and then

and then in the name of the father

of the son

of the holy ghost

at the end of the meal

and then and then

and then the catastrophe

talk to me about the catastrophe

tell me how

My mother wanted a well trained son

if you don't learn your history lesson

you shall not go to mass on Sunday

your behaviour on Sunday

this child is a disgrace to the family

this child in the name of God

be quiet

did I not tell you to speak French
French as in France
the French of French people
real French French

Catastrophe

tell me about the catastrophe
tell me how

My mother wanted a son a son of her mother
you did not greet the neighbour
again your shoes are full of dirt
and if I catch you again in the street
in the bush or in the savannah
in the shadow of the war memorial
and you are playing there
and you are romping about with one
with one who has not been baptised

Catastrophe

tell me about the catastrophe
tell me how

My mother wanted a son
really do
really mi
really fa
really sol
really si
really do
re-mi-fa
so-la-si
do

And now I must hear you absconded again
from your violin lesson
a banjo
are you saying a banjo
what do you say
a banjo you really say banjo
no my dear
you must know that we suffer
neither ban
nor jo
neither gui
nor tar
a mulatto does not do that sort of thing
you leave that to the negroes

translated by S. Akanji.



BY JOSE ZACARIAS TALLET

Zumba, mamá, la rumba y tambó!
Mabimba, mabomba, mabomba y bombó!
Buzzing mamá, dances rumba to the drum,
Mabimba, mabomba mabomba y mabum!
Zumba mamá, la rumba y tambó!
Mabimba, mabomba, mabomba y bombó!
She dances the rumba the blackish Tomasa,
He dances the rumba Jose Encarnación!
She's rolling her right hip, she's rolling her left hip
He turns and he squats and he jerks his behind
He pushes his belly he bows and he marches
on one of his heels, and one drags behind.
Chaqui, chaqui, chaqui, Charaqui,
Chaqui, chaqui, chaqui, Charaqui!
The powerful hips of the black girl Tomasa
are turning around an invisible axis
like a spinning top that is spinning in rage
they provoke with ecstatic and maddening rhythm
the lecherous grip of Ché Encarnación;
this wooden puppet, her body erect
her chest leans backwards, and now to the front
her belly and legs and arms bent at angles,
her leaps are precise like her jerking behind;
the hunting begins!
Change your step, Cheché, change your step!
Change your step, Cheché, change your step!
The blackish Tomasa with lecherous gesture
she tears back her hips and she lifts up her head
she jerks up her arms, she is folding her hands,
and in them is resting her ebony neck.
She boldly exposes her ball like breasts
they tremble to the left, and they tremble to the right
they gleam, they are dazzling Ché Encarnación.
Chaqui, chaqui, chaqui, charaqui!
Chaqui, chaqui, chaqui, charaqui!
The maddened negro now bends down to leap
the silken kerchief he holds in his hands
and now he will mark the blackish Tomasa
who provokes him with daring breasts and behind.

Now he is wild and he's flinging his cloth,
"Now!" cries the black one (his eyes are like coals
his voice is breaking and there is a devil
that seems to possess Ché Encarnasion).
The dancing Tomasa avoids his stroke,
and with mocking voice the black one cries "No!"
and boldly she moves and is shaking her buttocks
before the frustrated Ché Encarnasion.

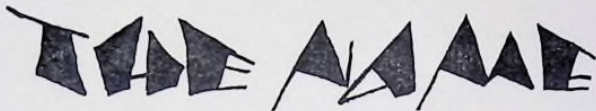
Whirling drum sticks
and sounding percussion,
rumbling drums,
and thundering Bongó.

Ché Encarnasion is swinging around,
He bends to the ground, he stands on one leg,
and the girl Tomasa is loosening her limbs;
and there is smell of jungle,
and smell of crows,
and smell of women,
and smell of men,
and smell of town slums,
and smell of country shacks.
And the two heads are coconuts
on which someone has written in chalk
a colon on top and a dash below.
And the bodies of the two negroes
Are now two mirrors of sweat.

Whirling drumsticks
and sounding percussion,
rumbling drums,
and thundering Bongó.

Chaqui, chaqui, chaqui, charaqui!
Chaqui, chaqui, chaqui, charaqui!
The climax of passion, the dancers are trembling
and ecstasy presses Jose to the ground.
The Bongó is thundering and in a mad whirl
the daemon has broken Tomasa's limbs.
Piqui-tiqui-pan, piqui-tiqui-pan!
Piqui-tiqui-pan, piqui-tiqui-pan!
The blackish Tomasa now falls to the ground
and down also falls Ché Encarnación.
there they are rolling, convulsing and twitching,
with whirling drum and raging Bongó
the rumba now fades with con-con-co-mabó!
And pa-ca, pa-ca, pa-ca, pa-ca!
Pam! Pam! Pam!

translated by S. Akanji.



BY NICOLAS GUILLEN

Since my schooldays
and even before . . . since life's dawn
when I was a mere slip of dream and tears
since that time
they called my name. A saint and a sign
to enable me to speak to the stars.
You are called, you shall be called
And then I was saddled
with the name you see on my card
with the one with which I sign my poems:
fourteen letters
which I carry on my back in the street,
which everywhere and always I carry as my escort.
Is that really my name, are you quite sure?
Do you really possess all my signs?
Do you know then my navigable blood,
the geography of my obscure summits
deep valleys of bitterness
that are not marked on any map?
Have you ever visited my chasms
my subterranean passages
with their large wet rocks
their islands rising from blackish lagoons
and pure cascades of ancient waters
which I feel descending
from the heights of my heart
— a fresh and deep sound —
and a place full of burning trees
with balancing monkeys
legislative parrots and snakes?
All my skin (I should have said so)
all my skin — does it really come
from that Spanish marble statue? And my fearful voice
the harsh cry from my gorge? And all my bones
do they come from there? And my roots
and the roots of my roots and
the dark branches swayed by dreams
and the open flowers on my front
and the bitter sap of my bark?
Are you quite sure?

Is there nothing else, only that which you wrote
that which you sealed
with a sign of wrath?
(Oh yes, I should have asked you.)
Well then, let me ask you:
Do you not see these drums in my eyes?
Do you not see these drums hammering out
two dry tears?
Have I not got an ancestor of night
with a large black mark
(blacker than the skin)
a large mark
written with a whip?
Have I not got an ancestor
from Mandingo, the Congo, Dahomey?
His first name? Oh, yes, tell me his first name!
Andrew, Francis, or John?
How do you say Andrew in Congo?
How in the old days did they call Francis
in Dahomey?
And in Mandingo, how do you say John?
Impossible? So they had other names?
The name, I am sure.
Do you know my other name, that comes to me
from that vast continent, the name
that bleeding and imprisoned, crossed the ocean
in chains, that in chains crossed the ocean?
Ah, you cannot remember it!
You have dissolved it with immemorial ink.
You have stolen it, from a poor defenceless negro.
You have hidden it, hoping
I would lower my eyes in shame.
Gracias!
Os lo Agradesco!
Kind people thank you!
Merci,
Merci bien,
Merci beaucoup
But no. Could you believe it? No.
I am clean.
My voice shines like polished metal.
On my arms, look: a baobab,
a lance, a rhinoceros.
I am also the grandson.
the great-grandson,
the great-great grandson of a slave.
(Let the master feel ashamed.)
Could I be Yelof?
Nicolas Yelof, perhaps?
Or Nicolas Bakonga?

Perhaps Guillen Banguila?
Or Koumba?
Guillen Koumba?
Or Kongue?
Could I be Guillen Kongue?
Oh who could know!
What mystery among the waters!
I feel the weight of the immense night
on the animals below,
on the innocent castigated souls;
but also on shaggy voices
that rob the sky of its
hardest suns,
to decorate the warrior blood.
But I know,
from a burning country
that runs through the great equatorial arrow
there will come distant cousins,
— my distant anguish thrown to the winds; —
I know there will come particles of my veins,
— my distant blood ;
crushing the bent grass with a hard foot; —
I know there will come men with green lives
— my distant forest
with its pain opened like a cross
and its breast red with flames.
Without knowing each other
we shall recognise one another in hunger
in tuberculosis and syphilis
in the sweat we bought on the black market
through bits of chain still clinging to our skin
without knowing each other
we shall recognise one another in the heavy eyes of dream
and even in the daily insults
which the quadrupeds of ink and paper
spit at us like stones.
What does it matter then
(what does it matter now!)
my little name
and its fourteen white letters?
And the name of my sad ancestor,
my Mandingo, Bantu, Yoruba Dahomey name
that was drowned in the ink of a solicitor?
What does it matter my pure friends?
Oh, yes, my pure friends,
yes, come and see my name!
My interminable names;
my name: mine, and *theirs*
my free name, and yours, and *theirs*,
theirs, my name free like the air.

translated by S. Akanji.

EAST INDIANS AND WEST

THE NOVELS OF V. S. NAIPAUL

BY GERALD MOORE

During the past ten years or so West Indian writing has developed with astonishing strength and speed, particularly in the novel. The uneven but gifted work of Mittelholzer, at its best in *A Morning at the Office*, has been swiftly joined by that of George Lamming, Sam Selvon and John Hearne. These men have given the West Indies a place of importance in the contemporary English novel. Indirectly they have performed a political service also, by offering the light of their own sympathy and insight to thousands of English readers, making West Indian life vivid and attractive for many who formerly, perhaps, had only ignorant vagueness or faintly hostile prejudice towards that part of the world.

But in all this opening of a new region for novelist and reader, the great East Indian section of the people, especially strong in Trinidad, has largely remained submerged. The new writers, for the main part black or coloured, have been content to give us such figures as Jagadir, the Indian clerk in *A Morning at the Office*, who is the most genuinely outcast person in the book. What is his world? What are the values, culture, daily life of his people? We had no inkling until the arrival of V. S. Naipaul, who seems to me the most naturally gifted of all these Caribbean writers. In two remarkable novels he has given us the very smell, taste and tempo of life in the Indian locations of Trinidad. His writing is distinguished by its absolute sureness of touch (he is still in his twenties) and its detachment — a detachment expressed through a tolerant irony and wit possessed by few novelists anywhere. Mr. Naipaul always shows us exactly what is going on, much of it fairly dubious, but he manages to do this almost, as it were, by accident or in passing. He does not get upset, and clearly expects us to follow this civilized lead, yet the very fact that nothing escapes his mildly amused eye is itself a kind of comment.

His first novel, *The Mystic Masseur*, appeared in 1957. It is a delightful and apparently inconsequent account of the extraordinary career of Ganesh Rumsumair (latterly G. Rumsay Muir, M.B.E.), the erstwhile schoolmaster, masseur, Hindu sage, radical, and conservative politician of Fuente Grove, Trinidad. Ganesh progresses from stage to stage of this career in the most oblique and surprising way. He always contrives to appear more disinterested and detached than his fellows, yet in the end it is always he who "wins out", and they who go down, to become the mere human debris of a spent phase of his

like his impossible wife Leela; his grubby, tearful, stingy father-in-law Ramlogan; the shoeless itinerant bookseller Bisson, the journalist Narayan, all eventually have reason to regret their involvement with the harmless little mystic and his infallible sense of going roundabout in the right direction.

The following passage gives an idea of Ganesh's quality. There is a custom whereby a young Hindu bridegroom is offered a plate of kedgerie the morning after the wedding. So long as he refuses to eat it, the bride's father must go on increasing his dowry bit by bit. It is a battle of "face". Now Ganesh, without ever exactly committing himself, has given Ramlogan to understand that he will be moderate in his demands in marrying Leela. This is what ensues:—

Still in all his bridegroom's regalia, satin robes and tasselled crown, he sat down on some blankets in the yard, before the plate of kedgerie. It looked white and unpalatable, and he knew it would be easy to resist any temptation to touch it.

Ramlogan was the first to offer money to induce Ganesh to eat. He was a little haggard after staying awake all night, but he looked pleased and happy enough when he placed five twenty-dollar bills in the brass plate next to the kedgerie. He stepped back, folded his arms, looked from the money to Ganesh to the small group standing by, and smiled.

He stood smiling for nearly two minutes; but Ganesh didn't even look at the kedgerie.

'Give the boy money, man,' Ramlogan cried to the people around. 'Give him money, man. Come on, don't act as if you is all poor poor as church-rat'. He moved among them, laughing, and rallying them. Some put down small amounts in the brass plate.

Still Ganesh sat, serene and aloof, like an over-dressed Buddha.

A little crowd began to gather.

'The boy have sense, man.' Anxiety broke into Ramlogan's voice. 'What you think a college education is these days?'

He put down another hundred dollars. 'Eat, boy, eat it up. I don't want you to starve. Not yet, anyway'. He laughed, but no one laughed with him.

Ganesh didn't eat.

He heard a man saying, 'Well, this thing was bound to happen some day'.

People said, 'Come on, Ramlogan. Give the boy money, man. What you think he sitting down there for? To take out his photo?'

Ramlogan gave a short forced laugh, and lost his temper. 'If he think he going to get any more money from me he damn well mistaken. Let him don't eat. Think I care if he starve? Think I care?'

He walked away.

The crowd grew bigger; the laughter grew louder.

Ramlogan came back and the crowd cheered him.

He put down two hundred dollars on the brass plate and, before he rose, whispered to Ganesh, 'Remember your promise, sahib. Eat, boy; eat son; eat, sahib; eat, pundit sahib. I beg you, eat'.

A man shouted, 'No! I not going to eat!'

Ramlogan stood up and turned around. 'You, haul your tail away from here quick quick, before I break it up for you. Don't meddle in what don't concern you'.

The crowd roared.

Ramlogan bent down again to whisper. 'You see, sahib, how you making me shame.' This time his whisper promised tears. 'You see, sahib, what you doing to my cha'acter and sensa values'.

Ganesh didn't move.

The crowd was beginning to treat him like a hero.

In the end Ganesh got from Ramlogan: a cow and a heifer, fifteen hundred dollars in cash, and a house in Fuente Grove. Ramlogan also cancelled the bill for the food he had sent to Ganesh's house.

The ceremony ended at about nine in the morning; but Ramlogan was sweating long before then.

'The boy and I was only having a joke,' he said again and again at the end. 'He done know long time now what I was going to give him. We was only making joke, you know'.

The economy with which this scene is handled, and the characterizing power of the dialogue, are typical of Naipaul's writing. In the same wayward spirit, Ganesh abandons teaching and moves to the newly-won house at Fuente Grove to become a masseur. Finding that he has no skill in physical massage, he launches himself as a Mystic Masseur, a kind of faith healer with carefully staged effects, and advertises under the inspired slogan, WHO IS THIS GANESH! At exactly the right moment he takes up writing and publishes a primer, *101 Questions and Answers on the Hindu Religion*. Discovering that Ramlogan has cornered the taxi-service for carrying his many clients to Fuente Grove, Ganesh simply buys him out and runs the service at the same inflated rates. Finding himself attacked by the embittered journalist Narayan, Ganesh enters journalism with his own paper, *The Dharma*, and subsequently defeats Narayan in the first elections for the Legislative Council. Starting off there as a popular radical member, he switches to the Establishment and the M.B.E. after being badly frightened by a crowd of strikers in Port of Spain. As Naipaul drily remarks, "the history of Ganesh is, in a way, the history of our times".

In his second novel, *The Suffrage of Elvira*, Naipaul tackles a more compact subject. The book simply tells the story of the first real popular election in the little Trinidad town of Elvira, whose population comprises Hindu and Moslem East Indians, Protestant Negroes and Catholic Spaniards. The most favoured candidate is "Pat" Harbans, a wealthy Hindu contractor from Port of Spain with no local connections whatever. His rival is a Negro minister, known as "Preacher", who is liked and respected locally but has no campaign money. When Harbans arrives in the town he finds that the Hindu vote is controlled by a goldsmith named Chittaranjan and the Moslem vote by a tailor named Baksh. "Preacher" has the Negroes, but the picture has been complicated by a couple of American girls — Jehovah's Witnesses — who have persuaded the Spaniards that all elections are the work of the devil and must be abjured.

Into this tense situation strolls Tiger, a stray dog who has somehow become associated in everyone's mind with *obeah* (black magic). Baksh's small son Herbert brings the dog home and is soundly whipped and spiritually fumigated for it, but his big brother Foam secretly feeds the animal until forced to get rid of it by Baksh. He then disposes of it to young Nelly Chittaranjan, but it is soon discovered and once more flung out on the street. The epic march of Tiger through Elvira, watched with dread by the entire populace, is in many ways the high spot of the book :

Tiger came out into the road and turned left.

It was nearly half-past three. Children were coming back from school, labourers from the estate. Only people in government service were still at work; they would knock off at four.

The news ran through Elvira. Baksh's puppy, the *obeah-dog*, the one that had been sent away, was back.

Tiger limped on. Schoolchildren and labourers stood silently at the verge to let him pass. Faces appeared behind raised curtains. People ran up from the traces to watch. No one interfered with Tiger and he looked at no one. His hiccoughs had gone. He tottered, wobbled, and went on, as though some force outside him were pushing him on to a specific destination.

Mr. Cuffy saw and was afraid.

Rampiar's husband was afraid. 'You is my witness, Ma', he said to his mother-in-law, 'that when the goldsmith come yesterday to ask for my vote, I tell him I didn't want to meddle in this politics business. You is my witness that he beg and beg me to vote'.

Tiger walked on.

Baksh, Mrs. Baksh, Foam and all the six young Bakshes knew.

'Shut up the shop!' Baksh ordered. 'And shut up the gate. Nobody dog ain't walking into my yard as they well please'.

Mrs. Baksh was pale. 'This sweetness, man, this election sweetness'.

Baksh said, 'Foam, I ain't want to get Bible and key again. You did or you didn't take away that dog last night?'

'I tell you, man'.

'Oh God, Foam! Things serious. Don't lie to me at this hour, you know'.

Foam sucked his teeth.

Herbert said, 'But we ain't even know is the same dog'.

'Yes,' Baksh said eagerly. 'Exactly. How we know is the same dog?'

Mrs. Baksh beat her bosom. 'I know, Baksh'.

Tiger came on, indifferent as sea or sky. He didn't walk in the centre of the road, as people wished he would; he walked at the edge, as if he wished to hide in the grass.

Christians, Hindus and Muslims crossed themselves. To make sure, some Hindus muttered Rama, Rama as well.

Tiger came around the bend of the road.

'Is Tiger!' Herbert said.

'Sweetness! Sourness!'

Rafiq said, 'Ten die'.

'But look how small the mister man dog is, eh?' Baksh said. 'You know, he get even smaller now. Small as a rabbit and thin as a matchstick'.

Herbert said, 'Still, small as he is, he coming'.

'Herbert,' Mrs. Baksh pleaded, 'you ain't cause enough trouble and misery?'

Baksh said, 'Not to worry, man. For all we know, the dog just going to walk straight past the house.'

'I know, Baksh. And everybody in Elvira know too. Look how they looking. They looking at the dog and then they looking at we. And they laughing in their belly, for all the serious face they putting on. Oh God, Baksh, this sweetness!'

Foam said, 'I don't see why all-you making this big set of fuss for. All I could see is a thin thin dog, break-up like hell, that look as though he ain't eat nothing since he born'.

Tiger staggered on.

Baksh said, 'Look, man. What you worried for? He ain't even trying to cross the road yet'.

'Baksh, I know. He go cross when he want to cross. That dog know his business, I telling you. Oh, Baksh, the mess you get me in!'

Herbert said, 'Oh. He ain't even stopping.'

Mrs. Baksh, crying, asked, 'You want it to stop, Herbert? Just answer me that. My own child want the dog to stop?'

Herbert said, 'Well, it ain't stopping'.

'What I did tell you?' Baksh said. He laughed. 'Wonder who house little mister man dog going to. Come to think of it, you know, man, it ain't even the same dog. The one we did have had a white spot on the right foot in front. This one ain't have no white spot. Not the same dog really'. He turned his back to the veranda wall and faced his family. 'Don't know why everybody was getting so excited. All right, all right, the show over'.

'Dog coming back', Foam said. 'He stop and turning'.

They all scrambled to look.

Tiger was limping brokenly across the road.

'Somebody feed that dog here!' Baksh shouted. 'Nobody not going to tell me that somebody ain't feed that dog here'.

Tiger dragged himself across the plank over the gutter. Then the strength that had driven him so far was extinguished; he collapsed on his side, his eyes vacant, his chest and belly heaving.

'He behaving as if he come home', Herbert said.

'Herbert, my son, my own son', Mrs. Baksh said. 'What come over you, son? Tell me what they do to you, to make you want that dirty dog. Tell me, my son'.

Herbert didn't reply.

Mrs. Baksh broke down completely. She cried and her breasts and belly shook. 'Something going to happen, Baksh. In this house.'

'Ten die', Rafiq said.

Baksh slapped him.

'Suppose that dog just lay down there and dead,' Baksh said. 'Oh God. Foam, you want me to believe that you ain't feed that dog here? That dog behave too much as if he know where his bread butter, you hear'.

Foam shrugged his shoulders.

Baksh said, 'Man, what going to be the best thing? For the dog to live or dead?'

Mrs. Baksh pressed her hands against her eyes and shook her head. 'I don't know, Baksh. I just don't know what is the best thing.'


But Herbert knew what he wanted. 'Oh, God', he prayed, 'don't let Tiger dead'.

In this passage Tiger, like a magnet, draws towards his progress all the extraordinary cultural richness of the town, where Indians speak an English dialect almost indistinguishable from that of the Negroes — full of the same constructions drawn from French and Spanish, where Moslems swear on the Bible, Hindus cross themselves, and Negroes take part in the Festival of Lights.

During his campaign, the wealthy intruder Harbans is exploited mercilessly by everyone in Elvira, with the exception of Chittaranjan, who is buoyed up by the hope that Harbans will marry his daughter Nelly. Baksh, for instance, first forces his son Foam upon Harbans as an expensive campaign manager, then threatens to fight as a Moslem candidate, and finally sells his votes back to Harbans at exorbitant rates. The mulcting of Harbans reaches a climax after his election, when he is forced to throw religious feasts for Hindus, Moslems and Christians, and then has his new Jaguar burnt by the mob while he is visiting a Negro "sick-bed". As the exhausted Member leaves the town for the last time he calls back, "Elvira; you is a bitch!"

Yet in the end it is Harbans who triumphs. He does not marry Nelly, he wins the seat, and we have no doubt that from now on Elvirans will be paying *him* for favours fast enough to redeem all their exactions. In the words of Mrs. Baksh, "This election sweetness! Man, I tell you, it turning sour".

The comic incidents of this perfect novel are all beautifully controlled. There is, for instance, the eloquent quarrel and moving reconciliation between Chittaranjan and his neighbour Ramlogan, caused entirely by the fact that Ramlogan's breadfruit tree will drop its heavy fruits on Chittaranjan's tin roof. Or there is the boomerang effect of Foam's election slogan VOTE HARBANS OR DIE! Or the way in which the suspicion of *obeah* is finally turned against the two Jehovah's Witnesses, who have to leave town in a hurry. Whatever the event, it is told with economy, perception, and the gentlest of irony. Naipaul exposes his fellow citizens as they are, yet his comedy is entirely without malice. He is involved in what he sees. The despised "coolie-man" has been silent for nearly a century. Naipaul's advent makes us glad that the voice of the East Indian is at last making itself heard in the Caribbean West and that, in his throat at least, it is one so tolerant and so humane.



BY ONIEDJI ARAGRABALU

The first impact of European expansion has been to undermine and nearly destroy local cultures in most parts of the world. Here in West Africa there is no question that traditional cultures have lost confidence in themselves and that as a result we are going through an uncreative phase in the arts. The intellectual West African, it is true, does no longer accept Western values at their face value and he has started to "hit back" as it were against European cultural domination. This is an intellectual movement that runs parallel with the struggle for independence. But we find that this new assertion of African values is taking place largely in the field of literature. Our poets and novelists have taken up the challenge and in many cases they have succeeded — as this journal testifies — to lay the foundations of a neo-African culture.

In the field of painting and sculpture however, West Africa has not yet produced an artist of comparable status to our great poets like Senghor. The visual arts in West Africa are still in a state of crisis. European influences have not been fully digested, and though we can boast of a number of talented young artists none of them is sufficiently at home in both worlds to have created a synthesis that would make him part of the development of modern art and distinctly African at the same time. Such a synthesis has been created by modern painters in India, however. The modern Indian — as other contributions to this issue confirm — is facing much the same problems resulting from culture conflict as the West African. Like the African he must re-examine his tradition and critically analyse the values of Western culture. In West African artists this struggle to find a balance is made manifest by the confusion of styles in which they work, always experimenting, always trying out new forms and techniques, never sure of themselves.

In Souza's work on the other hand we find that a synthesis has been achieved. The artist has created his own very personal form which places him among the great modern artists of our time, and yet, at the same time, his art is distinctly non-European. One feels behind it an ancient and rich cultural tradition which Souza has transposed in a modern and medium form. The roots he has in this ancient tradition have helped him to avoid the great danger to which the young European artist (who cannot usually draw on any traditions) is exposed: namely to become a featureless follower of one of the fashionable international movements and produce the modern cliché art that is found nowadays in the world's galleries from Warsaw to Philadelphia.

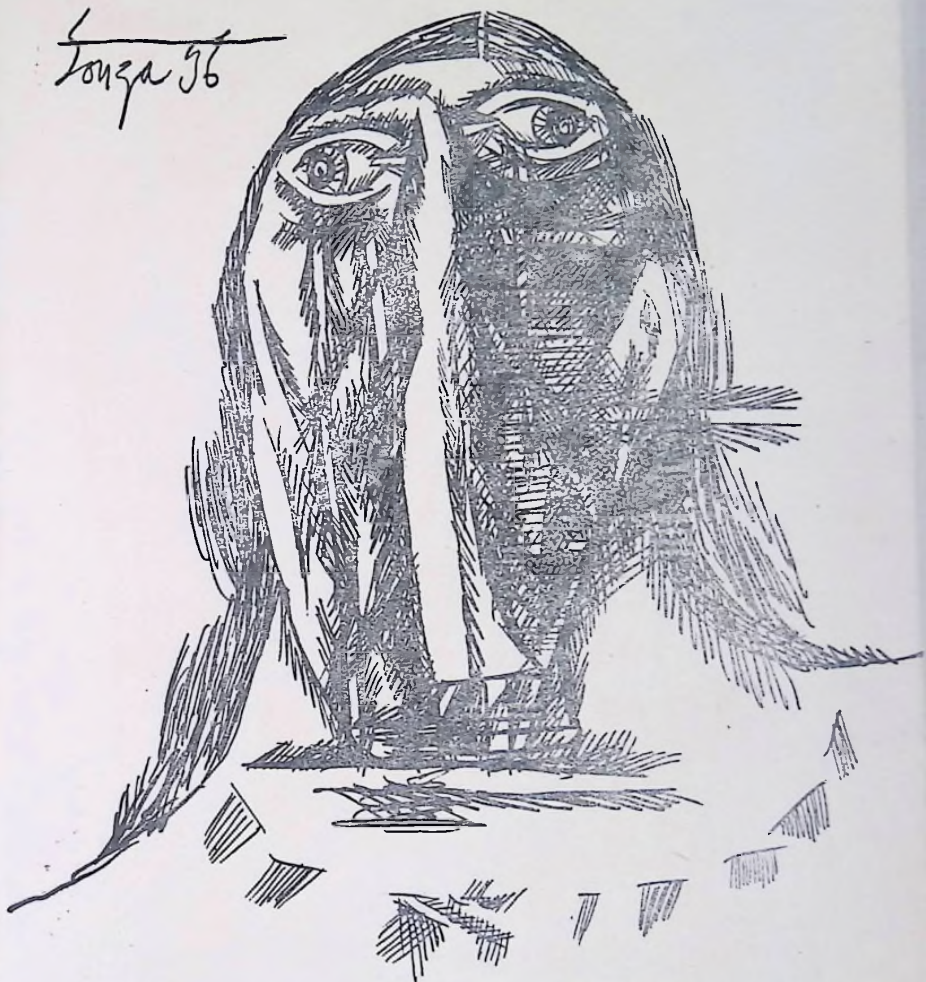
Souza 52



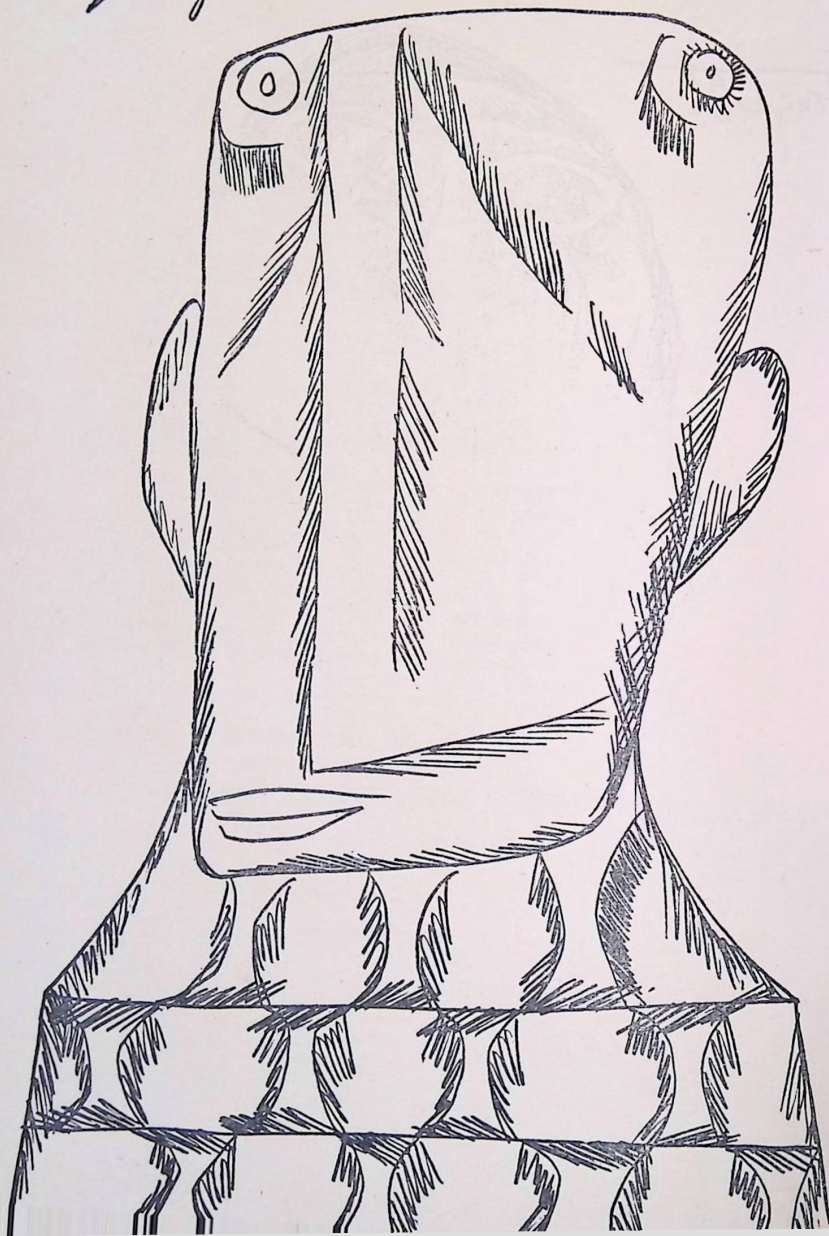
8/1/72



Souza 96



20/11/57

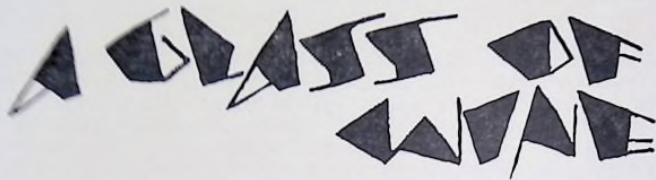


Souza, we know at a first glance, is an artist who had something to say. He does not merely play about with original forms, his form is forced on him by the urgency of his communication. In spite of his very individual technique we feel that he has roots in a great culture. But it is an Early Christian, rather than a Hindu atmosphere that we sense in his work. Souza's portraits (see for example the drawings on pp. 17-20) remind one of nothing so much as of Ikons. Souza was born in the Portuguese enclave in India, Goa, thus he comes from a culture that is already the synthesis of an early encounter between Eastern and Western culture. Portuguese Catholicism came to Goa early enough not to act as a merely destructive force. When Christianity came to Africa in the second half of the 19th century it was so forcefully backed by an industrialised and materialistic Europe that its effect on traditional cultures was largely destructive and no cultural syncretism has resulted. But in Goa, one feels Christianity has been able to absorb enough of indigenous thinking and religion to become a life force and not just a restricting sterilizing influence as in West Africa.

I do not know whether the artist would consciously agree with me — but to me Souza's art is religious, in the broadcast sense of the word. He is not so much interested in the outward appearance of people but seems to portray their innermost being. He creates portraits, not of individuals, but of human suffering and agony, and that is why all his figures are saints and martyrs in a sense. There is also an element of introvert meditation in these faces that strikes one as typically Indian or at least oriental and it is this quality, perhaps, that seems to remind one of Ikons.

Even when Souza creates conscious satire he does not cease to be a religious artist. The drawings on pages 49-52 are satirical portraits of European businessmen. They form a devastating attack on the materialist culture of the West. All the brutality and sadism of the European business world is expressed here; it is an indictment more powerful than volumes of West African protest poetry. And yet, it seems to me that even here, that artist cannot deny a basic humanity to his victims and underneath the horrid, grotesque facade there is even here a suffering human soul that is sacred.

Souza's art, bridging two worlds and two cultures, is of great significance to us in West Africa. It goes to prove that the tide is now beginning to turn: the force of the cultural attack from Europe seems to be spent and from the ruins of our various traditions in Asia and Africa we are beginning the work of synthesis and reconstruction.



BY ALEX LA GUMA

That evening we were sitting in the front room of Ma Schrikker's place when the door opened and this boy came in. He was tall and young and thin as a billiard cue and had beautiful red-gold hair combed in a high pompadour, and a pink-white skin. He looked very young and handsome and a little like one of those Johns you see on the screen.

"Hullo," Arthur said, smiling at the boy. I smiled at him, too, and he nodded and smiled back at us.

We were drinking some of Ma Schrikker's wine and taking our time about it because we had nowhere else to go that evening, and besides, we had paid six-and-sixpence for the bottle. Ma Schrikker didn't mind the customers taking their time over their drinks as long as the price was right.

She was fat and dark and jolly and always had a welcome smile for everybody, especially when they were customers. Although I thought her joviality was stimulated by anticipation of a rise in sales every time somebody arrived, because there were times when she was a real menace.

"How you keeping, pally?" Arthur asked the boy. He was a little drunk from the red and that made him friendlier than ever.

"Fine," the boy said shyly. "I'm fine."

"Sit, man. Sit down," Arthur said, still smiling at the boy.

He sat down on the settee and looked around. He had been there before, often, but he always looked around as if he was missing something.

There were a couple of old pictures on the walls; one of a steamship, and another of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor cut out of the photogravure section of a newspaper, framed in black; and a fancy embroidered frame that had a little house on a hill spotted by flies, and flowers in the garden and embroidered words that said, Home Sweet Home. There was also a big oval frame of an old John with white whiskers and a come-to-Jesus collar that Ma Schrikker claimed was her great-grand-father.

But we knew the boy wasn't really interested in the pictures. He'd come to see one of Ma Schrikker's girls, and looking around was just a sort of embarrassed way of indicating that.

"Well," Arthur said. "Have a glass of wine, pal."

Ho picked up the bottle and looked at it in the light. "There's one more dop over."

"Leave it," the boy smiled, "Don't worry."

"Hell, we got money," Arthur told him, grinning. "We'll buy another bottle."

And to me, "Don't I say, pal?"

"Naturally."

"Then I'll have the last one from the bottle."

He poured the red so that it fell into the glass with a small tinkling sound and it was dark and red and translucent in the electric light.

"Nothing like the red," Arthur said. "Jeripico. White wine is awright, too, but nothing can beat the red." He smiled at the boy and then winked at me. "He comes to see the girl. The little one with the curls." And the boy blushed, his face growing deep pink, his eyes turned down in embarrassment.

"Leave him alone," I grinned. "You see he's shy."

"Ja. A very shy boy. Do you like the girl, *ou pal*?"

The boy blushed deeper and he didn't say anything, but looked away from us.

"Leave him alone," I said to Arthur.

"He likes the girl very much," Arthur said, a little drunkenly.

"Leave him alone, man, and order the other bottle," I said and winked at the boy.

Arthur smiled at the boy and then turning to the door to the back of the house called, "Ma. Another bottle of the red. *Asseblief*. Please. Another one of the red."

"I heard you," the woman's voice growled from the back. "Do you think I'm deaf?"

"No," Arthur replied "Who said you was deaf? But send another red, man. And let the girl bring it. The lighty here is anxious to see her. He is a awake boy, a real smart juba, and I like him."

"Lord God," Ma Schrikker's voice cried again. "If that is the case, make love to him. I would not put it past you."

Arthur shook his head and looked lugubrious, saying to me, "You see? Look at that now. Look at such manners." He grinned at the boy again. "It's okay, pally. Don't be afraid. I won't make love to you."

He laughed and slapped my shoulder, and after a while Ma Schrikker herself came in. I saw the boy look up, and saw the small disappointed look on his face.

"Where's Charlette?" I asked.

"She's gone to get the wine from the outhouse," Ma said. "What, are you also courting her?"

"He does not like girls, what," Arthur said to her. He laughed and went on: "My pally does not like girls. There was a widow of forty-two who wanted to marry him, but he turned her down due to lack of experience. His experience."

He laughed again and slapped my back once more, hiccoughing. "I ask excuse. Please excuse me." He tried to stand up and bow, but sat down again heavily.

"Gwarn," Ma Schrikker said. "You think you funny, mos?"

"Charlie Chaplin," Arthur grinned.

Just then the girl came in carrying the bottle of red on a tray and Arthur said: "*Hier's sy*. Here she is. Your boy waits for you."

And looking at the girl I saw the deep blush under her smooth beautiful skin. Her skin was the colour of amber wine, and she had dark brown eyes, bright and soft, and around her oval face her hair was very black and curly. The soft, full lips smiled shyly as she blushed. She did not look at the boy, but knew that he was there, and looking at him in turn I could see the deep blush of his own face and the gentle lowering of the eyelids as he watched her.

She placed the tray on the table and turned away and Arthur laughed. "No, man. Where can you go? With the boy here and all. Sit down, bokkie." She blushed again and looked around the room, but not at the boy. I said: "Hullo, Charlette."

She glanced at me and blushed again and said, "Hullo."

"Look how they blush," Arthur said teasingly. "Look how they blush, man."

He poured some of the red into his glass, his hand shaking a little, and passed the bottle to me. "They blush very nicely," he smiled.

"It's the love," Ma Schrikker laughed. She laughed so that her whole body shook. "Love. Just like in the bioscope."

Arthur lifted his glass in the direction of the boy and girl and announced, "To the bride and groom. May all your troubles be little ones."

He laughed again, and saw the hurt look in the boy's face, and the girl looking away. I was going to say something but Arthur interrupted. "With such love, blushing and all, these two must mos marry" He drank some of the wine, choked and wiped his mouth on the back of his hand.

"Stop it," the girl said and the boy looked across at Arthur.

"Stop watter?" Arthur asked blankly. "Stop the wedding? There must be a wedding." He got up as if he was going to propose a toast, but sat down again when he's legs wouldn't hold him.

"Hell, cut it out, man," I told him. "Let's make finish and blow."

He looked puzzled. "What the hell, man. What goes on?"

The girl said, "Leave him alone. He's alright."

"Sure, I'm awright," Arthur said. "I can stand on one leg. You want to see?"

"You'll fall over and smash the furniture. All Ma's nice vases."

"Yes," Ma told him. "You watch my vases. They's presents I got. All of them."

"Bull," Arthur scowled, becoming lugubrious again. "Let's have another glass of wine, man."

I poured out two more glasses and took one. I smiled at the boy and said, "Don't worry about him. He's just had a few too many."

"That's okay," he answered, smiling. He looked at the girl and put one hand on her arm, gently, and she looked at him quickly, smiling with the small, curved smile. But there was something wrong, now, and a feeling of things not being the same.

Arthur finished his drink and hiccoughed again, saying sullenly, "To hell with it. I reckon they should get married. The next thing you'll know she'll have a belly, you don't let them."

There was that look on the boy's face again and the girl, Charlette, got up and said angrily, "Stop it. How come don't you want to stop it?" She looked as if she wanted to cry, and Arthur got up, managing it this time, looking surprised.

"What'd I do?" he asked. "Now what did I do, man?" He swayed on his feet.

I put a hand under his arm. "I reckon we better blow," I said.

"Ja," Ma Schrikker said. "He had enough. You better take him home."

"Hell, I isn't so drunk," Arthur said. "Let me go, man."

"No, man, you better go," Ma Schrikker told him.

"You throwing me out?" Arthur asked, looking at her. "Awright." He looked at me and then at Ma again, squaring his shoulders and saying with dignity, "I'm not coming here again. You've lost a customer." And added haughtily. "A good one, mos." He looked comical, alright, but I didn't laugh.

I got him over to the door with Ma following. Before we went out I said to the girl and the boy, "Don't let him upset you. He just had a few too many."

"It's alright," the girl said not looking at me.

We went out onto the stoop and Arthur was sagging on me a little. Ma said, standing in the doorway, looking big and shapeless with the light behind her: "Now you take him right home, hey? And don't get tackled."

"I'll get him home. He isn't very drunk."

"Let me go, man," Arthur said. "You reckon to carry me. I can walk, man"

I said good-night to Ma and she said to come around again, and shut the door on us.

"You awright?" I asked Arthur.

"Sure, man. Why not?"

"Let's go then,"

"What the hell," he complained. "What they get so funny about?"

"You and your wedding," I told him as we went up the street. "You know that white boy can't marry the girl, even though he may love her. It isn't allowed."

"Jesus," Arthur said in the dark. "Jesus. What the hell."



HOW ANANCY BECAME A SPIDER

BY ANDREW SALKEY

When time was just time, and trees was just trees, and t'ings just used to happen like they didn't have any reason to happen, there was plenty chances for small animals to grow into big animals and to have plenty space to romp and jump round like spinning top all over the place. As a-matter-a-fact, all the creatures and animals and trees and everything all over the place had a sort a straight-back dignity a-bearing themselves like they was special-special t'ings on the land. All this used to happen in a place called 'The Beginning'.

'The Beginning' was a peculiar nice-nice place. It never had any cause to pin down people and animals to any code-of-this or code-of-that. It only had one serious-serious word to say about a certain tree. And that tree was big and spreading all about the place like it have a whole heap of silent-silent importance that is resting all hidden inside its leaves. (If you look up and see this tree, you would begin to imagine that perhaps it could talk nice-nice to you.) But it never talk at all. It never talk because it had too much t'ings to say. (When anything or anybody know plenty-plenty t'ings, him always stand up very, very quiet-like and just sway a little bit and that is all.)

It happen now, that one daytime when Brother Sun was stretching up far into the blue-blue, Brother Anancy and him wife was walking up and down the banana field in this place called 'The Beginning'. (You might think the name of this place is a funny sort-a-name, but that is the personal business of all names — all names must behave in a way in which they mislead people, and cause a lot of botheration. Believe me! There is no other way that names and tags can have any purpose, especially when people is always looking up to names and tags to settle them affairs. People treat names like names is a sort-a-final-judge in them case.) Now Brother Anancy is the sort-a-dignify-creature that is very calm even though him fancy himself as a sort-a-nunter and a strong-silent-partner. And him wife, well, she is a sort-a-cute creature who is really inquisitive bad-bad. She born with too much appetite to taste-taste experience like she is a Boss-Woman in charge of a whole heap of plantation cooks.

Hear how she giving lip to Brother Anancy: 'Anancy! You is too much of a spineless, good-for-nothin'! You couldn't even run a race with a snail and beat it! Anancy! There's no use me hoping that you will ever be a builder of the house of my children! All you really want to do is stay right here in 'The Beginning' and live rent-free, and drink water-coconut and eat baked bananas that grow off the land. Is pure-pure freeness you like. Even though you walk

round the place with a stiff backbone like you is the original proud-t'ing, you have no spine, as far as me is concern! You have no spine, I tell you that! You is a tall long-foot, naked-something who crawl all about the place with a hungry belly and two starin' eye hanging out of a thick-thick nonsense head. You and you slow ways make me sick for true! All this dignity-thinking just make me wish I never know you, at all!

Then Anancy going try to say something, now. Him screw up him mouth and scratch him nakedness like him infest with tickling insect — but is not so. Him scratch because is a nervous-nervous move like when somebody have to talk to him superior. Hear Anancy, now: 'You know something? You is a impatient woman on the land. You see how everything spread out round us? There is lots of organization gone into it, you know? There is a time to settle down and a time to make movement. My time to move don't come, yet. Don't rush t'ings like the woman you is. You just come and see t'ings organize in front of you; and you must leave t'ings as they is. Wait and witness the harvest-a-t'ings. For all you know, there is plenty-plenty t'ings in store for us to make house and settle down all independent-like. But 'cause a-your-haste and quick-quick moves, you will spoil the benefit that going come down on us.'

Now, Anancy's wife jump in smart-up and full with fire-eye. Hear her, now: 'Is why you always saying that word: 'Going come down!' 'Going come down!' That is always how you describing the benefits you thinking about. Make me tell you something, now! Nothing ever come down but rain. Is only rain come down from up. Up is a place that don't even begin to exist. You hearing me? All that sort-a-fool-fool business don't create, at all. Is only your anticipatin' old mind that imagine so. Is only your dreaming-head that think so. You know something Anancy? You always believing in t'ings before they actually come about. You like to make out that all sorts-a-t'ings is in our midst. One time you talking about, GOOD AND EVIL; then another time, you talking about, FALLING FROM GRACE; then you continued with, ONE DAY WE GOING HAVE TO COVER OUR NAKEDNESS AND RUN LIKE MAD PEOPLE AND LEAVE THE BANANA FIELD AND LEAVE 'THE BEGINNING', FOREVER. I going tell you something that I want you to hold in that basin-head that you have on you bare-back shoulder! Anancy, you tired me out with you worry-head. You make me feel half-a-woman with you watching and peeping and thinking about this-an-that. You make me wondering if you is not a mad, moonshine-husband. The one piece-a-rib that help to born me in this place did come from your own chest, and I hoping that it never come from your mad side. If the one piece-a-rib did come from your mad side, I sure it bound to be catching, this mad, moonshine-madness that you going on with. But like how I can't give you back your piece-a-rib, I suppose I will have to live with it and hope for the best. I telling you, Anancy, you is a husband that I could well do without. Anancy, you is a husband that making me tired of you. And imagine, I know you in me naked state! I really tired of all your backing-back and your hesitating ways-a-life.'

After her woman-talk, Anancy try to come back with: 'You is hard-hard wife to live with, you know? Even though we have plenty-plenty space to lose one another like is nothing, I can't lose you out-a-me-mind, at all. Is why you don't hold on to you tongue? Is why you don't hold on to your appetite for t'ings I can't provide for you? I suppose one-a-dese-days you going want me to do the impossible, like climb the serious-serious tree, and eat the luscious-luscious red fruit that grow on it? I wouldn't put it out-a-mind whert

you is concern. Is excitement and botheration you always craving for? Is trouble you want to bring down on a man head?

As Anancy say that speech, she start to move in on him with fire-eye. again. Hear her big mouth, now: 'Anancy! How much time I must tell you that t'ings like 'Trouble' don't invented, at all? All the time you seem to have a sort-a-first-look at t'ings that don't make yet. You always talking in a way that don't even get into fashion. Is all that making me sick up-to-the-neck with you. Is why you can't live on the land and take it easy-like? You have to be thinking and working out t'ings and constantly having fretting-head! You have to be going on like you is a conscience for the whole place? If you setting up yourself as a conscience, then, let me tell you right now: I don't want to lie down and have to nice-up to no conscience when night-time come round. If is conscience you want to give me when I call out for other t'ings, then, is look I going start to look for something else! You hearing me? You hearing, Anancy?

She asking Anancy if him hearing her, but Anancy gone off in one of him sweet-sweet daytime dream. Him just walk away all dignify-like, and him walking like him is a floating-power up in the blue-blue. (Is one t'ing you can say for Anancy: him really don't talk back to him wife. At least, him don't learn how to do it, yet.) Well, now, Anancy wife begin to walk in the other direction, and she puffing and blowing with a whole heap of vexation and woman-temper. Her head is echo-box with all certain t'ings that Anancy was saying to her. When she listening to the echo, she really feeling sick and tired of the life she leading in 'The Beginning'. She walking now near by the serious-serious tree. She hearing a little kind-a-noise up in the branches. Is look she looking up, now. Her neck-string standing up like it full-a-inquisitive muscle and vein. The noise is a long-long snake is a kind-a-voice that saying something in a sing-song sound. Hear is what it saying: 'If you is not satisfied with you lot just come and talk to me! If you is not satisfied with you lot just come and talk to me!'

Now, we must leave Anancy wife alone. It is not a good t'ing to listen to private conversation especially when it involve a married woman and a stranger that up in a tree. We might hear t'ings that make us wish that we didn't listen, at all. (Don't you know is how it go!)

Is go after Anancy we going to go, now. Anancy is far away, by this time. Him walking take him far down to the bottom-side of 'The Beginning'. Is standing up him standing up like him is a sort-a-poet, just looking friendly and sympathetic-like at the running water and the flowers and the breeze and the insects that crawling round him. I say poet because even though that kind-a-person don't make yet, Anancy, in him worries, behaving like that kind-a-person. (All the same, is a good t'ing to remember from now on, that a poet, when the time come to make that kind-a-person, is really a sort-a-worrier — the kind-a-person who fretting all the time about t'ings like running water and flowers and breeze and insects and everything round him. I suppose it is a good kind-a-fretting this fretting is. Who can tell?).

Well, let us see what happening to Anancy, who so far shaping like a poet-person. Him start to talk with Brother Tiger and Brother Dog. Brother Tiger who is a big-big thinker himself, saying in a deep-subjec' voice: 'What to do Brother Anancy! All you have to do is wait and see what going to happen to you wife. You can't jump into her head and direct traffic the way you want it to go. Is her own head, and is her own traffic. She have her own force-a-thought, and her own way to act as she want to. You can't expect to take-

way her free self from her. Free self is property that nobody can ever hope to take charge of, at all. Is property that can only stay one person own.'

Brother Dog who was looking proud-like at all the trees around him, take off him eye from the trees and say: 'I agree with Brother Anancy to the last word. I can understand why him having worry-head over him wife. Now, take me, for instance, I am a straying kind-a-dog, and if my wife was to take it in her head to follow me everywhere and give me worry-head, I would never find me way, no place, at all. Supposing that my wife was to fatigue me with her woman-argument and her woman-desiring, I would live in a spin and twist like when other dogs searching for them tail. Is miseries I would have to eat three-times-a-day for seven days-a-week, not including a double share on Sunday-day-a-rest. Anancy, listen to me, now! I am a dog who is a very old hand in this marriage harness. I know what is what on the subject'. I know that all wife is simply a woman with a deep-deep burning down inside of her that asking for constant cooling and temperature-reading. You see, Anancy, this is how I look at it! Wife is obedience is company is a sort-a-bank-a-love and understanding when t'ings is all correct and easy. Wife is knowing what to put pressure on husband and when to take it off. Wife is a t'ing is patience is a life that must never run jostle with husband's ways-a-life. That is all I have to say on the painful subject!'

Brother Tiger, because him don't learn to growl like a tiger, yet, just look at Brother Dog and look off again in disgust. You see, down this side of 'The Beginning', Brother Dog's ideas is looked upon with plenty-plenty suspicion. Most of the other animals consider Brother Dog as a sort-a-critic who is always trying him best to spoil other people creations, because him can't create anything for himself. Brother Tiger know all this about Brother Dog, so, therefore, Brother Tiger just ignore what Brother Dog saying on the subject' of Brother Anancy wife. After a little bit-a-silence, Brother Tiger say: 'Take what I say already and turn it up and down in you mind, Brother Anancy. There is some consolation in not expectin' too much from others who live round you, in this place. And, remember, you can't set up yourself like a Boss-Man and decide to run others like they is t'ings to order about the place. What I tryin' to say is this: hold on and let what is to happen, happen very natural-like.'

Brother Dog, when him hear these words, simply rock sideways like a ripe-ripe mango on a slender branch, and laugh out loud-loud in Brother Tiger face. Brother Dog is very scornful of t'ings like Hoping and Waiting and Peaceful Manners. In fact, Brother Dog is the sort-a-warmonger that all critics-persons in 'The Beginning' grow up to be. (Is start they start off like promising poet-persons and somewhere in their life, they just dry up like rotten mango on a dead branch. That is the time when they begin to get like Brother Dog — hard and doubtful-like and blind to all the pretty-pretty side of t'ings.)

Hear Brother Anancy, now: 'Brother Dog and Brother Tiger! You is my constant brothers in this place. Any time at all that I want help in my personal matters, I come and visit you down this side of the land. Today, as I come to see you, is a bad-bad day for me, for true. Wife-business is a different sort-a-business to make easy-easy brain-talk, even to good thinking friends like you is to me. But worries is something that I seeming to invent in 'The Beginning'. I seeming to be the first to be the victim of this sort-a-new-t'ing. You know is what my wife just call me, before I come to visit you? She call me 'the conscience for the whole place'. Now, when she say that I just think quiet-like and don't say a t'ing. Whatever she did mean, it can't be something that is

nice-nice at all, or else it wouldn't be coming from my wife. I know so, since she saying it in a sort-a-turn-up-lip-way, like she smelling something rotten. What I want to know is what I must do with this funny-funny feeling that I having about her and me! I want to know what I must do with the feeling that I feeling about my life in 'The Beginning'! Is some black feelings I feeling about everything around me, Brother Tiger and Brother Dog! Is some thinking I been doing, lately. The feeling is like something pressing down on me face and chest. Is a feeling that don't carry no words with it. Is a feeling that make a change in you policy-a-treatment of her. I would make her know right And the t'ing that I can't understand, is that the feelings have some connection with me wife. All the time, I see her figuring big-big in the set-up that the feeling bring to me. Then just as I going to discuss the feeling with her, she turn over on her side and saying that I mad and that she going mad to, if I don't stop torture her. (You see, Brother Tiger and Brother Dog, I think that a husband should share his thoughts and for that matter all his feelings and doubts with him wife. And that is why I turn round to talk to her. May be is only certain t'ings a wife really want to share. What you think? Eh?)'

Brother Dog shake him head two sides and come up with: 'Is the same t'ing I always saying, Brother Anancy! Wife mean one t'ing. She mean sleep-less night-time and a day that full-a-botheration! If I was like you, I would make a change in you policy-a-treatment of her. I would make her know right away that I am the leader of her whole life and that she must follow me or drop out completely.'

Hear Brother Tiger, now: 'Drop out and go where? Tell us that Brother Dog! Where she dropping out and where she going to go? You is always saying t'ings like that. Where must she go when she drop out-a-marriage. You must think before you give advice. Listen me, Brother Anancy! You better leave us and go by yourself and think little harder about you worries and don't take no Dog advice, at all. You do that, right now, and you won't be sorry later on. Go on, Brother Anancy! Think it out alone!'

Well, Anancy walk away from him friends, Brother Tiger and Brother Dog. Anancy hanging him head on one side like a lop-sided bunch-a-bananas in the wind. Him walking and mumbling out him worries. All of a sudden, him begin hearing some words coming from the direction of the serious-serious tree. Him stop short. Him listen. Him move up slow-slow, now. Just as him doing that, him hear him wife voice answering back another voice. Him walk on little further and stand up and shelter himself in the low-low branches of a sour-sop tree. The voices still going on.

Hear is what them saying to one another; first, is Anancy wife voice saying: 'But, if you making out that you know all the answers them, I would like to learn a little of what you know. You make it sound like everything is easy-easy like drinking water out-a-hand by river-side. But how I going to know these t'ings unless you tell me the way to find out?'

Hear the other voice, now 'I tell you, soon enough. 'Member that I was the one that tell you that if you not satisfied with you lot, just come and talk to me? Well, talking is one t'ing and doing as I say, is quite another t'ing! If you is to get anywhere, you have to listen to me and do as I want you to do! Now, first t'ing: you have to eat this luscious-luscious red fruit that I have here between this branch. Second t'ing: you have to make you husband eat some of the same luscious-luscious red fruit. And the third t'ing: you must carry the seeds of the luscious-luscious red fruit with you everywhere you go.

The last t'ing is very important and you must not forget to do it — carry all the seeds of the fruit with you. It don't matter where you find yourself, you must always carry them with you and sow them as go along. Understand!

Anancy wife answer eager-eager, and bowing her head like is a shrine up in the serious-serious tree she visiting. Hear her, now: 'I understand everything. All I want is that Brother Anancy and me have a new kind-a-life. I will do anything that you tell me as long as a change overtake me and me husband. True! I mean it!'

Hear the other voice, now: 'Good! I like your style. I like your thoughts on the subject. You is a very progressive woman. Yes! Very progressive in your head. I like it, plenty-plenty. And as for the change-a-t'ings, well, you will get such-a-change that even you will hardly understand what happen to you old self. Is promise I promise this t'ing. As I wrap round this tree, I hones'ly make a promise to you. I promise you Progress and Change! And when I promise you those two t'ings, you must understand that you is the first to get them, because nobody else ever ask for them, before.'

Hear Anancy wife, now: 'Bite it, that's all, I have to do? Then give Anancy a bite, as well?'

Hear the other voice: 'No! Not bite! You must eat it! Both of you must have more than a bite. Is really a very sweet-sweet t'ing for both of you to do together! But, as you alone is here, right now, you will have to bite and eat a little bit in front of me. I sure that you will really like it. As you taste it, you will want you husband to try it, too. Now, I going pass the luscious-luscious red fruit to you.'

Well, Brother Snake (and we must call him 'Brother' since him helping out a woman, who is in distress) start to make some sliding noise down the branches of the serious-serious tree. Him move slow and easy and just glide through all the leaves like is oil on top of wet grass. Him handing the luscious-luscious red fruit to Anancy wife, now. She taking it from him and her hand shaking little bit. Brother Snake start to smile a snake-smile all over him face. Anancy wife, standing up in her naked state, take the luscious-luscious red fruit and rub it gently on her breast and look like she facing a new sort-a-fire experience with a glowing, hungry heart. Brother Snake feeling like him is the Provider of all Providers of Progress and Change, and him looking to see if Anancy wife going to obey him.

Well, she bite into the luscious-luscious red fruit and juice fly all over her face like fountain-spray. She swallow the pulp and smile come over her right away. She start to move away from the serious-serious tree. She walking now in the direction of where Brother Anancy is standing up and sheltering. She moving like she in a bad-bad trance. Her face start to crease-up into lines across her forehead, and she looking like she know something that making her look so knowing-like. As-a-matter-a-fact, she look like she have a weight of black cloud on her mind. Is her new-new knowledge that making her look so heavy 'cross the forehead. She find Anancy as him start to come out of hiding from the sour-sop tree. Hear her now: 'I know something, but I wouldn't tell a man! I know something, but I wouldn't tell a man!'

Anancy, by this time, is getting hot-neck and excited because him hear everything that Brother Snake was telling him wife. Listen to what him decide to ask him wife: 'What you know that so precious-like? What you know that I don't know already? Come, tell me, now, if you think you have something to boast about!'

Hear Anancy wife: 'If you want to know what I know, you have to take a big-big bite into this luscious-luscious red fruit!'

Then Anancy say: 'Look! You is me own wife and you is not to make terms like you is a stranger come from foreign country to trick me with policy and cute-talk, and all that sort-a-dodge. You must learn to resis' the temptation of Brother Snake, because him don't mean us any good. Can't you see? Him is a snake-faced tree-dwelling sort-a-cold-blooded t'ing that can't come down on the land and find a living like other animals round the place. I been listening to the two of you talking for a long time and I don't trust him, at all. All this talk about Progress and Change is just another one of Brother Snake tricks. I suppose, Brother Snake didn't tell you how him was once-upon-a-time a big-big Angel, and him slip-up bad-bad. As-a-matter-a-fact, Brother Snake slip-up so bad that him was the first t'ing that ever change. Brother Snake change from a big-big shining Angel into the Brother Snake him now is in the serious-serious tree.'

When Anancy talking away to him wife, him mouth was opening and closing like a swing-to door, and Anancy wife take her time and just as him open up again, to talk him talk, she ups and push the luscious-luscious red fruit into him mouth. The force of Anancy mouth closing down on it, just bite off a big-big bit and the juice fly round him face and some even get as far as him ear-hole. (Is by mistake that Anancy bite the luscious-luscious red fruit, but is no mistake, now, how him enjoying the taste.)

Hear him, now: 'Bite is a good t'ing. But I didn't know that it so sweet! Nice-nice for true! Yes. It really nice!'

And just as Anancy saying that, something funny happening. Anancy and him wife start to shiver all over. They shiver so much that they start to look for some outsize leaf to cover up with. Then the blue-blue sky start to look for rain; and the whole of 'The Beginning' start to break-up with giant earthquake; and the serious-serious tree start to wither-up and dead; and the animals start to bark vicious and growl vicious and snarl vicious and hiss vicious. Brother Snake start to laugh louder and louder and louder. Everything is in a crazy movement and sound, now. Anancy and him wife start to run all over the place. They just missing the wild animals as they passing like hurricane leader-wind, up and down. As Anancy wife running, so the seeds of the luscious-luscious red fruit sprinkling all over the place like is farmer-hand doing it. Anancy and him wife run out through the big-big iron gates and begin to head out towards a deep-deep forest. The forest look like it waiting and laughing. It black as night and just stay there waiting for Anancy and him wife. As Anancy wife running, so the seeds just dropping in the forest.

Then the voice of Brother Snake starting to shout loud-loud. Hear the voice: 'Drop all the seeds! Drop all the seeds! Don't worry, I will reap them later! They will all come back to me when the time is ripe for the harvest! Drop them! Drop them! Everything is going alright! You get you Progress! What about you Change? What sort-a-Change you want? Come! Tell me, quick-quick! What sort-a-Change you want?'

But, now is terror-head and panic-head grab poor Anancy and him wife. They see all the wild animals rushing down on them. Anancy look all around, him and him see Lion and Tiger and Elephant and man-eating Lizard and wild Boar and Boa-constrictor and Panther and Jaguar and Buffalo coming fast-fast. Anancy stop and think a little bit. Him feeling a new t'ing running up and down him face and him know right away that this new t'ing named Fear. Him feeling this new t'ing even in the root of him hair and him don't like it at all.

Hear Anancy, now: 'Brother Snake! Brother Snake! Change me and me wife into something small-small! I beg you, Brother Snake! Any thing that really small-small! Anything that will make me and me wife get out of the way of these wild big-big animals that coming down on us! Anything that will make them pass me by and look for fresh meat somewhere else!

Hear Brother Snake, now: 'Alright, Brother Anancy! I going do just that for you and you wife. I going change you into a spider! But I can't spare two spiders. You and you wife will have to be contented to become only one spider and live that way until you both dead in the same body! Is that alright, Anancy? Tell me quick! The animals them catching up on you!

Hear Anancy, now: 'I like what you just say Brother Snake! I like that very much! You just say: "You and you wife will have to be contented to become only one spider and live that way until you both dead in the same body." That is a nice-nice thought, Brother Snake. I thank you for that.'

Hear Brother Snake, again: 'Is you two ready for the change? Give me the word! Just give me the word!'

Then Anancy say: 'Change me and me wife into a spider! Please! A spider is what I want to be so that I can spin a web and catch plenty-plenty fly for me and me wife and we can live far up in the trees where Lion and Tiger and all the others can't put foot! Yes, Brother Snake change as you want, right now!'

And Brother Snake, because him glad that Brother Anancy wife spreading all the seeds of the shining Progress and Change far outside the lands of 'The Beginning', decide to change Anancy and him wife into one single spider.

And, I know that you won't believe me when I tell you; but, from that day until this very hour, this very minute, Anancy and him wife is a spider and the cunning ways that Anancy have is because of him wife; and the pretty-pretty web him spin is because of the poet-person in Anancy own, old-time self. So if you see a Spider web, don't break it too quick without thinking about the nice-nice poem it might be setting down, for you.

(If only we could read what it saying in that fine-fine writing that look like silver-silver fly-away music!).



FIVE MYTHS OF THE YORUBA CREATOR GOD

THE CREATION OF LAND

At the beginning everything was water. Then Olodumare the supreme god sent Obatala (or Orishanla) down from heaven, to create the dry land. Obatala descended on a chain and he carried with him: a snail shell filled with earth, some pieces of iron and a cock. When he arrived he placed the iron on the water, spread the earth over it and placed the cock on top. The cock immediately started to scratch and thus the land spread far and wide.

When the land had been created, the other orisha descended from heaven in order to live on the land with Obatala.

THE CREATION OF MAN

Obatala made man out of earth. After shaping men and women he gave them to Olodumare to blow in the breath of life.

One day Obatala drank palm wine. Then he started to make hunchbacks, and cripples, albinos and blind men.

From that day onwards hunchbacks and albinos and all deformed persons are sacred to Obatala. But his worshippers are forbidden to drink palm wine.

Obatala is still the one who gives shape to the new babe in the mother's womb.

OBATALA IS DESTROYED BY HIS SLAVE

At the beginning there was only one orisha in the world. Orisha had a slave whom he loved well, and who served him faithfully. One day the slave asked Orisha for a farm, and the god gave him a piece of land. The slave made his farm and built himself a hut at the foot of a hill. Orisha often came to rest in the slave's hut. But the slave was wicked and planned to destroy Orisha. One day when the slave saw Orisha approaching in his white gown from afar, he hid on the hill. And as soon as Orisha was approaching the slave hurled down a huge rock from the hill. Orisha was smashed into hundreds of pieces.

When the news of this disaster spread, Orunmila, the divinity of the oracle, went and collected as many pieces as he could. He gathered together more than half. These he deposited in a sacred calabash and he called it "Orisha Nla" — the great orisha. Since that time there are hundreds of smaller orisha in the world.

OBATALA LOSES HIS EYES

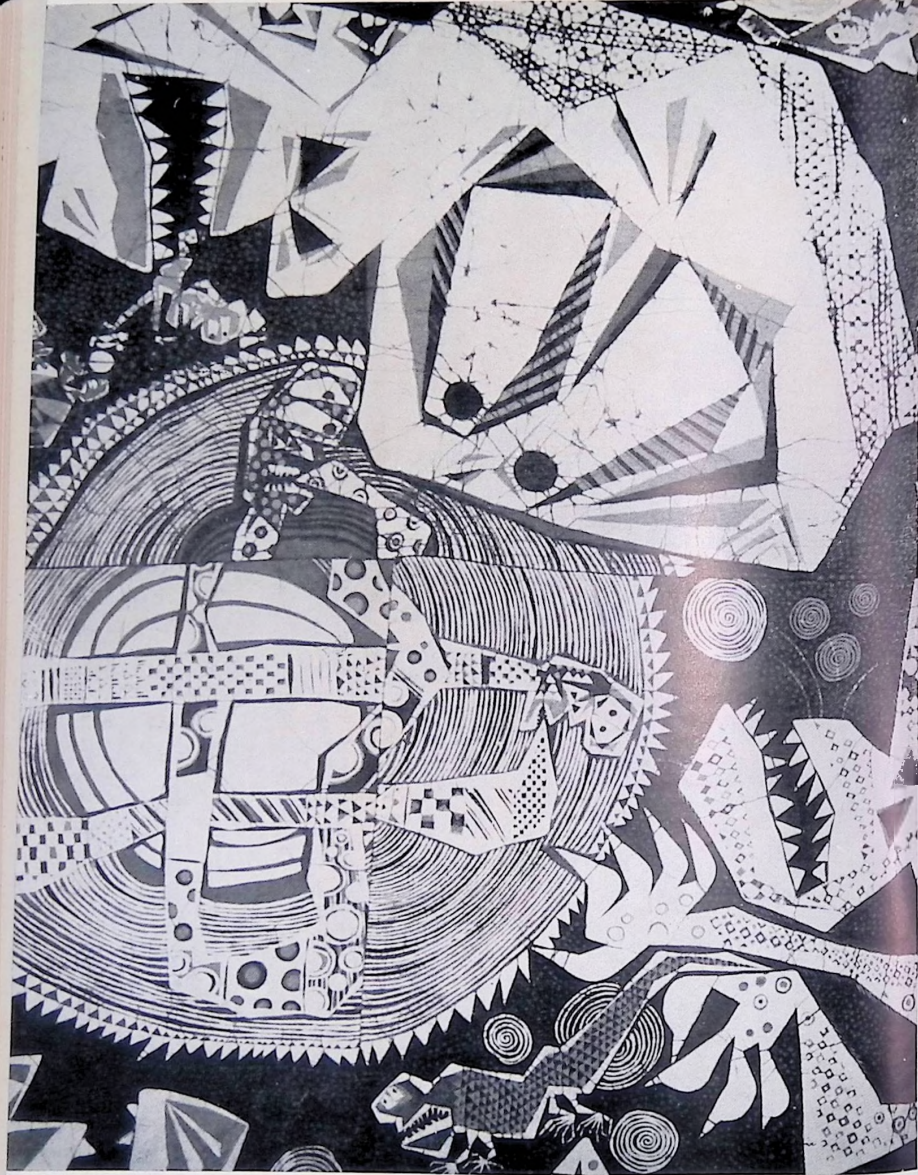
One day Obatala went to bathe in the river and he took out his eyes and the eye sockets and placed them on the river bank. While he was bathing, Eshu the contrary god came and took away the eyes and their sockets. When Obatala came out, he was in great despair because how could he carry out his appointed task of shaping man?

Then the goddess Oshun came and promised help. With her beauty and charm she so bewitched Eshu that he gave her the eyes. Then she went to Obatala and said: I will return your eyes if you will teach me the secret of "merindilogun" (the sacred method of divining with sixteen cowry shells). Obatala did not like the idea but as he needed his eyes he had to give-in.



THE IMPRISONMENT OF OBATALA

A batik by Susanne Wenger. Detail showing the head of Ajagemo, chief priest of Obatala.



The head of Obatala bending down over the scene of the ritual play. Below him, the disc of the sun.

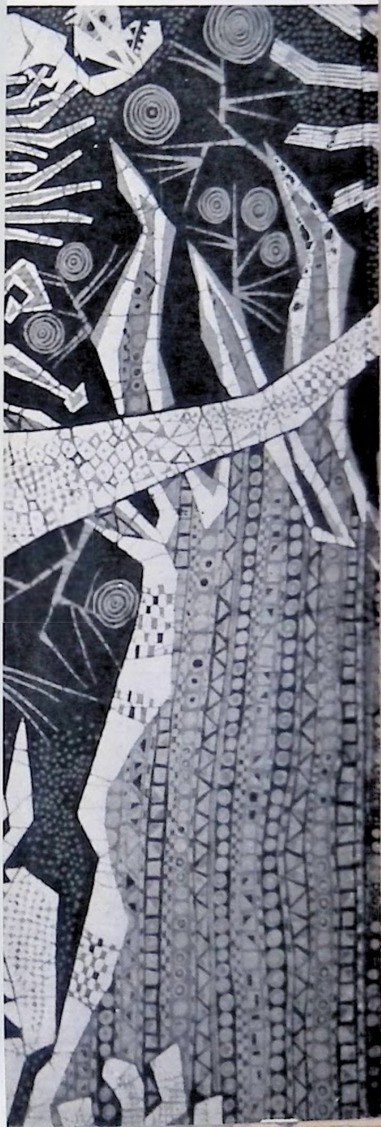
A NOTE ON SUSANNE WENGER'S
RECENT EXHIBITION IN LAGOS

BY SANGODARE AKANJI.

At a recent exhibition in Lagos, Nigerians were able for the first time to get acquainted with the work of Susanne Wenger, the well known Austrian artist who has been living among the Yoruba people in Nigeria for nearly ten years. Much had been written in Nigerian papers about her fabulous life in a Yoruba village and impressive reports of her exhibitions in London and Paris have also reached us here. But this exhibition sponsored by *Nigeria Magazine* in Lagos was our first chance to get acquainted seriously with her work.

The vast stream of visitors to the exhibition were perhaps to a large extent people unacquainted with modern art in any form, many of them were attracted to the show by the legendary personality of the artist, who is said to have penetrated so deeply into the mysteries of Yoruba religion that she has obtained a senior title among the worshippers of Obatala the Yoruba creator god. It is surprising therefore that most visitors were caught nevertheless by the compelling spell of Susanne Wenger's exciting new forms. The general feeling of excited fascination is perhaps best portrayed by the review of the critic of the Lagos "Daily Service" which is worth reprinting here:

"The first impression of this exhibition is both bewildering and exciting. One is not given a chance to contemplate individual works one after the other as one does in other art exhibitions. The whole room is filled with enormous dark toned "adire" cloths. The forms are strange, but before one is even able to recognise or interpret details one has come under the impact of a very intense atmosphere and one is caught by the wild, rhythmic movement of the design. Gradually one begins to get used to the sharp, clearly defined forms of Susanne Wenger's work. From the dynamic agitation on the cloths, details begin to stand out. We begin to recognise figures, human and animal on a lively background of sensitive, fluid pattern. And slowly a whole cosmos begins to unfold. There is Odudua creating the land, and Obatala shaping man. Shango the god of thunder ascends to heaven. Moremi sacrifices her only son and Eshu the god of fate intervenes with the lives of gods and men. We also recognise some of the ancient symbols of Yoruba religion: the leopard who symbolises Soponna the god of suffering, the white elephant of Obatala, the





The head of Obatala bending down over disc of the sun.

fish of Olorun and the intertwined snakes, symbol of eternity. Worshippers dance to the drums, offer prayers, divinate and bring sacrifices. The whole exhibition room seems to pulsate with life and dynamic action. By now we have completely forgotten the strangeness of the forms and designs. What we see is so intense and powerful that it seems more real than the shadowy human visitors to the exhibition.

And now we are confused once more. Is this the world of our fathers that we believed to be exhausted and degenerate, that is suddenly confronting us in a new disguise, full of vigour and energy? Has our traditional culture still so much presence that it could excite and stimulate an important contemporary European artist?

Looking through the reviews of Susanne Wenger's recent European exhibitions I note that her art has aroused considerable interest in Yoruba culture with which her work is so deeply connected. Let us hope that this exhibition in Lagos — her first in this country — will make some of us think again about our cultural heritage. Surely, if traditional Yoruba religion was able to excite an artist of the calibre of Susanne Wenger, it must have something to offer to us as well."

Nobody would quarrel with this sympathetic review that was published under the charming title "Susanne Sees Deeper". But towards the end the reviewer comes dangerously near to expressing the view that Susanne Wenger is a committed artist who *propagates* Yoruba culture. Nothing could be further from the truth; in spite of her deep involvement in Yoruba culture she is far from trying to preach, or to proselytise or even to convince. She has no missionary zeal, her art is rather like a statement of fact, a statement of truth as recognised or felt by her. Ultimately it is unimportant for the onlooker whether Susanne Wenger's art is inspired by Yoruba religion or by something else. Her experience in Yoruba culture merely acts as the driving force, as the source of energy from which she creates. The fact that it is relevant to her does not *necessarily* mean that it must be relevant to us also. What matters to us is that the vitality and rich imaginative mythology of the Yoruba people have given to Susanne Wenger the urgency and compelling energy of her work. Whether the ideas she represents are acceptable to us in themselves or not — we *must* accept the inexorable logic of her work. To me the most fascinating aspect of her work is the fact that it seems to follow its own inherent laws, and that once one has got accustomed to see her very unusual and original forms they seem perfectly *organic* and constructed according to

Detail showing Eshu on horseback and the head of Obatala's white elephant.





THE IMPRISONMENT OF OBATALA

A wax batik by Susanne Wenger. (9 feet 6 inches by 14 feet).



Sango the Yoruba god of thunder ascends to heaven.



some mysterious, creative principle. This consistency and logic in her art she owes, I believe, to her involvement. Her work flows from her life. It is the expression of her personal struggle and endeavour to create for herself a new symbolism by which to interpret her world. This is in sharp contrast to the vast bulk of "modern" artists who merely conform to the official concept of what is considered "progressive" art at the moment. Susanne Wenger stands completely outside this "movement". The intensity and depth of her art grow from the intensity and sincerity of her life — there is no self-conscious *experiment* with fashionable forms.

The most impressive work shown at the recent Lagos exhibition was a large 10 x 14 feet batik executed in the wax method in four colours. On a dark, near black background the drawing is carried out in a very pale yellowish green and the ornament and some of the larger shapes are in indigo and a reddish brown. Each colour is extremely alive playing from cold to warm shades and some areas are broken up by Susanne Wenger's famous ornament designs, others by an evidently deliberate "craquelé" effect produced by thin cracks in the surface of the wax. The design is highly dramatic and contains a lively yet balanced movement. A sweeping movement descends through the long arms of the creator god Obatala who is looking down from the sky. This movement is met and supported by a minor motion surging up from the bottom left and which seems to sweep right through the body of the woman worshipper who supports the central figure, that of Ajagemo, the high priest of Obatala. Ajagemo is represented during the sacred annual play in which he impersonates the god. The play is a representation of the mythical imprisonment of Obatala, a scene which forms a central theme in Susanne Wenger's work, rather like the crucifixion with a mediaeval artist. The violent counter movement from the right hand bottom corner seems to fork out into three different directions. The aggressive sweep of Ajagemo's opponent is caught up by the latter's hands and seems to loose momentum there. Above him one of the two leopards of Sonponna the god of suffering links up with the huge figure of the creator god Obatala. Finally Sango the god of thunder rises in an independent movement to



eing tied by his

Shango the Yoruba god of thunder ascends



heaven, holding the lightening in his hand. The disc of the sun, containing the interlocked snakes with their tails — symbol of eternity — form a calm centre of focus around which the dramatic movement and counter movement is acted out. It is impossible to enumerate the vast amount of mythological detail on this large cloth. In the left hand corner there is the large elephant, one of the symbols of Obatala; the baobab tree, home of the spirit children; and Eshu, the god of fate on horseback.

It is interesting to learn that a lot of the smaller detail is invented while the work is well under way. Only the large figures and scenes are sketched out in charcoal at the beginning. During the many months of laborious painting in wax and repeated dying processes, life itself suggests some of the detail. Thus for example a sacred albino who visited Susanne Wenger's workshop and prayed for her was immediately included on the batik. (See the tiny figure with staff and bell to the left of Ajagemo.) It may be that because of this method of working the fresh impression of spontaneity is never lost, in spite of the discipline the artist imposes on the emotional contents of the work and also in spite of her meticulous attention to detail. No description and amount of photographs can convey the impact of this work. It is a complete world in itself and one can spend hours trying to explore the mystery of it and trying to discover more and more new details. In spite of its passionate and dramatic contents and the angular forms that dash like lightning across the cloth, the movement is so balanced and the colour so subdued, that the over-all impression is calm and soothing. Although this is the first work ever executed by Susanne Wenger in the wax batik method (she has previously employed the Yoruba starch technique known as "adire") it is technically perfect. Frank McEwen, the director of the Rhodes National Gallery, said to me when he was hanging the exhibition: "This batik is like the climax of a century old culture. One can imagine generations and generations of artists perfecting a technique and a form until this is finally the achievement of the perfect expression and the perfect form. It is incredible that such a uniquely original technique and expression should have been achieved in a single life time."



Detail of the imprisonment. The hands of Ajagemo (left) are being tied by his adversary.



The white elephant of Obatala and the baobab tree sacred to spirit children. (Abiku).

OBATALA AND HIS FRIEND SHANGO

Obatala once decided to visit his friend Shango. He consulted the oracle, but the signs were bad. The Babalawo (or oracle priest) warned Obatala not to go, or else great calamity would befall him, or even death. Obatala however insisted on going. The Babalawo recommended a sacrifice that would avert death — but said that Obatala would have to suffer much. He advised him, however, never to protest and never to retaliate. Only in this way could he survive the trip.

Obatala set out on his journey. But he had not gone far, when he met Eshu sitting by the roadside with a pot of oil. Eshu asked him to help him lift the pot on his head. As Obatala did so, Eshu poured the oil over him. But Obatala would not complain. He went to the river and washed. Eshu repeated his trick three times. Still Obatala did not complain.

As he approached Sango's kingdom, Obatala saw his friend's horse which had run away. He caught it; but then Shango's servants appeared and they believed he was the thief! They seized him and threw him into prison.

For seven years there was misfortune in Shango's kingdom. Crops failed. Women aborted. Finally Shango consulted the oracle and the Babalawo said: An old man is lingering in prison. And he is innocent. Then Shango made enquiries and finally discovered that the old man was his friend Obatala. Shango released him at once. He gave him a white cloth and many presents and feasted him.

Obatala, it appears, is a very ancient god. He is much older than the present dynasties of Yoruba kings, who descend from an invading warrior, Odudua. Odudua who came with his men across the Niger, met a flourishing culture which he subdued. But he could not destroy the ancient gods of the original owners of the land. To establish a claim to the land, however, the myth of the creation of land is sometimes told with Obatala's name replaced by that of Odudua or that of Odudua's son Oranmiyan. These are later variants, intended to establish the right of the newcomers.

The invasion is also commemorated in various ritual plays, which take place in different towns at the annual festival of Obatala. In these rituals Obatala is driven out of the town and received back three weeks later in triumph, or else he is taken prisoner in a re-enacted war dance, and again released in triumph. The relationship between the old god and the invaders is also alluded to in the myth about Obatala and Shango. Shango is a son of Oranmiyan and therefore belongs to the invader group. Obatala's imprisonment and release may well represent the conquest and subsequent rehabilitation of the god. The myth also shows much of the character of the god and the cult. Being a "defeated" god, he cannot establish his claim to seniority and superiority over the others by force or by power. He is given recognition for his moral integrity and his great sincerity. His worshippers likewise must conquer through patience and suffering. Therefore in the myth Obatala is told not to "complain or retaliate".

The god's humanity is clearly shown in the creation myth. The account of creation bears superficial resemblance to Genesis in the Bible. But the stern god of the Bible makes everything perfect and the existence of deformed people is not accounted for. Obatala on the other hand takes full responsibility for all human beings, and puts the blame for deformation on himself. That is why albinos etc. enjoy special privileges in his shrine. The Yoruba concept of creation is also more dynamic than the biblical one. Jehova finishes his creation in seven days and retires. Obatala continuously creates every new child in the womb.

In the story about Obatala's destruction, the god is identified with the high god, who is generally distinct from him, as in the creation myth. This story tries to imply that all the orisha (Yoruba deities) are one. That they are merely aspects of the same divinity. This is a concept that may often be lost sight of by the average worshipper, but which is certainly present in the mind of all the senior priests.

Ulli Beier.



SIX POEMS

POETA

He was a builder
on the shores of dreams
and his tools were sharp
for the metaphysical stone

He sharpened his eye
on womanhood's fine body

And sharpened his wit
on their ultimate despair

With the metaphysical claw
the heart was torn
from the metaphysical breast
and blood was free

He was called a woman killer

But himself
he said he was only trying
to paint a picture

So the castles rose
on metaphysical shores
as old pride was crushed
and fell

SANSKRIT

Winter went
with the metal chill

But I don't know yet
what it means

The weather is black just the same
but they treat it good

You don't know when
and you don't know where

Noise is no noise
just black sound

And they live by it
and they die by it

And they kill you by it too
just black sound

This black weather
that they treat so good

CALICO, CALICO

The rib is fluted
but its song is lost

The *she* came forth
a natural woman

Was that the misery
was that all of the sin

No shame at all
until she brought it

It's like the wind
but her hair is free

O woman woman
with two wild manes

A DITTY FOR YOUTH

I went to the well and I went to the well
and the well was a place for water

But if I went to hell, the black man's hell
it's just another gutter

My old mammy wept and a sister shouted
but the fall I knew would be final

For hell is black as my own bung-hole
to deny it would be banal

So I roasted and spewed in the smelly dark
and bore my lot like a martyr

For the game is up from the hour of birth
thank the white man for cornbread and water

OF LAMBENT YEARS

It was said that the time was ripe
aye, that there might perchance
even be a touch of decaying

The color of the time
was the color of just such a fruit
hanging beyond its season

And who would pluck it
aye, who would pluck it, this fruit
hanging, as it was said, past season

Aye, when it was said
that it harbored petulant seed
to blight all subsequent seasons

CATALOGUE CATALOGUE CATALOGUE

Old devil gnawed me
early as I can think back to

No fiddle can cut his old gizzard
all the way out

Because this sin they call it was deep
as the womb I came out

My old Godmother's wand
had a pronged tail and was red as fire

That old devil is eating
in my guts right this minute

Seeing that yellow gal
swaying those hips like horses

Watching from under my eyelids
that tail of hers bright as honey

She acting up now like she never know
such a thing as the old devil
ever was

ARGUMENTS AND VOICES

A CHAPTER FROM AN UNPUBLISHED NOVEL

BY CYPRIAN EKWENSI

They caught the launch at Koton Karifi and steamed down the Niger past Idah, bearing South till they anchored off Onitsha. Soon afterwards they were driving the recording van out of the ferry and along the stony road to Nkwelle. Altogether they had slept two nights on the way and on this — the third afternoon — Alfred was already fretting about recordings for the programme. He was glad he had already written letters in advance and sent word by mouth so that by now his visit must be widely circulated.

As soon as the van turned into the road that lay through the woods, Alfred Nkito immediately felt exposed to a nakedness and loneliness he had not known since childhood. It struck him with the biting sharpness of a gust of cold wind. It was as though his sophisticated personality — a coat he normally wore — were ripped off his back, laying bare the true earthiness of his substance. Here was his own naked home with the mud and thatch houses, the cassava and the cocoyams, the banana and the orange trees. Indeed, God had blessed the land with fruit trees, all spreading their fronds overhead and casting cool shadows under which the young girls played.

With a catch in his throat Alfred noticed the girls in any number and remembered what his mother had said about Ifoma. Were these, then, the girls 'for marriage'? He looked at them with admiration, all of them firm of breast and wide of hip (without the aid of rubber corsets), banding together in groups, costumed, rehearsing no doubt the songs they had prepared for him to record. He could hear their chatter and their giggles as their arguing voices rose above the steady hum of the van.

And now as they turned the corner Alfred saw the children. Innumerable children. Children carrying children on their backs and mothering them and fathering them. Children crying while the dogs and the bleating goats ran across the motor road. Children who learnt quite early in life the important ties of blood and tribe. *This is your sister. Tear her a bit of the mango. That is your brother. Give him the bow and arrows and let him shoot.* They grew up firmly bound together, reserving vacant posts for their brothers and relations, prosecuting only non-brothers; helping their brothers and cousins escape the law. They rallied loyally around their fathers, mothers, uncles, sisters, in-laws, nephews, nieces, the whole family tree, the whole tribe. Alfred who had lived

away from home was sometimes glad that he could look with a hint of amusement on so much narrowness. If he began to count his near and distant relations and to subscribe to every good cause which they thought about, he would never survive. It was good to be hidden away two hundred miles up-river at Kwarra.

He rallied his drifting thoughts. Your problem Alfred, he reminded himself, is to capture the soul of this village in the medium of DRUMS and VOICES.... Drums that talk and drums that whisper. Drums that dance, and drums that cry, drums that fight and drums that love. Get also the voices of the young, the girls under the trees, the raconteurs.... Forget for a moment that you are one of them. Divest yourself of that illusion immediately and let your artistic conscience take command.

They came first to Ifite, the first of the five villages that comprised Nkwelle, situated under the trees, near the *Iyi-Oji* oracle. This was the Black Oath which made laws and administered justice to the people. Alfred quickly made a note. "Must get the Black Oath priest to speak."

When they had driven into the village of Ifite they were met by a group of young dancers with jingling anklets and plumes in their hair. These young men blockaded the road and the van slowed down while they sang praises of Ekwensi Okaka the chief of the village. They led Alfred to the house built by the *Eze* of Nkwelle and said that before DRUMS AND VOICES could be allowed to do any work at all Alfred and his men must be received for it was not a common thing for programme men to come to the village to publicise them.

They produced two goats, one white — for good luck and long life. Alfred followed them into a room where men were seated in their titled costumes wearing hats with eagle feathers in them or straps on their ankles to indicate their *oze* or chieftaincy grade. Although it was day, a hurricane lamp burned in the corner and the air was thick with chattering voices and pungent vapours of fermenting palm wine.

The man who led them stopped at a table placed in the centre of the room. He looked round and the gleam in his eye commanded a silence. Alfred leaned against a wall and waited.

"Friends!"

"Listen on, listen all. He speaks."

"Friends!"

"Heh!" came the throaty reply.

"Friends, welcome!"

"Heh!"

"Friends, welcome!"

"Heh!"

The words echoed and faded. The speaker's eyes still roved the multitude.

"Friends, brothers! I have little to say. Brothers. Today is a great day. Something is about to happen among us. Look at this young man." He placed a hand on Alfred's shoulder. "Our own brother. He has come. He has brought with him machines with the power to take away what we say and what we do. What he will take, will spread our name and put our doings before the world. Is that not good?"

"Heh! It is good."

"Welcome!... Brothers, it is a great day. We must give of our best."

He paused, looked round, and continued. Alfred was uneasy in the stuffy room.

"Brothers, hear me! A day like this one does not wake every day and find. We must mark it. We must show our son that he is of our blood. Alfred Udenze Nkito, that's how we know him. You all know his father well, and his mother and his brothers and sisters; you remember Udenze as a little boy before his father went to live abroad. Since Udenze became a man, he has not been home. Today we see him for the first time after many years away from home and we salute him in his big work. We salute him. Do we not?"

"God Bless!"

"Welcome."

"All is with God."

Alfred Udenze Nkito listened. He felt an inexplicable inner joy in his heart, and the liquid threat of tears which — as a man — he must force back by blinking. His throat felt raw and thirsty.

And when the speaker had done, Alfred rose. He thanked his people. He promised that if they would but help him, he would tell the story of Nkwelle to the whole world, in a way that no man before him had done.

He watched them pour the milky-white wine from the demijohns, sprinkling it first on the earth, that the *Iyi-Oji* might drink. And the big gourds were tilted so that the liquid followed into the drinking horns.

They offered him wine in a gourd and he took it in both hands and drank the wine of his own earth and felt the feeling of his own people.

Then he said: "We have work to do."

But they said, "Today? No, our son; we must have time to make ready. Where are the drummers? Where are the singers. . . . And besides, you have come a long way. Let us drink today and rejoice. Tomorrow we shall summon all the singers and the drummers and the story tellers. We shall meet on the mission ground. All Nkwelle shall meet."

The atmosphere was thick with the smell of human bodies, of pungent palm wine and burning tobacco leaf. Alfred lingered within it and was glad.

Next evening they drove to the mission compound. that is to say, they crawled. Nkito overheard the van driver complaining to the recording engineer that the radiator was boiling from being driven in first gear up-hill at one mile an hour for two hours.

On the field the three thousand people waited impatiently, mainly in groups. Fetishmen and hunters, farmers and masqueraders, school-children and young women each group breaking out in a sudden chorus of drums and voices. These indeed were the DRUMS AND VOICES of the people. Alfred Nkito felt now that here at last was the invisible listener beyond the microphone. His coming to Nkwelle had long since passed the 'recording tour' stage. It had become an event. He wished that by some magic Ifoma and Odugo could be there.

Ifoma to bask in his glory and Odugo to weep and try to ruin matters for him. He prayed that the recording machines would not let him down: no false recording speeds, no blank tapes carried home from a total distance of some five hundred miles. He was glad he had booked the van in good time and that the engineers in Nkwarra had spent at least three days servicing the machines.

He immediately foresaw one problem; noise. Excitement. In their anxiety to please him the people would ruin things. That was quite certain. Success would ultimately depend on a firm but tactful handling. But how? To control this multitude? Impossible. His heart sank as he contemplated the fantastic assembly before his eyes.

They had come from the very ends of the earth. From Amaenyi; from Ezikwelle; from Amuche; from Amagu; from Ifite; they were all here. No one was left at home. There were women whom he had seen in the morning carrying baskets on their way to the farm; but now they were transformed dandified beings with bright cotton-print costumes as the uniforms that held them together in their age-groups and societies. Nkito identified them all — the singing girls who had been born in the same year, had been dis-virgined around the same time, were circumcised, married, suckled their children at the same time. The cementing substance went much deeper than the superficial print costume.

He saw the king's hunters, the *Egbeni Oba*, who were dressed in a wierd assortment of leopard skins and baboon skins. They carried their weapons, spears, hunting knives, dane guns. Oh! Nkito groaned. . . . These were more than radio subjects. They were television material. How could the listeners — even the most imaginative — ever hope to 'see' these able-bodied men in all their enthusiasm?

As soon as he got down from the van, he mingled with the crowd, looking around for a suitable spot where he could place the microphone. He and the engineer finally decided to use the school hall. They put the microphone in the middle of the hall, but this did not happen until after Nkito had been shown round. All the people present, men, women, masquaraders, children, all three thousand of them, insisted on shaking Alfred's hand. After smilingly enduring the first five hundred, he disappeared. Certainly he had not neglected the elders. He had gone up to where they sat on benches placed in a semi-circle and for a while he had stood before them, looking at their dark imposing hats and watching how they held the staffs and the spears leaned on them.

He was glad then. And now he recalled the delicate moments when he had been confronted with the women. The soft hands, the scented air, the sweet skins bedewed with perspiration. And then the coarse hands of the youths, the gleaming eyes and flashing teeth.

While he was shaking hands, the recording engineer ran towards him.

"Alfred! . . . They're fighting over the mike! They'll damage it!"

Alfred out short his civilities. He ran straight across the field to the school hall where he had planted the mike. A big man in a white flowing gown had seized the standing mike and was holding it high above his head like one who intended to bring it down with effect on all and sundry.

"Who speaks of being recorded! My group comes first!"

"No, not yours! We first gave our names! Go and check on the list!"

Alfred seized the flowing gown. "I beg you!"

"But I'm recording first!"

"So you are; but just put down the mike!"

There was no silence, only increased confusion.

"How can he be first. It was our group you promised to record first. Have you forgotten?"

"Quite so, but I beg you let's put that mike down . . . If it gets spoilt that's the end!"

A group of women outside began parading up and down the field carrying a banner which they waved in an angry manner. Alfred understood that this was a mild demonstration against his unfair play. UWADI BE ORAEFO SINGING PARTY, Alfred read in gold letters on a crimson background. The women yelling out their own carefully rehearsed piece and if no one was bothering

to record them it was of no interest to them. The sun caught the striking mixture of real Indian Madras — yellow, black-striped, red with dark bands, their carefully combed out hair, the blazing cotton prints. Women had always been a force in Ibo country, Alfred mused, remembering the political riots.

"Wait! Let's take you on one by one."

A man was tugging at his elbow.

"This is the speech I have prepared!" he shouted, and Alfred turned and before he could protest: "It is to deal with the great oracle, the *Black Oatà*, *Iyi-Oji*." Alfred looked on, helpless.

"The *Iyi-Oji* is a famous juju worshipped by the Nkwelle Ezumaka people. It is situated in the village of Ifite and has a priest who officiates during its worshipping. It is represented by broken gourds, and bottles. Otherwise it is invisible to the people. It owns and inhabits a very large compound surrounded by big trees. Anyone who touches its property must die. It has a wonderful stream surrounded by Kola nut trees which were not planted by anybody..."

Alfred kept cutting in: "Yes! . . . Good! . . ."

The speaker's words were lost in the shouting. But he did not seem to care. Alfred tried to tear himself away, but with a vicious grip the reader pinned him down, shouting aloud his lines. "The *Iyi-Oji* oracle kills only a person who steals or one who takes the oath dishonestly (he runs mad before his death). This *Iyi-Oji* is a protector of our humble village from disease, pestilence and — ?"

There could be no silence, Alfred thought helplessly. There could be no order. He was in complete despair. Fortune, he thought, had a way of smiling at him and just when he stretched out his hand to receive his gift, she turned her back and vanished. Oh God, he prayed, let it not be that way today. I must show my powers of organisation.

He called the recording engineer.

"Please make a recording of this noise going on — just as it is. We shall play it back to the leaders. . . ."

It was about 3 p.m. when he said this and the sun was hot. Sweat was running down into the tail of his shirt. About five minutes later the engineer came back to the school hall and told him the tape was ready for playback.

Nkito went. He took three leading men with him. He played back the tape to them. They listened.

"What's this?" they asked, horrified.

"Your noise!"

"Impossible! You took us without notice!"

"It's what went into my machine."

"God!" cried one of them, "That machine knows no one, not even the Governor! So all this noise we make will go in?"

"Oh, yes! If you want me to take away noise — "

"No, no, no!" The man in the white robes waved his arms. "Friends! . . . Brothers! . . . Our name is ruined. Our name ruined! Finished!" He held his head in his hands and shed genuine tears. "We are shamed. If we do not come together like men now and give of our best, we are gone! Cancelled from the books of the world. Let us stop all this haggling now, I beg you; let us stop!"

He looked round the multitude. "Oracfo, where are you? Ofodile, where are you? Singing women, where are you all? Come, let us plan together. Here is what we must do. Are you here yet? Come together, night comes."

After this it was like the calm after a storm. One after the other, in strict studio manner, they sang. The king's huntsmen, the *Egbeni Oba*, the *Egwu Ogenz*, the *Etiyelu Ogwu* players, the women with their songs of the beautiful fish, *Egwu Asa*, the dreaded and horrifying song of the Oracle, the Black Oath.

Alfred continued recording till well past six in the evening. Then they took the van to the inner sanctum of the Chief's compound and there they continued to gather material on the town of Nkwelle on the *Iyi-Oji* oracle, on the days in inter-tribal wars. They were shown the broken mud walls that had not been rebuilt for fifty years.

Now, thought Alfred, I belong. I am serving the people. There is real joy in all this but it is hidden somewhere and I cannot find it. He did not notice when the hands of the clock crept to 11 p.m. Still he did not feel tired. He had reached the stage where work becomes sheer pleasure and the only consideration is finishing the immediate task in hand.

He was all in by two in the morning. But the driver who had been sleeping all along was fresh as new corn. He leapt promptly to his feet and tapped each man on the head. "The ferry is at six!"

They drove through the morning mists. Alfred could not help feeling mystified when the car passed near the woods. The *Black Oath* lay there, all-powerful, lonely and silent. Was this guardian of the five villages sleeping now? A chill crept along his spine as he wondered whether it took on human form after midnight. They passed through Amuche village. The headlights of the car caught a number of fat cows belonging to the *Black Oath*. They were tabu. Anyone who in any way molested with them or interfered with their freedom, died an inexplicable death. Their van slowed down and the driver gently coaxed them into the bush.

Alfred felt again that sense of awe which he thought he had left behind him since childhood. There must be something in this inexplicable ageless god of the Nkwelle people. Not even the Catholic Mission, a few hundred yards away, had succeeded in routing the *Iyi-Oji* from the forested stream that was its stronghold.



DEVELOPMENT OF THE LITERARY IDIOM IN HAITI

BY MIRIAM KOSHLAND

What is authentic Haitian literature? The question is not easy to answer. The fact that a novel is written by a Haitian does not make the novel authentically Haitian. Although French and American literary trends have influenced the Haitian writer, and although many acceptable novels and poems have been written⁽¹⁾ under French and American direct or indirect influences, nevertheless, Haiti, with few exceptions, has not yet produced an original national literature. It is not subject matter alone but style, language and analytical development of thought that must be considered in the classification of a national literature, in the sense that the novel must draw from the history, economy, social, cultural and spiritual background of a country and the life of a specific people. In addition to this, the artistic creation and working-out of the material needs above all an inner clarification of the artist towards himself and his homeland, a perspective of a given reality.

Long before the concept of *négritude* was discussed in Paris, the Haitian intellectual had tried to find out whether his cultural roots were tribal-African, French or Amerindian. Since it is only 150 years ago that Haiti became a free country, the literary tendencies emerging from the ravages of history were, naturally, militant, describing and often magnifying the battle for Haitian independence.

We find in Haitian literature from about 1804—1934 (American occupation 1915—1934) the ambivalent tendencies between the desire for identification with either Africa or France. The longing for Africa had, in its first stages, a rather mystical attraction which, however, has undergone changes in the past years by identification on other levels as well. We must bear in mind that after Haiti liberated itself from France in 1804, in the hearts of many educated Haitians France has for a long time remained the country of superior culture whose language had been adopted by Haitians and whose culture and literary style were imitated at first.

When Haiti became independent, 99% of the people were analphabets and the task for the Haitian writer to discover his authentic personality was tremendous. Haitian literary experiments started 30 years after independence when Ignace Nau published his creole tales. The first novel by a Haitian was written in 1859 by Emeric Bergeaud, *Stella*; and this was followed in 1872 by Demesvar Delorme's *Francesca*. Neither could be called truly Haitian since they borrowed too much from France.

With Amedée Brun the Haitian novel was born in the sense that this writer tried to analyze the essence of Haiti — the soul of the Haitian people. This last writer does not borrow any French decorum or express nostalgia for another country, neither does he paint any exotic landscapes, but he describes a Haitian reality by projecting the reactions of MAN into the Haitian climate. Frédéric Marcelin (1848) however, was the first important Haitian novelist in the sense that he had a larger perspective to Haitian problems and he was even the first Haitian writer who wrote with a good deal of scepticism in regard to the development of his own country. Antoine Innocent, Justin Lhérisson as well as Fernand Hibbert were born in 1873 and form a most important literary trio as the forerunners of the later novelists such as Jaques Roumain, Pierre and Philippe-Thoby Marcelin and others.

By 1915, Haiti had reached an important phase in its literary achievements. With the writers grouped around the literary magazine "La Ronde" writing with great concentration, a new event occurred in Haiti's life causing a catastrophe for the people of Haiti and its writers in particular. In 1915, American Marines started to occupy the country resulting in years of insecurity and disorder, and the trauma of those years is unfortunately still felt today. A number of books and essays were written during and after the American occupation, in an attempt either to accept American education and modernization — American style — or rejecting it. At the same time "latin" influences were discussed, and also rejected in an attempt to rediscover Africa; the result, in poetry, has been with very few exceptions a poetry without any style, and very trite, such as for instance:

Et, je ne sais pourquoi,
je voudrais être ce soir
l'ancêtre hirsute
qui jadis, dans le mystère et la brousse
dansait, ignorant, libre et nu.

(Claude Fabry)

Since writing in French Romantic style was no longer meaningful, and novels of this time such as Laleau's *Le Choc* or Stéphen Alexis *Le Nègre Masqué*, the books of Felix Courtois and Jean Baptiste Cineas are today rather out-dated, less for the subject matter than for their style.

If the Haitian had considered himself, till the American occupation, as a dark coloured Frenchman, Dr. Price-Mars' book *Ainsi parla l'Oncle* (1928), had tremendous influence upon his contemporaries; writers started to draw from their African heritage, and pride now took the place of shame or ignorance. The greatest importance of this book was, that it brought to the Haitian as well as to the outside world the traditional ethnography of Haiti and as a result Haitian intellectuals and writers have a new focus point for their work and this book had as a sequel a kind of intellectual revolution in the fields of literature, music, painting and philosophy. These years are the historical predecessors to what Sartre later on termed "négritude". But whereas Dr. Price-Mars⁽²⁾, one of Haiti's most eminent scholars, and his circle worked for a renaissance of Afro-Haitian traditions and the use of Créole as a generally accepted language, Dr. Dantes Bellegarde⁽³⁾, the equally world-famous Haitian scholar and contemporary of Dr. Price-Mars, stated in regard to French or Créole literary expression: "Créole is a local idiom that is spoken and understood by a small number of individuals only" (in comparison with other languages). (*Haiti et ses problèmes*, p. 45).

Créole has always been spoken and is still spoken by EVERYBODY in Haiti, by the peasants as their only tongue of communication and by the literate people and the intellectuals amongst themselves, as a more intimate language than French. Today, tendencies to write in Créole are very strong again, the poets Émile Roumer and F. Morisseau-Leroy write most of their poems in Créole and Morisseau-Leroy has also written a number of plays in Créole. His *Amigone* has been recently played with considerable success at the Théâtre des Nations in Paris.

The number of writers in Haiti is staggering particularly with regard to a small audience. Harold Courlaender⁽¹⁾ writes that "everybody in Haiti sings" and August Viatte⁽²⁾ that "every Haitian is a born poet", though we must not take this too literally. It is true that Haitians used to sing and occasionally still do, in the sense that most people like to sing; but the voices of the Haitian singers are today shrouded and silent in misery and hunger and not everybody having produced a slim volume of verses is a poet.

Since Haiti is a bilingual country, its people speaking either Créole or French and Créole, and where 90% of the people are still illiterate, the novelist and poet face truly staggering problems, which must be solved one way or another and in which the writers will play an important part.

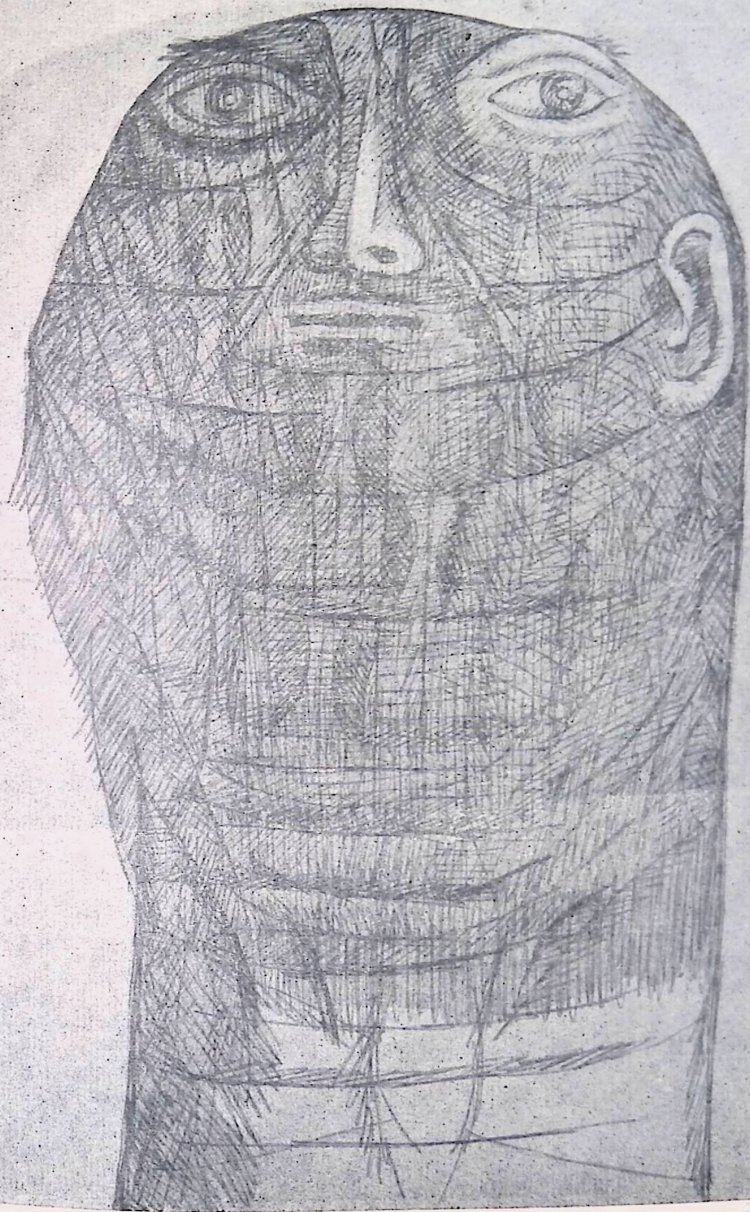
The novel in the twentieth century

The number of poets in Haiti surpassed by far that of the prose writers, perhaps the novel necessitates a more methodical way of thought and organizing of material. We shall now turn for a moment to those writers who formed "l'École des Griots" and the literary magazine *Les Griots* which, together with *La Revue Indigène* and *Optique* (all no longer in existence), became one of the highlights in Haitian literary publication ventures. The circle of writers included — to mention but the most important ones — Philippe-Thoby and his brother Pierre Marcelin whose novels are always written together, Anthony Lespès, Jean F. Brière, Roussan Camille, René Belance, and the most brilliant and genial of all Haitian writers during and long after this epoch: Jacques Roumain (1907-1944). After Jacques Roumain had published *Les Fantoche*s and *La Montagne Ensorcelée* (both 1931) his posthumous novel *Gouverneur de la Rosée* made him world famous, having been translated into 17 languages. This brilliant writer, ethnologist, linguist and politician, who had such a tremendous influence and impact upon Haitians of all social classes and writers, still today, so many years after his death, extends his influence to Haitians belonging to even very adverse social and political strata. Roumain's stories *La proie et l'ombre* tried to express the "collective soul" of Haiti, his novel, *Les Fantoche*s caricatured politicians, unable to adapt themselves to a prevailing acute world situation and *La Montagne Ensorcelée* evokes the mysticism of the Haitian peasant. In 1934, Roumain founded the Communist Party in Haiti, was exiled and travelled for many years abroad, was recalled to his homeland in 1941, established the Ethnological Museum, fought for Voodoo religion against the clergy, then was sent as Ambassador of Haiti to Mexico and returned to Haiti deadly ill, to die in 1944 a most idiotically premature and tragic death.

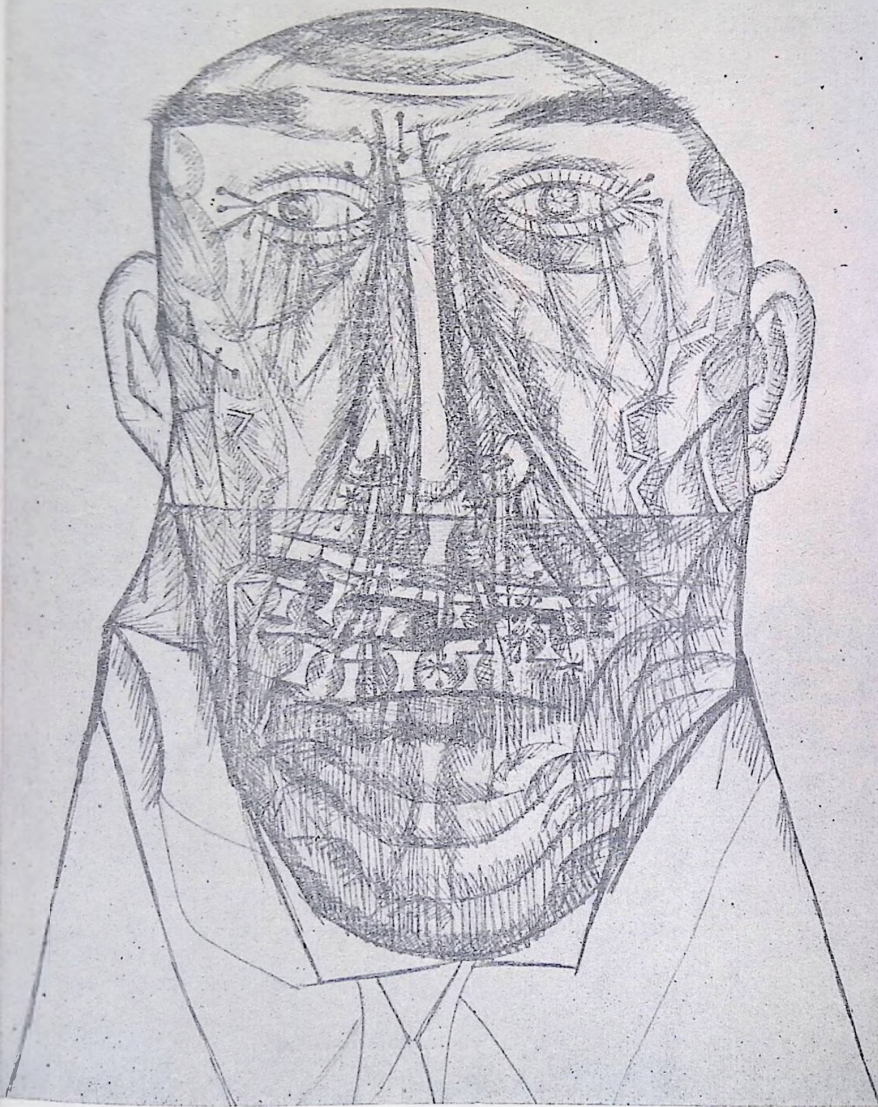
Under the influence of Jacques Roumain an entirely new school of writing developed in Haiti: Pétion Savain, Maurice Casséus, Edris Saint-Amand, the brothers Marcelin, Anthony Lespès and other writers and poets tried to express

(Continued on page 53)

Souza 53



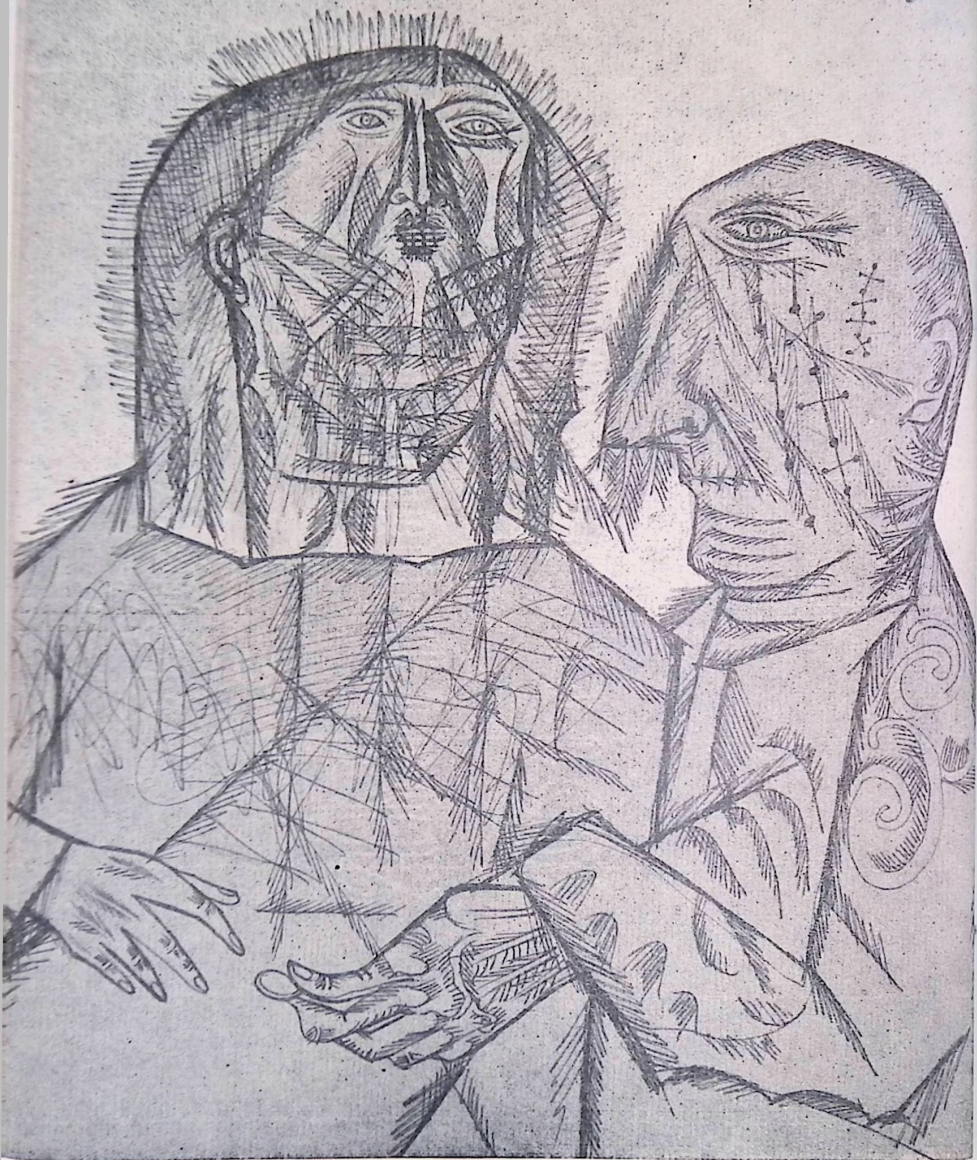
047a 55



Jonza 55



Souza 1985



(Continued from page 48)

their political and social ideas in the form of the novel or poem. Philippe-Thoby and Pierre Marcelin mainly use "folk-motives" as a basis for their novels (which received a number of prizes and a Guggenheim Award); their style is vivacious, allegro, witty, not very analytical, rather remaining on the surface in characterization. Anthony Lespès with his only novel *Les Semences de la Colère* has written an important socio-political document that shows his great talent as a writer and brilliant thinker, the range of his vision, however, slightly obscured: the book is brilliantly written but dogmatic, bitter, dry, filled with idealism for the realization of a society that would fight together for the same goal, against the "pariahs", against the "intelligence of the élite never able to understand". Edris Saint-Amand has published only one novel so far but is working on two others; his style is sensitive and restrained and he has a great discipline in writing. Except for Jack Stephen Alexis, of whom we will speak in a moment, Haitian writers and poets have arrived at such a deadlock, such almost total sterility that can be understood only from the acute reality of Haiti: poverty the constant worry and struggle for a daily bare frugal existence, insecurity and persecution which has led into deep depression and lack of creative productiveness.

If Jacques Roumain's book *Gouverneur de la Rosée* was, 15 years ago, the most important novel written by a Haitian, Jacques Stéphen Alexis is today the most gifted and brilliant young writer on any universal level of comparison. To compare him to any other writer makes little sense, to say that his analytical observations and explorations of the human mind are extraordinarily perceptive seems merely trite, to state that his power of verbosity is volcanic, vehement, violent, radiant and at the same time tender, reminding at times of Thomas Wolfe and his prose-poetry and evoking the song-poetry of medieval poets, all this would be a generalization. To label Alexis as an authentic Haitian writer would again put a limitation to his work; although his genius in painting Haitian landscapes and people as not even Jacques Roumain was able to do, to call him therefore a "national" writer would be a false classification. Although the people in Alexis' novels are authentically Haitian, nevertheless, or because of it, their problems are universal problems, linked and connected to certain acute Haitian questions, but extending into basic situations people all over the world have to solve. Each new book by Alexis explodes like a bomb on the literary landscape and like the prophet ignored or defamed in his own country, Alexis is much more recognized as a brilliant writer abroad. The reasons for this are obvious: the Haitian middle-class or pseudo-intelligentsia does not care to read such novels, they are not "refined" enough for their poor banal middle-class taste and the writers — those who are now silent — are, perhaps, slightly jealous of a talent so brilliant, versatile and deeply honest in the projection of his country in the frame of the novel and most important-honest with himself. Alexis' mastery of language and style surpasses that of Jacques Roumain: at times written in the rhythm of the Meringue, his is not only the mastery of a beautiful poetic language but a prose containing the music of Haiti.

The poets

Since Dr. Price-Mars' book *Ainsi Parla l'Oncle* and his numerous other writings, the younger Haitian poets turned almost entirely towards Africa in

their orientation and it needed a Langston Hughes to remind them that "the oppressed peoples are not only composed of the black peoples but also by men of white, brown, red and yellow color". Roussan Camille (1915) probably the most "Bohemian" among the Haitian poets became famous overnight with his poem *Nedje* which was translated into many languages. Camille belonged to the group of poets like Jean-F. Brierre, Philippe-Thoby Marcelin, René Belance, but has separated himself from them — or they from him — and he lives in a vacuum of illness, alcoholic mists and little current poetic creativity and utter isolation from his former friends. His great force of expression, lyrical language and depth of feeling can be studied best in his poems for Jacques Roumain and Pablo Neruda. Regnor C. Bernard (1915) and Jean-F. Brierre (1909) belong to the same generation as Camille. Whereas Regnor Bernard must be classified among the more militant Haitian poets, he has not written much and from a promising start abandoned, more or less, work as a poet. Jean-F. Brierre is, besides Magloire Saint-Aude — however on an entirely different level — the most important Haitian poet today still writing. Brierre is tremendously erudite, far-travelled, his poetry is not limited to militant, anti-colonial, anti-racial poetry, but he has written very moving and beautiful poetry, besides a novel that will be published soon. If he uses, in his earlier poems, mainly Haiti subject matter such as the suppression of the Negro by the Mulatto or the White, or the class struggle in Haiti and all over the world, his desire for liberation from colonialization is not used as an end but as a means for an INNER liberation. Brierre, like Jacques Roumain, is a true national poet with the widest international education and general outlook on life.

René Depestre (1926) writes mainly revolutionary socialist-oriented poetry, his work is subjected to his social and political life, the poet lives and works now in Paris.

Léon Laleau (1892) and Milo Rigaud (1904) were important poets at their time, even if today the younger Haitians no longer appreciate much of this poetry. If Milo Rigaud (who is the most important Haitian scholar on Voodoo tradition and comparative philosophy) uses in his poems predominantly Afro-Haitian themes — apart from some superbly beautiful lyrical poetry — Léon Laleau counterpoises impressionist-French notations with exotic Haitiana. When the poet lived in Paris, he wrote nostalgic verses, singing the beauty and tradition of Haiti and if Laleau lives in Haiti, he remembers Paris. His poetry is a good example for two trends of poetry following the first world war: love poetry in a classical lyrical style — or as in *Musique Nègre*, themes of Voodoo, Negro influences in the New World and Western influences in the Antilles expressed in a kind of American-Jazz idiom: witty, sarcastic not to say sardonic at times, on the other hand Laleau's facility in verse writing makes his poetry often trite; today these verses are rather passé and important only as a style in poetry of the past, too pretty, too superficial, not too original.

Emile Roumer (1903) is still one of Haiti's major poets, writing either in very elegant French or Creole about the small incidents of every day life in Haiti, historical events or poems of folkloric content. Carl Brouard (1902) is perhaps the most Haitian of Haiti poets, belonging to this older generation. His subject matter is mainly a desire to return to Africa or to sing Africa, his is a simple poetry, without any intellectualizing.

Magloire Saint-Aude (1902), the most tremendously gifted and interesting of Haitian contemporary poets has, because of his disdain for society, arrived at a state of complete isolation. In his life, as well as his work, he flees a

society for which he has no use and arrives at a passionate negation of every-thing. The result is a dreadful inner loneliness, a complete desolation, a vacuum of indefinite absolute nothingness. His poems are tremendously difficult to understand by a public used to banalities. In *Dialogues de mes Lampes* the poet uses symbols and juxtapositions of light and shadow, dead desires, lost joys, there is nothing left to him, not even curiosity. In his poem *Larme* (sans Dieu livide...) he expresses the inner night, utter desolation. The heart still is "fragile" i.e. the heart of the poet is still alive — or in *Poison* (pour mon dos gauche) which expresses his unwillingness to adjust to life, "gauche" meaning clumsy, "terre" society, "touches" meaning: things proving to himself that he has no place in this society. (This image referring to "pierre de touche" = a black and hard stone that was used to distinguish gold from copper, i.e. gold in this context meaning the poet; copper or brass, society.) A detailed analysis of this poet's work will be given at a later date. But I would like to point out that, even if Magloire Saint-Aude is a surrealist poet, he is far from writing verses in a state of absolute passivity as André Breton would claim for the surrealist poet, or under the dictation of his subconscious. On the contrary, Saint-Aude's poems are tremendously disciplined and in their eventual violence so methodically arranged and controlled by his intellect that the term "surreal" does not quite fit this poet. If apparently many words or lines seem incoherent nevertheless there is symmetry and a perfectly well balanced expression of thought and image: each word is in connection with a preceding or following word or thought (or image), new images may be taken up or left out, nevertheless there is the constant flow of uninterrupted thought.

If most Haitian poets, those mentioned and many others such as the painter-poet Roland Dorcély, Gérard Daumec, Jacques Le Noir and Georges Castera for instance, not included in this study, have a common basis for their poetry or visions of a future, Magloire Saint-Aude is the most egotistical and egocentric poet speaking only of himself. He is, as mentioned above, outside any society, thinking that "humanity is not worth while to bother about".

Conclusion

It should be mentioned that Haiti does not have a single publishing house. The novels of writers such as Jacques Roumain, Jacques Stéphen Alexis, Philip Thoby and Pierre Marcelin and Edris Saint-Amand and very few others have been published in Paris and also translated into many languages, into Spanish, Swedish, Finish, German, even into Czechoslovakian — though barely any into English! Most of the novelists and poets have to publish their work themselves, faute de mieux. A few poets have been included in anthologies of world poetry, such as Jacques Roumain and René Depestre, for instance.

Since before and after Haitian independence the literature of Haiti was oral mainly, it seems that a new style in literary expression must find its roots in precisely this oral tradition, since only this tradition is able to project the Haitian temperament: joie de vivre, vitality, sense of farce and the ridiculous, great sense of rhythm and a very specific philosophy of life deriving from Haitian religion.

Haitian "littérature engagée" is today more or less silent, less for an acute socio-political situation but because this literature has exhausted itself and arrived at a dead end. The generation of Jacques Roumain has very unfortunately arrived at an intellectual sterility in writing because of the repetition of theme and variation; the main bulk of the narrative traditional material has been

collected and published and is almost entirely exhausted. The cult of the "primitive" has led to mediocre poetry with the younger poets and drifts, since a number of years, to a great and alarming questionmark.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


- (1) Bissainthe, Max: Dictionnaire de Bibliographie Haitienne, Washington, 1951
- (2) Price-Mars, Dr. Jean: Ainsi parla l'oncle, 1928
- (3) Bellegarde, Dr. Dantès: Ecrivains Haitiens, 1950
 ibid, Histoire du peuple haitien (1492-1952), 1953
 ibid. Haiti et ses problemes, 1941
- (4) Courlaender, Harold: Haiti singing, 1939
- (5) Viatte, Auguste: Histoire littéraire de l'Amerique Francaise, 1954

CONTEMPORARY NOVELS:

- Casseus, Maurice: Viejo, 1935
 Roumain, Jacques: Gouverneurs de la rosée, 1944
 Marcelin, Philip-Thoby and Pierre: Canapé Vert, 1943
 ibid. La bête du Museau, 1943
 ibid. Le Crayon de Dieu, 1952
 Clément Magloire Saint-Aude: Pariahs, 1949
 Edris Saint-Amand: Bon Dieu rit, 1953
 Jacques Stéphen Alexis: Compère Général Soleil, 1955
 ibid. Les Arbres Musiciens, 1957
 Anthony Lespès: Les Semences de la colère, 1949
 Pétion Savain: La case de Damballah, 1939
 Jean-F. Briere: Les horizons sans ciel, vol. I, 1953

CONTEMPORARY POEMS

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------------------|
| Jean-F. Briere: | Chansons secrètes, 1935 |
| ibid. | Nous garderons le dieu, 1945 |
| ibid. | Black Soul, 1947 |
| ibid. | La nuit, 1955 |
| ibid. | La Source, 1954 |
| Roussan Camille: | Assaut à la nuit, 1940 |
| René Depestre: | Mineral noir, 1956 |
| René Balance: | Epaule d'Ombre, 1945 |
| Leon Laleau: | Abréviations, 1929 |
| ibid. | Musique Nègre, 1931 |
| ibid. | Ondes courtes, 1933 |
| Milo Rigaud: | Rites et Rythmes, 1933 |
| ibid. | Rythmes et Rites, 1932 |
| Magloire Saint-Aude: | Dialogue de mes lampes, 1941 |
| F. Morisseau-Leroy: | Diaourte. [n.d.] |
| ibid. | Natif-Natal, 1948 |
| Jacques Roumain: | Bois d'ébène, 1945 |
| ibid. | Choix de poésies, 1944 |



FROM HAITI

Translated by Miriam Koshland

AMERICAN STREET

BY GEORGE CASTERA

American street —
midnight just tolled,
that hour when fatigue makes man rootless
and leaves him without sleep.

American street . . .

midnight is past
a bar closes its doors, the drunken bums
are driven away with a crash of a chair.

American street . . .

torrents of music: I name Armstrong whose tainted laughter
rises up to encircle my heart.

American street . . .

the scent of the streetgirls fantomlike still haunts my memory —
(alas for Paris and its whores, Paris and its brothels)

American street . . .

It is one a.m. Mea culpa.

They told me their prisons protect their charges from vermin.

American street . . .

One thirty a.m.

Just now a virgin was raped
my senses go on a pilgrimage to her breasts, mountain of olives.

American street . . .

a phonograph plays an Argentine tango for a couple of lesbians,
a dog barks at a mad woman whose laughter sticks to her teeth.

American street . . .

Four a.m.: a thief was beaten to death,
who cares! They have the right to beat us.

American street . . .

A consumptive spits in a glass.

American street . . .

Five a.m. They just threw a bastard into the gutter.

American street . . .

American street: this poem written on the spider's web of my dream.

YOU APPEARED TO ME

BY ROLAND DORCELY

You appeared to me in the midst of a crowd
like a blossom
a little move and our glances were broken
My eyes have kept this thread which was broken
guilty
and every day I hope to find the other end
I should have called you
I should have called you
but I did not call you
but I did not call you
alas
life has torn my clothes
and mended my eyes without my doing
But you, what would you have done?
no doubt the opposite
lovely face, effaced by the crowd.

WE AND YOU.

BY CARL BROUARD.

We
the extravagant ones, the bohemians, the mad ones
we
who love the girls
and strong drinks
the lively nudity of tables
where the phallus of the
dice-box rises.
We
who have been hurt by life, the poets —
You
the tramps,
dirty
and stinking,
peasant girls coming down from the hills
with a brat in their belly.
peasants with calloused feet, full of vermin.
You
all the rabble
get up!
You are the pillars of the whole building,
just move
and everything comes down like a house of cards.

OBLIVION.

BY GERARD DAUMEC

To drink, to bury myself
in the oblivion
of things
to drown myself
in the sweet glow
of a drink...
somewhere
where I would find at last
as a horizon
and for love for hope
only the liquid flame
to fill my cup....
let me forget
and wildly enjoy
and sweetly drift
in drunkenness.

THE MANHUNT HAS STARTED . . .

BY JACQUES LE NOIR.

The man hunt has started
in the brush of the past
the sling of fear around the throat
my breath short
I run
Enemy steps resound like a gong
Nègre marron. Nègre marron
almost taken
almost caught
and your days are numbered
they look for me here

again
I slip away
then with the jump of an animal
with my laughter echoing
in the ranks of the sentinels

and I run over there
between the legs of a sailor

I hide in the woods

I throw myself

into freedom.

"Nègre marron" was the name given,
in colonial times, to the runaway slaves.

NEW SONG

BY ROLAND DORCELY

I took my old banjo
and sang you a song
I put my soul in it
and cried all along.

I sat at your feet
and my head did not rise
and when I looked up
you had closed your eyes.

You went to sleep
so I knew your concern was not deep
you were too tired to listen to
this old romance...

I asked you anew
what had happened to you
and you told me the score
you don't love me any more.

I got angry and wild
like a bad-tempered child
to my lips rose a song
of my pain and my wrong.

I took a new banjo
and sang a new song
I sang a new melody
mocking this tragedy.

You came back
with the silent step of a thief
with a kiss you have mended
my pain and my grief.

BOOK REVIEWS

THE DARK DANCER by Balachandra Rajan.
Heinemann, 1959. 16s.

The Dark Dancer presents the universal human problems of schizophrenic man torn between two ideas, two loves and more abstrusely but very relevantly, two cultures. It is written with a rare command of language, a delicate precision and poetry that places it in a literary class of its own.

After ten years at Cambridge, Krishnan returns to the home of his Brahmin parents in South India.

"It was where he was born, but where he was born didn't matter. There was nothing in the cracked arid earth to suggest that he belonged to it, or in the river, shrunk away from the banks, that seemed almost to wrench its way through the landscape, startling like an act of will, straining across the flat baked plain, to the first muddle of houses; and then the road forked from it, driving relentlessly through the mantle of dust to an end that might have been reached from any beginning."

Krishnan discovers himself to be a displaced person almost at the moment of entering the parental home. In the face of an ancient and tenacious tradition of religious and family custom his efforts to assert his own individuality are entirely fruitless. His mother arranges his marriage, his father settles his career, his uncle Kruger backs up the family with an infinite capacity for reasoning and limitless knowledge of astrology, mythology and Hindu philosophy. Krishnan enters into marriage with Kamala with mixed feelings, which indeed, Kamala shares:

"Kamala looked at him out of the corners of her eyes. She had exchanged no glances with him, her reason being not only modesty but the embarrassment of being a scholar in Sanskrit and so of understanding only too clearly the unprogressive elements in the ritual. When Krishnan put the marriage yoke against her and with blithe ignorance declared, "With this I reckon thee to my dominion," she was aware of some strain upon her self-esteem..... She looked at

Krishnan, who was far from comfortable also. In fact he appeared to be even less happy than she was. The thought that he might have made an even bigger mistake nearly sent Kamala off into a peal of laughter. Her elders looked at her scandalised, but Krishnan smiled — and it wasn't a bad smile. Kamala decided."

Unwillingly he takes up a position as a civil servant in Delhi and in the dreariness of government buildings and personnel appear the most humorous touches in the novel as for example Krishnan's conversation with the door-man; (though as an example of colonial education I suppose it is more sad than funny).

"I have just joined Government Service," explained Krishnan. "I am to work here."

"Where is your pass?"

"I have no pass as yet. No doubt I shall be given one."

"Nobody can go in without a pass."

"How am I to secure a pass if I can't go in to get one?"

"Under-Secretary Sahib will give you a pass."

"Then may I see Under-Secretary Sahib?"

"Certainly, if you can show me your pass."

This stage of the book may be described as the end of part one. Part two finds Krishnan submitting to the routine of Government service and settling, with reasonable contentment, into his marriage. But suddenly he meets Cynthia, an English girl he had known at Cambridge, and he is confronted with the age-old dilemma. Oscillating between Europe and Asia, violence and passive resistance and now between Cynthia and Kamala, Krishnan flounders more hopelessly than ever.

In the third part by contrast, we are plunged decisively into the massacre, the misery and bitterness of the religious war sweeping India's northern territory. It is in this atmosphere of fear and uncertainty and ultimate tragedy, that Krishnan comes to the beginning of self-realisation and we feel that emotionally, he is safely on the right road.

The characterisation throughout the book is consistently sympathetic and realistic. Krishnan

himself, his uncle Kruger and the cynical Vijayaraghavan must surely have been taken straight from life. The women, except for Krishnan's mother, are if anything, too consistent — Cynthia hard and demanding and Kamala soft and giving. Indeed had more emphasis been placed on the war and less on the triangle sequence, the book would have been assured a permanent place amongst historical novels.

The *Dark Dancer* has no real parallel in African literature, and can never have. Krishnan's problems are bound up in the fact that Hinduism and Islam are alive and influential, but in Africa the ancient religions are dead at the feet of literacy. Africans can find no comparability whatsoever between European education and their ancestors but in the India of Balachandra Rajan the two can lie down, perhaps profitably, together.

Diana Speed.

A TINKLE IN THE TWILIGHT

by Edgar Mittelholzer.

Secker & Warburg, 1959. 18s.

Having picked up this book casually to browse in, I found it impossible to put it down. With a wonderful sureness of touch the author develops both character and plot, and builds up suspense and interest right up to the end. One gets involved immediately in the fortunes of his hero, a London bookseller, who lives a strange retired life. Brian Liddard has come under the influence of Eastern philosophy. He has studied Yoga. But although he finds more satisfaction in the great Eastern Religion he is forced to make many compromises in order to continue living in his native Western society. He continues to run his bookshop, but in after office hours his life is completely withdrawn and subjected to a strict routine. He has no friends, abstains from sex and spends his time with Yoga exercises, and contemplation. For a while the compromise seems to work perfectly and leaves him completely contented; until one day he has a disturbing experience. At first he seems to suffer from hallucinations, but when more and more of these mystic experiences happen to him he begins to realise that he seems to have lost step with time, as it were. Past, future and present become confused in an uncanny way. At any

time his apparent experience of reality may suddenly dissolve — and he may discover later that he had actually lived through a future event. As these experiences multiply, he becomes more and more worried. They constantly put him into the most awkward situations, and make his life more difficult and dangerous. The beautiful compromise he had worked out for his own life fails to work. He realises that he should either have had the courage to become a real Yogi and give up his Western life or keep his hands off it all together. Eventually he solves his problem, when he finds a new formula for his life.

The book is unique in its perfect combination of mysticism and humour. The story moves on two planes all the time. On the one hand there is the hero, and his confusions and human weaknesses and the absurd situations he finds himself in. We can laugh at him or with him — but at the same time remain fully aware of the existence of supernatural forces with whom his life has made a superficial and disquieting contact.

In a sense also the book becomes a symbol of our time: most people in the world today have to create more or less awkward compromises between two cultures and the result is often as confusing and as dangerous as it turned out to be for Brian Liddard.

Sangodare Akanji.

TAMBOURINES TO GLORY

by Langston Hughes.

The John Day co., New York. \$3.30.

This is an apparently lighthearted book about the present craze of gospel singing in the United States. The heroines of the book are Bessie, a simple and pious woman and her friend Laura, a high-spirited, quick-witted hussy. Laura one day throws out a joking suggestion that they should both start a church. They are both good singers and they could make money holding gospel services on the pavement. Laurie is joking, but Bessie feels suddenly "the call". And before she knows where she is, Laura finds herself suddenly acting the part of a saint and preaching on the pavement:

It were a Palm Sunday when I got the call.
I were sitting in my room with Sister Essie here,
and I heard a voice just as loud saying, 'Take up
the Cross and follow me, go out unto the high-

ways and byways and save souls, go to the curbstones and gutters and save souls, and save the lost, approach the river of sin and approach the drowning. 'Oh I were drowning once friends, I were down there in sin's gutter lower than a snake's belly — now look at me. Look at me here on the curbstone of life reaching out with my voice to you to come be saved too.

The "Reed Sisters" as they call themselves, are an immediate success. Their excellent singing and the sincerity of Essie draw large crowds, and Laura is quite content too, because the money comes pouring in. Soon they can establish a real Church. Bessie is not very happy about Laura and her love of liquor and money. But she hopes that Laura will change, and Essie is not a fighting type anyway. When things go wrong she just drops off into a passive mood. She "just sits". Laura, in the meantime, enjoys life. While Essie puts all her own part of the collection back into the Church, Laura spends it on herself and her boy friends. Although she is a middle aged woman she is still good looking and she is flattered when a man tells her in the street:

'Woman you got bubbies like the headlights of a Packard car sticking out like two forty-fours. Stop shooting me in the eyes like that with what you carries in front of you.'

Laura soon falls in love with a smart young racketeer. Big-eyed Buddy. Buddy is a man "with ideas" and he soon turns the Reed sisters church into a commercial proposition. Sales of "holy" water, TV appearances and newspaper stunts all bring the money rolling in. But while the church is thus being exploited and Laura runs about in a mink coat, Essie prays and sings and the sincere element in the Church, although powerless to stop the commercial exploitation, yet remains undaunted. It is a situation that cannot go on for long and it soon heads for a tragic ending.

This simple tale is unfolded in racy language by Langston Hughes who is a competent story teller, a sure hand at drawing characters and whose warm human sympathy brings it all close to our heart.

Sangodare Akanji.

THE WILD COAST

by Jan Carew

London, Secker and Warburg, 1958. 16s.
'Caya was beating out a fast one-three rhythm on his drum and its echoes drifted in to mock the parson. Caya found more solace in a drum beat than in church bells and the holy words that rolled off the parson's tongue. The wind dance was a link with Africa. His ancestors had been hauled out of this continent and scattered over a hemisphere. They had arrived naked and empty handed, bringing nothing with them but their memories. But wherever a man wanders he will find the neighbour wind, the companion-wind, the messenger-wind, howling its welcome, fanning awake the still leaves, lying down and rolling on the grass and the reeds. Neighbour-wind can live next door to a man who is afraid of the strangeness of an alien land. Companion wind can strum familiar tunes on the harp strings of trees. Messenger wind can carry a cry of anguish across continents and seas. The wind was a symbol of absolute freedom, it was invisible, amorphous, imbued with titanic energies, no stockades could contain it nor could whips and chains humble it. For the descendants of the slaves the meaning of the message of the wind had not changed.'

This quotation gives some idea of the atmosphere of this book, that describes the lives of the descendants of African slaves on the "wild coast" of Guiana. These people who make a poor living on the swamp land are yet strong of spirit. They are still emotionally reacting against the days of slavery. They want to make full use of their freedom and live their life as fully as they can. Though they are nominally Christians, they have evolved their own religious ritual, the wind dance, which incorporates reminiscences of African gods and ceremonies. Familiar African names appear, like Sango and Legba. But there is otherwise little resemblance between the Wind dance and West African religion.

The hero of the story is Hector Bradshaw, descendant of the former white masters. But he also carries the slaves blood in his veins. He has been sent to his father's farm from the city and we watch him adapting himself slowly to the wild, hard life in the swamps. We watch him grow to manhood under the guidance of Doorne

the sly old hunter and his huge strong son Tengar.

Yet, in a way, this book is not so much about Hector Bradshaw, or his nurse, or his neurotic father, but about the swamp itself and the dangerous forest, from whom the people try to wring a living. In spite of their incessant, violent activity men here are small and insignificant creatures. And behind the human story the author makes us aware of all powerful nature dominating the lives of them all.

Omidiji Aragbabalu.

ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS by Colin MacInnes, MacGibbon and Kee, 1959. 15/-.

Colin MacInnes has already impressed us with his last novel, *City of Spades* which had as its subject the fate of Africans and West Indians in London. This new work, which is a novel about the "teenagers" is far more successful, however. In spite of its fascination, *City of Spades* had serious weaknesses. It was too obviously a "documentary" to be a good novel, parts of the plot were rather weak (particularly the escape of the hero from the hands of the law) and the English characters were a bit cliché.

Absolute Beginners suffers from none of these weaknesses. All the characters come to life fully: the teenage hero who is a freelance photographer and a bit of a philosopher, his girl friend Suze who is mad about Spades, Big Jill the Lesbian from downstairs, Mannie the Jewish poet, Ed the Teddy boy and a host of others. All these walk in and out of the hero's life and we learn to see them and tolerate them and judge them through his eyes. For the story is told in the first person, almost like a diary, or perhaps rather like a teenager thinking aloud. The whole book is written in the casual jargon of London teenagers, and it turns out to be a perfect vehicle for literature. There is a beautiful relaxed, philosophical quality about it. Colin MacInnes has proved himself a master in the art of handling dialect in *City of Spades* where he introduces a fabulous variety of West Indian and West African dialects. But here he has created something that could almost be called a new literary language and it makes one wish that our West African writers would not always fight shy of West African English and even pidgin.

I do not mean that any kind of bad English is a medium for literature, because it creates "atmosphere". Colin MacInnes makes us hate Ed, the Teddy boy, merely by giving an exact imitation of his inarticulate, garbled speech. Compared with his brutal mumbblings the teenage language is sensitive and alive and full of humour.

Absolute Beginners shows the teenager with his lust for life, his contempt for the adult world and his incredible freedom which he owes to his financial independence. Colin MacInnes reveals him as intelligent and determined to create his own style of life and not at all muddled and mixed up and "angry" as the Sunday papers try to represent him. He is not irresponsible as they so often accuse him of being, but he is simply not interested in the same problems as the adults. He cannot remember the war and the war stories of the adults are just a bore to him. He has no class sense at all and class feelings or hatred of adults seem insensible to him. Born into the welfare state, he does not know the meaning of socialism.

Side by side with the teenage world is the world of the Teddy boys, those really irresponsible, almost sub-human juvenile gangsters. In the last chapter the two worlds clash in the tragic Notting Hill riots. Colin MacInnes does not hesitate to make us see the whole savageness of these outbreaks but he also shows us the healthy and in some cases courageous reaction of the *real* teenager, who, as a genuine jazz fan instinctively sympathises with the coloured people and rallies to their support.

Absolute Beginners has something absolutely authentic and genuine about it. The only slightly incongruous note is the hero himself, who has a little more wisdom than one could possibly expect from a teenager and one feels the author is projecting some of his own feelings and ideas through him. But who would quarrel with that? Personally I would not want to miss Colin MacInnes's warm sympathy and humanity for anything. After reading *Absolute Beginners* I felt almost like inviting Colin MacInnes to write a novel about Nigeria. He is the only European novelist I can think of who could get away with it.

Omidiji Aragbabalu.

PAGANS AND POLITICIANS

by Michael Crowder.

Hutchinson 25s.

Having now lived in West Africa for some time Michael Crowder must be well on the way to revising the two water-tight compartments in which he has placed the people. In actual fact *PAGANS AND POLITICIANS* is a highly successful attempt to capture the atmosphere of the places he visited, to pin down in swift flashes the problems of the people, to tune in to their desires and adaptations to a world which is changing rapidly from the pagan to the political. This rambling, discursive, intimate, informative, infuriating, exciting, highly sophisticated travelogue shines with Crowder's sincerity.

Not for him a conducted 'V.I.P.' visit with his nose in the air. The moment when Crowder decided to take on a Creole journalist as his companion, to eat and sleep where and when he could, to travel by whatever means he could find, half his problems vanished. He was establishing a link with the people. As a result of this direct contact his observations are startlingly near the truth. He did not attempt to make any predictions, or to pass any judgements and therein lies his strength. To the very vital question "Can democracy survive in Ghana?" Michael Crowder has this answer: "To me the most dangerous opponent of democracy is apathy. If this is so, its chances of survival are high in Ghana, for as both Gbenon and Dr. Peschel remarked to me, the crowds attending party speeches were immense considering that these were only local elections. In Britain even the Prime Minister is lucky if he gets as large an attendance for a general election speech as Gbedemah did at Kumasi."

Crowder's eye is turned not only on the political scene but on the human and the humorous. There is as much adventure in this book as the indigene himself is likely to encounter in a lifetime of living in his natural habitat. How was he able, in so short a visit to discover the power and the beauty of the women of Eastern Nigeria? "The Ibo women are exceptionally beautiful with orange-brown skins that have a subtle warmth glowing through them One anthropologist tells of some Ibo

men who were angry with the way their women openly took lovers But the women held meetings and decided to move out of the village to another group. They left everything behind except suckling children The men endured this for a day and a half, then implored the women to return."

Apart from Madame Ouezzin Coulibaly with whom the author stayed at Abidjan, very few of the *POLITICIANS* came out in those inarvelous word vignettes which one associates with this kind of book. But Madame Ouezzin did very well: the first African woman Minister, holding the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare in Upper Volta.

Lastly it is impossible to take up this book without being struck by the high technical quality of the photographs and their very artistic selection and layout. All the illustrations including the clever cover were made by the author. When the second edition comes out, Michael Crowder will certainly have many amendments to make for the West African political scene is especially unstable and unpredictable.

Cyprian Ekwensi.

RACE, CULTURE AND PERSONALITY

by Simon Biesheuvel (South African
Institute of Race Relations,
Johannesburg. 3s. 6d.)

Dr. Biesheuvel is Director of the National Institute for Personnel Research, a department in the South African Council for Scientific and Industrial Research. This is the text of a lecture he gave to the Institute of Race Relations as one of a series of annual memorial talks, which, it is hoped, will provide "a platform for constructive and helpful contributions to thought and action". It is an honour to be invited to contribute to this series, as the lecturers are specialists in their respective spheres of study. Dr. Biesheuvel's field is the psychology of aptitudes and personality among Africans, and he has already contributed a lot to research in that line, including a thesis called *African Intelligence*.

The writer takes off from the ground laid by David Riesman and other American sociologists, who suggest three categories for the human

personality: (a) the tradition-directed personality, typified in medieval man and in traditional African societies where the individual conforms to communal practice; (b) the inner-directed personality which has a Renaissance orientation. Here parental influence plays the most important role in determining goals and values in early life. The individual is guided by his sense of guilt; (c) the other-directed personality is a recent development in middle-class societies of the West. The individual conforms to fashions, intellectual systems and so on imposed by the larger environment than the family: the school, the newspaper, the films, records. Here, a "diffuse anxiety" replaces a good deal of the "guilt-and-shame" control.

In answering the age-old question whether there is any temperamental difference between black and white, Dr. Biesheuvel says there is no factual evidence of such difference.

He goes on to point to evidence that shows a difference in stimulability and activity level associated with visual perception. But, he rightly points out, too, diversity of personalities between African cultures themselves defy generalisation.

One must take accounts of tribal practices with a great amount of reserve, because, in South Africa, traditional life has been and is continually being modified by economic factors: the cracking up of family life owing to migrant labour and the moving of family units to European farms, weakening of bonds between chief and subjects, Europeanization of tribal authority, and so on. No fewer than five big rural reserves have in recent years been thrown into a fit of violence and civil strife owing to the imposition of obedient and pliable tribal authorities by the government to enable white officials to remove whole communities from one place to another. All such factors go against a good deal of orthodox anthropology.

And then to urban communities. The lecturer says: "Although these location dwellers are not entirely devoid of culture, they come near to being so, and the evidence in support of the view that instinctive urges dominated their behaviour is to be found in the lawlessness and violence which are prevalent in many urban areas, the frequency of assaults involving stabbing, the laxity of sexual morals and the high illegitimacy rate." Nevertheless, adds Dr. Biesheuvel rather patronisingly, "it would be a mistake to take too pessimistic a view of African

urban society." I should say that there is definitely a culture in urban African society. Their jazz, popularly called "Township Jazz", is not altogether American. Their classical music is the meeting point of European forms and African idiom. Choral music everywhere, in the smallest of semi-urban areas, is an important cultural activity co-ordinated through music festivals. The "upsurge of vitality" rises above the "vice and sordidness of township life" in a way it can never do in a corresponding situation in white suburbia.

Of the middle class, the lecturer says: "...because many of its members have only comparatively recently risen to the middle-class level, they still look to their white counterpart to provide the appropriate model of civilized life. They are in frequent contact with members of this group as their teachers, supervisors, or employers, and their advancement is therefore very much dependent on the impressions which they create and the good opinions which they earn." Why does Dr. Biesheuvel not simply and bluntly say that the black man's rise to the middle-class as part of an oppressed community is frowned upon by whites, that he is haunted by a sense of insecurity because of this? And that, in the light of this, the educated African falls in two general groups: the man who is gradually made to accept mentally the white man as a model (it's so much less painful if he does in any case) and the man who is too sensitive to oppression to accept his position in any way? The former, for instance is not worried by the fact that he can often only get a job if he carries a testimonial written by a white liberal or missionary and never when it is written by an African; the latter chafes at this kind of thing, but because he is in dire necessity, he must go to a white man for a testimonial and suffer humiliation in the process.

I find the most interesting part of this lecture is the one that treats of work attitudes among Africans. Whereas in white communities the compulsion to work transcends the subsistence motive, it is only so to a very small extent in African communities. Dr. Biesheuvel seems to think the stock explanation about temperate as against tropical climate is a plausible one. But is it not just a question of a people's traditional attitude to work, as the lecturer rightly points out at the end? This argument, he feels, is reinforced by the revulsion of French-speaking

Africans against European culture and their desire to recapture their indigenous roots; men like Senghor, Cesaire and so on. Sick of the stark materialism of the West, they turn to the innocent past of people who did not explore or invent but simply gave themselves up to "the essence of things".

"If *negritude* is something more than a declaration of faith by a few intellectuals and romantics," Dr. Biesheuvel concludes, "we may well have come to the end of our search." The search for "some unique element in African personalities", he says. I wonder. Born into oppression as we Africans are in South Africa, we are keen to seize the tools that keep the

white man in power; we are at grips with a brutal present. The past has been used against us by the white man and we have no time to sit and brood about it, even although we reject certain European values and cling to certain of ours that we still cherish. But we don't think for 24 hours of the day which we are going to adopt or throw aside on any occasion. Three hundred years is a long time in terms of cultural cross-breeding and we have been unconsciously taking and throwing away and sifting. Senghor's people haven't had that experience. It is well that Dr. Biesheuvel talks of "African personalities", which phrase has no pretensions to a mystical unified whole.

Ezekiel Mphahlele.

PUBLISHED BY THE YORUBA HISTORICAL RESEARCH SCHEME:

O L O K U N

IWE ATIGBADIGBA NI ATATA YORUBA

A LITERARY JOURNAL IN YORUBA EDITED BY A. AKINJOGBIN

Contributions to the first issue by: O. S. Coker, M. Babajumo, A. Faleti, Oba Laoye, Timi Ede; A. Odelana, A. Odukoya, S. O. Iloyi, and S. B. Faturoti.

* * * *

NIGERIA MAGAZINE

SPECIAL PUBLICATIONS:

SACRED YORUBA WOODCARVINGS by Ulli Beier

A study of Yoruba art in one particular Yoruba town: Ilobu.

Richly illustrated with photographs by the author.

SACRED YORUBA FESTIVALS by Ulli Beier

A study of Yoruba Religion as it manifests itself in the annual cycle of festivals in the town of Ede.

With photographs by the author.

THE GODS AS GUESTS by Robin Horton

A study of the Religion of the Kalabari people in the Niger Delta.

Illustrated with photographs by the author.

Obtainable from "Nigeria Magazine", The Exhibition Centre, Marina, Lagos

A JOURNAL OF AFRICAN AND AFRO-AMERICAN LITERATURE

BLACK ORPHEUS COMMITTEE: Geormbeeyi Adali-Mortty, Marcelino Arozarena,
Adeboye Babalola, Aimé Césaire, Léon Damas, M. F. Dei-Anang, J. Jahn,
Gerald Moore, J. A. Ramsaran, Léopold Sedar Senghor, Paul Vesey.

EDITORS: Ezekiel Mphahlele, Wole Soyinka and
Ulli Beier



PUBLISHED BY THE GENERAL PUBLICATIONS SECTION
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, IBADAN, NIGERIA.
Printed by the Times Press, Kakawa Street, Lagos · W/T1195/60

CONTENTS

No. 9 June 1961

		Page
FICTION		
KASIM	Ibrahim Tahir	1
JIGIDA	Michael Okafor	22
THE FLAME TREE	Edris Saint Amand	31
THE GAMBLER	Nkem Nwankwo	49
CREATION MYTH	Marthe Arnaud	57
POETRY		
6 POEMS	Basil McFarlane	31
SONGS FOR NAETT	L. S. Senghor	25
2 POEMS	Ellis Ayitey Komey	37
INCANTATION and other poems	Mason Jordan Mason	44
EVOLUTION and other poems	J. S. Mosley	55
2 POEMS	Flavien Ranaivo	61
CRITICISM		
LANGSTON HUGHES	Ezekiel Mphahlele	16
GIMME DAT OLE BLACK MAGIC	Wolfgang Vogel	38
ART		
VINCENT AKWETI KOFI	Ulli Beier	35
TIBERIO	Gerald Moore	62
REVIEWS		
Gerhard Kubik, O. Aragbabalu, S. Akanji		
Gerald Moore, Ezekiel Mphahlele.		63



THE OPENING CHAPTER OF AN UNPUBLISHED NOVEL

BY IBRAHIM TAHIR

Dusk was slowly creeping on the tropical day. The sun was slowly lazily but surely sinking below the horizon — a great round ball amidst a pool of colours in the western sky — here red, there a mixture of red and purple and not quite so far away and in between a pool of yellow and delicate blue, the colour of the tropical sky. The air itself, the ground and the mudbrick huts were all tinged with this extravagant but beautiful hue. The trees, as on every occasion while the sun sets, cast long thin delicate shadows on the ground, shadows that were life-less one moment and yet so full of life the next as they responded to the gentle caressing of the tropical breeze. Amid this enchanting scene of beauty and calm came pouring forth the sharp and enchanting call of the Muezzin from the City mosque. In a very thin clear but yet so humble tone it came "Allahu Akbar" it said. Yes, Allah is the Greatest. Humbly gently but confidently it poured forth the message of Allah and from every direction the people crept home, from the fields, the market place and the village square where the girls and boys were gathered they all trooped home. Watching all this strict obedience to the religious call of just one voice one would be tempted to think that this was indeed a stable peaceful community of a strict pure and stable order. So in fact it was, representing as it did the power of Allah and that singularity of faith so peculiar to the Muslim faith. Yet to one soul that beautiful sunlit day something was wrong — very wrong.

As he sat in the rectangular massive hall that was his Koranic school run by his father and taught by an uncle drawing as its pupils children from all over the town for no fee at all, Kasim had the feeling that that very day something was going to happen. He sat through the lesson clutching the wooden task on which the text was written, apparently absorbed in what was written on it, or so it would seem to the teacher or "mallam" who supervised the chanting gathering that half sang and half cried each his own text. But Kasim was far from absorbed in his lessons, he was indeed absorbed but in something else. For the last few months since his mother's death things had changed and in his heart of hearts, a twelve year old, he could not understand why All he knew was that he was slowly losing favour with everyone in his father's household. Today it was some trivial matter the next day another and so on and on day after day. What bewildered him more and more was even his father. the

Imam to whom his mother and he had been favourites until her death had suddenly turned cold towards him. As he sat and thought, all the memories of the days when his mother ruled paramount and supreme in the household came back to him. She was, while she was alive the unchallenged favourite and no-one, not even his father, dared oppose her. She was the third concubine among a household of four legally married wives and three concubines. She was not therefore even a wife but according to the principles of the Faith she was to all intents and purposes a wife save in name. She and other concubines like her in both Kasim's and other noble families were descended from slaves in the earlier days to marry whom custom and even exaggerated religious opinion held as a sacrilege. But there was nothing in the Muslim faith to stop their masters from taking them as concubines or wives extraordinary. They would be sent to a noble man as a token of friendship by a friend or by the rulers to their deputies, singly or along with a ruler's daughter at marriage and both princess and former slave or "kuyanga" as they were commonly called become the possession of the master. The concubine henceforth stayed in the household and acted both as attendant and "wife". She could if she suited the whims of her master gain great favours or if she failed she could be cast away among the other women servants to do all the manual work in the home. If she was a ruler's gift she got regifted to another noble home. If she bore children they were entitled by religious law to inherit their father as though they were born of normal wives, but the concubine could inherit nothing unless their masters or husbands said so if they happened to make a will. But that very rarely happens since nearly all Muslims blessed with an octopus religion that provided for everything and anything were not bothered with the inconveniences of having to make one. That was Kasim's mother's station in the household. But did we not say that concubines could gain great favour? That precisely was what Kasim's mother did.

Her case to start with was the unique type in which she was originally descended from her husband's slaves, captured from the pagan tribes in the days of the Jihad when Shehu Usman Dan Fodio, that honoured and reverent Fulani religious leader, was doing so much to spread the gospel. Her great grandparents were captured in the Holy War. For the religion taught that in the early Islamic days all Muslims should preach their gospel peacefully to all heathen worshippers, and if they refused to believe fight them. Those captured, if they still refused to believe were to pay dues but allowed to continue their worship or as convenience may be taken as slaves. To these people Usman Dan Fodio commanded his followers to show kindness but as always all religions have human weaknesses to combat, and what happened to many of Hasan's people is everybody's guess, but is neither our business to justify or defend and nor is it our business to condemn. Some became eunuchs that graced many an emir's court and many and yet more joined the long weary march to the coast to be sold — uprooted from Home to a home, there to become a people without an identity unaccepted by their new home and too far removed by the gulf of the centuries to have anything in common with Home. But in the old days who could foresee, and on whom could you blame the crime, the buyer who did perhaps see or the seller who did not see, but definitely acted against the principles of his faith and succumbed to the temptations of greed and splendour and the lust for power. For power it was, and even as Shehu Usman Dan Fodio

lay on his deathbed the Fulani Empire was already a collection of warring Emirs fighting one another all of the same faith, and yet the faith that started the party at all had forbidden the fight of Muslim against Muslim. But nevertheless even in Adam we saw an example. Man will always be as weak and as imperfect as a mirror image, a replica of the true article but perverted. However the fact remains as far as our story is concerned that it was during such feasts in blood that Hasana's people fell captive to the scimitar and the crescent.

Her people had been brought into the Muslim community there to live and even to become generals in the Muslim armies but nevertheless slaves. Her grandfather was in fact a slave general. Her people had as was always the case, gradually become Muslims not perforce but of their own free will impressed as they were by the sublime humility of their captors' faith. They were not embittered as one might be tempted to think by hate, rather they succumbed to their lot and in most cases did all they could to become. They were despised, abused but even so they were incapable of hate. Instead they became servile, timid and gluttons for currying favour. They were like the African in contemporary society. For centuries trampled upon, enslaved, spitted upon and rejected for God knows what, yet completely opposed to a bloody way out and in some cases unaware of his own strength. That exactly was the position of the slaves of the emir's courts. They stooped to every little command and performed every act of the extreme degeneracy. As children they would grow up with the master's children, playing with them, recognising no barriers between them, although of course they dressed in the poorer cloths while their masters dressed in the richest eastern silks and brocade. But as soon as the little masters and their slaves began to mature the voices from above would begin to whisper to them what they really were and then would come the inevitable separation. But it was not unusual to find real friendship springing from the childhood association. But what about Hasana, how did she fit in the picture?

She grew up like an ordinary slave alright but for her there was no point of separation. For Hasana was a beautiful girl. She was born of slave parents of course so there was no Fulani blood in her and one could only conclude that her beauty was a mere accident. Kasim's father, her lord and master, watched her as she developed from a little skinny chocolate coloured urchin into a young and beautiful girl, and each day his admiration for her grew and eventually he ordered that she was not to be sent anywhere or to do any work, and nor was she to come outside the house either of will or of force. This of course, as custom laid down, was a sign that she was to be possessed. She was also ordered to leave her slave mother's room and sleep with one of her master's wives. One night as she lay sleeping she was awakened by the voice of her master. "Hasana, come with me" he said; and he led her out of the room and to his quarters, for, all Muslims if they could afford to have more than one wife generally have their separate quarters in the house to which the women took turns at visiting. Hasana followed her master into the room, a scene of great splendour, disturbed only by the heaps and heaps of Islamic books. Once inside her master was no longer what he was. He became the slave and she the mistress. He talked gently to her and explained she was to be a concubine and live as maid to a wife in the house. Although

by daybreak Hasana was no longer a girl and still lay half asleep and half unconscious, that meeting last night had showed her one thing, and even as her master talked, the plot had already began to hatch in her mind. What infinite power did she possess that has and could transform a man she feared into soft clay, so soft she could if she wished mould it and build herself what she may. As days wore on Hasana assumed a position of greater favour than befell any concubine. Soon she was visiting her master's quarters more nights than even the legally married wives, and people began to wonder. The fact was that Hasana possessed that rare something lacking in most women but found in a few. What that something was I have neither the imagination nor the audacity to suggest. Perhaps all men will find out as the Imam did that all women, blue, black or magenta have the same trade mark but that some of the "goods" differ in quality. It did not take Hasana long to find out that her master, powerful as he was, he was still a man. Through infinite feminine tricks she gradually dominated him until she became to everyone's surprise, and did I hear you say shame, the undisputed leading lady in the family, to rule and be obeyed next to no one but her master. But even so what was her master but her tool? For once the doors closed and the lights are out what man would not pay the price no matter how much? It was under these circumstances that Kasim was born the son of a favourite to be pampered and made into the Imam's beloved son. But things did not quite go as they had for a long time For life, that delicate eggshell, broke and Hasana was no more. As she lay dying the death of an ideal Muslim with the Kalimat Shahada on her lips, the Imam bent over her, tears filling his eyes, she asked one last wish. Kasim her only son, a twelve year old, she knew would now be left to suffer the lot that befalls any maternal orphan in a polygamous home. She asked of her master to protect Kasim from his half brothers and even more from his other mothers, the other women. The Imam vowed that he would do all he could for Kasim. But alas that was a promise which he could never keep. It was neither his fault nor his neglect but a result of circumstances which human as he was he did not possess the power to combat.

Soon after he had taken a favourite and she, the other women and other children made Kasim the target of attack. He was assailed from all sides until he began to feel he was no longer in his own home. Among people who had been before so kind, so gentle, and above all who had watched him grow Today, it was some fantastic accusation of some obscure but exaggerated crime and the next day a bitter taunt which even the heart of a child like him could not help but bleed. But his heart was not all that bled. Yes, even his own body bled. For, his father, believing as he did that whatever the religion taught or was claimed to have taught was right and law; and whenever tales of Kasim's misdeeds reached him it meant a disobedience to the Holy rule. To him a defender of the faith, the respected leader of his people in the practices of their faith such transgression was intolerable. Hadn't the Koran our Holy Book said "Wabil Walidaini ihsanan?" Why then should his son of all sons break the Holy Word by the disregard he was supposed to have shown to the other women. Were they not his wives and as such the equals of Kasim's mother? The Imam's answer in this case had always been one — a tough but flexible double tongue it had — a hippopotamus hide whip that had been dried.

stiffened and brought back to life again with shea nut butter. Down it always came on Kasim's tender skin, and repeatedly too. Kasim would howl and plead for mercy, but his father would command his silence, even though the menacing whip continued to descend with lightening rapidity, a lifeless chameleon's tongue lashing out at it's prey. To shut up a child under torture is indeed impossible and Kasim's case was no exception to the rule. So long as his father beat him he would always cry; but Kasim's father blinded by fury did not realise. and the rain of blows would continue to descend until the tender mercies of the hangers on or the voices of the neighbours from next door came to the rescue. For even though the Imam could ignore a child's agonised cry his sense of honour and dignity were always effective sedatives to the outrageous burst of his temper. Very gradually these beatings became commonplace — so commonplace that all over the town the voice of Kasim was as familiar as the Muezzin's call and every evening when dusk fell people would sit expecting to hear that same voice always pleading for mercy but for some unknown reason never getting any. But so long as Kasim's father was the Imam no one would believe he was only being a victim of feminine intrigue and unnecessarily reducing his son to a whip-drunk scar-ridden child, a boy of a million twists but no Oliver. They all of course felt pity for Kasim to begin with but as the affair became more and more frequent they began to get annoyed with it all. They made the Imam and Kasim an enigmatic byword all over the town. Fathers with problem children would say to them "I will not tolerate you being to me what Kasim is to the Imam and nor shall I condescend to be another Imam". Girls and boys alike sang abusive songs secretly in his name. and far and wide the little boy's name became a legend of infancy.

Very often when these beatings became unbearable Kasim would escape from the house to his grandmother. He knew as most Hausa children knew that his grandmother was the Angel in the family ready to protect and to intervene in any family matters. There were many times when he ran away in face of another beating and one particular incident he remembered vividly. It was the day he was chased by his father right out of the house. He ran to his grandmother's and was followed right up to her house by the Imam. When she heard him coming she opened a great big pot in which usually grain was stored and Kasim was pushed in and the mouth covered with a reed tray. Kasim had remained there for about half-an-hour before his father's fury abated and he was led back to the house and his father's forgiveness procured. That of course would always happen so long as his "old angel" pleaded for him, for even the Imam respected and obeyed without question the word of his parents, for like all Muslims he believed to great dimensions the words of Muhammed who is quoted to have said "Aljannat Tahta Akdamil Ummahat". To him and Muslims all strict obedience to the parents will was an accessory after their faith and a necessary medium for gaining Allah's favour.

All would have been well for Kasim had his grandmother lived to see him through his most difficult time. But fate had its way and she died. Now that she was dead he realised that one day a break would be reached. What was more, to his physical tortures were added the more painful mental tortures. He had hitherto shared a common bowl at mealtimes with three or four of his brothers of the same age. But for some unknown reason they began to refuse to eat with him. If they had to they insisted he ate only from the part of the bowl

strictly in front of him. That was of course very difficult for Kasim, for in a case where the meal was mixed from flour to rice with the stew thrown on top of it, how was anyone to confine oneself to any one portion? Where there was plenty of stew was only a matter of chance and it would be perfectly normal to reach out and help oneself in whosoever's front it may be. But then to his brothers, instructed as one can only imagine, by their vindictive mothers, Kasim was an uncesirable. He was, as they mockingly told him, the son of a slave and they even took the trouble to point out to him his maternal grand-parents practically slaves or half-servants and half-slaves. At first Kasim paid no attention to these but when he found himself alone, forsaken and even hated; whenever the taunts and insults were repeated he would retreat and cry. At night he always crept into one of the servants quarters and slept while his brothers had their mothers to send them off to bed and light fires to keep them warm. As far as the household was concerned he could as well get lost and nobody would care except perhaps, to very remote possibility, the Imam. For there were times when his father looked at him with an expression that somehow puzzled him — it was a look that was a mixture of innocence and guilt, of ignorance and helplessness and more strikingly of paternal love. In fact once he was wounded by the crack of a whip. The wound was dressed very simply and as Kasim sat one day before the midday meal a brooding hen that happened to be passing by saw the ooze of pus coming through the cloth around the wound and it was only natural that she pecked at it. Kasim felt such pain as he had never done before, but to all the household sitting around it was nothing. But when the Imam came round to him he was touched. He carefully washed the wound, redressed it again and coaxed Kasim into silence. That day Kasim remembered vividly; his mothers spent the rest of the day mumbling disapproval and jealousy amongst themselves, for much as they hated Kasim they dared not openly defy the Imam except of course when the worst came to the worst and that to a Hausa Muslim woman is to be avoided rather than looked for. Who was she anyway to defy the accepted principles of her faith strengthened as it was by tribal custom and tradition? Anyway that particular day and a few isolated occasions besides were the only times when he felt wanted or even loved. All other times it had been the same remorseless tide of false accusations, followed by the undeserved beatings.

However on that beautiful tropical day blanketed as the atmosphere was by the majestic beauty of the tropical evening sky Kasim had the feeling as he sat in the school that his infant strength could no more stand the onslaught of the bitterness surrounding him. Even as he sat there or even when one met him in the street it was impossible to fail to notice the expression on his face. It was the true picture of misery, fear, despondency, insecurity and confusion. You could see by the shadows around his eyes, funny but articulate shadows that spoke only the language of sorrow. Then there was the downcast and horror-stricken look about his eyes, kept constantly moist in a way that can be found only in the eyes of people on whom hung the shadow of doom. Perhaps what would touch you most was the pleading expression he wore. It was the kind of look that would remind one of the heart-rousing appeal! "My God my God, why hast Thou forsaken me". But what was it that particular day that had filled his soul with the anticipation of tragedy?

What had happened was that a stepmother had sent Kasim, before Zahar school session began, to take some money, and all but two shillings to her aunt, for the purchase of a clay pot. Like many other boys Kasim had stopped to play "etule" with some young ones like him by the roadside. Etule was a familiar Hausa game, played by building little mounds of sand and the opponent had to guess in which one the object was. Failing that the loser is made to place his outspread palm on another but bigger mound of sand for the successful opponent to hit with his clenched fist. Somehow during the game one shilling out of the two was lost in the sand. Kasim returned home crying and he knew even before arriving that no one would believe it if he told them. All the women came out and each in her own way accused him of spending or somehow misappropriating the shilling. When the Imam came home all the women were sitting in the kitchen, the gloomiest bunch one ever saw. Puzzled by this unexpected and inexplicable cold welcome, the Imam asked, "What is wrong with you all. I see you haven't even eaten today". The senior wife stood up. "My Lord what has happened today is too big and too sad for us to mention." "What is it?" said the Imam anxiously. "In your own interests my Lord and ours, for this is both as much of a scandal for you as it is for us, we should leave this untold and write it off as one of the mysteries of Allah," she replied.

The Imam's curiosity had been roused, his pride hurt and what self-control he had was instantly lost and in a very angry voice he retorted, "Will you tell me or don't I have the right even to know what happens in my household. Alright, you either tell me or you clear out. All of you"

At this the senior wife said, "We were only trying to save you the shame and embarrassment of it all. We could never understand how this could happen. It's like failing to find fire in a blacksmith's workshop and finding it in the cotton spinners loom. Perhaps this is what comes of mixing your blood with slaves."

"You mean Kasim, what has he done this time", said the Imam. "If you have to know, the shame is that your own flesh and blood is a budding thief", she said.

The Imam stood there speechless. Beads of perspiration began to roll down his face and his eyes were as red as burning coals. Meanwhile the wife continued to relate the whole story with a lot more detail that she found from nowhere. The Imam's first words were, "Lailaha Illallah Where is the little degenerate. You wait until I lay my hands on him" and with that he literally stampeded furiously out of the room, his big flat Hausa sandals echoing the sound of his angry steps. From his hiding place Kasim heard all that had been said and he waited until his father's footsteps had receded into the distance before making his way to the Koranic School. He had the fear while he was there that his father would tear in any minute and assail him. However that did not happen and all the time as he sat expectant but despondent he turned over and over again in his mind what he was to do. To run away soon after school was the first idea that came to his mind but that seemed to him an admission of his guilt, and he rejected the idea. Well what about staying away until everyone was fast asleep? Yes that seemed the only chance of avoiding another beating at least until the next morning. He thought perhaps his father's reason would triumph over his passion and anger before then. So when the Muezzin's call came for the



DECORATED HOUSES IN ZARIA NORTHERN NIGERIA







Magrib and everyone went home to pray and eat their evening meals Kasim hung around and waited until the late evening class. His brothers and sisters who had by then no doubt been told what he had allegedly done cast inquiring and spiteful glances at him when they came back to the evening class. When the session was over they came up to him and one of them said, "Kasim, so you are a thief. What a shame." And all the children joined in a chorus, "Oh what a shame", Kasim did not know what to say. He felt like getting hold of them one by one and beating the daylight out of their wretched bodies. But he knew even that would have been no use. He stood there watching their little mocking faces, scorn written on every one of them. Slowly the tears filled his eyes until he could see or hear nothing and he covered his face with his hands. By the time he had finished crying save a few intermittent but spasmodic sobs there was no sign of any of them and as a matter of fact he had not realised that he had stood there for nearly one hour and time was fast approaching to midnight. He thought of the little devils who had a while ago bedevilled him, certainly all asleep at home, and he made his way to his father's house.

As he came to the door he could see that in the stableyard in a hall where his father taught, was a gathering. He drew nearer. He knew at once that the gathering was about him. For he could hear his father's angry voice defying all counsel from his relatives, uncles and aunts to Kasim, who had all come to try to cool his father down. He could hear his eldest uncle say to the Imam, "Please brother in the name of our dear father, Allah have mercy on him, calm your temper and listen to what Kasim has to say for himself."

"To what?" he heard his father reply, "I am Kasim's father not his friend and I pray Allah shall not show me the day when father and son argue like equals."

"At least," his uncle said, "haven't you thought that there could have been a mistake. Don't you think that what Kasim said could have really....."

"What are you suggesting? My wives, his mother, everyone of them tell a lie! Well, lie or no lie, and even if Kasim were to get back into his mother's womb, I swear in the name of Allah I shall dig him out and beat him for this."

"Oh how dare he," thought Kasim, "Isn't my mother dead! He who should have been both father and mother to me." With that thought reverberating in his mind Kasim did not wait to hear any more. He turned and ran. He did not know where he was going, all he wanted then was to be as far away from the house as he could. On and on he ran. He passed the old tumbledown derelict walls of the town's belligerent past and with no thought even of a possible encounter with hyenas or leopards he ran on. He could not say how far he had run when he eventually got tired. But he did realise, however, that he was far from human habitation. He could see the dark shadows of the bush trees and he made for one of them and lay down. It was then and only then he began to feel the bruises he had suffered in his rush through the bush. His feet and legs he realised were all scratched. But that did not bother him. Then he began to think what his family would say when they found he was gone. What of his innocence, who would defend him?

"I had already been found guilty and sentenced anyway, so why bother?" Then his thoughts shifted to his father. He smiled for some reason at the

thought of his father sitting on his couch all night whip by his side waiting for him to come in. Then he pictured him again disappointed and resentful and he smiled again, this time from the sheer joy of knowing that for once he had pulled one over someone. The thought that his running away might upset his father did not bother him for someone who had been so brutal and hateful would not care because he had run away With such thought in his mind sleep overtook his weary body.



DASIN McFARLANE

POEMS

JACOB AND THE ANGEL

And shall a man
mortal though the wind
covets eternity seek only
this seek only to endure
whether failings of breath and bone
corruption of flesh and faith?
Too thin too thin the wind
of consolation here
the outer edge of prayer
the unexorcised inexorcisable knife
selfknowledge is closer to distant stars
whose stare is lonely and unexplained
solemn and keen and unwinking like regret
than the old Earth estranged now
a pillow of cold stone.

POEM

Music a kind of sleep
imposes on this weary flesh
wind beyond silence
speech of the God who ordered
trees flowering of dark earth
light, essence of darkness
birth
Lucifer massed
in arrogant disorder all about
pale quiet strength of stellar presences
hears in a wonderful dread
music a calm
persistent tread
above the wild torment of nameless waters.

ASCENSION

Carry me up some morning to the heights
Now that I have died...
Here among the stone piles have I died;
Here upon the sterile desert,
Here by the cacti crucified.
Therefore carry me up some morning to my Father,
I fulfilled,
Who is all knowledge and all strength
All wisdom and all fulness
All there is of truth
All green hills: I fulfilled
Carry me up some morning,
Carry me up some morning to the heights
Where I shall live again
Supremely;
Where I have never died.

THE FINAL MAN

This is the final man;
Who lives within the dusk,
Who is the dusk
Always.
To know birth and to know death
In one emotion,
To look before and after with one eye.
To see the Whole,
To know the Truth,
To know the World and be without a world:
In this light that is no light,
This time that is no time, to be
And to be free:
This is the final man
Who lives within the dusk,
Who is the dusk
Always.

LOVESONG

You are somewhere an essence never dreamed
by me or other fortunate mariner
who holds steadfast a course among ungainly seas to find at dawn
staggering across his track your starless vessel. You
are that fate, for being inconceivable, no man anticipates
or wishes on his friend; yet having found
nurtures in it forever a strange irrational joy.

The rescue
you accept, an accident as any other in the endless chain
you celebrate; no more. The accident we are, this
only will overtake you slowly, outshadowing others. See, already
you would forsake the more complacent rhythm
of the deck but newly gained. The ocean beckons.

ELEGY: FOUR O'CLOCK

The land is full of echoes; all the bright
company of men the dumb
land uttered in prophesying tongues are gathered
in the constant afternoon. Flame licks the hills. It
is enough that I am here, one
with the maimed and dead and utterly victorious
citizens of the moment. Here
is perfection, in a calm miniature of hills, the leaden
sea, the desolate street, the tidy
burgher addressing himself to evening
and the suburbs. Day is shuttered
and done. Who is lonely
as the Wind? None sees his shadow.

LANGSTON HUGHES

By EZEKIEL MPHAHLELE

Here is a man with a boundless zest for life. Now that sounds trite. But who could say less of Langston Hughes? He has an irrepressible sense of humour, and to meet him is to come face to face with the essence of human goodness. In spite of his literary success, he has earned himself the respect of young Negro writers, who never find him unwilling to help them along. And yet he is not condescending. Unlike most Negroes who become famous or prosperous and move to high-class residential areas, he has continued to live in Harlem, which is in a sense a Negro ghetto.

Since 1926 when his first volume of verse, *The Weary Blues*, appeared, Langston Hughes has loomed progressively larger on the North American literary scene, and he has stayed top among Negro writers.

Hughes is a most versatile writer: poetry, fiction, plays, jazz lyrics, librettos, books about jazz, Negro history, and so on. We are here concerned with his verse.

There was quite a chorus of Negro voices in the twenties, and the then 23-year-old Hughes was one of the chorus. The others were Countee Cullen; James Weldon Johnson; Angelina Weld Grimké; the Jamaica-born Claude McKay; Jean Toomer; Paul Laurence Dunbar; Sterling Brown; Arna Bontemps; Georgia Douglas Johnson, and so on. Journals like *Crisis* and *Opportunity* which catered specifically for Negro culture gave a terrific spurt to creative talent.

As might be expected, a large volume of the verse that was turned out was very close to the Negro situation; the fact of oppression, the fact of the black man's rejection by the white man, the fact of rootlessness. This protest swayed between surrender and self-pity at the one end and a stiff-necked self-justification at the other. We hear Angelina Weld Grimké say in *Surrender*:

Uncrowned,
We go, with heads bowed to the ground,
And old hands, gnarled and hard and browned.
Let us forget the past unrest —
We ask for peace.

Countee Cullen in his *Protest* says he does not long for death:

But time to live, to love, bear pain and smile,
Oh, we are given such a little while.

"We shall not always plant while others reap," Cullen holds forth, echoing Shelley. Although the Negro is dark-skinned he harbours a certain loveliness.

So in the dark we hide the heart that bleeds
And wait and tend our agonizing seed

And yet it was he who reiterated so often that he wanted his verse to be taken as poetry, without the implications of race.

In the same idiom Langston Hughes sings:

I, too, sing America.
I am the darker brother.
They send me to eat in the kitchen
When company comes
But I laugh,
And eat well,
And grow strong.
Tomorrow,
I'll sit at the table
When company comes.
Nobody'll dare say to me,
"Eat in the kitchen,"
Then.

Besides,
They'll see how beautiful I am
And be ashamed, —

I, too, am America.

Again,
The night is beautiful,
So the faces of my people.

All his life the fact of Hughes's negro-ness (he has actually a light complexion) has aroused in him a desire to challenge those from the other side of the colour line that reject it:

My old man's a white old man
And my old mother's black.
My old man died in a fine big house.
My ma died in a shack.
I wonder where I'm gonna die,
Being neither white nor black?

It is unfortunate that blunt protest, which is inevitable in circumstances of race discrimination that often expresses itself in lynchings or slow murder, seldom lifts poetry above the level of sickly, mawkish versification.

Naturally, this colour-consciousness had, at a certain point, to look for its roots, or rather try to feel Africa as the Negro's cultural cradle. In 1923 Hughes met and heard Marcus Garvey exhort Negroes to go back to Africa to escape the wrath of the white man and Hughes became one of the many poets who thought they felt the beating of the jungle tom-toms in the Negro's pulse. Their verse took on a nostalgic mood, and some even imagined that they were infusing the rhythm of African dancing and music into their verse. They were called, rather half-sarcastically and half-enviously, the "Rhythm Boys", Prof. Stirling Brown of Howard University, who was a young poet then, regarded the movement as a mere faddism. Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois roared at Carl Van Vechten, a white author, for portraying in his novel, *Nigger Heaven*, Harlem cabaret life as a show of savage, primitive passions in the rhythm of its dance and music.

This romantic mood very rarely produces powerful poetry. Only when it was dispersed and was fused with other thoughts could it result in a sober poem like Hughes's *The Negro Speaks of Rivers*. He wrote it on his way to

Mexico to see his father who hated "niggers", although he was a Negro himself. This worried the son no end, and the poem is a fusion of thoughts about the father, Negroes, himself, slavery and African ancestry.

I've known rivers:

I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the
flow of human blood in human veins.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.

I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.

I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.

I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln went
down to New Orleans, and I've seen its muddy bosom turn
all golden in the sunset.

I've known rivers:

Ancient, dusky rivers.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

He came to Africa. As with most things, Langston Hughes took this continent casually, with a sense of fun. Not as Richard Wright was to take it years later when he came here and gave an account of his experiences in *Black Power* (1954). Wright took himself too seriously and expected Africans to warm to his approach immediately simply because he is black. He assessed the value of African cultures as he observed them in Ghana by Western standards and summed them up as inadequate (in spite of his own admission that he could not strike a medium for mutual understanding between him and the Ghanaians). He did not have Hughes's humility and sense of adventure.

"My Africa, Motherland of the Negro peoples! And me a Negro! Africa! The real thing, to be touched and seen.....!" Hughes exclaimed. To him the people were "dark and beautiful". But he was sad, because "the Africans looked at me and would not believe I was a negro. You see, unfortunately, I am not black!"

The vogue for primitivism put Langston Hughes in an embarrassing position at one time, which, however, he came out of with grace. He had found himself a patron in the person of a rich white woman. She kept him comfortably in food and clothing so that he could write "beautiful things", things that came out of his "primitive soul". One day he wrote something angry against the luxurious newly-opened Waldorf Astoria, the symbol of plenty surrounded by so much poverty and toil. Hughes simply did not know how to satisfy his benefactor. He writes:

She wanted me to be primitive, and know and feel the intuitions of the primitive. But, unfortunately, I did not feel the rhythms of the primitive surging through me, and so I could not live and write as though I did. I was only an American Negro — who had loved the surface of Africa and the rhythms of Africa — but I was not Africa. I was Chicago and Kansas City and Broadway and Harlem. And I was not what she wanted me to be.

This experience hurled Hughes into another emotional crisis. The first one had been that time when he was in Mexico and felt he hated his father. Desperately ill, he went to his mother and stepfather in Cleveland.

Langston Hughes left the African theme for a long time. Now that Africa has begun to take on a new significance for the American Negro he has reviewed the old poems with their drumbeats and nostalgia. He has written new ones, and handled the lot as part of *The Poetry of Jazz*, a series of readings Hughes does, accompanied by drums. The following is in the new mood:

Africa.
Sleepy giant,
You've been resting awhile.
Now I see the thunder
And the lightning
In your smile.
Now I see
The storm clouds
In your waking eyes:
The thunder,
The wonder
And the new
Surprise
Your every step reveals
The new stride
In your thighs.

The Negro's recall of the slave days piles up imagery in such poems as *Trumpet Player*; and the "black" theme is elevated from the shallows of self-justification. There is a muted voice of protest here, coming out like the plaintive tones distilled from a muted trumpet: Here are four stanzas from the poem.

The Negro
With the trumpet at his lips
Has dark moons of weariness
Beneath his eyes
Where the smouldering memory
Of slave ships
Blazed to the crack of whips
About his thighs.
The music
From the trumpet at his lips
Is honey
Mixed with liquid fire.
The rhythm
From the trumpet at his lips
Is ecstasy
Distilled from old desire —
The Negro
With his trumpet at his lips
Whose jacket
Has a *fine* one-button roll,
Does not know
Upon what riff the music slips
Its hypodermic needle
To his soul —
But softly
As the tune comes from his throat
Trouble
Mellows to a golden note.

It is not often that Langston Hughes's anger mounts to a pitch. When it does, especially when he writes on the South, his protest comes straight from the shoulder, and he throws in tense and turgid word-pictures. In *Third Degree* he says:

Slug me! Beat me!
Scream jumps out
Like blow-torch.
Three kicks between the legs
That kill the kids
I'd make tomorrow.

*Bars and floor skyrocket
And burst like Roman candles.*

Again, there is the poem, *The South*:

The lazy, laughing South
With blood on its mouth.
The sunny-faced South,
 Beast-strong,
 Idiot-brained.
The child-minded South
Scratching in the dead fire's ashes
For a Negro's bones.
 Cotton and the moon,
 Warmth, earth, warmth,
 The sky, the sun, the stars,
 The magnolia-scented South.
Beautiful, like a woman,
Seductive as a dark-eyed whore,
 Passionate, cruel,
 Honey-lipped, syphilitic —
 That is the South.
And I, who am black, would love her
But she spits in my face.
And I, who am black,
Would give her many rare gifts
But she turns her back upon me.
 So now I seek the North —
 The cold-faced North,
 For she, they say,
 Is a kinder mistress,
And in her house my children
May escape the spell of the South.

He writes much in lighthearted vein, skimming the surface of things, presenting the externals of a situation to suggest the inner meaning to the reader, never posing as a thinker. His abundant sense of satire reinforces everything he touches in this manner. At one time he will say:

I don't mind dying —
But I'd hate to die all alone!
I want a dozen pretty women
To holler, cry and moan.

A man returns to his lover whom he left a long while ago. The woman says:

I looked at my daddy —
Lawd! and I wanted to cry.
He looked so thin —
Lawd! that I wanted to cry.
But the devil told me:
 Damn a lover
 Come home to die!

In a roaringly funny satirical poem, *Life is Fine*, a man is driven by some love problem to thoughts of suicide. He goes to a river and jumps in.

I came up once and hollered!
I came up twice and cried!
If that water hadn't a-been so cold
I might've sunk and died.
 But it was
 Cold in that water!
 It was cold!

He takes a lift sixteen floors up a building to jump down from. He yells and cries because if the building hadn't been so high, he might have jumped and died. "But it was high up there! It was high!" So he decides to go on living. He might have died for love, "but for livin' I was born". And.

Life is fine!
Fine as wine!
Life is fine!

Finally, in more pensive vein but with Hughes's deep chuckle down there at the base of his questionings:

What happens to a dream deferred
Does it dry up
Like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore —
And then run?
Does it sink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over —
Like a syrupy sweet?
Maybe it just sags
Like a heavy load
Or does it explode?

Langston Hughes still talks about the beauty of being dark-skinned. He may yet help to supply the artist's answer to the dilemma in which the American Negro finds himself these days: political, economic and social integration with whites — yes; but can the Negro retain his cultural identity and avoid being swallowed up by the American mainstream. Some Negroes of culture think they want to do both. There is a good deal of talk among them about *négritude* and the enchantment it holds out to them. One Negro writer said recently at a conference of writers that, with the general improvement of the coloured man's position in the United States, it was going to be hard for those apprenticed in protest writing of the "lynching tradition" — especially the older men — to re-adjust themselves. Langston Hughes is in no such predicament. It is a long time since his poetry outlived dead-pan protest. And Hughes was never pre-occupied with a two-dimensional protest.



OR 'THE STRING OF BEADS

BY MICHAEL OKAFOR

A few moments before there had been speeches. He and I had been sitting at one end of one of the long tables. There had been laughter and drinks; eatables and smiles had flowed continuously. You could just make out the familiar smell of moth balls in the inseparable smells of all sorts and brands of perfumes. Moth balls of course, betrayed the fact that the clothes had been extracted from the preserving boxes.

My greatest friend at the Training College, Helen, was my chief bridesmaid and she had been telling me continually how beautiful I looked in my wedding gown. I liked her for that.

Now I was alone and with the white lace still rustling over me, I was tearing away at the brown paper that wrapped the square-shaped object. My father had sent it as a wedding present. He had at first objected to our marriage but somehow he had come to change his mind. And to follow up his complete approval he had sent me this heavy present. But, he had warned, I should not open it until after the wedding. You may then understand why I was so impatient.

I did not need to have a second look: it was a tape-recorder. I should not, of course, have known what it was if I had not spent one of my holidays in Lagos miles away from here with one of my relatives. Nneka, I am sure, would not recognize one; she has hardly left our home-town. And even though she is my elder sister I have seen more places than she.

As I was saying, I confess I was disappointed. For although I did not know exactly what to expect, I did not in the slightest consider this possibility. Any way, it was a father's gift and I brightened immediately and warmed myself into feeling happy about it.

I touched a knob, which was remarkable for being unusually dainty. I was merely attempting to examine the instrument. To my great surprise a voice began to issue out from it. It was my father's voice, not the usual clear one, but something quite hoarse — and came out deliberately.

"Enuma", it had started, and I was surprised to hear my name. I was reassured immediately that the voice was my father's. He had never liked to call me by my Christian name, which I prefer. He used to say he gave up everything Christian when against the advice of the Catechist and others, he had taken a

second wife. His own Christian name he gave up at that time and though he never said it, he expected you to change your name too. No, not me: I like being called Esther; it makes you feel at once that I had been to school and, was what we used to call at the Training College, modern.

"Enuma", the voice called again. Then it sighed; and there was a long pause.

"I have always wanted to tell you this. But you were too young; and too much after your own affairs when you were big enough. I knew I must tell you this someday . . . someday. Perhaps you know it already; perhaps indeed you own one yourself already . . . perhaps.

"Have you, Enuma, ever walked from here to Adazi? No, you haven't: I know that. Surely, not when there are lorries to take you around these days. These new things are good alright . . . but . . . but they make one lazy."

The deliberation with which the words were uttered held you spell bound and made you want to continue to listen. "How could anyone walk to Adazi?" I asked myself. "Not for anything; at least, I can not think of walking ten miles. For that is the distance from my town."

The voice roused me again:

"Enuma, are you listening? I was just saying that walking to Adazi was a simple matter to us in those days. And we were at that time only a little below your present age. Enuma, you will be twenty in a month or so. But when I was that age we were just about finishing our Primary school education. I do not know if you can be called luckier, but you see we went to school when our parents considered we were old enough to stand the teachers' cane — say from ten or eleven years of age. Then we had to march to Church on Sunday at Adazi, rain or not. The only priest in this neighbourhood was in that town. And we all had to go to church there.

"That night there was bright moonlight only that occasionally thick black clouds were seen about — at times even hiding the moon so that you thought it was going to rain. There was a gentle Harmattan breeze, which was not quite as dry as it had been all morning. We all set out in a large unorganized group of about fifteen — children who lived in our neighbourhood. Even had there been no moonlight we would still have gone, for it was Christmas Eve.

"But the party which had been going from compound to compound collecting its members had not gone very far from ours when my father called on me. I returned to fetch him his pipe. He was quite old at this time and did not move about much. I did not keep long with him. But when I returned my companions were not in view. So I set to run. I could clearly make out what appeared to be their voices; but I never reached them. I continued to run. Yes, they were in front. At last I was exhausted and could not run any longer. So I began to walk. When I had recovered my breath sufficiently I shouted at them. The echo merely rang on, but there was no reply. The voices appeared to be nearby but when I ran forward I met no one. It was as if they kept a constant distance and hid themselves just when they saw me running for them. Believe me, I was getting really frightened for there were no houses around only trees and grass; dark trees with long shadows and tall grass.

"I had by this time done about half the journey and there was no going back.

"Something squeaked not far away and I jumped and ran forward. Nothing; it

was only a squirrel perhaps. I continued. But I thought I heard footsteps behind me. I increased my pace afraid of looking back. But the footsteps came nearer and nearer. I could bear the suspense no longer: I looked back and I saw a multitude of people advancing on the path and through the grass. I set out with a dash crying and shouting to my father to help me. How could he help? The old man could hardly move and in any case was not near. There are no houses between the two towns, as I've said. I made my way on the path, up and down small hills, across tiny streams now dried up, over fallen trees.

"I thought I was dreaming; a dream could not have been worse. I ran along till I fell partly through exhaustion and partly because I struck my foot against a stump. I struggled in vain to stand. I just lay down and waited for the worst to happen to me. I am surprised that I did not remember to pray as we had been taught to do when in danger.

"Something cold dropped on me as I lay down. I knew it must be a snake so I beat it off with the last bit of energy left in me. I did not succeed in driving it off. In fact it stuck itself round my wrist. I rubbed it against the ground, against the grass, on my shirt. It remained fast. Then I summoned courage to look at it, it was only a string of beads, the type women were fond of in those days. I wiped my forehead to remove the sweat and dust. In a moment I was again hearing the voices of the party. I called out and this time they answered. I joined them, telling them nothing of my experiences as they would hardly believe me.

"I now know that the string of beads, the "jigida" as it used to be known had been my helper. I have got out of awkward situations since then by rubbing the beads on my forehead." There was a pause, after which my father's voice dwindled.

I do not exactly know when the voice stopped telling its story. But a choir was singing right in front of me. I looked at my hand and over the white glove of my wedding dress was a green "jigida". I clutched it as if to make sure it did not vanish. For the whole thing appeared to me to be a dream. I reassured myself that I was awake by calling myself "Esther" and answering.

I rubbed it against my forehead and continued to answer to my own name. Then I gradually opened my eyes and there was John by my bed. He said he'd been calling me and waking me up for nearly three minutes.

I looked at my wrist, there were no beads — only my wrist watch. Somewhere from nearby a wireless set was issuing out a Christmas Carol. I sighed and got out of bed.

A few days later when I was actually wedded to John, I told myself my children must wear strings of beads at least when they are babies. John will of course never know why. He'd laugh at me and say I am old fashioned. But what else can I do when my father's voice continues to ring in my ears: "Take care of it, Enuma, you will need it". And my father had been dead long since — long, long, before I had this dream. The old saying can't be wrong: Dead men, when they do speak, always mean business.



TEN POEMS FROM LEOPOLD SEDAR SENGHOR'S "CHANTS POUR NAETT"
Translated by Sangodare Akanji

O THESE STREETS....

(for flutes and *balafong*)

O these streets of sleeplessness, these streets of the meridians, these long
nightly streets!

For so long, I have been civilized, and yet I have not appeased the white god
of sleep.

I speak his language well, but my accent is barbaric.

The darkness here is black, the scorpions on the path are sand-coloured,
night coloured

And clouds of stupor weigh down my chest that is shaken by thicket and
wheezing.

But here now is my sister the breeze, that visited me in *Joal*.

When foreign birds sang the ancestor's message, sweet like evening dew.

The memory of your face is stretched on my throat, a lordly tent.

A vaulting of velvet that encircles the blue forest of your hair.

Your smile runs through my sky like a milky way

And the golden bees on your shady cheeks are humming like stars

And the Southern Cross is glistening on your chin.

And then I ejaculate a cry of carnal desire that floods my heart like the
Niger spreading over winter crops.

And I cry out aloud like the water to the creatures of the sister trees:

"Nanyo!"

And I cry out to the couples who chatter on the honest mat of the beach:

Nanyo!

And I shall rest a long time in blue black peace,

I shall sleep a long time in the peace of *Joal*,

Until the angel of dawn returns me to your light,

To your brutal and cruel reality, civilization!

SHE DRIVES ME INCESSANTLY
(for two *balafong*)

She drives me incessantly through the thicket of time.
My black blood pursues me through the crowd up to the clearing where the
white night sleeps.
Sometimes I return to the street and I see the palm tree again smiling in
the monsoon.
Her voice brushes me lightly like lipping wings and I say.
"It is Naëtt!" I have seen the sunset in the blue violet eyes of a blond negress.
In Sèvres-Babylone or Balanger her Ambra- and *Gongo*-scent have spoken to me.
Yesterday in the Angelus church her candle eyes burnt rosebeetle-coloured
On her banana skin. My God, my God, but why should I tear out my shrieking,
pagan senses?
I cannot sing your anthem nor dance it without swing,
Sometimes a cloud, a butterfly or a few drops of rain are on the window
of my boredom.
She drives me incessantly through the space of time.
My black blood pursues me into the solitary heart of night.

IN WHAT TEMPESTUOUS NIGHT

What dark tempestuous night has been hiding your face?
And what claps of thunder frighten you from the bed
When the fragile walls of my breast tremble?
I shudder with cold, trapped in the dew of the clearing.
O, I am lost in the treacherous paths of the forest
Are these creeper or these snakes that entangle my feet?
I slip into the mudhole of fear and my cry is suffocated in watery rattle.
But when shall I hear your voice again, happy luminous morn?
When shall I recognise myself again in the laughing mirror of eyes, that are
large like windows?
And what sacrifice will pacify the white mask of the goddess?
Perhaps the blood of chicken or goats, or the worthless blood in my veins?
Or the prelude of my song, the ablution of my pride?
Give me propitious words.

i ACCOMPANIED YOU
(for *Khalam*)

I accompanied you to the warehouses and to the gates of night
I was speechless before the golden riddle of your smile.
A brief dusk fell on your face, a divine mood.
From the height of the hill, the refuge of light, I saw your loincloth extinguished,
And your headdress, like the sun, sank into the shadows of the ricefields.
Then I was pounced on by fear, ancestral fears more treacherous than the leopard,
And my spirit failed to drive them beyond the horizon of day.
Will this be eternal night and the parting without a return?
I shall weep in the darkness of the motherly caves of the earth.
I shall sleep in the silence of my tears,
Until my brow touches the milky morn of your lips.

SONG OF THE INITIATE:
(for three drums: *gorong*, *talmbat*, and *mblakakh*)

Behold from the purity of night rise the steep altar, the granite brow.
The blue green line of the eyebrows, fresh like the shadow of the *Kori*.
To the pilgrim whose eyes are washed clean, with fasting and ashes of waking
The head of the red lion appears, at sunrise on the highest peak,
In superreal majesty. O killer terror, I withdraw, powerless.
I have no antelope horns, only a hunting horn filled with emptiness:
My untouched beggar's bag. O tear me with your twin lightning,
How terribly sweet their roaring! Delightful, unrelenting the claws!
And let me die, to be reborn in the revelation of beauty!
Silence, silence over the shadow.....subdued tom-tom,.....
Tom-tom, long heavy tom-tom tom-tom black.

I HAVE SPUN YOU A SONG
(for two flutes)

I have spun you a song, sweet like the cooing of doves at noon,
And my three stringed *Khalam* gave me thin accompaniment.
I have woven you a song, but you would not listen.
I brought you wild flowers, containing a scent of secrets, like the eyes of
a sorcerer,
And their blooming is rich, like twilight at *Sangomar*.
I brought you my wild flowers. Will you allow them to wither
While you play your ephemeral games?

A HAND OF LIGHT
(for flutes)

A hand of light caressed my eyelids of night
And your smile was above the mists that drifted monotonously over my Congo
My heart was an echo to the pure song of the birds of dawn
Thus my heart once beat the pure song of power in the branches of my arms.
Look, the bushflower there, and the star in my hair and the ribbon encircling
the brow of the athletic shepherd.
I shall borrow the flute whose rhythm pacifies the herds
And all day long sitting in the shadow of your eyelashes at the Fimia-source
I shall faithfully graze the blond roaring of your herds.
Because this morning a hand of light caressed my eyelids of night
And all day long my heart was an echo to the pure song of the birds.

BE NOT AMAZED

Be not amazed beloved, if sometimes my song grows dark,
If I exchange the lyrical reed for the *Khalam* or the *tama*
And the green scent of the ricefields, for the swiftly galloping war drums.
I hear the threats of ancient deities, the furious canonade of the god.
O, tomorrow perhaps, the purple voice of your bard will be silent for ever.
That is why my rhythm becomes so fast, that the fingers bleed on the *khalam*.
Perhaps, beloved, I shall fall tomorrow, on a restless earth
Lamenting your sinking eyes, and the dark tom-tom of the mortars below.
And you will weep in the twilight for the glowing voice that sang your black
beauty.

I WILL PRONOUNCE YOUR NAME

(for *tama*)

I will pronounce your name, Naëtt, I will declaim you, Naëtt!

Naëtt, your name is mild like cinnamon, it is the fragrance in which the lemon grove sleeps,

Naëtt, your name is the sugared clarity of blooming coffee trees

And it resembles the Savannah, that blossoms forth under the masculine ardour of the midday sun.

Name of dew, fresher than shadows of tamarind.

Fresher even than the short dusk, when the heat of the day is silenced.

Naëtt, that is the dry tornado.. the hard clap of lightning

Naëtt, coin of gold, shining coal, you my night, my sun!

I am your hero, and now I have become your sorcerer, in order to pronounce your names.

Princess of *Elissa*. banished from Futa on the fateful day.

YOU HELD THE BLACK FACE

(for *Khalam*)

You held the black face of the warrior between your hands

Which seemed with fateful twilight luminous.

From the hill I watched the sunset in the bays of your eyes.

When shall I see my land again, the pure horizon of your face?

When shall I sit at the table of your dark breasts?

The nest of sweet decisions lies in the shade.

I shall see different skies and different eyes,

And shall drink from the sources of other lips, fresher than lemons.

I shall sleep under the roofs of other hair, protected from storms.

But every year, when the rum of spring kindles the veins afresh,

I shall mourn anew my home, and the rain of your eyes over the thirsty Savannah.



Notes on the words printed in italics :

<i>Balafong</i>	a kind of xylophone built with different sized calabashes
<i>Elissa</i>	original home of the Serer, Senghor's people who now live on the banks of the Senegal river
<i>Gonga</i>	sweet perfume used by women in Senegal
<i>Gorong</i>	deep sounding drum
<i>Joal</i>	birthplace of Senghor
<i>Khalam</i>	a three stringed guitar, similar to that used by the Hausa people
<i>Kori</i>	the thin green line that indicates the existence of a river bed in the desert
<i>Mbalakh</i>	a large, high pitched drum
<i>Nanyo</i>	exclamation of joy (from the Wolof language)
<i>Sangomar</i>	the mouth of the Salum river
<i>Talmbat</i>	a heavy drum
<i>Tama</i>	a small drum used to accompany praise songs

THE FLAME TREE

A CHAPTER FROM THE NOVEL "BON DIEU RIT"

BY EDRIS SAINT-AMAND

One Sunday afternoon before the sermon, Pastor Henri had condescended to call on Uncle Prévilus, the best behaved of his children, as he called him. But with all the goodwill in the world the old people could not offer him any food, for they had nothing to bite themselves. When Pastor Henri was about to leave after exchanging a few words, he suddenly had the idea that Prévilus should cut down the large flame tree that stood in his back yard.

"This flame tree, Prévilus, was it not a tree to which you used to bring sacrifices, in the old days when you were still caught in superstition? I think you ought to cut it down! What is this tree still supposed to do here?"

Prévilus was speechless. His tongue stuck in his throat. Besides his rheumatism plagued him and his mind was heavy with worries anyhow. There was a long pause. The pastor waited.

"Oh, I would have felled it long ago," the old man said at last. "After all, I am freed of superstition. But the tree gives me shade. Without the flame tree it would be intolerable in this yard here in the afternoons."

But the pastor remained hard: "So a little bit of shade is worth more to you than the presence of Christ?" he said. "So I have mistaken you! Only in name you are a protestant. Christ will never enter this yard, until the cursed tree that has once served as an altar for the devil will be uprooted. Not until it will be destroyed, as if it were the devil in person."

Uncle Prévilus pulled his face into a grimace that could mean both yes and no.

Plaisimond said: "O father, it must be true what the pastor says. As long as the tree is here, we are pursued by misfortune. Who knows? Maybe the tree is responsible for all the misfortune that has befallen us. I am working, yet I cannot see that I profit from my work. Money dissolves in one's hands. For days on end we have nothing to eat. There was a time, when there was no Pastor Henri around here..." and he laughed when he said that, "and if we had suffered as much in those days, I would simply have taken what was not mine. Yet I remember well, what he told us. For the last week Monsieur Cyrille has not given me any work. For a whole week I have been without work — and yet I do not steal. Because Christ has forbidden it... We must cut down the flame tree, if we do not want the misery to remain with us."

Grandmother Lésida gesticulated and clapped her hands in order to indicate how much she agreed with Plammond. And when he was silent, she declared with sweet irony: "Listen, Prévilus, I am older than you, and for me you are still a child. I command you to tear out this accursed flame tree tomorrow morning! I do not want to see it again here in this yard. It is responsible for all our misfortunes. Does not Pastor Henri tell us every day "One cannot serve Christ and Mammon at the same time?" I must confess to you, Reverend Pastor, that Prévilus does seem to be same these days. Since his rheumatism has caught him again, he has lost his head. Do you know, Reverend Pastor, what he said yesterday? We should not reproach his son Prévilien any longer. Everybody had his own ideas, and if Prévilien insists on serving the Loas we should leave him in peace."

"I am sure that Prévilus was only joking," said Pastor Henri with an evasive gesture.

"No, no, he said it in earnest," she continued. "I am old enough to know when a person is joking and when he is serious. Believe me, Reverend Pastor."

But Prévilus interrupted her. "Dont listen to Grandmother Lésida, Reverend Pastor," he said "O, I am in such pain today. My arm has never hurt me so much."

"Pains, of course, you only dont want to fell the flame tree," cried the grandmother.

Pastor Henri seemed seriously worried. "The arm gives you great, great pain," he said in a low solicitous voice, "Next Sunday I shall bring you a remedy. But remember that you are suffering for the sake of Christ, and that you have to bear everything, absolutely everything with happiness. Above all you must fell the flame tree. Because this cursed tree can call down the wrath of God on you and your family."

Prévilus stood there for a long time thinking. His head was heavy like an overripe fruit. "I will think about it, Reverend Pastor," he said, "But if I fell it, where shall I be able to sit when the sun shines? Tell me that, Reverend Pastor, tell me that."

But now Pastor Henri was really annoyed. In a threatening voice he shouted at the old man: "I am beginning to think, Prévilus, that grandmother Lésida is right, and that you are afraid to tear out this sacrificial tree! It is not my fault if I have to speak harshly to you. You force me to do it. May be your illness has confused your head? This is unheard of! You say that you need shade! So you admit that you sit in the shade of a curse laden tree!"

The old woman broke out into shrill laughter and slapped her thighs, as if she wanted to smash her kidneys. "I told you so, Reverend Pastor," she said, "I told you so. His disease has turned him into a coward."

Then uncle Prévilus did not have the strength to resist this alliance. He shook his head: "Alright, you have demanded it, and I must agree. Tomorrow morning this tree will no longer be in my yard. You know everything, Reverend Pastor, and what ever is your wish, must be my wish too. Not even the roots I will leave in the ground. You shall be satisfied with me, Reverend Pastor."

The pastor left happily and very pleased. It was almost night, a warm moonlit night. And while the pastor walked slowly to the little hut in which he was going to proclaim the word of God he became conscious of a great happiness. This little scene which he had just experienced was quite enough to let him relish with all his senses, with his tongue, his fingers and his eyes, the infinite pleasures that awaited him one day in heaven to recompense him for his earthly sufferings. Thus he walked along blissfully. When he arrived at Dorismond's hut, his little chapel, the believers had already assembled. And once again this evening the pastor declared before the pious ones, that uncle Prévilus was the best of his sheep, the model of a convert, a true Christian.

"There may be," so the pastor declared, "people who are neatly dressed, who are clean and can read and write, but all that is nothing if they are not children of God. Blessed be the poor in spirit....."

Prévilus, whose rheumatism had not prevented him from attending the service, was glad about these words. In the dim light of the assembly his eyes shone like cats eyes, and an almost blissful smile played around his mouth.

Then the pious assembly left the little room. The ceremony was over.

The night had descended, a night sparkling with stars. A night with distant drums; a soft wind played in the branches, the heavy shadows brought worries to the heart, the toads sang their repulsive song and a soft calm sank into the weary limbs. Uncle Prévilus stretched out on his bed and tried to sleep. But his arm pained him. A great big black moth suddenly rustled on the partition, and caused great fear, because it was said that it brought bad luck. After a long fight, Plaisimond could hit the insect that was flying from wall to wall with a broom, and brush it out into the night through the half opened door.

At last uncle Prévilus fell asleep. Suddenly he had a dream. A very beautiful woman with very long hair stood erect in front of him and said: "Uncle Prévilus, Uncle Prévilus! It is me, mother Erzulie, listen to me. I have hurried here to tell you, that great misfortune will befall you, if you are going to fell the flame tree. You already wonder what your offence might be. You search and search in vain. Yes, it is me, who pursues you. I have made you poor and miserable and sick, because you have forsaken me. If you are going to fell the flame tree as well — woe to you! I shall not say any more."

He awoke and could not sleep again. The rheumatism would not leave him alone and his bad thought neither. The night seemed to become longer, horribly long. At last the morning squeezed in through the cracks in the wall. But the bad images remained in his head clinging unperturbed. Yet he had promised to cut down the flame tree this very morning.

Ma Prévilus and Grandmother Lésida were the first to get up. It was cold. But they knew that they had to fulfil a duty.

Ma Prévilus called Plaisimond: "Plaisimond! Plaisimond! Remember that we promised Pastor Henri to fell the flame tree. Unfortunately you have no time, because you must go to ask for work at Monsieur Cyrille's. But get up at once and call on Jean-Bart, Philémon and Osiris on your way. Tell them that Grandmother Lésida and I need their help to cut down the flame tree.

All three are good protestants. For such work they will not want much money. They will even enjoy doing it. When Monsieur Cyrille pays your wages on Sunday you may give them a little bit out of it. But get up now. Plaisimond, get up!"

But how surprised they were when Uncle Prévilus interrupted her: "No! No! Nobody shall touch the flame tree!" he declared. "I will not have it. The flame tree provides shade in the yard. If you have it cut down, where shall I go and sit then? Where shall I rest?"

"Did you not promise Pastor Henri to fell the flame tree?" cried grandmother Lésida.

But then the old man really let fly: "That is none of Pastor Henri's business. I am ill, and I cannot miss the shade which the tree provides. Besides Pastor Henri cant give orders here. I am the master of this house! I dont have to obey anybody. I'm not the servant of Pastor Henri! I have white hair: am I still supposed to be a servant? Listen to what I tell you, Plaisimond. If you go and tell people to fell the tree you are my son no longer. Then you are a disobedient, contrary young lout, and then I shall drive you out of the house."

As he spoke thus the old man had risen with ease from his bed, all pain had suddenly disappeared from his arm. In utter confusion Plaisimond dropped all his eagerness, just as one drops ones trousers before going to bed.

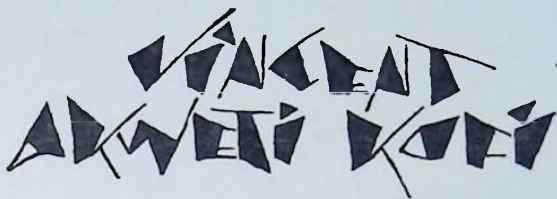
"Alright father, alright. If you dont want it, I shant do it. You are the one to command."

"I have commanded," the old man mumbled.

Ma Prévilus and Grandmother Lésida could only withdraw into a corner and chatter incessantly. Prévilus was a hypocrite, they said, a superstitious fellow who was afraid of the Loas, that was the reason why he behaved like that. But they were going to tell Pastor Henri!

But the old man silently ignored the words that condemned him.

translated by Saṅḡodare Akanji.



A SCULPTOR FROM GHANA.

BY ULLI BEIER

Ghana has no great tradition in wood carving, as have the Ivory coast to the West of it and Nigeria to the East. Yet it is from Ghana that we get one of the most gifted modern West African carvers. Vincent Akweti Kofi was born at Odumase-Krobo (Southern Ghana) in 1923. He was educated at Achimota and qualified at the Royal College of Art in London (A.R.C.A.) in 1955.

He is now an art teacher, but continues to do his creative work mainly in wood, cement fondu and metal. He has exhibited twice in London, several times in Ghana and recently in New York.

The five works reproduced here are all over life-size wood-carvings which can be seen at Akuafu Hall, at University College, Ghana. They are impressive, massive works, that seem lonely and out of place in the odd domestic architecture of Akuafu Hall. They all radiate a certain rugged, untamed power, that is expressed in the bulging, heavy forms, the rough surface, and the compact composition.

The most delicate figure is the relatively small "Mother and Child". It is executed in very light coloured Odanta wood, and the artist has given it a rather fine, smooth, surface treatment. The feeling of the work is tender and gentle. The large, clumsy hands of the mother press the child to her body. Mother and child look past each other in different directions, thus introducing an element of loneliness into this intimate theme. All the lines are soft and rounded and sensual. The heart shaped head of the mother has a flat receding forehead and large serious, meditative eyes. (Plates I, II right, III).

Much more rugged and forceful are the shapes of "The Drummer" (Plate II left, Plate V). He is shown in what seems to be an attitude of invocation. The face turned upwards, the large bulging eyes looking at the sky, the soft heavy lips loose and expectant. A feeling of power and force is conveyed largely through the vigorous bend of the left arm, and the large, heavy fists. But the stance of the legs is gentle, almost humble, and the resulting contrast produces the impression of potential, but subdued power.

The "Hornblower" has the same chipped surface treatment and similar bulging forms. (Plate IV, Plate VIII) The composition is extremely solid and compact. Slightly disturbing to me is the fact that the features are suddenly naturalistic; the puffed cheeks and half closed eyes showing the effort of blowing. This naturalism of the face seems to conflict with the transposed forms of the rest of the sculpture. On the whole, the anatomical features of the human form are only the raw material of Akweti Kofi's composition. In this sculpture he was, to my mind, less consequent.

A rather bewildering piece is "The Crucifix". Not so much in itself, as through its title. The figure is extremely heavy and powerful. The forms are round and bulky and the feeling of force is accentuated by the resemblance of the hands and feet to elephants' feet — almost like some legendary figure from folklore. The gigantesque figure is not without merit, but it is difficult to associate it with its theme. (Plate VII).

Of almost classic poise and beauty is the figure of "The Dancer." The tall, pregnant looking woman, has raised one arm above her head. The left hand rests heavily on her hip. It is a hand typical for Kofi's work: large and bulky, giving a strong down-to-earth feeling to all his work. Although the figure is entitled "The Dancer" it is static, like the rest of Kofi's work at Akuafu Hall. The figure stands erect and solid, like a caryatid.

It is a great pity that the powerful, monumental work of this Ghanaian sculptor is not yet known in Nigeria. Here, our sculptors seem to be burdened by the heavy weight of a great tradition. Some of our artists repeat feebler and watered down versions of their forefathers work. Others, in their desperate desire to free themselves, get lost in their attempt to adopt and digest European forms. Only a few have attained the originality and power of Vincent Akweti Kofi.

THE PLATES

- | | |
|------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Plate I | Mother and child — Odanta wood, five feet. (detail) |
| Plate II | The drummer. "Okyereman". Mansonia wood Eight feet, 1958 Right: |
| Plate III | Mother and child. (detail) |
| Plate IV | The hornblower. "Asokwa". Mansonia wood. 1958 |
| Plate V | The drummer. Two views. |
| Plate VI | The dancer. Two views. Mansonia wood. 1958 |
| Plate VII | The Crucifix. 1957 - 58.. |
| Plate VIII | The Hornblower. |

















ELIJAH ASHLEY KOMEY

POEMS

THE CHANGE

Your infancy now a wall of memory
In Harmattan the locusts filled the sky
Destroying the sweat put into the field
And restless seas shattered canoes
The fisher-folk put to sail by noon.
The impatience in your teens
Yet silent were your dreams
With the fires in your heart
Breaking the mask of innocence.
The evasive solitude in your womb
And the determination of your limbs
With eyes like the soaring eagle
Shattering the glass of ignorance.
Your infancy now a wall of memory
Before this you, like the worms,
Leaning on for vain indecorous dreams
And the cobras with venomous tongues
Licking the tepid blooms of hibiscus.

MIDZAKUMAN

(My native land)

O soil! Land of the patient seas
Where the sun rises and sets across the winds
And the moon smiles over staggering mysteries
And riches of earth, cram at your heels
And the spoils of victors rest by your feet
And I, your son, sing a song of emptiness.
When I'm gone, your son, cry no more.
Empty life and empty souls
Empty hearts and empty minds
The coward that I am, your son,
Never to lose a drop of my blood
Nor exude a sweat from the flesh
Nor shed a tear on your corpse
When I'm gone, your son, bury my seeds.

JAZZ BOOKS

NOTES ON THREE NEW JAZZ BOOKS

BY WOLFGANG VOGEL

Jazz began towards the end of the last century with the appearance of the band of Buddy Bolden, the legendary barber from New Orleans. It was the beginning of a musical form that was the synthesis between African and Occidental musical cultures.

Buddy Bolden's jazz sounded dissonant and strange to people brought up on conventional European musical concepts, and the regular beat tended to get on peoples' nerves, to such an extent that critics labelled it "barbaric" -- they hardly knew then, that the adjective applied better to the critics than to the music.

But jazz soon broke out of the intellectual ghetto the critics had assigned to it and like many a cultural manifestation that was rejected at its appearance, it later experienced a splendid rehabilitation. The time of humiliation was followed by a flood of enthusiasm and with it came a mass of jazz literature. Many books were written about this musical phenomenon, books that often said more about the enthusiasm of the author than about the music itself. There were famous works like Rudi Besh's *Shining Trumpets* and Hughes Panassié's *Le Jazz Hot*. They were magnificent in their own way, superbly written with great love for their subject, but they went basically wrong when they defined jazz as a purely American manifestation. One admitted that jazz contained a number of African musical elements, but one was never aware how large was the African contribution and what the extent of its influence in rhythm, harmony and musical concepts.

Reading this jazz literature one notices a general uncertainty when it comes to defining jazz. This uncertainty results from the fact that too little was known about African music and jazz was fitted too far into European-Occidental categories.

The purpose of this article, however, is not to analyse the faults of those books but rather to spotlight the three works that give us a new insight into jazz. Marshall Stearns, who is professor at the Institute of Jazz Studies at Hunter College, New York, is one of the few great jazz experts in the world

today. His *Story of Jazz* is a very musical, very American book. A whole century of American culture history is examined in it. The analysis of the music is a pretext for him to make sociological investigations of the fate of the American negro, to criticise American society and to investigate the role played by jazz in this society. Stearns' book is cultural history rather than pure musical history. His jazz analysis is based on the concept "blending". The entire development of jazz from the drum orchestras of Africa to the neoafrikanisms of Art Blackey is to him a gigantic blending process. Africa and Europe are the opposite poles of this process and African and European music have achieved a synthesis in jazz.

Starting with an analysis of West African music (unfortunately he is relatively superficial here) he arrives at a description of New Orleans, the city that is regarded as the birth place of jazz. (Of course jazz originated in many places at once in the USA, but in New Orleans it became popular and obtained world fame.) The description of the wild, colourful life that filled the city at the delta of the Mississippi in those days leads him on to the discussion of blues, spirituals, worksongs, minstrel music and ragtime. Stearns defines these popular musical forms as the "American background to jazz." But here he makes a big mistake: the overestimation of America's contribution.

African culture has undergone changes in America, has adapted itself to the new surroundings, the new rhythm, the new living conditions. From the European culture of the Occidental immigrants grew the new Euro-American culture; and the African culture of the black people who had been carried to America developed into a new Afro-American culture. Blues, worksongs, spirituals and ragtime are not the "American background", because this background does not exist, in fact cannot exist except as a geographical concept. All the folkloristic pre-jazz forms are the result of a mixture between African and European musical cultures. Stearns himself arrives at this conclusion.

From a description of the Jazz Age in the twenties, Stearns leads on to "swing", "bebop" and "cool" which he describes in great detail.

For Stearns music is the living expression of an epoch, and therefore he concludes his jazzbook with an investigation into cultural and social problems of the jazz period. What part did jazz play in American society, in literature and the plastic arts? What part does the Afro-American play in the United States? What is jazz today, what is its future? These are some of the questions that Stearns tries to answer towards the end of his book. His *Story of Jazz* is a brilliant work, one for which the "fans" have been waiting for a long time.

Equally brilliant, and perhaps more scientific is Alfons M. Dauer's *Der jazz — Seine Ursprünge und seine Entwicklung* (Jazz: its origins and development).

Dauer is a musicologist. In his book jazz is not placed into a social or general cultural context. The author has written a book that is distinguished by objectivity, precise scientific definitions and theories and the introduction of a precise terminology.

Dauer first of all gives us an exact definition of African music, which he is trying to explain with many examples. (His book contains an appendix of seventy musical scores taken from African and jazz music.) Then he introduces jazz, and shows that it is the result of a contact between African and Occidental music. According to Dauer all the early forms, archaic and classical

jazz, Dixieland and Chicago style are the result of the influence of Occidental music on African music. All forms of traditional jazz then are "black" music with "white" influence and only with the appearance of swing, the opposite process begins to take place.

What then is African music and what are its characteristics that have been preserved in jazz? The basis of African music is rhythm, a rhythm that is produced by percussion instruments like drums and xylophones. This rhythm, says Dauer, is completely free, that means it is not tied to a simultaneous tone movement or melody. African music follows its own laws, which are brought down to two main principles by Dauer.

First of all African music uses several *basic metres* simultaneously. (We have a basic metre when an exact number of equally accented beats is repeated in fixed periods of time. Thus in a triple metre we have three beats to a time unit.) This means, in the simplest case, that a $3/4$ measure is beaten against a $4/4$ measure. Dauer calls this type of rhythm *polymetric*.

The second principle of African music is that *several* rhythms can be beaten on *one* basic metre. The basic metre is being rhythmically dissolved and this is done through a shifting of accents and the use of syncopation. Dauer calls this process "polyrhythmic". African musicians produce a very artful music through an application of these two principles, which becomes more or less complex according to the number of participants.

Harmony has a less important place in African music. If harmony is defined as the sound of several notes within a short space of time, one can find two basic principles for African harmony. The one basic principle is called *parallelism* by Dauer. In this case singers, flutes and strings begin the melody simultaneously. They all have the same rhythm, and keep closely together. On the other hand we have *polyphony* when the voices are completely free: the voices or instruments start their melodies independently from each other, they play different rhythms and exist freely side by side. Their relationship to one another is very loose, and at certain points apparently ceases to exist.

By comparison Occidental music is poor in rhythms. It uses a single metre, that forms at the same time the rhythm of the piece. Occidental rhythm only serves to support the melody, it is hidden in it. The rhythmical movement is completely tied up with the melodic movement, they are inseparable. Any plurality of voices is based on a system of euphony, that is produced by the tonality of the dominant, a schema of harmonic sequences.

The folkloristic precursor of jazz, according to Dauer, is the worksong, that is still being sung on the cottonfields of the Southern States today. In the worksong we rediscover the ancient African working songs, whose form was taken over almost entirely. There are however the beginnings of harmonizing, which is due to European influence. The spiritual, another precursor of jazz, is the religious song of American negroes. It originated from the Africanisation of ancient English church songs, which were rhythmified and sung according to the principal of parallelism, and was rearranged according to the ancient African scheme of call and response. The priest or principal singer took over the part of the call while the congregation sang the response.

Even in these early folkloristic forms Dauer sees the beginning of the

synthesis, which begins through the equal importance given to melody and rhythm. Moreover the melodies begin to run in European harmonic sequences.

In one of the major chapters Dauer comes to the phenomenon of the blues, which is of extremely great importance for the development of jazz. Blues has its origin in folklore, but soon developed into a sophisticated art form that can be regarded as a new Afro-american creation. Dauer adds some new aspects to the numerous blues theories.

Blues usually has 12 time form, but it is easiest to understand if one divides it into three phases of 4 measures each. The first phase is in the tonic, for example C major and moves towards the end to the dominant, c 7, in order to continue in the second phase in the subdominant, f-major. In the third phase, via the dominant, g major one returns to the tonic c-major. This sequence of tonic, subdominant, dominant and tonic is purely of European origin. The connection of the three keys can easily be shown on European instruments like the harmonica or the accordian. Dauer calls the sequence of the harmony of the basic steps the *blues formula*.

He then proceeds to show that the blues formula plays a secondary part and that it is subordinate to the formation of melody. This is an entirely new theory. Dauer proves that the sequence of the harmony of the basic steps is not yet present in the earliest blues. The formation of a blues melody arises from a development of the call and response scheme. The call and response scheme was a way in which several simultaneous melodies were re-arranged as a sequence. In the blues the first two phases belong to the call, the third to the response. The fact that the third phase contains the response proves the Afro-american singer has unconsciously grasped a law of occidental harmony — because the dominant always has the character of a response. Dauer calls the division of the blues into call and response the sequence of the blues pattern.

A further characteristic of blues are notes that do not fit into the occidental categories of major and minor. They cannot be represented with notes and arise from the flattening of the third or seventh note on a key. This characteristic is generally known as blue notes.

Dauer then goes on to describe the individual styles of Jazz. What is commonly known as New Orleans Jazz he divides into *archaic* and classical jazz. Archaic jazz originated through a negro imitation of white marching bands. Such marching bands were composed as follows: the rhythm section consisted of a large and a small drum and a tuba, the melody instruments were clarinets, trumpets and French horns. In these marching bands the melody instruments play several improvised variations on the same theme simultaneously and on top of the polyrhythms of the rhythm section. In the archaic jazz style there are no blues notes. The musicians play "pure". Nor do we find the call and response scheme, for the blues is not fully developed during this time.

The classical jazz style is developed in New Orleans towards the end of the 19th century. It is developed out of the marching jazz and the now fully developed blues. The classic jazz bands play mostly for social dances of the Afro-americans, which represent according to Dauer a kind of shifting of ritual dances, into a profane atmosphere. The new purpose of the music brings with it a new composition of the band. The rhythm section consists of a

percussion in which the large and the small drums of the marching band have been combined, plus a piano and a banjo and a string bass; the melody instruments are usually cornet (or trumpet) clarinet and trombone. The polyphony has undergone an important change. For the trumpet has now taken over the call and the clarinet and trombone the response. But this is arranged in such a loose way, the response begins even during the call: the clarinet and the trombone start to play their response when the trumpet has only just started its call. The resulting polyphony Dauer says consists of the relationship between the individual musicians, which gives definite functions to individual instruments and to which they have to stick. In the classical jazz style the blue notes are also present, and we have the further characteristic of "shouting". The trumpet player exclaims with his instrument and produces a sound that has an emphatic impact, similar to the "fieldhollers" of the worksongs. Another new tone is the "growl", a vehement vibrato that is produced by holding the hand in front of the trumpet or trombone. In the rhythm section the percussion beats the basic metre, while the other rhythm instruments and the melody instruments invent new rhythms according to the laws of African polyrhythm which intertwine, separate, play against each other and thus create considerable tension. In the earliest classical jazz all the rhythm instruments are used to beat the basic metre, while only the melody instruments create counter rhythms. Dauer proves that the rhythms of the classical jazz bands are very related to the African drumming orchestras.

The last chapter speaks about the styles of Dixieland and Chicago jazz which resulted from an imitation by white musicians of classical jazz. This imitation of the classical jazz style led to a watering down of its idiom. The African polyrhythm is lost, the melody instruments play around each other and are no longer divided into the call and response scheme, which had given a first place to the cornet and a second place to the clarinet and trombone. The blue notes are largely replaced by pure notes and the rhythmic variety of the classical jazz style is replaced by relatively poor rhythm. The musicians have taken over the vibrato and the shouting merely for the sake of effects.

The Chicago style is a further watering down, if compared with the authentic jazz, but it also forms a new starting point, because it leads on to the swing era. These variations of jazz Dauer calls Euro-African, with the emphasis here on *Euro*. A development that achieves fulfilment in swing.

The authors of "hear me talking to ya" saw their task differently. They wanted to create a history of jazz with the help of utterances by the musicians themselves about their music and their time. The work is beautifully complementary to the above named books. The authors Nat Shapiro and Nat Hentoff went with a tape recorder into the bars, the night clubs and meeting points of musicians and led endless conversations with them. They skimmed the international jazz magazines for the authentic testimony of jazz musicians and thus they created a fascinating chronicle of jazz. It is difficult to describe or criticise such a successful book. When we open the book the great jazz musicians begin to speak: Bunk Johnson, King Oliver, Alphone Picou, Johnny Dodds talk about their music, and how and why it was made. The theatres, ball houses, the speak easies and the barrell houses seem to be crowded once more, and everything is re-enacted in front of our eyes. Freddy Keppard places the cornet

to his mouth and begins with "High Society". Bessie Smith bleeds to death in the streets of Chicago and Roy "Little Jazz" Eldridge weeps because of the humiliations he has to endure because of his black skin. The kings of swing and bebop appear and Stravinsky, Milhaud, Ravel and Dvorak give their appreciations of jazz music. From Buddy Bolden to Dave Brubeck, from Benny Goodman to Dizzie Gillespie they tell their story. "Hear Me Talking to Ya" is like a conjuring of the reader. This book is jazz, it is music transformed into letters. This is perhaps the greatest compliment one can pay to a jazz book.

With Stearns, Dauer, and Shapiro and Hentoff we have three standard books on jazz that can give full satisfaction to every jazz fan and music lover.

Bibliography :

Marshall W. Stearns: *The Story of Jazz*. Oxford University Press Inc. New York 1956.

Alfons M. Dauer: *Der Jazz — Seine Ursprünge und seine Entwicklung*. Erich Roth Verlag, Kassel 1958.

Nat Shapiro and Nat Hentoff: *Hear Me Talking to Ya*. Reinhard, New York 1955.





EIGHT POEMS

OF A GLACIAL BLUE LIGHT

The reeling wounded remembrance
lapping like tired waves
lapping up the old salt tide
succeeding
now and again succeeding
in casting up
where the beach is littered
with ancient derelicts
succeeds now and again
in casting up
that which was never expected
that which
we had hoped
was at the bottom of the sea
Call it a glacial blue light
this reeling remembrance
this remembrance
that casts up
now and again
that which was never expected
casts it up
from the very bottom
of the tired dead sea
the black old sea
which now and again grows sick
sick of her old dead depths

THIS AGE AND DAY

Cadillac like a mile long
and twice as slick
Breezed lightning
blue as the winter
White side wall tires
humming like humming birds
all so slick
But no shoes
or shoes with holes
nose blue as winter
Humpty-dumpty
had
an uncle and an aunt

Named Sam both of them

And not so slick

CANAAN

The landscape
was
the intermingled
bodies
of nude sleeping females
the concaves
deep in shadow
breasts, buttocks, shoulders
thighs
peak bright in sun
the hills
of Canaan
were something like this
the white bodies
faceless, armless
under the setting sun

MARKET DAY

Anything could be bought
which is to say it
was for sale
everything at a price
including the market
and the basket of eggs
including nest eggs
The sky was an fluffy
as the basket
the eggs were packed in
and as high
The river was pretty low
and there were other things
too
Anything could be bought
Anything

JIMCRACKY

I keep writing about the winter
else because its so cold
It's white like a woman
who just looks at the ceiling
Only I don't see one yet
who just lie there eating an apple
It may be just superstition
but all the dark ones are warmest
It is just like all the sun
soaked right in their veins
I don't want no more winter
its all white and cold like

KINETIC

Mouse-bird
ka-ka-ka calling
with wicked teeth
The delicate leather wing
Nostrils flaring
like a stallions
broken but unsubdued
Age ka-ka-ka calling
through the thin maze
The blood spelling blood
Ka-ka-ka calling
from the wicked eye
Spelling out the letters
which once were said
to be handwriting on the wall



THE GAMBLER

BY NKEM NWANKWO

A small group of tired men, most of them carrying football Pools Coupons squatted or stood by the steps of a Lagos Post Office. The Postal workers had all gone home for the mid-day break. It was yet some minutes before they were to resume but the waiting group smarting from the sun were restless.

"They no go come," said an old man getting up from the stone he had made a seat. "They no go come."

"No mine am," said a lanky young man. "I sabe these Post Office people. They don suffer me three years but they no go suffer me again. My friend don teach me how I go play pools. Yes — No be small small money like that de win. No I go save big money and throw' am in my time." He glanced a challenge at the smilingly sceptic group. His clothes were shabby, his shoes down at heels but his eyes were deadly optimistic.

"Yes," shouted the orator: "My friend Bayo we de work with me last month no de work with me again. He throw in one hundred pounds, yes one hundred and he win thousands. Now I see am ride fine fine cars and carry fine fine women. You no see am". This last was directed at a shortish, self-effacing clerk standing by. "You no see 'am". The young orator had a way of converting anybody into an acquaintance with a glance.

"Perhaps," the man addressed said very cautiously, and glanced at the five shillings note he meant to invest that week.

"Yes," said the orator "I no go wait for this dam people. I go go for nother place". He smiled a companionable smile all round and straggled off.

As soon as he was gone the Post Office opened. The sturdy clerk of the five shillings note dashed to the counter, and getting there first bought his Postal Order, registered his pools coupons and emerged feeling as he had felt for the past ten years that the world would be kind to him at last.

"One hundred pounds" he said to himself remembering the fiery orator's words "Impossible". He smiled a smile of diffidence mixed with optimism. Some passers-by noted the smile and thinking it was for them returned it but Okoli Ede nicknamed "Time up" by his friends of the Government department where he worked, did not notice. His thoughts were engaged in contemplating the vagaries of that new mysterious god football pools. He came to the bus stop and looked a little wistfully at a standing vehicle. He would have liked to go by it, his home was a mile away and the sun eagerly pricked his head but

his salary did not allow for casual expenses. He walked therefore and after sweating at the neck for sometime came to his home, a small sooty room in the back yard of a rakish angled building. The room had a tone of minimum convenience not of comfort. It was furnished with an iron bed, a table and a chair. A corner of it segregated with an old blanket served for kitchen.

Okoli Ede took off his workaday clothes; blue khaki shorts and white shirt, and changed into brown wrapper and singlet. Then he set about boiling water for his garri.

"No, impossible" he murmured to himself. He could not stop the train of thoughts set on by the orator. Mightn't there be something in it though? To gamble on a grand scale? But with one hundred pounds! Fifty perhaps —

The pot was aboil. Okoli Ede prepared his lunch, ate, washed up and then came to his table to work on his G.C.E. papers. That was the pervasive aspect of his life. He was always eager to get home to it and his nickname 'Time up' commemorated the haste with which he got away from the office at close of day.

But this time Okoli Ede could not concentrate. There was a restlessness inside him; bred of a mental conflict which was growing and spreading. Wasn't life ordinarily tedious. For five years he had been taking the G.C.E., and failing. Will he ever reach where he had all along aimed. A voyage to England. A law degree. Back to Nigeria. A prosperous car, long and American. women Politics. More women. Ministerial office. More money than one could have need of or would it not be better to gamble with everything. If one won In one jump the end achieved £75,000. Okoli Ede got up, excited by the overwhelming figure. He had always loved money. There was a time he lost a shilling, he went without his meal for the whole day to pay for that loss.

A reaction against optimism set in and Okoli Ede with a hiss of disapproval sat down hard and resumed his work But after some minutes the figure 75,000 persistently danced across his line of vision. He unlocked a drawer set in the table and slipped out a bank account book. He opened it. His assets stood at exactly £100. A coincidence? But it might be an omen. In newspaper, his stars for that week sad said: 'Do not be afraid to take a chance'; why should his credit stand at exactly the figure the young orator mentioned?

But one might fail even with a hundred pounds. Suppose he failed. He had responsibilities, his father and mother struggling against a perverse land which yearly failed to yield them enough to eat. Memories of that land had haunted him like an evil spectre forcing him to accumulate, to place a barrier between himself and want. Suppose he failed. He threw the accounts book inside the drawer and recommended work. He must never again think of the mad scheme.

But he did think of it. Deep inside where the mind of men acted without awareness the conflict went on.

"I will not fail." Okoli Ede woke up the next morning with those words on his lips. "I will not fail." His nerves tingled, his body was all warm, his hands clammy with sweat, his throat constricted with excitement. With £100 it is impossible to fail. He jumped up and sought activity, anything

that would prevent him from thinking, for to think is to hesitate and tremble. When Okoli Ede went to work that morning he carried with him his bank book; but he still had not the strength to tell himself what he wanted to do with it. Work was slack that day and when the Chief Clerk, bored with inactivity, left to chat with a pretty girl in the next section, Okoli Ede slipped out. The excitement was still on him. He walked hurriedly, he could not look himself in the face. The bank clerks divined his purpose and treated him with the insouciance reserved for those who withdrew rather than deposited.

That afternoon when he reached home he could not summon up life to boil water for his garri. He lay on his bed face down, exhausted with the strain, his mind torpid, unable to contemplate the terrible deed that would pitch him up or send him right down. Some force, some energy accumulated over the years had smoked off leaving only hope.

His mind was clearing now seeking points of contact with solid elements, boyhood memories. He remembered on a certain occasion being tempted to give his school fees to a money doubler. His father's friend had dragged him away by the ears. But this very day he had done it.

He slipped out of his pocket a wad of notes. — Thirty pounds. The remains of five years honey pot. Some instinct had prevented him from throwing in everything, he had remembered that he had to live until the fortune came He thought of the awed faces of the crowd at the Post Office when he had asked for a money order for seventy pounds And so he had fed the god twice in two days.

The morning sun flooded Okoli Ede's room revealing its dingy starkness, but fresh invigorating air came with it and gave out promises of a fuller more adventurous living. Okoli Ede was suddenly filled with a discontent and a shame for his stingy colourless way of living. When the money came — There was no doubt now that it would come — how would it look in that room. But no matter. It was wonderful what fresh paint, colourful curtains and a new carpet could do for a room . . . A little bouncy, Okoli Ede went out to work. Afterwards he walked into a silver plush store and equipped himself for the role he was to play in a few days time. Back home he sang and danced as he cleaned out his room. "Not bad" he said at last stepping back and examining his handwork; the almanacs covered the putrid parts of the wall and the curtains looked fetching . . . With a pleasurable feeling of achievement which he had never known in all his thirty years he opened a leather box lying on the bright new carpet. Reverently he examined the contents: a made-to-measure two piece suit, an up-to-date tie, black shoes, shirt — Why not put them on now. Would that be a little pushing. Okoli Ede smiled with a little of his old diffidence. At last he was arrayed and trying to see himself in a small mirror, many things still lacked but some can wait . . . He went to work the next day smartened, suited and stiff.

"Eh, 'Time up' don rise high," several clerks gathered, eager for banter.

"Na so!"

"Wetin be her name?"

"Why 'eeno tell us make we prepare?"

"I never know say ee has one."

"Whosai plenty-you no sabee them quiet ones . . . Women die for'am".

"Na waya O!"

The Chief Clerk looked up sharply and the clerks hustled to their places. That always inflated his dignity a little. He was a tall, thin man with museum-piece spectacles and the yellowing eyes of the drunkard. He peered suspiciously at Okoli Ede and remarked his suit. Then he looked furtively down at his own cigarette-ash-speckled bargain shirt and frowned. He would set down any clerk who got above himself. The office was not the place for show.

A thirst for experience, for pleasurable irresponsibility for secret sensation possessed Okoli Ede. His caution, rooted by upbringing had not quite died, once or twice it had murmured from the deep recesses but Okoli Ede had pushed it down, after all one had to live, and with the coming fortune he was only living on his expectation. He entered a pub and for the first time in his life stared at the hired women, drank beer and listened to vigorous music — he would have liked to follow up and mingle with the whirling mass on the dance floor in riotous abandon but timidity restrained him. He gulped more beer, his eyes glassed and his head swam. He rose to go. On his way a girl made eyes at him and his suit; but when he crawled near her she turned from him cold and proper. "Time will come. She will run after me" Okoli Ede consoled himself.

His change from steady modesty to recklessness gave neighbours matter for talk. But Okoli Ede did not heed raised brows or pointed whispers. He plunged violently into looseness borne on the crest of desire and hope.

The results of the football matches appeared on Sunday. Okoli Ede did not remember to buy the papers for he was suffering from the body's reaction to immoderate pleasure; the bowels moved funnily at painful intervals, the mouth was coated with spider webs, the eyes smarted, the legs were heavy.

The dividends were declared a few days later — £50,000 for top points. The excitement was too much for Okoli Ede. He had to walk the street to cool off. He wasn't afraid but his heart beat very loud.

While waiting, his craving for pleasure increased but there was no money to gratify it. Then one night he hired a girl. He woke very late in the morning and started dressing hastily. The girl woke too and when he wanted to pay her he was a shilling short. She made a point of it.

"Come tomorrow," said Okoli Ede roughly. "I no go come no time. You go pay me now." She was a hungry-looking waspish creature used to fights over pennies. Okoli Ede was afraid of her and of what the neighbours might say.

"If you no pay me you no go go work," she grasped him . . . "Or I go take this" she left him and dived for his new coat.

"No No! Not that. Please make e take that," he gave her a tin of face powder . . . she considered, then threw the coat and powder contemptuously at him and stamped out, she would have preferred a fight — Okoli Ede was very late. The Chief Clerk, a little triumphant, watched him come in. He had had a difficult morning himself. A quarrel with his wife had left him as empty as a deflated football. The clerks had sensed his need to recover his prestige on somebody and were keeping out of his way.

"Na jus now 'ee de come," asked the Chief Clerk darting a baleful glance at the dishevelled Okoli Ede.

"Yes," said the latter sullenly, going to his seat.

"You no hear me!" roared the chief clerk; his rage suddenly touched off. "If you no take time we go sack you... yes sack you one time... You come work when you like eh. Abi you think say you be director... you think say na you alone sabe wear suit?"

This sally was too much for the other clerks. They roared and slapped their thighs and shouted "Oga ejo — O!".

The plea only swelled the Chief Clerk and stimulated his tongue. "Look 'am!" he said. The clerks directed their several gazes at Okoli Ede who was standing scowling by his table.

"He no fit fill 'im belle and 'ee de wear suit... No be your name be director or —"

He did not go further. The clerks stifled their mirth and a hiss of amazement escaped them as they saw their chief's face a bewildered world of black, blue and spouts of blood.

Okoli Ede glared murderously for a moment, and assured that the bottle had made its mark, walked out of the office.

"Let them sack me," he shouted as he got home. "They don't know who I am... but they will."

He slumped on his wooden chair and put his head in his hands. He sat in that position all day. Evening had set in when he rose, still unsteady with passion. Just at that moment, a blue envelope crept through the aperture below the door.

"Who be that?" Okoli Ede shouted nervously

"Na me."

"Who be you?"

No answer. Okoli Ede picked up the letter. Foreign Postmark. The letter dropped twice from his shaking hands but he hastily picked it up each time... He couldn't open it, for once opened the secret will no longer be a secret. Clutching the letter he lay on his bed and closed his eyes. Then he suddenly jumped up and in one swift movement tore it open and stared at it hard; his mind curiously enfeebled could not grasp the full meaning, but his body divining by reflex knew, and the heart thumped dumbly.

Ten shillings. Okoli Ede murmured at last with a dull voice... Won... Ten shillings. The thought circled on the wave of consciousness. Impossible — Impossible, I spent a hundred — He would go and find out. The pools people had representatives somewhere... No impossible. Ten shillings. It isn't true. But when he reached the streets his purpose started reflecting its futility. His legs had representatives somewhere... No. impossible. Ten shillings. It isn't true. But he went on....

Something must be done... One can find a place where money was kept carelessly and steal... He couldn't find another job and his parents and neighbours would have a poor opinion of him if he went home to farm... If only there were no policemen around.

There was a deafening screech near Okoli Ede and suddenly a demonic taxi careered wildly and halted near the pavement. The driver lept out and came and towered angrily above him.

"Why 'ee no look wey 'ee de go? ...you wan die?...if you wan die why 'ee no fall into Lagoon there."

Okoli Ede didn't answer but walked on with the same mechanical gait.

"Oloriburuku, man of evil omen!" shouted the taxi-driver. "I no go kil you."

He walked back to his car and dashed away. Okoli Ede stood by the lagoon and watched the expanse of water calm and opalescent with the evening colouration. Far out to sea many brightly coloured boats squatted like sated sea-monsters of old. Then a canoe with two pullers came by trailing close to the shore. The fishermen seemed pleased about something. They pulled with vigour lapping the invigorating evening breeze gratefully..... Then they broke into a song anxious to drown their nagging fear of not being able to provide enough garri for their large families.

"They are happy" thought Okoli Ede watching them until they had formed black specks that verged with the blue misty haze in the distance. Far in the west the sun had broken into little ridges that flamed like blood on fire. A little later the night with its usual formidable suddenness blotted out the day.

Okoli Ede looked around to make sure that no one was near, then spread his hands wide and went with the day.



THREE POEMS

BY J. S. MOSLEY

EVOLUTION

The bush God

A Totem

The Jesus God

A Cross

The Jungle Jesus

A Holy Pole

Who became Boss

When Fetish became Cross ?

One lauded doctrine
Has it

That the blood evolves even

As it is

From Time's horrific erection
Flushing

Darwin's elite selection

Who still reading, bleeding, and
Blushing

Forget to ask for fear of speaking
Out of turn

What the hell has happened

To the goddamned sperm ?

ZYGOTE

I shall move into the deep water
While the cool sands caress my feet
The sun carves my body
And the white churning foam
Laces my knees amid the scream
Of quiet whistling winds
And the flow
The steady slow
Legato
Wire brush beat of the breaking waves
Why? Say why?
Am I here at the foot of the sea?
Before the altar of my God.
But I shall move into the deep water
Where the sea weed seed
Betrays an urgent need
To roam where it is never dry
And to grow
Below the flotsam and the foam
And the forceful waves that rise and die
And never find a home.

CEMETERY

The quiet intimacy of the cemetery
The lack of time in old tombstones
The lack of space in graves
The whispering shadows of noisy bones
Reveal today the ghosts of tomorrow
That were yesterday entombed
Here where slayers hacked
These crypts are packed
Some engraved with flattery
Within these holed abodes
Find custom's deliquescent place
Stacked regimented cavities
The great moral in death's mode
And I felt the troglodyte
In a crowd of graves
Where harried moles had burrowed
Ten thousand holes
Just to have the scent of tea.

CREATION

THE CREATION MYTH OF THE MALOZI
collected by Marthe Arnaud

Nyambe lived on earth with his wife Nasilele, long long ago. It was he who made the forests and the river, and the plain. It is he who made all the animals, the birds, the fishes and he made also Kamunu and his wife.

Kamunu distinguished himself quickly from the other animals. When Nyambe carved a piece of wood, he the man also carved his own. When Nyambe carved a wooden cup, the man also carved his own. When Nyambe forged the iron, the man also forged his own. Nyambe was amazed and he began to fear man. Then man forged himself a lance. One day he killed the male child of the big red antelope. And he killed other animals as well: he ate them.

Nyambe scolded him, he said:

"You man, your way of acting is bad. Why do you kill them? These are your brothers. Do not eat them, you are my children together."

Then Nyambe chased the man, he sent him far away.

There Kamunu ate for one year. When he returned he arrived at the place where one drinks water. He was seen by Kangomba, the large red antelope. She went to speak to Sasisho, the messenger bird of Nyambe, she said:

"The one whom I saw down there, who holds a magic pot and a club, is that not the same Kamunu who killed us?"

Sasisho went to talk to Nyambe, he said:

"Kamunu is here, he has returned."

Nyambe said:

"I have heard. Let him sit down."

Once Kamunu came to Nyambe. It was Kangomba who had taken Kamunu to Sasisho, the messenger of Nyambe. Kamunu asked from God land to cultivate. He was given fields. Kamunu worked the land.

The buffaloes entered Kamunu's fields at night. Kamunu wounded a buffalo. He died. The night lifted. He went and he found him who was dead. He went to Nyamba:

"I have killed the buffalo."

Nyambe said:

"Let him eat it."

Kamunu's pot died. The pot in which he boiled his magic medicines. It died. Kamunu went to Kangomba he said:

"Go and speak on my behalf to Nyambe. Tell him my pot has died."

Nyambe said:

"My own things also are like that."

Kamunu arrived in his village. The deer entered his field at night. Kamunu wounded the male among them. It was he who was wounded by Kamunu. The deer died. Kamunu carried the tail to Kangomba. He said: "I have killed the deer."

Kangomba went to Nyambe. Nyambe said: "Let him eat it, it is my welcome present."

Kamunu returned. Kamunu's dog died. Kamunu went to Kangomba and said: "My dog has died."

Nyambe said: "It is good; I have heard."

Kamunu returned from Nyambe. He said to his wife: "I saw the dog with Nyambe, and the pot."

The wife refused to believe. She said: "It is not like that."

The sun set. The elephants came to Kamunu's field. The wife woke the man. The man arose, took his lances and wounded an elephant. He wounded him. The elephant died. The night lifted. In the morning he went and found him who was dead.

Kamunu went to Kangomba he said: "Go and announce me to Nyambe. Say, I have killed the elephant."

Nyambe said: "Eat him. It is your welcome present. I have not given you any present yet since you have come back to me."

Kamunu returned. When he came to his wife he said: "Nyambe has said that we should eat our welcome present."

Kamunu's child died. The child died. Kamunu went to Kangomba:

"Go speak to Nyambe for me; say that my child is dead."

They went to Nyambe together. There Kamunu found his child with Nyambe, he found it sitting there.

Nyambe said: "My own things also end like that."

Nyambe called Sasisho and Kangomba: "How shall we live? Kamunu can come here too easily." They went on to an island.

Kamunu assembled large cane and stood on it. He went to find Nyambe on the island. Kamunu carved a canoe, he went to give to Nyambe out of everything he collected, animal or fish. Nyambe was sad, he did accept them, but he refused to eat them, because they were his children.

Nyambe made a mountain, he took refuge thereon. But there too man followed him.

Nyambe wanted to flee again. With Sasisho and Kangomba they sent messengers all over the earth. But they found the children of man wherever they went.

Then they called the soothsayers, and they called also Simbukoki, the prophetic insect: "Show us the South, show us the North. They sent all the birds to look for Litooma, the city of Nyambe. But they did not find it. They also called Nalungwana the diviner of Nyambe. Nalungwana made the divination. He seized Liuyii, the spider and he said: "Your life, King, depends on him."

Nyambe sent out Sasisho and Liuyii, they went to look for a place where Nyambe could live. They returned to Nyambe, they said: "We have found the town."

Nalungwana refused; he said "They have not yet reached the place, they must traverse the river, and go to the other bank."
Sasisho and Liuyii crossed the river, they arrived at Litooma. They returned, they said: "We have found the town on the other bank of the river."

Nalungwana acquiesced.

Nyambe thought of saving the animals, so that they could not be reached by man. The animals refused. They said: "We shall only live here."

The big red antelope said: "I shall live through speed; man cannot run."
The gun said: "I too, shall live like that."

And many others also said: "We too shall live through speed."
The fish said: "I do not fear man; I live in the water."

The hippopotamus said: "Man? I shall kill him. I am stronger than he."
The elephant said: "So am I."

The buffalo and the lion: "And we."

The hyena said: "I shall lie in wait for him at night; I shall seize him in his sleep."

The wild goose said: "I shall live by my wings."
The other birds: "And we too."

And so on and so on.

Nyambe still tried to persuade them, because man surpassed them in cunning. He said:

"Let all kinds go and collect wood."

They collected a great quantity and made a large heap.
Nyambe said: "Let the kettle boil."

The fire was lit, there was a big furnace, very big, and even the soil burnt.
Nyambe said: "Let us see the one who can lift the pot from the fire."

The gun tried, it was afraid. The great antelope and the deer too were afraid. Many others could not even remain standing in front of the furnace and they fled. Those who tried hard were the elephant and the rhinoceros, they had their skin burnt and they fled to the water. The animals were all defeated. They could not lift the pot from the fire.

"We are calling Kamunu."

Kamunu and his people went to carry water from the river. They carried it in wooden cups, in calabashes and in pots. They soaked the ground with water, they poured water in the fire and so they extinguished it and they took the pot. They set a man to Nyambe who said: "We have already taken the pot."

Nyambe then assembled all the men and all the animals and said:
"If there is a man who was born today, let him be brought here."

But man refused and said: "He is very tender, he is only made of water, he cannot be held by any other man, except by her who has born him."

Then Nyambe said: "If there is an animal that was born today, let it come here." The animal came quickly. Nyambe said: "Let the animals walk as soon as they are born. Let man sit for a year before he walks."

Some animals agreed to go with Nyambe. These are the animals whose kind is unknown to us.

Nyambe and Nasilele his wife left with Sasisho, they crossed the river. they went to the other bank, they were taken to Litooma the city of Nyambe by Liuyii the spider. Nyambe said: "Let Liuyii return." But Nalungwana said: "Let Liuyii's eyes be blinded, so that he can never find this way again. Otherwise he may bring Kamunu to Nyambe."

Then Nyambe rose up high, he alone.

When Nyambe had gone up, Kamunu assembled all men and said :

"Let us build a high tower, so that we can go to Nyambe."

They erected wooden posts on the ground, they fixed others on top of them and tied them with lashes of bark; they raised the tower like that and it became very high. But because of the weight, the undermost barklashes tore, the tower fell and those who were on top of it died. Now Kamunu abandoned his efforts to find Nyambe.

But every morning when the sun appears he says : "Here is our king, he has come." They bend their forehead to the ground, they clap their hands and they say :

Mangué, mangué, mangué Mulyeto !

(glory, glory, glory, to Mulyeto!)

When man wants to go hunting, or when he dreams in his sleep, or during illness, always he prays to Nyambe offering him water in a wooden cup, or some other thing; and on that day he will not do any work. Always he goes to worship him when the sun sets. He worships also Nasilele the wife of Nyambe, particularly when the moon is new.

When somebody dies and it is a man, they place him in the tomb and direct his face to the East, and if it is a woman they direct her face to the West so that they may know how to arrive near Nyambe or Nasilele. When a human being has arrived on the other side of the river, if it is one who has the ritual markings on the arms and the holes in the ears, he is being received by Nyambe, if it is a man, and by Nasilele, if it is a woman; he is shown the road that leads towards the King, there he will live well. But if there is one who has neither the ritual marks on his arms nor the holes in his ears, he will be given flies to eat, and if he does not accept them he will be sent on the large road, but which will become narrower and narrower until it ends altogether, it ends in the terrifying desert, where man will be killed by hunger and thirst.

FRANCIS PASCARELLO

2 POEMS TRANSLATED BY MIRIAM KOSHLAND

MY HOME IS SPACE

My home is space
the moon my lookout
the sky is my garden
and the stars my flowers.
I give you a sign
from the meadow of the night,
I wave the cloth of my lamba.
Then you will look for the road
which we shall walk together —
return to the shore
where we shall meet.
And when you have loved me
the stars will fall.

LOVE SONG.

Do not love me, my friend,
like your shadow —
shadows fade in the evening
and I will hold you
until the cock crows —
Do not love me like pepper,
it makes my belly too hot,
I cannot eat pepper
when I am hungry.
Do not love me like a pillow —
we would meet in sleep
and not see each other during the day.
Do love me like a dream —
for dreams are your life in the night
and my hope in the day.

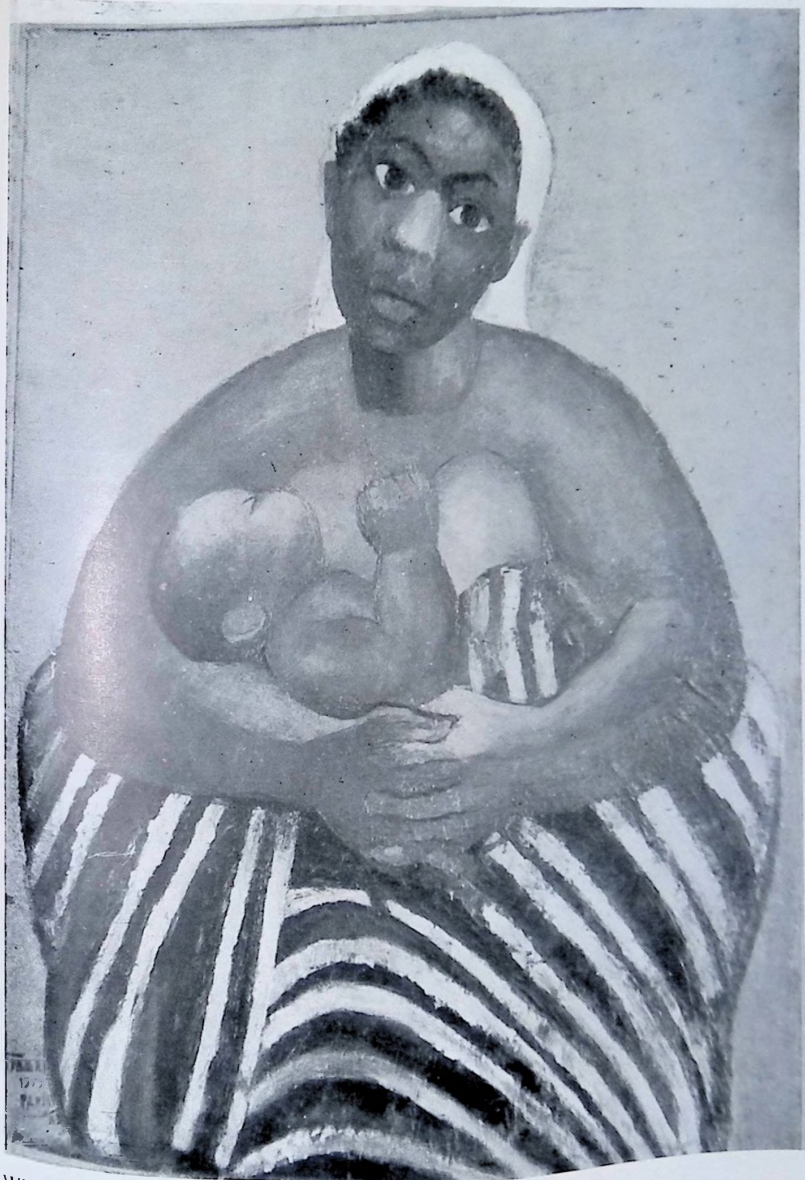
TIBERIO

BY GERALD MOORE

Wilson Tiberio was born into a predominantly black community in southern Brazil, where Yoruba traditions were still strong and active. From the first he painted the life he saw around him, the life of peasants who had managed to transplant to a remote corner of the new continent a great deal of their ancestral spirit and culture. These early paintings are colourful and vigorous, stressing the gaiety and activity of the Brazilian streets and market places. Critics in the big cities or the coast accused Tiberio of racialism because he dealt only with black subjects. The fact was that he merely used his eyes, instead of painting "idealised" white skins, scarcely seen in his part of the country.

Nevertheless he was driven by an emotion rare among occidental negroes, a genuine nostalgia for Africa and a real need to live and work among its people. He longed to trace to their sources the customs, beliefs and profound spiritual traits of his Brazilian neighbours. In 1947 the chance came and he set off for French West Africa. For many months he travelled through the interior, living simply and working with furious energy as the flood of new subjects poured in upon him. Much of his work since then has been drawn from the great well of images and impressions which was filled in these journeys. A new sense of suffering and labour now fills his canvasses, but it is a suffering always transfigured and made beautiful by a dominating rhythm and grace. His designs also become simpler and keener, with a perfect balance of purity and strength. Works like *Porteuses d'eau au Niger*, *Maternité* and *Au retour d'Afrique Noire* still radiate these qualities, though all were painted more recently, during his years in Paris. In *Porteuses d'eau* the drooping shoulders, yokes and head-ties of the women are balanced by the ripe swelling forms of the gourds, as though all their tears were collected there. Again in *Maternité*, the elements of stylisation in the tubular neck and triangular nose are answered by the abundant curve of warm flesh and patterned cloth below.

Despite his decade in Paris since 1950, Tiberio has remained always a painter of the human scene and has never produced an abstract canvas in his life. He describes abstraction as "aesthetic masturbation". Paintings like *Les forcats* may borrow something from cubism, but such borrowings are always subordinate to the humanism and compassion of his art, qualities which run through it from his first youthful essays in Brazil down to the deeply assured work of the 'fifties. The fine terracotta head of 1959 is typical of the sculptures which he has also begun to produce in recent years. There is an extra-ordinary eloquence in the long slope of the head.



WILSON TIBERIO : MATERNITE



TIBERIO : PORTEUSES D'EAU



TIBERIO : LES FORLATS



U. BOCIONI: DANCERS



TIBERIO: TERRA COTTA HEAD

BOOK REVIEW

MUNTU by Janheinz Jahn

Eugen Diederichs, 1959. Faber & Faber, 1960.

This work by Janheinz Jahn, which first appeared with Eugen Diederichs in Germany in 1958 deals with the hypothesis of a neo-African culture the nature of which the author explains in 247 pages. Jahn, who never visited the African continent before writing this book, relies on the existing ethnographic literature and the works of contemporary African and Afro-American writers. From the texts he studied he collects examples from different parts of the continent and tries to present us traditional African culture as a unity. Thus for example the Bantu philosophies described by Alexis Kagame and Placide Tempels and the Dogon philosophy described by Griaule are being examined for the purpose of finding similarities, and these similarities are then treated as "African philosophy." Some characteristics of the music of Ghana and the music of African slaves are declared to be the "essence" of African music, and so on. From this "traditional African culture" is supposed to arise today the "neo African culture" — after a successful integration of European influences.

We must give credit to Jahn for never describing Africans as "primitive", a practice that still continues in popular and sometimes even in scientific literature on Africa. But we must reject the method with which he constructs his hypothesis of one traditional and of one Neo-African culture. Since the author has no personal experience of the African continent and his sources are entirely found in literature the result is a rather distorted picture of his subject. Much of the existing ethnographic material is of doubtful value and we are far from having a complete description of African cultures. It is easy to select from such an insufficient body of informa-

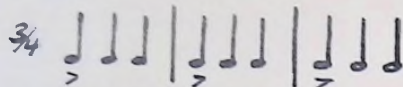
tion such examples as suit the hypothesis and to interpret these examples as general characteristics of the African culture.

It seems particularly daring to try and derive "the African philosophy" from descriptions of only five different systems among only five different tribes, the more so because the authors are partly European.

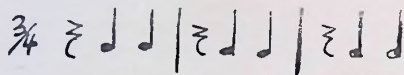
Considering the vast number of African peoples (according to official reports there are more than 500 languages) it seems rather thoughtless to accept five African philosophies as representing the whole continent, even if they *did* correspond in every detail.

If the author had travelled through Africa before writing his book, he might have convinced himself of the variety of cultures on this continent. As I am an ethnomusicologist and have spent a whole year travelling through a large part of Africa on foot in 1959/60 I should like to bring an example from my own field of study. I started my trip burdened with theories of "African rhythm" by Waterman, Dauer and other important writers. But soon I discovered that the concept "African rhythm" has no practical use at all. During my investigations in ten different African countries I found that not even the vague and generalising statement that African rhythm is complex and highly developed can be applied everywhere. In those areas where complex rhythms existed, the *type* of complexity was very different from tribe to tribe. The rhythms of the Baganda in East Africa and of the Yoruba in West Africa, for example, are highly complex and give an exciting, highly developed overall picture. But the way in which the Baganda combine their rhythmic formulas is completely different from that of the Yoruba. But to my greatest surprise I even met tribes whose music

made me wonder whether I was in Africa at all. The *Nwuya* a dance of the Wapanga in South West Tanganyika is rhythmically as simple as an English Waltz. There are ten players in front of a row of large, beautifully built drums. But what they play (it seems unbelievable) is nothing but:



in a slow lazy tempo. This is accompanied by women on two smaller drums:



That is all. The tunes of the singers are all sung strictly on the beat. Yet I was assured that this was one of the oldest dances of the Wapangwa.

Where then is the famous "African" polyrhythm and polymetre, about which Jahn, inspired by the reading of Dauer, is so enthusiastic? Of course there are in Africa brilliant examples of polymetre and in most places of polyrhythm. But there are also areas in which little of the sort can be found. It is interesting to note too, that even in areas that use the most exciting rhythmic combinations, only a small part of the musical pieces is in complete polymetre. The word polymetre, which is so beloved to Jahn, does not, by the way, characterise something specifically African. Both modern and mediaeval European music employ polymetre — and they do not therefore sound specifically "African." The fact that the different voices of a composition are in different metres is a purely abstract principle, and does not in itself give African forms of music their character.

Another example from the plastic arts: the famous African sculptures originate largely from West and Central Africa. In some East African territories like Uganda, Kenya and Tanganyika there is hardly any traditional art, with the exception of that which was influenced by the Arabs of the coast. Would it be fair to speak of

"European" art if all pictures originated in Italy. Similarly there is no "African religion" (introduced as such in the second chapter, page 27, line 3) but only a variety of African religions.

Anybody who travels *slowly* through Africa will also notice that the members of different African cultures react in different ways to European influences. The Masai in Kenya have preferred to reject European civilisation almost entirely and simply to continue in their traditional life. Other tribes accept European civilisation unconditionally. In some territories, particularly in the British ruled territories of East Africa, entire nations get into psychological difficulties, as a result of forms of discrimination and of the enforcement of an all too rapid cultural change. In some cases the clash of African and European cultures becomes physical. The Kikuyu reacted after half a century of occupation with Mau Mau. The Baganda fight for their freedom with boycott measures.

In East Africa traditional crafts were almost completely destroyed by European trade and imports. Among the Yoruba of West Africa, however, they are still very much alive. Some tribes are ashamed of their traditions, others are proud of them. East Africa becomes predominantly Christian, in West Africa Islam is much stronger, but traditional African religions are also much stronger in West Africa and as a result there are many different cultural elements again.

In Katanga province in the Congo a modern form of African music has arisen of considerable artistic value; on the other hand the West African "Highlife" in most of its forms is little more than popular hit tunes. The poets enlisted by Janheinz Jahn who are supposed to represent the "neo-African" culture are largely from West and South Africa and from the West Indies. No important poet has so far been found in East Africa.

Janheinz Jahn says that "neo African culture" has "two components" (page 17 line 8) Even the "European component" (page 17 line 9) is built up from a variety of different components that vary from area to area in their composition. It

seems rather daring to assume with Jahn that from the encounter of a large variety of African cultures with different European cultures one "neo-African" culture can arise. We would rather imagine that new cultural developments would vary in different regions.

We do not only accuse the author of failing to write from personal observation, however, which tempts him to draw the wrong basic conclusion "that African culture presents itself as a unity". He is also guilty of having *misread* his sources. On page 41 line 14 Jahn writes:

"The drum music, its polymetric basis serving to establish a simultaneous sound of various rhythm patterns..."

(Original German version: "Die Trommelmusik deren Polymetrische Grundlage dazu dient, verschiedene Schlagformeln zugleich erklingen zu lassen...")

This is nonsense. It seems that the author understands neither the meaning of "polymetre" nor of "rhythm pattern". To say that a polymetric basis serves to produce various rhythm patterns is like saying that a waltz serves to produce a waltz-rhythm and waltz tunes.

It should be of course: Different rhythm patterns form a polymetre in their combination if each of them is in a particular individual metre.

An equally impossible formulation of Jahn's is:

"The African percussion rhythm is either polymetric or polyrhythmic." (page 169 line 19)

The author's logic becomes extremely dubious, when he associates ideas merely because of the similar sound of words. Page 41 line 27 he says: "The importance of this typically African poly-metric basis of this music becomes clear through a comparison with those forms of possession which appear in the North American negro churches. Since — as Dauer proves — the poly-metric basis has been lost in these, the community of worshippers is no longer being mounted by many Loas — but only by one — by Christ."

How will Jahn prove to us that polymetre in music corresponds with polytheism in religion

(in the African religion) and that monometre corresponds with the monotheism of Christianity? Even apart from the fact that in Africa and in America a large part of the traditional religious music is not polymetric at all, as one can easily find out by listening to tapes or records.

In spite of these faults, "Muntu" will have an educative and more or less positive effect on the wider circle of readers. We see the positive and educative element of the book in its basic moral attitude towards the African and the cultures of his continent. These readers who are still prejudiced are given a chance here to get rid of their prejudices. We do admit that the author loves the African and the creations of his spirit and this can be felt throughout the book. Many misconceptions about Africa are being removed. For the non expert it is probably quite unimportant whether he sees one or many African cultures and whether he understands what is meant by polymetre or not.

It is important that this book can help to improve our relationship with Africans and in addition to that the well read author gives us a full bibliography and acquaints us with many African and Afro-American authors of whom the average reader hardly has any knowledge.

Gerhard Kubik

THE DRUMMER BOY by Cyprian Ekwensi,
Cambridge University Press, 1960.

THE PASSPORT OF MALLAM ILIA
by Cyprian Ekwensi.

Cambridge University Press, 1960.

With these two little books the author and Cambridge University do some very important pioneering work. The need has long been felt for a new type of youth literature to be written especially for the youngsters of West Africa. Most English youth books are not very meaningful to West African boys and girls because of the foreign background, and these English books that deal with the African scene are mostly found completely objectionable by Africans.

Cyprian Ekwensi who is widely known for his novel "People of the City" has here treated two Nigerian scenes. The first book is about a blind drummer boy in Lagos, the other about an exciting adventure in the far North of Nigeria. To this reader "The Passport of Mallam Iliia" seems more successful of the two. It is a genuine adventure story, a real thriller, with plenty of fighting, wrestling, escapes, disguises and a cavalry charge thrown in free of charge. This is a real boys book. Few young boys will worry about the improbabilities in the plot. They will be carried away by the excitement of the story and the rich technicolour pageantry of the scenes. (One thinks of a film script immediately.)

The blind drummer boy is a bit too full of good feelings and good intentions. The boy himself is a successful figure — happy with his drum and constantly trying to escape his benefactors. In the end, alas, the 'do gooders' get the better of him and the author destroys the charming image of his own creation. The blind drummer boy becomes "respectable" by being put into a school where he can learn to read and write. There is no harm of course, in this bit of sentimentality, but my own guess is that "Mallam Iliia" will prove more successful with the younger generation.

Omidiji Aragbabalu

KOSSOH TOWN BOY by Robert Wellesley Cole, Cambridge University Press, 1960. Price: 12s. 6d.

This is the autobiography of an African surgeon from Freetown. It is of special interest because Mr. Cole comes from a family of Krios and his childhood, which he describes in this book, is therefore remarkably different from Camara Laye's childhood described in the famous book "The Dark Child".

Robert Wellesley Cole has nothing to tell of the mysteries of traditional life of which "The Dark Child" is so full. The Krios, having merged from many different African peoples had lost all their traditional customs. The author was born in a Christian family whose ideals and values are unbelievably English, and Victorian English at that.

The book is told in a simple but charming language and the author emerges as a most likable person who takes the little things of everyday life most seriously. His narrative is in fact a record of simple everyday events in his family and his passing of the school certificate is as near as he ever gets to some sort of emotional climax.

Compared with "The Dark Child" the book is extremely prosaic. It has neither the poetry nor the imaginative vision of the French book. Nor does Wellesley Cole convey the wonderful dignity of African life in the way Camara Laye did. In "The Dark Child" even the smallest events take on a symbolic significance and each episode helps to build up the book into a great African vision of life. In "Kossoh Town Boy" we are left, ultimately, with nothing but a picture of Victorian respectability.

Robert Wellesley's extremely simple — almost naive — interpretation of life does not seem to be typical of the highly sophisticated and cultured urbanity that one usually associates with intellectual Krios.

Sangodare Akanji

MIGUEL STREET — by V. S. Naipaul.
Andre Deutsch 13s.

Miguel Street disappoints the high expectations aroused by V. S. Naipaul's two comic novels. It is a collection of "character sketches" from his boyhood in Port of Spain and the bizarre inhabitants of Miguel Street are paraded before us in a light throw-away prose that forbids us to take any of them too seriously or for too long. There are the prolific Laura, bearer of eight children by seven men, the mechanical genius Uncle Bakcu, the sinister Toni, the philosophic Hat who acts as a kind of Chorus to the show until he goes off to prison for savaging his mistress. But somehow Mr. Naipaul's laconic humour becomes tedious without a comic plot-line on which to string it. It begins to seem tricky and affected after the first few stories, and the hun-

dredth witticism beginning, "Hat said," is exasperating. Also it is hard to accept a narrator who occasionally introduces himself as speaking the dialect of Miguel Street, when it is pretty obvious that the author must always have been a wide-eared scholar stalking cat-like through the rotten alleyways of his native city. The impersonal narrative of *The Sulfrage of Elvira* was a far better medium for his sense of comedy, which needs in any case a novel's room to display itself.

One or two stories, however, give us glimpses of the mastery which Mr. Naipaul can display at his best: the sad and funny figure of Man-Man, the painful make-believe of the poet B. Wordsworth, or the jackdaw scavenger Errol riding proudly through the early morning on his gleaming blue cart.

Gerald Moore

AN AFRICAN TREASURY by Langston Hughes. Crown Publishers, Inc. New York. \$3.50.

Recently I reviewed an anthology of African writing, *Darkness and Light*, in these pages. My chief complaint against it was that the editor, Mrs. Peggy Rutherford, had cluttered the work with antiques: mythology and folk tales; that there was very little new writing, and that, where there was, she had not brought to her selections a critical mind, — judging from their poor quality.

I cannot say the same of Langston Hughes's anthology. It is a robust little packet, the best collection of contemporary African writing. And yet Mr. Hughes worked by remote control and did not have Mrs. Rutherford's rare opportunity of touring Africa to look for material.

Mr. Hughes went for articles, miscellaneous writing, essays, short stories and poetry. Apart from Nigeria's Gabriel Okara and Wole Soyinka; Senegal's Birago Diop; Sierra Leone's Abioseh Nicol, and Malagasy's Jean Joseph Rabearivelo, each of whom is represented by one poem, the contributors in the verse section are a weak lot. Soyinka is the most sophisticated of these; he is the only writer in British-settled West Africa who can laugh in words; he is not a slave to

the "African experience" whatever negritude may say about such a thing. Nor does Rabearivelo pretend, in his *Flute Players*, to an exclusively Malagasy experience: "Your flute/you carved from the shinbone of a strong bull/and polished it on barren hills beaten by sun.

Babs Fafunwa (Nigeria) has some interesting things to tell about his experiences in the United States, peculiar to most Africans. J. Koyinde Vaughan's (Nigeria) essay, *Africa and the Cinema*, should purge the Nigerian's unquestioning, innocent and unsophisticated acceptance of the white man's glorified image of himself and the stupid image of the African on the cinema screen. If it has cost Paul Robeson years of regret to have appeared in compromising film roles, it must cost years of education for Nigerians to appreciate his position.

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.

This is from J. Benibengor Blay's (Ghana) *Funeral of a Whale*, which makes interesting reading. J. H. Kwabena Nketia (Ghana) takes us to the enchanting and idyllic land of Akan poetry. Efua Theodora Sutherland (alias Efua Morgue) of Ghana reminds us in the exciting style of her prose story, *New Life at Kyerelaso*, that she is essentially a poet. Thus:

Shall we say
Shall we put it this way
Shall we say that the maid of Kyerelaso,
Foruwa, daughter of the Queen Mother,
was as a young deer, graceful in limb? . . .
And she was light of foot, light in all her moving.

Abioseh Nicol's story also reminds us that he is the best writer of English prose in West Africa. It is a far cry from the prose style of West Africans, which has a decidedly British influence, to that of South Africans, which shows cultural cross-impacts that only a multi-racial society can provide. South African writing is full of physical and mental violence, semantic violence, rhythms that reflect restlessness, impatience.

Can Themba will say in his impressionistic manner:

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. Gay, friendly, coquettish, always ready to sell you a drink. But now that house is flattened. I'm told that in Meadow-in-Meadowlands she has lost the zest for the game. She has even tried to look for work in town. Ghastly.

After coming out of the country, Bloke Modisane recalls angrily:

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 labour to be exploited because I had to live. I accepted the discrimination against my skin as a physical reality I had to live with; 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.

Todd Matshikiza, in his typically temperamental style, will say:

Their new priest from overseas was young an' bold an' brave about the sinfulness of the souls in his parish. An' every Sunday he would grasp the pulpit in both hands an' say, You coloureds drink! You coloureds haven't a chance in heaven. The coloured congregation became cross. They went up to the priest an' said, "Now look, stop calling us you coloureds, because we ain't goin' about calling you, you European. Stop that finger-pointing business, an' stop throwing bricks made of you coloureds or we'll mangle you, we'll hangle you, we'll make your life a bangle."

In Richard Rive's story, *The Bench*, a Coloured man, Karlie, sits on a bench which is for Europeans only; just so that he should conquer his fear and vindicate his dignity.

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.....

In any anthology of African writing, one is struck by either the absence or paucity of material from Central and East Africa. Although oppression is not lacking here and should normally be a spur to literary activity, British indirect rule has left behind it a vast area of unsophisticated humanity. In South Africa, on the other hand, where oppression is often a paralysing spur, the high degree of literacy (60 per cent.) often helps non-whites to live above their distress.

This collection is far from exhaustive. Langston Hughes says he was prompted to set about it after reading hundreds of entries for the *Drum* short story contest which the South African edition used to run for several years, and which attracted contributions from all parts of Africa. One must hope that another endeavour is not far off.

Ezekiel Mphahlele

MISSION TO KALA by Mongo Beti, translated by Peter Green and published by Frederick Muller, 1958. Originally published in French as *Mission Terminée* by Editions Correa, Paris, 1957.

It is always difficult to forgive an author for surprising us completely. Mongo Beti has committed this fault with his second novel *Mission to Kala* (*Mission Terminée*), an extravagant comedy of innocence and experience. His new hero enters wholeheartedly the world of ordinary lustful living which surrounded like a hostile wilderness the missionary labours of the Reverend Pere Superieur Drumont and his "boy" in *The Poor Christ of Bomba*. Even the title of the new book seems to echo ironically the preoccupations of the first. The differences of tone, pace and structure are even more remarkable than those of theme. *The Poor Christ of Bomba*, despite its fine oblique satirical humour, was slow-moving, repetitious and prolix. But it esta-

blished itself at once in the reader's mind as a deeply serious and radical work, an utter and final rejection of white missionary activity in colonised Africa. Speed and Gusto are the key-notes of *Mission to Kala*, while the serious core of the book is more elusive and slower to resolve itself.

Jean-Marie Medza has just failed his Baccalaureat examination and returns to his village for a rest, only to find himself jacked off on a bicycle to the "bush" village of Kala to retrieve the erring wife of his lazy cousin Niam. At Kala he is treated as a scholar and a hero, especially by his beefy young cousin Zambo. His complete sexual and alcoholic innocence put him at quite a disadvantage in a community devoted to palm-wine and love-making, but he does his best to carry off the role of "city slicker" which has been assigned to him by the "simple" villagers. When the most beautiful and unattainable girl in the place offers herself, embarrassment renders him quite impotent and he has to plead indifference in explanation later to his wondering friends. Finally Zombo manages to introduce him to the equally innocent young daughter of the chief. This time, being allowed to make the running, he achieves a triumphant seduction, only to find himself subjected to the African equivalent of a shot-gun wedding by the girl's canny old father.

When the awakened Medza returns to his native village, he has a fortnight to think things out before the processional arrival of his new bride and Niam's fly-blown one, who has been successfully recalled to her duties after a strenuous bout of adultery. He realises that he is too young to get bogged down in marriage, even to the delightful Edima, and that he cannot tolerate his mean tyrannical father a moment longer. On the arrival of the Kala delegation, Medza creates a scene of splendid comedy by returning drunk in the midst of the celebrations, kissing Edima, defying his father dodging a savage beating, and finally walking out with Zambo towards a life whose promise he has just begun to guess.

Only in these last pages does Beti deepen his tone, showing that all this is something more than a ribald reminiscence, but is a moment of youth which he is still exploring, to which he must return again and again:

a journey which enabled me to discover many truths. Not least, the discovery — made by contact with the country folk of Kala, those quintessential caricatures of the 'colonised' African — that the tragedy which our nation is suffering today is that of a man left to his own devices in a world which does not belong to him, which he has not made and does not understand.

Gerald Moore

ODU

A JOURNAL OF YORUBA, EDO AND RELATED STUDIES

Edited by S. O. BIOBAKU, A. Y. EKE, H. U. BEIER

From the contents of no. 8:

Discoveries in Ilesha — William Fagg and Frank Willett

Yoruba Wall Paintings — Ulli Beier

Stories from Benin — R. E. Bradbury

Yoruba writing — J. F. Ade Ajayi

Osifakorede of Ijebu — P. C. Lloyd

Ijala — E. O. Yemitan

Yoruba Poems — Adeboye Babalola and A. O.

Odunsi

Published by: General Publications Section

Ministry of Education,

Western Region, Ibadan, Nigeria.

NIGERIA MAGAZINE

What the critics say!

THE GODS AS GUESTS

by Robin Horton
7/6 + 1/- postage overseas

This very well-illustrated booklet is intended for the layman. Mr Horton is to be congratulated on having written a vivid and sociologically valuable account of Kalabari religion for an audience of which a high proportion is Nigerian.

Africa, January 1961.

He has provided us, with a scholarly and readable introduction to Kalabari life and religion.

Ibadan, Number 10

SACRED WOODCARVINGS

by Ulli Beier
6/- + 1/- postage abroad

Mr. Beier and the editor of the Nigeria Magazine are to be congratulated on this venture; that it has been reprinted three times shows that they have succeeded in finding many readers for this modestly priced booklet.

Africa, January 1961

NIGERIA 1960

SPECIAL
INDEPENDENCE ISSUE
2/- + 2/- postage overseas

Nigeria Magazine has produced a splendid independence issue. It is lavishly illustrated and has a most impressive list of contributors.

Ibadan, Number 10

A number of Journals have produced special issues, to commemorate Nigeria's Independence, but this is an outstanding example... The entire issue was printed in Lagos and marks an important step forward in Nigerian publishing apart from its interest as a survey of the newly independent nation.

Royal Commonwealth Society Journal.

Obtainable from the Exhibition Centre, Marina, Lagos, Nigeria

ART IN NIGERIA 1960

by ULLI BEIER

Most writers on Africa follow the simple formula that old carvings are good and new ones bad; modern African artists, they say, are merely copying Europe instead of "going back to their own traditions".

This provocative and richly illustrated booklet shows that the situation is a great deal more complicated than that. Mr. Ulli Beier believes that in Africa new art forms have been evolved independently of European teaching and influence; that the intellectual African artist cannot simply be asked to "go back" to his traditions.

Mr. Beier does not attempt to give a comprehensive survey of art in Nigeria today; the choice of examples is largely dominated by his own personal experience. With his wife, the artist Susanne Wenger, Mr. Beier has lived for ten years in a small Nigerian town and this forthright account of Nigeria's rich artistic activity is the product of his life amongst Nigerians.

Clothbound, 18s. 6d. net

paperbound, 10s. 6d. net

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
WEST AFRICAN OFFICE
P. O. BOX 33, IBADAN

ROHO

JOURNAL OF THE VISUAL ARTS IN EAST AFRICA

FROM THE CONTENTS OF THE FIRST ISSUE:

The politics of artists — editorial
Memories — by Elmo Njau
Killimanjaro god dust — by Sam Ntiro
Why Art? — by Professor Cecil Todd
Verse Riddles — by Gregory Maloba
African pottery — by Bruce Kent
Science and Art — by Pat Henderson
A poem of Kikuyu — by Rebecca Njau
Prehistoric Island — by M. Posnansky
Lithographs — by Su Tung Wen
Mountains of the Moon — by J. Kingdom
On Kufic — by Ai Darwish
Somali Embroidery — by M. Whitaker
Top Life — by Louis Mwanki
Architecture — by A. G. Smith, A.R.I.B.A.

Obtainable from: "ROHO", P. O. Box 262,
Kampala, Uganda.
Price 3/-.

PARTISAN REVIEW

AMERICA'S LEADING LITERARY REVIEW
Now bi-monthly

Special double issue

DISSONANT VOICES IN SOVIET LITERATURE

underground and off-beat Russian writing in a selection never before available in English. Edited by Patricia Blake and Max Hayward.
\$1.25 at all newsstands and book stores.

Partisan Review, 22 East 17th St., N.Y.C. 3

Please enter my subscription for

- 1 year @ \$5.50
 2 years @ \$9.00 (a saving of \$2.00)

add 75% per year for foreign subscriptions

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

Check enclosed

Please bill me

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE:

MARTHE ARNAUD

this Malozi myth first appeared in *Presence Africaine* No. 2 in an article "Mythologie et Folklore sur le Haut-Zambeze".

BASIL MCFARLANE

born 1922 in Kingston, Jamaica. Works in the Central Film Organisation of Jamaica. Published a volume of poems "Jacob and the Angel", British Guiana 1952.

ELLIS AYITEY KOMEY

Ghanaian poet living in London. Much of his work (including short stories) appeared in the *West African Review*.

GERHARD KUBIK

student of Music in Vienna. Recently visited Africa on a research trip. In preparation: a book on Uganda xylophones and another on Yoruba children's songs.

MASON JORDAN MASON

published "Notebook 23", 1949; "Dream in Heliotrope", 1952; "Mussolini has met his end in the mad house" 1952; "The Blue Green Whale" 1952 all Motive Press; *Ranches of Taos*, New Mexico. See other poems and biography in BO 7.

GERALD MOORE

director of Extra-Mural Studies, Makerere College, Uganda. See articles in *Black Orpheus* No. 1, No. 4 and No 7.

J. S. MOSLEY

born in Philadelphia 1920. Education in USA, France and Sweden. Has been working as an engineer in Ghana since 1952.

EZEKIEL MPHAHLELE

co-editor of "Black Orpheus". Published "Down Second Avenue", Faber and "The Living and Dead" Special Publication of "Black Orpheus".

NKEM NWANKWO

second year student at University College, Ibadan. This story won first prize at a short story competition organised by the LAGOS BRANCH of the NIGERIAN ARTS COUNCIL in 1960.

MICHAEL OKAFOR

Graduate in Agriculture from University College, Ibadan.

FLAVIEN RANAIVO

born 1914 in Arivonimano, Madagascar. Published a volume of poems "L'Ombre et le Vent", 1947 Tanarive.

EDRIS SAINT AMAND

born 1918 in Gonaïves, Haiti. Was Deputy Director of the National Library in Port au Prince. Lives in Paris since 1951. Published a novel "Bon Dieu Rit", Domat, Paris 1952. This extract is published by permission of *Büchergilde Gutenberg* 75, ("Der Flammenbaum" 1955).

IBRAHIM TAHIR

Hausa writer and critic now working for Hausa Programmes of the BBC in London. The extract is taken from an incomplete novel.

WOLFGANG VOGEL

secretary to the Institute of "Neo Afrikanische Forschung" in Offenbach.

THE ARTISTS

THE VIGNETTES

are by a patient of Lantoro Hospital, Abeokuta. (The work of two other patients can be seen in B.O. 10.

THE COVER

designed by Susanne Wenger after an appliqué cloth from Dahomey.

