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Third World Literature: The Development of Ethnic and National Identity in the Transition from Colony to Independence

George Botelho

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AN ANTHOLOGY

THIRD WORLD LITERATURE: THE DEVELOPMENT OF ETHNIC
AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN THE TRANSITION FROM
COLONY TO INDEPENDENCE

GEORGE BOTELHO

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
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PROFESSOR GEORGE URCH, FACULTY ADVISOR

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INTRODUCTION

The material presented between the covers of this book is not to be seen as a step-by-step program which attempts to describe methods by which ethnic and national identities are established. It is not a course outline, nor does it offer a theoretical perspective for development. It is not an attempt to find a solution to the problems associated with ethnic disunity in the developing world. It is certainly not a book to be read and understood, in linear fashion, from the first page to the last. It is not a Social Studies course, although it is concerned with social issues in many parts of the world. Anyone attempting to judge the material using the above criteria will be disappointed but, even worse, they will be mistaken for doing so.

This material will be most useful in the secondary classroom which is made up of a multicultural or multi-ethnic student body. Due to the focus, that is, looking at the issue of identity in the third world, it would perhaps be most relevant in schools in developing countries which have been affected by colonialism. It could also be of use in American inner-city schools where there is a large concentration of ethnic diversity. There is an essay which illustrates how the literature of the post-colonial, developing world is being used in Arizona schools, to foster a positive identification with traditional ethnic values in

Navajo youth, who for reasons that are all too obvious, are not included in the process that describes mainstream learning in the United States. The Chicanos also share in a similar deprivation of opportunity and access, not only to education in the traditional sense, but also to resources which, increasingly, even middle-class Euro-American citizens are being denied. Many of the issues under consideration here are bound up with the concept of dignity, and the manner in which people who are "different" are treated by a governing body which believes in its inherent "superiority" and Divine Right to rule, by any means necessary, for its own interests.

Political independence does not necessarily bring economic independence for a country, nor does it grant psychological independence for its people. In countries which are newly-independent, many of the writers, politicians and other intellectuals continue to look to the mother-country for support and identification. Although these new nations have identities of their own, the minds of many leading citizens are still in a state of colonialism. Their language is the language of the coloniser. As long as this is true, their voice, while it achieves wider international access, is limited within their own country because they (here I refer to writers) most often do not even communicate in the language(s) of their own people. Ngugi wa Thiong'o of Kenya has advocated that a process of decolonising the mind must ensue if developing nations are ever to achieve their true place in today's world. Ngugi has declared that he will write exclusively in his mother tongue of Gikuyu, and also in Kiswahili, the national language of Kenya, in order

to make his ideas accessible to his own people. Many other leading writers of the developing world have followed his example. It may be argued rightly that writing exclusively in one's own mother tongue (ethnic language) will create disunity in countries which, like Kenya and Papua New Guinea have very diverse populations. I believe, therefore, that Ngugi is correct in writing in both his ethnic tongue as well as in the national language. Writing in the mother tongue is not only a matter of pride, it also guarantees that the message will be read, heard and understood by those to whom it has the most relevance, and who may not understand the national language. The percentage of people in developing nations who read or speak the language of the mother country, whether it be English, French, Spanish, Portuguese or German (the most widely-used colonial languages) is certainly very small, and reflects the highly-selective nature of the education systems in these countries. Thus, writing in colonial languages ensures that the colonial status-quo is maintained.

This anthology is organised by geographic regions: Africa, the Americas, Asia and Oceania are represented. It does not pretend to be an exhaustive resource. I have included a bibliography, and a search through the literature will turn up a multitude of resources of literature written during the colonial period as well as the time since the drive toward independence began in the 1960's. It would be up to the individual teacher to decide how the anthology could be used in the classroom. It should not be used, however, as a curriculum in itself. It is merely a resource and should not be mistaken as being anything more or anything less.

The teacher may wish to look at various pieces, comparing the ways language is used. As virtually all the pieces are in English, notable exceptions being bilingual texts of work by Pablo Neruda, the readings would be most appropriately used in the English classroom. A significant number of the pieces use local words which give character to the settings and characters. Some of them, such as the pieces by the Jamaican women's writing collective, Sistren, and the work of Trobriand Islands writer, John Kasaipwalova, are written with great attention to local language patterns, and thus are authentic in their social and political dimensions. Teachers may wish to focus on writing from a particular country or region, or to compare pieces from different countries within a region. Different aspects of colonialism may be examined when comparing pieces from different regions. The pieces lend themselves to a wide variety of topics for class discussion and student reflective writing. The possibilities are simply too numerous to mention here, and in any case this is not the focus of this project. Individual teacher interest and class momentum would suggest the best uses for this material.

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DEBATE ON NATION-BUILDING

I have stirred my tongue to no avail
in the unending colloquium on nation-building.
There must be some hour yet unborn
for unheard-of beliefs,
some hour to shock the world to attention;
many talkatives will then wake to thunder
losing heart as to what their voices can tell.

Those ideas not given a chance live as exiles
that will be recalled some day to tumultuous welcome;
they live untarnished beyond the ministries.
That suggestion knocked down by the crudity of selfish love
survives in the heart as a reminder of undying desire;
that solution kept away
as the problem exacts its inordinate toll
stands by for the hour of second knowledge.

I debate with rocks — phantom faces
I live with — to endear outcast hearts.
But there is the pain of the bruised tongue,
since the thoughts that can pour
a sea of fresh water from the sky,
debates that will open up cells
for a free march of desires
are all held back, savaged by ineptitude.
And when shall we all be professors and card-bearers,
when shall we be recreated into power groups
— the charlatans of the generation —
to be heeded for the worth of our words?

So I will talk to the trees,
discuss with the birds,
parley with human-faced brutes;
the dialogue for salvation has to be kept going
at the expense of traditional reasoning;
the search to bring back the cherished exile

from
TANURE OJAIDE
"LABYRINTHS OF THE DELTA = (NIGERIA)"

has to be kept alive in dreams;
the dream to move a sand-bogged crop
to a fresh horizon
haunts me with its mirages.

The wanderer shakes his head at His Excellency's
insolvent mind, the fat head
who swung the electorate with sectarian frenzy.
Let it be, the land has enough to sustain itself
if only the blind back up the lame,
if the team will share the boat to rescue
imprisoned beauty from the boa's safe depths . . .
But where is the dog's bark registered on the game;
whose tears assuage the national thirst?
There is so much left to chance in our bearings.
The day we are turned right
from the nebulous path, then will we arrive
at our once-abandoned senses.

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EXILE

When I contemplate exile
the tyrant who tramples my beautiful country
adds bilboes to my handcuffs;
I live in the dark hole of his hysteria.
His god relishes drinking the blood of agony.

When I contemplate exile
my land wears a monstrous mask —
the fruits lose their cherished taste,
fish desert the waters,
and the earth shudders under human steps.
I begin to see everybody as an agent,
and I care not if we are separated forever.

2
The atrocities perpetrated against Brutus
weigh heavily upon my tormented heart.
I want to leave my father and mother
for the cosmopolis of learning.
Solzhenitsyn beckons me out of this gulag,
Joyce wants me out of this philistine dirt;
I begin to sit with Milosz, entertain Cheney-Coker,
and play butterflies with Nabokov.

I have mapped out my escape routes,
rehearsed unfamiliar steps in a common outfit.
Surely a plastic surgeon has to mend my nose
and eliminate my scars
if I am to steal past the guards
who aim their rifles at the heart of the land
I want to flee.
The exile will only begin across the border.

Exile has become my seductress;
I daydream of her fine eyes, hallucinate
over her appeal . . .
But who will sing the savage song
to rid the beautiful land of the monstrous scourge?

GRANNY'S BLESSING

Granny said she buried my birthcord beside an iroko
on which an eagle nested;
but my hands peel in my father's smallest farm.
I served a decade to raise my bride's price,
and imagine how sullen I appeared to my people
when a cobra chased her from the chamber
before night swathed us, one body.

I am on the road with a pocket drum,
and I am never drunk except with songs, never bright
except when calling my favourite gods their praisenames
and annoying those who knock each other's teeth.

People call me lazybones to my hearing, saying
by the hour I reach my destination, stars will be my hosts.
No one has called me out to wrestle with him,
no one has struck me, or broken my bones,
and yet I am the weakling. I am poor
because I chew the dry end of an abandoned chewingstick.
They do not see me in the deserter's mask crossing fields
with a dog's breath at night.

Since the old woman died, I have been wondering
whether birds or trees are my best friends;
I could not shoot a sunbird in the cassava farm,
nor have I felled a fir tree all the years.
I move on, repeating what she intoned: "The iroko cannot
be hidden in the company of weeds,
and the eagle will soar to his perch
after feasting with sunbirds on the low brushes."

And it's not yet noon in God's day.

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Piano and Drums

Gabriel Okara

W
5 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;

10 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
15 warmth of hurrying feet and groping hearts
in green leaves and wild flowers pulsing.

20 Then I hear a wailing piano
solo speaking of complex ways
in tear-furrowed concerto;
of far away lands
and new horizons with

36

coaxing diminuendo, counterpoint,
crescendo. But lost in the labyrinth
of its complexities, it ends in the middle
25 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.

37

WEST AFRICAN VERSE

Three Phases of Africa Frank Parkes

III Every Valley Shall be Exalted

Every valley shall upright stand
Earth's lowly ones shall rise
In black renascence

4
5 Let us burn bibles for incense
The rejected babe
Drowns in the man-made ravine
Storm-beaten, sun-scorched, fleeced
Out-dooring the star of the east?

10 They that ride
White asses
Shall roll in the debris of destruction
Their mind did fashion
Their banquet halls are doom
In ghosts awake

15 Their tabernacles of gold
Shall find their joyless grave.

Those that grope the sidewalks
Shall find resurrection
In crumbs of fulfilment

20 Those that chew oppression's bitter corn
Shall reap earth's joys
Their sweat did water
And mud huts rise
Above the rubbish heaps
25 Of yesteryear's cathedrals.

But they that from their hills of greed
Did scorn the toils of earth
Shall moan by empty gravesides
At the trumpet of awakening.

30 For the new dawn has broken
The upright palm goes to his farm
The mighty are no more
Cassocks are no more
Sceptres no more

35 The palm gives of its wine
At the sacramental font.

Our History

Mbella Sonne Dipoko

to pre-colonial Africa

And the waves arrived
Swimming in like hump-backed divers
With their finds from far-away seas.

5 Their lustre gave the illusion of pearls
As shorewards they shoved up mighty canoes
And looked like the carcass of drifting whales.

67
10 And our sight misled us
When the sun's glint on the spear's blade
Passed for lightning
And the gun-fire of conquest
The thunderbolt that razed the forest.

15 So did our days change their garb
From hides of leopard skin
To prints of false lions
That fall in tatters
Like the wings of whipped butterflies.

Pain

Mbella Sonne Dipoko

All was quiet in this park
Until the wind, like a gasping messenger, announced
The tyrant's coming.
Then did the branches talk in agony.

5 You remember that raging storm?

In their fear despairing flowers nevertheless held
bouquets to the grim king;

Meteors were the tassels of his crown
While like branches that only spoke when the storm
menaced

10 We cried in agony as we fell
Slashed by the cold blade of an invisible sword.

Mutilated our limbs were swept away by the rain
But not our blood;
Indelible, it stuck on the walls
Like wild gum on tree-trunks.

The Vultures

David Diop

9
In those days
When civilization kicked us in the face
When holy water slapped our cringing brows
The vultures built in the shadow of their talons
5 The bloodstained monument of tutelage.
In those days
There was painful laughter on the metallic hell of the
roads
And the monotonous rhythm of the paternoster
Drowned the howling on the plantations.
10 O the bitter memories of extorted kisses
Of promises broken at the point of a gun
✓ Of foreigners who did not seem human ✓
✓ Who knew all the books but did not know love. ✓
But we whose hands fertilize the womb of the earth
15 In spite of your songs of pride
In spite of the desolate villages of torn Africa
Hope was preserved in us as in a fortress
And from the mines of Swaziland to the factories of
Europe
Spring will be reborn under our bright steps.

Africa

David Diop

Africa my Africa,
Africa of proud warriors in the ancestral savannahs,
Africa my grandmother sings of
Beside her distant river
5 I have never seen you
But my gaze is full of your blood
Your black blood spilt over the fields
The blood of your sweat
The sweat of your toil
10 The toil of slavery
The slavery of your children.
Africa, tell me Africa,
Are you the back that bends
Lies down under the weight of humbleness?
15 The trembling back striped red
That says yes to the sjambok on the roads of noon?
Solemnly a voice answers me
'Impetuous child, that young and sturdy tree
That tree that grows
20 There splendidly alone among white and faded flowers
Is Africa, your Africa. It puts forth new shoots
With patience and stubbornness puts forth new shoots
Slowly its fruits grow to have
The bitter taste of liberty.'

Bent, and the women's pure love cry
—*Kor Siga!*

I remember, I remember . . .
My head in motion with
What weary pace the length of European days where now and then
An orphan jazz appears sobbing, sobbing, sobbing.

14. *Kor Siga*: Champion or protector of *Siga*, the term for a sister or fiancée.

Negro Mask

to Pablo Picasso

She sleeps and rests on the candor of the sand,
Koumba Tam sleeps. A green palm veils the fever of her hair, bronzes
her brow, curves

The closed eyelids, a double cup with wellsprings sealed.
In this fine crescent, the darker, scarcely heavy lip, where is the smile of
woman accomplice?

The patina of the cheeks, the line of the chin sing of silent agreement.
Mask face, closed to the ephemeral, eyeless, without substance,
Perfect bronze head with its timeworn patina
That neither paint nor redness nor wrinkles nor the trace of tears or
kisses stain.

O face as God made you even before the memory of the ages,
Face of the world's dawn, show no tender throat to rouse my flesh.
I adore you, O Beauty, with my monochordal eye!

Prayer to the Masks

Masks! O Masks!
Black mask red mask you white-and-black masks,
Masks at the four points the Spirit breathes from,
I salute you in silence!
And not you last, lion-headed Ancestor,
You guard this place from any woman's laughter, any fading smile,

Distilling this eternal air in which I breathe my Forebears.
Masks of maskless faces, stripped of every dimple as of every wrinkle,
You who have arranged this portrait, this face of mine bent above this
altar of white paper

In your image, hear me!
Now dies the Africa of empires—the dying of a pitiable princess
And Europe's too, to whom we're linked by the umbilicus.
Fix your immutable eyes on your subjugated children,
Who relinquish their lives as the poor their last garments.
May we answer present at the world's rebirth,
Like the yeast white flour needs.
For who would teach rhythm to a dead world of cannons and machines?
Who would give the shout of joy at dawn to wake the dead and
orphaned?
Tell me, who would restore the memory of life to men whose hopes are
disemboweled?

They call us men of cotton, coffee, oil.
They call us men of death.
We are men of dance, whose feet take on new strength from stamping
the hard ground.

The Totem

In my innermost vein I must hide him,
My ancestor with the lightning-scarred, the stormy skin.
I must hide my guardian animal
Or a scandal will break out.
His is my faithful blood, requiring my fidelity
To protect me from my naked pride,
And the arrogance of lucky races. . . .

Ode for Three Kôras and Balaphong (excerpt)

for René Maran

After this day's hope—see how the Somme, the Seine, and the wild Slav
rivers run red beneath the Archangel's sword.
My heart weakens at the winy smell of blood but I have orders and my
duty to uphold.

May I be consoled each night at least by the migratory humor of my
other self.

Tokô-Waly, my uncle, do you remember those long-ago nights when my
head grew heavy on your patient back?

Or how you took my hand in yours and guided me through signs and
shadows?

The fields blossom with glowworms; stars alight on grass and trees.
There is silence all around.

The only stirrings are the perfumes of the bush, hives of russet bees that
dominate the crickets' thin vibrato and muffled tom-tom, the distant
respiration of the night.

You, Tokô-Waly, you hear what is inaudible
And explain to me the signs our Forebears make in the marine serenity
of the constellations,

The Bull, the Scorpion, the Leopard, the Elephant, and the familiar Fish
And the Spirits' milky splendor in the infinite celestial tann.

But here as veils of darkness fall is the Goddess Moon's intelligence.

African night, my black night, mystical and bright black and brilliant,
You rest in concord with the Earth, you are the Earth and the harmonious
hills.

O classic beauty, line not angular but elastic, elegant and slender,
O classic face! From brow arching under perfumed forest and wide
oblique eyes to a graceful bay, the chin, and

The ardent outburst of twin hills! O sweet curves, melodic visage!

O my lioness, my black Beauty, my black Night, my Black one, my Bare
one!

Ah! How often you have made my heart beat like an untamed leopard's
in its narrow cage!

Title. *Kôra*: A Senegalese harp, made with from sixteen to thirty-two strings.
Balaphong: An African xylophone made of thin wooden slats.

12. Tann: Great sand flats along the Senegalase coast.

Night delivering me from reasons, salons, sophisms, from pirouettes and
pretexts, from the calculated hatred of slaughter humanized.

Night dissolving all my contradictions, melting contradictions in the
primal unity of your negritude.

Receive this child, a child twelve years of wandering have not aged.

I bring from Europe but this child who is my friend, the brightness of
her eyes amid the Breton mists.

Château-Gontier, October–December 1939

Return of the Prodigal Son (conclusion).

Elephant of Mbissel, hear my pious prayer.

Give me the fervent science of Timbuktu's great doctors.

Give me the will of Soni Ali, son of the Lion's foam, a tidal wave to
conquer a continent.

Breathe on me the wisdom of the Keitas.

Give me the Guelwar's courage and gird my loins with a Tyédo's strength.
Let me die for the cause of my people, in the stink of gun and cannon
if need be.

May the love of this people stay fast and take root in my liberated heart.
Make me your Master of Language; no, make me his ambassador.

Blessed be my fathers, who bless the Prodigal!

I want to see the women's house again, I played there with the doves and
my brothers, the sons of the Lion.

Ah! To sleep once again in my childhood's cool bed,

Tucked in once again by the black hands so dear,

And once more the white smile of my mother.

Tomorrow I set out again for Europe, on the diplomatic path,
Homesick for the Black Land.

Diptych

The Sun, hung by a string
deep in the indigo calabash,
boils up the kettleful of day.

The Darkness, frightened at the coming
of the Daughters-of-Fire, burrows
at the foot of fenceposts.

The savanna is bright and crisp,
shapes and colors, sharp.
But in distressing silences filled with hummings
and noises neither muffled nor shrill
a heavy mystery hovers,
a secret, shapeless mystery
frightens and surrounds us.

Nailed on with fiery nails, the dark cloth
spread above the earth covers up the bed of night.
Frightened at the coming of the Daughters-of-Darkness,
dogs bark, horses whinny,
man burrows deep within his hut.

The savanna is dark
shapes and colors, all are black.
But in distressing silences filled with hummings
pathways thick with mystery
slowly become visible
to those who have departed
and to those who will return.

Spirits

Listen to Things
More often than Beings,
Hear the voice of fire,
Hear the voice of water.
Listen in the wind,
To the sighs of the bush;
This is the ancestors breathing.

Those who are dead are not ever gone;
They are in the darkness that grows lighter
And in the darkness that grows darker.
The dead are not down in the earth;
They are in the trembling of the trees
In the groaning of the woods,
In the water that runs,
In the water that sleeps,
They are in the hut, they are in the crowd:
The dead are not dead.

Listen to things
More often than beings,
Hear the voice of fire,
Hear the voice of water.
Listen in the wind,
To the bush that is sighing:
This is the breathing of ancestors,
Who have not gone away
Who are not under earth
Who are not really dead.

Those who are dead are not ever gone;
They are in a woman's breast,
In the wailing of a child,
And the burning of a log,
In the moaning rock,
In the weeping grasses,
In the forest and the home.
The dead are not dead.

Listen more often
To Things than to Beings,
Hear the voice of fire,
Hear the voice of water.
Listen in the wind to
The bush that is sobbing:
This is the ancestors breathing.

Each day they renew ancient bonds,
Ancient bonds that hold fast

Binding our lot to their law,
 To the will of the spirits stronger than we
 To the spell of our dead who are not really dead,
 Whose covenant binds us to life,
 Whose authority binds to their will,
 The will of the spirits that stir
 In the bed of the river, on the banks of the river,
 The breathing of spirits
 Who moan in the rocks and weep in the grasses.

Spirits inhabit
 The darkness that lightens, the darkness that darkens,
 The quivering tree, the murmuring wood,
 The water that runs and the water that sleeps:
 Spirits much stronger than we,
 The breathing of the dead who are not really dead,
 Of the dead who are not really gone,
 Of the dead now no more in the earth.

Listen to Things
 More often than Beings,
 Hear the voice of fire,
 Hear the voice of water.
 Listen in the wind,
 To the bush that is sobbing:
 This is the ancestors, breathing.

Omen

A naked sun—a yellow sun—
 The pure yellow sun of hasty dawns
 Pours waves of gold upon the bank
 Of a pure yellow river.

A naked sun—a white sun—
 A sun naked and white
 Pours waves of silver
 Upon a white, white river.

A naked sun—a red sun—
 A sun naked and red
 Pours waves of red blood
 On a red, red river.

"courage, strength, and ideals necessary to vanquish the difficulty of our times," reaching a vast audience through newspapers, radio broadcasts, and popular reprintings. He is also the author of two new plays: *Beatrice au Congo* (*Beatrice in the Congo*), and *Monsieur Thogo-gnini*.

FROM *Africa Arise!*

In Memoriam

"Starved to death,"
He died of hunger,
but it won't be written on his tomb
for they put him in an unmarked grave,
it won't be written there in stone
for the government rejects the truth.

He had gone to all the offices,
the factories, the farms:
no jobs . . .

And thread by thread, his clothing turned to rags.
This, with a thousand bales of surplus cloth nearby . . .
He slept beneath the stars.

And he was a man like you
a man like me,
a man like them,
and he lay beneath the stars,
this man, on the bare ground
before the palaces,
while on the docks mountains of cement were growing hard.
It won't be written there on stone
that he died
beside a palace
with hunger in his belly,
cold gnawing at his bones,
his flesh grown colorless and limp, his ribs collapsing,
the sockets of his bones rebelling.

It won't be written on his tomb
that he died of hunger, slowly,
slowly, while flour mildewed in the stores,
while behind the counters with the iron grills,
behind warehouses filled with goods
they were pulling in the profits . . .

A man is dying.

A man like you,

a man like me,

a man like them.

A man is dying of hunger,
starving, in the midst of plenty.

"Starved to Death"
won't be written on his tomb.
Dishonor on the government
that degrades mankind and brings him low.
It won't be written on his grave
"Dead, of Hunger."

But you, remember
that he starved to death,
slowly
died of hunger,

a man like them
a man like you
slowly
died of hunger
bit by bit
in the midst of plenty
staring at deaf heaven.

This was a man
like you,
like them,
a man . . .
Remember!

FOUR POEMS FROM *Dance of the Days*

I Thank You, Lord

I thank you, Lord, for having made me Black,
for having made me
the sum of all griefs,
for having put upon my head
the World.

I wear the livery of the Centaur
and I have carried the World since the first morning.

White is the color of the great occasions.
Black the color of everyday.

And I have carried the World since the first evening.

I am content
with the shape of my head
made to carry the World.

Satisfied
with the shape of my nose
made to inhale the four winds of the World.

Pleased
with the shape of my legs
ready to run to the end of the Earth.

I thank you, Lord, for having made me Black,
for having made me
the sum of all pain.

A thousand swords have pierced my heart.
A thousand brands have burned me.
And my blood has reddened the snow of all the calvaries,
and my blood, at each dawn, has reddened all horizons.

Yet I am content
to carry the World.
Happy with my short arms
with my long arms
with my thick lips.

I thank you, Lord, for having made me Black.
I have carried the World since the dawn of time

and in the night my laughter at the World
creates the day.

A World to Come

Stars in profusion
Pure
As the eyes of
Wise men
Will be as brilliant
As the destiny of men.

We shall be one:
No more looks of anguish.
We shall be brothers:
No more looks of hate.

And if in the sky
There is a glow
It will be to light our love.
And if in the bush
There is a song
It will be to soothe our sleep.

We shall be brothers.
We shall be joined.
And the stars in profusion
Pure
As the eyes of
Wise men
Will be as brilliant
As our destiny.

Ode to Africa

I shall tune my lute to sing your litanies as the quiet hours pass,
limbering my hands to play the *griot's kôra*

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along the straight and winding paths
to sing of dead and valiant bowmen.
I shall dress myself in velvet and in lilies
to glide in rhythm to the frantic drums
upon the gleaming ground that trails behind the stars.

I shall be shod in sandals of blue shadow
all decked with violets that loll upon the grass
to sketch in virtuoso steps
the ancient sabbath dances.

I shall glove myself in daybreak and in sighs
to praise on David's harp
the magic spell of life's first hours.

And on the marble of your courtyards
I shall dance bedraped in plumes
on a carpet made of fur from the kings of sea and bush.

On the threshold of your Eastern palace
I shall congregate the bards
to celebrate on instruments diverse
in chords harmonious and new
your forests
your savannas
your grandeur
and your metamorphoses.

Beyond the world and windmoans in the doom palms,
beyond the incandescent desert sands
by pools of running water
where daytime seems forever chasing sirens,
I shall gather men and women
whose hands and laughter scan the strains
slipping from my lute onto the wing of time
in search of a last jewel for your azure throne.
And in ecstasy, before your fiery chariot,
from an amphora of virgin porphyra
I shall let flow
drop by drop

upon your feet
the ambrosia
of the gods.

A Wreath for Africa

I shall weave you a wreath
of laurel and hibiscus
set in a butterfly's wingspan
and the calm of underbrush in blossom.

I shall fashion you an emerald crown
with pearls from the treasures of Atlantis
sparkling with the moisture of my guileless tears
and a garland
from the song of rosy shoots and cool water.

I shall weave you a wreath
from the azure of the zephyr's web
and the babbling of the breeze
on dewy mornings when the breath
of living things is silhouetted in the air.

I shall weave you a wreath
from the harmony of my springtime songs
envied by the nightingale in bridal finery
and I shall give you sandals made of fur
from an angry lioness.

I shall fashion you a wreath
of pure flame mingled with the rainbow
of former times of fortune
enveloping
the heat of the millennial fire.

I shall fashion you a wreath
of blue dawns
and a necklace of pink gems
that Time
will never dare to tarnish!

I shall weave you a wreath
from the essence of flowers
with pendants of human life and wisdom.

I shall make you a crown
softly gleaming
with the brilliance of Tropical Venus
and in the orb of the feverishly shimmering
Milky Way.

I shall write
your name
in letters of
fire,
O Africa!

Hands

Free hands
Living hands
made
for waking
and not for smothering
for giving
enriching
and not for taking away
for keeping time
for conquering hate
Mason's hands
rough and ready
ditchdigger's
woodcutter's
cane
cotton
coffee-planter's hands
Hands of a timber-hauler
of a sawyer of wood

Outdoor hands
black hands
bare hands
of a people stripped bare,

Hands that speak
punctuate
offer
rise
meet
hold
the bud of joy
bound by Unity
the knot of life.

Child's hands, blossoming with innocence
old man's, wrinkled with wisdom,
woman's, swollen with caressing,
Hands that wash and indicate
reveal and flourish
Hands!

Black
hands
made to mold Love
calloused
to wear bitterness away,
I seek my share of the riches of the world.
Folded in the Cape of Tempests,
I tear the false gods' masks away
and crown you all in dreams and laughter.

Black hands
builder's hands
men's hands
I plunge them
into the Earth
into the Sky
into the light of Day
into the diamonds of Night

I plunge them
into the Morning dew
into the gentle Twilight
into Past Present Future
into all that is Gleam and Sparkle
that lives and sings
into all that dances
Black hands
Brother's hands.

I take them out
strong and happy
full and radiant
to mix the colors
and beyond oceans and mountains
to salute YOU
Friend!

December 1963

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not only in "Negro Tramp" and several other poems discussed above, but also in the poem "Africa."

Counterbalancing the bitterness and anger vented in many of David Diop's poems is the overriding faith and optimism embodied in such powerful images as that of the tree "patiently stubbornly rising again," the hurricane with which the future will be plowed, burning voices that are a sign of dawn, springtime that will grow beneath light feet, guitars and pestles that will sound forth into a portentous sky. Perhaps because of the suffering, anger, and humiliations implied in the opposing set of images in his poems, David Diop's optimism is not an easy or a facile one. It always seems blended with a certain wisdom, a wisdom that knows the taste of freedom will be bitter as often as it is sweet, that from delirium and impatience comes the working out of dreams, that days sparkling with joy are bought with "ragged" days, and with nights "with a narcotic taste." It is from these labors, both of the body and the spirit, that comes "the ever fertile seed of times when equilibrium is born."

Often, too, David Diop's poems are I-and-you poems, in which a single narrator sings of, or explores and defines, his relation to another. The "you," the other, is always a different one. It may be the comrades to whom he laments of the lost Mamba; it may be Africa itself; it may be the fictional black tramp, or the incarnation of black womanhood he calls "Rama Kam"; it may be the strange men who were not men but birds of prey; it may be his mother, heroine of one especially moving poem. In "With You" it is a beloved woman who is probably his wife, but who also may be Africa envisioned as a woman.

In these translations, we have tried to conserve the striking imagery of the originals and the compelling beat that is such a marked feature of David Diop's French.

ELEVEN POEMS FROM *Pounding*

Vultures

At that time
With great slashes of civilization
Spitting holy water on domesticated brows,
Vultures in the shadow of their claws

Built the bloody monument of a tutelary era.
At that time
Laughter died in the metallic hell of roads
And the monotonous rhythm of "Our Fathers"
Muffled the screams from profitable plantations.
Oh the acid memory of kisses sundered,
Promises maimed.
Strange men who were not men
You knew all the books but knew not love,
Or hands that fertilize the belly of the earth,
The roots of our hands deep as revolt.
Despite the proud songs amid your charnels,
The desolated villages of Africa dismembered,
Hope lived within us like a citadel.
And from the mines of Swaziland to European sweatshops
Springtime will bear flesh beneath our limpid feet.

Listen, Comrades . . .

Listen, comrades of the flaming centuries
To the passionate black shouts from Africa to the Americas.
They've killed Mamba.
Like the seven men from Martinsville,
Like the Madagascan in the ghastly prison pale
In his look, comrades,
Was the warm fidelity of a heart without anguish,
And his smile despite his pain,
Despite the wounds that striped his body,
Kept the colors of a bright bouquet of hope.
It's true, they've killed him,
White-haired Mamba
Who ten times poured us milk and light.
I feel his mouth upon my dreams
And the peaceful trembling of his breast,
And the memory hurts
Like a living thing torn from the maternal breast
But no . . .

What breaks out louder than my pain,
 Purer than the morning when the wild beasts woke,
 Is the shouting of a hundred peoples who crush them in their lairs.
 And my long-exiled blood,
 The blood they thought exhausted in a coffin made of words,
 Finds once again the fervor to pierce fogs.
 Listen, comrades of the flaming centuries
 To the burning Negro voices from Africa to the Americas.
 This is the sign of dawn,
 The brotherly sign, come to nourish men's dreams.

Challenge

17
 You who stoop, you who weep,
 You who'll one day die, and not know why,
 You who fight to guard Another's sleep,
 You whose eyes no longer laugh,
 You, my brother with the face of fear and pain,
 Rise up and cry out: NO!

The Time of Martyrdom

The white man killed my father
 For my father was proud.
 The white man raped my mother
 For my mother was beautiful.
 The white man bent my brother beneath the roadway sun
 For my brother was strong.
 Then the white man turned to me,
 His hands red with black blood,
 Spit his scorn in my face
 And with his voice of master called:
 "Hey, boy! Bring me a napkin and a drink!"

For a Black Child

Life
 At fifteen
 Is a promise, a kingdom half glimpsed.
 In the land where houses touch the sky
 Although the heart remains untouched,
 Where hands are placed upon the Bible
 Though the Bible is unopened,
 A fifteen-year-old life can allay the river's hunger,
 A no-count god-damned nigger life . . .
 A black boy on an August eve did perpetuate the crime,
 Did dare the infamy to use his eyes and glance
 To speculate about a white
 Mouth and breasts and body,
 A body, black boy, that only whites at orgies can ravish to the rhythm of
 your blues
 (the black man only sometimes in anonymous rooms).
 Crime doesn't pay you'd often been told
 And so justice could be done: there were two
 Exactly two on the platform of the scale,
 Two men against your fifteen years and the kingdom half glimpsed.
 They thought of the crazy old blind man who saw,
 Of their women besmirched,
 Of the order that was tottering,
 And your head flew off to the sound of hysterical laughter.
 In air-conditioned mansions
 Over cool drinks
 Good conscience gloats
 In its tranquillity.

For My Mother

When all about me memories arise,
 Memories of anxious hangings on the edge of cliffs
 Of icy seas where harvests drown;

When drifting days come back to me,
 Ragged days with a narcotic taste;
 When the word becomes aristocrat
 To overcome the emptiness
 Behind closed blinds;
 Then Mother I think of you,
 Of your beautiful eyelids burned by the years,
 Of your smile on my hospital nights,
 Your smile that told of old and vanquished miseries,
 O Mother mine Mother of us all,
 Of the Negro they blinded who once again sees flowers . . .
 Listen listen to your voice,
 This cry shot through with violence,
 This song that springs only from love.

The Hours

There are times for dreaming
 In the peacefulness of nights with hollow silences
 And times for doubt
 When the heavy web of words is torn with sighs.
 There are times for suffering
 Along the roads of war at the look in mothers' eyes,
 There are times for love
 In lighted huts where one flesh sings.
 There is what colors times to come
 As sunshine greens the plants.
 In the delirium of these hours,
 In the impatience of these hours,
 Is the ever fertile seed
 Of times when equilibrium is born.

Negro Tramp

For Aimé Césaire

You who walked like a broken old dream
 Laid low by the mistral's blades,

Along what salty paths,
 Along what detours muddy with suffering accepted,
 Aboard what caravels from isle to isle planting flags of Negro blood torn
 away from Guinea

Have you worn your cast-off cloak of thorns
 To the foreign graveyard where you used to read the sky?
 In your eyes I see you halt, stooped and in despair,
 And dawns when cotton and the mines began again,
 I see Soundiata the forgotten
 And the indomitable Chaka
 Hidden 'neath the seas with the tales of silk and fire.
 All this I see . . .

Martial music and the clarion call to murder
 And bellies gaping open in snowy countrysides
 To pacify the fear cowering in the cities
 O my old Negro harvester of unknown lands,
 Sweet-scented lands where everyone could live.
 What have they made of the dawn that used to open on your brow
 Of your luminous stones and golden sabers?
 Look at you naked in your filthy prison,
 A dead volcano for others to laugh at,
 For others to get rich on
 To feed their awful hunger.
 Whitey they called you, how picturesque,
 Shaking their fat, high-principled heads
 Pleased with their joke, not nasty at all,
 But I, what did I do on your windy weeping morning,
 That morning drowned in seafoam
 When the sacred cows decayed?
 What did I do seated on my clouds but tolerate
 The nocturnal dyings,
 The immutable wounds,
 The petrified rags in the terror-stricken camps?
 The sand seemed made of blood
 And I saw a day like any other day
 And I sang Yéba,
 Yéba, like a raving animal.
 O buried plants,
 O lost seeds,

Forgive me Negro guide!
 Forgive my narrow heart
 The victories postponed, the armor abandoned.
 Patience, the Carnival is done.
 I am sharpening a hurricane to plow the future with;
 For you we shall remake Ghana and Timbuktu
 And guitars will gallop wildly
 In great shuddering chords
 Like the hammerblows of pestles
 Pounding mortars
 Bursting forth
 From hut to hut
 Into the portentous blue.

Africa

To my mother

Africa, my Africa!
 Africa of proud warriors in ancestral savannas,
 Africa my grandmother sings of on a distant riverbank,
 I have never known you
 But my face is filled with your blood,
 Your beautiful black blood spread across the fields,
 The blood of your sweat,
 The sweat of your toils,
 The toils of your slavery,
 The slavery of your children.
 Africa, tell me, Africa,
 Is it yours this back that is bending
 Bowed low by humility's weight,
 This trembling red zebra-striped back
 Saying yes to the whip on the sweltering roads?
 Then gravely a voice answered me:
 Impetuous son, this young and robust tree,
 This very tree
 Splendidly alone
 Amid the white and wilted flowers,

Is Africa, your Africa, growing again
 Patiently stubbornly rising again
 And little by little whose fruit
 Bears freedom's bitter flavor.

Rama Kam song for a black woman

The wildness of your glances pleases me,
 Your mouth has the taste of mango,

Rama Kam.

Your body is the black pimento
 That makes desire sing

Rama Kam.

As you pass
 The handsomest woman is made jealous
 By the warm rhythm of your hips,

Rama Kam.

As you dance
 To the tom-tom, Rama Kam,
 The tom-tom taut as my victorious sex
 Throbs beneath the *griot's* leaping fingers.
 When you love me, Rama Kam,
 A tornado shakes
 In the fiery blackness of your flesh
 And fills me with your breath,

O Rama Kam!

With You

With you I have refound my name,
 My name long hidden 'neath the salt of distances,
 I have rediscovered eyes no longer fever-dimmed
 And your laughter like a flame piercing the darkness
 Once more has brought me Africa despite the snows of yesterday.
 Ten years, my love . . .

Mornings of illusion and the remnants of ideas
And sleep inhabited by alcohol;
Ten years and the breathing of the world has poured its pain on me,
This suffering that weights the present with tomorrow's taste
And makes of love a boundless river.
With you I have refound the memory of my blood
And necklaces of laughter 'round my days,
Days that sparkle with joys renewed.

AJANTALA, THE NOXIOUS GUEST, IS BORN

21

A long time ago, there lived in a town a woman trader. She was a trader of petty articles. She used to go from one forest to another when going to the markets. Her town was also in the heart of the forest. Her going from one market to the other every day did not prevent her from becoming pregnant. But to the surprise of the people of the town, she was unable to deliver her pregnancy for twenty-six years. This was not only a burden for her but also a great grief to her.

One morning, as she was on her way to the market, something knocked in her womb heavily several times. She was shocked in fear and then she slowed down her movement. She heard a strange voice coming out from her womb: "My mother! My mother! My mother!" Her pregnancy shouted from her womb. "I am not an ordinary child at all!" The pregnancy cried to the woman, Adedoja, with a sharp voice.

"What kind of a child are you then?" Adedoja asked with fright.

"I am a noxious* guest who is not going to stay with you, and my real name is AJANTALA!"

"Ajantala, the Noxious Guest?" Adedoja screamed in fear as she repeated the name.

"Yes, you are right. You shall call me Ajantala as soon as you have born me!"

Adedoja begged earnestly with fear. "Oh, let the time come quickly because you have kept yourself too long in my womb and that has been a terrible burden."

"I have been too long in your womb? How many years now have I been staying in your womb? Tell me now!" the pregnancy asked, shouting horribly from Adedoja's womb.

* Noxious = harmful, poisonous

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“You have spent twenty-six years in my womb already, and the people of the town mock me and never sympathise with me!” Adedoja explained painfully to her talking pregnancy.

“And what kind of burden have I been to you?” wondered the pregnancy.

“It is too great and strange for me to express!”

“You are a fool to tell me that I have been a terrible burden! You have not even experienced what are called burdens. Just wait and see how troublesome a child I am when you have borne me!”

At this time, Adedoja did not know that an old woman was following her and that the old woman had heard the exchange of hot words between Adedoja and her pregnancy. This old woman asked with great surprise: “But with whom are you talking hotly like that?” Adedoja squirmed with fear when she looked behind her and saw the old woman.

“You — you — you see, my pregnancy is talking to me from my womb and I am really confused about the kind of preg —!”

The pregnancy hastily stopped Adedoja and warned her, “Shut up your mouth there and don’t tell my secret to anyone! This old woman is a treacherous person. A villain she



is. Don't tell her the truth!"

Adedoja declined to tell the truth to the old woman. "Oh, thank you, my mother, But I am talking to myself!" She feared her pregnancy's warning.

"What are you telling me? Are you in your dotage?* I have heard clearly that you were talking with somebody!" the old woman said in anger.

"Hmm. Well, I am talking to . . . !" Adedoja stammered.

Adedoja's pregnancy cautioned her once more, "Beware of yourself, Otherwise I shall show you the kind of a noxious child that I am. I have been lenient with you!"

Having heard the voice of this talking pregnancy again, the old woman was so afraid that she stopped immediately asking questions of Adedoja.

Adedoja and the old woman went on to the market. As soon as Adedoja had sold her wares and bought new ones, she returned to the town.

Adedoja had hardly walked heavily to the door-way of her house when her talking pregnancy shouted to the people of the house: "Eh, you people of the house, come and help my mother put her wares down!"

The people ran to Adedoja. They looked

here and there with surprise and fear, but they did not see the person who had shouted to them. However, they helped Adedoja put her wares down.

"The voice that we heard was that of a man and not of a woman!" the people remarked with surprise as they craned their necks and fastened their eyes on Adedoja in confusion.

"Can a pregnancy talk?" one of the people asked.

I have not yet heard in my life that a pregnancy talks like a person," another one of the people said, hoping to clarify the confusion. But it did not help because Ajantala, the Noxious Guest, continued to threaten Adedoja every day.

One morning, at the very moment that Adedoja's pregnancy was exactly twenty-six years old in her womb, she was delivered of a strange male child before the people of the house.

"Ah, what a strange child is this? He has teeth in his mouth, bushy hair on his chin, and his moustache is full of bushy long hair. His eyes are as sharp and big as those of an old man, his head is full of plenty and strong hair and his chest is hairy!" The people of the

**Dotage* — weakness of mind and body due to old age

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house clapped with panic and shouted.

The people were still looking at him confusedly when he stood and shouted suddenly: "Eh, my mother, tell the people that my name is Ajantala and that my nick-name is *Noxious Guest*". Willing or not, Adędoja announced his name and nick-name to the people.

"Ah, Ajantala, the Noxious Guest, welcome to the world!". However, the people showed that they despised his strange name by repeating it in derision.

Then in the presence of the people, Ajantala stood up again by himself and shouted: "Eh, my mother, give me the sponge. I am going to wash my body. It is too dirty!" Then after washing he asked for clothes and Adedoja, who was supposed to be his mother, hastily gave him the clothes. And he wore all as the people folded their arms and looked at him in fear and confusion.

Then, he went to the sitting room. He sat on a chair and then he shouted: "Eh, give me food and cold water. I am hungry badly!" After he had swallowed the food and drunk the water, he shouted, "Show me the way out!" The people hastily parted to the left and right and he passed between them to the door-way. But as he peeped outside, he shouted: "Ha — ah! Look, the dung of the domestic animals is everywhere on the ground. Of course, I am not

going to stay even a night in this dirty town! No! Not I!" As Ajantala was still shouting, hundreds of people heard his fearful voice and they ran to him. They stood in front of him and fastened their eyes on him. Everyone began to shout: "Ah, no doubt, this is not a human being. He must be an evil spirit!"

These people were right; Ajantala was one of the evil spirits. He lived inside the Iroko tree which was at the roadside on which Adedoja used to travel to the market. Unfortunately, one morning, as Adedoja was going to the market, she trekked by the Iroko tree, Ajantala, the Noxious Guest, came out from the tree and entered her womb. He lurked there just to rest for twenty-six minutes.

In fact, Ajantala spent twenty-six years in Adedoja's womb. But twenty-six years for the human beings were twenty-six minutes for the evil spirits.

Ajantala had hardly walked to the front of the house when he saw a group of red people who were playing 'ayo'.* He ran to them and he took the 'ayo' board suddenly and flung it far away. Then he abused them: "You hopeless old people, sitting down and playing 'ayo' in this dirty ground".

The old people stood up at once and shouted

*Ayo = a traditional Yoruba game using seeds and a game board.

angrily:

"You are a stupid fool! You, an ugly small boy like you, are insulting us like that!" Ajantala without hesitation, slapped one of the old people on the face. Having seen him do so, the other people who surrounded the players of 'ayo' and were looking at them, started at once to beat him and he started to beat them in return.

But it was not easy at all to defeat Ajantala for he was as strong as iron. And within a few minutes, news had spread to every part of the town that a small strange man was beating a group of people. And thousands of people ran to the scene of the fight. They joined the other people and all were beating him. Yet, they could not overpower him.

When Ajantala had beaten more than one hundred people to death, all of the "Babalawo"* of the town came with their different kinds of magic spells to the scene of the tussle. With great anger, they drove Ajantala away from the town by means of their magic spells which were mainly prepared for driving away the evil spirits like Ajantala.

*Babalawo = a priest of Ifa; Ifa is a god of divination

FOUR

The Last Stand Of El Kanem

26

Mallam El Kanem dismounted his big black horse, and handed the reins over to the Hausa orderly waiting outside the palace of the Emir. Briskly he walked up the bare, cactus-lined path to the foot of the massive, flat-topped mud fortress. Beneath the mud arch he pulled off his sandals and raised his voice in a loud salutation. No one answered him. He glanced cautiously around and stepped in. The narrow passage was dark as night, although the sun was baking hot outside. El Kanem shuffled forward, now guided by a mud buttress, now pausing to recollect exactly where All lived. The only occasion he had ever been there was when All had lost the horse race and had been so downcast about it that Kanem had had to come personally and encourage him to forget his shame and disappointment. But now a far more vital issue was at stake.

He paused near a side entrance and pulled aside the mat curtain. A young man in a peaked white cap sat on the floor with his legs crossed under him, reading a Koran. A hiss from Kanem. All—frowning—lifted his fat round face, his eyes shone with fear.

"El Kanem! For Allah's sake go away, my father!"

"Never mind about the Emir," El Kanem was calm. "He's only an old man." He stepped into the close-smelling room and seated himself on a leather sofa. "All, you've got to help me —"

"Why did you not send for me?" All scolded. "If my father sees you here, he'll think I'm helping an—an imposter!"

"Look, All. The matter stands like this: I am of less importance than you to the millions of people in Bornu. Are you not the son of the king? Have no fear. I can take any rude words your father may care to say to me." Kanem leaned forward. "All, your father has deposed me. I am no more head of a Gwandu District."

"Deposed you? Impossible! By Allah! This is not the time to make bad jokes. How about your new horse, Farin Wata?"

"I've not come to talk about horses. All, I've come to talk about my very life, my future. You yourself know well that for untold ages now, our house has been the ruling house."

"True enough."

"The White people respected that knowledge. That's why it was made District Head. But since this new District Officer came, things have been different." He paused and lifted the dust veil from his nose, from behind which his voice had been coming rather thickly. "This is what happened: we were told to collect tax money in our Districts. One hundred pounds in eight places each. We were given a certain date on which to pay the money into the Native Administration Treasury. The money could be more than that, of course, but never less. My District is rather a big one, and I'm quite sure we could easily have raised twice that amount in no time."

"On the appointed day, my village heads paid in their money. The District Officer called me and asked to know what had happened. The money was short, by a hundred pounds in three places. I was surprised. I told him that that was all the money my village heads had been able to collect."

*Farin Wata—White moon, meaning full moon.

He became really angry. What of all the cattlemen? What had become of the hundreds of heads of cattle? Had somebody refused to pay his tax? Had I been really strict with my work? To all these questions I answered that this was not the first time I had collected tax in my district, that something must have gone wrong somewhere.

"The District Officer took offence at once. He knew what had gone wrong, and he would find it. He told me to remain in the Treasury Office while he sent a dozen dandokas to search my residence. The Policemen returned late in the afternoon and reported that they had not been able to find any money in my house. The District Officer was amazed. He maintained that, in any case, I and I alone was responsible for what had happened, and I had to pay for it. He ordered that my personal effects be auctioned, and the money raised. Your father auctioned my things as you know."

"Well, all these things I would gladly have stood as the punishment which Allah sometimes metes out to us, but this morning your father told me that he had been ordered to depose me. A new Sarkin Ungua would be here soon, he said, to take my place. El Kanem's voice broke. "That is why I have risked coming here to speak to you. I know your father loves you. He listens to everything you say to him. If you approach him on my behalf, he might change his mind. You know how the District Officer trusts the Emir. He gives him the power to choose his own District Heads, and only interferes with him in matters needing his advice. All you must not fail me. I know you can get me out of this trouble. If I lose this work, what shall I do? I am not like most of our men. I have learnt no trade. I'll be too proud to go back to the farm after holding such a high post."

There was a long pause.

*A Dandoka is a Native Authority policeman.

*Sarkin Ungua—a village head.

"This is a delicate matter," All signed. "My father will be angry with me. He will cast me out. He will think . . ."

"You must try," Kanem interrupted. "I'll give you my best mare Farin Wata. You can have her. If only you'll get me back to power. Try your very best for me."

"I might not succeed."

"There is no question of failure," Kanem cut in, gathering the folds of his loose, elaborately embroidered robes. "You must succeed. You have to succeed. I cannot think of anything else."

"But suppose my father insists? You know what sort of a man he is."

Kanem smiled.

"Let us not think about that. My family is the family for this work. We always have been, and will continue to be." He rose and his face grew solemn. "I must go now. That new Sarkin Ungua might have come already. I don't want him hanging around my residence. My women are so hard to trust."

"Ah, your women. Is Fatimih well?"

"She is. She greets you."

"I'll see her when I bring you the Emir's word."

"Do your best," Kanem clasped his arm. "Till you come then."

He smiled bitterly and picked his way back to his horse tethered beneath the baobab tree. As he cantered homeward, he resolved grimly not to lose his place in life. It was Allah who had destined him to be Sarkin Ungua for Gwandu District, and no mortal would rob him of his post.

Outside the domed mud house that was his official residence, a tall lean man paraded pacing up and down in an impatient manner. His turban was neatly wound around his head, but the white baggy trousers beneath the little black coat showed signs of dust and travel. At the foot of the baobab tree, bags of corn, chairs, earthen pots, mattresses, and brass-ware were piled, guarded by half-a-dozen

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women who sat on the stones nearby, silent and moody. El Kanem dismounted and led his horse towards the stranger. "You are looking for someone?" he asked.

"Just so," the stranger replied, regarding El Kanem through heavy dark sunglasses. "I'm the new Sarkin Ungua from Panwa. I've come to relieve the old one."

"I see," rejoined Kanem. "You wait here. The other District Head has just gone to see the District Officer."

"The sooner he comes back the better. I've been waiting here now for hours. My wives are in the sun."

Kanem left him abruptly, feeling more disgusted than ever with the scheming Emir. He led the horse to the stables himself and tethered it. The courtyard was completely empty of servants. Only old Musa, regardless of his master's declining fortunes, still watered and fed the horses at the other end of the stables. Kanem flung him a greeting, patted his horse's nose and went back into his mud house.

One of his wives came out to meet him, removing her black veil and smiling at him. He brushed her aside and went into his room.

"Nobody must disturb me," he told her.

He shut the door behind him and took off his gown. He hung his cap on a nail in the wall and flung himself on to the only sofa they had not sold. He felt restless. He stood up and lifted the single cloth over his bed. A wicked smile overspread his face. The guns were still there as he had hidden them: six rifles, one revolver. They were in perfect working order. Ever since he paid out so much money for them to those Arabs from the French border, he had never had a chance to see them. The Arabs had made it quite clear to him that as a British subject he was buying fire arms at his own risk, that they were not interested in what would happen to him when the authorities discovered that he was breaking the law. El Kanem had not been daunted. He had always had a vague notion that someday perhaps

well, one never knew.

All the afternoon he waited patiently for Ali to arrive now and again going to the door to peer out. The new District Head had removed his glasses and now sat beneath the tree, devouring large quantities of sour milk and guinea corn from a calabash. There was no sign of Ali, the Emir's first son.

The afternoon wore into evening. Lights began to appear all over the town. Little girls filled the air with cries of "Kerosene" and "Cigarettes". The sellers of roast meat thrust more wood into their fires. From the night market came the scream of the makers of bean cakes. Still Ali did not turn up. The new District Head came up to the residence and began to beg for shelter. The night was going to be cold, he pleaded. His wife, his children were in the open air. When persuasion failed, he drew the long sword dangling at his hip. El Kanem shut the door in his face. He could hear the man raving and raving on the other side long after he had regained the quiet of his room.

Finally the new Sarkin Ungwa shouted, "I'm going to report to the Emir. This house must be vacated. I am the new officer, why should I beg to be taken into my own house?"

El Kanem called his wives together.

"Take heart," he said, turning now to one drooping figure, now to the other. "Everything will come right. This little trouble is only for a short time. Allah always sends such trouble to test our courage."

The women started whimpering and sniffing.

"Where's my lovely Fatimeh?"

The women lifted their faces. There were now six of them.

"Where's Fatimeh? Has she deserted me in my trials?"

There was no response.

"Does none of you know where the elder Fatimeh is gone? Not even you, Black Fatimeh, her sister?" He stood all

For Allah's sake, tell me if you know. Where is your sister Black Fatimeh? Where is my newest bride?"

The women bent down their heads, their veils drooping like withered lilies in the late evening.

"I must find her. They can't drive me away and take my wife. Or my horses. I must find Fatimeh." He went back into his room and slipped the automatic pistol into his pocket. "Wait for me, all of you. I know where to look for Fatimeh. If Ali comes in my absence, tell him to wait."

He slipped out into the night. There were no stars, and only the glow of distant lights lit the red road. El Kanem went hurriedly through a lane into a large street, passing the hawkers and vendors of perfumes and leaving behind him conflicting mixture of smells.

Halfway down the street, he stopped. The house he was looking for stood behind a dark mango tree. Unlike most houses in Northern Nigeria, it had large windows, but El Kanem could not make out the faces of the people inside because of the dense fumes of cigarette smoke which hung in the air. Men were twanging their molds and women were dancing. The men and women, who sat on the benches along the four corners of the wall, held in their hands large gourdfuls of guinea-corn beer.

El Kanem stood at the door, scanning each face for a time.

"Drink in good health," he shouted suddenly. "All of you, drink in good health." There was a silence. A drunken man gurgled uncontrollably and flung himself on the mud floor. "If anyone has seen one Fatimeh, wife of the District Head, El Kanem, by Allah, let him say. She is missing!"

"She's not here," snapped the proprietress, a corpulent woman seated on a tiny stool in a dark corner of the room.

"You lie," Kanem snapped back. "She's my wife and I know her habits well."

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He had remembered that it was at this same drinking house that he had met her and by his power had elevated her into the position which she now occupied. For some time now he had known that she still patronised this house when she could slip away from her home unnoticed. Poor girl, he almost pitied her for her weakness. Kanem stepped into the bar, thrust aside the fat beer-seller, and flung open a secret door hidden behind a large earthenware pot. Fatimeh would be here, anywhere, drinking in the room reserved for the more respectable people.

A Mallam from the Emir's court looked at Kanem without interest, and buried his moustaches in his burukutu. At a third table a youth was telling a story in a very loud Hausa voice to a light-skinned girl with dark eyes and very white teeth seated opposite him. He was laughing and she was laughing and beating the table with her slim bangles. Her eyes met El Kanem's and she stiffened.

"Fatimeh!" shouted El Kanem. "Fatimeh, get up and let us go home."

The young man paused and glanced round in the middle of his story. El Kanem stiffened. Fatimeh's escort was none other than All, the Emir's most loved son. There was a long uneasy silence during the mutual recognition. All's round face became haggard and his bloodshot eyes narrowed.

"My good friend," El Kanem said softly, "so this is how you help me, is it?"

"No, no," All disclaimed. "I — I only came here to drink, and she invited me."

"Fatimeh would not dare to do that. She drinks, but she always drinks in secret and alone. You went after her knowing how frail is the heart of a woman. You were quite sure I would be killed by your father. By the way, have you spoken to him about me?"

"I — I forgot."

*Burukutu—a drink made from corn beer.

"You what?"
"I'll speak to him to-morrow in the — in the morning. He was so busy —"

"Oh, you'll never see the Emir your father again. All! By Allah, you'll never —" El Kanem's hand slid towards the roomy pocket in his gown. "I don't care what happens to me. I am no longer a young man. But you, you are less than twenty. You're just starting life's great journey."

"For Allah's sake, Kanem, don't talk like this. For Allah's sake, have patience. I'll speak to the Emir. I promise." All turned his palms upwards in supplication. His voice was trembling.

"Too late!" Kanem spat. Beads of sweat ran down his brow. Slowly he withdrew his hand from his pocket and aimed the gun at All's head.

"Kanem!" shrieked Fatimeh. "My husband!"
The automatic cracked and she fell forwards. All tried to move. Another shot echoed and he slumped sideways, coughing and gasping.

Panic spread through the bar. Chairs were overthrown. Men struggled, scrambling for the door. El Kanem slipped hurriedly out into another compound, scaled a wall, ran along a street, and arrived panting, sweating and bruised at his residence. His wives rushed forward to open the door, and when he came in, they screamed:

"What happened? Where is Fatimeh?"

"Shut the door!" snapped Kanem. "Lock it. Bar it. Bring out all the rifles and my boxes of cartridges. Listen all of you. There's going to be trouble, big trouble. Do you hear? I shall need these rifles. When I empty one, fill it at once. There must be no empty rifle here at any time when the shooting begins."

He took the loaded rifles and went out into the courtyard. Musa, the keeper of the stables, came out to meet him. Kanem did not even look at him. He went to each

stable in turn. At each door the horse would poke out its head to be caressed, and Kanem would put a bullet into it. "What are you doing?" cried Musa. "Have you gone mad?"

Kanem went on with his cold-blooded work. When the last of the horses had been killed he heaved a sigh and muttered, "Now no son of a rat will take my horses. Not even the Emir!"

"But," Musa began.

"Be silent."

El Kanem went back into his room. Presently the sound of horses' hooves came to his ears. The riders stopped outside his house and a powerful voice shouted:

"The Emir orders you to give yourself up, El Kanem. Give yourself up while you can do so in peace. You have stolen the money of the tax-payers. You have killed all the Emir's first son. Give yourself up, El Kanem, and peace will come unto you. You have heard."

El Kanem unlocked the door and came out into the open night. The man was still shouting. He stopped abruptly when Kanem threw himself on the ground. Next instant five rifle shots fired in quick succession rang through the air. The Emir's men fled.

"I have been dismissed," laughed El Kanem, rising. "But I have not been removed. Let him who dares come along."

He kept awake all night, counting the hours, listening to the cries of girls, the laughter of drunken men staggering homewards. Presently all sounds died out, and he knew that the city was asleep. The Emir, he knew, would not be asleep by now. He could not sleep with his first son dead.

Towards dawn Kanem crept to the door wide open, and waited. A horseman rode up, glancing cautiously right and left. Kanem could see that it was the new District Head. He took a careful aim and fired. The new Sarkin Ungu toppled over his horse's mane. Kanem's blood was heated

with the desire to kill, to go on killing. He would damage this city yet, before they finally got him.

Meantime the messengers of the Emir rode on through the thickening dust. All night long they had ridden, arriving at one village only to be told that the District Officer had just left the place the day before. None of the peasants seemed to know for certain where he had gone.

In the early hours of the dawn the messengers dismounted near a little village. A tent was pitched in the centre, but outside it was an empty camp bed and two or three tables with tarpaulin tops. They were told that the District Officer was in the bush and would be back in an hour.

With characteristic patience the men waited. At the end of two hours a small khaki-clad man emerged. He was followed by a dozen men in large gowns. The two messengers rose and greeted him.

"Zaki (Lion). May your life grow longer. We have come on an important matter."

"Everything is important," replied the tired and hungry District Officer. "Wait here. I shall listen to you after chop."

"All the people will be dead by then," one of the messengers grumbled.

"Dead?!" echoed the District Officer with more concern.

"Which people?"

The messengers began to talk at the same time. They told the District Officer about Kanem's madness, how he had killed his new bride, the Emir's son, and a few innocent people besides. The Emir had sent them to him for permission to use armed police against Kanem as it would be madness to attempt to capture him without.

"Is this the same Mallam Kanem who made away with the tax money?"

"Just so, Zaki."

"Hold on!" He went into his tent. A typewriter clattered for a moment and he came out holding a sealed envelope bearing across the top the words: OFFICIAL. "Take this note to the Emir. Tell him also by word of mouth he must not fire at Kanem even one shot unless it is absolutely necessary. He must try to capture the man alive if possible. Send him my greetings."

"Yes, Zaki!"

The messengers mounted their horses and galloped away. Late that afternoon, armed Policemen held a consultation. They rode up before El Kanem's official residence and placed one man opposite the domed mud building. This man kept up a steady rifle fire against the house to which El Kanem soon began to reply. The inhabitants of the city having received a strict warning not to stir outside their house gates, the rifleman was soon the only figure in sight.

When El Kanem saw the Policeman, he posted two of his wives at the back door and examined his ammunition store. He had seen through their plans. They wanted to get him from the back. He laughed softly to himself. As he had suspected, the warning voice of one of his wives came from behind him.

"My Lord, they're here. They're scaling the wall. They don't care about the bottles on the wall. Wal-O. Hundreds of them!"

"Shoot them down, you fool. They can't scale that wall."

A dandoka on the wall paused with bleeding hands and started laughing when his face came up.

"Are you mad, my fine lady? To fight for a man who killed your own sister?"

Black Fatimeh turned furiously.

"Kanem," she shouted across the little room. "Did you kill Fatimeh? Did you kill my sister?"

"Wait!" Kanem shouted. "By Allah, this is no time for

that! A bullet tore into the roof, bringing down large bits of rock and splintered wood. Mallam Kanem ducked and answered with two cracks of his rifle.

"You killed my sister?" Black Fatimeh insisted.

"She was better silent," Kanem said, his eyes on the lone Policeman in the distance behind the low mud wall.

"What did you say?"

"Wallah! I shall explain, Fatimeh, give me a rifle."

El Kanem put aside the empty rifle he had been using. He stretched out his hand to receive a fully-loaded one. The dandoka opposite the front of the building was keeping up his firing. The other dandokas, who were trying to scale the wall, had started to shatter the jagged edges of the bottles stuck in the top.

"You killed my sister," Fatimeh repeated.

El Kanem turned then and saw that Fatimeh was menacing him with her rifle. Her eyes were those of a mad woman. Kanem read in them his sentence of death.

"Foolish, wicked man," muttered Black Fatimeh.

"Give me your gun, they are coming."

The dandokas, in their blue dresses and red waist-bands, charged into the house. Kanem, unarmed, was caught between the cross fire. He slumped forward and lay still. Fatimeh's rifle fell from her hands. "I did not mean to kill him, only to frighten him."

She tore her hair and stamped her feet. "My Lord, my husband —"

The dandokas herded the sobbing women into the compound. They covered up Kanem's body solemnly and went to give a report to the Emir. "He was a brave man," was their verdict, "though bad and foolish."

Kanem's wives were still crying, still wringing their hands, still calling down vengeance on the persecutors of their great Lord and Master.

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VIII

Jomo Kenyatta—The African Messiah

Everybody, everywhere, who reads newspapers or listens to the radio has heard of Jomo Kenyatta, the man the American newspapers called 'The Burning Spear', who in 1953 was sentenced to seven years' hard labour on a charge of having organized and led 'the dreaded Mau Mau rebellion' in Kenya. In 1945, when I first began to awaken to the meaning of politics, Jomo was only a legend to me, for he was in a far-away land, in England, and had been there for seventeen years.

Every young African knew something of Kenyatta's story. We all knew that our fathers and their fathers in the years soon after the First World War had formed an organization called the *Kikuyu Central Association*. They did so because the British Government had decided to give large tracts of their land away to ex-soldiers from England. And we knew that in 1928, a young mission-educated Kikuyu named Johnstone Kamau had become Secretary-General of the KCA and under the name of Kenyatta had begun to edit its newspaper called *Muigithania* (meaning literally 'One who makes people agree and compromise'). All of us knew that Jomo had gone to Britain in 1929 to protest about the taking of the land and that he had started to study there at the London School of Economics with the great anthropologist, Malinowski, and that he had written a book about the Kikuyu people called *Facing Mount Kenya*. There were a lot of other things we had heard about but of which we were not so sure: that he had journeyed into the land of the Russians and stayed there for some time; that he had married an English woman and had had a child by her; that he was known to all the powerful politicians in Britain; that he had many friends in the Labour Party which took power in 1945.

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From MUGO GATHERU,
CHILD OF TWO WORLDS

We had all given our pennies and shillings at rallies to be sent to England to help Kenyatta to represent us there. We believed that some day he would return and bring new hope and perhaps new laws about the land. And we believed that all settlers feared nothing more than a return of Jomo Kenyatta to Kenya. And some of the illiterate people had put all of this hope and admiration into songs which were sung in the Kikuyu Country.

The Kikuyu Central Association was banned in 1940 as a 'subversive organization' because it kept agitating for the return of the African lands and for equal rights. The Europeans feared that KCA would hurt the war effort in Kenya. In 1944 the Government allowed the Africans to start another organization, called the Kenya African Union. One African newspaperman began to publish a newspaper in Kikuyu which agitated all the time for the return of Kenyatta to Kenya. Then one day in 1946, after Labour had won the election in England, Kenyatta came home. At last we young people saw him. We liked him and his bold, loud, challenging voice, and we liked his programme.

To most Africans of the generation of my father and my father's father, Jomo's name has been associated with the fight about land—not with political matters as representation in the legislature or who shall or shall not be the first prime minister of Kenya. They sent Kenyatta to London in the year of the beginning of the Great Depression to protest about the land.

As Kenyatta lived and travelled in Europe, he began to see the Kenya problem not just in terms of petitioning the British Government to rectify past injustices with regard to the land. He saw the problem as one of teaching Africans how to get enough political power to control their own affairs in Kenya.

Although to the older people Kenyatta was the man who would restore the land, to the young people of Kenya in 1946 he was an African Messiah who would now lead them towards self-government just as Azikiwe in Nigeria and Nkrumah in the Gold Coast were doing. In 1947 they elected him presi-

dent of the Kenya African Union. Now, in 1964, he is, at last, Prime Minister of Kenya!

'Mr Mbiyu'—The Man of Gethunguri

In 1945, Jomo Kenyatta was only a legend to us, but there was another educated Kikuyu who was with us in the flesh, and for whom all of us young people had great admiration. He, too, had spent many years overseas, but not in Britain. He had gone away, even before Jomo Kenyatta went to England. He had stayed so many years that many people thought he was lost and would never return. And then, one day in 1939, he came home again. He came wearing a long black gown and a flat hat with a tassel on it. He had stopped in Britain on the way home and studied there for a while and had diplomas from schools there, too. This was Peter Mbiyu Koinange, son of a senior chief of the Kikuyu.

Mbiyu's father had sent him away in 1927 to the Hampton Institute in Virginia, U.S.A., the same school which had trained Booker T. Washington who wrote *Up from Slavery*. He had heard about this school from the Phelps Stokes Commission which had toured East Africa studying educational problems at the request of the Colonial Office. Mbiyu's father had told him to train himself to serve his people. Mbiyu spent four years at Hampton preparing for college entry. I have heard that he was very popular there and was a first-class football player, as well as a good student.

He then went to Ohio Wesleyan College (now University), where after four years he took his B.A. Years later when another Kenya African student attended this school, Mbiyu's teachers and friends in neighbouring towns spoke with great pleasure of having known him and of how he taught them to play the African game called 'Giuthi'.

Finally, he took his M.A. at the Columbia University Faculty of Education there. When he left America he decided to stop in England to take some lectures in anthropology at Cambridge and to get a diploma from the Institute of Education in London. And then he came home in the year 1939. I was about fourteen years old then.

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'Mr Mbiyu' decided to form a school to train teachers for the Africans' 'independent schools' and so a school at Gethunguri came into existence. It was attended by over 800 students ranging from seven to twenty-one years of age. Its standard was equivalent to the Ordinary level of the General Certificate of Education. The idea was to make it a University College of Kenya from which people could obtain their teaching diplomas, trade certificates, and degrees. It lasted nearly thirteen years until it was closed down by the Government during the Emergency. It was flourishing in 1941 when I tried to enter it after my circumcision—a story I have already told. It was only natural that my friends and I should have headed for Gethunguri. Mr Mbiyu and his school represented to us the brave, independent Kikuyu spirit. We knew the main outlines of Mr Mbiyu's story, and of how the school at Gethunguri was founded, just as we knew the story of Jomo Kenyatta.

When Kenyatta came home in 1946, he and Koinange began to co-operate together in the building up of the Kenya African Union. They also attempted to found an organization for bringing Europeans, Indians, and Africans together in peaceful, friendly relations. Mr Mbiyu was very keen on what might be described as 'grass-roots diplomacy'.

In 1947, Mr Mbiyu went to London to represent the Kenya African Union there for two years, and then was invited to India by Prime Minister Nehru. Later he went back to England to represent Kenya Africans and was there when Mau Mau broke out. He was in effect exiled all though the Emergency but was allowed to return home for three days to visit his aged and very sick father who had been arrested. When Mr Mbiyu became the model of inspiration to us he was an educator. We watched him grow into a political leader, and we young people were proud of him.

I suspect the fact that Mr Mbiyu had studied in America and that the first Kenyan to get a master's degree had been educated in that country, was one of the things that influenced me to want to go to America to study some day. The second Kenya African to go to America to study was Julius Gikonyo who left in 1948 and came back home in 1957 with a Ph.D. degree in Political Science. I was the third student

to go to America. Since we went, over eight hundred Kenya students have gone there. Mr Mbiyu pioneered the way for us. Now, he is Minister of Pan-African Affairs in Kenya.

Mr Mathu of the Legislative Council

To the young Kikuyu of 1945 Kenyatta was the promised Messiah, but there was also an Elijah who had come before him. This was Eliud Wambu Mathu who, in 1944, became the first African to sit in Kenya's Legislative Council. Due to pressure from the Africans it was decided that they would be permitted to have *one* representative in the Kenya Legislative Council—ONE. He was to be appointed by the Governor, although the Europeans had elected members. It was inevitable that Eliud Wambu Mathu would be that one. He was educated, mild mannered, and moderate.

Mathu's father was a medicine-man who lived in a place called Waithaka. Young Mathu went to the Church of Scotland mission near the town of Kikuyu, and when he finished he became a school teacher. In 1937 he started educating himself by correspondence through the University of South Africa, and managed to pass the very difficult matriculation examination of the University of South Africa. He then began to study for the external degree offered by the same university. By this time he was teaching at the Alliance High School, Kikuyu, the headmaster of which was Mr Greaves. Mr Greaves liked him and gave him much assistance and Mathu successfully passed his examinations in political science, history, and psychology, and received his B.A. degree. He then went on to South Africa itself for higher studies and from there to Balliol College, Oxford, where he spent two years. He returned to Kenya in 1940 to become a teacher again at Alliance High School, Kikuyu.

Soon after Mathu's return, his friend, Mr Greaves, was replaced by another European. Mathu did not get along too well under the new regime, so he left to establish his own school at his birthplace—Waithaka. His school progressed very well.

After Mathu was appointed to the Legislative Council he

also went into business and was very successful. Although he was an *appointed* representative, he represented African interests very well. He was a fluent and fiery speaker like the American Adlai Stevenson or the British Aneurin Bevan. The Africans liked the way he talked. The Europeans respected him.

Immediately after his nomination, Mathu stressed the importance of having a country-wide African political organization to advise on various problems in the central and local governments. He thus stimulated the formation of what became the Kenya African Study Union and later on the Kenya African Union (KAU). I still remember his first letter to the editor of the *East African Standard* in Nairobi on this subject, in 1944. The idea was to unite all Africans in Kenya irrespective of tribe. All of us young Africans were proud of this man of our people who spoke not only for the Kikuyu, but for all Africans in the Kenya Legislative Council. Many of us wanted to be like him some day.

Although I admired both Kenyatta and Koinange, I think it was Mathu's speeches, in those days before Kenyatta came home, that first stirred my heart most thoroughly. Mr Mbiyu was quietly working away day by day building up his school. Kenyatta was far away overseas. But Mathu was acting in a drama on a stage where all could see him and hear him—in the Legislative Council—and his speeches were reported regularly in the *East African Standard*. I went sometimes to the Legislative Council to hear him in the flesh, and it was thrilling. Mathu's example made many young Kenyans yearn for a higher education. On my part, I began to see the salvation of Africans through education. I dreamed of playing some part in Kenya's public affairs myself when I became educated. And it came to pass that Mr Mathu was eventually responsible for something that changed the whole course of my life.

The name Mathu means 'pawns'. The name Wambu means 'one who shouts loudly'. There are many who feel that these two names actually characterize Mathu's personality. He first came to power as an appointed representative of the African people, not an elected one, and this put him in a very difficult position. During the Emergency between 1952 and 1955,

'Mathuism' meant trying to 'stay in the middle'. At that time Mathu found himself in a position worse than that of the Frenchman Talleyrand. He made mistakes, but his successes were enormous, too.

In 1956, when the Kenya Africans were allowed to vote for their representatives to the Legislative Council for the first time, Mathu stood for office, but he lost the election. He lost again in 1958, this time to the young American-educated Julius Gikonyo Kiano. So he retired to his farm in Kyanugu. It is too early to say what Mathu will do eventually politically. It may be that he will be like the Roman Cincinnatus.

Mathu is like the American Al Smith, 'A self-made leader'. He is an energetic man, forthright and well educated, and he has shown that he can be tough. He always comes up on his feet. In 1961, he served in the Congo as Deputy Director of the United Nations operation there.

Kikuyu Domination or Myth?

There have been serious charges against my people. For example, that they are natural-born 'agitators', 'bush-lawyers', and that they organized Mau Mau in 1952 in an attempt to drive out the Europeans from Kenya, and consequently establish the Kikuyu dictatorship over the rest of the Kenya tribes, followed by a return to barbarism and darkness. I am tempted to say something about this problem—without involving myself in an unnecessary controversy.

Most of the Kikuyu live on what is called a 'Reserve', or the 'Kikuyu land unit'. They were put there in the same way that the Navaho, and Fox, and Menominee Indians were put on reservations in the United States. A group of people from Europe came after the First World War and fell in love with our land. They liked its fine climate and its fertile fields, so they began to settle there. At first my people accepted them as guests. When they began to abuse our hospitality we and the other Africans—the Masai, the Suk, the Wakamba, and the Nandi—fought against them. But bows and arrows were useless against guns. As the Masai were our enemies of the past they sometimes fought alongside the Europeans against

us. Other Africans were later used to help fight the Masai. There were many more of us than there were American Indians and many fewer Europeans. Yet, for the last sixty years the country was dominated by about 60,000 Europeans and the 7,000,000 Africans were largely confined to Reserves.

Not all white people who came were interested in taking the land. The missionaries came to tell us of a new God and brought with them schools and modern medicine. Traders came to sell us many products we had never seen before. And people from India came to work in building railroads and later settled as traders. There are 250,000 of them now. Against these there has been some resentment, but not real bitterness. That has been reserved for those who took our land from us.

By 1920 there were enough Europeans in our country growing sugar, coffee, tea, and sisal products to make agriculture a profitable business. Then gold was discovered. Kenya was declared a Crown Colony under English rule. Many of my people protested as they saw more and more of our land being taken, and in 1923 the British Government made a strong statement to the effect that the rights of the Africans must be respected as the land was ours. 'The settlers', many of whom were retired soldiers, threatened to revolt and set up an independent state. The British Government sometimes tried to take our part, but it felt that it must also not go too much against the opinions of the settlers, their own kinsmen who came out to Kenya from England.

In 1934 something occurred that hurt us much. About 17,000 square miles of the best land in Kenya was declared open to *white settlers only*. It was called 'The White Highlands' and both Africans and Indians were barred from settling on it. This created a strong and deep feeling among my people that they had not been treated right. How can there be an exclusive 'White Highlands' in the Black Man's country?

The coming of the Europeans also created the 'Squatter'. As great farms came into being in the 'White Highlands' growing crops and cattle for the market, it was necessary to secure labour. Most of the Africans lived in their own villages and were not interested in working for wages. But some were,

and besides it was becoming harder to secure a living for many people as the amount of land for Africans grew smaller. So, as I have related, the custom arose of Africans settling on Europeans' farms. The African and his family would be given a plot of land to till, and in return he gave most of his labour to the European farmer. Sometimes he got a small wage, too. Often he did not. He was called a Squatter and his position was something like that of a share-cropper in the American South. By 1950 over one-third of the Kikuyu were Squatters. To a Squatter, the European farm was just a work place. The Reserve was really 'Home'.

As a son of the Kikuyu people I find myself living in two worlds, and in the telling of my story I am telling the story of my people who are also caught between two worlds. I do not tell this story as a tribalist or a chauvinist. I do not believe the Kikuyu were born to rule or oppress others, or that they are superior to other Kenyans or Africans. I tell it because I am proud of the people which gave me birth and because I feel they have been misunderstood by many.

Mau Mau is over. A new Kenya is in the making—a Kenya of many tribes and several races. New leaders are emerging— young men who, while proud of their own tribal groups, think of themselves first as Kenya citizens and who work together forgetting all about their tribal origins. I should re-emphasize the fact that my people have no plans or intentions of establishing dictatorship in any form over anybody in Kenya. The more we know about each other's customs and history, however, the better we shall understand each other.

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XI
White Man's World

On March 5th, we arrived at the port of Tilbury, near London. Now, for the first time I was in the White Man's World—the United Kingdom. After customs clearance, we travelled by train from Tilbury to London.

I was so excited at being near the end of my journey and so worried about my future fate that I fear the scenery along the way made no impression on me.

In London I had hoped that Mr Njonjo would be waiting for me, but since he was not at the station I decided to take a taxi to his address. Njonjo was in Scotland but I found a friend of his who was living in the same building. He was an Indian student studying for the LL.M. degree at the University of London. Since he did not have the keys to Njonjo's room, and was not sure when Njonjo would return, he decided to get me a room in one of the students' hostels. He took me to Kensington Square Gardens where I remained until Njonjo's arrival two days later.

Njonjo moved me to Hallam Street, where he got me a better room at one of the hostels provided by the Welfare Section of the Colonial Office to accommodate overseas students. There were many students from the West Indies, Nigeria, the Gold Coast (now Ghana), Uganda, Zanzibar, but none from Kenya or Tanganyika. I made friends among these students. It was largely due to them that my stay in London was so enjoyable. This was the first time I met fellow students from other parts of Africa. I had to come to Britain to make my first Pan-African contacts.

In general, the African and the West Indian students were very angry with the Labour Government, which was in power at that time, because of the Seretse Khama affair, the Central African Federation, and political crisis in the Gold Coast, and

they urged that the British people vote the Labour Government from office over these issues.

In England I found myself in a culture which was very different from the Indian culture. The Indian culture appeared to be less dynamic, but sympathetic—while the English was very dynamic and aggressive. It was much more aggressive and demanding than I had experienced in Nairobi when I first encountered urban life.

As regards the British people, I must say that they impressed me very highly, in particular by their courtesy. I found it very difficult to understand them, however. I was amazed at the difference between the British people in Great Britain and in Kenya. In Kenya they were very arrogant, if not snobbish and shortsighted. Their general outlook appeared as if it were circumscribed by their selfishness, which in turn made them appear illiterate, though there were, of course, exceptions here and there. As for the freedom of speech, press and assembly, I thought that Great Britain was the classic example, even though I had not travelled all over the world in order to make a comparison.

I visited Hyde Park where different groups of people gathered to expound their varied political and religious philosophies. I was surprised to see African speakers up on their stands side by side with white men, speaking their minds vigorously and without fear. Speakers there were saying just what they wanted to say and drawing crowds to listen to them.

My six weeks in England were wonderful I visited the BBC, St James's Park, the British Museum, the Haymarket, and Madame Tussaud's. I asked someone to take me to No. 10 Downing Street to see where the authority comes from. Most of the students were very busy, and had it not been for the kind attention of a blonde Scottish secretary at the hostel I would never have seen London. I was very grateful to her, and even now look back on her friendliness to me as the high point of the trip. She did much to open my eyes to the fair-mindedness and friendliness of liberal British people. I think what impressed me most in my rambling around was that Nehru and Gandhi were among the famous ones at Madame

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Tussaud's. I spent most of my time reading and walking by myself.

In my history classes over in Kenya I had learnt how Great Britain was able to dominate the world, particularly by her navy, from the time of the Spanish Armada up to 1945. It was really incredible to me that such a tiny country could have done all this. Now that I was there, I started observing for myself the underlying causes that generated the British people's success. I attributed this success, perhaps too hastily, to their stable government, unity of purpose, scientific achievement, diplomacy, and a grim, supreme tenacity.

On March 13th, I obtained a United States visitor's visa, No. 0900/55939/257 or 1-94 No. V-104333 from the American Consul in London. I also received \$40 from Mr Graham for pocket money while in London. On April 17th, I received a letter from the Cunard White Star Company Ltd, of London, telling me that my fare from England to the United States had already been paid by Mr Graham, and that I should go to their office to collect the ticket. I was very happy.

On April 22nd, I left London by train for Liverpool to embark for the United States. That evening the M.V. *Britannic* left for Cobh in Ireland where Irish passengers were to embark. I wanted to see Ireland very much. I had heard of 'Erin go Bragh' many times in the past and it made me feel that some day the Kenya Africans, too, may like to say 'Kenya go Bragh'!

Our voyage from Cobh to New York was also very pleasant. There were a lot of beautiful American girls from Boston and California. Some of them were curious about why I was going to America and they asked me many questions about my country. I was a bit ill at ease when talking to them. Partly because I wasn't too sure about the correctness of my English. But I gradually gained self-confidence.

I recalled what I had learnt over in Kenya in my geography and history classes about people like Christopher Columbus who had sailed the Atlantic Ocean to the New World. Now that I was doing the same I felt like a human document. I was being a part of history myself, not just reading about it. I was extremely happy about it.

On April 30th, I arrived at New York. I did not know anybody there. However, Njonjo had given me an address of an American girl whom he met in London, a lady belonging to a well-to-do white family who had become interested in the welfare of Africans when she was visiting London. At the port I found that Mr Graham had sent me \$20 through the American Express Company Inc. and Professor Drake had sent me \$35 through the Western Union.

So after our passports were examined and we had gone through the customs I decided to take a taxi to the address which Njonjo had given to me. Unfortunately, the girl was not in. I asked the superintendent of the building, a white man, whether he knew when she would come back. He said that he did not have any idea. I insisted that he open her apartment for me so that I could leave my suitcase inside it. He said that he could not do that but if I wanted, I could stay in the lounge until she came. I remained there from 7.47 p.m. to 11 p.m. that night. The girl did not come! The superintendent tried to call various hotels and the Y.M.C.A. for me without success. Finally, he suggested that he take me to the police station and said that the police authorities could get me a place to sleep for the night. We set off for the police station. I did not feel frightened at mention of the police. I just assumed that this was a New York custom. I also trusted the superintendent. On our arrival we were informed that there was no place for me to stay that night. The police suggested two other places and we went to both of them, unsuccessfully.

By this time the superintendent was getting tired. But he was very friendly to me. He paid the taxi driver who was driving us to all these places and bought me two packets of Chesterfield cigarettes. He was a German immigrant who had been there twenty-five years. By this time, having met friendly white people in London and on the boat, I was not surprised at receiving kindness from him.

Since I did not know anybody in New York, I had already decided to leave immediately for Chicago. My chief reason in trying to contact the girl was that she might advance me enough money for my fare to Chicago, since the money Professor Drake had sent to me could not be obtained from the

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Western Union office until the next day. I had less than \$20 and it was running out, pretty fast!

Finally, the superintendent and I returned to the building. We found that she had come back. The superintendent introduced me to her. She remembered Njonjo immediately. She and I thanked the superintendent for the trouble which he had taken.

After the girl had asked me about Njonjo, London, and my voyage from Liverpool to New York, and where I was going to attend college, she made some coffee for me. She also got in touch with her boy friend and asked him to come to her place in his car so that they could make arrangements for my accommodation until the following day when I would leave New York for Chicago.

In a few minutes, he arrived and she introduced me to him. He was a very pleasant psychology student at New York University. All of us drove to his apartment where I was accommodated nicely until the following morning.

On Monday, both of them drove me around New York City. I saw many Negroes on the road. When we drove through Harlem I was surprised to see so many. I wanted to stop and go over to one of them and say: 'I am your brother.' I was naive. I felt I'd like to start telling them about their brothers in Kenya. But I did not want to bother my friends to stop. Having seen them, I felt that I was not alone now, that if I got lost I could go to them and could get what I wanted. But it was not till I got to Chicago that I had my first chance to talk to an American Negro. I enjoyed seeing New York City very much.

In the evening, my friends took me to the station and offered to pay my fare to Chicago with a hope that Professor Drake would refund it. I accepted happily and thanked them very much for their kind generosity.

On the following day, I arrived at Chicago, where Professor Drake was waiting. Immediately I said to myself: 'He looks like a Kikuyu from the Fort Hall District in Kenya or like a Chagga from Moshi near Kilimanjaro in Tanganyika.' Both of us were very happy to see each other. I thought that if we were in Black Man's World over in Kenya, perhaps we could

have strangled a spotless fat ram to celebrate the occasion! I thanked Ngai.

From the station, Professor Drake took me to a cafeteria for late lunch. He asked about my experiences in Kenya, India, England, and New York. He was very kind to me.

After lunch, he took me to a near-by Y.M.C.A. where I was to remain until the following morning when he would get me proper accommodation.

At six o'clock, both Professor St Clair Drake and Mr McCray came to see me. This was my first meeting with Mr McCray, a man who had been corresponding with me for a long time. I had seen his picture, so I knew how he looked. It was like meeting an old friend. He was typically African in colour and features. I found him very interesting and widely read—especially on African and West Indian affairs. After two hours of tremendous discussion, both gentlemen left me.

On the following morning, Professor Drake came to the Y.M.C.A. and I checked out for a small, nice apartment in Maryland Avenue. He helped me to put things in order, after which he took me down town to Roosevelt University. There he introduced me to various professors and students. About forty per cent of the students were Jewish, one-fifth Negro, and many other races were also represented. Everyone was very friendly to me. Some students kept on telling me: 'Mugo, now that you are here, you should study economics and political science.' But, one student from Kansas said: 'No, he should think of studying geology or engineering, they need this kind of training over in Africa at the present time, don't they?' I told them: 'We will see.'

Professor Drake took me around to various departments and finally to his own Sociology Department where he gave me a small section of his office as my study room. He also brought me various books on politics, economics, philosophy, history, English, anthropology, and sociology. To me, everything was strange, exciting, and confusing. Professor Drake helped me to get along very well. He also taught me how to enunciate various words and names in the American way so that I could be understood. He really paid as much attention

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Everything was all right. From that time on, I was always leery about kissing, whether a girl had false teeth or not.

The Americans like kissing very much, and in many cases their way of kissing looks like birds trying to pull each other's beaks!

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Chike's School Days

Sarah's last child was a boy, and his birth brought great joy to the house of his father, Amos. The child received three names at his baptism—John, Chike, Obiajulu. The last name means "the mind at last is at rest." Anyone hearing this name knew at once that its owner was either an only child or an only son. Chike was an only son. His parents had had five daughters before him.

Like his sisters Chike was brought up "in the ways of the white man," which meant the opposite of traditional. Amos had many years before bought a tiny bell with which he summoned his family to prayers and hymn-singing first thing in the morning and last thing at night. This was one of the ways of the white man. Sarah taught her children not to eat in their neighbours' houses because "they offered their food to idols." And thus she set herself against the age-old custom which regarded children as the common responsibility of all so that, no matter what the

CHINUA ACHEBE
GIRLS AT WAR + OTHER STORIES

GIRLS AT WAR AND OTHER STORIES

raised applause from his class by demolishing a boy's excuse for lateness with unanswerable erudition. He had said: "Procrastination is a lazy man's apology." The teacher's erudition showed itself in every subject he taught. His nature study lessons were memorable. Chike would always remember the lesson on the methods of seed dispersal. According to teacher, there were five methods: by man, by animals, by water, by wind, and by explosive mechanism. Even those pupils who forgot all the other methods remembered "explosive mechanism."

Chike was naturally impressed by teacher's explosive vocabulary. But the fairyland quality which words had for him was of a different kind. The first sentences in his *New Method Reader* were simple enough and yet they filled him with a vague exultation: "Once there was a wizard. He lived in Africa. He went to China to get a lamp." Chike read it over and over again at home and then made a song of it. It was a meaningless song. "Periwinkles" got into it, and also "Damascus." But it was like a window through which he saw in the distance a strange, magical new world. And he was happy.

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TWO

Of all the different kinds of work my father engaged in, none fascinated me so much as his skill with gold. No other occupation was so noble, no other needed such a delicate touch. And then, every time he worked in gold it was like a festival—indeed it *was* a festival—that broke the monotony of ordinary working days.

So, if a woman, accompanied by a go-between, crossed the threshold of the workshop, I followed her in at once. I knew what she wanted: she had brought some gold, and had come to ask my father to transform it into a trinket. She had collected it in the placers of Siguiiri where, crouching over the

river for months on end, she had patiently extracted grains of gold from the mud.

These women never came alone. They knew my father had other things to do than make trinkets. And even when he had the time, they knew they were not the first to ask a favor of him, and that, consequently, they would not be served before others.

Generally they required the trinket for a certain date, for the festival of Ramadan or the Tabaski or some other family ceremony or dance.

Therefore, to enhance their chances of being served quickly and to more easily persuade my father to interrupt the work before him, they used to request the services of an official praise-singer, a go-between, arranging in advance the fee they were to pay him for his good offices.

The go-between installed himself in the workshop, tuned up his *cora*, which is our harp, and began to sing my father's praises. This was always a great event for me. I heard recalled the lofty deeds of my father's ancestors and their names from the earliest times. As the couplets were reeled off it was like watching the growth of a great genealogical tree that spread its branches far and wide and flourished its boughs and twigs before my mind's eye. The harp played an accompaniment to this vast utterance of names, expanding it with notes that were now soft, now shrill.

I could sense my father's vanity being inflamed, and I already knew that after having sipped this milk-and-honey he would lend a favorable ear to the woman's request. But I was not alone in my knowledge. The woman also had seen my father's eyes gleaming with contented pride. She held out

her grains of gold as if the whole matter were settled. My father took up his scales and weighed the gold.

"What sort of trinket do you want?" he would ask.

"I want. . . ."

And then the woman would not know any longer exactly what she wanted because desire kept making her change her mind, and because she would have liked all the trinkets at once. But it would have taken a pile of gold much larger than she had brought to satisfy her whim, and from then on her chief purpose in life was to get hold of it as soon as she could.

"When do you want it?"

Always the answer was that the trinket was needed for an occasion in the near future.

"So! You are in that much of a hurry? Where do you think I shall find the time?"

"I am in a great hurry, I assure you."

"I have never seen a woman eager to deck herself out who wasn't in a great hurry! Good! I shall arrange my time to suit you. Are you satisfied?"

He would take the clay pot that was kept specially for smelting gold, and would pour the grains into it. He would then cover the gold with powdered charcoal, a charcoal he prepared by using plant juices of exceptional purity. Finally, he would place a large lump of the same kind of charcoal over the pot.

As soon as she saw that the work had been duly undertaken, the woman, now quite satisfied, would return to her household tasks, leaving her go-between to carry on with the praise-singing which had already proved so advantageous.

At a sign from my father the apprentices began working two sheepskin bellows. The skins were on the floor, on opposite sides of the forge, connected to it by earthen pipes. While the work was in progress the apprentices sat in front of the bellows with crossed legs. That is, the younger of the two sat, for the elder was sometimes allowed to assist. But the younger—this time it was Sidafa—was only permitted to work the bellows and watch while waiting his turn for promotion to less rudimentary tasks. First one and then the other worked hard at the bellows: the flame in the forge rose higher and became a living thing, a genie implacable and full of life.

Then my father lifted the clay pot with his long tongs and placed it on the flame.

Immediately all activity in the workshop almost came to a halt. During the whole time that the gold was being smelted, neither copper nor aluminum could be worked nearby, lest some particle of these base metals fall into the container which held the gold. Only steel could be worked on such occasions, but the men, whose task that was, hurried to finish what they were doing, or left it abruptly to join the apprentices gathered around the forge. There were so many, and they crowded so around my father, that I, the smallest person present, had to come near the forge in order not to lose track of what was going on.

If he felt he had inadequate working space, my father had the apprentices stand well away from him. He merely raised his hand in a simple gesture: at that particular moment he never uttered a word, and no one else would: no one was allowed to utter a word. Even the go-between's voice was no longer raised in song. The silence was broken only by the

panting of the bellows and the faint hissing of the gold. But if my father never actually spoke, I know that he was forming words in his mind. I could tell from his lips, which kept moving, while, bending over the pot, he stirred the gold and charcoal with a bit of wood that kept bursting into flame and had constantly to be replaced by a fresh one.

What words did my father utter? I do not know. At least I am not certain what they were. No one ever told me. But could they have been anything but incantations? On these occasions was he not invoking the genies of fire and gold, of fire and wind, of wind blown by the blast-pipes of the forge, of fire born of wind, of gold married to fire? Was it not their assistance, their friendship, their espousal that he besought? Yes. Almost certainly he was invoking these genies, all of whom are equally indispensable for smelting gold.

The operation going on before my eyes was certainly the smelting of gold, yet something more than that: a magical operation that the guiding spirits could regard with favor or disfavor. That is why, all around my father, there was absolute silence and anxious expectancy. Though only a child, I knew there could be no craft greater than the goldsmith's. I expected a ceremony; I had come to be present at a ceremony; and it actually was one, though very protracted. I was still too young to understand why, but I had an inkling as I watched the almost religious concentration of those who followed the mixing process in the clay pot.

When finally the gold began to melt I could have shouted aloud—and perhaps we all would have if we had not been forbidden to make a sound. I trembled, and so did everyone else watching my father stir the mixture—it was still a heavy

paste—in which the charcoal was gradually consumed. The next stage followed swiftly. The gold now had the fluidity of water. The genies had smiled on the operation!

"Bring me the brick!" my father would order, thus lifting the ban that until then had silenced us.

The brick, which an apprentice would place beside the fire, was hollowed out, generously greased with Galam butter. My father would take the pot off the fire and tilt it carefully, while I would watch the gold flow into the brick, flow like liquid fire. True, it was only a very sparse trickle of fire, but how vivid, how brilliant! As the gold flowed into the brick, the grease sputtered and flamed and emitted a thick smoke that caught in the throat and stung the eyes, leaving us all weeping and coughing.

But there were times when it seemed to me that my father ought to turn this task over to one of his assistants. They were experienced, had assisted him hundreds of times, and could certainly have performed the work well. But my father's lips moved and those inaudible, secret words, those incantations he addressed to one we could not see or hear, was the essential part. Calling on the genies of fire, of wind, of gold and exorcising the evil spirits—this was a knowledge he alone possessed.

By now the gold had been cooled in the hollow of the brick, and my father began to hammer and stretch it. This was the moment when his work as a goldsmith really began. I noticed that before embarking on it he never failed to stroke the little snake stealthily as it lay coiled up under the sheepskin. I can only assume that this was his way of gathering

strength for what remained to be done, the most trying part of his task.

But was it not extraordinary and miraculous that on these occasions the little black snake was always coiled under the sheepskin? He was not always there. He did not visit my father every day. But he was always present whenever there was gold to be worked. His presence was no surprise to me. After that evening when my father had spoken of the guiding spirit of his race I was no longer astonished. The snake was there intentionally. He knew what the future held. Did he tell my father? I think that he most certainly did. Did he tell him everything? I have another reason for believing firmly that he did.

The craftsman who works in gold must first of all purify himself. That is, he must wash himself all over and, of course, abstain from all sexual commerce during the whole time. Great respecter of ceremony as he was, it would have been impossible for my father to ignore these rules. Now, I never saw him make these preparations. I saw him address himself to his work without any apparent preliminaries. From that moment it was obvious that, forewarned in a dream by his black guiding spirit of the task which awaited him in the morning, my father must have prepared for it as soon as he arose, entering his workshop in a state of purity, his body smeared with the secret potions hidden in his numerous pots of magical substances; or perhaps he always came into his workshop in a state of ritual purity. I am not trying to make him out a better man than he was—he was a man and had his share of human frailties—but he was always uncompromising in his respect for ritual observance.

The woman for whom the trinket was being made, and who had come often to see how the work was progressing, would arrive for the final time, not wanting to miss a moment of this spectacle—as marvelous to her as to us—when the gold wire, which my father had succeeded in drawing out from the mass of molten gold and charcoal, was transformed into a trinket.

There she would be. Her eyes would devour the fragile gold wire, following it in its tranquil and regular spiral around the little slab of metal which supported it. My father would catch a glimpse of her and I would see him slowly beginning to smile. Her avid attention delighted him.

"Are you trembling?" he would ask.

"Am I trembling?"

And we would all burst out laughing at her. For she would be trembling! She would be trembling with covetousness for the spiral pyramid in which my father would be inserting, among the convolutions, tiny grains of gold. When he had finally finished by crowning the pyramid with a heavier grain, she would dance in delight.

No one—no one at all—would be more enchanted than she as my father slowly turned the trinket back and forth between his fingers to display its perfection. Not even the praise-singer whose business it was to register excitement would be more excited than she. Throughout this metamorphosis he did not stop speaking faster and ever faster, increasing his tempo, accelerating his praises and flatteries as the trinket took shape, shouting to the skies my father's skill.

For the praise-singer took a curious part—I should say rather that it was direct and effective—in the work. He was drunk with the joy of creation. He shouted aloud in joy. He

plucked his *cora* like a man inspired. He sweated as if he were the trinket-maker, as if he were my father, as if the trinket were his creation. He was no longer a hired censer-bearer, a man whose services anyone could rent. He was a man who created his song out of some deep inner necessity. And when my father, after having soldered the large grain of gold that crowned the summit, held out his work to be admired, the praise-singer would no longer be able to contain himself. He would begin to intone the *douga*, the great chant which is sung only for celebrated men and which is danced for them alone.

But the *douga* is a formidable chant, a provocative chant, a chant which the praise-singer dared not sing, and which the man for whom it is sung dared not dance before certain precautions had been taken. My father had taken them as soon as he woke, since he had been warned in a dream. The praise-singer had taken them when he concluded his arrangements with the woman. Like my father he had smeared his body with magic substances and had made himself invulnerable to the evil genies whom the *douga* inevitably set free; these potions made him invulnerable also to rival praise-singers, perhaps jealous of him, who awaited only this song and the exaltation and loss of control which attended it, in order to begin casting their spells.

At the first notes of the *douga* my father would arise and emit a cry in which happiness and triumph were equally mingled; and brandishing in his right hand the hammer that was the symbol of his profession and in his left a ram's horn filled with magic substances, he would dance the glorious dance.

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No sooner had he finished, than workmen and apprentices, friends and customers in their turn, not forgetting the woman for whom the trinket had been created, would flock around him, congratulating him, showering praises on him and complimenting the praise-singer at the same time. The latter found himself laden with gifts—almost his only means of support, for the praise-singer leads a wandering life after the fashion of the troubadours of old. Aglow with dancing and the praises he had received, my father would offer everyone cola nuts, that small change of Guinean courtesy.

Now all that remained to be done was to redden the trinket in a little water to which chlorine and sea salt had been added. I was at liberty to leave. The festival was over! But often as I came out of the workshop my mother would be in the court, pounding millet or rice, and she would call to me:

"Where have you been?" although she knew perfectly well where I had been.

"In the workshop."

"Of course. Your father was smelting gold. Gold! Always gold!"

And she would beat the millet or rice furiously with her pestle.

"Your father is ruining his health!"

"He danced the *douga*."

"The *douga*! The *douga* won't keep him from ruining his eyes. As for you, you would be better off playing in the courtyard instead of breathing dust and smoke in the workshop."

My mother did not like my father to work in gold. She knew how dangerous it was: a trinket-maker empties his lungs blowing on the blow-pipe and his eyes suffer from the

fire. Perhaps they suffer even more from the microscopic precision which the work requires. And even if there had been no such objections involved, my mother would scarcely have relished this work. She was suspicious of it, for gold can not be smelted without the use of other metals, and my mother thought it was not entirely honest to put aside for one's own use the gold which the alloy had displaced. However, this was a custom generally known, and one which she herself had accepted when she took cotton to be woven and received back only a piece of cotton cloth half the weight of the original bundle.

KENJO
enjo Jumbam

file

4: Banso.

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EDUCATION: Government Teacher
Training College, Kumba.
College of Arts and Science,
Bambili (1962-1964).
University of Yaoundé
(1970-1972).
University of Leeds, England
(1972-1973).

QUALIFICATIONS: BA, M.Lit.

OCCUPATION: Centre National pour
L'Education, Yaoundé.
Formerly teacher in Bafia and
Mbengwi.

PUBLICATIONS: *Lukong and the Leopard*
(Heinemann)
The White Man of God
(Heinemann)
Do Me I Do You (Mould
No. 6)



Interview

INTERVIEWER: When did you first write?

JUMBAM: I started writing all sorts of things long ago. In 1962/63 I was the editor of a student newspaper at my secondary school, and I have been writing in one form or another ever since for my own enjoyment without any real intention to publish.

INTERVIEWER: You have a long history of writing and teaching. How have you blended these interests together?

JUMBAM: At the time of unification, the focus was changing from Nigeria to Cameroon in educational materials. I was a history/geography teacher and had to teach without available materials. So, I wrote my own geography and history textbooks. Later, I went to teach in Bafia, where I taught English in a francophone area. The book from which I was to teach was not available, so I wrote *Lukong and the Leopard*

INTERVIEWER: Did you try to inspire your students to write?

JUMBAM: I used to teach creative writing to children of 13-14 years in Mbengwi, and tried to get them interested in it. I noticed a lack of reading materials for these children, and so I wrote some things myself. Around 1978 I began writing my novel *The White Man of God* after I moved to Yaoundé. I still believe in the importance of developing creative writing skills in school children and want to do more about it.

INTERVIEWER: Is your novel, *The White Man of God*, somewhat autobiographical?

JUMBAM: No, it isn't really, though people presume it is. People ask me about certain persons or events they think they recognise from my original area and try to identify with the book.

INTERVIEWER: Did you write the novel with a particular audience in mind?

JUMBAM: My audience was to be the average Cameroonian who

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has left primary school or may have been through secondary school. The chapters are almost meant to be short stories in themselves. Because some people may read it over a long period of time, I want them to be able to pick it up at any time and continue from where they have left off.

INTERVIEWER: From what source do most of your ideas come in your writing?

AMBAM: I have been teaching all my life - I draw ideas from where I grew up, and relate them to my teaching and writing.

Summary of *The White Man of God*

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The central character in this novel is a young boy named Tansa who lives in a village near Bamenda. The story follows his family and friends through both small and significant events of their daily lives. The arrival of missionaries in the village causes conflict over what people think of 'The White man of God.' Some people accept it and others resent it. A picture of how people are affected on both sides is presented.

The climax occurs when the parish priest attacks the Chief juju only to discover that the man behind the mask is his head catechist. The treatment of the character of the aging grandmother Yaya and her difficulty to understand the whiteman's God and their theories on salvation and hell is especially well done.

The White Man of God: Chapter 8

The sun was already very hot. The men and the women sat down in groups drinking palm wine and talking noisily. The boys and girls ran up and down covering one another with wild flowers cut from the nearby bushes. Some of the girls stood in small groups playing a kind of game in which two girls clapped their hands and danced dextrously lifting

one foot and then the other to a regular beat. More people were still coming and the whole place was already humming like a market.

Then there was a gunshot from Wainkar and that set the whole place in a commotion. The people emptied their cups hurriedly and put them away. The women who had young children ran and took them by the hand. The catechist took the Samba drum and gave it a rippling beat that set all hearts thumping. Just as the drumming stopped a woman piped up a shrill 'Hiii-i-i-i-i' which set one's nerves on edge.

'Stand in your groups! Everyone to his group!' Pa Matiu shouted.

The women stood together in a group. The men stood on either side of the big road and held their guns in readiness to fire. The boys and girls ran towards Wainkar. Pa Matiu called them back but in the general excitement not a single child heeded his call. Then the white man of God appeared riding on a two-wheeled iron instrument which he held by the ears. It passed out gas from an open anus at regular continuous intervals, pom-pom-pom-pom. The smell of the gas was nauseating to some people but I think I liked it. He slowed down when he sighted the crowd and we ran down on either side of him.

When he came to the crowd he stopped the wheels from passing out gas and dismounted. Then Pa Matiu walked up to him and bowed before him and spoke to him reverently in the white man's language. The white man of God spoke through his nose and Pa Matiu told everybody to kneel down. We all did so and the white man of God held his hands together as in prayer, then he lifted up his right hand, cut the air before him, first downward, then left and right murmuring some words as he did so. At the end we all said 'Amen'.

No sooner had we stood up than there exploded a continuous thunderous boom of gunshots that deafened one's ears, and smoke filled the air. Dogs were barking and fowls were cackling and children were crying all around, from Wainkar to Yaikar and from Rombi even up to Vekovi. The booming of the gunshots was quickly succeeded by the rippling beat of the Samba drum and the clang-clang

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sound of the dancers' instruments. The white man of God seemed rooted to the spot.

As the Samba instruments died out, the women came in with a softer, sweeter tone which was taken up by everybody. They sang and clapped their hands and march-danced forward to the rhythm of the song. The white man of God called for Pa Matiu and whispered something to him, and Pa Matiu immediately appointed four men to push the wheels to the Mission. Then they all joined the procession and I saw the white man of God clapping his hands too.

Lukar's mother led the choir. She sang each verse of the song and the congregation sang the chorus which was:

Ver sha'tia ver sta'tia dji awa yua
Ver sha'tia ver sha'tia dji awa yua
Shikumkumko shikumkumko shinon she ndzev
Shikumkumko shikumkumko shinon she ndzev
Yibei bong ker, yibei bong ker wo awiya ver wong.
(Our greetings our greetings you're welcome.
Our greetings our greetings you're welcome.
Shikumkumko shikumkumko the river bird
Shikumkumko shikumkumko the river bird
We are blessed that you're coming to our country).

I saw Yaya and she smiled at me and I went to her.

'Where is the child?' she asked.

'He is with Maria.'

'I should have taken him home with me.'

'Are you not going to the Mission?'

'No, I have seen enough.'

'We shall be coming later,' I said and followed the procession.

Pushing the machine was not as easy as it first appeared to be. I and a group of boys crowded round it and watched it curiously. The men pushing it had difficulty in steadying it on the road. Sometimes it turned its head towards the bush and would go there. At other times it moved so fast that two people had to pull it backwards to check the speed. This happened when they were descending a slope. We wanted to hear it make the pom-pom-pom noise but it did not. Some boys said that it was better than a car

because if it got to a broken bridge it jumped across the river to the other side.

There were several groups of dancers at the Mission. The white man of God went round from group to group and danced. Each group roared its applause when he went to it and we followed him from group to group. When he had gone round all the groups he went to his house to rest.

The cooks and the stewards were going from the kitchen to the house and back again. They were very neatly dressed and walked smartly. They pulled off their shoes before entering the house and put them on when going back into the kitchen.

The scent emanating from the kitchen was sweet. We hung around enjoying it. The cook called us and gave us vessels to fetch him some water. It was some distance to the spring but we all rushed there, glad that we were carrying water for the white man of God. When we came back the cook fried some eggs and gave them to us. There were baskets upon baskets of eggs in the house.

Just then the white man of God called for the cook and he answered, 'Fadda'. He spoke to the cook and each time the cook answered, 'Yes, Fadda'. We were glad to know the name of the white man of God. He was called 'fadda'. This was great news and we ran to the field to tell our friends.

Dances continued. Men and women sat in small groups drinking palm wine. Food was served and we ate. There was feasting and making merry everywhere in the Mission. There were pagans too dancing and feasting with us. But Yaya was not there. She had gone back home.

The following morning Lukar came and told me that those who were going to receive their first Holy Communion on Easter day were expected to go to confession on Thursday. I had known this all along but had nursed a secret fear. What was I going to confess? Mama was still in Shisong and I was afraid to ask Papa what sins I had committed besides taking part in a pagan sacrifice. I remembered that I beat Beri, my sister, that I had slept in church and, yes, that I told a lie to my father one day. I kept on repeating these to myself so that I might not forget any of my sins.

Feliy was taken to work as one of Fadda's boys. Feliy was one of our friends. He had been in Bakossi with his father and he used to tell us stories of that part of the world. His father was rich and bought him several shirts and short trousers and he was always neat. He was the only one in Nkar who had a tennis ball and we loved playing with it. I told Feliy on Wednesday that I was afraid to confess my sins because, as they said, Fadda could become angry suddenly and either beat or curse someone.

'But he does not understand our language,' Feliy said.

'Really!'

'Yes.'

'But he will know what I am saying.'

'How will he?'

'He has the power to.'

'No, he does not understand me when I speak.'

'But in the confessional he may.'

'I don't know about that.'

'Tell me, is he as wild as they say?'

'I have not been with him long enough to know that.'

'What do the cooks say?'

'I have never asked them.'

'Can you find that out for me before tomorrow?'

'There's no need to fear.'

'Sure?'

'Yes.'

I was going to the Mission for confession when I met Dubila coming back already. She was carrying her baby on her back. I was frightened when I saw her because she was not looking happy.

'Dubila, am I late?'

'No, they are still talking with those to be baptized tomorrow. They want me to call Wirsy's father. Can you wait for me?'

Wirsy was her first son. We went together to her house. Fortunately her husband was in. Dubila stood in front of the door and said, 'They've asked me to call you.'

'Are you speaking to me?' Fonjo asked.

'Yes.'

'What are you saying?'

'They say you should come.'

'Who says I should come?'

'The white man of God.'

'Who'

She did not answer.

'When did the white man of God know me?'

'They want you now please.'

'Ngiri!' he exclaimed, 'what does he want me for?'

'You better come and ask him.'

'You, Dubila, you'll bring trouble to this compound one day. Do you hear what I am saying? Why do you have to link me with the white man of God? Didn't I tell you to stop going there? Ah, women who don't obey their husbands!'

She began to weep and I turned to go.

'Go and tell him I am coming,' her husband said.

Dubila caught up with me.

'What does the white man of God want Wirsy's father for?'

'He says he wants to ask him something before I am baptized.'

There was quite a crowd near Fadda's house. I could see his head through the window. Pa Matiu was standing near the door. It was ajar. Dubila came and went to the door.

'He says he is coming,' she said.

'Did you not tell him that it was the white man of God himself who wanted him?'

'I did.'

'Ah, there he comes.'

Fonjo mounted the steps to Fadda's door. He put his spears, bag and scabbard against the wall and folding his hands together close to his mouth with a slight bow forward he gently said: 'White man!' as a kind of greeting.

Fadda spoke and Pa Matiu interpreted.

'Do you want your wife baptized?'

'I have not stopped her.'

A moment's silence.

'He asks if she is your only wife.'

'Tell him I have two others. She's the third.'

A moment's silence.

'He says are you willing to put away the other wives and have only this one?'

Fonjo was puzzled.

'Tell him that I do not understand him.'

The question was repeated.

'Ask him if he wants a wife.'

'No, he is not the marrying type.'

'What do I get from baptism to put away two wives, two wives with children! If the white man of God wants a wife, there are lots of girls about. Why does he want to break up families! Put away two wives with children!'

'You have not understood what he is saying,' Pa Matiu said.

'Pa Matiu, be careful!' Fonjo said bringing his hand close to Pa Matiu's mouth. 'I say be careful! Not understood! Not understood what? Not understood that I should put away two wives with children for baptism?'

He took his spears and bent down to take his bag and scabbard. The white man of God shut the door with his foot and shut his window and bolted them.

'Leave here and go home,' Fonjo ordered his wife. Then turning to the crowd below he exclaimed, 'Incomprehensible!' and was silent for a moment. No one said a word. 'Whoever heard such a thing? Is this white man merely wicked! If he wanted a wife he could certainly have these young girls standing here. To tell a man to put away the mothers of his children! And you, Dubila, if you weren't carrying a baby, I would have given you the beating of your life.'

'Fonjo, listen to me. Hear me for one moment,' Pa Matiu said.

Fonjo turned round and his eyes were red. 'Pa Matiu, don't let me face you here. You are my elder, but don't provoke my anger any longer. I shall have to see the Fon about what you and this white man are planning. These are the things that spoil the country.'

In the evening Yaya came into Papa's house. I was sitting in with him roasting fresh maize. She pulled her seat close to the hearth.

'Give Yaya space to sit closer to the fire,' Papa said.

'I am all right here,' Yaya said.

'Get a cup for her, Tansa. I have some good wine.'

'Many thanks indeed,' Yaya said.

I brought the cup and poured wine into it for Yaya.

'I have just come from Mborn,' she said. 'I was in Fonjo's house and saw a scene and heard a story. Fonjo's two wives might have killed the third had Fonjo himself not been there and had Dubila not used her baby to shield her.'

'What was it all about?'

'The other two wives say she was asking their husband to put them away and keep only her. And when women begin a thing like that it never ends. There will always be trouble in that house from now on.'

'Why did Dubila say that anyway?'

'It is your church. They say she must do that if she is to be baptized. This is what we have always said about this new worship. Do you see what it is doing? In Meluv it has divided children of one womb even when they all go to church. Some say they belong to this church and others to that one. And those of this church won't talk to those of that one. What sort of a thing is this? And when I say that there are many gods they want to kill me for it and yet they worship in rival churches. What this foreign god will bring to this country is still hidden. It is like a pregnant woman. No man can say what child it will be until it comes.'

'Yaya,' Papa said, 'we haven't had time to speak about this new form of worship yet. Now let me try to explain a few things. But I must tell you that it is not easy to make you understand in one day what I took more than three years to learn. Do you hear, Yaya?'

'I am listening.'

'The most important truths are these. One: there is only one God who made the world and everything in it. Two: he sent his Son to teach the world how to worship him and it is this new form of worship. Three: his Son taught that a man must love God above all things and love his neighbour as himself. I have studied all these things and have found that they are good and I believe them. I and the mother of my children and the children themselves.'

'Why these different churches and the hatred between the believers if they all worship one God?'

'Well, they differ in the ways of worship.'

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'And what did his Son teach?'

'Well, some people want to change things to suit themselves.'

'And why do you hate them for it? I should think the case is between them and their god.'

'You don't want to associate with one who does the wrong thing or he will lead you the wrong way.'

'I shouldn't mind what you believe about God. But what you say that God will put some people in a burning fire, and let them burn there and never die, that has not yet settled in my mind.'

'It is only those who hate God that will be so punished.'

'How does a man hate God? No man does.'

'What about those who break his laws?'

'What laws of God do people break?'

'Liars, thieves, murderers and other people who do wicked things. Do you not think they deserve punishment?'

'Even these people still don't hate God. They do the things God does not like but that's not the same as hating him. Up in Kinsjenam a thief stole four of Lukong's goats. When he came back to steal the fifth Lukong saw him and he began to run. Lukong hit him in the back with his spear and he fell down and cried, "O God I'm dead. O my God, O my God." But he was a thief.'

'What was he calling God for? God didn't ask him to steal.'

'He was calling God because God was his father; because he knew God would console him.'

'And do you believe God would console him?'

'Why not? He had been killed and that was punishment for his crime. You don't punish a man twice for one crime.'

'What about those who commit crimes and are not caught or known?'

'They suffer greatly for their crimes before they die. If they don't, God punishes them in the spirit world. That is why we have wicked spirits. Wicked men, witches and magicians communicate with them. But they don't suffer for ever. I don't believe God is that wicked.'

'You are saying that what his Son said of God is not

true.'

'Are you sure his Son said that his father will burn people alive and make them live for ever in flames?'

Questions

- 1 Give a character sketch of Mr Fonjo.
- 2 Show what is funny in the description of the White Man of God's motor cycle.
- 3 Why does Tansa secretly fear confession? What do you think of his sins?
- 4 How do the various characters react to the White Man of God and what he represents? What attitudes are revealed?
- 5 Discuss the conflict created between Yaya and her daughter because of the difference of their religious beliefs.
- 6 Why is Fonjo puzzled when Fadda asks him to put away two wives?
- 7 How does the author succeed in making Fadda appear to be other than human through his descriptive technique?
- 8 In what way does the author's style fit in the setting and characterization of the novel in this passage?

THE MARTYR

NGUGI WA THIONG'O

KENYA

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It is always easier to kill when there is a clear, strong sense of injustice and the enemy is seen as inhuman. It is disarming to see the enemy as being like ourselves. *The Martyr* is a man who wants to kill whites because he and his people have been oppressed, but he is also the servant of the woman he most wants to kill. As her servant he hates her, but he is also close enough to see that she is human.

When Mr and Mrs Garstone were murdered in their home by unknown gangsters, there was a lot of talk about it. It was all on the front pages of the daily papers and figured importantly in the Radio Newsreel. Perhaps this was so because they were the first European settlers to be killed in the increased wave of violence that had spread all over the country. The violence was said to have political motives. And wherever you went, in the marketplaces, in the Indian bazaars, in a remote African duka,¹ you were bound to hear something about the murder. There were a variety of accounts and interpretations.

Nowhere was the matter more thoroughly discussed than in a remote, lonely house built on a hill, which belonged, quite appropriately, to Mrs Hill. Her husband, an old veteran settler of the pioneering period, had died the previous year after an attack of malaria while on a visit to Uganda. Her only son and daughter were now getting their education at 'Home' — home being another name for England. Being one of the

¹ duka = village.

earliest settlers and owning a lot of land with big tea plantations sprawling right across the country, she was much respected by the others if not liked by all.

For some did not like what they considered her too 'liberal' attitude to the 'natives'. When Mrs Smiles and Mrs Hardy came into her house two days later to discuss the murder, they wore a look of sad triumph — sad because Europeans (not just Mr and Mrs Garstone) had been killed, and of triumph, because the essential depravity and ingratitude of the natives had been demonstrated beyond all doubt. No longer could Mrs Hill maintain that natives could be civilized if only they were handled in the right manner.

Mrs Smiles was a lean, middle-aged woman whose tough, determined nose and tight lips reminded one so vividly of a missionary. In a sense she was. Convinced that she and her kind formed an oasis of civilization in a wild country of savage people, she considered it almost her calling to keep on reminding the natives and anyone else of the fact, by her gait, talk and general bearing.

Mrs Hardy was of Boer descent and had early migrated into the country from South Africa. Having no opinions of her own about anything, she mostly found herself agreeing with any views that most approximated those of her husband and her race. For instance, on this day she found herself in agreement with whatever Mrs Smiles said. Mrs Hill stuck to her guns and maintained, as indeed she had always done, that the natives were obedient at heart and *all* you needed was to treat them kindly.

'That's all they need. *Treat them kindly*. They will take kindly to you. Look at my "boys". They all love me. They would do anything I ask them to!' That was her philosophy and it was shared by quite a number of the liberal, progressive type. Mrs Hill had done some liberal things for her 'boys'. Not only had she built some brick quarters (*brick*, mind you) but had also put up a school for the children. It did not matter if the school had not enough teachers or if the children learnt only half a day and worked in the plantations for the other half; it was more than most other settlers had the courage to do!

'It is horrible. Oh, a horrible act,' declared Mrs Smiles rather vehemently. Mrs Hardy agreed. Mrs Hill remained neutral.

'How could they do it? We've brought 'em civilization. We've stopped slavery and tribal wars. Were they not all leading savage miserable lives?' Mrs Smiles spoke with all her powers of oratory. Then she concluded with a sad shake of the head: 'But I've always said they'll never be civilized, simply can't take it.'

'We should show tolerance,' suggested Mrs Hill. Her tone spoke more of the missionary than Mrs Smiles's looks.

'Tolerant! Tolerant! How long shall we continue being tolerant? Who could have been more tolerant than the Garstones? Who more kind? And to think of all the squatters they maintained!'

'Well, it isn't the squatters who ...'

'Who did? Who did?'

'They should all be hanged!' suggested Mrs Hardy. There was conviction in her voice.

'And to think they were actually called from bed by their houseboy!' 'Indeed?'

'Yes. It was their houseboy who knocked at their door and urgently asked them to open. Said some people were after him —'

'Perhaps there —'

'No! It was all planned. All a trick. As soon as the door was opened, the gang rushed in. It's all in the paper.'

Mrs Hill looked away rather guiltily. She had not read her paper.

It was time for tea. She excused herself and went near the door and called out in a kind, shrill voice.

'Njoroge! Njoroge!'

Njoroge was her 'houseboy'. He was a tall, broad-shouldered man nearing middle age. He had been in the Hills' service for more than ten years. He wore green trousers, with a red clothband round the waist and a red fez on his head. He now appeared at the door and raised his eyebrows in inquiry — an action which with him accompanied the words, 'Yes, Memsahib?' or 'Ndio, Bwana.'

'Leta Chai.'

'Ndio, Memsahib!' and he vanished back after casting a quick glance round all the Memsahibs there assembled. The conversation which had been interrupted by Njoroge's appearance was now resumed.

'They look so innocent,' said Mrs Hardy.

'Yes. Quite the innocent flower but the serpent under it.' Mrs Smiles was acquainted with Shakespeare.

'Been with me for ten years or so. Very faithful. Likes me very much.'

Mrs Hill was defending her 'boy'.

'All the same I don't like him. I don't like his face.'

'The same with me.'

Tea was brought. They drank, still chatting about the death, the government's policy, and the political demagogues who were undesirable elements in this otherwise beautiful country. But Mrs Hill, maintained that these semi-illiterate demagogues who went to Britain and thought they had education did not know the true aspirations of their people. You could still win your 'boys' by being kind to them.

Nevertheless, when Mrs Smiles and Mrs Hardy had gone, she brooded over that murder and the conversation. She felt uneasy and for the first time noticed that she lived a bit too far from any help in case of an attack. The knowledge that she had a pistol was a comfort.

Supper was over. That ended Njoroge's day. He stepped out of the light into the countless shadows and then vanished into the darkness. He was following the footpath from Mrs Hill's house to the workers' quarters down the hill. He tried to whistle to dispel the silence and loneliness that hung around him. He could not. Instead he heard a bird cry, sharp, shrill. Strange thing for a bird to cry at night.

He stopped, stood stock-still. Below, he could perceive nothing. But behind him the immense silhouette of Memsahib's house — large, imposing — could be seen. He looked back intently, angrily. In his anger, he suddenly thought he was growing old.

'You. You. I've lived with you so long. And you've reduced me to this!' Njoroge wanted to shout to the house all this and many other

things that had long accumulated in his heart. The house would not respond. He felt foolish and moved on.

Again the bird cried. Twice!

'A warning to her,' Njoroge thought. And again his whole soul rose in anger — anger against those with a white skin, those foreign elements that had displaced the true sons of the land from their God-given place. Had God not promised Gekoyo all this land, he and his children, forever and ever? Now the land had been taken away.

He remembered his father, as he always did when these moments of anger and bitterness possessed him. He had died in the struggle — the struggle to rebuild the destroyed shrines. That was at the famous 1923 Nairobi Massacre when police fired on a people peacefully demonstrating for their rights. His father was among the people who died. Since then Njoroge had had to struggle for a living — seeking employment here and there on European farms. He had met many types — some harsh, some kind, but all dominating, giving him just what salary they thought fit for him. Then he had come to be employed by the Hills. It was a strange coincidence that he had come here. A big portion of the land now occupied by Mrs Hill was the land his father had shown him as belonging to the family. They had found the land occupied when his father and some of the others had temporarily retired to Muranga owing to famine. They had come back and *Ng'o!* the land was gone.

'Do you see that fig tree? Remember that land is yours. Be patient. Watch these Europeans. They will go and then you can claim the land.'

He was small then. After his father's death, Njoroge had forgotten this injunction. But when he coincidentally came here and saw the tree, he remembered. He knew it all — all by heart. He knew where every boundary went through.

Njoroge had never liked Mrs Hill. He had always resented her complacency in thinking she had done so much for the workers. He had worked with cruel types like Mrs Smiles and Mrs Hardy. But he always knew where he stood with such. But Mrs Hill! Her liberalism was almost smothering. Njoroge hated settlers. He hated above all what he thought was their hypocrisy and complacency. He knew that Mrs Hill was no exception. She was like all the others, only she loved paternalism. It convinced her she was better than the others. But she was worse. You did not know exactly where you stood with her.

All of a sudden, Njoroge shouted, 'I hate them! I hate them!' Then a grim satisfaction came over him. Tonight, anyway, Mrs Hill would die — pay for her own smug liberalism, her paternalism and pay for all the sins of her settler race. It would be one settler less.

He came to his own room. There was no smoke coming from all the other rooms belonging to the other workers. The lights had even gone out in many of them. Perhaps, some were already asleep or gone to the Native Reserve to drink beer. He lit the lantern and sat on the bed. It was a very small room. Sitting on the bed one could almost touch all the corners of the room if one stretched one's arms wide. Yet it was here, here, that he with two wives and a number of children had to live, had in fact lived for more than five years. So cramped! Yet Mrs Hill thought that she had done enough by just having the houses built with brick.

'Mzuri, sana, eh?' (very good, eh?) she was very fond of asking. And whenever she had visitors she brought them to the edge of the hill and pointed at the houses.

Again Njoroge smiled grimly to think how Mrs Hill would pay for all this self-congratulatory piety. He also knew that he had an axe to grind. He had to avenge the death of his father and strike a blow for the occupied family land. It was foresight on his part to have taken his wives and children back to the Reserve. They might else have been in the way and in any case he did not want to bring trouble to them should he be forced to run away after the act.

The other Ihii (Freedom Boys) would come at any time now. He would lead them to the house. Treacherous — yes! But how necessary.

The cry of the night bird, this time louder than ever, reached his ears. That was a bad omen. It always portended death — death for Mrs Hill. He thought of her. He remembered her. He had lived with Memsahib and Bwana for more than ten years. He knew that she had loved her husband. Of that he was sure. She almost died of grief when she had learnt of his death. In that moment her settlerism had been shorn off. In that naked moment, Njoroge had been able to pity her. Then the children! He had known them. He had seen them grow up like any other children. Almost like his own. They loved their parents, and Mrs Hill had always been so tender with them, so loving. He thought of them in England, wherever that was, fatherless and motherless.

And then he realized, too suddenly, that he could not do it. He could not tell how, but Mrs Hill had suddenly crystallized into a woman, a wife, somebody like Njeri or Wambui, and above all, a mother. He could not kill a woman. He could not kill a mother. He hated himself for this change. He felt agitated. He tried hard to put himself in the other condition, his former self and see her as just a settler. As a settler, it was easy. For Njoroge hated settlers and all Europeans. If only he could see her like this (as one among many white men or settlers) then he could do it. Without scruples. But he could not bring back the other self. Not now, anyway. He had never thought of her in these terms. Until today. And yet he knew she was the same, and would be the same tomorrow — a patronizing, complacent woman. It was then he knew that he was a divided man and perhaps would ever remain like that. For now it even seemed an impossible thing to snap just like that ten years of relationship, though to him they had been years of pain and shame. He prayed and wished there had never been injustices. Then there would never have been this rift — the rift between white and black. Then he would never have been put in this painful situation.

What was he to do now? Would he betray the 'Boys'? He sat there, irresolute, unable to decide on a course of action. If only he had not thought of her in human terms! That he hated settlers was quite clear in his mind. But to kill a mother of two seemed too painful a task for him to do in a free frame of mind.

He went out.

Darkness still covered him and he could see nothing clearly. The stars above seemed to be anxiously awaiting Njoroge's decision. Then, as if their cold stare was compelling him, he began to walk, walk back to Mrs

Hill's house. He had decided to save her. Then probably he would go to the forest. There, he would forever fight with a freer conscience. That seemed excellent. It would also serve as a propitiation for his betrayal of the other 'Boys'.

There was no time to lose. It was already late and the 'Boys' might come any time. So he ran with one purpose — to save the woman. At the road he heard footsteps. He stepped into the bush and lay still. He was certain that those were the 'Boys'. He waited breathlessly for the footsteps to die. Again he hated himself for this betrayal. But how could he fail to hearken to this other voice? He ran on when the footsteps had died. It was necessary to run, for if the 'Boys' discovered his betrayal he would surely meet death. But then he did not mind this. He only wanted to finish this other task first.

At last, sweating and panting, he reached Mrs Hill's house and knocked at the door, crying, 'Memsahib! Memsahib!'

Mrs Hill had not yet gone to bed. She had sat up, a multitude of thoughts crossing her mind. Ever since that afternoon's conversation with the other women, she had felt more and more uneasy. When Njoroge went and she was left alone she had gone to her safe and taken out her pistol, with which she was now toying. It was better to be prepared. It was unfortunate that her husband had died. He might have kept her company.

She sighed over and over again as she remembered her pioneering days. She and her husband and others had tamed the wilderness of this country and had developed a whole mass of unoccupied land. People like Njoroge now lived contented without a single worry about tribal wars. They had a lot to thank the Europeans for.

Yes she did not like those politicians who came to corrupt the otherwise obedient and hard-working men, especially when treated kindly. She did not like this murder of the Garstones. No! She did not like it. And when she remembered the fact that she was really alone, she thought it might be better for her to move down to Nairobi or Kinangop and stay with friends for a while. But what would she do with her boys? Leave them there? She wondered. She thought of Njoroge. A queer boy. Had he many wives? Had he a large family? It was surprising even to her to find that she had lived with him so long, yet had never thought of these things. This reflection shocked her a little. It was the first time she had ever thought of him as a man with a family. She had always seen him as a servant. Even now it seemed ridiculous to think of her houseboy as a father with a family. She sighed. This was an omission, something to be righted in future.

And then she heard a knock on the front door and a voice calling out 'Memsahib! Memsahib!'

It was Njoroge's voice. Her houseboy. Sweat broke out on her face. She could not even hear what the boy was saying for the circumstances of the Garstones' death came to her. This was her end. The end of the road. So Njoroge had led them here! She trembled and felt weak.

But suddenly, strength came back to her. She knew she was alone. She knew they would break in. No! She would die bravely. Holding her pistol more firmly in her hand, she opened the door and quickly fired.

Then a nausea came over her. She had killed a man for the first time. She felt weak and fell down crying, 'Come and kill me!' She did not know that she had in fact killed her saviour.

On the following day, it was all in the papers. That a single woman could fight a gang fifty strong was bravery unknown. And to think she had killed one too!

Mrs Smiles and Mrs Hardy were especially profuse in their congratulations.

'We told you they're all bad'

'They are all bad,' agreed Mrs Hardy. Mrs Hill kept quiet. The circumstances of Njoroge's death worried her. The more she thought about it, the more of a puzzle it was to her. She gazed still into space. Then she let out a slow enigmatic sigh.

'I don't know,' she said.

'Don't know?' Mrs Hardy asked.

'Yes. That's it. Inscrutable.' Mrs Smiles was triumphant. 'All of them should be whipped.'

'All of them should be whipped,' agreed Mrs Hardy.

QUESTIONS

1. Mrs Hill is thought by her friends to be too liberal in her attitude to natives and to her "boys". What does the author think of her attitude to Africans?
2. What resentments does Njoroge have against Mrs Hill? Why does he dislike her even more than he dislikes hard women like Mrs Smiles and Mrs Hardy?
3. Why did Njoroge suddenly decide not to kill Mrs Hill? You might compare his motive with the barber's in *Just Lather That's All*.
4. Why did Mrs Hill shoot Njoroge even though she had just realised for the first time that he was not a boy? You might compare this moment with the moment in *Bread* when the woman denounces the man as a thief even though she realizes he is starving.
5. You might compare the author's attitude to newspapers with the view of them in *Azikwelwa*.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o's The River Between

Some background on Kenya

Kenya is located in on the eastern coast of Africa and is bounded by Ethiopia and the Sudan on the north, Uganda on the west and Somalia and the Indian Ocean on the east. It covers an area of 224,961 square miles and has a population of 20,312,000 (census in 1985), making it one of the most populous countries in Africa with an average density of 90 persons / square mile. The capital city is Nairobi with Mombasa as another major city. A highlands region runs north to south down the western half of Kenya and is cut by the Great Rift Valley into two sections, Mau Escarpment and Aberdare Range. This valley is from 30-40 miles wide and 2,000- 3,000 feet lower than the surrounding country. There are 30-40 different ethnic groups found in Kenya with 3/4 of the population professing Christianity, 1/5 declaring animism (the belief that natural objects, natural phenomena, and the universe itself possess souls of consciousness) and the rest either Muslim or Hindu. There are more than 40 national languages found in Kenya and although English is the standard national language, its use is limited to upper, educated class. Kikuyu is spoken by four million of Kenyas's 20 million inhabitants. Luo is the next largest language group spoken by the Luo. With the possible exception of Kiswahili, few Kenyans can speak languages other than their own. Kiswahili is the language of a coastal people and is understood by approximately 60 per cent of the people.

A Brief History of Kenya

The first Europeans to get to the interior of Kenya were German agents of the Church Missionary Society. The British took control over from the Germans. The Kenyan African Union , the first national political party, was founded in 1944 to give the first African unofficial member of the Legislative Council support. The Africans demand for political independence grew more and more radical resulting in an armed conflict between the Africans and the colonialists. It was directed against the presence of Europeans in Kenya and was mainly

a response of the Kikuyu (Gikuyu). Thousands were killed and others were detained or restricted. This uprising was known as the Mau Mau Rebellion and a state of emergency was declared in on October 19, 1952 which lasted until December 1959. Political parties were banned until 1960. On December 12, 1963 Kenya declared independence and a year later became a republic with Jomo Kenyatta as its first president.

Ngugi himself

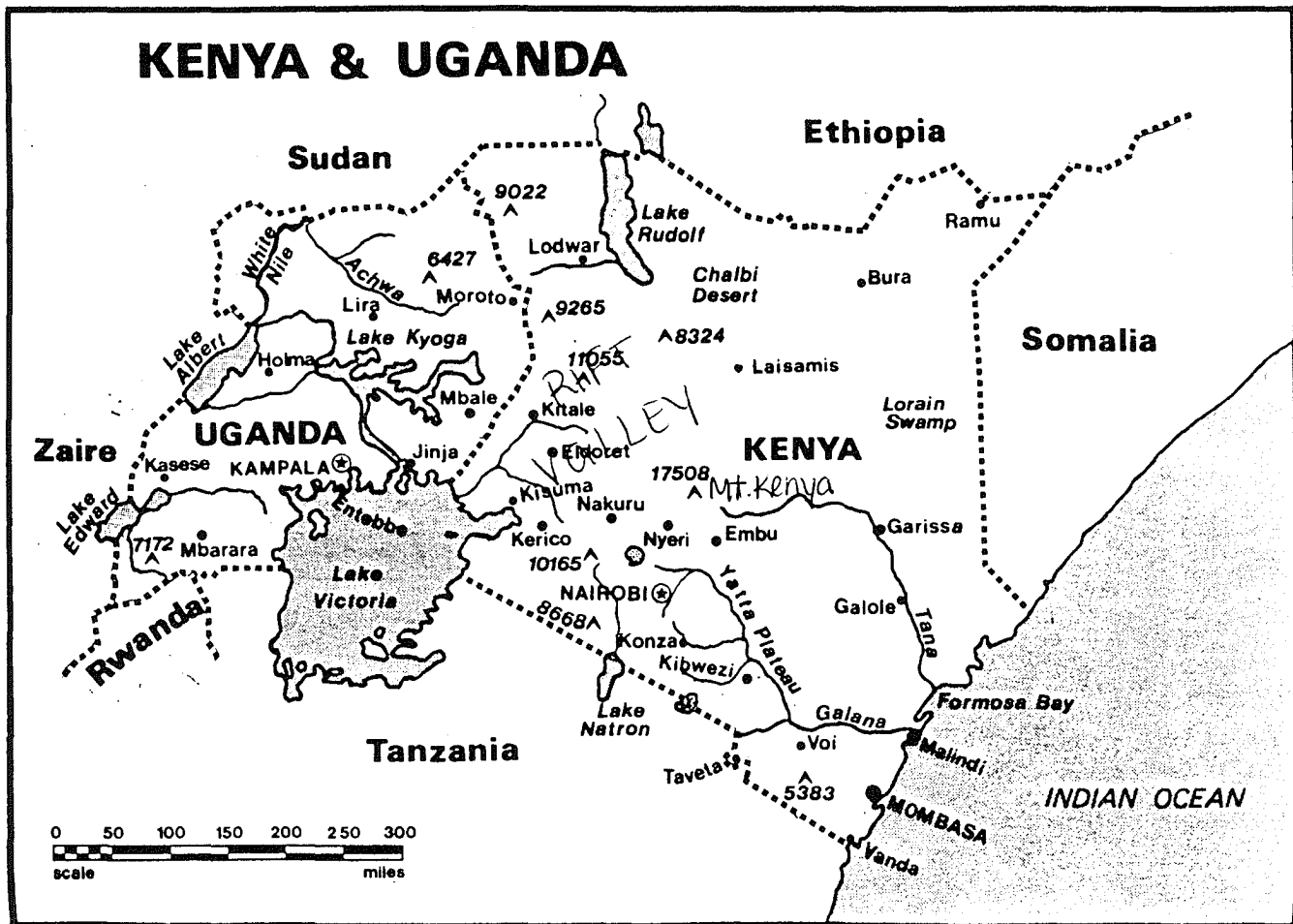
Ngugi wa Thiong'o was born in Kamiriithu Village near Limuru, Kenya, 12 miles northeast of Nairobi in 1938. His father was an *ahoi*- a dispossessed peasant farmer forced to become a squatter on the estate of a well-to-do landowner. Although most such landowners were British, his father worked the land of one of the few propertied Africans. Ngugi's mother was one of four wives, and Ngugi was one of about 28 children in the family. He was educated at the Alliance High School at Kikuyu, 8 miles north-west of Nairobi. He then continued at Makerere University College in Kampala, Uganda from 1959-64, and Leeds University, England from 1964-67. He is intensely devoted to the task of reconstructing and strengthening the newly independent Kenya. He believes that the African writer author plays a crucial role in African society as he or she would serve to banish the people's sense of inferiority and contempt in which they held their own culture, a contempt inherited from Europeans. To Ngugi, English is a colonial language, used by the educated upper class and the international public, but excludes his own countrymen. He feels literature should be written so that it can reach the majority of the population, the poor. He is one of the only African authors to write in other indigenous tongues than Kiswahili. It is through writing in one's own language and having it translated into other African languages that Ngugi believes will provide a bridge between the many cultures that exist in Africa. In January, 1978, Ngugi was detained by the government for his play, *Ngaahika Ndenda* (I Will Marry When I Want) which explored the issue of social status in Kenya and was produced in the Kikuyu language. He remained in prison for almost 12 months without trial. His other writings include *Weep Not Child* (1964), *A Grain of Wheat*

(1968), *The Black Hermit* (1968), *This Time Tomorrow* (1970), *Homecoming* (1972), *Secret Lives* (1975), *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* (with Micere Mugo) (1977), *Petals of Blood* (1977).

A couple of definitions which may help:

thahu: n, a charm, curse, or spell of the Kikuyu.

Kiama: n, a council of elders among the Kikuyu of Kenya; a political organization. the Kiama administers justice and the members are in a state of brotherhood and absolute purity among themselves so that impartial judgement could be ably affected.



FEMALE CIRCUMCISION

Circumcision of women is used as an important part of the initiation rituals among many African tribes. (The practice of circumcision, however, is not limited to Africa. All Western countries have practiced female circumcision and accounts of using a clitoridectomy and even circumcision to cure such pathologies as masturbation have been reported as late as the 1950's in the United States.) There are actually a wide variety of operations which all come under the vague description of female circumcision. The Sunna method is the mildest and most closely resembles male circumcision. Only the tip of the prepuce of the clitoris is removed, either by cutting or burning it away. The pharaonic method is more accurately described as infibulation. The clitoris and both the labia major and the labia minor are removed, and then the two sides of the wound are brought together. This can be done with a variety of materials, such as thorns or catgut strings. Frequently, something will be inserted into the wound, like a stick or a clay penis, so that the girl will be able to urinate and menstruate.

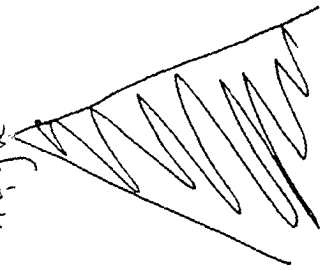
Medical complications are prevalent, even in situations where modern techniques such as anesthesia and disinfection are used. Girls frequently have trouble with urination and infections are not unusual. At the time that a female is to lose her virginity, either her husband must rip her open, by forcing his penis into her, or by slitting her open with a knife. Complications frequently occur with childbirth that have a permanent impact on the reproductive health of the woman. The psychological well-being of the woman is probably permanently damaged. Most women who have had these operations report little or no pleasure in sex and many experience pain. The operation is sometimes performed more than once, for instance if a man is to go on a long journey, he will have his wife "sewn up" to ensure her fidelity.

This is an indication that these "rituals" have the definite purpose of controlling female sexuality. An intact scar is proof to a potential husband, as well as the rest of society, that a woman is a virgin, whether or not her hymen is intact. In fact, it is not unusual that a woman who has had sex will be forced to undergo the operation so that it appears that she is a virgin.

Many groups are opposed to the procedures for various reasons. For instance, many feminists oppose female circumcision as another ritual which attempts to perpetuate a male-dominated society. (There are also feminists who perceive this view to be just another example of Western colonialism.) The Christian religion opposes female circumcision in varying stages of severity. However, at least in present-day Senegal, most Christian women are circumcised, which indicates that the amount of control actually exercised is probably minimal.

Akanyu Mumia
(mother + father of the tribe)

Makuyu



Kameno

Kamuri - witch
Wachisi - warrior
Mugo wa Kibiro -
seer



Hemba

Chage

Wagatai

Nyambura

Muthani

Kabonyi

|

Kamau

Jochua + Misumu
Njiri (aunt)

"myth"

Kimuthia

fiction

fiction

CHAPTER ONE

The two ridges lay side by side. One was Kamenno, the other was Makuyu. Between them was a valley. It was called the valley of life. Behind Kamenno and Makuyu were many more valleys and ridges, lying without any discernible plan. They were like many sleeping lions which never woke. They just slept, the big deep sleep of their Creator.

A river flowed through the valley of life. If there had been no bush and no forest trees covering the slopes, you could have seen the river when you stood on top of either Kamenno or Makuyu. Now you had to come down. Even then you could not see the whole extent of the river as it gracefully, and without any apparent haste, wound its way down the valley, like a snake. The river was called Honia, which meant cure, or bring-back-to-life. Honia river never dried: it seemed to possess a strong will to live, scorning droughts and weather changes. And it went on in the same way, never hurrying, never hesitating. People saw this and were happy.

Honia was the soul of Kamenno and Makuyu. It joined them. And men, cattle, wild beasts and trees, were all united by this life-stream.

When you stood in the valley, the two ridges ceased to be sleeping lions united by their common source of life. They became antagonists. You could tell this, not by anything tangible but by the way they faced each other, like two rivals ready to come to blows in a life and death struggle for the leadership of this isolated region.

It began long ago. A man rose in Makuyu. He claimed that Gikuyu and Mumbi sojourned there with Murungu on their way to Mukuruwe wa Gathanga. As a result of that stay, he said, leadership had been left to Makuyu. Not all the

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from THE RIVER BETWEEN
NGUGI WA THIONG'O

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people believed him. For had it not always been whispered and rumoured that Gikuyu and Mumbi had stopped at Kameno? And had not a small hill grown out of the soil on which they stood south of Kameno? And Murungu had told them:

'This land I give to you, O man and woman. It is yours to rule and till, you and your posterity.'

The land was fertile. It was the whole of Gikuyu country from one horizon embracing the heavens to the other hidden in the clouds. So the story ran in Kameno. Spiritual superiority and leadership had then been left there.

Kameno had a good record to bear out this story. A sacred grove had sprung out of the place where Gikuyu and Mumbi stood; people still paid homage to it. It could also be seen, by any who cared to count, that Kameno threw up more heroes and leaders than any other ridge. Mugo wa Kibiro, that great Gikuyu seer of old, had been born there. And he had grown up, seeing visions of the future and speaking them to the many people who came to see and hear him. But a few, more cynical than their neighbours, would not go to him. They called him an impostor. Then one night, when people were asleep, he vanished from the hills. He was soon heard of in the land beyond; in Nyeri, Kiambu, Muranga; in fact all over the Gikuyu country. And he still spoke aloud his message and cried:

'There shall come a people with clothes like butterflies.'

These were the white men.

Or there was that great witch, Kamiri, whose witchery bewildered even the white men at Muranga. His witchery and magic, before he was overcome by the white men with smiles and gifts, had won him resounding fame. He too, it was said, had been born at Kameno. Like Mugo before him, he had disappeared from the hills to the country beyond. He could not be contained by the narrow life of the ridges.

Another was Wachiori, a great warrior, who had led the whole tribe against Ukabi, Masai. As a young man he had killed a lion, by himself. When he died, at the hands of a stray-

ing white man, he left a great name, the idol of many a young warrior.

The ridges were isolated. The people there led a life of their own, undisturbed by what happened outside or beyond. Men and women had nothing to fear. The Ukabi would never come here. They would be lost in the hills and the ridges and the valleys. Even other Gikuyu from Nyeri or Kiambu could not very well find their way into the hills. And so the country of many ridges was left alone, unaffected by turbulent forces outside. These ancient hills and ridges were the heart and soul of the land. They kept the tribes' magic and rituals, pure and intact. Their people rejoiced together, giving one another the blood and warmth of their laughter. Sometimes they fought. But that was amongst themselves and no outsider need ever know. To the stranger, they kept dumb, breathing none of the secrets of which they were the guardians. *Kagutui ka Mucii gatihakagwo Ageni*; the oilskin of the house is not for rubbing into the skin of strangers.

Leaders of the land rose from there. For though the ridges were isolated, a few people went out. These, who had the courage to look beyond their present content to a life and land beyond, were the select few sent by Murungu to save a people in their hour of need: Mugo, the great seer; Wachiori, the glorious warrior; Kamiri, the powerful magician.

They became strangers to the hills. Thereafter, the oilskin of the house was not for them. It was for those who lived inside. These were the people whose blood and bones spoke the language of the hills. The trees listened, moaned with the wind and kept silent. Bird and beast heard and quietly listened. Only sometimes they would give a rejoinder, joyful applause or an angry roar.

CHAPTER TWO

The hills and the ridges now lay behind. This was a plain, the only such level stretch of land in this country. If you strained your eyes and peered into the misty distance you could see the land of Ukabi. It was all peaceful on this plain, which was said to have been a field of battle, once long ago. A few cattle pulled and mauled the grass while others lay down looking vacantly into space, chewing.

Suddenly, two boys emerged from the bush. They began to fight. One was tall and his unusually long neck and limbs made him appear older than he really was. He was Kamau, son of Kabonyi from Makuyu. The other, Kinuthia, was shorter with surprisingly strong muscles. His slow wide eyes well matched his smooth forehead. He lived with his uncle at a village beyond the two ridges away from Makuyu. His father had died early.

At first the boys fought with the sticks they had gone to fetch from the bush. The green sticks caught each other in mid-air several times and were soon in pieces. The boys threw them away and one piece touched a cow, which stood up quickly, frightened. It moved a few paces from the struggling pair, waking two others on the way. Then it looked in the opposite direction, unconcerned with the fight.

Kamau and Kinuthia were now wrestling. Their arms were interlocked and the two boys went round and round without either getting the better of the other. Kinuthia tried to lift Kamau off the ground and then trap him with his right leg. The attempt always failed. Kamau had his struggles too. Though not usually voluble, today he was eloquent with threats.

'You will know who I am,' he warned, at the same time using his right knee to hit Kinuthia's stomach.

'Cow,' cried Kinuthia with pain.

'Hyena.'

'Even you,' Kinuthia hissed back.

Kinuthia appeared much more collected, and an observer would have thought that he would win. But he tripped over a sharp stone and soon was lying prostrate on his stomach. Kamau bent over him and pinned Kinuthia's hands behind his head. His face was grim and contorted as he used his head to dig into Kinuthia's face, making his nose bleed. The boy underneath Kamau's knees felt pain. He thrust his legs in the air hoping to catch Kamau by the neck between the legs. Blows fell on him and he was bewildered, not knowing when and where the next blow would follow.

Two cows that had moved away together turned their heads and watched the struggle for a while. Then they bent their heads, thrusting out their tongues to pull and maul the grass like the others.

Just then, another boy came running from a group of cows a distance away.

'Stop fighting!' he shouted breathlessly as he stood near the pair. Kamau stopped, but he still sat on Kinuthia.

'Why are you fighting?'

'He called me names,' answered Kamau.

'He is a liar. He laughed at me because my father died poor and ...'

'He called my father a convert to the white man.'

'He is!'

'You beggar.'

'White man's slave.'

'You ... you ...'

Kamau became furious. He began to pinch Kinuthia. Kinuthia looked appealingly to the other boy.

'Please stop this, Kamau. Didn't we swear that we of the hills were comrades?' He felt helpless. It was three days earlier that they had sworn to be brothers.

'What do I care about comrades who insult my father?' asked Kamau.

'I will do it again,' retorted Kinuthia between tears.

'Do now.'

'I will.'

'Try!'

Kamau and Kinuthia began to struggle. The boy felt an irresistible urge to fall on Kamau; he pulled a blade of grass and began to chew it quickly, his eyes dilating with rage and fear.

'Kamau,' he burst out.

The tremor in the boy's voice sent a quiver of fear up Kamau. He quickly looked up and met the burning eyes, gazing at him. Meekly he obeyed the unspoken command. But his face went a shade darker than it normally was. He slunk away, feeling humiliated and hating himself for submitting. Kinuthia stood up unsteadily and looked gratefully at the boy. The boy kept on lowering his face, gazing at the same spot. The feeling of pride and triumph he had suddenly felt at seeing Kamau obey him had as suddenly subsided to one of regret at having done that to him. Perhaps it might have felt better if Kamau had stuck it out and he had had to use force to remove him.

The boy's name was Waiyaki, the only son of Chege. He was quite young; not of Kamau or Kinuthia's age. He had not even gone through his second birth. Waiyaki was, however, already tall for his age. He had a well-built, athletic body. His hair was tough and dry with kinks that finished in a clear outline on the forehead. Just above the left eye was a slightly curved scar. He had got it from a wild goat. The goat had run after one of the herdboys. Seeing this, Waiyaki had taken a stick and run after the goat shouting. The goat turned on him and jabbed him with its horns, tearing the flesh to the bone. His father arrived in time to save him. That was a long while ago. The wound had healed, leaving him a hero among the boys although he had run after the goat for sheer fun and enjoyment of the scene. That, however, was not the sole reason why the other boys, young and old, promptly followed him.

Chege, his father, was a well-known elder in Kameno. He had now only one wife, who had borne him many daughters but only one son. The other two wives had died during the

great famine, without any children. The famine had been preceded by a very rich harvest. Then locusts and worms and a long drought came to bring death to many. Chege had barely survived. His daughters were now well married, apart from one, who had died early. The other elders feared and respected him. For he knew, more than any other person, the ways of the land and the hidden things of the tribe. He knew the meaning of every ritual and every sign. So, he was at the head of every important ceremony.

Many stories ran around him. Some people said that he had the gift of magic. Others said that he was a seer and Murungu often spoke to him. And so they said that he could see visions of the future like Mugo wa Kibiro, who a long time back prophesied the invasion of the Gikuyu country by the white man. Some even said that Chege was actually related to Mugo. Nobody knew this for sure. Chege himself claimed nothing. Ever since he had warned the people against Siriana Missionary Centre and they had refused to hear his voice, he had talked little, keeping all thoughts to himself. Chege had told the people of the ridges what had happened in Muranga, Nyeri and Kiambu. He told them of Tumu Tumu, Gikuyu, Limuru and Kijabe. They doubted his voice, saying:

'How do you know?'

'See them, the butterflies.'

'Butterflies? You have never left the ridges!'

'They are there, beyond the ridges, putting up many houses and some taking the land.'

'How could you have seen the light beyond?'

'Fools, fools,' he muttered to himself in despair.

Nairobi was already flourishing, and the railway was moving across the country in the land beyond where not many from the ridges had been. And they lowered their voices and whispered together:

'The white man cannot speak the language of the hills.'

'And knows not the ways of the land.'

But the white man had come to Siriana, and Joshua and Kabonyi had been converted. They had abandoned the ways of

the ridges and followed the new faith. Still people shrugged their shoulders and went on with their work, whispering:

'Who from the outside can make his way into the hills?'

Chege had then been young. Now he was growing old. However, he remembered something in his old age. A light shone in his eyes, a flicker of hope. He would guard it and divulge the knowledge to none but the right one.

The boys did not want to be caught by the darkness. They collected their cattle together and drove them home. Many paths ran through the forest to various huts scattered over the ridges. Unless you were careful, you could easily lose your way in the hills; one part of the forest looked so much like another. But the boys, born and brought up in the hills, knew the paths.

Darkness was settling when Waiyaki reached home. Chege had been waiting for him. He called Waiyaki to his *thingira*, the man's hut. He sat on a stool, leaning against the central pole. A fire burnt low and, when Waiyaki entered and stood close to the door, Chege took a stick lying near him and poked the fire slowly. Sparks flew upwards in quick succession.

'Why do you come home with darkness?' Chege at last asked, without raising his head. He spat on the floor.

'We took the cattle to the plains.'

'The plains?'

'Yes, Father.'

After a small silence - 'That is far to go,' he said.

Waiyaki kept quiet. He was never at ease in front of his father.

'Danger lurks in darkness.'

'Yes, Father.'

Again Waiyaki was uneasy. He darted a quick glance at the door. His father had not yet looked up.

'Who showed you the way?'

'I know all the ways in the ridges,' he said proudly to impress the father he secretly feared. Besides this, Waiyaki did not like to be thought young for he considered himself able to make decisions like a man.

Chege looked at his son. He contemplated him for a while. Waiyaki tried to puzzle what his father was thinking. And suddenly it occurred to him that his father had been anxious and had feared for him. A feeling of pride warmed his heart and he wondered if the other boys could boast of such a father.

'You have not eaten.' There was softness in Chege's voice.

'I have just come.'

'Go then and get your mother to give you something to put in your mouth. You must be hungry.'

Waiyaki made to move. But as he was about to go out, his father called him back. Waiyaki now trembled a little.

'Remember, tomorrow is the day of your second birth.'

'Yes, Father.'

'Do not forget,' Chege said with an unnecessary emphasis.

Waiyaki ran to his mother's hut. How could he forget such an event?

CHAPTER THREE

Demi na Mathathi were giants of the tribe. They had lived a long way back, at the beginning of time. They cut down trees and cleared the dense forests for cultivation. They owned many cattle, sheep and goats and they often sacrificed to Murungu and held communion with the ancestral spirits. Waiyaki had heard about these two generations of the tribe and he was proud of them. Only he wished he knew what they had looked like. They must have been great and strong to have braved the hazards of the forest.

Sometimes in the bush, he and the other boys played Demi na Mathathi. One day a boy from Koina told Waiyaki:

'You cannot be Demi.'

'Why?' he asked. The other boys came round.

'You are not ready for circumcision. You are not born again.'

Waiyaki looked at the ground and felt small. Then he turned to the group and let his eyes fall on them. His eyes were large and rather liquid; sad and contemplative. But whenever he looked at someone, they seemed to burn bright. A light came from them, a light that appeared to pierce your body, seeing something beyond you, into your heart. Not a man knew what language the eyes spoke. Only, if the boy gazed at you, you had to obey. That half-imploring, half-commanding look was insisting, demanding. Perhaps that was why the other boys obeyed him. His mother always turned her eyes away from his. And some women and big girls remarked that he made them feel shy. But then women were always shy when men's eyes were on them. Waiyaki was not aware of anything strange in his eyes, although sometimes he felt something burn in him, urging him to say and do daring things.

And that day he felt the urge come to him. For a moment he thought himself Demi as he answered back.

'But I am Demi.' And then he saw a tree a little distance away. 'See if I don't cut down that tree,' he went on. And he took an axe and rushed to the tree, oblivious of everything. He began to cut it with all his strength and soon the stick that was the axe fell into pieces. At first the other boys had laughed. But they soon followed his example and went around cutting down trees and clearing the forest ready for 'Cultivation' just like Demi na Mathathi.

That day Waiyaki went home and told his mother: 'I must be born again.'

Now the day had come. And when the sun rose and hit the ground and goats scratched themselves against the wall, Waiyaki went to the back of the hut and let the rays fall on his neck. The burning was pleasant.

Waiyaki wanted to be happy, very happy. Was he not going to learn the ways of the land? Was he not going to drink the magic ritual of being born again? He knew he wanted to be like his father, knowing all the ways of the land from Agu and Agu, long ago.

But he felt dejected. Something he could not define seemed to gnaw at his soul, having first crept through the flesh. He wished Kamau or Kinuthia were there to keep him company. And yet he had wanted this thing. As the sun shone on his skin, he held his muscles taut and shut his eyes, trying to recapture the feeling of importance he had experienced in the days of waiting. The anticipation had been sweet. Now it did not matter. Only after today he would be ready for the biggest of all rituals, circumcision. This would mark his final initiation into manhood. Then he would prove his courage, his manly spirit.

Much beer had been brewed and many elders were beginning to arrive. Two had come early in the morning and were now busy slaughtering a goat. Everyone who was present would eat meat. And the spirits of the dead and the living would be invoked to join in the ritual.

The ceremony did not take long. It was not even complicated. His mother sat near the fireplace in her hut as if in labour. Waiyaki sat between her thighs. A thin cord taken from the slaughtered goat and tied to his mother represented the umbilical cord. A woman, old enough to be a midwife, came and cut the cord. The child began to cry. And the women who had come to wait for the birth of a child, shouted with joy:

'ali-li-li-li-li-li
Old Waiyaki is born
Born again to carry on the ancient fire.'

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For a time, Waiyaki forgot himself and thought he was Demi, bravely clearing the forest, a whole tribe behind him. But when he looked around and saw old women surrounding him, he began to cry again like a little child. He felt the pain of fear inside himself. He tried to open his eyes wide, wide, and for a moment he had a flashing maddening sensation that they would not open. He trembled and thought himself shrinking with cold. He had never felt this before and tears continued flowing, falling to the ground. The women went on shouting but Waiyaki did not see them now. Their voices were a distant buzz like another he had heard in a dream when a swarm of bees came to attack him. He cried the more. People became frightened. This was not what usually happened.

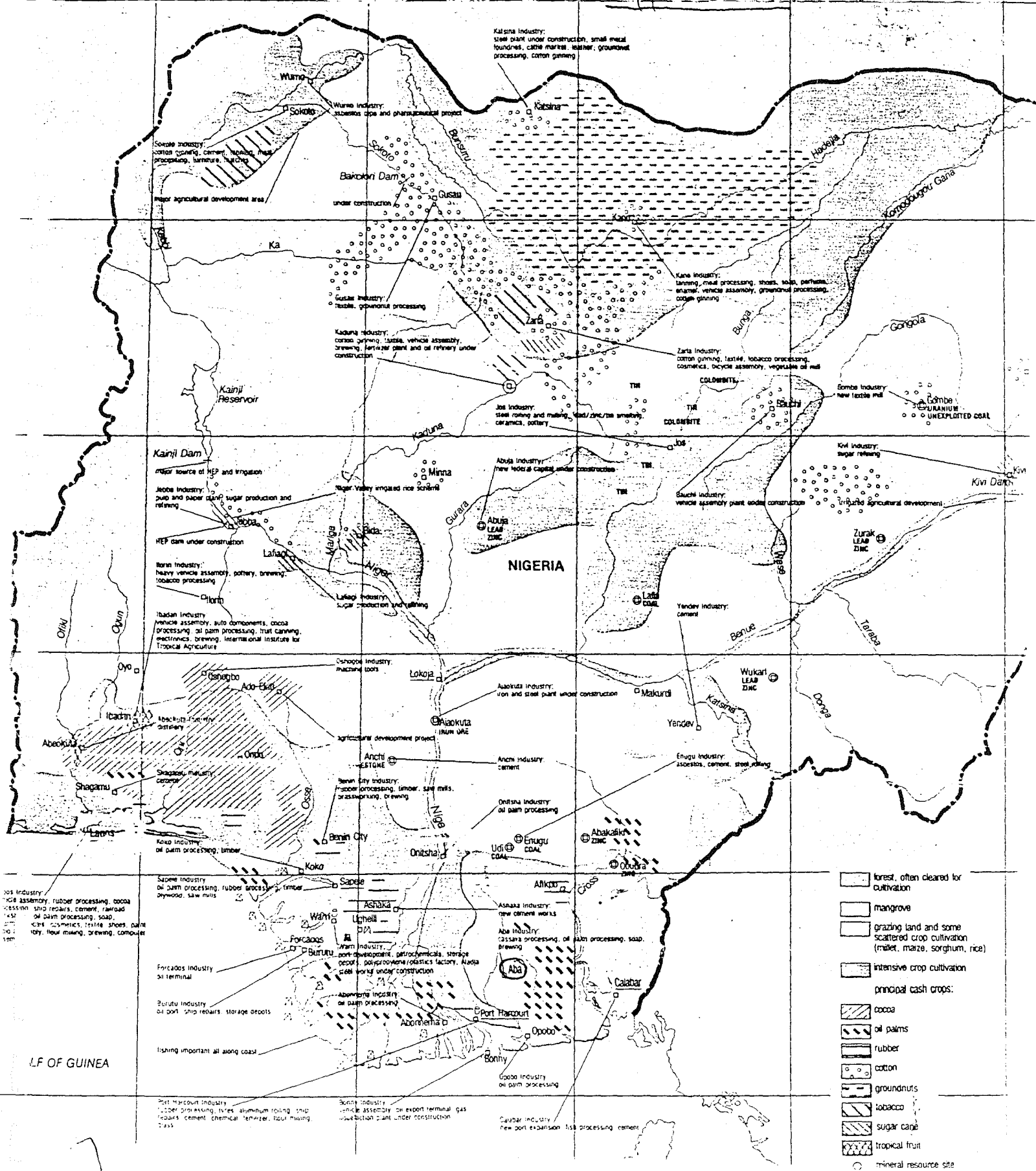
Later in the day, his mother went into the field. Waiyaki, whose head had been shorn of hair, trailed behind her as a little child would follow its mother. And when she went to Honia river, he followed. She dipped him into the water and he came out clean.

He went to bed early. A strange hollowness settled in his stomach. The whole thing had been a strange experience. He was glad that the ceremony was over. But somewhere a glow of pride was beginning. He was ready for initiation.

A.

T. Obinkaram Echeva's Crippled Dancer

4°E 6°E 8°E 10°E 12°E



- forest, often cleared for cultivation
- mangrove
- grazing land and some scattered crop cultivation (millet, maize, sorghum, rice)
- intensive crop cultivation
- principal cash crops:**
- cocoa
- oil palms
- rubber
- cotton
- groundnuts
- tobacco
- sugar cane
- tropical fruit
- mineral resource site

LF OF GUINEA

ECHEWA, T(homas) Obinkaram (1940-)



PERSONAL:

- born December 18, 1940 in Aba, Nigeria to Nwaigwe (a farmer) and Ojiugo (Nwaohamuo) Echewa
- came to United States in 1961
- married Mae Whittler (a teacher), June 5, 1965.
- had three children: Martin, Chinyere and Olenga
- University of Notre Dame, B.S., 1965; Columbia University, M.S., 1966; University of Pennsylvania, M.A., 1972
- lives in Philadelphia, Pa.

CAREER:

- English instructor at Grambling College in Grambling, La., 1967-70; research assistant in School District of Philadelphia, Pa.; English instructor at State University of New York College at Oswego, 1973-1974; associate professor of English at Cheyney State College in Cheyney, Pa., 1974-
- has been stringer for Time and The New York Times and has done free-lance work (poetry, stories and articles) for magazines such as New Yorker, Nation, America, Newsweek, West Africa and Essence
- member of International Communication Association
- received English Speaking Union Literature Prize for his first book The Land's Lord, published in 1978.

MAJOR WORKS:

- The Land's Lord (1978)
- The Crippled Dancer (1986)
- I Saw the Sky Catch Fire (1992)

BOOK REVIEWS:

- review of Crippled Dancer by David Dorsey in World Literature Today:

-says of book that it is "more than a novel about a society's transitional concepts of religion, morality, law, duty, and authority. It is about more than a growing boy's acceptance of (and triumph within) deficiencies and burdens imposed by family, community and fate. It is more than a romance. If tragedy be perseverance in pursuit of good **regardless** of outcome, the novel has a cogent moral. It scorns, more than villains, 'a dancer dizzied from turning this way and that, or like the wind instrument on top of the school house, pointing wherever the strongest wind blew him.'" It suggests:

Life was truly like a court case, and he, Ajuzia, had best be like the crippled man of the popular [Igbo] proverb, and whether he had won or lost his case, he should go home swinging, swaggering and dipping, as if he were dancing.

ECHEWA'S OWN ARTICLES:

- "A Nigerian Looks at America," July 5, 1982, Newsweek:
 - very critical of American values, in opposition to "African" values
 - American children impetuous, African children patient

- "African Sexual Attitudes," January, 1981, Essence:
 - African v. American sexual customs
 - Africa has much more open, easy-going attitude about sex; he says that is more healthy for children, helps them to accept and feel comfortable with their sexuality

Echewa's life and values as reflected in Crippled Dancer

One can discover a great deal about Echewa's early life among the Igbo people by looking at the life of the amala people in The Crippled Dancer. As we trace Ajuzia's life and his growth into manhood coupled with its grave responsibilities, we find his world in the midst of a cultural crisis. Colonialism has taken its hold in the village. European vices and values are skewing Ajuzia's family; leaving him torn between his obligations to his grandfather and the tribe and his drive for education, an accomplishment not valued by the older members of the village.

The evils which exist within the present governing system are made apparent through characters like radio and the village chief, yet Ajuzia's victories inevitably stem from his ultimate reliance on the new system for justice. Herein lies a confusing issue which Echewa never clarifies for the reader. One must consider whether he is unwilling or unable to do so.

The destruction of customs among the Igbos is not a fiction. Echewa may have felt the same pressures as Ajuzia does due to his desire for education. The temptation to leave the hardships of changing tribal life behind for the plush existence abroad must have been challenging. "By bringing young people of both sexes together from variant language groups and then requiring them to work and speak in a common language, the university threatened all family and communal ties" (Robert M. Wren, Achebe's World, p. 2). But Echewa has not discarded his childhood altogether. Although he has been living away from his native Nigeria for a number of years, his writing still revolves around his homeland

and the types of problems his people were facing while he was growing up.

Sexuality plays a large role within The Crippled Dancer. Frequent reference to genitals and the absence of any taboos on nudity or copulation make Ajuzia's life full of confusing contradictions. Echewa touches upon the issue more fully in an article he wrote for "Essence" in January of 1981:

Like so much else in traditional Africa, sexuality has its proper, natural place. Within that place, the attitude toward sex tends to be casual. ...This easygoing attitude is perhaps the most important aspect of the sex education of an African child. While African elders tend to pass on their comfort and ease about sexual matters, American elders tend to pass on their uneasiness and psychological hang-ups (p. 56).

Growing up with the influence of European institutions which most of his people have not experienced, Ajuzia struggles between the expectations of his grandparents and the disciplines of his scholarly life.

Altogether Ajuzia is fighting the same uphill battle which Echewa and his contemporaries must have faced in their lifetimes. The tragedy of watching a culture disappear is not made any easier by jumping into another lifestyle with both feet. Echewa has trouble accepting American values over his Nigerian upbringing years after he has established himself in this country. And the sorrow of watching his people turn on themselves and lose touch with their heritage in the face of colonialism weighs quite heavily in his words.



A Nigerian Looks at America

MY TURN/T. OBINKARAM ECHEWA

As a supernannated foreign student about to return to Nigeria after more than twenty years in the United States, I feel ready to venture some answers to the question Americans have asked me hundreds of times, namely: What do I think of their country?

To start, I must observe that both the country and I have changed considerably in the time I have been here. When I first arrived as a young man who grew up in rural eastern Nigeria, I found America an enchanted garden and a magic shop. Over the years, as I became used to the glitter, I found much that repulsed me and much to disagree with. Then again, as I stayed longer, I matured to realize that America, like every country, is a mixture of good and bad, with no monopoly on virtue and wisdom as some Americans believe, or on vice and folly as some detractors suggest.

America is prismatic and elusive. The picture that comes to my mind when I reflect on it is not singular, uniform or coherent; it is not a postcard landscape but a series of colorful splashes, a blinding psychedelic light show.

As a song, America is a loud, discordant chant, a thousand disco bands in an echo chamber, a series of outbursts—Pow! Whee! Kazook!—like the text of a Batman or Superman cartoon.

Life in this country is crowded, frenetic and breathless. Americans loathe physical idleness the way nature is supposed to loathe a vacuuming silence makes them equally uncomfortable.

Discipline: in temperament, America is young and hyperactive, unwilling and unable to ponder deeply or at length. Americans apprehend rather than comprehend ideas. They do not have the discipline or the endurance to wrap their minds around a thought. Instead they prefer to grab, snatch or make a stab at it. Their mental energies are usually exerted as pulses rather than as continuously flowing force. Americans tend to be direct and literal rather than allusive and figurative, stark rather than subtle. They are happier dealing with statistics than with nuances.

If America were a building, it would be an office block or a skyscraper—a structure of steel, concrete and glass, massive but without curves or complication.

Detesting the ponderous, the complex and the inconclusive, Americans simplify and abbreviate everything they come across. Even "Hello" and "Goodbye" are shortened to "Hi" and "Bye." Some analysts have suggested that America abandoned the Vietnam War effort simply because it became bored with its inconclusiveness.

In lieu of philosophers, modern America produces copywriters and social scientists. American folk wisdom excludes anything that cannot be placed on a poster or bumper sticker and read at a glance. Americans like an epigram or a catchy and alliterative jingle, with, if at all possible, a sexually suggestive double-entendre.

American social and intellectual life is so bathed in clichés that it is nearly impos-

*Living successfully
in modern
America takes
more than a
little Philistinism.*

sible to think a fresh or original thought. Try to think in America and your head swarms with ready-made phrases, stock expressions and instant, prepackaged ideas. These are continually belched into the atmosphere like verbal exhaust and inhaled like smog by everyone who lives within the country's borders.

Then the fumes are repackaged, relabeled and recirculated by armies of new-idea hucksters—professional or self-anointed experts on human behavior. To turn a quick profit, they market half-baked ideas, grandiloquent par and pedestrian observations masquerading as science.

Americans are an inquisitive people, not inclined to leave anything alone. If you give an American child a package, he will quickly tear off the wrappings. If he finds a toy inside, he will start to play with it immediately. He will play feverishly for a while and then discard the toy out of boredom. Later, he might take it apart to see what makes it go. By contrast, a traditionally reared Afri-

can child is inclined to savor the mystery of what is inside the package for some while. When he eventually uncovers the toy, he will play with it only a little at a time, so as not to use it up.

"That is why you Africans never made any progress," an American friend said to me once when I made the above comparison. "You never bothered to investigate the mysteries around you." Maybe.

It is true that one has to break an egg to make an omelet, but an egg is much more than just an ingredient for an omelet. A fundamental danger that America poses to itself—and to a world it now dominates—is its tendency to relegate every available egg to the making of omelets.

Extremes: In the final analysis, Americans are merely human, though some of my American friends bristle when lumped together with the rest of mere humanity. What distinguishes America as a culture is the peculiar blend of human characteristics that are emphasized. Those traits usually touted in Fourth of July speeches—individualism, unrestrained freedom, competition—have served the country well up to a point. They are sometimes pursued to such extremes, however, that they end up vulgarizing human life and spirit.

Living successfully in modern America, no matter how or where one chooses to live, can be like trying to hail a cab in Times Square after the theater on a rainy Saturday night: it demands more than a little Philistinism. The "American way of life" is not founded on the interplay of human virtues supporting and encouraging one another, but rather on competing human appetites keeping one another in check. America blunts one's finer sensibilities by insisting that life is a grabfest, a jungle, a dog-eat-dog fight.

All of the above notwithstanding, I have quite enjoyed my stay here and obtained a good education. My criticisms apply mainly to American institutions rather than American people. As individuals Americans are kind, gracious and very generous. To put it in cliché-ese, some of my best friends are Americans.

Echewa is the author of a novel, "The Land's Lord." He is working on a book about his experiences in the United States.

GOOD HEALTH!

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and immediate payment for the first visit and will bill or arrange terms for subsequent consultations. Get a clear understanding at the outset. Also, make sure you do not douche before your appointment. The secretions of the vagina are important signs of health or disease.

Be sure to give your doctor a complete health history including a family medical history. A secretary or doctor's assistant usually takes your medical history, so a very busy doctor may not always see all the information. It's up to you to mention the important points, such as serious diseases or operations, when you speak to the doctor privately.



There are still women who don't know much more about their body than where to put a tampon.

ON THE EXAMINING TABLE

The actual gynecological exam makes many women nervous and embarrassed. Often a woman feels bewildered and isolated in the sterile territory of the doctor's office. Everything seems so out of her control. Apprehensions are lessened if a woman is well informed and regards her gynecologist as a partner.

Once you undress and lie on the examining table, you'll be told to slide down so that your buttocks are at the edge of the table. You'll then place your heels in stirrups on either side of the table and be asked to open your legs. While you're doing this, your doctor is donning latex gloves. Next he or she will dab a bit of lubricant at your vaginal opening and proceed to insert a speculum.

A speculum looks a bit like the mouth of a duck. It holds open the vaginal walls so that your cervix, or neck of the uterus, will come into view. Speculums are made of metal or plastic. Metal ones can be uncomfortably cold if not warmed before use (remember those horrible jokes about speculums stored in the refrigerator?). Plastic speculums, which are usually disposable, don't need to be warmed.

The doctor will insert the speculum into your vagina, holding it closed. He or she opens the instrument by grasping the handle while pushing the shorter outside section of the handle toward you. The click you'll hear means the speculum has

locked in place. Sometimes the cervix is off to one side. In that case, the doctor will withdraw the speculum and then reinsert it after pushing down on your abdomen.

Your vagina is now open, looking like a small tunnel. At the end of that tunnel is your cervix. Pinkish and round, it resembles the head of a wet penis. Your doctor will now note its color (a cervix with a bluish tinge is one indication of pregnancy) and any unusual discharge or inflammation.

There's been some controversy about how often women should have a Pap smear. It has traditionally been suggested that to detect cervical cancer, women have this simple, painless test yearly. But in March 1980 the American Cancer Society stated that women whose Pap results are negative two years in a row could then have the test every three years until age 40. This statement was met with resistance from many quarters, including the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, which insists that yearly Pap smears are essential. You should be sure to have a Pap smear yearly or follow your doctor's advice.

If you suspect you have been exposed to gonorrhea, ask that a smear from your cervix be tested for this disease as well. During your exam, more enlightened doctors may use a hand mirror and ask whether you'd like to see your own cervix. Take a look: it's really fascinating and helps connect you with your body. If you're not offered a chance to look at your cervix and you want to see, ask!

Last comes the internal, or bimanual, exam. Your doctor will insert the index and middle finger of one hand into your vagina while palpating your lower abdominal wall with the other hand. The doctor first feels the size, shape, consistency and position of your uterus, then locates your fallopian tubes and ovaries. At this point the exam is finished. You'll be asked to dress and join the doctor in his or her office. This is a good time to discuss concerns about contraception or to get an answer to a question that's been bugging you. Don't let yourself be rushed. You're paying for the time—use it!

EXAMINE YOURSELF?

The feminist movement can take much credit for enlightening women about their own bodies. Women's health care advocates, noting that "the birth canal is the most political territory in the world—and men control it," have worked intensely to educate women about their unique health-care needs.

Some of that work has centered around gynecological self-care. Women's

health centers around the country offer seminars on self-examination, which include inspection of the cervix and notation of the color and consistency of vaginal secretions. Not every woman is interested in inspecting her cervix, but the phenomenon of self-care deserves attention. *Our Bodies, Ourselves* is filled with advice and helpful suggestions on how to get better acquainted with your reproductive organs, and the book has even gathered old-fashioned remedies for vaginal infections and other gynecological problems.

There are still times when you need the services of a gynecologist. When you know your reproductive self well, you can help your doctor do a better job. ●

Ms. Hawkins is a Florida-based freelance writer.

MOTHERING

African Sexual Attitudes

BY T. OBINKARAM ECHEWA

The scene is a village in eastern Nigeria 30 years ago. A barefoot, bare-breasted woman of about 50 pauses dramatically in front of a naked five-year-old boy. She squints teasingly at his midsection and says: "Wow! You really do have a big one! Big and curved and pointing to the next village! May I touch it?"

The boy tee-hees and tries to run away, but she captures him before he can escape and begins tickling him all over. Some moments later, she is stroking his penis to the rhythm of a well-known song:

*Utu! Utu! Lita! Lita!
Iko gi nwanvi abiwala!
(Penis! Penis! Rise! Rise!
Your girl friend is coming!)*

Perversion? Child molestation? No—just a common, harmless and friendly teaser usually done in front of several bystanders including other children and possibly the boy's parents. Its aim is to cause the boy to have an erection. When he does, everyone laughs uproariously as he tries to hide or control it. Beyond the fun of it, the tease has no other purpose than to make the child accept and be comfortable with his own sexuality.

Recalling this practice, surrounded as I am by American sexual sensibilities and the constant debate about the sex education of American children, I get

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MOTHERING

(continued from page 54)

nostalgic about how direct, simple and natural an African child's sex education is. Just think what would happen if the little drama described above were to be reenacted in the United States!

Like so much else in traditional Africa, sexuality has its proper, natural place. Within that place, the attitude toward sex tends to be casual. Sexuality is no more a "big deal" than eating, drinking, sleeping or going to the toilet. This easygoing attitude is perhaps the most important aspect of the sex education of an African child. While African elders tend to pass on their comfort and ease about sexual matters, American elders tend to pass on their uneasiness and psychological hang-ups.



Nowhere is traditional Africa's casualness toward sex more manifest than in its attitudes toward nudity. Africans prefer not to be encumbered by clothing beyond that which is necessary in a hot and humid climate. Both boys and girls walk about naked and become familiar with genitals as they work, sit, bathe or relieve themselves. Before they become "clothed" at puberty, they see the changes in themselves and in their brothers and sisters—new hair growth, enlarging testicles or budding breasts. In conversation, children freely refer to male genitals, though they employ euphemisms for the vagina and vulva.

Adult women, generally the most covered group, are likely to have their breasts uncovered. At the stream, a child sees adult women who have secluded themselves some distance from the traffic in order to bathe nude. At home in Nigeria, every three- or four-year-old shares a

bucket of bath water with her mother at some point.

Though children only occasionally glimpse an adult female's genitals, they frequently see men in varying degrees of exposure. Since men traditionally dress without underwear, their testicles often swing from side to side as they walk, run or engage in vigorous manual labor. A man climbing a palm tree exposes dangling testicles to any child who cares to look up.

Every village child knows how babies are made and where they come from by the time she is five. Because she is familiar with sex organs, she has a good idea what goes where. Common proverbs and folktales told to the young by grandparents (and often repeated by the children to one another) frequently contain explicit references to intercourse and impregnation.

A child also learns a lot about sexuality from the animals that are traditionally kept by villagers. When I was growing up, every child in our village had the experience not only of seeing but of helping animals copulate. If a woman had no grown roosters in her chicken coop, for instance, she would tie a long rope to one of her hens and hand it to a son or daughter to take to a neighbor's coop. As the neighbor opened her coop, the child would toss the hen toward the rooster, and for the next half-hour would beg, offer grain and coax the rooster to mount the hen.

A child would get even more involved with the matings of dogs, goats and sheep. A boy would grasp the female animal in heat and nudge it in front of a neighbor's male, then hold the female down while it was being mounted.

Remembering such episodes, I can't help but notice how American attitudes differ. It's hard to restrain a grin when I see American parents in a park trying nervously to divert the attention of their children from copulating dogs.

Because village children are very much around when babies are delivered at home (still true in most of Africa), they have no difficulty figuring out what's going on. They're not allowed to watch the actual birth process but can overhear it from a short distance and participate in the ritual burial of the afterbirth and umbilical cord. If a child still has any doubts about where babies come from, the women who assemble to celebrate the birth of the new baby explain it rather graphically with the crotch dance.

The crotch dance is an improvised folk drama enacted by the women at the height of a birth celebration. From the woman's point of view, it recapitulates

what goes on during courtship, marriage, intercourse, orgasm, pregnancy and childbirth. The dance extolls the women and teasingly mocks the men.

"Where do they all come from?" the woman leading the song intones.

The other women raise their hands high above their heads, tilt their bodies back, then strike their crotches firmly with both hands, as in unison they answer: "They all come from a woman's crotch!"

"The chiefs and wrestlers living and dead?" sings the leader.

"They all come from a woman's crotch!"

"Hunters, warriors and the whole human race?"

"They all come from a woman's crotch!"

I'm not suggesting that American families adopt African rituals like the crotch dance to teach their children about sexuality. But what seems sorely needed is the open spirit behind such rituals—the feeling that sexuality is natural and right. Parents provide their children's first view of sexuality. Think about it—what are you passing on to them? ●

Mr. Echewa is a Philadelphia-based freelance writer.

OUR SEXUAL HEALTH

BY JUNE DOBBS BUTTS, ED.D.

Q: I recently contracted trichomonas vaginalis. I was treated with the drug Flagyl for seven days. I was told that Flagyl is the only cure for this disease. Later on I read that Flagyl is harmful. Is this true? What happens if the disease goes untreated?

A: Metronidazole, or Flagyl (its brand name), is the drug of choice for trichomonas vaginalis (or trich), a vaginal infection caused by a one-cell parasite that's in the genitourinary tract of both women and men. Trich is a stubborn infection to eliminate because, though women do manifest symptoms (usually a greenish-gray, foamy vaginal discharge), partners who may also have the disease usually exhibit no symptoms. Thus a woman with trich whose partner is not treated for the infection will reinfect the woman—and start the whole cycle over again.

Flagyl has been found to cause cancer in mice and is not recommended for use during the first three months of pregnancy. Some users of the drug experience side effects such as headache, diarrhea and abdominal cramping. Flagyl users should not drink alcoholic beverages during treatment, since alcohol tends to

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THE BUSH RADIO

Ajuzia felt vague; his self-consciousness was dispersed through a sea of uncertainty; his thoughts of himself were merely passing glimpses, blurred like the shadows of hurried motion off the corners of one's eyes. In a drama that was supposed to be his, other people had a more commanding presence: Radio, Orji, Nwanyiaku, his grandfather and grandmother and the *amala* people crowded the stage, occupied their places with greater density and spoke their lines with greater assurance.

Ajuzia felt a need to substantiate himself. Just as a whale collected large quantities of plankton by filtering the ocean, so perhaps he could gather the diffuse elements of his personality by running the memories of his nineteen years of life through his mind. Others also would be netted in the filter, but he himself was bound to be there somewhere. He would elbow Radio aside, shrug off his grandfather's restraining clutch and, like Chief Orji, slap himself on the chest and declare haughtily: 'I am Ajuzia! Ajuzia is!' A prime factor and not a derivative! Existing in his own right and not by reference to others! He did not mind sharing the stage, but the stage had to be his to share as he chose, not for others to claim and crowd. He was the lead actor; the spotlight was for him, the shadows for the others. In the dance, he had to break away from the group formation and dance solo - primp and jig and flounce and shake, all by himself.

However, Radio, as always rude and brusque, refused to be ushered away from the stage. Orji loomed so large that he

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T. OBINKARAM ECHEWA,
THE CRIPPLED DANCER

could not be kept in the shadows. The echo of his grandfather's voice whined and droned on and on in his ears, like the buzz of a tireless fly – questioning, judging, complaining and exhorting. And behind all of them was the unharmonised chorus of the *amala* people of Umu Njikara.

Radio. Radio was clung to the mind. He was robust, full-fleshed and talkative. His face had the bluntness of a hammer; his voice was husky and loud.

One time, when Ajuzia was about eight years old, they were in the bush looking for mushrooms – Radio and several other boys. Uncouth and vulgar, Radio had unabashedly dropped his shorts and was relieving himself into a hole he had dug in the ground, meanwhile chit-chatting with the other boys who had formed a circle around him. At a point one of the boys had remarked how big Radio's penis was getting. Radio replied that the size came from using the instrument regularly.

'On whom?' everyone wanted to know.

Radio would not say. He would only laughingly say that he had used it at least five or six or seven times. Maybe even ten or twelve times.

The conversation at length wandered from sizes to curvatures, and then to Ugwumba, who was reputed to have the largest testicles in the whole village.

'You can make it grow bigger and longer,' Radio said, 'if you whip it.'

'Awh!' all the other boys said, screwing up their faces and laughing.

But Radio insisted he was serious. 'It is true,' he said between grunts. Ugwumba himself had told him so. The thing to do was to cut a stick from an *ahaba* bush exactly the size and length of penis you wanted. First rub the penis with warm coconut oil, then with the juice from young and tender *uwuru* leaves. Then beat it with the *ahaba* stick as hard as possible. The stick had to be whittled smooth because, if not, the penis would become covered with bumps and warts.

'Ugwumba told you that?'

'That is exactly what he said.'

'I do not believe it.'

'That is your concern. You can try it if you like, or keep your little bottle stopper.'

One of the other boys said: 'A man from my mother's village named Ikpeoha has an even bigger penis than Ugwumba. A real earth digger, and they say after he has used a woman, that woman is spoiled forever.'

'It cannot be bigger than Ugwumba's.'

'I say much bigger.'

'Have you seen it?'

'Yes. One day at the stream, he was bathing and tried to stuff it between his legs because of all the people around. It went between his legs and came out at the back like the head of a big viper.'

At length someone wanted to know: 'Will it grow after the first time or do you have to whip it many times?'

Radio replied that you had to keep doing it for some time.

'How long?'

'It depends on how long you want it to grow.'

'Will it not hurt? The penis is very tender.'

'So what if it hurts a little. It will not hurt forever.'

'And once it grows, it does not shrink back?'

'No.'

Radio cleaned himself, pulled up his shorts and with great ceremony stuffed his testicles back into them. He then said: 'There is one girl who will cry and whine for me before this market week is over.'

'Liar!'

'Who is lying?' He made a belligerent gesture, but then seemed to think better of it. 'Anyway what difference does it make to me if you do not believe me.'

Someone asked: 'Why do women cry and whine when they do it? Is it because it hurts them?'

'I have heard they do that to make the men think they are not enjoying it.'

'Do women enjoy it?'

'Why do you think they consent to do it?'
'Because their husbands will beat them if they do not.'
'Women enjoy it as much as men. More even.'
'Who told you? Have you ever been a woman?'
'I have heard some women talking. Also they whine to encourage the men to do it harder to them.'
'All of you should just shut up,' Radio said. 'If you want to know anything about it, I am the one you should ask.'

He was about eight or nine years old then, more likely eight, because that was before Nwanyiaku came.

His mind idled, the flitting, elusive shadows of memory slowed, and he reached to catch them, as if by an act of the will he could grasp them and hold them still, then compel them into focus and truly see the occasion as it was – that occasion when he first had a woman.

Adakurudiya had coaxed away his coyness and humility, and upgraded what he thought of himself to catch up with what apparently he had grown to become in the eyes of others. Having always been a boy – a mere boy as his grandmother was fond of saying – he had always thought of himself as a boy. His perception of himself lagged behind by many years the objective fact of his physical maturity. As for the act itself, he had always considered it as an exclusive adult prerogative, an act shrouded in whispers and mystery and cultish secrecy. Clothes were worn to hide it. It was performed behind locked doors, often in the dead of night.

And then for a grown woman, old enough to be his mother, to permit him to see her naked, then touch her nakedness, to guide him into her, and row down with him through the eddies, surges and cresting waves of feeling, that was a wonder. It had made him think of what was often said to happen at the moment of death: a relative or recently dead acquaintance would meet the dying person at the gate, help him on his way, and guide him through the dark and narrow passage.

Adakurudiya chuckled. 'You sure say this be your first time?' she asked in pidgin English.

'Yes.'
'I no believe you. Anyway, if this be your first time for true-true, then I be glad to be the one to pluck your cherry fruit.'

'What kind of fruit?'
She laughed at him. 'No be fruit at all I de talk about. That just be name them *de* call person who never do'am before, person who still be vagin.' She laughed. 'Me, I still be vagin.'

'Yes, you be Vagin Maria.'
'Whassmatter? You no like'am?'

The experience had not been that overwhelming, nothing like what had been promised in anticipation and imagination through all the stories he had heard since childhood. True, there had been a multitude of sensations which he had never felt before, but they had not lasted long enough for him to make their full acquaintance, but had bounded off on their own giddy momentum and left him haplessly behind. He had not been able to anticipate them. They had caught him unawares and unprepared. And then they had been over so quickly that he wanted to shout: 'Stop! Rewind the tape to the beginning, and then replay the experiences slowly. Very slowly!'

But, like so many other experiences in his life, a return to the beginning was not possible. The parade marched past and did not return. More than that, he realised, even now, that his intellectualisations of the experience were more palpable than the experience had ever been in reality. He always stayed lost between thought and action, between the doer and the spectator. Would he ever experience anything in full and uncompromised measure? Would he ever be ready and fully prepared? Or would he always back or side-step into everything unawares?

Adakurudiya's shadow lingered, and he remarked that it had more density and intensity – substantiality – than he could claim for his. Even in thought, as in the reality of their first encounter, she seemed more present than he was; all her

faculties were engaged in their fullest range; she knew what was coming, knew herself and knew him. And she probably not only *knew* but fully *understood*. As for himself, he was like a baby at baptism, confused by the strange rituals and the hubbub, and at the exalted moment gaining only the vaguest familiarity with the water of salvation, which was then quickly wiped off his face. Baptism certainly did not teach one how to swim.

Adakurudiya's shadow then moved on. Radio returned.

Radio, the dead shot with the rubber sling shot, setting traps that caught 'adult' game, killing animals with his sling shot which adults could not kill with their cap guns, Radio, the side-stepper, who most mornings set out going to school but quite often ended up going hunting. The few times he himself was late to school or played truant, Radio had something to do with it. Most likely they had gone hunting. Birds and squirrels were in all the trees, eager to be tracked from limb to limb, from tree to tree, while time passed.

When it was past the hour of school opening, the best thing to do was not to show at all in order to avoid Mr Irondi's punishment for lateness. So stay in the bushes until it was time for school dismissal, then march home as if one had gone to school.

Radio, who had one day coaxed him to climb a tree and reach for fruits which grew on a vine that had partially lost its hold on a branch. The fruits were large and red and delicious-looking, but everyone had left them alone so far because they grew dangerously out of reach. He had managed to reach them, pluck them, and toss them into Radio's waiting hands, but then he could not get back from the dangling vine to the firm part of the branch. The ground was perhaps twenty-five feet below, so he was not eager to jump. But there was no way to get back on the tree, try as he may. Finally he had closed his eyes and made ready to jump, asking Radio to inspect the ground where he expected to land for stumps or other things that might injure him. Radio ran away, saying he did not want to be called as a witness

when adults at home wanted to find out how he had broken every bone in his body.

Radio, with whom one day he had been returning from school with other children when a car slowed down and stopped. (His father, Ehilegbu, had been alive then.) A White Man and woman and their three children had got out of the car. The woman offered them red and green sweets wrapped in transparent cellophane, and when they ran to get them, the man took out his camera and began taking their pictures. It was the middle of March and the sun was blazing and the ground in sandy places burned underfoot, and all the children were naked and sweaty and dusty from running and wrestling.

'Say cheese,' the man said to them, cocking the camera before his eyes. 'That's right! Now make a face! ... Good! Now do a little dance for me. Come on, don't be shy. Come on! You want my wife to take back the sweets? Now, that's it. That's better. You are good dancers. Now run home and enjoy your sweets ...'

But the white woman had run out of sweets by the time it was his turn to receive one, so she had given him a penny instead.

Everyone began running home jubilantly, singing: 'The white woman gave us sweets! The white man took our pictures! Our pictures have gone to England! Our pictures have gone to England!'

He lost his penny in a bet with Radio.

'I can reach that tree there before you, even if I hop on one leg and you run on two.'

'You cannot.'

'I bet I can.'

'I bet you cannot!'

'How much?'

'Half-penny!'

'I bet you one penny!'

'All right, one penny!'

'Okay. Ready? Go!'

Radio ran on two legs until he was a few yards from the tree. Then he hopped the rest of the distance on one leg.

'Let me have the penny,' he said.

'No. You cheated. That was not the bet.'

'I reached the tree on one leg, did I not?' Radio put his school bag down, grabbed him and unclenched his fist which was tightly clasped around the penny.

'I will tell my father.'

'I do not care who you tell.'

'Thief!'

'Your mother.'

'I will tell my mother you abused her. And my father that you abused my mother. Thief!'

'Who do you keep calling thief, huh? Who do you keep calling thief?'

On his knees and crying after Radio had punched him in the belly, he was shouting: 'Thief! Dunce!' Dunce was what the teachers at school called children who were not very good at their lessons.

'Your mouth will some day mean your death,' Radio said.

'You too. And your mouth is like a goat's *nyash*.'

Angrily, Radio ran back and punched him again, this time splitting his lips and spilling his books from his school bag.

Just before he was to enter his own compound, Radio said: 'Here, take back your penny.' But then as he reached for it, Radio withdrew his hand and said: 'I will give it back to you if you call me your mother's lover. You want the penny back? Then say that I fucked your mother last night.'

'I fucked *your own* mother last night!' he had said, and Radio punched him again.

Another occasion. Same Radio. Similar incident. It was around the Christmas-harvest season. The boys in the village formed a masquerade dance troupe and went from compound to compound dancing for people and receiving money as tokens. Radio, the oldest boy among them, and the one with the strongest eyes, appointed himself the managing director and the treasurer of the occasion. He, Ajuzia, wore the mask

and had his body covered with hot and prickly *akoro* fern. Other boys brought drums, gongs and assorted musical instruments.

At the end of the day, Radio announced that, unfortunately, his pocket had a hole and most of the money had fallen out. He was profusely sorry but would not let anyone frisk him to verify that his other pockets were empty. And then he kept the lion's share of what was supposed to be left.

He recalled his grandmother trying to console him about this event when he came home that evening, with anger pumping around his chest like a volcano.

'You have always been a good dancer,' she said, trying to lure his mind away from Radio. 'You inherited your grandfather's gift of rhythm, and were it not for school and how things have changed, perhaps you would have become a *di-egwu* like him. As a baby you began dancing even before you could walk. You would pull yourself up on chairs and other things, hold on to them and then jiggle up and down.' The memories made her shake her head with laughter. 'You fell down so many times and split your lips so many times from jiggling so hard when you were still learning to stand. You would dance even when there was no music. People used to say you were hearing the music of the ancestors. Our first Ikoro Dance after you were born, people tossed so much money at you that your mother was able to buy a hen with it. The last of the chickens that came from that hen did not die until maybe last year or the year before. A tailor had sewn a jumper for you. Your mother had rethreaded your strings of cowries and hung a bell on them, and tied a blood-coloured scarf around your waist. Everyone marvelled at this child who could hardly stand but who was in step with every beat of the drums...'

'I want to tell Nna-nna,' he recalled himself saying.

The grandmother grunted. 'Hmmmh. Well, all right. But he will become very angry. He will draw his *mkparajam* from its sheath and go waving it about. You know how with everything that concerns you he becomes so angry. Did Elewachi give you anything at all?'

'Three pence.' He opened his hand and showed her the coins.

'At least he gave you something. Let me hold it for you.'

'But I was the one who wore the mask and did the dancing. But then he said he brought the mask. He said it was the way the mask looked and not my dancing that made people give us the money.'

'If that were so, then people should give him money all the time because his face looks like a ferocious mask. The others who did the drumming, how much did he give them?'

'I do not know. I think two pence. And he kept more than one shilling for himself.'

'Perhaps the fathers of the others will get him about it. Anyway do not worry. These three pennies may bear more fruit for you than the shilling he kept. There is a saying that the poor man eats his crusty overnight fufu and his soup has no fish or meat; and the rich man's soup is full of meat and fish. However, when they both go to the latrine, the rich man's shit does not smell any better than the poor man's. Come on. I have a pot of water on the fire which I was boiling for my own bath. I will pour it in the bucket for you, so you can wash off that sweat and prickle.'

She rubbed his hairless head vigorously and then let her hand drop gently on his shoulder as she nudged him towards the kitchen. 'A gift your *chi* has given you,' she said, 'no one can ever steal or snatch from you. That is more important than all the money in the world. It is like a spring bubbling up from inside you. People can steal your water or muddy it, but they cannot stop your spring from bubbling up again ...'

When he smiled and looked up into her face, his eyes were arrested by the beads of sweat which formed on the delta underneath her forehead and between the eyebrows. No one else sweated that way, with individual beads of sweat clustered on one spot, each droplet so distinct that you could actually count them - and meanwhile there were no signs of sweat anywhere else on her face.

She took his head in both her hands, turned it to one side and asked: 'Did you two fight?'

'No.'

'Is this not a bruise here on your cheek?'

'No, just a scratch from the mask.'

'H'm,' she said doubtfully. 'Do not try to fight Elewachi. He is bigger than you, big enough to be your older brother twice removed ... You must be hungry.'

Probably she had noticed how he was watching her chewing. She opened her hand and said: 'It is only a small piece of gristle bone. Would you like some?'

He shook his head and said, 'No.'

She had a habit of chewing things with such relish that his mouth would water and the back of his throat would flicker with longing, even if all she was sucking on was a piece of bone or merely a piece of bitter cola.

Another time:

'I have handed Owunna a signal twig,' his grandfather was saying to his friend, Odemelam. 'It is about his son, Elewachi. The *udara* have ripened again and again he is using the base of the tree as his latrine. Mounds of his shit are everywhere.'

'H'm,' was Odemelam's only reply.

'You know I planted a fence last year around that tree because of him, but termites have eaten some of the posts now, and the palm fronds have dried, and it is easy for him to squeeze through. But if he would only climb the fence or squeeze through it, as children often do. Or just pick a few *udara* to eat. But he picks what he wants and spreads excrement around the rest. In the old days who cared about *udara* or any fruit tree, except cola. But in the world that we are now living in, everything is for sale. But no one should sell fruit picked from another man's tree. Even when I built the fence I let some branches overhang it, so that outsiders and passers-by could help themselves to some of the fruit. But that is not enough for this Elewachi ...'

'What did Owunna say?'

'He said he had heard me.'

Odemelam chuckled, 'But what will he do?'

'I do not know, but I have a mind to do something myself and teach that child a lesson.'

'That child is a devil child. I do not know what you can do that will penetrate his tough hide. You could bury thorn plants under the tree. If his feet get stuck a number of times, perhaps he will desist.'

'But then everyone else's feet will get stuck.'

'That is true. Perhaps you should talk to de-Izhima. Give him a signal twig too. Perhaps he will call in Owunna and make him do something.'

'Perhaps I should just teach that boy a lesson myself.'

'Catching him and whipping him will do little good. I have seen him whipped almost to the death by his father, and it did no good. And that was about two years ago when he was much smaller.'

'I will burn his intestines,' the grandfather said. He then explained an old ritual.

Odemelam sighed. 'I do not know,' he said, 'if that would not be too severe. People have been known to die from it, and I am sure you do not want the guilt of his death hanging around your neck.'

'But why will not his father put him on a leash?'

'What has he not tried? He cannot be corrected...'

Early in the morning two days later, Ajuzia and his grandmother were awakened by his grandfather's screaming. 'Ayi!' he was shouting. 'Erundu, I am dead! I am worse than dead that something like this should happen to me! Ayi!'

'What?' his grandmother shouted back. 'What has happened?'

'Look at what he did! Look at what he did! Look at my loin cloth!'

'Who did? What did he do?'

'He pushed me down! He knocked me to the ground, that devil child! And ran away before I could catch him. Down into one of his shit piles! Erundu, I am covered with this boy's shit.'

'Elewachi?'

'Elewaekwesu* is the right name for him!' He tore off his loin cloth and flung it away and began stumping back and forth on his bad leg completely naked. 'Erundu, I am dead!' he kept repeating. 'Worse than dead. Oriala, boil me some water because the smell of shit is all over me. He hit me and he pushed me down. I should kill him or kill myself. Ajuziogu, my son, do you hear me? Ajuziogu, Elewachi hit your grandfather and pushed him down into a mound of shit. What will you do about it? All of my children are dead and you are the only one left. What will you do about it? Will you avenge it?'

Still naked, and shrugging off the grandmother's efforts to console him, he sat down on one of the logs laid over the water pit, with his legs outstretched, both hands inserted into his lap, his shoulders pulled up and his neck tucked in between them. He continued shouting: 'I am dead! I am worse than dead! I must kill that boy or kill myself. Ajuziogu, what will you do about it?'

He did not answer. He did not know what he would do. Various thoughts tangled with one another in his mind, tied themselves and him into knots and left him paralysed and helpless. He had been roused from sleep by his grandfather's screams, and had come rushing out with a machete before he was fully awake - a man was supposed to rush out with his weapon if he heard any shouts in the middle of the night - but he had no irresistible urge to keep on running, find Radio and cut off his head for honour and vengeance. The thought coursed through his mind that he might at least find Radio and make a noisy threat, a token show of force and allow himself to be restrained by bystanders. He staged a fight in his mind with Radio but could not envisage winning. So he let the vision go.

The sun was beginning to lift over the tops of the raffia

* 'Anticipating what the Devil will do' as opposed to Elewachi, 'anticipating what God will do'

palm trees, dissolving away the morning mist; he and his grandmother stood on either side of his grandfather's outstretched legs, he on the side of the shorter left leg.

'Come and wash yourself,' the grandmother said, sighing. 'Me, I am merely a woman of two lips. But do not worry. You do have Ajuziogu. He will not always be a boy, but will grow up some day and avenge you fully. Come on. Your bath water is getting cold ...'

Echoes of these words were now trapped in his mind. Sometimes he could feel their voices almost like physical entities bouncing between his ears. Often in the middle of the day or night, while he was doing nothing that should have made him think about them, they would suddenly surface on his consciousness and displace whatever else was on his mind: his grandfather's question, and his grandmother's answer. He was the Avenger and Vindicator. He felt like an *osu agwu*, a slave boy bought for the purpose of serving a juju, whose whole life was consumed in the service of that juju, or like a girl, who, as a child, had been promised in marriage by her parents, so that when she grew up her loyalty was already committed, her options were used up and she had no choice.

About ten days after pushing Ajuzia's grandfather into the pile of shit, Radio became sick to the point of dying from dysentery.

'I did it,' the grandfather said, to everyone who cared to ask him. 'I did it and I am glad I did it.'

'But he is dying, and his death will be upon your head.'

'He is not dying. That child will never die.'

'You have not gone to see him, and those who have gone all say that he is really in a bad way.'

'I do not wish him to die. By all the gods of this village may he not die! But if illness is the only thing that will lower his eyes a little and give him pause for a few days, then I think he more than deserves a pause ...'

Radio hung on for days, causing heavy threats to circulate in the village about what would happen if he should die,

giving his grandmother a terrible fright, and the grandfather himself more than a little pause. But, in the end, Radio did not die.

However, the illness started some rumblings which could still be heard a year later. Perhaps even longer. Perhaps that illness and the events it set in motion were a turning point in his life, and that of his grandfather. Much of what happened had to do with Orji. Chief Orji ... Orji ...

Anyway, when Radio was sick, Radio's father sent a signal twig through Old Man Izhima to say that Radio's life was in the grandfather's hands, that if anything happened to him the grandfather would be called to account.

'Is he accusing me of witchcraft?' the grandfather asked Izhima.

'That word has not been used, but the drift of his allegation is that way.'

'Then tell Owunna that I do not accept his signal twig.'

'You cannot reject a twig.'

'I have rejected this one. If Owunna is accusing me of witchcraft, then tell him for me that my name for him is *awtu!* *Awtu* that is being fucked and is pursing and smacking its lips and going *taka-taka-taka!* If he is accusing me of witchcraft, let him summon the *amala* assembly and accuse me before everyone. My ears are deaf to whispers. I do not hear them!'

Later, word had come around to Ajuzia's grandfather that Orji was priming Owunna to make the case for witchcraft. His grandfather confronted Orji and, in the argument which ensued, called the chief a thief. Orji swore that he would live to regret that statement.

'It is true,' the grandfather said. 'It is true that you have stolen before. The heart of this village is now faint and no one has dared to accuse you, but any day you wish, you can summon me before the *amala* and I will accuse you!'

'When you come before the *amala*,' Orji retorted, 'it will be to answer for your witchcraft, *Onye nsi!*'

His grandmother had been sorely worried, especially about the quarrel with Orji. 'You are defending too many fronts,' she said. 'Do not challenge a gorilla to a wrestling match. Orji is a gorilla.'

'When you have right on your side you can challenge anyone or anything. What choice do I have except to fight all the fights that find me.'

'Do not find any new fights. Lie low. A python becomes a Grand Python by conserving itself.'

When some weeks later Radio had recovered fully from his illness one might have thought that the case was over, and the words which were spoken in anger were forgotten. Not so. Orji was out to wreak vengeance on his grandfather. The case for witchcraft did not hold water before the village assembly. What his grandfather had done to bring on Radio's dysentery was drastic but recognised in tradition. He had poured gunpowder on a mound of Radio's shit, stuck a vulture's feather in it, some cowries, and *ofotofo* roots, and then he had ignited the pile. That was not witchcraft.

However, when Orji could not persuade the village assembly to bring a witching judgment against his grandfather, he moved the case to another forum of justice, the Native Court of Icheku, where he was the Head Chief.

Orji ... Orji ... The man made his heart throttle with anger.

Radio at length returned to school. His school career, however, was destined to come to an end a short time later.

It happened one Thursday afternoon during recess. Radio and two other boys pushed him into the boys' urinal - a large pit whose bottom was covered with broken bricks and mud saturated with several years of urine from each of the two hundred boys at the school.

The headmaster, Mr Irondi, was furious. He gave the other two culprits twelve strokes of his cane on the bottom and thirty-foot ridges to dig in the school farm. Radio he expelled outright, having already dubbed him incorrigible. In fact, two weeks before this incident, Mr Irondi had given

Radio a thrashing because some girls reported that he had placed a mirror on the floor at the corner of the doorway and stationed himself nearby, so that when the girls stepped over the doorway, he could look at their underwear, if they were wearing any.

If God made Radio, then He made him late on Friday afternoon, using parts left over from the day's and the week's other creations, and He did not quite have time to chisel him to refinement before He had to take a break for the Sabbath. His hands seemed to have been made for someone else - they were too large and too long for him; his legs were bowed; his feet were long and flat; he gave the impression of being loosely hung, and of needing some tightening at the joints, and maybe also in the head. He was very large at the shoulders, and his head seemed to have been formed from two bowls which met at a ridge that ran from one ear to another. His face was roughly scooped out. His nostrils flared; his nose was of the type villagers described as looking as if a large animal had stepped on it. His mouth was a severe pout, and when he forgot to hold up his lower lip, it drooped and exposed a moist and red underbelly.

Radio was the hunter, the trapper, the boy whose litany of self-praise was longer than what was accorded the most exalted of Roman Catholic saints: One in Town! Artful Dodger! One Way Casanova! City to City! Olympic Boy! Most Dangerous Prick in town! He came and went as he pleased. Usually he rode his bicycle to Aba very early in the morning and sold some goods he had bought from the local women the evening before - firewood, *garri* or fruit. He was back from Aba usually by mid-morning, always brought back a copy of the *Pilot*, the *Express* or the *Daily Times*, and a gist of whatever rumours were circulating in town. From his return till late afternoon he was in the bicycle repairer's shed, telling tall tales, trouncing anyone who dared to challenge him in a game of draughts, showing off his acrobatics on a bicycle.

Radio hadn't always been Radio. He had begun his life as Elewachi or Fyneboy, a son of the weakest-kneed man in the strongest branch of the descendants of Njikara, nephew to Izhima, third or fourth cousin to him. For as far back as he could remember, Radio had been called the bad seed. People looked at him or observed his actions and shook their heads. Before he was eight years old it seemed that even his parents had already given up on him and, by the time he was ten, every man, woman, child and juju in the village had something against him. Elders often said that he would never be able to pay fully in his present incarnation or his next for all the things he was accused of doing. Some people said they didn't like the way his eyes swam around furtively in his head, because that meant he might steal when he got older. Others said that he probably stole already, and could cite the fact that traps which he set for rabbits had been known to snare people's chickens, and some of these chickens had never been accounted for.

27
The year Mr Irondi expelled Radio from school seemed to have been the year when all of his talents were coming to full bloom. It was the year Gelegelego, a woman whose head was not correct, who for years had slept under one of the trees at Ahia Orié, became pregnant. Radio was credited with the feat. Radio, however, denied it. Gelegelego delivered the child by herself one night, and cut the umbilical cord (it was said) with her teeth. The next time Ahia Orié was in session, market women threw food to her, rags and small coins. Children formed circles around her to watch as she nursed the baby whom everyone said looked like Radio. In all of the village festivals that year, girls and women made songs of the event.

Not long afterwards, Radio left town and went to Port Harcourt. He was there about three months, during which time, by his own report, he managed to hold at least three jobs, including a stint as a houseboy for two prostitutes. And then he was back in the village as if he had never left it, except that he now had troves of experience as a city dweller,

shop clerk and prostitute's servant. Everything about prostitutes had become revealed to him in that short time, their methods of seducing men, of winning their hearts and their money, the preparations they made (for example, cleaning their thing with lime or lemon juice to dry and tighten it, asking their houseboys to sample it – that was why most prostitutes preferred young men as house servants, and Radio himself had become a great sampler). Unbelievable lore. Enough legend for a lifetime, acquired by Radio in less than three months. Sordid stuff that shocked and offended village sensibilities, made people wrinkle their faces and their noses and say to him 'Enough!' or 'Stop!'. After his return from Port Harcourt, Radio's reputation as a storymonger became even more firmly established, and everyone began calling him Bush Radio.

Six months later Radio was off again, this time as a migrant labourer to the Spanish island of Fernando Po. Two years later, back in the village with a large metal trunk, one *poto-man-lo*, one radio, one wall clock, watch, one paper carton filled – curiously – with old books and magazines all in Spanish, a few other trinkets and incidentals. His pidgin English had mellowed into a mellifluous, cosmopolitan flavour. His vernacular had acquired a much travelled, exotic inflection. His play at draughts was now flawless, his acrobatics on a bicycle unimpeachable.

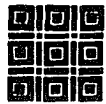
Some months later, and again the 'foreign' coating had worn off Radio, and he was fully back in step with the village, his finger on its pulse, his lips drawn and at the ready to repeat whatever he heard, to carry the news from wherever to everywhere. Radio had become fully Radio. Bush Radio! Chief Announcer! Zorro! Man Pass Man! Sea Never Dry! Rock of Ages! Rock of Gibraltar! Nimble in Danger. Artful Dodger! Immortal! One in Town! In fact every slogan that was ever written on the front of a passing lorry.

Radio seemed to find an enviable sort of easy comfort in his way of life. He was unencumbered by thought or responsibility. His very survival was not a sacred duty he

owed to anyone else. His life was not important to anyone not to his father or mother – not even to himself. He was a solo dancer who had broken out of the group formation and refused to return to it, to be re-absorbed by it. He was not dancing to the common rhythm, but challenged the music as he alone heard it, in step only with himself. Radio was free.

Ajuzia felt, that by contrast, his own life made too much incumbent upon him, he felt himself under far too much obligation. It weighed heavily on his shoulders, hung around his neck and threatened to strangle him, lay on his chest and threatened to crush it. 'Fight your own fight,' everyone had always exhorted him when he was a child. Countless times his father had said: 'Do not come to me crying!' Even when he had been in the right, even when a boy much bigger than he was had pummelled him, his father always said: 'Fight your own fight and win or lose it on your own strength. If you lose it, then bear your defeat like a man. Your father is not supposed to hit another child on your behalf...'

3



Named for Victoria, Queen of England



I WAS BORN IN OGIDI in Eastern Nigeria of devout Christian parents. The line between Christian and non-Christian was much more definite in my village forty years ago than it is today. When I was growing up I remember we tended to look down on the others. We were called in our language "the people of the church" or "the association of God." The others we called, with the conceit appropriate to followers of the true religion, the heathen or even "the people of nothing."

Thinking about it today I am not so sure that it isn't they who should have been looking down on us for our apostasy.

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CHINU A CHEBE

HOPES AND IMPEDIMENTS

Named for Victoria, Queen of England

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And perhaps they did. But the bounties of the Christian God were not to be taken lightly—education, paid jobs and many other advantages that nobody in his right senses could under-rate. And in fairness we should add that there was more than naked opportunism in the defection of many to the new religion. For in some ways and in certain circumstances it stood firmly on the side of humane behavior. It said, for instance, that twins were not evil and must no longer be abandoned in the forest to die. Think what that would have done for that unhappy woman whose heart torn to shreds at every birth could now hold on precariously to a new hope.

There was still considerable evangelical fervour in my early days. Once a month in place of the afternoon church service we went into the village with the gospel. We would sing all the way to the selected communal meeting place. Then the pastor or catechist or one of the elders having waited for enough heathen people to assemble would address them on the evil futility of their ways. I do not recall that we made even one conversion. On the contrary, I have a distinct memory of the preacher getting into serious trouble with a villager who was apparently notorious for turning up at every occasion with a different awkward question. As you would expect, this was no common villager but a fallen Christian, technically known as a *backslider*. Like Satan, a spell in heaven had armed him with unfair insights.

My father had joined the new faith as a young man and risen rapidly in its ranks to become an evangelist and church teacher. His maternal uncle, who had brought him up (his own parents having died early), was a man of note in the village. He had taken the highest-but-one title that a man of wealth and honour might aspire to, and the feast he gave the town on his initiation became a byword for open-handedness

bordering on prodigality. The grateful and approving community called him henceforth Udo Osinyi—Udo who cooks more than the whole people can eat.

From which you might deduce that my ancestors approved of ostentation. And you would be right. But they would probably have argued if the charge was made by their modern counterparts that in their day wealth could only be acquired honestly, by the sweat of a man's brow. They would probably never have given what I believe was the real but carefully concealed reason, namely that given their extreme republican and egalitarian world-view it made good sense for the community to encourage a man acquiring more wealth than his neighbours to squander it and thus convert a threat of material power into harmless honorific distinction, while his accumulated riches flowed back into the commonwealth.

Apparently the first missionaries who came to my village went to Udo Osinyi to pay their respects and seek support for their work. For a short while he allowed them to operate from his compound. He probably thought it was some kind of circus whose strange presence added lustre to his household. But after a few days he sent them packing again. Not, as you might think, on account of the crazy theology they had begun to propound but on the much more serious grounds of musical aesthetics. Said the old man: "Your singing is too sad to come from a man's house. My neighbours might think it was my funeral dirge."

So they parted—without rancour. When my father joined the missionaries the old man does not seem to have raised any serious objections. Perhaps like Ezeulu he thought he needed a representative in their camp. Or perhaps he thought it was a modern diversion which a young man might indulge in without coming to too much harm. He must have had

second thoughts when my father began to have ideas about converting him. But it never came to an open rift; apparently not even a quarrel. They remained very close to the end. I don't know it for certain, but I think the old man was the very embodiment of tolerance, insisting only that whatever a man decided to do he should do it with style. I am told he was very pleased when my father, a teacher now, had a wedding to which white missionaries (now no longer figures of fun) came in their fineries, their men and their women, bearing gifts. He must have been impressed too by the wedding feast, which might not have approached his own legendary performance but was by all accounts pretty lavish.

Before my father died, he had told me of a recent dream in which his uncle, long long dead, arrived at our house like a traveller from a distant land come in for a brief stop and rest and was full of admiration for the zinc house my father had built. There was something between those two that I find deep, moving and perplexing. And of those two generations—defectors and loyalists alike—there was something I have not been able to fathom. That was why the middle story in the Okonkwo trilogy as I originally projected it never got written. I had suddenly become aware that in my gallery of ancestral heroes there is an empty place from which an unknown personage seems to have departed.

I was baptized Albert Chinualumogu. I dropped the tribute to Victorian England when I went to the university although you might find some early acquaintances still calling me by it. The earliest of them all—my mother—certainly stuck to it to the bitter end. So if anyone asks you what Her Britannic Majesty Queen Victoria had in common with Chinua Achebe, the answer is: They both lost their Albert! As for the second name, which in the manner of my people

is a full-length philosophical statement, I simply cut it in two, making it more businesslike without, I hope, losing the general drift of its meaning.

I have always been fond of stories and intrigued by language—first Igbo, spoken with such eloquence by the old men of the village, and later English, which I began to learn at about the age of eight. I don't know for certain, but I have probably spoken more words in Igbo than English but I have definitely written more words in English than Igbo. Which I think makes me perfectly bilingual. Some people have suggested that I should be better off writing in Igbo. Sometimes they seek to drive the point home by asking me in which language I dream. When I reply that I dream in both languages they seem not to believe it. More recently I have heard an even more potent and metaphysical version of the question: In what language do you have an orgasm? That should settle the matter if I knew.

We lived at the crossroads of cultures. We still do today; but when I was a boy one could see and sense the peculiar quality and atmosphere of it more clearly. I am not talking about all that rubbish we hear of the spiritual void and mental stresses that Africans are supposed to have, or the evil forces and irrational passions prowling through Africa's heart of darkness. We know the racist mystique behind a lot of that stuff and should merely point out that those who prefer to see Africa in those lurid terms have not themselves demonstrated any clear superiority in sanity or more competence in coping with life.

But still the crossroads does have a certain dangerous potency; dangerous because a man might perish there wrestling with multiple-headed spirits, but also he might be lucky and return to his people with the boon of prophetic vision.

On one arm of the cross we sang hymns and read the Bible night and day. On the other my father's brother and his family, blinded by heathenism, offered food to idols. That was how it was supposed to be anyhow. But I knew without knowing why that it was too simple a way to describe what was going on. Those idols and that food had a strange pull on me in spite of my being such a thorough little Christian that often at Sunday services at the height of the grandeur of "Te Deum Laudamus" I would have dreams of a mantle of gold falling on me as the choir of angels drowned our mortal song and the voice of God Himself thundering: This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. Yet, despite those delusions of divine destiny I was not past taking my little sister to our neighbour's house when our parents were not looking and partaking of heathen festival meals. I never found their rice and stew to have the flavour of idolatry. I was about ten then. If anyone likes to believe that I was torn by spiritual agonies or stretched on the rack of my ambivalence, he certainly may suit himself. I do not remember any undue distress. What I do remember is a fascination for the ritual and the life on the other arm of the crossroads. And I believe two things were in my favour—that curiosity, and the little distance imposed between me and it by the accident of my birth. The distance becomes not a separation but a bringing together like the necessary backward step which a judicious viewer may take in order to see a canvas steadily and fully.

I was lucky in having a few old books around the house when I was learning to read. As the fifth in a family of six children and with parents so passionate for their children's education, I inherited many discarded primers and readers. I remember *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in an advanced

stage of falling apart. I think it must have been a prose adaptation, simplified and illustrated. I don't remember whether I made anything of it. Except the title. I couldn't get over the strange beauty of it. "A Midsummer Night's Dream." It was a magic phrase—an incantation that conjured up scenes and landscapes of an alien, happy and unattainable land.

I remember also my mother's *Ije Onye Kraist* which must have been an Igbo adaptation of *Pilgrim's Progress*. It could not have been the whole book; it was too thin. But it had some frightening pictures. I recall in particular a most vivid impression of the valley of the shadow of death. I thought a lot about death in those days. There was another little book which frightened and fascinated me. It had drawings of different parts of the human body. But I was primarily interested in what my elder sister told me was the human heart. Since there is a slight confusion in Igbo between heart and soul I took it that that strange thing looking almost like my mother's iron cooking pot turned upside down was the very thing that flew out when a man died and perched on the head of the coffin on the way to the cemetery.

I found some use for most of the books in our house but by no means all. There was one arithmetic book I smuggled out and sold for half a penny which I needed to buy the tasty *elele* some temptress of a woman sold in the little market outside the school. I was found out and my mother, who had never had cause till then to doubt my honesty—laziness, yes, but not theft—received a huge shock. Of course she redeemed the book. I was so ashamed when she brought it home that I don't think I ever looked at it again, which was probably why I never had much use for mathematics.

My parents' reverence for books was almost superstitious;

so my action must have seemed like a form of juvenile simony. My father was much worse than my mother. He never destroyed any paper. When he died we had to make a bonfire of all the hoardings of his long life. I am the very opposite of him in this. I can't stand paper around me. Whenever I see a lot of it I am seized by a mild attack of pyromania. When I die my children will not have a bonfire.

The kind of taste I acquired from the chaotic literature in my father's house can well be imagined. For instance, I became very fond of those aspects of ecclesiastical history as could be garnered from *The West African Churchman's Pamphlet*—a little terror of a booklet prescribing interminable Bible readings morning and night. But it was a veritable gold mine for the kind of information I craved in those days. It had the date of consecration for practically every Anglican bishop who ever served in West Africa; and even more intriguing, the dates of their death. Many of them didn't last very long. I remember one pathetic case (I forget his name) who arrived in Lagos straight from his consecration at St. Paul's Cathedral and was dead within days, and his wife a week or two after him. Those were the days when West Africa was truly the white man's grave, when those great lines were written of which I was at that time unaware:

Bight of Benin! Bight of Benin!

Where few come out though many go in!

But the most fascinating information I got from *Pamphlet*, as we called it, was this cryptic entry: "Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, died 430." It had that elusive and eternal quality, a tantalizing unfamiliarity which I always found moving.

I did not know that I was going to be a writer because I did not really know of the existence of such creatures until

fairly late. The folk stories my mother and elder sister told me had the immemorial quality of the sky and the forests and the rivers. Later, when I got to know that the European stories I read were written by known people, it still didn't help much. It was the same Europeans who made all the other marvellous things like the motor car. We did not come into it at all. We made nothing that wasn't primitive and heathenish.

The nationalist movement in British West Africa after the Second World War brought about a mental revolution which began to reconcile us to ourselves. It suddenly seemed that we too might have a story to tell. "Rule Britannia!" to which we had marched so unselfconsciously on Empire Day now stuck in our throat.

At the university I read some appalling novels about Africa (including Joyce Cary's much praised *Mister Johnson*) and decided that the story we had to tell could not be told for us by anyone else no matter how gifted or well intentioned.

Although I did not set about it consciously in that solemn way, I now know that my first book, *Things Fall Apart*, was an act of atonement with my past, the ritual return and homage of a prodigal son. But things happen very fast in Africa. I had hardly begun to bask in the sunshine of reconciliation when a new cloud appeared, a new estrangement. Political independence had come. The nationalist leader of yesterday (with whom it had not been too difficult to make common cause) had become the not so attractive party boss. And then things really got going. The party boss was chased out by the bright military boys, new idols of the people. But the party boss knows how to wait, knows by heart the counsel Mother Bedbug gave her little ones when the harassed owner of the bed poured hot water on them: "Be patient,"

said she, "for what is hot will in the end be cold." What is bright can also get tarnished, like the military boys.

One hears that the party boss is already conducting a whispering campaign: "You done see us chop," he says, "now you see *dem* chop. Which one you like pass?" And the people are truly confused.

In a little nondescript coffee shop where I sometimes stop for a hamburger in Amherst there are some unfunny inscriptions hanging on the walls, representing a one-sided dialogue between management and staff. The unfunniest of them all reads—poetically:

Take care of your boss
The next one may be worse.

The trouble with writers is that they will often refuse to live by such rationality.

G. Ojong Ayuk

Profile

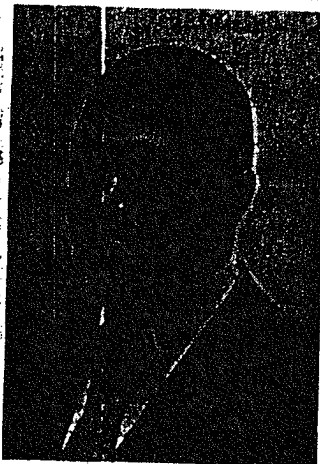
BORN: 1938.
Kembong, Manyu Division.

EDUCATION: St. Paul's Teacher Training
College, Bonjongo.
Government Teacher
Training College, Kumba.
University of Yaounde.
McGill University, Montreal,
Canada.
University of Alberta,
Edmonton, Canada.

QUALIFICATIONS: BA, MA, Ph.D African
Literature.

OCCUPATION: Lecturer in English
Department, Ecole Normale
Supérieure, Yaoundé.
Formerly worked for
Supreme Court of Yaoundé.

PUBLICATIONS: *Building a National Culture*
(Présence Africaine No. 112).



Interview

INTERVIEWER: How do you select the topics for your essays, which often seem to be sociological?

DR. AYUK: As I read, ideas just keep coming to me, though I've not had sociological training. I see the connections during the course of my reading and I pick on a central idea. I then frame my reading around that topic, about which I know little and which I want to develop. As I widen my reading I then begin to focus and to draw more specific ideas together. This involves a discarding and construction process, both from the literature of the pure works themselves and in the literary analysis of them.

INTERVIEWER: Do you see yourself writing poetry or novels later?

DR. AYUK: Maybe poetry, but I see myself spending more time on essay writing. When something fascinates me and I think about it late at night and form ideas in my mind, I want to write about it and express a certain viewpoint.

INTERVIEWER: Politics seem to be a preoccupation in your essays. What has influenced you in this direction?

DR. AYUK: It probably began in my first year at university. I spent one year in the Law Faculty here and became interested in the history of political ideas. The idea of justice and the elements of injustice in society aroused me. Then when I had a chance to go to Canada to study I took up Literature and in studying the background of Senghor and others, I saw my interests developing along the same lines. This tied in with my previous interest in politics.

INTERVIEWER: Do you write with a particular audience in mind?

DR. AYUK: The subject itself draws its own audience. Though I've been a teacher most of my life, I don't want to see myself as restricted to the classroom only. I want to reach out. This affects the nature or style of the writing in a certain way. I don't write so much with a particular audience in mind, but rather with the idea of wishing to reach out in expressing a viewpoint on topics in which I've developed a particular interest.

Building a National Culture

Introduction

Those who are familiar with writings from Africa cannot fail to acknowledge the fact that most African writers, whether in poems, plays, novels or essays, have concerned themselves very much with the theme of culture. Perhaps this has been done with the full understanding that the many years of slavery and colonial domination have, to some extent, hampered the development of indigenous African cultures. Culture can only thrive under freedom and liberty. It is for this reason that newly-independent African nations have concerned themselves with the problems of political, economic, social and cultural development – development of the nation in every aspect.

We have seen that imperialist domination means that the centre of gravity of a people's history is often dislocated and appropriated by alien rulers. The historical process is negated and, in the words of Cabral, 'it follows that imperialist domination halts or negates the process of cultural development of a people'. The period of foreign occupation of most parts of the continent was marked by fierce protracted wars, and the attainment of political independence did not automatically mean that the ground had been laid for the revival of the resurgence of African culture at the national level.

What is the meaning of culture?

This is a very difficult question to answer, considering that there are many definitions (both old and recent) put forward by specialists. In our present study we shall not attempt to give the term a new definition: rather, we shall endeavour, after a close examination of some definitions, to pick out the essential characteristics of elements that constitute the culture of a given community. For Jacques Maquet, 'culture is the totality of knowledge and behaviour, ideas and objects, that constitute the common heritage of a society'. James Ngugi defines culture as 'a way of life fashioned by a people in their collective endeavour to live and come to terms with their total environment. It is the sum of their art, their science and their social insti-

tutions'. Writing in the same vein, H. L. B. Moody states that 'we use the word "culture" to signify what is peculiarly characteristic of a particular community, including its organization, institutions, laws, customs, work, play, art, religion, music and so on – its totality'. Cabral views culture 'as an essential element in the history of a people: it is simultaneously the fruit of a people's history and the determinant of its history'.

These few definitions have some common elements. Firstly, culture has to do with a people's history, that is to say with their heritage. Secondly, culture is the sum total of a people's way of life. Thirdly, culture grows as people advance through history. We view culture as a heritage because, as each generation in a given society or community grows up, it receives or inherits the sum total that was built by other generations and makes this its property. This is a common heritage because it is shared by every member of the society. For instance, the society to which one belongs determines what one wears as clothing, what one eats as food, one's system of marriage and what one worships. Equally the economy in some societies is capitalist, whereas in others the system is essentially socialist.

Furthermore, we have seen from the above quotations that the elements that go to make up a people's culture are many and varied, because they are the products of different regions of the community and the works of people from all walks of life. Let us note for the moment the all-important fact that one of the prerequisites for nation-building is cultural fusion. For a new nation more emphasis should be placed on shared values than on regional or tribal cultures. Just as development in the economic, social and political spheres must be achieved on the national scale, it follows that culture should present a truly national outlook. A national culture in this sense should be the whole body of effort made by a people to describe, justify and praise the action through which that nation has created itself and through which it sustains itself. Let us remember that the process of cultural fusion, which ultimately involves the acquisition of shared values and modes of expression among the different sub-groups of society, will not be possible without some form of cultural

interaction. Therefore, the building of a national culture will not be complete without a clear-cut language policy. Language expresses the national culture, both in its oral and written forms, and it therefore serves as a storehouse for the present and the future. A culture is primarily transmitted orally. In the light of what we have said so far, one may be tempted to agree with the following definition:

Culture is that which, being transmitted orally by tradition, and objectively through writing and other means of expression, enhances the quality of life with meaning and value, by making possible the formulation, progressive realization, appreciation and the achievement of truth, beauty and moral worth.

The fusion of regional cultures should seek to develop the essential value of truth, beauty and moral worth.

Cultural fusion and the creation of a national culture

The key problem facing emerging African nations is that of trying to unite the different and differing tribes into one entity – a nation. It is very difficult to get the masses to accept themselves as one people.

It is difficult to achieve cultural unity in a nation that is broken up into tribal units in which each individual owes primary allegiance to the values of his village or clan (which he considers total and complete). This happens because the masses have not been taught to appreciate values other than those in their area of origin.

Therefore, to achieve cultural unity, the nation must address itself to the arduous task of 'indigenizing what is foreign, idealizing what is indigenous, nationalizing what is sectional and emphasizing what is African.' Where imported values are necessary, every attempt should be made to adapt them to the African way of life. This should be the case with our educational institutions, for instance. We cannot afford to lay aside, merely because they are foreign, values that the modern world has come to accept as really useful to human progress, but we must not accept that a system of value, however good, will apply in exactly the same way in Europe as in Africa.

In the discovery of national heroes from past history, it may be necessary to carry out a thorough research into the history of many regions that constitute the nation. We should not be satisfied simply with the records that were made for us by our colonial masters. The history of some African States is still centred around the coming of the Europeans to what are now the capital cities and chief ports, and the people they encountered. Newly-independent nations contain much more; they embrace territory far beyond the national capitals and the chief ports. Experience has shown that, even within the same nation, some regions have acquired distinctive skills. Take, for instance, our food habits: the Etons of the Central South Province of the Cameroon are very good at cutting a certain forest vegetable called *okok* (known in Manyu as *Mfu* or *eru*); the Batangas and Balundus of the South-West Province are fast in plantain peeling and there are a host of other examples. In fusing customs, some of these qualities should be brought out, so that people from other regions may be taught to imitate them.

The new African nations have the primary task of providing a measure of consensus among their different peoples: they must constantly strive to renovate and adapt national culture to the requirements of existence in the modern world. This means the setting up of institutions for defusing tensions between groups and the construction of bridges between tradition and modernity. In short, the laying of foundations for a new heritage is what we call construction or reconstruction of a national culture. Thus 'each nation ought to have its national or official language known by all citizens. Similarly, each nation must have institutions for legislation, the currency system, the market, the military or police system, education, the postal service, the transportation and communication systems'.

The shared culture of a nation should be a means of uniting the people in common beliefs, actions and values. If it achieves this, culture will fill with order that portion of life which lies beyond the pale of state intervention. 'It will fill it in such a way as at the same time to integrate its society on the basis of common attitudes, common values'. Thus, culture creates the basis of the formulation

of a common destiny and co-operation in the pursuit of that destiny.

Architects of a national culture

It is customary to think, especially in the new nations of Africa, that, since the nation cannot function as a unit in the creation of culture, the task of building a national culture devolves on the government of the day. I think that this is a way of throwing too much responsibility on the government alone. The creation of a culture and of cultural values should be a vast co-operative enterprise, depending for its progress upon the insight, energy, genius and devotion of many people in the community. This is not to deny the fact that governments have, in the past, encouraged and promoted and, indeed, continue to encourage and promote, the creation of culture.

From the study of history, we note that learning was very largely encouraged by enlightened and exceptional rulers. This tradition has continued, but also men and families that have become wealthy through commerce and industry have outstripped rulers in the patronage of cultural life. Indeed, if the Government or the State were alone to create and promote culture, there would be a danger that it would set up standards and stifle the enthusiasm of those who should be allowed to create in perfect freedom.

Again, if the State were to finance all cultural pursuits, it would tend to impose a stereotyped culture on the masses. Any attempt to try to introduce strictly defined standards would be the death of culture. After all, life itself is movement, so why should cultural activity be still or frozen? There have been many pathetic illustrations of the dismal fate of authors, composers, actors and radio and television officials under communist dictatorship in our present century. When the State takes complete control of cultural life to the extent that servility and adulation take the place of reverence for truth, the interest of the dragooned public audiences wanes before monotonous cultural products.

On the other hand, to claim that a culture can be created by all the people is a misconception, for not everybody can create. Despite exceptions, the mass of humanity is unable

to create or to devise great traditions of truth, beauty or goodness. Therefore, in every community, the people tend to follow cultural standards devised and elaborated by the elite, by those 'outstanding personalities who, by virtue of their superior insight, energy and example, succeed in some mysterious way in discovering and imparting new values or in giving new directions to the orally transmitted cultural traditions.'

The responsibility for creating national cultures lies squarely on the shoulders of politicians and creative literary artists. But in building their national culture, both must have recourse to the traditional heritage of the African people as well as to the cultures of Europe, America and Asia. To do this, they must also try to reject importation of foreign values. As we mentioned earlier, foreign values should be adapted to national conditions. However, every effort must be made to develop a technical, technological and scientific culture, in accordance with the demands of progress, for it is by so doing that we can eventually integrate our national culture into the modern world, a culture based on the critical assimilation of the gains made by mankind in the fields of art, science and literature in other parts of the world.

But what precisely should the role of the State be in building a national culture? In every nation, governments must try to use the mass media – the telephone, television, radio and films – to serve as instruments to express national experience and to support culture. For only through the use of the media will citizens develop a sense of pride, concern and commitment to the nation. They should not be led to turn outside their own countries for the creativity of others and for the values and standards by which they judge their own, especially in the fields of television, film, publishing and recording.

I do not, however, wish to imply here that we should not be open to the finest that other nations produce. No sensible person would like to suggest that a concrete wall be built against the art and thought of other lands. The major problem stems from the fact that quite often too much reliance on what we import from others seems to reflect an uncertainty about ourselves and our identity. We

tend to think that what we import must necessarily be better, and we lack confidence in the fact that we too have reached, or are capable of reaching, standards of international excellence.

We must not rely solely on the camera of foreigners to produce a photograph of ourselves. This, in my opinion, is a bleak and conservative outlook, for who will doubt the many African achievements in cultural creativity, particularly since independence? Judged by the quality of our artists and their works, we can confidently say that there is a cultural renaissance of extraordinary accomplishment taking place in our midst.

It is therefore desirable that governments should guide their citizens, to know as much as possible about their country, its history and traditions and about their national life and common achievements. It is in the national interest to give encouragement to individuals and to institutions which express national feelings, promote common understanding and add to the variety and richness of our life, both urban and rural.

In order to build a national culture, the State must try to discourage the massive intrusion of foreign cultures. Our cultural industries should be able to produce at maximum capacity, so that we too can distribute our cultural products. For only in so doing will our voice be heard beyond our frontiers.

The public, and even some politicians, sometimes fail to realize that art and culture play a crucial role in our lives. It is therefore up to the State to establish the principles, objectives and priorities of government support in these areas, thereby enabling it to respond more effectively to national needs.

The role of the State in encouraging cultural activities should not be overlooked, but it should initiate these activities by making use of the talents of the citizens. All cultural creation must aim at national identity. We cannot and should not only be identified by obvious national symbols such as flags, anthems and cards. We should try to seek new forms of identification. It would be absurd to think that we can only identify ourselves by trying to project what is old-fashioned and low grade. We should not be

identified with overgrown hair, unshaved beards, shabby dresses over which we wear a leopard skin, juju-type caps with a feather. We should be eager to know how our cultures were moulded, while at the same time extending and promoting our cultural values. We should also try to know how best we can be integrated into modern culture.

Conditions necessary for building a national culture

One of the principal consequences of colonial domination is the depersonalization of human beings in the three continents of Africa, Asia and Latin America. Colonialism, in establishing by violence the cultural unreality of the subjugated peoples, in petrifying their cultures in an immense ghetto of history, deprives the colonized of all identity

The chief factor in the building of a national culture is national sovereignty, and for African countries this really means freedom from alien rule and domination. Culture can only evolve and thrive in a free society. It follows that a complete and total liberation of the people, through the elimination of all exploitative forces, is necessary for the building of a national culture. Furthermore, there should be a sound language policy which aims at the teaching and study of one or two national or official languages. Also, schools of drama and music should be set up in the institutions of learning. In every nation, creative writing should be used to promote cultural fusion: essays, poems, textbooks and translations of outstanding works from other countries in the literary and scientific fields. A language policy must aim at promoting a shared language, such as Hausa or Swahili, with the avowed purpose of encouraging cultural homogenization that will serve as part of the means of promoting unity. Language is certainly one of the gateways to artistic, religious, economic and, in fact, every expression of human experience. Therefore, African states must not forget the pressing need to choose a linguistic code of their own which will not undermine their national cultures. Even if they are compelled by circumstances to make use of some of the world's international languages (English and French), this should not mean the total

exclusion of a national, indigenous language.

With independence, all the fetters to cultural renaissance should be removed. It should at all times be remembered that culture, like society, is essentially dynamic. The citizens of independent Africa should set about destroying the old static customs and traditions that have in the past given her the image of a zoo or museum of human evolution. The customs which are no longer necessary for the proper development of adequate human expression should be transformed or done away with. This applies to some of our tribal customs that have no significance whatsoever in a modern society.

Conclusion

In this essay we have attempted to suggest ways of building a national culture. We have examined a few definitions of culture, and we have tried to show the important elements that a national culture should embrace. With regard to the State as a promoter and creator of culture, we have tried to point out that its role need not, and should not, be preponderant.

We have also noted that a national culture should be seen as a factor in developing a national identity and in promoting unity. A national culture should be distinct from traditional ideological and political divisions. In building their cultures, African nations must remain outward looking, but the desire to remain open should not be taken to mean that indigenous cultures are to be smothered by alien models. Indeed, an authentic national culture must be built on the basis of a sound, integrated cultural policy, a policy which should deal with the overall development and be in keeping with the economic, political and social needs of the different groups that make up the nation. The aims and means of such a policy must be decided co-operatively: all those concerned – creative artists, men of religion, linguists, chiefs, elders and politicians – must be consulted. There should be a strong reliance on certain traditions, such as a national language which is essential for communication and which is the best means of transmitting the cultural heritage. Again, we have stressed the need to base a national cultural policy on the oral

tradition which is not only a kind of historical memory but also a dynamic tradition which expresses community life.

Finally, the building of a national culture is only possible if it is based on a sound political philosophy, for it is the nation's political philosophy which can either promote or mar the development of a national culture worthy of the name. But, again, a national culture should not be seen merely as the sum of several activities, but as a way of life. Culture, to borrow T. S. Eliot's phrase, is 'a peculiar way of thinking, feeling and behaving.'

Questions

- 1 Under what conditions can a culture develop and thrive?
- 2 What does the author accept as a comprehensive definition of culture?
- 3 What do you understand by the phrase 'cultural fusion'?
- 4 What role according to the author does language play in the development of culture?
- 5 How does culture enhance nationalism? What are the conditions that favour the growth of a national culture?

African Literature:

Matshoba's *Call Me Not a Man*

Dudu Jankie

My students and Botswana in general are faced with oppression as a fact of their lives. Although most American students are fortunate in not having to grapple daily with oppression, they, too, may face being oppressed because of their race, class, gender, or sexual preference. Using Mtutuzeli Matshoba's *Call Me Not a Man* (1979) as the central text in a unit on oppression would certainly benefit both my students and yours. In the first place, such a unit would help students understand the oppression they face and perhaps make them better able to respond to that oppression. In addition, such a unit may increase students' sympathies for the victims of oppression and perhaps even motivate them to act on behalf of those who are oppressed. At the very least, such a unit would promote an understanding of contemporary African political history, for as Matshoba explains in the introduction to his book,

I want to reflect through my works life on my side of the fence, the black side: So that whatever may happen in the future, I might not be set down as a blood-thirsty terrorist: So that I may say: "These were the events which shaped the Steve Biko and the Solomon Mahlangu, and the many others who came before and after them." (x)

***Call Me Not a Man*: A Brief Synopsis**

This collection of short stories reflects a commitment to exposing the evils of the South African policy of apartheid and the common experience of the Blacks under that system. All of the seven stories clearly illustrate some of the different ways that oppression can be perpetuated. As M. Vaughan (1988) clearly points out,

Rather than character, Matshoba concentrates upon situation. Each story has an exemplary quality: it treats the situation that is its subject-matter as a model situation, from which lessons can be derived. (312)

"My Friend, the Outcast" describes the plight of a Black family that was evicted from its township house under false accusations that it had rental arrears. But the truth was that government officials had accepted a bribe from a young man who needed housing desperately. After his role in the whole eviction plan was discovered, the young man decided not to take the house but rather help the family recover it.

The little story, "Call Me Not a Man," focuses on the role of Black police reservists who have been co-opted into the South African oppressive machinery in order to perpetuate the ill treatment and exploitation of helpless Black workers. The process is described as dehumanizing and degrading to the reservists, their victims, and the powerless onlookers. Matshoba provides a vivid example of how the reservists victimize a migrant worker returning home after a long time because he does not have his "passbook" with him.

"A Glimpse of Slavery" throws light on the humiliating treatment of Black workers by their white co-workers. It also

describes the system by which pass offenders and criminals are forced into becoming farm labourers (slaves in Matshoba's terms) for the duration of their sentences and the kind of horrors this involves. (Trump 1988, 39)

In "A Son of the First Generation," Matshoba comments on the Immorality Act. The ill-fated affair between Martha, a young Black woman, and

David Steenkamp, a white man, led to the birth of a new "colored" child who represents the birth of a new generation in South Africa, a child whose very existence violates the Immorality Act. Matshoba uses this story to attack these laws. He explains,

But I do not see what can be immoral in the mere existence of a human being. Even the child born after an act of rape cannot be stripped of its right to exist, once born. . . . To me a so-called "colored" human being is a brother, conceived in the same Black womb as I. Child of a sister robbed of the pride of motherhood by the man-made immorality laws. (91)

Matshoba explains that "A Pilgrimage to the Isle of Makana" was inspired by the imprisonment of his brother Diliza in Robben Island (vii). He provides a detailed description of the journey he undertook to visit him. The story is interspersed with comments on the relevant aspects of South African history and on the process center, "the place Robben Island has in African consciousness" (Vaughan 311).

In "Three Days in the Land of a Dying Illusion," the main focus is on a traveler who was going to visit friends in Umtata in Transkei. Through him and the journey he is undertaking, Matshoba focuses on the "creation" of the Transkei homeland/*bantustan* and its independence. The journey reflects that Transkei is "a land of a dying illusion."

In "Behind the Veil of Complacency," Matshoba creates an idyllic world presented by two young Black lovers, who wished that their happiness could last forever. However, their idyllic mood was completely shattered when a white shopkeeper accused Mapula (the young woman) of stealing an orange worth five cents.

Structuring the Unit

Although most students will have some experience with oppression, they may not bring a sophisticated understanding of the concept to their reading. Therefore, I developed my unit around a series of key questions designed to help students consider aspects of oppression that they might otherwise neglect.

1. What is the cause of the oppression?
2. What is the effect of the oppression on both the oppressed and the oppressor?
3. What is the response of the oppressed to their oppression?
4. Are there any possibilities for change?



These questions are a useful heuristic to help students expand their consideration of oppression. Asking the first question is important, for, as Jonathon H. Turner, Royce Singleton, Jr., and David Musick (1984) explain, "distinctive social, cultural, and biological attributes can serve as the basis for labeling targets of oppression" (4). Consistently asking this question will help students become aware of the many causes of oppression. Asking the second question is important, for it helps students understand that oppression harms both the oppressor and the oppressed, a point powerfully established in many of Matshoba's stories but one that students often neglect. Asking the third question is important because it helps students begin to evaluate the range of responses available to the characters, from acquiescence to violence, instead of simply regarding their actions as inevitable. Finally, asking the fourth question is important, for it helps students do more than simply finish a story and say, "It's so sad" or "It's so wrong." Such responses do little to solve the problems that Matshoba poses.

To introduce the unit I begin with a series of case studies that reflect different forms of oppres-

sion with which the students may be familiar. I design the case studies to highlight the importance of the key questions that I discussed above as well as to introduce vocabulary that will be useful for the rest of the unit—for example, stereotype and scapegoat. Through the course of the unit, we dis-

The second question helps students understand that oppression harms both the oppressor and the oppressed.

cuss the stories in terms of the questions. We draw connections between our experiences and the experiences portrayed in the stories. For example, when we read "Three Days in the Land of a Dying Illusion," we talk about the experience of the migrant laborers it portrays. Because many of my students have relatives who are or have been migrant laborers, we can compare their experiences to the experiences of the characters. Of course, making such connections will be more difficult for American teachers, but in this example, students could compare the experience of immigrants to the experience of the migrant laborers. Finally, I move my students to independence by having them work together to analyze the UNESCO film

This Is Apartheid (1970) and to produce a ~~short~~ play portraying an oppressive situation that we have not talked about in class.

The theme of oppression runs across ~~the~~ writing of most contemporary African writers throughout the Continent. Introducing ~~your~~ students to this theme through a unit on Mtutuzeli Matshoba's *Call Me Not a Man* will help prepare them to read other African writers and ~~it~~ will help them realize that the problems he addresses affect them as well.

University of Botswana
Gaborone, Botswana

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EJ SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO

Global Perspective—on the Home Front

Throughout the semester the object [in a freshman composition class] was to make all composition work, and particularly letter-writing, as real as possible. Following this plan, I arranged to have my class of boys write letters to a class of young men of varying ages in the night school. The young men were foreigners from the various countries of Europe. Some, who had come to visit relatives, could not return because of the war, others had been here for a year or more, but most of them had traveled to this country to become citizens. Some were well educated in their own languages, and practically all had a trade or profession.

* * * * *

[On the day the responses came] The one exclamation was, "Why, they write better than we do! . . . The questions asked by my pupils were answered very frankly, and the boys were delighted with the descriptions which they received of life in European countries. They smiled at the mistakes in English idioms, but also noticed some mistakes similar to their own in the uses of prepositions and connectives. The last day of the semester the boys wrote answers, which were much better than the first letters.

Rena M. Odell. December 1915. "Some Problems in English Composition," *EJ* 4.10: 647-52.

Navajo Students and “Postcolonial” Literature

Kurt Lucas

Cultures in Conflict

For years, the scope of English literature classes has been limited primarily to works from Great Britain and its former colony, the United States. This limitation, however, ignores the scores of other former British colonies which are producing their own “English-language” literatures. Writers from Africa, India, as well as the Caribbean and Pacific Islands are generating some of the world’s most evocative literature, springing from the cultural conflicts between traditional peoples and their colonizers. With America’s population having “shifted dramatically from a predominantly white population to one that is substantially ‘other-cultured’” (Gonzalez 1990, 16), these “post-colonial” literatures offer American students important insights into how other peoples have dealt with racial misunderstandings, inequities of power, and shifts in traditional values and beliefs.

I teach Navajo students at a small rural school near the center of the spacious Navajo reservation, where the native culture is still adjusting to outside influences caused by—as my students say—“Anglos.” Since these students are adjusting to a “British-influenced” culture, they generally relate better to themes in postcolonial literature than to the themes found in more traditional English texts. Realizing this, the school administrators and I decided to develop a twelve-week course for second-semester seniors called “Cultures in Conflict: ‘Post-Colonial’ Literature from Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific.”

Getting Started

Attempting to cover so many diverse cultures and geographic regions in just a few weeks seems a bit

intimidating—for the teacher and the students. The prospects become less daunting, however, when everyone recognizes how similarly various native peoples have responded to European colonizers. The themes we start with in West African literature resurface throughout the course. To ensure a smooth passage among regions, I rely heavily on videos to provide a shared picture of the places we will discuss while investigating written works.

On the first day, I ask the students to brainstorm characteristics of the three geographic regions we plan to study. They tend to emphasize the differences between themselves and post-colonial people, including many negative stereotypes they have gleaned from television and movies. For example, their list for Africa often contains derogatory terms like “spears,” “slaves,” and “savages.” In order to challenge these stereotypes and open students’ eyes to similarities between their own situation and that of postcolonial people, I show a movie called *Powaqqatsi* (1987), which offers overviews of both traditional and modern life in parts of Africa, Latin America, India, and Polynesia. As Native Americans, these students readily recognize how both they and postcolonial people have adapted their traditional lifestyles to survive in an increasingly “Westernized” world. With this comparison established, we begin our worldwide tour of English literature written outside the so-called “first world.”

Literature from Africa

I teach works from three different African regions—West Africa, East Africa, and Southern Africa—using each to investigate a different aspect

of the colonial period. To study a native people's first encounter with Europeans, we visit West Africa, closest to Europe, for our initial stop. Early contact with the English made Nigeria fertile ground to produce postcolonial literature's seminal work, Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1959). These lines from William Butler Yeats' poem "The Second Coming" provide this novel with both its title and recurring theme: "Things fall apart; the center cannot hold; / Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world" (314).

The book opens with Okonkwo, the main character, standing at the center of his culture, having employed the traditionally accepted means of muscle and hard work to earn respect and prosperity. However, the arrival of the British in the late 1800s, with their new religion and educational system, alters the tribe's path to success. Okonkwo, unwilling to forsake his tribe's traditions, refuses to change, causing his tragic self-destruction. This novel's theme of traditions falling apart and giving way to cultural anarchy holds great appeal for modern students who grow up in a world much different from the one their parents knew as children.

Next, the class travels forward several decades and across the continent to East Africa, where we study a traditional "song" from Uganda, Okot p'Bitek's *Song of Lawino* (1966). This ninety-page poem sung by a traditional woman consists of thirteen "verses," each telling of her husband's decision to abandon his traditions and imitate the white colonialists. While reading the poem, the

**"Postcolonial" literatures offer
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students make powerful connections between the cultural changes happening to Lawino's people and the changes they see in their Navajo tribe. On their reservation, as in p'Bitek's Uganda, many have rejected the old ways, while others have adapted traditions to create a culture akin to but distinct from the original. Lawino laments this molting of her people's customs, fearful the resulting metamorphosis will produce some rough beast

inferior to her present culture. In the following excerpt, she contrasts different animals in an attempt to stop her husband, Ocol, from aping the whites:

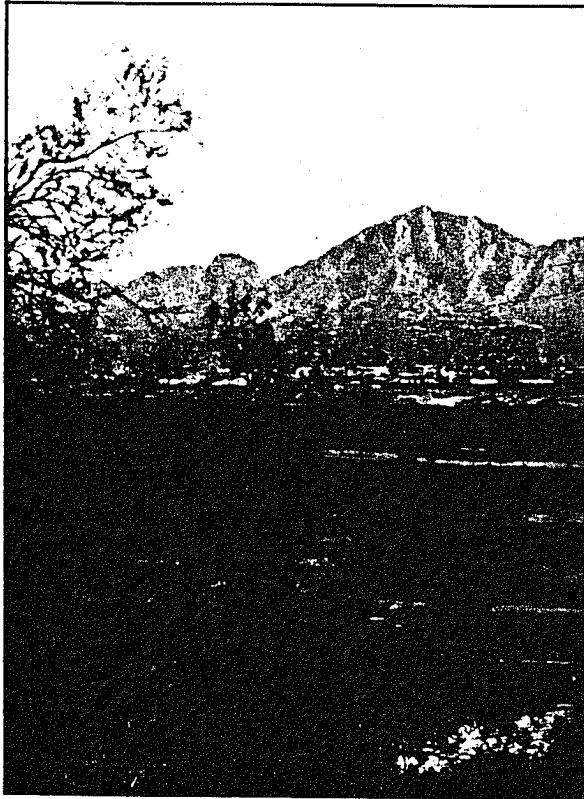
No leopard
Would change into a hyena,
And the crested crane
Would hate to be changed
Into the bold-headed,
Dung-eating vulture,
The long-necked and graceful giraffe
Cannot become a monkey. (56)

Passages like this encourage Navajo students to consider their own fears of cultural change. We use Ocol's situation to discuss how the modern machines—especially VCRs, compact disc players, satellite dishes—seduce old cultures into changing. Our talks reveal the students' fear that they might lose their culture if their people are unaware of outside influences. As Anthony wrote in his journal,

I would feel lost if I lost my traditional ways. Just to know how some traditional ways are is just what I want. The way Ocol should [act is] taking good things from the white ways and using or applying them to his way of life.

We study two other works before leaving East Africa, both dealing with the Mau Mau revolts in Kenya during the 1950s. At that time, the British were well established; consequently, many native Kenyans had learned enough about British customs to choose how they would emulate the British and to what extent they would maintain their own traditions. Since different native groups adapted and adopted British ways to varying degrees, conflict arose not only between Africans and British but among native peoples as well. Such conflict within and between groups is the theme of the Kenyan film, *The Kitchen Toto* (1987). Mwangi, the film's main character, is trapped between cultures, unable to decide where to place his loyalty: with the British whose money supports his family or with the Kikuyu rebels, the people of his tribe. His indecision proves fatal. Our class uses the film to discuss the difficulties of being stranded between two cultures.

We delve further into this issue by studying about the same revolts as presented in author wa Thiong'o Ngugi's novel *Weep Not Child* (1964). In this work, the Kikuyu tribe is divided against itself, with some members trying to maintain their traditions and regain their lands, while others attempt



to imitate the British in order to prosper financially. The book's main character, Njoroge, is caught in the middle, forced to choose between the traditions of his family and the lure of the colonialists' education system. The resulting conflict between the different factions destroys many of the novel's characters, producing both anguish and a loss of self-identity for Njoroge. The students relate well to this work, realizing that they too are searching for a balance between their Navajo traditions and the promises of Anglo education. Our discussions focus on how to achieve equilibrium between two cultures.

Our next journey takes us to Southern Africa, where the culture conflicts we study are more current, often appearing in the news. We start by viewing Richard Attenborough's film *Cry Freedom* (1987), which shows the racial segregation and inequality of South Africa's apartheid system. Taking place in the mid-1970s, just after the student protests in Soweto, this film recounts the story of black-rights activist Stephen Biko, who died while detained by South Africa's security police. The images of racial injustice prepare these Native American students for the hate based on skin color that we study in other South African works.

We continue to examine South Africa's daily violence and oppression by reading white South African André Brink's *A Dry White Season* (1979). Though naive at first, the novel's main character, Ben Du Toit, becomes increasingly aware of his country's racial injustice as he investigates the death of a black acquaintance. South Africa's institutionalized repression attempts to force Ben into abandoning his quest for the truth; Ben's refusal to stop costs him his life. The book's final message calls readers to join the struggle against racial supremacy and cultural intolerance:

[I wrote] it down. To report what I know. So that it will not be possible for any man ever to say again: *I knew nothing about it.* (316)

As Navajos, the students are outraged by the novel's theme of human dignity torn asunder, a theme which stimulates lengthy discussions about race, human injustice, and collective responsibility for social wrongs.

Having investigated some of apartheid's recent history, we travel back in time to study two of Athol Fugard's plays. The first, "*Master Harold* . . . *and the boys*" (1982), takes place in Port Elizabeth in 1950, just two years after many of the most heinous apartheid laws were established. This play, with its young white schoolboy and two black men, shows how caring interaction and intimate understanding can create cross-racial connections, while feelings of racial superiority can rip those human bonds apart. As Mark Cummings (1989) commented in an earlier issue of *English Journal*,

Throughout the play, images of community and love such as a ballroom, a dance, a winner's trophy, kite-flying, and the name "Hally" are set against images of isolation and hate such as a whites-only bench, a collision, a chamberpot, a racist joke, and the name "Master Harold." (71)

My students readily feel the play's ache and fury, empathizing with the characters' failed attempts to create a world without collisions by "getting the steps right." After reading the script, we watch a video version of the same play starring Matthew Broderick and black actors Zakes Mokae and John Kani (1986). Their combined performance brings the immediacy of apartheid's racism directly into our classroom. We follow this video by watching another Fugard play called *Sizwe Banzi Is Dead* (1978) about the country's dreaded, inhumane—and recently repealed—pass laws. In this produc-

tion, a black man named Sizwe must choose between the self-dignity of keeping his name or the self-debasement of destroying that name to take the name of a dead man. Apartheid entraps Sizwe, forcing him to "kill" his own name in order to support his family. My students relate Sizwe's loss to losses in their own tribe, explaining how they as Navajos have painfully had to sacrifice parts of their culture in order to ensure the tribe's survival.

Literature from the Caribbean

Recrossing the Atlantic to study the Caribbean, the students find island nations where most white colonists have left to resume lives in Europe, leaving behind only vestiges of their colonial languages, values, and political systems. The video I use to introduce the Caribbean is in French, filmed on the island of Martinique. *Sugar Cane Alley* (1985) reveals the economic inequities between different Caribbean social classes while recounting one boy's successful use of education to rise through those classes. The film often shocks students by showing them how regimented—and yet vital—schooling is in the Caribbean. This realization of education's importance helps them approach the next work we read, Jamaica Kincaid's *Annie John* (1983), a coming-of-age biography describing a young girl's school experiences on the island of Antigua. Annie's success in education takes her farther and farther away from her family and friends, eventually separating her from her culture when she leaves to study in England. As a class, we consider how education lures some Navajos away from the reservation as well. With this in mind, the students reflect on their own definitions of success, examining how they might use education as a tool for their culture's and their own advancement.

We continue our study of Caribbean class struggles by watching a film called *The Harder They Come* (1972) (which, by the way, is the only English-language film with English subtitles I have ever seen). This film, starring reggae singer Jimmy Cliff, is set on the island of Jamaica and depicts a rural man coming to Kingstown to exploit his musical talents for fame and prosperity.

Unfortunately, his ignorance of city life and his impatience with his slowly rising social status destroy him, mostly because the upper classes are determined to prevent such upward mobility. A similar theme of social oppression resurfaces in *The Wine of Astonishment* by Earl Lovelace (1982). This

novel from Trinidad shows how blacks have tried different paths in search of success: some have found satisfaction practicing the traditions they brought from Africa; others have abandoned their people, copying the colonialists in order to take high-status, high-paying government jobs. Pondering the reasons behind this cultural exodus, the novel's narrator speculates that the cause may lie in the culture's

weakness and not the wickedness of our children that turn them away from us and from their self to try to be something else where they could feel that they is human being.

The students recognize this danger of a culture losing its people if that culture loses its vitality. As Kim responded in her essay,

A weak culture is born of weak people. If the newer generations get lazy and don't pass on their culture to their children, then the whole culture weakens. We must care enough to pass on all we know to our children to keep our cultures alive.

Literature from the Pacific

For our last stop, we traverse the Pacific Ocean to investigate Polynesia, where we begin our study by watching a film from New Zealand called *Utu* (1986). The title, roughly translated from Maori, means "revenge" or "paying back" for either good or evil deeds. This term describes the characters' quest for justice during the country's Maori revolts of the late nineteenth century. With few exceptions, the scenery and costumes in the film are similar to what is in most "cowboy and Indian" films my students know. Several students have even asked whether portions of the film were filmed in Arizona or Utah. I use this familiarity as an entry into one of the film's themes: a native people's attempt to reclaim lost lands and regain its culture. My students begin by cheering on the Maoris, hopeful the natives will avenge the army's slaughter of a village. However, by the end of the film the class realizes that no member of either culture is innocent: all share responsibility for the devastation of both peoples.

We follow this film with our final novel for the course, Albert Wendt's *Sons for the Return Home* (1973). Set mainly in New Zealand, this story tells of a native Samoan using an interracial relationship to bridge the more traditional world of his parents and the more "Westernized" world of New Zealand. The relationship fails because both cultures, reluctant to accept one another, leave the

main character to retreat inside himself. His introspective search leads him to a clearer sense of self—a self almost totally free from outside cultural influences. The novel ends with the main character literally between cultures, pondering what his new self might be and what rejecting his

selves—students can begin to grasp and overcome the barriers that divide people, whether in different countries or different neighborhoods.

Rock Point Community School
Rock Point, Arizona 86545

**The scenery and the costumes
in the film are similar
to what is in most
“cowboy and Indian” movies
my students know.**

culture means. Many of the Navajo students in my class fear that any people will become lost if they forsake their traditions; yet, with so many cultures in America mixing and evolving, the ability to leave one's ways long enough to walk around in another person's values and beliefs seems an important skill to learn. This novel illustrates for the students just how challenging trying on the “shoes” of another culture can be.

For me, the most satisfying part of the course is reading the final evaluations, since many students leave the course having learned a new pride in their own culture and new sensitivity to other people's customs. As Ernestine wrote,

From taking your class, I became aware of my Navajo culture. Before, I used to think that I was never really aware of the importance of the Navajo culture. I have been taught about it since I can remember, but I thought of it as just being there—the same as traditions to be practiced forever, but I realized that many changes are going to occur. As of now, my culture is the most important thing because like I have said before it represents me and my people. . . . Thank you for waking me up and making me realize the importance of my culture and the respect for other cultures.

As America becomes more culturally diverse, many students—not just Native Americans—can profit from studying “postcolonial” literature, because it enables people to recognize similarities and differences between their own cultures and the many cultures they will encounter during their lives. As they become more aware of these other peoples—no matter how different from them-

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DAYS IN NEW YORK¹

Here I live in a garbage can.
The pile grows bigger each week
with the broken homes
splintered all around.
A black cat chases a shadow
down the passageway:
its whiskers presage another snowstorm.

The white of the negro maid's eyeballs
is the only clean thing here,
besides, of course, the quart gallon carton of milk
squatting at my door.
They wouldn't believe it here
that Ganges water can work miracles:
in spite of the cartloads
of dead men's ashes and bones
daily offerings to the river.

I open each morning my neighbour's *Times*,
whisked away from his door
before he stirs.
Gloved hands leave no fingerprints.
And a brisk review of all our yesterdays is no sin.

En route to perdition,
I sometimes stop at Grand Central to piss.
Where else can one ease one's nerves
when the bladder fills up
like a child's balloon?
In the Gents, each in his stall,
we stand reduced to the thing itself.
Questions catapult in the air:
'Are you a Puerto Rican?
A Jamaican? A Red Indian?'

¹ This is a revised version, the original of which appears in *Subterfuges* (Oxford University Press, 1976) as 'A Letter from New York'.

I look for the feathers on my skull,
a band around my forehead.

And mumble, 'No, a brown Indian,
from the land of Gandhi.'
The stranger briskly zips his soul
and vanishes past the shoeblack,
who turns to shine a lanky New Yorker,
swaddled in the high chair like Lincoln.

Incidentally, there are no beggars at Grand Central.

Only eyes, eyes, eyes,
staring at lamp-posts.

Back in my den after dusk
I banded the day's bruises.

Outside the window perches the grey sky,
(an ominous bird wrapped in nuclear fog.

At night the Voices of America
break in upon my tenuous frequency,
intoning the same fact three times,
till the sediment grips the Hudson's soul.

But my soul is still my own.
For, every Sunday morning, I descend
into purgatory,
the basement where three laundromats
gulp down nickels,
to wash all our sins.

But the brown of my skin defies
all bleachers.

How long will this eclipse last?

Come in, and see for yourself.
It's taken thirty odd years.
Now, a small hand will do.

10
It was the August heat
brought the stars to a boil,
and you asked me about constellations.

Yet, by itself, your hand was a galaxy
I could reach, even touch
in the sand with my half-inch telescopic

fingers. Overwhelm the flight
of human speech. Thus celebrate
something so perishable, trite.

from **HOMECOMING**

My tongue in English chains,
I return, after a generation, to you.
I am at the end

of my dravidic tether,
hunger for you unassuaged.
I falter, stumble.

Speak a tired language
wrenched from its sleep in the *Kural*,¹
teeth, palate, lips still new

to its agglutinative touch.
Now, hooked on celluloid, you reel
down plush corridors.

¹ Tamil classic of the third or fourth century A.D. by Valluvar.

3
And so it eventually happened—
a family reunion not heard of
since grandfather died in '59—in March

this year. Cousins arrived in Tiruchchanur
in overcrowded private buses,
the dust of unlettered years

clouding instant recognition.
Later, each one pulled,
sitting crosslegged on the steps

of the choultry,¹ familiar coconuts
out of the fire
of rice-and-pickle afternoons,

Sundari, who had squirrelled up and down
forbidden tamarind trees in her long skirt:
every morning with me,

stood there, that day, forty years taller,
her three daughters floating
like safe planets near her.

I made myself an expert
in farewells. An unexpected November
shut the door in my face:

I crashed, a glasshouse
hit by the stone of Father's death.
At the burning ghat

relations stood like exclamation points.
The fire stripped his unwary body
of the last shred of family likeness.

¹ Inn.

I am my father now.
The lines of my hands
hold the fine compass of his going:

I shall follow. And after me,
my unborn son, through the eye of this needle
of forgetfulness.

8

With paper boats boys tickle her ribs,
and buffalos have turned her to a pond.
There's eaglewood in her hair

and stale flowers. Every evening,
as bells roll in the forehead of temples,
she sees a man on the steps

clean his arse. Kingfishers and egrets,
whom she fed, have flown
her paps. Also emperors and poets

who slept in her arms. She is become
a sewer, now. No one has any use for Vaikai,
river, once, of this sweet city.

10

The street in the evening tilts homeward
as traffic piles up.
It is then I stir about.

Rise from the table and shake the dust
from my eyes. Pick up
my glasses and look for myself

in every nook and corner
of the night. The pavement turns informer
hearing my steps. A pariah dog

slams an alley in my face.
I have exchanged the world
for a table and chair. I shouldn't complain.

12

I see him now sitting at his desk.
The door is open. It is evening.
On the lawns the children play.
He went for the wrong gods from the start.
And marriage made it worse.
He hadn't read his Greek poets well:

better to bury a woman than marry her.
Now he teaches. Reviews verse
written by others. Is invited to conferences

and attends them. How long it had taken
him to learn he had no talent
at all, although words came easy.

One can be articulate about nothing.
Or, was it simply
his god had left him?

Pedalling his bicycle glasses, he asks,
'What's it like to be a poet?'
I say to myself, 'The son of a bitch

fattens himself on the flesh of dead poets.
Lines his pockets with their blood.
From his fingertips ooze ink and paper,

as he squats on the dungheap
of old texts and obscure commentaries.
His eyes peal off.

Where would His Eminence be
but for the poets who splashed about
in the Hellespont or burned in the Java Sea?

7

R. PARTHASARATHY

14

I am no longer myself as I watch
the evening blur the traffic
to a pair of obese headlights.

I return home, tired,
my face pressed against the window
of expectation. I climb the steps

to my flat, only to trip over the mat
outside the door. The key
goes to sleep in my palm.

I fear I have bungled again.

That last refinement of speech
terrifies me. The balloon

of poetry has grown red in the face
with repeated blowing. For scriptures
I, therefore, recommend

the humble newspaper: I find
my prayers occasionally answered there.

I shall, perhaps, go on
like this, unmindful of day
melting into the night.

My heart I have turned inside out.

Hereafter, I should be content,
I think, to go through life
with the small change of uncertainties.

DHURUVAKUMAR JOSHI (INDIA)

Homecoming

DHURUVAKUMAR JOSHI

I had to leave the shores
that they should see fit
to do me honor.
Now, accounts of my passage
through the Golden Gate
adorn drawing-room gossip-shelves.

Advice they want on how
to squeeze a passage
to a University on an assistantship.

Sneakily, in the other room,
daughters (ripe and waiting)
are chaperoned before me.

Friends who mocked
at my exercise of freedom once
now pat me.

Fathers and mothers
uncles and aunts
cousins-in-law

scan me like customs men, before
certifying me fit
for their homely girl.

A brief exile is all I had.
It is over. And that
has made all the difference.

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A British Military Graveyard In The Himalayas

TONY CONNOR (INDIA)

This wife, "Much loved, much cherished,"
crumbles among long grasses.
She is no more remembered
than the sad young subaltern
who composed her epitaph,
then went on to die elsewhere—
surrounded by grown children,
perhaps.

She was "nineteen years"—
whether she died of fever
or in childbirth the gravestone
does not say. Certainly she
was well-born: the other ranks
and their women were buried
lower down — with no such view
of distant Tibetan peaks.
Here, daisy and wild iris
sweeten the indignity
of forgotten vows, and words
the weather has scoured away;
tall pines and a grand vista
stand over the broken gate
like an apter reminder
of Imperial conceit,
where everything is broken: —
tombs toppling, vaults cracked open,
urns askew in undergrowth.

I doubt they'd have allowed me
to enter the gate before
Independence, — certainly
not as a corpse. Even now
I'm incongruous among
these dead Public School tyrants
and the extravagantly

phrased eulogies they composed
for one another. I can't
think of them as *my people*;
only "Much loved, much cherished"—
whose name has flaked from the stone —
moves my curiosity
towards unearned affection.
Indeed, the dutiful men
rotting here at attention,
are nobody's people now —
unless Mr. Chatterjee,
(who owns most of the mountain,
so it's said) claims them as his.



A Quick Glimpse of Buddha's Children On The American TV Between Its Commercials

Kampuchean boy
after his daily breakfast
of Thai wind, ricemud, raindust,
covers his nose from his sister
who sleeps through it—
She chose to breed flies in her eyes,
nostrils, in her sweet red mouth.
He can already see her
in Buddha's heaven
rainbows in her wings.

The Moon

DINA NATH NADIM

The moon looked like a pancake as she rose
behind the hills. She looked dull as a robe
of pampore tweed worn off threadbare and torn
at the collar-band out of which peep the scars
on a marble breast, and pale as a counterfeit
silver coin which robs a coolie of her mite.

The moon looked like a pancake and
the hills looked hungry; and the clouds put out
the fire in western skies. But in the east
the wood nymphs lit the moon's cooking stove
in whose soft glow shoots of the steaming rice
seemed to spring upon the hills. I whispered
hope to my hungry belly, and gazed and gazed,
with hungry looks, at the moon-flooded sky.

Translated from the Kashmiri by J. L. Kaul

Two Poems

KESHAV MALIK

In Praise of Guns

The clouds burst in praise of guns,
Especially when Cains rehearse
The ancient curse.

Then trumpeters trumpet the hearse
Of each brave son—
Circumcised and non.

God in heaven, who pour out in such fun,
When scorn answers in cold coin of scorn
Tooth for tooth, eye for eye.

From age to age so the show goes on—
The soul's gaze fixed
On mirroring pools of blood.

The clouds burst in praise of guns
In praise of sons—
A red thread running through a hole in lungs.

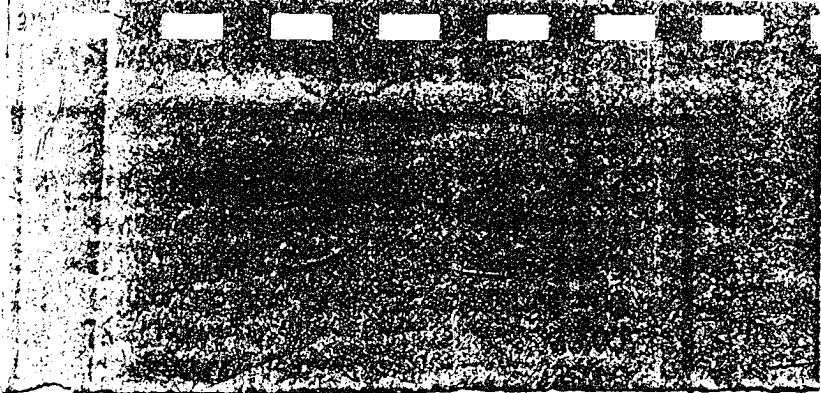
Lightning and thunder commend violence,
The charioteer winks approval, let
Shot answer shot.

The Date

Where would you like to meet her?
Suddenly, under the smooth hypnotic wheels
Upon the elegant highway! Or
Would you rather care to greet her
Accidentally, head on, by the swaying necklace
Of the well-lit bay. Perhaps
You will neck her by night
In the slim streets of the beloved

(INDIA)

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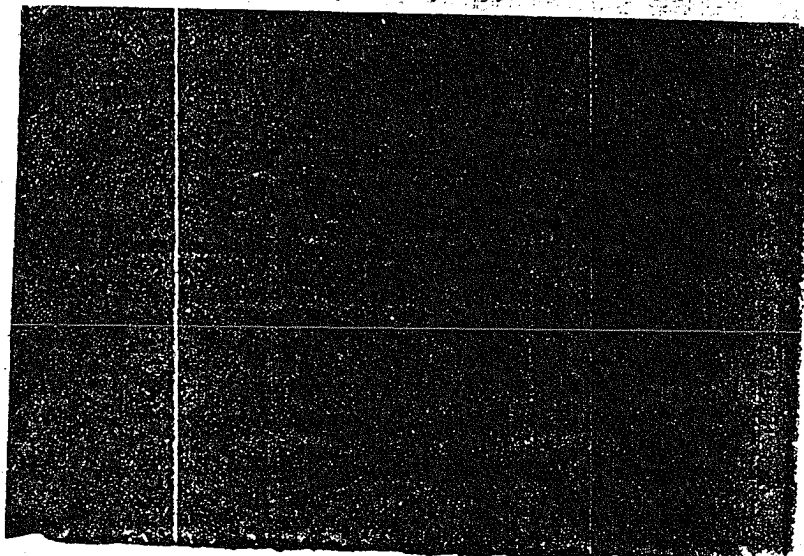
Circumcision

Having hauled down my pyjamas they dragged me, all legs and teeth, that fateful afternoon, to a stool before which the barber hunkered with an open cut—throat. He stropped it on his palm with obvious relish. I did not like his mustachios, nor his conciliatory smile. Somehow they made me sit, and two cousins held a leg apiece. The barber looked at me; I stared right back, defying him to start something. He just turned aside to whisper to my cousin who suddenly cried 'oh look at that golden bird', and being only six I looked up; which was all the time he needed to separate me from my prepuce. 'Bastard, sonofapig' I roared, 'sister-ravisher, you pimp and catamite', while he applied salve and bandaged the organ. Beside myself with indignation and pain, I forgot the presence of elders, and cursed and cursed in the graphic vocabulary of the lanes, acquired at leap-frog, marbles, and blindman's buff.

(PAKISTAN) RAFAT

Still frothing at the mouth they fetched me to bed, where an anxious mother kissed and consoled me. It was not till I was alone that I dared to look down at my naked middle. When I saw it so foreshortened, raw, and swathed in lint, I burst into fresh tears. Dismally I wondered if I would ever be able to pee again.

This was many many years ago. I have since learnt it was more than a ritual, for by the act of a pull and downward slash, they prepare us for the disappointments at the absence of golden birds life will ask us to look at between our circumcision and death.



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15 *Playing the English Gentleman*

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My faith in vegetarianism grew on me from day to day. Salt's book whetted my appetite for dietetic studies. I went in for all the books available on vegetarianism and read them. One of these, Howard Williams's *The Ethics of Diet*, was a 'biographical history of the literature of humane dietetics from the earliest period to the present day'. It tried to make out that all philosophers and prophets from Pythagoras and Jesus down to those of the present age were vegetarians. Dr Anna Kingsford's *The Perfect Way in Diet* was also an attractive book. Dr Allinson's writings on health and hygiene were likewise very helpful. He advocated a curative system based on regulation of the dietary of patients. Himself a vegetarian, he prescribed for his patients also a strictly vegetarian diet. The result of reading all this literature was that dietetic experiments came to take an important place in my life. Health was the principal consideration of these experiments to begin with. But later on religion became the supreme motive.

Meanwhile my friend had not ceased to worry about me. His love for me led him to think that, if I persisted in my objections to meat-eating, I should not only develop a weak constitution, but should remain a duffer, because I should never feel at home in English society. When he came to know that I had begun to interest myself in books on vegetarianism, he was afraid lest these studies should muddle my head; that I should fritter my life away in experiments, forgetting my own work, and become a crank. He therefore made one last effort to reform me. He one day invited me to go to the theatre. Before the play we were to dine together at the Holborn Restaurant, to me a palatial place and the first big restaurant I had been to since leaving the Victoria Hotel. The stay at that hotel had scarcely been a helpful experience, for I had not lived there with my wits about me. The friend had planned to take

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Playing the English Gentleman . 61

me to this restaurant evidently imagining that modesty would forbid any questions. And it was a very big company of diners in the midst of which my friend and I sat sharing a table between us. The first course was soup. I wondered what it might be made of, but durst not ask the friend about it. I therefore summoned the waiter. My friend saw the movement and sternly asked across the table what was the matter. With considerable hesitation I told him that I wanted to inquire if the soup was a vegetable soup. 'You are too clumsy for decent society,' he passionately exclaimed. 'If you cannot behave yourself, you had better go. Feed in some other restaurant and await me outside.' This delighted me. Out I went. There was a vegetarian restaurant close by, but it was closed. So I went without food that night. I accompanied my friend to the theatre, but he never said a word about the scene I had created. On my part of course there was nothing to say.

That was the last friendly tussle we had. It did not affect our relations in the least. I could see and appreciate the love by which all my friend's efforts were actuated, and my respect for him was all the greater on account of our differences in thought and action.

But I decided that I should put him at ease, that I should assure him that I would be clumsy no more, but try to become polished and make up for my vegetarianism by cultivating other accomplishments which fitted one for polite society. And for this purpose I undertook the all too impossible task of becoming an English gentleman.

The clothes after the Bombay cut that I was wearing were, I thought, unsuitable for English society, and I got new ones at the Army and Navy Stores. I also went in for a chimney-pot hat costing nineteen shillings – an excessive price in those days. Not content with this, I wasted ten pounds on an evening suit made in Bond Street, the centre of fashionable life in London; and got my good and noble-hearted brother to send me a double watch-chain of gold. It was not correct to wear a ready-made tie and I learnt the art of tying one for myself. While in India, the mirror had been a luxury permitted on the days when the family barber gave me a shave. Here I wasted ten minutes every day before a huge mirror, watching myself arranging my tie and parting my hair in the

correct fashion. My hair was by no means soft, and every day it meant a regular struggle with the brush to keep it in position. Each time the hat was put on and off, the hand would automatically move towards the head to adjust the hair, not to mention the other civilized habit of the hand every now and then operating for the same purpose when sitting in polished society.

As if all this were not enough to make me look the thing, I directed my attention to other details that were supposed to go towards the making of an English gentleman. I was told that it was necessary for me to take lessons in dancing, French and elocution. French was not only the language of neighbouring France, but it was the *lingua franca* of the Continent over which I had a desire to travel. I decided to take dancing lessons at a class and paid down £3 as fees for a term. I must have taken about six lessons in three weeks. But it was beyond me to achieve anything like rhythmic motion. I could not follow the piano and hence found it impossible to keep time. What then was I to do? The recluse in the fable kept a cat to keep off the rats, and then a cow to feed the cat with milk, and a man to keep the cow and so on. My ambitions also grew like the family of the recluse. I thought I should learn to play the violin in order to cultivate an ear for Western music. So I invested £3 in a violin and something more in fees. I sought a third teacher to give me lessons in elocution and paid him a preliminary fee of a guinea. He recommended Bell's *Standard Elocutionist* as the text-book, which I purchased. And I began with a speech of Pitt's.

But Mr Bell rang the bell of alarm in my ear and I awoke.

I had not to spend a lifetime in England, I said to myself. What then was the use of learning elocution? And how could dancing make a gentleman of me? The violin I could learn even in India. I was a student and ought to go on with my studies. I should qualify myself to join the Inns of Court. If my character made a gentleman of me, so much the better. Otherwise I should forego the ambition.

These and similar thoughts possessed me, and I expressed them in a letter which I addressed to the elocution teacher, requesting him to excuse me from further lessons. I had taken only two or three. I wrote a similar letter to the dancing teacher, and went personally to the violin teacher with a request to dispose of the

violin for any price it might fetch. She was rather friendly to me, so I told her how I had discovered that I was pursuing a false idea. She encouraged me in the determination to make a complete change.

This infatuation must have lasted about three months. The punctiliousness in dress persisted for years. But henceforward I became a student.

16 Changes

Let no one imagine that my experiments in dancing and the like marked a stage of indulgence in my life. The reader will have noticed that even then I had my wits about me. That period of infatuation was not unrelieved by a certain amount of self-introspection on my part. I kept account of every farthing I spent, and my expenses were carefully calculated. Every little item, such as omnibus fares or postage or a couple of coppers spent on newspapers, would be entered, and the balance struck every evening before going to bed. That habit has stayed with me ever since, and I know that as a result, though I have had to handle public funds amounting to lakhs, I have succeeded in exercising strict economy in their disbursement, and instead of outstanding debts have had invariably a surplus balance in respect of all the movements I have led. Let every youth take a leaf out of my book and make it a point to account for everything that comes into and goes out of his pocket, and like me he is sure to be a gainer in the end.

As I kept strict watch over my way of living, I could see that it was necessary to economize. I therefore decided to reduce my expenses by half. My accounts showed numerous items spent on fares. Again my living with a family meant the payment of a regular weekly bill. It also included the courtesy of occasionally taking members of the family out to dinner, and likewise attending parties with them. All this involved heavy items for conveyances, especially as, if the friend was a lady, custom required that the man should pay all the expenses. Also dining out meant extra cost, as no

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deduction could be made from the regular weekly bill for meals not taken. It seemed to me that all these items could be saved, as likewise the drain on my purse caused through a false sense of propriety.

So I decided to take rooms on my own account, instead of living any longer in a family, and also to remove from place to place according to the work I had to do, thus gaining experience at the same time. The rooms were so selected as to enable me to reach the place of business on foot in half an hour, and so save fares. Before this I had always taken some kind of conveyance whenever I went anywhere, and had to find extra time for walks. The new arrangement combined walks and economy, as it meant a saving of fares and gave me walks of eight or ten miles a day. It was mainly this habit of long walks that kept me practically free from illness throughout my stay in England and gave me a fairly strong body.

Thus I rented a suite of rooms; one for a sitting room and another for a bedroom. This was the second stage. The third was yet to come.

These changes saved me half the expense. But how was I to utilize the time? I knew that Bar examinations did not require much study, and I therefore did not feel pressed for time. My weak English was a perpetual worry for me. Mr (afterwards Sir Frederic) Lely's words, 'graduate first and then come to me,' still rang in my ears. I should, I thought, not only be called to the Bar, but have some literary degree as well. I inquired about the Oxford and Cambridge University courses, consulted a few friends, and found that, if I elected to go to either of these places, that would mean greater expense and a much longer stay in England than I was prepared for. A friend suggested that, if I really wanted to have the satisfaction of taking a difficult examination, I should pass the London Matriculation. It meant a good deal of labour and much addition to my stock of general knowledge, without any extra expense worth the name. I welcomed the suggestion. But the syllabus frightened me. Latin and a modern language were compulsory! How was I to manage Latin? But the friend entered a strong plea for it: 'Latin is very valuable to lawyers. Knowledge of Latin is very useful in understanding law-books. And one paper in

Roman Law is entirely in Latin. Besides a knowledge of Latin means greater command over the English language'. It went home and I decided to learn Latin, no matter how difficult it might be. French I had already begun, so I thought that should be the modern language. I joined a private Matriculation class. Examinations were held every six months and I had only five months at my disposal. It was an almost impossible task for me. But the aspirant after being an English gentleman chose to convert himself into a serious student. I framed my own time-table to the minute; but neither my intelligence nor memory promised to enable me to tackle Latin and French besides other subjects within the given period. The result was that I was ploughed in Latin. I was sorry but did not lose heart. I had acquired a taste for Latin, also I thought my French would be all the better for another trial and I would select a new subject in the science group. Chemistry which was my subject in science had no attraction for want of experiments, whereas it ought to have been a deeply interesting study. It was one of the compulsory subjects in India and so I had selected it for the London Matriculation. This time, however, I chose Heat and Light instead of Chemistry. It was said to be easy and I found it to be so.

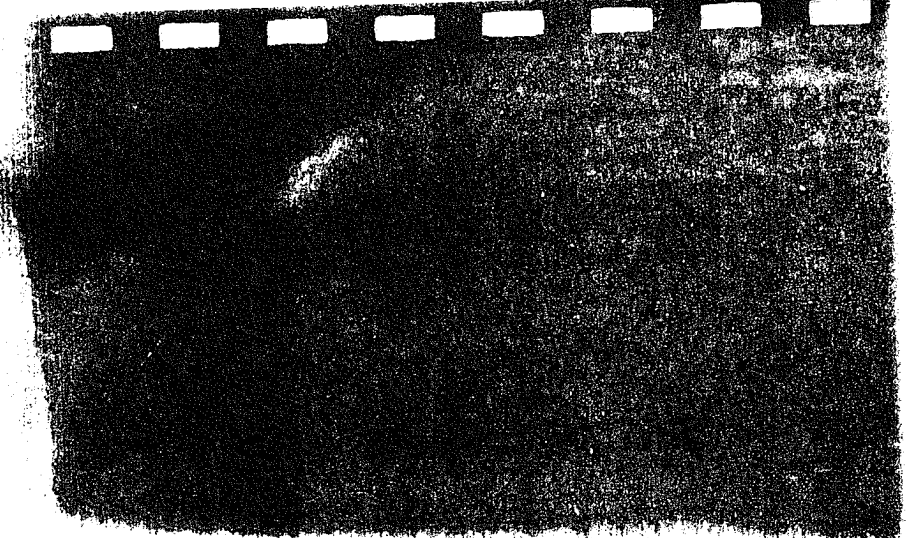
With my preparation for another trial, I made an effort to simplify my life still further. I felt that my way of living did not yet befit the modest means of my family. The thought of my struggling brother, who nobly responded to my regular calls for monetary help, deeply pained me. I saw that most of those who were spending from eight to fifteen pounds monthly had the advantage of scholarships. I had before me examples of much simpler living. I came across a fair number of poor students living more humbly than I. One of them was staying in the slums in a room at two shillings a week and living on two pence worth of cocoa and bread per meal from Lockhart's cheap Cocoa Rooms. It was far from me to think of emulating him, but I felt I could surely have one room instead of two and cook some of my meals at home. That would be a saving of four to five pounds each month. I also came across books on simple living. I gave up the suite of rooms and rented one instead, invested in a stove, and began cooking my breakfast at home. The process scarcely took me more than twenty minutes, for

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66 . *My Experiments with Truth*

there was only oatmeal porridge to cook and water to boil for cocoa. I had lunch out and for dinner bread and cocoa at home. Thus I managed to live on a shilling and three pence a day. This was also a period of intensive study. Plain living saved me plenty of time and I passed my examination.

Let not the reader think that this living made my life by any means a dreary affair. On the contrary the change harmonized my inward and outward life. It was also more in keeping with the means of my family. My life was certainly more truthful and my soul knew no bounds of joy.

17 *Experiments in Dietetics*

As I searched myself deeper, the necessity for changes both internal and external began to grow on me. As soon as, or even before, I made alterations in my expenses and my way of living, I began to make changes in my diet. I saw that the writers on vegetarianism had examined the question very minutely, attacking it in its religious, scientific, practical and medical aspects. Ethically they had arrived at the same conclusion as I had.

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5' Education of Children

When I landed at Durban in January 1897, I had three children with me, my sister's son ten years old, and my own sons nine and five years of age. Where was I to educate them?

I could have sent them to the schools for European children, but only as a matter of favour and exception. No other Indian children were allowed to attend them. For these there were schools established by Christian missions, but I was not prepared to send my children there, as I did not like the education imparted in those schools. For one thing, the medium of instruction would be only English, or perhaps incorrect Tamil or Hindi; this too could only have been arranged with difficulty. I could not possibly put up with this and other disadvantages. In the meantime I was making my own attempt to teach them. But that was at best irregular, and I could not get hold of a suitable Gujarati teacher.

I was at my wits' end. I advertised for an English teacher who should teach the children under my direction. Some regular instruction was to be given them by this teacher, and for the rest they should be satisfied with what little I could give them irregularly. So I engaged an English governess on £7 a month. This went on for some time, but not to my satisfaction. The boys acquired some knowledge of Gujarati through my conversation and intercourse with them, which was strictly in the mother-tongue. I was loathe to send them back to India, for I believed even then that young children should not be separated from their parents. The education that children naturally imbibe in a well-ordered household is impossible to obtain in hostels. I therefore kept my children with me. I did send my nephew and elder son to be educated at residential schools in India for a few months, but I soon had to recall them. Later, the eldest son, long after he had come of age, broke away from me, and went to India to join a High School in

Ahmedabad. I have an impression that the nephew was satisfied with what I could give him. Unfortunately he died in the prime of youth after a brief illness. The other three of my sons have never been at a public school, though they did get some regular schooling in an improvised school which I started for the children of Satyagrahi parents in South Africa.

These experiments were all inadequate. I could not devote to the children all the time I had wanted to give them. My inability to give them enough attention and other unavoidable causes prevented me from providing them with the literary education I had desired, and all my sons have had complaints to make against me in this matter. Whenever they come across an M.A. or a B.A., or even a matriculate, they seem to feel the handicap of a want of school education.

Nevertheless I am of opinion that, if I had insisted on their being educated somehow at public schools, they would have been deprived of the training that can be had only at the school of experience, or from constant contact with the parents. I should never have been free, as I am today, from anxiety on their score, and the artificial education that they could have had in England or South Africa, torn from me, would never have taught them the simplicity and the spirit of service that they show in their lives today, while their artificial ways of living might have been a serious handicap in my public work. Therefore, though I have not been able to give them a literary education either to their or to my satisfaction, I am not quite sure, as I look back on my past years, that I have not done my duty by them to the best of my capacity. Nor do I regret not having sent them to public schools. I have always felt that the undesirable traits I see today in my eldest son are an echo of my own undisciplined and unformulated early life. I regard that time as a period of half-baked knowledge and indulgence. It coincided with the most impressionable years of my eldest son, and naturally he has refused to regard it as my time of indulgence and inexperience. He has on the contrary believed that that was the brightest period of my life, and the changes, effected later, have been due to delusion miscalled enlightenment. And well he might. Why should he not think that my earlier years represented a period of awakening, and the later years of radical change

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years of delusion and egotism? Often have I been confronted with various posers from friends: What harm had there been, if I had given my boys an academical education? What right had I thus to clip their wings? Why should I have come in the way of their taking degrees and choosing their own careers?

I do not think that there is much point in these questions. I have come in contact with numerous students. I have tried myself or through others to impose my educational 'fads' on other children too and have seen the results thereof. There are within my knowledge a number of young men today contemporaneous with my sons. I do not think that man to man they are any better than my sons, or that my sons have much to learn from them.

But the ultimate result of my experiments is in the womb of the future. My object in discussing this subject here is that a student of the history of civilization may have some measure of the difference between disciplined home education and school education, and also of the effect produced on children through changes introduced by parents in their lives. The purpose of this chapter is also to show the lengths to which a votary of truth is driven by his experiments with truth, as also to show the votary of liberty how many are the sacrifices demanded by that stern goddess. Had I been without a sense of self-respect and satisfied myself with having for my children the education that other children could not get, I should have deprived them of the object-lesson in liberty and self-respect that I gave them at the cost of the literary training. And where a choice has to be made between liberty and learning, who will not say that the former has to be preferred a thousand times to the latter?

The youths whom I called out in 1920 from those citadels of slavery - their schools and colleges - and whom I advised that it was far better to remain unlettered and break stones for the sake of liberty than to go in for a literary education in the chains of slaves will probably be able now to trace my advice to its source.

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proper place. The seed had been long sown. It only needed watering to take root, to flower and to fructify, and the watering came in due course.

10 *The Boer War*

I must skip many other experiences of the period between 1897 and 1899 and come straight to the Boer War.

When the war was declared, my personal sympathies were all with the Boers, but I believed then that I had yet no right, in such cases, to enforce my individual convictions. I have minutely dealt with the inner struggle regarding this in my history of the Satyagrah in South Africa, and I must not repeat the argument here. I invite the curious to turn to those pages. Suffice it to say that my loyalty to the British rule drove me to participation with the British in that war. I felt that, if I demanded rights as a British citizen, it was also my duty, as such, to participate in the defence of the British Empire. I held then that India could achieve her complete emancipation only within and through the British Empire. So I collected together as many comrades as possible, and with very great difficulty got our services accepted as an ambulance corps.

The average Englishman believed that the Indian was a coward, incapable of taking risks or looking beyond his immediate self-interest. Many English friends, therefore, threw cold water on my plan. But Dr Booth supported it whole-heartedly. He trained us in ambulance work. We secured medical certificates of fitness for service. Mr Laughton and the late Mr Escombe enthusiastically supported the plan, and we applied at last for service at the front. The Government thankfully acknowledged our application, but held that our services were not then needed.

I would not rest satisfied, however, with this refusal. Through the introduction of Dr Booth, I called on the Bishop of Natal. There were many Christian Indians in our corps. The Bishop was delighted with my proposal and promised to help us in getting our services accepted.

At the same time I was working with us. The Boer had shown more pluck,

determination and bravery than had been expected; and our services were ultimately needed.

Our corps was 1,100 strong, with nearly 40 leaders. About three hundred were free Indians, and the rest indentured. Dr. Booth was also with us. The corps acquitted itself well. Though our work was to be outside the firing line, and though we had the protection of the Red Cross, we were asked at a critical moment to serve within the firing line. The reservation had not been of our seeking. The authorities did not want us to be within the range of fire. The situation, however, was changed after the repulse at Spion Kop, and General Buller sent the message that, though we were not bound to take the risk, Government would be thankful if we would do so and fetch the wounded from the field. We had no hesitation, and so the action at Spion Kop found us working within the firing line. During these days we had to march from twenty to twenty-five miles a day, bearing the wounded on stretchers. Amongst the wounded we had the honour of carrying soldiers like General Woodgate.

The corps was disbanded after six weeks' service. After the reverses at Spion Kop and Vaalkranz, the British Commander-in-Chief abandoned the attempt to relieve Ladysmith and other places by summary procedure, and decided to proceed slowly, awaiting reinforcements from England and India.

Our humble work was at the moment much applauded, and the Indians' prestige was enhanced. The newspapers published laudatory rhymes with the refrain, 'We are sons of Empire after all.'

General Buller mentioned with appreciation the work of the corps in his despatch, and the leaders were awarded the War Medal.

The Indian community became better organized. I got into closer touch with the indentured Indians. There came a greater awakening amongst them, and the feeling that Hindus, Musalmans, Christians, Tamilians, Gujaratis and Sindhis were all Indians and children of the same motherland took deep root amongst them. Everyone believed that the Indians' grievances were now sure to be redressed. At the moment the white man's attitude seemed to be distinctly changed. The relations formed with the whites during the war were of the sweetest. We had come in contact with thousands

of tommies. They were friendly with us and thankful for our being there to serve them.

I cannot forbear from recording a sweet reminiscence of how human nature shows itself at its best in moments of trial. We were marching towards Chieveley Camp where Lieutenant Roberts, the son of Lord Roberts, had received a mortal wound. Our corps had the honour of carrying the body from the field. It was a sultry day – the day of our march. Everyone was thirsting for water. There was a tiny brook on the way where we could slake our thirst. But who was to drink first? We had proposed to come in after the tommies had finished. But they would not begin first and urged us to do so, and for a while a pleasant competition went on for giving precedence to one another.

II *Sanitary Reform and Famine Relief*

It has always been impossible for me to reconcile myself to any one member of the body politic remaining out of use. I have always been loathe to hide or connive at the weak points of the community or to press for its rights without having purged it of its blemishes. Therefore, ever since my settlement in Natal, I had been endeavouring to clear the community of a charge that had been levelled against it, not without a certain amount of truth. The charge had often been made that the Indian was slovenly in his habits and did not keep his house and surroundings clean. The principal men of the community had, therefore, already begun to put their houses in order, but house-to-house inspection was undertaken only when plague was reported to be imminent in Durban. This was done after consulting, and gaining the approval of, the city fathers, who had desired our co-operation. Our co-operation made work easier for them and at the same time lessened our hardships. For whenever there is an outbreak of epidemics, the executive, as a general rule, get impatient, take excessive measures and behave to such as may have incurred their displeasure with a heavy hand. The community saved itself from this oppression by voluntarily taking sanitary measures.

But I had some bitter experiences. I saw that I could not so easily

count on the help of the community in getting it to do its own duty, as I could in claiming for its rights. At some places I met with insults, at others with polite indifference. It was too much for people to bestir themselves to keep their surroundings clean. To expect them to find money for the work was out of the question. These experiences taught me, better than ever before, that without infinite patience it was impossible to get the people to do any work. It is the reformer who is anxious for the reform, and not society, from which he should expect nothing better than opposition, abhorrence and even mortal persecution. Why may not society regard as retrogression what the reformer holds dear as life itself?

Nevertheless the result of this agitation was that the Indian community learnt to recognize more or less the necessity for keeping their houses and environments clean. I gained the esteem of the authorities. They saw that, though I had made it my business to ventilate grievances and press for rights, I was no less keen and insistent upon self-purification.

There was one thing, however, which still remained to be done, namely, the awakening in the Indian settler of a sense of duty to the motherland. India was poor, the Indian settler went to South Africa in search of wealth, and he was bound to contribute part of his earnings for the benefit of his countrymen in the hour of their adversity. This the settler did during the terrible famines of 1897 and 1899. They contributed handsomely for famine relief, and more so in 1899 than in 1897. We had appealed to Englishmen also for funds, and they had responded well. Even the indentured Indians gave their share to the contributions, and the system inaugurated at the time of these famines has been continued ever since, and we know that Indians in South Africa never fail to send handsome contributions to India in times of national calamity.

Thus service of the Indians in South Africa ever revealed to me new implications of truth at every stage. Truth is like a vast tree, which yields more and more fruit, the more you nurture it. The deeper the search in the mine of truth, the richer the discovery of the gems buried there, in the shape of openings or an ever greater variety of service.

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Obsession

A taste of blood comes
 A taste of blood rises
 Irritates my nose
 eyes
 throat

A taste of blood comes
 A taste of blood fills me
 nose
 eyes
 throat

A taste of blood comes
 acridly vertical
 like
 the pagan obsession
 for incense

There Are Nights

For Alejo Carpentier

There are nights with no name
 there are nights with no moon
 when a clammy
 suffocation
 nearly overwhelms me
 the acrid smell of blood
 spewing
 from every muted trumpet

On those nights with no name
 on those nights with no moon
 the pain that inhabits me
 presses
 the pain that inhabits me
 chokes

Nights with no name
 nights with no moon
 when I would have preferred
 to be able no longer to doubt
 the nausea obsesses me so
 a need to escape
 with no name
 with no moon
 with no moon
 with no name
 on nights with no moon
 on nameless nameless nights
 when the sickness sticks within me
 like an Oriental dagger.

Position

For J. D.

The days themselves
 have taken on the shape
 of African masks
 indifferent
 to any profanation
 of quicklime
 the homage of
 moonlit sighs
 any size
 played on a piano
 the refrain
 repeated in
 shrubbery
 gondolas
 et cetera

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Hiccups

For Vashti and Mercer Cook

I gulp down seven drinks of water
several times a day
and all in vain
instinctively
like the criminal to the crime
my childhood returns
in a rousing fit of hiccups

Talk about calamity
talk about disasters
I'll tell you

My mother wanted her son to have good manners at the table:

keep your hands on the table
we don't cut bread
we break it
we don't gobble it down
the bread your father sweats for
our daily bread

eat the bones carefully and neatly
a stomach has to have good manners too
and a well-bred stomach never
burps
a fork is not a tooth-pick
don't pick your nose
in front of the whole world
and sit up straight
a well-bred nose
doesn't sweep the plate

And then
and then
and then in the name of the Father
 and the Son
 and the Holy Ghost
at the end of every meal

And then and then
talk about calamity
talk about disasters
I'll tell you

My mother wanted her son to have the very best marks
if you don't know your history
you won't go to mass
tomorrow
in your Sunday suit

This child will disgrace our family name
This child will be our . . . in the name of God
be quiet
have I or have I not
told you to speak French
the French of France
the French that Frenchmen speak
French French

Talk about calamity
talk about disasters
I'll tell you

My mother wanted her son to be a mama's boy:
you didn't say good evening to our neighbor
what—dirty shoes again
and don't let me catch you any more
playing in the street or on the grass or in the park
underneath the War Memorial
playing
or picking a fight with what's—his—name
what's—his—name who isn't even baptized

Talk about calamity
talk about disasters
I'll tell you

My mother wanted her son to be
 very *do*
 very *re*

very *mi*
 very *fa*
 very *sol*
 very *la*
 very *ti*
 very *do-re-mi*
fa-sol-la-ti-
do

I see you haven't been to your vi-o-lin lesson
 a banjo
 did you say a banjo
 what do you mean
 a banjo
 you really mean
 a banjo
 no indeed young man
 you know there won't be any
 ban-or
 jo
 or
 gui-or
 tar
 in our house

They are not for *colored* people
 Leave them to the *black* folks!

Sell Out

For Aimé Césaire

I feel ridiculous
 in their shoes
 their dinner jackets
 their starched shirts
 and detachable collars
 their monocles and
 their bowler hats

I feel ridiculous
 my toes not made
 to sweat from morning until night's relief
 from this swaddling that impedes my limbs
 and deprives my body of the beauty of its hidden sex

I feel ridiculous
 my neck caught smokestack style
 with this head that aches
 but stops
 each time I greet someone

I feel ridiculous
 in their drawing rooms
 among their manners
 their bowings and scrapings
 and their manifold need of monkeyshines

I feel ridiculous
 with all their talk
 until they serve each afternoon
 a bit of tepid water and
 some teacakes snuffling rum

I feel ridiculous
 with theories they season
 to the taste of their needs
 their passions
 their instincts
 laid out neatly every night
 like doormats

I feel ridiculous
 among them
 like an accomplice
 like a pimp
 like a murderer among them
 my hands hideously red
 with the blood of their

ci-vi-li-za-tion

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Blues

For Robert Romain

Give them back
 to me
 my black
 dolls
 to dissipate the picture
 of pallid wenches
 merchandising love
 who stroll along
 the boulevard of my ennui

Give me back my black
 dolls
 to dissipate
 the never-ending image
 the hallucinating image
 of buxom puppets with big bottoms
 whose stinking misery
 is carried in the wind

Give me the illusion I'll no longer
 have to satisfy
 the sprawling need
 for mercy
 snoring beneath the world's disdainful nose

Give my black dolls back to me
 So that I can play with them
 the simple games of my instincts
 instincts that endure
 in the darkness of their laws
 with my courage recovered
 and my audacity
 I become myself once more
 myself again
 out of what I used to be
 once upon a time
 once

without complexity
 once upon a time
 when the hour of uprooting came
 Will they never know the rancor in my heart
 opened to the eye of my distrust too late
 they did away with what was mine

ways
 days
 life
 song
 rhythm
 effort
 footpath
 water
 huts
 the smoke-gray earth
 the wisdom
 the words
 the palavers
 the elders
 the cadence
 the hands
 beating time
 the hands
 the feet
 marking time
 upon the ground

Give them back
 to me
 my black
 dolls
 black
 dolls
 black
 black
 dolls.

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E. R. BRAITHWAITE

To Sir, With Love and *Ways of Sunlight* are two books which have been produced by West Indians in London. The first of these involves a black man with white characters. The second contains no white characters.

To Sir With Love is a record of the experiences of a black teacher at a tough school in a slum area of London.

Two early chapters tell about the author's experiences of colour prejudice during eighteen months of job-hunting in

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London. Before this, he had served for six years in the R.A.F. where the colour of his skin had not mattered at all: 'I had forgotten about my black face during those years. I saw it daily yet never noticed its colour.'

When the chance of a teaching appointment came, Mr Braithwaite seized it.

At school, the teenage boys and girls did their best to shock and discourage their new teacher. But he was able to understand their aggressive behaviour: they were insecure and under-privileged and had been pushed around. As a black man in England he knew what that kind of experience could do to a human being.

By the end of the book, the teacher, Mr Braithwaite, has taught his pupils to be patient and tolerant—just as he has been in his encounters with colour prejudice. He has transformed an undisciplined bunch of near-savages into a decent, civilised group of pupils.

The selection from *To Sir With Love* is in two parts. In the first we see the violence which is never far from the lives of the boys as they react to the bullying of Mr Bell, the Physical Training master.

In this incident, Mr Braithwaite appears in a more favourable light than Mr Bell. One of the criticisms levelled against this book is that the writer tends to belittle the efforts of his fellow teachers while he shows himself as a superior kind of person. This may be partly the result of the fact that Mr Braithwaite is not only the author, but he is presented as the main figure in the book. You should think about this criticism as you read.

The second part of the selection introduces the colour problem. The passage ends on a note of reconciliation.

Another criticism of the book is that Mr Braithwaite's successes seem to come too easily and that we do not see the problems in all their bitterness. Following this up, critics have suggested that the author is too sentimental and that his easy solutions are part of a game of wishful thinking. Again, you might like to consider these criticisms as you read the extract.

The P.T. Class

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Just about this time a new supply teacher¹, Mr Bell, was sent to our school as supernumerary to the staff for a few weeks. He was about 40 years old, a tall, wiry man who had had some previous experience with the Army Education Service. It was arranged that he should act as relief teacher for some lessons including two periods of P.T. with senior boys. One of Mr Bell's hobbies was fencing; he was something of a perfectionist and impatient of anyone whose co-ordination was not as smooth and controlled as his own. He would repeat a P.T. movement or exercise over and over again until it was executed with clockwise precision, and though the boys grumbled against his discipline they seemed eager to prove to him that they were capable of doing any exercise he could devise, and with a skill that very nearly matched his own.

This was especially true in the cases of Ingham, Fernman and Seales, who would always place themselves at the head of the line as an example and encouragement to the others. The least athletic of these was Richard Buckley, a short, fat boy, amiable and rather dim, who could read and write after a fashion, and could never be provoked to any semblance of anger or heat. He was pleasant and jolly and a favourite with the others, who, though they themselves chivvied him unmercifully, were ever ready in his defence against outsiders.

Buckley was no good at P.T. or games; he just was not built for such pursuits. Yet such is the perversity of human nature, he strenuously resisted any efforts to leave him out or overlook him when games were being arranged. His attempts at accomplishing such simple gymnastic performances as the 'forward roll' and 'star jump' reduced the

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rest of the P.T. class to helpless hilarity, but he persisted with a singleness of purpose, which though unproductive, was nothing short of heroic.

Buckley was Bell's special whipping boy. Fully aware of the lad's physical limitations, he would encourage him to try other and more difficult exercises, with apparently the sole purpose of obtaining some amusement from the pitifully ridiculous results. Sometimes the rest of the class would protest; and then Bell would turn on them the full flood of his invective. . . .

Matters came to a head one Monday afternoon. I was not present in the gym, but was able to reconstruct the sequence of events with reasonable accuracy from the boys' reports and Bell's subsequent admissions.

During the P.T. session he had been putting them through their paces in the astride vault over the buck, all except Buckley, who was somewhat under the weather and wisely stood down from attempting the rather difficult jumps, but without reference to or permission from Bell, who was not long in discovering the absence of his favourite diversion.

'Buckley' he roared.

'Yes, Sir.'

'Come on, boy. I'm waiting.' He was standing in his usual position beside the buck in readiness to arrest the fall of any lad who might be thrown off balance by an awkward approach or incorrect execution of the movement. But the boy did not move, and the master stared at him amazed and angry at this unexpected show of defiance by the one generally considered to be the most timid and tractable in the whole class.

'Fatty can't do it, Sir, it's too high for him,' Denham interposed.

'Shut up, Denham,' Bell roared. 'If I want your opinion I will ask for it.' He left his station at the buck and walked to where Buckley was standing. The boy watched his threatening approach, fear apparent in his eyes.

'Well, Buckley,' Bell towered over the unhappy youth, 'are you going to do as you're told?'

'Yes, Sir,' Buckley's capitulation was as sudden as his refusal.

The others stopped to watch as he stood looking at the buck, licking his lips nervously while waiting for the instructor to resume his position. It may have been fear or determination or a combination of both, but Buckley launched himself at the buck in furious assault, and in spite of Bell's restraining arms, boy and buck crashed on the floor with a sickening sound as one leg of the buck snapped off with the sound of a pistol shot. The class stood in shocked silence watching Buckley, who remained as he fell, inert and pale; then they rushed to his assistance. All except Potter; big, good-natured Potter seemed to have lost his reason. He snatched up the broken metal-bound leg and advanced on Bell, screaming:

'You bloody bastard, you f---ing bloody bastard.'

'Put that thing down, Potter, put it down,' Bell spluttered, backing away from the hysterical boy.

'You made him do it; he didn't want to and you made him,' Potter yelled.

'Don't be a fool, Potter, put it down,' Bell appealed.

'I'll do you in, you bloody murderer.' Bell was big, but in his anger Potter seemed bigger, his improvised club a fearsome extension of his thick forearm.

That was where I rushed in. Tich Jackson, frightened by the sight of Buckley, limp and white on the floor, and the enraged Potter, slobbering at the instructor in murderous

fury, had dashed upstairs to my classroom shouting: 'Sir, quick, they're fighting in the gym.' I followed his disappearing figure in time to see Bell backed against a wall, with Potter advancing on him.

'Hold it, Potter,' I called. He turned at the sound of my voice and I quickly placed myself between them. 'Let's have that, Potter.' I held out my hand towards the boy, but he stared past me at Bell, whimpering in his emotion. Anger had completely taken hold of him, and he looked very dangerous.

'Come on, Potter,' I repeated, 'hand it over and go lend a hand with Buckley.' He turned to look towards his prostrate friend and I quickly moved up to him and seized the improvised club; he released it to me without any resistance and went back to join the group around Buckley. Bell then walked away and out of the room, and I went up to the boys. Denham rose and faced me, his face white with rage.

'Potts should have done the bastard like he did Fatty, just 'cos he wouldn't do the bloody jump.'

I let that pass; they were angry and at such times quickly reverted to the old things, the words, the discourtesies. I stooped down beside Buckley, who was now sitting weakly on the floor, supported by Sapiano and Seales, and smiling up at them as if ashamed of himself for having been the cause of so much fuss.

'How do you feel, old man?' I enquired.

'Cor, Sir,' he cried, smiling, 'me tum does hurt.'

'He fell on the buck. You should have seen 'im, Sir.'

'Gosh, you should've heard the noise when the leg smashed.'

'Mr Bell couldn't catch Fatty, Sir, you should've seen him.'

Most of them were trying to talk all at once, eager to give me all the details.

'Bleeding bully, always picking on Fats.' This from Sapiano, whose volatile Maltese temperament was inclined to flare up very easily.

'If I'd had the wood I'd have done the f—er in and no bleeding body would have stopped me.' Denham was aching for trouble and didn't care who knew it. Bell had slipped away unharmed after hurting his friend, and Denham wanted a substitute. But I would not look at him, or even hear the things he said. Besides, I liked Denham; in spite of his rough manner and speech he was an honest, dependable person with a strong sense of independence.

'Can you stand up, Buckley?'

With some assistance from Seales and Sapiano the boy got to his feet; he looked very pale and unsteady. I turned to Denham: 'Will you help the others to take Buckley up to Mrs Dale-Evans and ask her to give him some sweet tea: leave him there and I'll meet you all in the classroom in a few minutes.'

Without waiting for his reply I hurried off to the staffroom in search of Bell.

Funeral

On December 6th, Seales was not in his place and I marked him absent. Just before recess he came in and walked briskly to my table.

'Sorry I can't stay, Sir, but my mother died early this morning and I'm helping my Dad with things.'

As if those words finally broke all his efforts to be strong and grown up, his face crumpled and he wept like the small

boy he really felt. I got up quickly and led him unresisting to my chair, where he sat, his head in his hands, sobbing bitterly.

I gave the news to the class; they received it in shocked silence, in that immediate sympathy and compassion which only the young seem to know and experience, and then many of them were weeping too.

I spoke comfortingly to Seales and sent him home; then I went to see Mr Florian to acquaint him with the circumstances.

After recess, as I was about to begin our History lesson, Barbara Pegg stood up; she had been asked by the class to say that they had agreed to make a collection among themselves to purchase a wreath or other floral token of sympathy, to be sent to Seales' home. I said I was agreeable, providing I was allowed to contribute also. We learned that the funeral was fixed for the Saturday. Barbara collected the contributions throughout the week, and by Friday morning had nearly two pounds. I was delighted at this news, and after assembly we discussed together the type of floral token they wished to purchase and the nearest florist from whom it could be obtained. Then I remarked:

'Which of you will take it over to his home?'

Their reaction was like a cold douche. The pleasantly united camaraderie disappeared completely from the room, and in its place was the watchful antagonism I had encountered on my first day. It was as if I had pulled a thick transparent screen between them and myself, effectively shutting us away from each other.

It was ugly to see I felt excluded, even hated, but all so horribly quickly.

'What's the matter with you?' My voice was loud in my ears, 'What's suddenly so awful about the flowers?'

Moira stood up, 'We can't take them, Sir.'

'What do you mean Miss Joseph? Why can't you take them?'

She looked quickly around the room as if pleading with the others to explain.

'It's what people would say if they saw us going to a coloured person's home.' She sat down.

There it was. I felt weak and useless, an alien among them. All the weeks and months of delightful association were washed out by those few words.

Nothing had really mattered, the teaching, the talking, the example, the patience, the worry. It was all as nothing. They, like the strangers on buses and trains, saw only the skins, never the people in those skins. Seales was born among them, grew up among them, played with them; his mother was white, British of their stock and background and beginnings.

All the hackneyed clichés hammered in my head. A coloured boy with a white mother, a West Indian boy with an English mother. Always the same. Never an English boy with a Negro or West Indian father. No, that would be placing the emphasis on his Englishness, his identification with them.

It was like a disease, and these children whom I loved without caring about *their skins* or *their* backgrounds, they were tainted with the hateful virus which attacked their vision, distorting everything that was not white or English.

I remembered a remark of Weston's: 'They're morons, cold as stone, nothing matters to them, nothing.'

I turned and walked out of the classroom, sick at heart. I wanted to talk to someone about it, but to whom? They were all white, all of them, even Gillian, so what could they say that was different. Maybe they were, by education and

breeding, better able to hide it, to gloss it over with fine words.

I walked into the Head's office. He listened, his face mirroring the deep humanity and sympathy which were so truly a part of him.

'I'm glad this has happened, Braithwaite, for your sake, especially.'

'Why, Sir?'

'Because I think you were setting too much store by quick results. After all, we are not concerned here merely with academic effort; our idea is to teach them to live with one another, sharing, caring, helping. It's not easy for them.'

Here we go again, I thought. Everything those little bastards do is right, even this. Was he never prepared to see any point of view except that which supported their case?

'Whether it is easy or not, Mr Florian, Seales is one of them, he has grown up with them, he's no stranger like myself.'

'This is a community with many strong racial and religious tensions and prejudices, most of them of long standing.'

'That may be so, Sir, but Mrs Seales was a white woman of this area, and she worked at the local laundry with many other parents of these children; they knew her as well as they know her son.'

I was feeling angry with him for his attempt to excuse their conduct.

'You have been taking too much for granted, because of your success in the classroom . . . I am sure that they all like Seales very much, but once outside the school things are different, and I think Seales would be the first to appreciate that.'

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'But Mr Florian . . .

'You must be patient, Mr Braithwaite,' he continued, rising. 'You've been here, how long? From May to now, nearly seven months, and you've done a great deal with them. Be patient. Maybe next year, the year after—who knows? Go back to them and show them some of the same tolerance and patient goodwill you hope to get from them. . . .'

They were quiet in the classroom. I wanted to say something, but no words came. Jacqueline Bender rose.

'Sir, I don't think you understood just now. We have nothing against Seales. We like him, honest we do, but if one of us girls was seen going to his home, you can't imagine the things people would say. We'd be accused of all sorts of things.' She sat, evidently overcome by this long speech.

'Thank you for making that so clear, Miss Bender. Does the same thing apply to the boys as well?'

They were not defiant now, but their eyes were averted.

'I'll take them.' Pamela stood up, tall and proudly regal.

'Why should you, Miss Dare? Aren't you afraid of what might be said of you?'

'No, Sir, gossips don't worry me. After all, I've known Larry, I mean Seales, since in the Infants.'

'Thank you, Miss Dare. The funeral is at ten o'clock. I'll take my usual train and perhaps I'll see you there. Thank you.'

I left it at that, pleased and encouraged by her words, and we returned to our lessons.

That evening I told Gillian of the boy's mother's death but made no mention of the other thing. I wanted to try and forget it as quickly as possible.

On Saturday morning, I caught an early bus from Brentwood. I sat on the top deck in the rearmost seat,

disinclined to see or be seen, to speak or be spoken to; withdrawn and wishing only to be as far removed from white people as I possibly could be. I had given all I could to those children, even part of myself, but it had been of no use. In the final analysis they had trotted out the same hoary excuse so familiar to their fathers and grandfathers: 'We have nothing against him personally, but . . .' How well I knew it now! If he'd been pimp or pansy, moron or murderer, it would not have mattered, provided he was white; his outstanding gentleness, courtesy and intelligence could not offset the greatest sin of all, the sin of being black.

They had been glib at the Student's Council², and bright and persuasive. It had sounded great coming from them, that talk of common heritage and inalienable rights; glib and easy, until they were required to do something to back up all the talk, and then the facade had cracked and crumbled because it was as phoney as themselves. Crucify him because he's black; lynch him because he's black; ostracise him because he's black; a little change, a little shift in geographical position, and they'd be using the very words they'd now so vociferously condemned.

The whirl and rattle of the bus was a rhythmic percussion syncopating the anger in my heart into a steady, throbbing hate, until I felt rather light-headed. I disembarked outside the London Hospital and walked towards Commercial Road and Priddle Street where the Seales lived. As I turned into the narrow roadway I could see the drearily ornate hearse parked there, and the small group of curiosity-seekers who somehow always materialise to gape open-mouthed on the misery of others. And then I stopped, feeling suddenly washed clean, whole and alive again. Tears were in my eyes, unashamedly, for there, standing in a close, separate group on the pavement outside Seale's door was my class, my

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children, all or nearly all of them, smart and self-conscious in their best clothes. Oh God forgive me for the hateful thoughts, because I love them, these brutal, disarming bastards, I love them. . . .

I hurried over to join them to be again with them, a part of them. They welcomed me silently, pride and something else shining in their eyes as they gathered close around me. I felt something soft pressed into my hand, and as I looked round into the clear, shining eyes of Pamela Dare, I dried my own eyes with the tiny handkerchief.

from *To Sir, With Love*

BRAITHWAITE, E. R. (*British Guiana*).

Born in British Guiana 1922.

EDUCATION: *British Guiana and United States.*

Served in R.A.F.

PUBLICATIONS: *To Sir With Love 1959: experiences while teaching in a London school.*

Paid Servant 1962—a report about welfare work in London.

A Kind of Home-coming 1963—a visit to Africa.

A Choice of Straws 1965—a novel.

NOTES

- 1 (p. 87) *A supply teacher*: A teacher used by Education Authorities to fill temporary vacancies, as they arise from school to school.
- 2 (p. 96) *They had been glib at the Student's Council*: A reference to a student council meeting at which the pupils had spoken of their belief in the ideal of the brotherhood of man regardless of colour.

CLAUDE MCKAY

A reading of Claude McKay's *Banana Bottom* will show why many readers consider de Lisser's *The White Witch of Rosehall* to be reactionary and insignificant in West Indian writing. For while de Lisser's novel ends with a rejection of the West Indies, McKay's is an assertion of West Indian life and manners and a protest against the insensitive imposition of European values on West Indians.

Claude McKay was a very different kind of person from de Lisser: he was black, he was poor, and he found it necessary to leave Jamaica and seek a living in the United States.

In McKay's novel the heroine is a black West Indian. Bita Plant is brought up and sent to an English university (Continental tour included) at the expense of the Reverend Malcolm Craig and his wife Priscilla, missionaries to the colony. The Craigs consider Bita Plant their great experiment and they plan that she should marry a local boy, the pompous Herald Newton Day, a promising student at the Tabernacle Theological College. Bita would then be the lady of the parish, an example of rectitude and piety to her untutored people.

Banana Bottom is the story of how Bita strips herself of a European polish which is unnatural and irrelevant in a West Indian context. She wrecks the plans of the Craigs by resisting their urgings to remain aloof from her peasant people. She ritually destroys the photographs of her university and in the end marries the good, silent and strong workman Jubban.

The novel gives a vivid picture of Jamaican life in the 1890s and it is the sense of a Banana Bottom society with honest values and a spontaneous openness to experience which makes Bita's rejection of European fastidiousness and inhibition a credible act of emancipation.

In this passage from *Banana Bottom*, Bita goes to the market and finds herself revelling in the sights and sounds of her native land. She is accompanied to the mission house by the dandy Hopping Dick and incurs the displeasure of Mrs Craig. This episode marks a clear beginning in Bita's movement towards self-liberation from an imposed and uncongenial way of life.

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CLAUDE MCKAY

Banana Bottom

From the front verandah of the mission one could look down on the market. It was a vast square where the peasants used to come down from the mountain to barter and sell in the open before Jubilee grew to be a town. Now it was fenced in, half stone wall, half wire. At one end a long shingled shed with stalls for meats and poultry, grain, sugar and other native products, and at the other another shed packed with donkeys, mules and horses hitched close together and biting, scratching and kicking one another, and in between the wide uncovered ground, where the majority of the peasants sat together dispensing with the cost of stalls and crying their stuff under the merciless blazing sun.

The market was the centre of the town. A main macadamised road from the city, another from the little fruit port, and one coming down sharply from the mountains over Banana Bottom picked up the footways and mule tracks winding out of the greeny blue and fruiting little villages, and converged upon the market.

Rosyanna, broad, dark blue and spreading like a pruned orange tree was joyful to go marketing with Bitá for a change, anticipating some novel first-hand news which she could retail to the sisters of her set. Rosyanna was the low-down news agent between the mission and the town. She emphasised the importance of her being a servant of the mission by getting hold of first news, such as what preacher was exchanging pulpit with Malcolm or Priscilla Craig on such a Sunday, what church member was going to be invited to dine with the visiting preacher, and what date was fixed for a harvest festival or missionary meeting. But of the private life of the mission she had little to say, for outside of the

and yampies, breadfruit and the unrefined cane sugar that lay caked rich brown and sweet in upright oblong tins.

Three times more women than men higgling and ped-laring, broad warm faces of all colours between brown and black, sweating comfortably, freely in gay calico clothes, the full hum of their broad broken speech mounting and falling in strong waves under the sheer downright sun.

Bit a mingled in the crowd, responsive to the feeling, the colour, the smell, the swell and press of it. It gave her the sensation of a reservoir of familiar kindred humanity into which she had descended for baptism. She had never had that big moving feeling as a girl when she visited the native market. And she thought that if she had never gone abroad for a period so long, from which she had become accustomed to viewing her native life in perspective, she might never have had that experience.

Many young natives had gone to the city or abroad for higher culture and had returned aloof from, if not actually despising, the tribal life in which they were nurtured. But the pure joy that Bit a felt in the simple life of her girlhood was childlike and almost unconscious. She could not reason and theorise why she felt that way. It was just a surging free big feeling.

The noises of the market were sweeter in her ears than a symphony. Accents and rhythms, movements and colours, nuances that might have gone unnoticed if she had never gone away were now revealed to her in all their striking detail. And of the foodstuff on view she felt an impulse to touch and fondle a thousand times more than she wanted to buy.

Some of the church folk detained her for a few pleasant words. And she was such a long time getting done with her purchases that Rosyanna was fairly rebellious. At last they

were ready to go back to the mission. Rosyanna's basket was packed and her hands full. At the moment of departure Bit a spied a splendid sugar-pineapple. She bought and carried it herself, Rosyanna protesting. For at Jubilee and similar towns nice persons did not carry packets or anything heavier than a fan or a cane. There were numberless little brats always ready to run errands and tote things. Among the aspiring native youth who got away from the soil and were being trained to use a pen profitably and read and figure fluently it was considered quite disgraceful to use those same fingers to tote a little bundle.

* * *

Swinging her pine through the main gate of the market, Bit a was accosted by Hopping Dick, who, pretending that it was accidentally, struck a gallant attitude and said: 'Such hands like yours, Miss Plant, were trained for finer work than to carry common things like pineapples.'

'Do you think this will spoil them?' laughed Bit a, who was instinctively coquettish and not the sort to turn sour over a compliment.

'Too much will, indeed,' said Hopping Dick. 'There's more big-foot country gals fit to carry pines than donkeys in Jamaica. Please give me the pleasure to relieve you, as I am walking your way.'

So Hopping Dick insisting, Bit a allowed him to take the pine while Rosyanna's face under her basket was heavy with disapproval. Annoyed by Hopping Dick's remark, being a country woman and barefooted, she was also amazed at his audacity in offering to walk along with Bit a and her permitting. She was a servant of the mission and a sister of the church, and Bit a was too much identified with both to walk

the street with a grogshop customer, a horse-gambler and a notorious feminine heart-breaker.

Hopping Dick turned on his dandiest strut walking up the main street with Bitá. Out of the corner of his eye he saw a group of his set in the door of the grogshop watching him open-mouthed; but apparently unseeing, he strutted more ornamentally, ostentatiously absorbed in conversation with Bitá. He was as much astonished himself at what he was doing, for although he had the reputation of a fast worker and successful, it was not with girls of Bitá's standard. He would never have approached Bitá alone. It was just his famous luck being with Belle Black that morning and getting introduced on it. It was no wonder that people stared. After the first compliments Hopping Dick was stumped of what to say. He was very ready-tongued with the local girls in the market and at the tea-meetings, but he felt he could not use the same talk upon a person like Bitá, and he wanted to shine. So the few minutes between the market and the mission were mostly spent in perfecting his strut.

Once he said 'That was one beautiful performance that you gave for the benefit of Jubilee, Miss Plant, and we all proud and talking about it.'

'Oh, you were there!' said Bitá.

Hopping Dick hesitated: 'No, I missed out, but Miss Black told me all about it. Never been much to church meetings, but I'll be going from now on whenever you play.'

Now they were at the gate of the mission and Rosyanna, who had puffed out to balloon proportions in the meantime, rocked testily through without a word, leaving Bitá who stopped a moment to exchange formalities with Hopping Dick. She thanked him, taking the pine.

'You will find Jubilee too small to live in after living abroad,' said Hopping Dick.

'I don't think so. I believe I could live anywhere there's air to breathe and space for free movement.'

'There's not enough here. This place is too small. The whole island's too small.'

'Oh well, small things are better for comfort, sometimes,' and Bitá said good-bye.

'Good-bye, Miss Plant. I hope I shall have the honour of more conversation with you. You're so intelligent. There aren't any intelligent young people in Jubilee.'

'Not any? Not even you? Then we must find some,' she said.

Whether Rosyanna informed Mrs Craig that Bitá was at the gate with Hopping Dick or Mrs Craig had spied them from the front verandah, which gave a good view of the gate, Bitá was never sure. But as soon as Mrs Craig was alone with her she said:

'How did you meet that man? I'm sorry you've been talking to him.'

'Oh, I met him with Belle Black and he offered to carry my pine.'

'He's not a fit person for you to be seen in the street with, Bitá. And he had no right to take advantage of your ignorance and force his company upon you. He is a brazen, bad young man.'

'He didn't force himself on me. He asked me if he could come and I said all right.'

'Of course I excuse you. Since you're quite like a stranger here after so many years away. There are lots of things we have to talk about. You know there are certain things we just can't do, simply because they reflect on the mission.'

'But I don't think walking and talking a little with Mr

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Delgado could have anything to do with the mission. Even if he's not a person of the best character.'

'Bita, my child! Don't try to be ridiculous. A mere child even could see the right thing to do. You have received an education to make you see and do the correct thing almost automatically. Even Rosyanna feels a certain responsibility because she is connected with the mission. And Mr Craig and I—we put the mission first in everything. We never forget we are living examples of right conduct. That we are public servants.'

Bita retired to her room. And the more she thought of the incident the more resentful she became. She wondered, now that she had come home to it after all the years of training, if she would be able to adjust herself to the life of the mission.

from *Banana Bottom*

MCKAY, Claude (*Jamaica*).

Born in Jamaica 1890. Died 1948.

EDUCATION: *Jamaica and United States*.

PUBLICATIONS: *Songs of Jamaica 1912*.

Constabulary Ballads 1912.

Spring in New Hampshire and Other Poems 1920.

Harlem Shadows: the Poems of Claude McKay 1922

Home to Harlem 1928—a novel.

Banjo 1929—a novel.

Gingertown 1932—short stories.

Banana Bottom 1933—a novel.

A Long Way from Home 1937—autobiography.

Harlem: Negro Metropolis 1940

Selected Poems 1953.

NOTES

1 (p. 39) *Coloured Choristers*: In the novel, the church choir of Jubilee: composed of young people from the parish.

2 (p. 40) *Tea-meetings*: A great social occasion among the people.

BANANA BOTTOM

There would be an auction of cakes and other items, refreshment for the participants, singing and other kinds of concert performances, the selection of a queen, and dancing. It was partly a fund-raising device on behalf of the holder of the tea-meeting. It was generally frowned upon by the missionaries and the decent middle-classes.

Jamaica Kincaid

AT THE BOTTOM OF THE RIVER

BY JAMAICA KINCAID

GIRL

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Wash the white clothes on Monday and put them on the stone heap; wash the color clothes on Tuesday and put them on the clothesline to dry; don't walk barehead in the hot sun; cook pumpkin fritters in very hot sweet oil; soak your little cloths right after you take them off; when buying cotton to make yourself a nice blouse, be sure that it doesn't have gum on it, because that way it won't hold up well after a wash; soak salt fish overnight before you cook it; is it true that you sing benna in Sunday school?; always eat your food in such a way that it won't turn someone else's stomach; on Sundays try to walk like a lady and not like the slut you are so bent on becoming; don't sing benna in Sunday school; you mustn't speak to wharf-rat boys, not even to give directions; don't eat fruits on the

PICADOR

published by Pan Books

INFORMATION TO HELP YOU READ *ANNIE JOHN*

A brief history of Jamaica Kincaid

Jamaica Kincaid's mother named her Elaine Potter Richardson when she was born in 1949 in St. John's, Antigua. Like Annie John, she lived with her mother and the man she knew as her father (her stepfather) in a house that he had built. She went to government schools where, she says, "No one expected anything from me at all. Had I just sunk in the cracks it would not have been noted." At age sixteen she left Antigua to be an *au pair* in New York. Once in the US, she attended Franconia College for a year, but returned to New York to work for a magazine called *Art Direction*. She was eventually fired for writing a controversial article on black American advertising, although she "can't really remember what it was that made everyone so upset." She managed--miraculously, it seems--to meet a man in a elevator who introduced her to another man who wrote for *The New Yorker*. He suggested she do so as well, and arranged for her to have lunch with the publisher, after which she immediately began writing Talk pieces. All of her writing except for *A Small Place* appeared in the magazine before it was published.

As far as this whole metropolitan experience was from her childhood which one interviewer characterized as "tropical poverty" (whatever that might mean), she has never been able to leave Antigua Behind; "I never give up thinking about the way I came into the world, how my ancestors came from Africa to the West Indies as slaves," says she. Even more intimately, she can't escape her mother. In response to the question "Is *Annie John* autobiographical?" she says "I didn't want to say it was autobiographical because I felt that would be somehow admitting something about myself, but it is, and so that's that." She is currently happily married and living in Bennington, Vermont with her husband (the son of the publisher of *The New Yorker*) and their two children. She says, "I decided that happiness is too much activity, too busy. I don't really yearn for happiness; I yearn for an absence of anxiety."

History and Geography of Antigua

The small island known as Antigua lies about 250 miles east southeast of Puerto Rico. It is one of the Leeward Islands in a chain of islands known as the Lesser Antilles. These islands form a natural boundary between the Atlantic ocean to the east, and the Caribbean sea on the west. Antigua (an-tee-ga) is about 108 sq.mi. (approximately the size of Philadelphia) with a current population of 85,000. The island's center is mainly low and flat while the outer edges gently curl upwards to form a series of peaks and cliffs. The capital, St. Johns (pop. 27,000), is located alongside a deep bay on the island's northwest coast. The weather on Antigua is generally warm (avg. daily temp. 81 f.), dry (avg. yearly rainfall 44in.-- Compare to Dominica, two islands to the south of Antigua, which has over 200in. of rain per year), and is subject to frequent droughts.

Christopher Columbus bumped into the island in 1493 and named it after a church in Seville. The island, at this time, was inhabited by a peaceful group of people known as the Arawaks. The fiercer, more warlike Caribs had conquered much of the Lesser Antilles from the Arawaks centuries before the Columbian era, but had apparently left Antigua alone. After earlier unsuccessful attempts at settlement by the Spanish and French, the British colonized the island in 1632.

The first sugarcane plantation was established in 1674 by Sir Christopher Codrington. Soon, Africans were imported as slaves to work on these plantations and they quickly outnumbered their white owners. Forests were cleared to make room for more sugarcane and even today many Antiguan blame the lack of trees on the island for its frequent droughts. Sugar and rum became the island's cash crops (I know, rum is not a crop, but it comes from sugar and you know what I mean). In October 1736, owners uncovered a slave conspiracy designed to murder all whites on the island and establish a new government under the leadership of the former slaves. Had this plot succeeded, Antigua, not Haiti, would have been the first slave colony to demand its freedom and achieve self-rule.

The revolt never occurred, many whites left the island in fear of new uprisings, and slaves had to wait nearly a century before emancipation in 1834. Unfortunately, with all the farmland in the hands of the plantation owners, many of whom were not even living on the island, freedmen were still economically tied to these plantations in a way that was no better

than slavery. It was not until the mid-twentieth century, when trade unions were finally allowed, that the majority of Antiguan began to achieve economic and political power.

Sugar continued to be the colony's chief export until the 1960's, when sugar prices dropped appreciably. The last sugar refinery closed in 1972 and tourism has since been the main staple of Antigua's economy. Education is an Antiguan strong point with 9 years of mandatory schooling and a literacy rate of over 90%. English has been the island's official language for over 300 years.

The Antigua of *Annie John* (about 30 years ago) was a slow paced, rural, agricultural community of about 60,000. Sugar production was coming to an end, and tourism had not started yet. It would be easy to understand how some people (like Annie John or Jamaica Kincaid) might feel stifled or suffocated on such a small and isolated place.

In 1967, Antigua was made a self-ruling colony of Great Britain, and on November 1, 1981, Antigua became an independent nation now known as Antigua and Barbuda (Barbuda is a smaller, sparsely populated island 25 miles north of Antigua). The Antigua of today has become highly commercialized. Hundreds of thousands of Americans flock to the many high price resorts that line the nation's 365 beaches. It has been said that nearly the entire coastline of Antigua is now privately owned by these resorts.

Religions of Antigua

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in many colonies not under the possession of Britain, the catholic missionaries were very active in converting the African slaves; however, in those colonies that were under British control, like Antigua, the Church of England did not assume the role of a missionary church. The Church of England did not allow the participation of the African slaves as it was seen as a religion only for White settlers and officials. With this lack of attention from the religion of the slaveowners many of the slaves decided to turn to other religious movements and to cults.

The Church of England was not the only system that prevented the conversion or baptism of the slaves in the name of Christianity; their owners also refused to allow these things to occur. The slaveowners believed that the conversion of their slaves would be a threat to their authority because of the possible development of unity among a slave

population that outnumbered them. The slaveowners also detested the conversion of their slaves because once they were baptized they would have had to look at them as their brothers who deserve humane treatment. This would have gone against their use of brutality as a form of control.

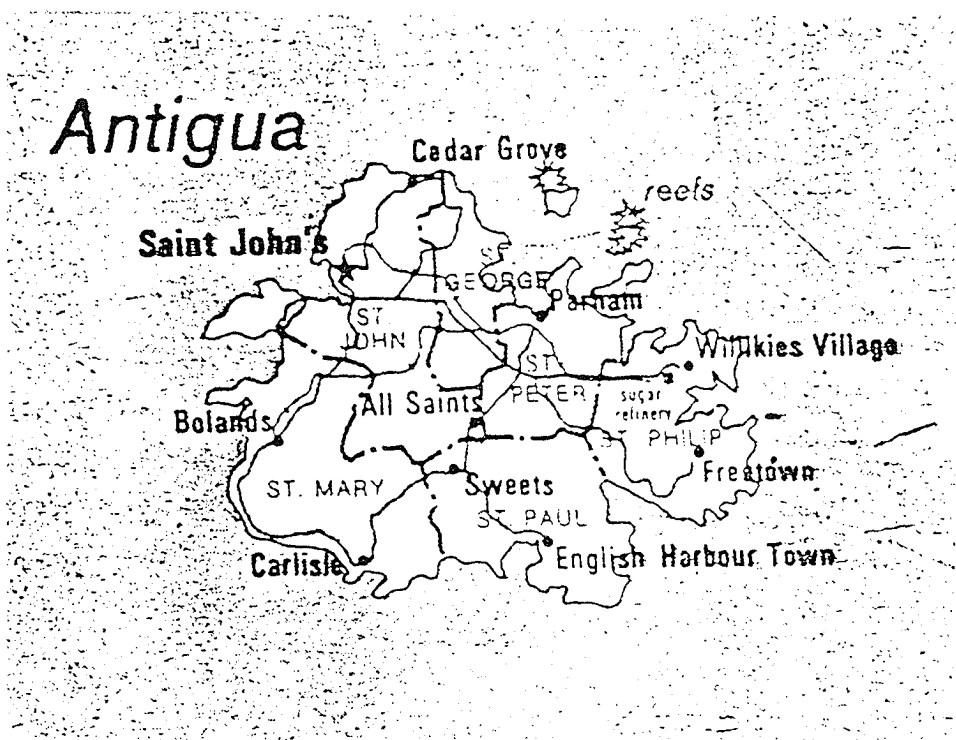
In 1770 Methodist missionaries arrived to Antigua and requested the permission to visit the slaves. Initially many planters were very hostile and refused their requests. Once the Methodists were able to convert a few of the planters, they were able to begin the conversion of the slaves. Their work began with the development of the Methodist Society which consisted of a few converted planters, slaves, and lower class whites. They held weekly worship meetings in the homes of various members and tried to uplift the spirits of the slaves. This alarmed some of the upper class Antiguans and many landowners did not allow missionaries on their property. The Methodists relied on slaves to be leaders who could hold meetings and visit the sick within their estates. Once uprisings began to develop, especially the revolt in Haiti during the 1790's, the white population began to question the role of Methodist missionaries. Therefore a number of estates banned the instruction of their slaves and many Methodist churches were destroyed and many preachers were either harassed or imprisoned.

In 1833, slaves accounted for 23,000 of the 32,000 members of the West Indian Methodist Church Districts. Some time after emancipation the number of Blacks who belonged to the Methodist Church began to decline as their disillusionment with the power of the religion increased, due to the conditions that they remained under and the large gap that still persisted between the white and the black population. Still, as many blacks realized that they were still not welcome by the Church of England, many returned to the Methodist Church. As they returned, many white members left and became Anglicans; therefore the Methodist Church developed into the Church for the black and colored people.

During slavery, after slavery, and today many blacks rely on the obeah religion as a system of guidance. The word "obeah" has African origin and proves that throughout the centuries the African beliefs that were first brought over to the New World by the slaves could not be obliterated. Many slaves and many blacks turned to this religion because the traditional churches failed to provide for them.

Obeah, a system of magic, involves the belief that spirits can be used to hurt the living and can also be called off by various rituals. The obeah man or woman, one who practices this magic, plays the role of a witch doctor, faith healer, marriage counselor, fortune teller, and a medical doctor. They are looked to as a medical doctor usually due to the distrust of modern medicine and its expensive cost. Various leaves and herbs are believed to contribute to one's strength, health, and well-being and are often used by the obeah man in situations of illnesses, human misfortune, and when evil spirits must be kept away. There are various ways to protect oneself from evil spirits, including fasting, praying, wearing charms, drinking consecrated water, bathing in consecrated water or herbs, anointing oneself with oil, and a number of other strategies. *Annie John* makes reference to ritual baths.

Other times, it was a special bath in which the barks and flowers of many different trees, together with all sort of oils, were boiled in the same large caldron. We took these baths after my mother had consulted with her obeah woman, and with her mother and a trusted friend, and all three of them confirmed that from the look of things around our house...one of the many women my father had loved...was trying to harm my mother and me by setting bad spirits on us." (A.J. pg. 14 & 15)



Chapter Five

Columbus in Chains

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Outside, as usual, the sun shone, the trade winds blew; on her way to put some starched clothes on the line, my mother shooed some hens out of her garden; Miss Dewberry baked the buns, some of which my mother would buy for my father and me to eat with our afternoon tea; Miss Henry brought the milk, a glass of which I would drink with my lunch, and another glass of which I would drink with the bun from Miss Dewberry; my mother prepared our lunch; my father noted some perfectly idiotic thing his partner in housebuilding, Mr. Oatie, had done, so that over lunch he and my mother could have a good laugh.

The Anglican church bell struck eleven o'clock—one hour to go before lunch. I was then sitting at my desk in my classroom. We were having a history lesson—the last lesson of the morning. For taking first place over all the other girls, I had been given a

prize, a copy of a book called *Roman Britain*, and I was made prefect of my class. What a mistake the prefect part had been, for I was among the worst-behaved in my class and did not at all believe in setting myself up as a good example, the way a prefect was supposed to do. Now I had to sit in the prefect's seat—the first seat in the front row, the seat from which I could stand up and survey quite easily my classmates. From where I sat I could see out the window. Sometimes when I looked out, I could see the sexton going over to the minister's house. The sexton's daughter, Hilarene, a disgusting model of good behavior and keen attention to scholarship, sat next to me, since she took second place. The minister's daughter, Ruth, sat in the last row, the row reserved for all the dunce girls. Hilarene, of course, I could not stand. A girl that good would never do for me. I would probably not have cared so much for first place if I could be sure it would not go to her. Ruth I liked, because she was such a dunce and came from England and had yellow hair. When I first met her, I used to walk her home and sing bad songs to her just to see her turn pink, as if I had spilled hot water all over her.

Our books, *A History of the West Indies*, were open in front of us. Our day had begun with morning prayers, then a geometry lesson, then it was over to the science building for a lesson in "Introductory Physics" (not a subject we cared much for), taught by the most dingy-toothed Mr. Slacks, a teacher from Canada, then precious recess, and now this, our his-

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 tory lesson. Recess had the usual drama: this time, I coaxed Gwen out of her disappointment at not being allowed to join the junior choir. Her father—how many times had I wished he would become a leper and so be banished to a leper colony for the rest of my long and happy life with Gwen—had forbidden it, giving as his reason that she lived too far away from church, where choir rehearsals were conducted, and that it would be dangerous for her, a young girl, to walk home alone at night in the dark. Of course, all the streets had lamplight, but it was useless to point that out to him. Oh, how it would have pleased us to press and rub our knees together as we sat in our pew while pretending to pay close attention to Mr. Simmons, our choirmaster, as he waved his baton up and down and across, and how it would have pleased us even more to walk home together, alone in the “early dusk” (the way Gwen had phrased it, a ready phrase always on her tongue), stopping, if there was a full moon, to lie down in a pasture and expose our bosoms in the moonlight. We had heard that full moonlight would make our breasts grow to a size we would like. Poor Gwen! When I first heard from her that she was one of ten children, right on the spot I told her that I would love only her, since her mother already had so many other people to love.

Our teacher, Miss Edward, paced up and down in front of the class in her usual way. In front of her desk stood a small table, and on it stood the dunce cap. The dunce cap was in the shape of a coronet, with

an adjustable opening in the back, so that it could fit any head. It was made of cardboard with a shiny gold paper covering and the word “DUNCE” in shiny red paper on the front. When the sun shone on it, the dunce cap was all aglitter, almost as if you were being tricked into thinking it a desirable thing to wear. As Miss Edward paced up and down, she would pass between us and the dunce cap like an eclipse. Each Friday morning, we were given a small test to see how well we had learned the things taught to us all week. The girl who scored lowest was made to wear the dunce cap all day the following Monday. On many Mondays, Ruth wore it—only, with her short yellow hair, when the dunce cap was sitting on her head she looked like a girl attending a birthday party in *The Schoolgirl's Own Annual*.

It was Miss Edward's way to ask one of us a question the answer to which she was sure the girl would not know and then put the same question to another girl who she was sure would know the answer. The girl who did not answer correctly would then have to repeat the correct answer in the exact words of the other girl. Many times, I had heard my exact words repeated over and over again, and I liked it especially when the girl doing the repeating was one I didn't care about very much. Pointing a finger at Ruth, Miss Edward asked a question the answer to which was “On the third of November 1493, a Sunday morning, Christopher Columbus discovered Dominica.” Ruth, of course, did not know the answer, as she did not

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know the answer to many questions about the West Indies. I could hardly blame her. Ruth had come all the way from England. Perhaps she did not want to be in the West Indies at all. Perhaps she wanted to be in England, where no one would remind her constantly of the terrible things her ancestors had done; perhaps she had felt even worse when her father was a missionary in Africa. I could see how Ruth felt from looking at her face. Her ancestors had been the masters, while ours had been the slaves. She had such a lot to be ashamed of, and by being with us every day she was always being reminded. We could look everybody in the eye, for our ancestors had done nothing wrong except just sit somewhere, defenseless. Of course, sometimes, what with our teachers and our books, it was hard for us to tell on which side we really now belonged—with the masters or the slaves—for it was all history, it was all in the past, and everybody behaved differently now; all of us celebrated Queen Victoria's birthday, even though she had been dead a long time. But we, the descendants of the slaves, knew quite well what had really happened, and I was sure that if the tables had been turned we would have acted differently; I was sure that if our ancestors had gone from Africa to Europe and come upon the people living there, they would have taken a proper interest in the Europeans on first seeing them, and said, "How nice," and then gone home to tell their friends about it.

I was sitting at my desk, having these thoughts to myself. I don't know how long it had been since I

lost track of what was going on around me. I had not noticed that the girl who was asked the question after Ruth failed—a girl named Hyacinth—had only got a part of the answer correct. I had not noticed that after these two attempts Miss Edward had launched into a harangue about what a worthless bunch we were compared to girls of the past. In fact, I was no longer on the same chapter we were studying. I was way ahead, at the end of the chapter about Columbus's third voyage. In this chapter, there was a picture of Columbus that took up a whole page, and it was in color—one of only five color pictures in the book. In this picture, Columbus was seated in the bottom of a ship. He was wearing the usual three-quarter trousers and a shirt with enormous sleeves, both the trousers and shirt made of maroon-colored velvet. His hat, which was cocked up on one side of his head, had a gold feather in it, and his black shoes had huge gold buckles. His hands and feet were bound up in chains, and he was sitting there staring off into space, looking quite dejected and miserable. The picture had as a title "Columbus in Chains," printed at the bottom of the page. What had happened was that the usually quarrelsome Columbus had got into a disagreement with people who were even more quarrelsome, and a man named Bobadilla, representing King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, had sent him back to Spain fettered in chains attached to the bottom of a ship. What just deserts, I thought, for I did not like Columbus. How I loved this picture—to see the usually triumphant Colum-

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bus, brought so low, seated at the bottom of a boat just watching things go by. Shortly after I first discovered it in my history book, I heard my mother read out loud to my father a letter she had received from her sister, who still lived with her mother and father in the very same Dominica, which is where my mother came from. Ma Chess was fine, wrote my aunt, but Pa Chess was not well. Pa Chess was having a bit of trouble with his limbs; he was not able to go about as he pleased; often he had to depend on someone else to do one thing or another for him. My mother read the letter in quite a state, her voice rising to a higher pitch with each sentence. After she read the part about Pa Chess's stiff limbs, she turned to my father and laughed as she said, "So the great man can no longer just get up and go. How I would love to see his face now!" When I next saw the picture of Columbus sitting there all locked up in his chains, I wrote under it the words "The Great Man Can No Longer Just Get Up and Go." I had written this out with my fountain pen, and in Old English lettering—a script I had recently mastered. As I sat there looking at the picture, I traced the words with my pen over and over, so that the letters grew big and you could read what I had written from not very far away. I don't know how long it was before I heard that my name, Annie John, was being said by this bellowing dragon in the form of Miss Edward bearing down on me.

I had never been a favorite of hers. Her favorite was Hilarene. It must have pained Miss Edward that I so often beat out Hilarene. Not that I liked Miss

Edward and wanted her to like me back, but all my other teachers regarded me with much affection, would always tell my mother that I was the most charming student they had ever had, beamed at me when they saw me coming, and were very sorry when they had to write some version of this on my report card: "Annie is an unusually bright girl. She is well behaved in class, at least in the presence of her masters and mistresses, but behind their backs and outside the classroom quite the opposite is true." When my mother read this or something like it, she would burst into tears. She had hoped to display, with a great flourish, my report card to her friends, along with whatever prize I had won. Instead, the report card would have to take a place at the bottom of the old trunk in which she kept any important thing that had to do with me. I became not a favorite of Miss Edward's in the following way: Each Friday afternoon, the girls in the lower forms were given, instead of a last lesson period, an extra-long recess. We were to use this in ladylike recreation—walks, chats about the novels and poems we were reading, showing each other the new embroidery stitches we had learned to master in home class, or something just as seemly. Instead, some of the girls would play a game of cricket or rounders or stones, but most of us would go to the far end of the school grounds and play band. In this game, of which teachers and parents disapproved and which was sometimes absolutely forbidden, we would place our arms around each other's waist or shoulders, forming lines of ten or so

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girls, and then we would dance from one end of the school grounds to the other. As we danced, we would sometimes chant these words: "Tee la la la, come go. Tee la la la, come go." At other times we would sing a popular calypso song which usually had lots of unladylike words to it. Up and down the schoolyard, away from our teachers, we would dance and sing. At the end of recess—forty-five minutes—we were missing ribbons and other ornaments from our hair, the pleats of our linen tunics became unset, the collars of our blouses were pulled out, and we were soaking wet all the way down to our bloomers. When the school bell rang, we would make a whooping sound, as if in a great panic, and then we would throw ourselves on top of each other as we laughed and shrieked. We would then run back to our classes, where we prepared to file into the auditorium for evening prayers. After that, it was home for the weekend. But how could we go straight home after all that excitement? No sooner were we on the street than we would form little groups, depending on the direction we were headed in. I was never keen on joining them on the way home, because I was sure I would run into my mother. Instead, my friends and I would go to our usual place near the back of the churchyard and sit on the tombstones of people who had been buried there way before slavery was abolished, in 1833. We would sit and sing bad songs, use forbidden words, and, of course, show each other various parts of our bodies. While some of us watched, the others would walk up and down on the large tombstones

showing off their legs. It was immediately a popular idea; everybody soon wanted to do it. It wasn't long before many girls—the ones whose mothers didn't pay strict attention to what they were doing—started to come to school on Fridays wearing not bloomers under their uniforms but underpants trimmed with lace and satin frills. It also wasn't long before an end came to all that. One Friday afternoon, Miss Edward, on her way home from school, took a shortcut through the churchyard. She must have heard the commotion we were making, because there she suddenly was, saying, "What is the meaning of this?"—just the very thing someone like her would say if she came unexpectedly on something like us. It was obvious that I was the ringleader. Oh, how I wished the ground would open up and take her in, but it did not. We all, shamefacedly, slunk home, I with Miss Edward at my side. Tears came to my mother's eyes when she heard what I had done. It was apparently such a bad thing that my mother couldn't bring herself to repeat my misdeed to my father in my presence. I got the usual punishment of dinner alone, outside under the breadfruit tree, but added on to that, I was not allowed to go to the library on Saturday, and on Sunday, after Sunday school and dinner, I was not allowed to take a stroll in the botanical gardens, where Gwen was waiting for me in the bamboo grove.

That happened when I was in the first form. Now here Miss Edward stood. Her whole face was on fire. Her eyes were bulging out of her head. I was

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 sure that at any minute they would land at my feet and roll away. The small pimples on her face, already looking as if they were constantly irritated, now ballooned into huge, on-the-verge-of-exploding boils. Her head shook from side to side. Her strange bottom, which she carried high in the air, seemed to rise up so high that it almost touched the ceiling. Why did I not pay attention, she said. My impertinence was beyond endurance. She then found a hundred words for the different forms my impertinence took. On she went. I was just getting used to this amazing bellowing when suddenly she was speechless. In fact, everything stopped. Her eyes stopped, her bottom stopped, her pimples stopped. Yes, she had got close enough so that her eyes caught a glimpse of what I had done to my textbook. The glimpse soon led to closer inspection. It was bad enough that I had defaced my schoolbook by writing in it. That I should write under the picture of Columbus "The Great Man . . ." etc. was just too much. I had gone too far this time, defaming one of the great men in history, Christopher Columbus, discoverer of the island that was my home. And now look at me. I was not even hanging my head in remorse. Had my peers ever seen anyone so arrogant, so blasphemous?

I was sent to the headmistress, Miss Moore. As punishment, I was removed from my position as prefect, and my place was taken by the odious Hilarene. As an added punishment, I was ordered to copy Books I and II of *Paradise Lost*, by John Milton, and to have it done a week from that day. I then couldn't

wait to get home to lunch and the comfort of my mother's kisses and arms. I had nothing to worry about there yet; it would be a while before my mother and father heard of my bad deeds. What a terrible morning! Seeing my mother would be such a tonic—something to pick me up.

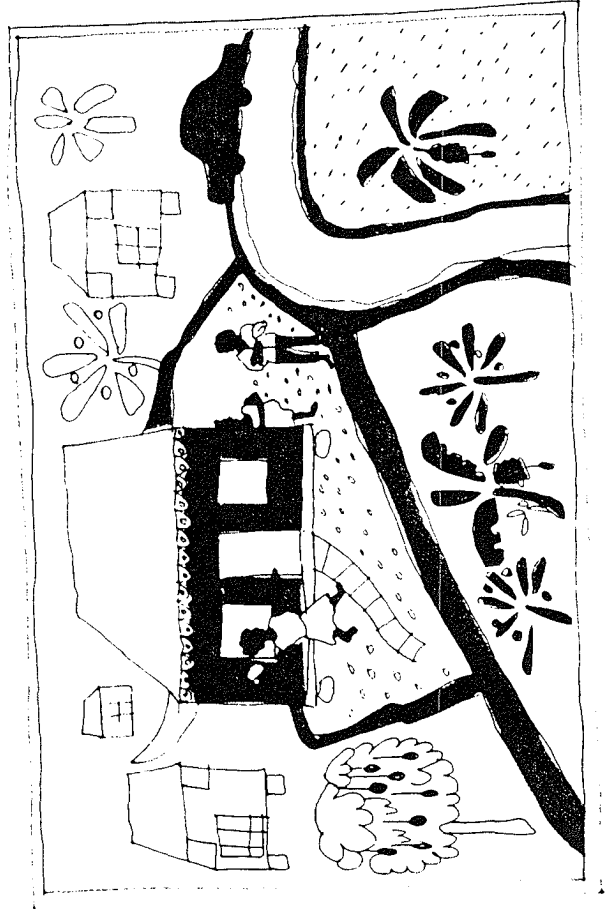
When I got home, my mother kissed me absent-mindedly. My father had got home ahead of me, and they were already deep in conversation, my father regaling her with some unusually outlandish thing the oaf Mr. Oatie had done. I washed my hands and took my place at table. My mother brought me my lunch. I took one smell of it, and I could tell that it was the much hated breadfruit. My mother said not at all, it was a new kind of rice imported from Belgium, and not breadfruit, mashed and forced through a ricer, as I thought. She went back to talking to my father. My father could hardly get a few words out of his mouth before she was a jellyfish of laughter. I sat there, putting my food in my mouth. I could not believe that she couldn't see how miserable I was and so reach out a hand to comfort me and caress my cheek, the way she usually did when she sensed that something was amiss with me. I could not believe how she laughed at everything he said, and how bitter it made me feel to see how much she liked him. I ate my meal. The more I ate of it, the more I was sure that it was breadfruit. When I finished, my mother got up to remove my plate. As she started out the door, I said, "Tell me, really, the name of the thing I just ate."

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My mother said, "You just ate some breadfruit. I made it look like rice so that you would eat it. It's very good for you, filled with lots of vitamins." As she said this, she laughed. She was standing half inside the door, half outside. Her body was in the shade of our house, but her head was in the sun. When she laughed, her mouth opened to show off big, shiny, sharp white teeth. It was as if my mother had suddenly turned into a crocodile.

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Rock Stone a River Bottom
No Know Sun Hot



from
JISTREN, LIONHEART GAL

Me cyaan figat dem lickle tings weh me madda used to tell me. 'Member seh man a green lizard,' she used to say. 'Man is a ting weh change. Di instant when dem see one next woman, dem no waan bodder deal wid yuh, especially when dem see yuh tight pon yuh money.'

Yuh see, she was disappointed by a man and dat cause her fi go tru a whole heap. While she was living wid me faada and pregnant wid me, him plan fi married to smaddy else and never tell her. When she find out, dem argue it out and den she tek time go back home a fi-her yard, as she never waan box him down or notten like dat. She always lick it inna me head seh man a one no good sinting.

It happen dat Mama meet dis lickle short man name Mr Jimmy and dem married. Me and him gree to a certain extent, but him and Mama couldn't gree at all for him wouldn't give her no money fi food. Dat a di first me see di direct oppression weh fi really mek yuh mawga down over life.

Mr Jimmy could a trace. Him used to siddung pon a chair pon one lickle bump where di kitchen deh and trace Mama. 'Gweh yuh warra-warra bitch! When yuh say yuh gone a church, yuh gone ketch man.' When Mama hear dem tings and know seh a no true, she would a use all a piece a mortar stick and come 'WOOFEN!' inna him side. Den yuh hear him, 'Lawd!' Him cyaan fight. Di ongle ting him have a him mouth. Him trace like a any batty man! Him talk and fling off him hand.

One day, when him a tell her some breed a someting, she just tek di chair wid him and him felt hat and bend-mouth walking stick, and throw him a gully. Him and di chair roll down deh and me madda not even look pon him. If yuh ever see him, him turn up him eye like when yuh sling way puss! When him come up him say, 'Yuh bitch yuh! Yuh waan me fi dead and lef me land, but if yuh kill me, ah gwine tear out yuh whats-it-nots-it!'

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It happen dat Mr Jimmy ketch pneumonia and a Mama same one did haffi nurse him. Dem tell him no fi mek rain wet him. Him wouldn't hear. Him go a bush and rain wet him and him dead.

After dat, a just Mama and me live. She used to say we talk one language. When she cook di food she always dish it out inna one pudding-pan and me siddung deh so, and she siddung yah so, and we eat. She cook meat and throw it inna one dish and di two a we eat out a one dish.

So, she always show me seh, 'Be independent fi yuh pon fi yuh own. Depend upon yuh own income. If dem give yuh notten and yuh save sinting out deh, no mek him know. Save dat to yuhself. No go show him seh, "Me a save dis fi me and yuh," cause at times him will tek it way from yuh and run yuh way and yuh no have notten.' It just grow inna me seh me must have someting fi meself. She say to me seh, 'First ting in life, yuh must try and have a bed fi yuhself.' Dat mean when di man put yuh out, yuh have yuh bed. Yuh no haffi go beg anodder woman cotch. If yuh even pack up yuh clothes inna carton box, remember yuh fi have a bed fi lie down pon. Again, she used to say, 'If di man have a bed, di man can run yuh off a di bed and yuh haffi bounce it pon di floor. Wherein, if yuh have yuh bed, yuh can say, "Come off a me bed!" Wherever him waan go, dat a fi-him business. Mek sure seh him cyaan put yuh off a di bed, for a fi-yuh bed.

'A iron board is essential. A wash pan is essential. Yuh musn't borrow dem deh from woman. When clothes-iron time, mek sure yuh have, if a even ONE clothes-iron fi yuhself. Yuh no fi go next door go borrow dem tings deh.'

Me always have dem ting deh in me mind. From me have sense tek over meself, me always a throw me lickle pardner. Me waan know me have sinting fi meself and him have fi-him own too, so none a we cyaan show off pon we one anodder. Me have me bed too, dat if him put me out me have me bed fi move wid. Me no haffi inna no problem wid him. Me no haffi go wid so-so bundle. No! When me come out a me house, it haffi empty like smaddy move out.

Yes! Me madda show me what and what is essential fi a woman have. And me mek sure have dem. All di same is not all di time me and Mama used to gree . . .

It did kind a lonely which part me and Mama did live. It come in like seh we live inna a desert by we-self. House never deh nearby.

Yuh haffi walk far. Mama and me mussy live like when yuh have big yard and di people dem dead out and lef two lickle people inna di yard. Di yard lonely. When she gone a church and me come from school, a would a me alone stay deh. When me see pickney a pass, me wi find sinting fi give dem, fi play wid dem lickle bit and talk to dem lickle bit.

Me used to inna di yard a siddung pon one chair a di window. Me never used to do notten more dan look tru di glass, and di day run off. One day me see one guy a pass inna one car. Him stop and me and him start talk. Him ask who and me live deh and weh me faada deh and weh me madda deh. Den him say, 'Bwoy, from me pass and me see yuh me really love yuh. Yuh have any bwoyfriend?' Me did have one lickle bwoyfriend name Malton Edwards, but to how Mama grow me is like she never waan me fi chat to him. Di woman mek me couldn't did talk to him none at all. So me say, 'No.'

'Which school yuh go?' Me tell him.

'Yuh a go school Monday?' Me say, 'Yes.'

'All right. Me wi see yuh anodder time. Me wi come back come look fi yuh.'

Me did like him one sort a way when him say him love me.

One Monday lunchtime, him come a school. All dem time deh me did shy. Me never did too waan talk to bwoy. So me tell him seh school over two-thirty and me haffi wait till four o'clock inna di evening before di bus come. Me have a long waiting fi stand up pon di white road and so him can come den.

Him come and him carry me inna him car and we go eat lunch and laugh and chat. Me no tek bus dat deh evening. Him carry me home inna him car and him drop me near to di gate.

Me madda ask me, 'Di bus come already?'

Me say, 'Yes, Mama.'

Afterward, me madda did really hear di bus blow and she ask me, 'How di bus a blow if it pass?'

'It could a bruck down and it just a move off.' And me nice her up.

Di next day, him come back. Him carry me fi lunch and him wait fi me and we drive come home again. Him drop me near a me yard and me walk go up. She say 'Yuh come home good. Yuh a come home early a evening time.'

'Yes Mama. Me a come home early tru me know seh a yuh one deh yah.'

Him was bigger smaddy dan me. Him was working selling tings.

Me was round sixteen and him was round twenty-odd. When me come home inna night, it come in like me head a go blow off me body di way how me feel nice. Me just cyaan wait fi day light. Woo! Me cyaan sleep. Me a pray fi day light fi me see him. Me a say, 'Yes. Me find one bwoyfriend. Me find one bwoyfriend now.'

Di next day, him come again. And den him come and him come and him come and him come and everyday him come.

After one time now, him say to me 'Yuh ever have sex yet?'

Me say 'No man. Yuh mad! Me madda wi beat me if she know.'
'Den yuh madda no haffi know.'

'She wi know cause me wi expect baby.' Me know seh people must have sex fi have baby, but me never know in terms a how. Me never start fi have me period yet and me never know notten bout me body.

'No man,' him say. 'Me won't mek yuh have no baby.'

'Me madda always say, anytime she find out seh me pregnant she a go run me out.' Me a tell him weh me madda say bout man and we laugh and we laugh. Him park him car and we siddung. A di first time me taste how beer taste.

One day, him bring one bathsuit fi me and him say, 'Yuh know weh me carry dis fah? Me carry it fi me and yuh go a beach when school over.' Lawd, me feel nice seh me a go a beach down a Port Maria! Me glad when school over and we go down a di beach and me put on me bathsuit. Nobody like me now. Me get way! Yeah! Man a no notten!

Him say me must tell me madda di evening seh me nah go come home di next evening. Me a go stop a Hampstead. Me tell her. She say, 'How yuh so hot fi go stop a Hampstead?'

'A no notten, but me just feel fi stop down deh tru me never stop down deh dis long time. Dem may say me used to down deh and me no come back.' Di evening, me no go a not a Hampstead at all. We deh a Port Maria whole evening a drive up and down pon di white road. Inna di night now, we go a one guest house.

Lawd! Him gimme one nightie out a di someting him use to a sell. Him say me must sleep inna dat. When him a park di car, me go upstairs fi go a bed. Me put on di nightie and go siddung a di bed foot. Him come and stretch out pon di bed and say, 'Yuh nah come lay down?'

'No man. Me no feel fi lay down. Me a talk first.' We talk and him say, 'Come lay down, man.'

'No man. Me no feel fi lay down,' me say. 'Yuh know, me feel

funny fi a go sleep wid man and me never do dat yet.'

'Just get used to me, man. Yuh no know seh yuh a me lickle girlfriend? Look how long me and yuh a talk. A time fi we go to bed now.'

Me go and lay down. Me cotch out a di bed foot and him hug me up. 'Come up man. Yuh fraid a me?' him say.

'Me no fraid a yuh.' Me lay down deh and we a talk. Him tell me bout him parents and him bredda. Him say if in case me get pregnant him wi married to me. Me a tell him seh me madda nah go accept dat 'cause yuh hair no pretty and yuh no brown'.

Me madda always a emphasise pon di blackness a me faada and a say, 'Di colour a yuh skin a di colour a yuh mind.' She feel seh all black man handle woman bad.

'Wah! She will like me man,' him say.

'Yuh tan deh tink me madda a go like yuh! She a go feel a way because she a go say how she spend her money and me let her down.' Him a talk. And den we go to bed.

Lawd have mercy! Dat was a judgement inna me life. O God! It hot. It hot. O God! Me start to bawl. Him say, 'When yuh have sex di first time it always hot!' Jesus Christ! Jesus Christ! Ah cry! Ah cry! Ah cry! Ah cry! Till me never know me could a ever stop. Me tell him fi carry me home. Me tell him seh me waan go home. Him a say, 'No.'

'Lord God! A weh me a go tell me madda seh?' Di bed nasty up wid blood. Me start fret for me feel seh me madda a go find out. She never used to tell me bout period so me believe seh she a go see seh me a see me period and feel seh it cause from having sex. It stop now. Me promise him me nah go do it again under Judgement Land. Me stay down a Hampstead di next evening. Me tell di lady seh me a see lickle blood. She send me go buy a pack a Safex and she gimme. 'Yuh turn big woman now. Dis a yuh period. If yuh have anyting fi do wid a man, yuh wi get pregnant.'

'See deh now,' me say inna me mind, 'me a breed.' Me a fret. Me cyaan eat. It come in like me a get off a me head. Inna me head feel light. Everytime me member pon it me blood run cold. Me haffi all siddung and hold up me jaw.

Di blood go way inna di next day. Round two days after, him come back. Me no waan him chat to me. Me no waan hear notten from him. Him say, 'Yuh never feel like seh it would a happen one day? If it never happen wid me, it would a happen wid some-

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body else, so yuh no haffi feel no way.' Him say, 'A no notten fi shame bout.' Me swear seh me nah do notten again. Me never know bout no virgin nor notten. Me never tink bout sex yet. Me never know it a go be so much painful agony, else all now me wouldn't do it yet.

Anyway, it happen dat me go do it again. Dat was di time me get pregnant. Di first time me see it, was when a did agony inna me life. Di second time me do it again me see lickle bit a blood round two days after. Den notten nah come again. Me no know what a clock a strike. Me feel glad. Him ask me if me see it again. Me say, 'No. Don't me done tell yuh seh me nah go do notten again.' Him deh-deh and him still come look fi me and bring tings fi me.

Anytime me inna class now, it come in like when yuh eat stale food. Yuh feel logi-logi. One day, me eat a fish at school and me vomit up di fish and feel upset. Everyting me eat, me feel fi vomit. Me feel inna me breast tough-up. Me say, 'How dis never inna me breast yet?'

Couple days later inna di car, me a tell him how me feel and him say to me, 'Yuh know seh yuh a breed.'

'Yuh mussy mad. Weh me a go tell me madda seh?' Me start fret bad-bad because me know Mama a go run me out. Me no know weh fi do. Me no know weh fi say. Me no know notten. Me no know weh fi tell Mama seh. Me cyaan tell di lady up a Hampstead because she a go send call Mama and Judgement a go gwan inna me skin. Me no waan come home. Me no know when me madda a go know for me no know notten bout pregnant.

One day, me go school and me no bodder go home back. Me just come a town wid him. Him and him madda did live up a Waterhouse. Him tell him madda seh me pregnant.

'Yuh go breed di woman lickle gal!' she say and she come talk to me and ask me if me madda know. Me tell her no. And me go live wid dem. Dem handle me nice, but me feel inna one different world. Me a fret, but me haffi tan deh.

One evening, dem buy one *Star* and bring it come. When me open it and look, me see one school picture weh me did have, inna di *Star*. It say me missing and if anybody know me whereabouts, dem fi talk. When me see dat me say, 'Jesus Christ! Me waan go home!' And me start cry. Him madda say she a come wid we fi go a di yard, for me haffi go home.

Di day now, when we reach right which part him used to drop me a evening time, him park di car. Me siddung deh and him and him madda walk through di next yard and go down inna our yard. Me could a see Mama from up a di car and me see when dem reach down. Di woman ask her if she a me madda. She say she see di notice inna di *Star*, and she know some information she can tell her.

'Lawd, Lady,' Mama say, 'tell me. A di one lickle gal me have. Dem did kill one gal up a Guy's Hill Road weh used to come a Grantham College. Could a dat happen to she.' George madda say she know which part me deh.

'Yuh could a carry me go show me?' She say she waan me fi come back and di two a we live. 'Look from when me no eat food. Look how me mawga.'

'She up a di road.'

'Up di road?' Mama say. 'Den wah mek Bess fraid fi come a him yard?' She tell di lady fi come call me.

'No,' she say, 'me have someting fi clear wid yuh first.' Di lady gwan like she a one Welfare Officer from di Community Centre nearby weh walk di area and check out bout pickney, if dem a go school. She have a lickle book inna her hand. Mama a talk how me and she live and a say, 'Me no see wah mek him could a run way. A must some man carry him way.' Me decide fi come down a di yard.

When Mama see me a come she say, 'Bess! Wah mek yuh lef me yard? Weh mek yuh go way? Look how me and yuh live yah so long. Massy God! Lawd have mercy, man! Wah mek yuh wicked so? Yuh know from when me no nyam food and di two a we live yah and Woo! Murder! Woo! Judgement Woo! God a go charge yuh! Yuh wicked!'

Di lady a say, 'We want to sit down and talk, because this can't remedy the situation.'

Dem go inna di house and dem draw one chair and dem siddung. Me never did waan go in but di lady say, 'Come, Bess,' and so me go in and me siddung. 'It's no point hiding this from you,' di lady say, 'Bess is pregnant for my son.'

From Mama hear 'pregnant fi me son,' she get up and say, 'Lady! Lady! Come out a me house! Come out a me house! COME OUT A ME HOUSE! Lawd Jesus! Christ! Di whole a me money weh me spend gone down di drain. WOOOO! WOEEEEEE!' and she start bawl and a galang. And she roll in di dirt in front a her house which part she used to fling Mr Jimmy over di lickle hill. She bawl and she

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bawl and she say, 'Oh Jesus! Can Jesus bear di cross alone?! MURDER! Woman, come out a me yard. Me no waan yuh inna me YAAARD!' And she start to gwan like Poco woman, which wherein she was not a Poco woman, but she jump and gwan and she, 'Alleluia! My GAWD! Jesus!'

And di lady a say, 'Well, I'm not leaving. I'm not leaving at all. We're big people and we can sit and talk.'

But Mama a bawl and a say, 'Me no waan no talking. Me have me pasture and me have me goat and me hog. Me no waan no charity.'

And di lady deh-deh a talk and talk. Me look pon George and a say, 'A yuh do it! A yuh do it!' Him just a look pon me.

One man name Mister Lenny, who did waan married to Mama, did pass. Him stop and say, 'But, Miss Mira, yuh haffi gwan so? Yuh must know seh it would a happen.'

'Look yah, Mass Lenny, yuh know weh me know? Galang! Go a yuh yard! Yuh wife cook yuh dinner and it deh-deh a cold. Gwan a yuh yard! Come out a me business! Me no waan yuh inna me business,' she say and Mass Lenny gone.

Di lady a talk and a talk till Mama say, 'Dat bwoy? Dat bwoy deh! Mmgh! Mmgh! Me God! Me tink seh di gal would a look up off a di ground. Instead di gal not even raise up him head, him hold it down. A black man! Wid roly-polly black pepper head! Me no waan dat deh pickney. None at all. Me no waan him yah. Look pon di quality of yuh hair wid dat deh black pepper grain. Mmmgh! MMMHHH! MMMHHH! Eeehh! Eeehh! Ummm! EEEemgh! OH MY GAWD!' She definitely feel seh if yuh hair no straight, yuh nah gwan wid notten. But den, di joke is, fi-her breed a bongo breed too.

Di lady did gimme some nightie and every lickle ting. She never did haffi directly buy dem, tru she and di son sell dem. She gimme also duster, bed slipper and a pail wid a basin and soap dish and chimmy. She bring some cloth fi mek madda's frock fi me anytime me pregnancy get big. And me madda say, 'No. Tek dem up. Me no waan dem. Further, me no waan di pickney inna me yard. Me no waan it. Cause di faada not even have lickle colour.'

Di lady say, 'Yuh difficult fi deal wid.'

'Me difficult fi deal wid? Me difficult? Inna me own yard? A fi-me yard!' and she start so-till George madda go way.

When me see she a galang me run up di road. Me go a di car. Me say me a go way back wid dem, but she say me fi stay. She say me

madda a go set police. Dat a di only reason wah mek she wouldn't waan me fi come back deh. Me never insist fi mek him tek me wid him. Me a say Mama wi waan me fi come back to her. But if she know seh me gone again is anodder coal dat pon me head. Me never waan fi go stay a no place weh George could a put me. Me waan fi stay deh. Me prefer fi deh round di yard mek she see seh me deh-deh. Me decide fi stay and face it. Me say if she lick me down a so; but me a stay. Di lady say George will come back di next day fi find out what happen. Me just feel seh she will talk till she stop. Me feel seh a me madda and she nah go do me notten too hard.

When di woman gone, she go inna di house and tek out a white sheet. She spread out di white sheet and put all me clothes dem in deh. All me clothes! She tie it up inna one big white bundle and she carry it come put pon one mango stump out a di gate. She put one fork, one knife, one spoon, one tinnin lamp, one plate and one ole chamber right a di road side fi everybody pass and see dem. And den she start complain to all di people passing weh she and dem talk.

Mass Lenny pass and she tell him and him try fi talk to her and say 'Miss Mira, a so and so and so . . .' But she nah listen. She nah pay him no mind.

Everytime me come near di gate she say, 'Gweh! Gweh!'

Night come down. Me siddung out a di mango bump ready fi spend di night wid me bundle. One a di time, me see she a walk fast a come. Me tink a me she a come fi come lick and me run. Den she say, 'Gweh! Slut dog! Gweh! Anyweh yuh ketch yuh cold go blow yuh nose deh.' Me nah pay her no mind. She come tek way di bundle and say, 'If anyting, people a go say a me put yuh out so mek me tek dem up.' She carry dem go put back inna di house. Lickle bit later she come out and den she go in. She come out. She go in. She come out and me just haffi keep running till me hear she slam di door. BOOM! Me tek me time and go push di door fi find out if it open. It lock and she gone a her bed. Me go inna di outside kitchen go sleep pon di bench.

Inna di morning me wake up early and run out a di kitchen go siddung out a di gateway. When time fi school pickney pass, me move and go round inna di bush part go siddung. Me no waan nobody fi see me. She come and she cuss and she cuss and she cuss and she cuss. When me see seh she gone a bush, me go inna di

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kitchen go boil me tea. Me hear a car come down and when me look a George. Him say him madda send him back come see what happen. Me tell him and him say, 'Me madda say me no fi carry yuh back cause she no waan notten go happen.' We drive go a Linstead and him buy up bully beef and sardine. We drive come back and we sidding up di road and we laugh and chat. Laugh, yes! And chat and drink di drinks. Him soon gone a him yard now and me one up deh. Me one. Me start to cry and him say, 'Bwoy, it really happen; but it could a go less dan so.'

'It couldn't go less dan so,' and me start bawl now cause him a go way and a me haffi go sleep inna di kitchen. And den him gone.

All right! Everyday him wi come anytime me madda gone a bush. When me fi go a clinic, him carry me. Each time him come, him carry food. Sometime him carry box food. Sometime him carry food from him yard come deh. If a me madda, me would a never get hot water. She mek sure out her fire when she a go bush and lock her kitchen. Me haffi pop out di wattle fi go inna di kitchen. Den when she come now is a different someting.

Bout two weeks after me come home, me tink seh she gone a church cause me see her when she come out and gone, not knowing she did over next door. Meanwhile George come bout eleven o'clock. Me see di car and me go up deh. Me feel glad. Me go meet him and we a chat. She see di car up di road and she feel seh me mussy deh someweh bout. She no bodder go a no church now. She go down back a fi-her house go puddung her Bible, tek off her boot, clothes and hat. Den she go up a di coconut tree and pick up some coconut husk. She come down back and watch. She see me and him stand up a talk. She start fling a whole heap a coconut husk and stone after me. She run after me and she cuss. Me run, for she a fling three and four pieces one time.

'No come back! Me no waan yuh fi di pickney Poopa! If di pickney born me nah go register him inna fi-yuh name. Me a give him fi-me name. Me no waan yuh inna me breed!' George no say notten to her. Him just go way.

From dat, him never come back. Me leave lonely. Me no have nobody. A just me alone inna di kitchen and down di gully. If me mek up lickle fire, as she see di smoke a raise, she fling stick and say, 'Slut dog! Go find yuh bull weh breed yuh. Gweh dog! Gweh dog-dog!' She come down di gully and tek weh di breadfruit, go cook it fi her hog and me hungry. Me haffi feed pon ripe banana for me nah get no food fi eat.

One time, ah just wait so-till she have her pot a mutton soup pon di fire. She sidding right near to di door a sew. Ah go in and tek piece a cloth and lift off di pot off a di fire. As me mek to come out through di door, who me buck up pon? No she?! Di pot drop from me and she start fling after me. Me run round di track and come up back. Dat time she run gone a fling after me. Me hungry. Me desperate. Ah tek me mouth and sup some a di soup off a di ground. 'Ssooop, ssshelep!'

One day, she have a big laying hen inna di yard and ah just use a mortar stick and lick him down and kill him. Me pick him and tek her coconut oil and cook him. When di last lickle piece a chicken wing inna di pot a fry, me hear di donkey a come in. Me haffi tek up di pudding-pan and run. Ah just lef all di feather dem inna di kitchen. When she come in, she never quarrel same time, cause she did tired. After dat she cuss me.

Me bathe a di tank inna di yard. It did have a pipe so me can bathe anytime. She have a pan out deh me can use. But di bathroom weh deh round a di side, me dare not go in deh-so. Me bathe out-a-door.

One day me tan up pon a one lickle hill and she tan up down a bottom and a wash and chat bout, 'Him have him man and di man breed him and gone lef him.'

Me say, 'Ah yuh mek him gone lef me! Yuh mussy did want him!' Den she bawl fi days and months.

Me say, 'Bwoy! Me a live hard life.' Me nah tink notten bout no baby, like seh someting would a happen. Me not even tink seh it would a hard fi me have di baby, dat me would a haffi go a hospital. She did tell me already seh she nah go send me back a school cause me waste di money already. She did really gimme money. Das why she feel me shouldn't did go get pregnant. A no because a wants mek me get pregnant. Me no know wah mek me go get pregnant. A no tru me did inna wants a notten.

One man name Zedekiah Mighty, who a some cousin to her, see me all bout wild. Me tell him wah a gwan and him say him a go talk to her. Dat time me did round six months pregnant. Me get big now. So Mass Zeddy talk to her and tell her how me belly get big and me can have baby a bush.

One day, me deh pon di tank a sleep, cause yuh know when yuh pregnant yuh lazy and yuh waan sun. No care how yuh hot, yuh

stay inna di sun fi di whole day. Me deh pon di tank top a sleep inna di trash. Me just hear when smaddy come over me and say, 'A dem life yah yuh love, ee? Yuh enjoy it.' Me get up and see her and go fi run now. She say, 'No bodder run. Carry up dis.' A one basin wid some clothes in deh.

Me carry it up and me go put it down. Me say, 'Yuh no spread out di clothes dem, Mama?' Me spread out di clothes. Den she say, 'Look inna di house pon di table, yuh see some dinner. If yuh want it, yuh can tek it.' Me eat and me go inna me room go lie down and get a good sleep.

Me deh-deh now. Me feel like 'Alice in Wonderland' for she nah talk to me fi round a week. If she gone a bush, me sweep up di yard, wash up plate and clean (if a time fi clean). Dem ting deh weh me never use to do whentime me never pregnant. When me know seh she near fi come, me light di fire and put on di pot pon it. When she come, she wi put in her food.

Whentime me fi have di baby, me couldn't have di baby. Di ongle time me did go a clinic a whentime George did carry me. After me come home, me start go a clinic few time. When me in labour now, di baby did hitch inna me leg so him couldn't did born. Di midwife tell Mama fi carry me go a Linstead a hospital. She go call one car and dem carry me go hospital. Dem send go call di doctor and him come. Him push up him hand inna me belly. Dat was anodder terrible pain again. Di same evening bout two o'clock me have di baby.

Me deh a hospital fi round two weeks after me have di baby. George come a hospital come look fi me. Me no know how him did get fi know seh me did deh a Linstead, but him come. It was a Saturday. Him see seh a bwoy baby me have. Him bring some lickle tings fi di baby: some orange, whole heap a lickle grocery fi me fi put inna me locker.

Me madda come now and she ask me how me get dem.

'Miss Birdie bring it come give me,' me tell her. Miss Birdie did live inna di district.

'Lawd, a weh do Miss Birdie now!' she a say. 'A weh Miss Birdie a push-up, push-up himself fi a carry sinting fi come give yuh. She not even have notten fi herself, but she a carry tings come give yuh. Dem mussy tek it turn table talk. Ah could a have a mind dash it way.'

'No bodder dash it way, man. God will charge yuh. Member seh

yuh a go a church.' And she lef it and never know seh a him bring it.

It happen den dat me leave and deh a me granny. Mama say me fi deh-deh cause she no know bout baby again and she cyaan bodder wid it. Me deh-deh long-long now, till she come tek set. She waan me fi come back cause a she one deh-deh and she fraid. She lonely so-till me come home and me and her live.

George come to di yard two time. He couldn't come a me granny but him come a Mama come see me and come look fi di baby and carry clothes fi di baby. Dem time deh di baby cyaan wear di clothes, for if me madda see di clothes dem, is a different story. She could a put me out dis time all togedder and me no come in back. Me haffi wait so-till she gone a bush and me go a clinic. Me wash di baby clothes. Me put dem on pon di baby. Him wear dem go a clinic. Me wash dem out when she gone a bush di next day, and me tek dem up off a di line before she come and hide dem.

One time, she ketch him come deh again. Dat was anodder long story again. 'Yuh come fi breed her again?'

Him turn round and say, 'A yuh mussy waan me fi breed yuh.'

And she start bawl. 'Ah pray God fi yuh,' she say to me. 'Yuh carry man fi come cuss me and di Judgement of di Lawd going come down pon yuh.' Dat time, a she put it inna him way dat him did haffi say someting. So she vex bout dat. Him couldn't come back deh. So George gone now. Me no see George again and again and again. Me lef just so.

George did only see Craig when him did lickle. To mek more of an effort to get in touch wid Craig, him would a haffi go fight Mama. E-E! Aye! Massy me God!

To how she gwan is like seh she never waan me fi chat to no man at all. She no must expect seh me would a tek a man inna some way? She feel dat by telling me 'man a green lizard' she would a prevent a situation, but she mek it worse. Madda fi really siddung and talk to dem daughter inna certain ways of life. Yuh as a madda fi mek a daughter know weh she a go face inna life. No just mek she go out deh just go drop pon it so. Mama did really waan lickle teachment for she did backward. Inna Mama time if yuh no white, yuh couldn't go a high school and so all dem tings mussy mek her believe di colour of yuh skin haffi do wid yuh ability. Yuh know weh did happen to she? She did feel seh she would a live forever, so Craig wouldn't waan no faada. She could a never know seh she would a dead.

Me did licky-licky. Das why me did run go talk to George. Me did waan car drive and nice tings. But dat a no notten. Di ting weh me go wrong at was di pregnancy. Yuh can have a bwoyfriend, but yuh no must get pregnant before yuh ready. A fi yuh safeguard yuhself gainst pregnancy. No matter what nice tings a man a go tell yuh seh fi have sex, remember a YUH a go get pregnant. Me would a tell a one say, 'Aaah bwoy, mek sure yuh have some lickle education inna yuh head first before yuh get pregnant . . . for from yuh have pickney . . . Bwoy!'

Being a madda meself so young, me never enjoy it. Yuh haffi siddung deh wid dat pickney from him come out, from him face di earth and yuh haffi dedicate yuhself to dat child and notten more else. Yuh have no freedom fi go up and down unless yuh have smaddy fi keep dat pickney deh. Yuh just siddung wid yuh pickney and if anything happen a yuh response. When time me have Craig me no have nobody fi stay wid him for me madda gone a bush. Me one haffi siddung deh. All if me hear one lickle dance up di road or one lickle picture up di road, she say me cyaan go because di pickney a go wake up and bawl in her ears. And at di same time me would a carry di pickney go a him bumpy-bumpy head faada, but she no waan me carry him go deh.

After me turn big woman, Mama dead. After she dead, me did feel like smaddy deserted, weh no have nobody, like when yuh have piece a land and yuh no pay di land no mind. It grow up alone. It and bush. She never waan me fi live me owna life. She never waan me fi grow up. Every gal pickney have a struggle fi meet from dem a young miss. but if dem even deh wid tiefing man, no care how di madda no like it. she haffi lef her. All she can do is mek sure she and di daughter can reason good. Me madda never tell me 'thanks' yet. She never tek notten from me. She always a gimme. All dem lickle tings rest pon me mind when me member how she used to say, 'Be independent, fi yuh pon yuh own.'

Another Life

Derek Walcott

by the same author

IN A GREEN NIGHT: POEMS 1948-60

SELECTED POEMS

THE CASTAWAY

THE GULF AND OTHER POEMS

DREAM ON MONKEY MOUNTAIN AND OTHER PLAYS



JONATHAN CAPE
THIRTY BEDFORD SQUARE LONDON

from DEREK WALCOTT
ANOTHER LIFE

at my eyes' touch, everything tightened, tuned,
Sunday,
the dead Victrola;

Sunday, a child
breathing with lungs of bread;
Sunday, the sacred silence of machines.

Mama,
your son's ghost circles your lost house, looking in
incomprehensibly at its dumb tenants
like fishes busily inaudible behind glass,
while the carpenter's Gothic joke, A, W, A, W,
Warwick and Alix involved in its eaves
breaks with betrayal.
You stitched us clothes from the nearest elements,
made shirts of rain and freshly ironed clouds,
then, singing your iron hymn, you riveted
your feet on Monday to the old machine.

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Then Monday plunged her arms up to the elbows
in a foam tub, under a blue soap sky,
the wet fleets sailed the yard, and every bubble
with its bent, mullioned window, opened
its mote of envy in the child's green eye
of that sovereign-headed, pink-checked bastard Bubbles
in the frontispiece of Pears Cyclopaedia.
Rising in crystal spheres, world after world.

They melt from you, your sons.
Your arms grow full of rain.

Old house, old woman, old room,
old planes, old buckling membranes of the womb,
translucent walls,
breathe through your timbers; gasp
arthritic, curling beams,
cough in old air
shining with notes, stair
polished and repolished by the hands of strangers,
die with defiance flaking your grey eyes,
notes of a sunlit air,
your timbers humming with constellations of carcinoma,
your bed frames glowing with radium,
cold iron dilating the fever of your body,
while the galvanised iron snaps in spasms of pain,
but a house gives no outcry,
it hears the depth of forest, of ocean and mother.
Each consuming the other
with memory and muse.

Why should we weep for dumb things?

This radiance of sharing extends to the simplest objects,
to a favourite hammer, a paintbrush, a toothless,
gun-sunken old shoe,
to the brain of a childhood room, retarded,
lobotomised of its furniture,
stuttering its inventory of accidents:
why this chair cracked,
when did the tightened scream

Closest the
mother came
to having
a voice.
She becomes
the house, room
& bed.

NGUGI WA THIONG'O

George Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin*

It will be our argument that although it is set in a village in a period well before any of the West Indian islands had achieved independence, *In the Castle of My Skin* (New York, 1954) is a study of a colonial revolt; that it shows the motive forces behind it and its development through three main stages: a static phase, then a phase of rebellion, ending in a phase of achievement and disillusionment with society poised on the edge of a new struggle; that it sharply delineates the opposition between the aspirations of the peasantry and those of the emergent native élite, an opposition which, masked in the second phase, becomes clear during the stage of apparent achievement. The novel itself is built on a three-tier time structure corresponding broadly to our three stages: the first three chapters describe stable life, a village community whose social consciousness is limited to a struggle with immediate nature; the next six chapters deal with a village whose consciousness is awakened into a wider vision, involving challenge of and struggle against the accepted order of things; while the last chapters show the ironic dénouement; a new class of native lawyers, merchants, teachers has further displaced the peasantry from the land. But underlying the story's progress in time is a general conception of human history as a movement from the state of nature to a 'higher' consciousness; it is a movement from relative stability in a rural culture to a state of alienation, strife and uncertainty in the modern world.

The restless note is struck at the very beginning: looking at the rain, the hero can see the raindrops in terms of his interior life: 'our lives—meaning our fears and their corresponding ideals—seemed to escape down an imaginary drain that was our future' (p. 2). The image anticipates the end, where the boy now about to embark on an adult's world away from home casts a last glance behind him:

The earth where I walked was a marvel of blackness and I knew in a sense more deep than simple departure I had said farewell, farewell to the land. (p. 312)

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who from the moment he came down 'an' tells us that the Lord ain't going to drop manna in we mouths I start to think', Mr Slime kindles in them a dream ('he speak the other night how he goin' to make us owners o' this land . . . I couldn't sort of catch my breath when I hear it, but 'tis a big thing to expect . . .'), which makes them look differently at the hitherto existing relations on the Estate. It occurs to them, for instance, that the landlord is as much dependent on them, the village, their labour, as they on him.

' 'Tis true,' said Mr Forster, 'you couldn't have the land without the village.'

'And he can't do without the village either,' said the overseer's brother.

'He couldn't feel as happy anywhere else in this God's world than he feel on that said same hill lookin' down at us.' (p. 95)

Because of the new mood, they haul Creighton down from God's heaven on the hill and reduce him to human proportions, on the Estate: hence they can now look at him consciously and critically, rejecting for instance his paternalism, or seeing his humanitarianism for what it really is:

He's a nice sort of man, the landlord; he kind, he will give you if he think you really need, he's really like that, but if he got to spend any r'al sum of money, it give him heart failure. And he got more than he could ever spend in this God's world. (p. 94)

A privileged minority is the most charitable and humanitarian in any society: they possess God's own benevolence and regulate their relationship with the lower orders from Olympian heights, carrying themselves with divine aloofness. They must avoid contact, must never assume human flesh, for to be human, Lamming tells us in another beautifully realised episode involving the boys and a fisherman, is to be vulnerable. It is in this context that Creighton's anger and pain are understandable once the people not only reject his paternalism but actually show, or seem to show, disrespect to his person. Instinctively, he realises that any personal disrespect is a challenge to the value-system that legitimises his power over the people:

He [the landlord] say to me sittin' in the sun beside the heap o' hay, he says we won't ever understand the kind o' responsibility he feel for you an' me an' the whole village. He say it was a real responsibility. There ain't much he can do whatever anybody may say, but he'd always feel that responsibility. We ain't his children he say, but the feelin' was something like that. He had

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sort o' take care o' those who belong to the village. Things was never as they should be, he say. He know that full well. But nothin' take away that feelin' o' responsibility he feel for you an' me an' all o' we here in this corner o' God's earth. An he say we was lucky 'cause there be some in this islan' who never knew anybody to feel that kind of responsibility for them.

Ma, who has sympathy for the landlord and is pained by the current mood of disrespect, had gone to see him to apologise for her people's sacrilege. She is old and religious, and she is resigned to the *status quo*. She distrusts violent changes, and the future anyway is always dark and unpredictable. But her husband, Pa, infected with the new mood, rejects his wife's cautionary tale. It is Pa, gropingly, puzzled, but welcoming the new dream, who best summarises the prevailing thoughts and attitudes:

I ain't know exact, Ma, an' Mr Slime never so much as say except that he feel that you an' all the rest who been here donkeys years, 'tis time that we own it. If Mr Creighton an' all the Creightons from time past can own it, there ain't no reason why we mustn't. (p. 84)

This is a revolutionary thought: what it calls for is a total overhaul of all the relations hitherto governing the island—the colonial plantocracy. Not surprisingly, some people are frightened: Ma in her religious reverence for life and continuous order, instinctively perceives the suffering attending any revolutionary changes; she fears for the children, 'the young that comin' up so fast to take the place of the old'. But most of the villagers, even when they are nervous at the daring of their own thoughts, are mesmerised by the possibilities for them and their children. Mr Slime has gained their confidence, not merely by kindling a dream where there was a vacuum, but by actually pointing at a concrete agency: a Friendly Society and a Penny Bank, which has grown in strength over a year, has shown them what their united action can achieve. The achievement of Mr Slime is this: he has given the people a measure of self-respect, a new estimation of their own worth; arising from the self-confidence regained, their imagination and thoughts rage, and like flames, reach out for other accepted notions in religion and education.

In *In the Castle of My Skin* Christianity, juxtaposed with Nature and with natural, healthy relationships between people, is seen as disrupting peoples' lives. Sometimes this brings about comic situations like that of Jan, Jen, and Susie.

... But apart from its destructive effects on individual lives, Lamming shows us how Christian values legitimize colonial

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Lamming's short sentences, reporting as if he was both inside and outside the people's hearts:

There was a kind of terror in the air. The villagers were quiet and frightened within. The sun came out and dispersed the rain clouds and soon it was bright all over the land. All the shops were closed. The school was closed. In the houses they tried to imagine what the fighting was like. They had never heard of anything like it before. They had known a village fight and they were used to fights between boys and girls. Sometimes after the cricket competition one village team for various reasons might threaten to fight with the opponent. These fights made sense, but the incidents in the city were simply beyond them. There was fighting in the city. That was all they were told, and they repeated the words and tried to guess who were fighting whom. But they couldn't follow it clearly. It wasn't Mr Forster or Bots' father or the overseer's brother who were fighting. It was simply the fighting. They were fighting in the city. And the fighting would spread in the village. That was all clear. And they couldn't say they understood that. (p. 193)

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Gradually we learn what has happened in the city. A crowd of waterfront workers sent a delegation to the Governor. The sentries would not allow the delegation to pass. Hence fighting breaks out during which the police fire at the crowd and kill Po, a small boy. Rioting spreads in the town and into the surrounding villages. The peasants resent the town people, but watch with breathless expectation as the workers ambush Mr Creighton, who is saved from death by the timely arrival of Mr Slime. Disappointed, because they wanted to avenge Po's death, the men disperse. Soon the police arrive at the village with rifles and 'bayonets shining dull and deadly in the night' and things return to 'normal'.

Has anything happened? We are told, ironically, I think, that the years have changed nothing. The riots are not repeated, but things are clearly never the same again in the village. For the boy-hero, his immediate world has gradually withered away: 'where you wus sittin' wus a worl' all by itself, an' you got to get up an' go to the other world where the new something happen'. The break-up of the old is an inevitable process of growing up and what the boy uncomfortably feels—that he is seeing things for the last time—is part of the transition from adolescence to manhood. But his transition coincides with, or is a symbol of, a deeper historical experience the village community is about to undergo: the further dispossession of the peasants, thus adding them to the army of the rootless urban workers. This experience, as in many events in Lamming's novels, has a peculiar irony: the final dispossession

logically follows their own agitation and their awakened consciousness. The strike and the riots make Creighton depart from the Estate; he sells the land to the Penny Bank and the Friendly Society. The people with the most shares get the first choice in the purchase of land and the house plots. These are lawyers, teachers, doctors and members of the legislative Assembly—in a word, the emergent national bourgeoisie.

'Tell me,' the shoemaker said (when given verbal notice to quit his home by the new owner) 'what sort o' nancy story you tell me 'bout you buy this lan'; how the bloody hell you can buy this, who sell it to you, where you get money to buy it from, since when you an' a white landlord is friends for him to call you in secret an' sell you a spot o' land that I been on for only God knows how long. This ol' shop been here for more'n twenty years, an' you come on a big bright morning like this to tell one some shitting story 'bout this spot belonging to you . . .' (p. 246)

His incredulous outburst and protesting gestures are futile; he sobs loudly; he was one of the first and the most consistent followers of Mr Slime; he is painfully conscious of the irony that he, and the other peasants, had put 'signature' to a warrant for their exile. To emphasise that the process we are witnessing is the dispossession of the peasantry, the central importance of land is stressed over and over again.

Houses were built and houses were sold in all parts of the island. But it was different with the land. This thing which stretched high and low and naked under the eye, the foot, the wind and the rain had always seemed to carry a secret buried somewhere beneath its black surface. Why did people respect land as they did? He didn't understand, but it was a kind of visitation that assisted or terrified, an infectious disease which money made imperative for the rich to inherit. The poor understood the same issue in a different way; since they couldn't own it, they rooted themselves into it. Dirt was cheap as the villagers often said, and sand was free; but land was the land, priceless, perennial and a symbol of some inexplicable power.

In this clash in which the peasants are exploited and dispossessed, turned into urban labourers even, we can hear echoes of a similar process in Africa and Latin America. The implacable power of money in this process and in destroying personal relationships is constantly emphasised. The feudal colonial relationship—Creighton's paternal 'responsibility' and the peasants' customary rights—is finished. Above all, cash now regulates personal relations

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The next extract, from *In the Castle of My Skin*, and the one which follows it, by Drayton, come from books which deal with childhood in the West Indies.

One deals with childhood in a peasant village and involves a group of boys. It is written in such a way as to be typical of boyhood in a West Indian village.

The other, *Christopher*, deals with the closing stages in the childhood of a particular boy from another social level. For Christopher is the son of a sugar planter, and his contact with peasant life is very limited.

In the Castle of My Skin and *Christopher* complement each other. They reflect different social levels in the West Indies; they are a good illustration of the way in which different writers, writing ostensibly on a similar subject, may differ in their means and in their effects.

In the Castle of My Skin is a story of boyhood and growing up in a Barbados village in the 1930s and 1940s. It is partly autobiographical, and partly a chronicle of change in the village.

On one hand, the author evokes a childhood filled with naivety, wonder and discovery; with half-formed feelings and absurd-sounding speculation; with the endless chattering of boys, and with the adventure that boys and girls always seem to be able to extract from their surroundings.

On the other hand, there is a portrait of the village. Its ways are set, and its people seem to fit into their places in the community: Savory, the mobile food merchant, around whose cart the villagers gather every morning, pushing and fighting and gossiping; the shoe-maker with his smattering of Priestley and a photograph of the cricketer, George Headley, 'The Black Bradman'; and Ma and Pa, the eldest, most respected couple in the village. On a hill overlooking the village is the big house where the white landlord lives. He controls the tenants through a black overseer. The world of the villagers is distinct from the sphere of the landlord. It is a feudal set-up, with privileges and with deprivations, but it is a stable organisation.

By the end of the book, childhood has passed, and the old way of life in the village has been disturbed. The old man, Pa,



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is put in the Alms House and the boy, G, now grown-up, is about to leave his island. The way in which the author combines the story of the passing of childhood with the chronicle of the village to produce a complex work about change and identity cannot properly be gone into in this anthology; nor is there space to discuss the social and political implications of the book.

This passage from *In the Castle of My Skin* illustrates what is its most memorable feature: its expression of the quality of boyhood in a typical West Indian village.

The details of the incidents are West Indian but their general appeal to the spirit of boyhood crosses regional boundaries.

The first extract opens with the author as a boy, G, being bathed by his mother in the open yard.

The extract is vividly presented to our senses: from the shifting pebbles under G's feet to the flow of water down his body; from the convulsive movements of arms and body to the quiet of perfect balance; from the swishing of the water over the body to the smooth flow downwards. There is a variety of sound effects—from the laughter of the spying boys and girls to the complaints of the boys' mothers. The combination of dialogue and action also contributes to the strong sense impressions.

The second extract sees G joining his friends on the seashore as they perform a solemn ceremony. The passage is an attack on the senseless educational system which forces West Indian schoolboys to learn about King Canute, but the attempt of the boys to connect even this obscure gentleman with their lives is a triumph for the spirit of boyhood.

In the Castle of My Skin

The skillet was caught up and canted and the water crashed against my head and down my body in a swishing cataract.

'Google, google, no more,' I said, 'google google, no more.' The pebbles loosened by the moisture from the earth

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slipped beneath my feet. My arms were thrown out, withdrawn, clasped in a shivering lock, opened again, folded once more. The pebbles shifted under my heels. My body tottered from the rapid, convulsive gasps for breath. Now quiet, erect. Balance perfect. The pebbles reassorted. The basement firm. I was ready. The hand was hoisted and the skillet poised.

'Yes,' I said, 'I like it so. Slow. Not fast. Just like that.'

The body was firm, hard, erect, a paved brown track down which the water contoured in, out, around, off.

'I want to see,' a voiced raised over the neighbouring fence. 'G. mother bathing him.'

'Get down,' the elder voice snapped, 'you too fast and malicious. Come inside, you red scamp.'

'She's right,' my mother said in a low, approving tone. 'He's too fast, wanting to see everything except what concerns him. The children today. My God.' The skillet sallied about and over my head and the water poured down slowly, steadily.

'Get up quick,' another voice raised from the opposite fence, 'they going to finish soon.' The heads groped testily over the fence and the eyes peering down on the spectacle widened with delight.

'Look,' I said, pointing at the boys, 'they looking.' My mother wheeled round swinging the skillet by its wire handle. The heads darted below the sagging fence.

'Vagabonds,' my mother said, 'what you peeping at? You all don't bathe?'

The fence swayed from the pressure it had borne as the boys leapt to the ground. The pumpkin vine snapped and fell.

'Look what they do,' my mother said, letting the skillet

fall and moving towards the fence. She held the vine with intimate concern, tracing its ragged zigzag along the fence to where the roots might have been. Now her voice was cracked, tremulous, hardly audible.

'Look what they do,' she said, letting the snapped vine slip between her fingers. 'They kill it, and it was just going to bear.'

Suddenly the whole aspect of the morning had changed. Something it seemed had emerged to call a halt in preparation for a new beginning.

'What they do?' the neighbour asked keeping her balance above the fence.

'Kill the pumpkin vine,' my mother said, turning away from the fence with hardened indifference. 'Why the hell anybody worry to plant anything round here only God knows.'

Now the voice spoke as if from an inner void beyond which deeper and deeper within herself were incalculable layers of feeling. The neighbour looked deeply hurt.

'Bob,' she said, 'look what you do to the neighbour pumpkin vine.'

Bob climbed on to the fence. It swayed to and fro. He looked down self-pityingly at the vine, and then across to where I stood naked on the pool of pebbles, waiting. His lips parted involuntarily, and the broad, cream teeth shone in the sun.

'And you laughing,' his mother said. 'You kill the neighbour pumpkin vine, and on the back of it you laugh?' Her eyes reddened and the black skin stretched tight across the bone.

Bob's glance fell obediently to the vine. He winked his eyes as if he wanted to cry.

'Well, what you going to tell her?' his mother shouted.

Bob plugged his thumb into his mouth keeping his eyes on the vine.

'Don't look like a jackass,' his mother said. 'What you going to tell her?'

'I going tell her sorry,' Bob groaned, passing the dripping wet thumb between his nose and eyes. He felt the damp on his face and looked up at my mother.

'I sorry,' he said. Then his glance caught me where I stood, naked, waiting. He let his eyes fall to the ground, and against his will laughed. No word was spoken, but the clenched fist boxed mightily into his ear. His head dropped forward, and the body fell over the fence into our yard. It struck out over the fallen vine in convulsive shrieks.

'You shouldn't hit him like that,' my mother said, raising the body.

The woman's fury lanced her like an ache. She threw her hand out to grab Bob's shoulder, and the fence swayed . . . forward, then back, forward again and back, and in its final approach dropped to the ground with a resounding crash. My mother dragging Bob away narrowly escaped, but the woman was thrown forward into the yard where she lay half-conscious. The two yards merged. The barricade which had once protected our private secrecies had surrendered.

'What trouble is this this morning,' my mother said. She lay Bob on the ground, and looked around feeling for some power within or outside her to dictate the next step. My mother on such occasions looked pitiful beyond words. I had often seen her angry or frustrated and in tears, but there were other states of emotion she experienced for which tears were simply inadequate. Seized by the thought of being left alone, she would become filled with an overwhelming ambition for her child, and an even greater defiance of the

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odds against her. Then she would be silent as she was now, or she would talk in a way that was mechanical while her meaning seemed to go beyond the words. She would talk about pulling through; whatever happened she would come through, and 'she' meant her child. She stood there in the yard looking now a little sheepish as the people like a routed squad of bees appeared, wondering what had happened.

Bob's mother was trying to recover her balance.

'Take Bob inside, quick' I said; 'take him before she see.'

'Yes,' my mother said, 'yes, quick.' We knew what height his mother's fury could reach.

My mother beckoned two of the spectators and they carried Bob over the fence and hoisted him through the window. My mother received him on the inside and perched him in the corner behind a sack.

'Stay there,' she said, 'and don't move till I tell you.'

Whose side my mother took, the parents' or the children's, I could never tell.

My mother had come back in the yard, and Bob's mother, it seemed, had fully regained her senses.

'Where is you?' she said.

'I here,' my mother said.

'I sorry,' Bob's mother said with much feeling, 'I really sorry.'

My mother didn't answer.

'But if I put my hand on him this morning,' Bob's mother cried, 'he don't live another second.'

On all sides the fences had been weighed down with people, boys and girls and grown-ups. The girls were laughing and looking across to where I stood on the pool of pebbles, naked and waiting. They looked at Bob's mother and the broken fence and me. The sun had dried me thoroughly, and now it seemed that I had not been bathed,

but brought out in open condemnation and placed in the middle of the yard waiting like one crucified to be jeered at.

'Look,' one girl said pointing me out to her friend.

'Yes, I see,' the other said, grinning between her teeth.

I pretended not to hear.

'What you doing there naked as you born?' my mother said.

It seemed she had forgotten me, and had suddenly become aware of a situation in which I appeared unpardonable.

'Waiting,' I said, 'I didn't know you were finished.'

'You little fool,' she said, 'you don't want a little boy like yourself to see you, and you can stand there in the middle of the yard and let the whole world look at you!'

She came towards me with a broken branch. I tiptoed over the pebbles, keeping a keen eye on the branch.

'Don't move,' she said, 'if you move I lash you.'

'But I didn't know you finish,' I said.

She came closer. She had hardly stated her case before the arm was raised above her head, and the blow struck. I shifted under the upraised arm, circled her twice, keeping a loose hold on her waist, then slipped through her legs and ran off to a corner. On all sides there was laughter, and the fences swayed.

'Don't move,' she said. 'If you move I lash you.' She came closer, and we played a game of cat and mouse in the corner, she darting to one side, I to the other. The fences rocked with laughter. Then she leapt forward, missed her balance and fell lightly against the fence. I tripped over the pebbles and ran into the house. The fences swayed as the laughter peal by peal pelted through the trees.

'It ain't nothin' to laugh at,' Bob's mother protested.

'The children bring too much botheration to parents nowa-

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days. Look what that other one make me do this morning, but let him hide. Night run till day catch him!'

* * *

There they were, Bob, Trumper and Boy Blue. They stood on the very spot over which a fisherman's dead body was once washed. Their backs were turned to the land and they made a V, with Bob as the point where the wings of the letter would fuse. It looked like the kind of ritual one saw when men came out to preach at the street corner. Their faces were turned to the sea and Bob's hand was held up with all but two fingers clenched as if he were blessing the unseen fish. Meanwhile, Trumper and Boy Blue looked closely at the sand deepening below his weight. I went quietly down the slope of the beach trying to make sense of the affair. They kept their backs turned, and no one saw or heard my approach. I stood directly opposite Bob, so that the V had now been converted into a diamond with Bob and me as the points where the wings would have fused. Far out, the sea tumbled. The waves jumped and skipped, crashed and flattened out, dying a foaming white death before they could reach the boys.

'We'll wait for the next,' Trumper said.

The next wave leapt and went the way of the others.

'You'd better go nearer,' Trumper said. Bob took a step forward towards the sea. The waves fell in a foaming monotony along the blue surface. They waited, Bob looking out to sea, while the others looked down where his toes and heels left their line in the sunken sand. The scent of the air was like iodine, and raw fish and grape leaf. It filled the nostrils and the ears and the eyes so that everything smelt and looked and felt like iodine and raw fish and the liquid of the grape leaf.

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'Remember,' Trumper said, 'remember not to forget the words!'

'What's the words again?' Boy Blue asked.

'What yuh mother give you ears for?' said Bob.

'I don't remember with my ears,' Boy Blue said.

'What you remember with?' Bob asked.

'With my rememberin',' Boy Blue said.

'Stop argurin',' Trumper said. 'This is too serious a matter.'

'What's the words again?' Bob asked.

'Chris', you worse than Boy Blue,' Trumper said.

'Quick, before the wave comes,' Bob said.

'Open yuh ears and hear,' Trumper said.

'He don't hear with his ears,' Boy Blue said.

'All right, don't start that again,' Trumper said. 'These are the words.'

'Quick,' said Bob. 'Quick.'

'Good,' said Trumper. 'Listen, the words are: Sea Come No Further.'

'When is he to say that?' Boy Blue asked.

'Just when it goin' to touch yuh toes,' Trumper explained.

'Good,' said Bob.

'You better repeat it beforehand,' said Trumper.

'Yes,' said Bob. 'Sea Come No Further.'

'You better say it to you'self all the time in case you forget at the last moment,' Trumper said.

'No,' Boy Blue argued, 'you won't believe it after a time. I fin' when I repeat a thing, a word, for example, it sound after a time as if it ain't a word, but just a kind of noise.'

'That's true,' said Bob. 'I'll say for the last time. Sea Come No Further.'

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'An' just when it goin' touch your toes,' Trumper said.
 'An' suppose it don't touch?' Bob asked.
 'Then you'd be better than the King,' Trumper said.
 'Who king is this?' Boy Blue asked.
 'Canute,' said Trumper, 'King Canute.'
 'Where he come from?' asked Boy Blue.
 Bob and Trumper laughed.
 'He's the king in the hist'ry book,' said Trumper.
 'But where he live?' asked Boy Blue.
 'He don't live,' said Trumper, getting angry. 'It's hist'ry.'
 'You mean a story?' said Boy Blue.
 'If you want to call it that,' said Trumper.
 'Where did you read it?' said Boy Blue.
 'In the Michael John²,' said Bob. 'It's really wha' I hear
 the others say, 'cause I don't read that sort of joke. I prefer
 the newspaper.'
 'I know Michael John,' said Trumper. 'It's the book wid
 B.C. 55 and the Battle of Hastin's.'
 'An' it's in that they give the joke about Canute?' Boy
 Blue asked.
 'It ain't no joke,' said Bob. 'Look! Look! Look!' The
 wave climbed the air like a mountain heaving itself forward
 with the spray flying and the body getting more and more
 hollow. It came forward like a fat fool, not knowing where it
 was going, or what to do with its fury. I retreated up the
 beach.
 'You better start sayin' the word now,' Boy Blue said.
 'Yes,' said Trumper. 'Now!' and he and Boy Blue made
 ready to run.
 Bob arched his back and we heard the syllables stumbling
 past his lips. 'Sea Come No Further. Sea Come No
 Further.' His voice went out like the squeak of an insect to
 meet the roar of the wave.

'Come no further,' said Bob, shivering with fear, 'come
 no further.'

The wave came forward like a thundering cloud, crashed
 and shot like a line of lightning over the footprints that were
 the only sign of our fugitive king. We collapsed in the grape
 vine, sick with laughter.

from *In The Castle of My Skin*

LAMMING, George (*Barbados*).

Born in Barbados 1927.

EDUCATION: *Barbados.*

PUBLICATIONS: *Novels* In the Castle of My Skin 1953.

The Emigrants 1954.

Of Age and Innocence 1958.

Season of Adventure 1960.

Essays The Pleasures of Exile 1960.

NOTES

- 1 (p. 113) *Night run till day catch him*: Even the day catches up with
 the night eventually.
- 2 (p. 115) *Michael John*: A school text-book in history.

MIGUEL STREET
V.S. NAIPAUL

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

V.S. Naipaul was born in Chaguanas, Trinidad, on August 17, 1932. His father was a journalist and a writer of short stories. His grandfather was Banyans trained Brahman. As a child, he lived between matriarchal twari clan house in Chanaguas and bustling streets of Port of Spain. He was influenced by Hindu orientation of East Indian community. He was somewhat intolerant of ancestral Hinduism and of colonial society. At the age of 18, in 1950, he went to England where he attended Oxford. In England, he worked for the BBC as a book reviewer. He continued to be a journalist in the following years. He began writing seriously at the age of 23. Naipaul is a satirist. He travelled to London, Africa, the Caribbean, India, South America, and the United States. His journeys are clearly reflected in his writing. He studied different languages such as Spanish, French, and English.

Miguel Street, Naipaul's first book, was only published in 1959. Naipaul's other works include The Mystic Masseur (1957), The Suffrage of Elvira (1958), A House for Mr. Biswas (1961), Mr. Stone and the Knights Companion (1963), The Mimic Men (1967), Guerrillas (1975). He published essays and short stories, such as "The Overcrowded Barracoon", "A Flag on the Island", "In a Free State", "The Middle Passage", "An Area of Darkness", and "India: A Wounded Civilization". Later on in his career, Naipaul wrote travel books.

Naipaul was often resentful of colonialism. "His strength remains in his ability to discern the inner corruption of men who neither know nor are capable of effecting an authentic existence for themselves." His plot often depicts human nature under pressure. Miguel Street centers on politics and corresponds to the elections in 1946, and 1950. He brings life to East Indians and mixed communities in Trinidad. The book shows the different personalities within a community.

DEFINITIONS

Ramayana: great Sanskrit epic of India, perhaps written in 2nd century B.C. It includes 43,000 couplets of 16 syllable lines. It tells the adventures of Rama, heir to kingdom of Ajodhya, who with his hall brothers, collectively made up an avatar (incarnation) of God Vishnu.

Calypso: In the West Indies, a song consisting of a spoken or intoned story or comment on the news, or on a celebrity in the news, accompanied by drumming and guitar strumming. It contains rhymes of a sort, usually in couplets, but not regular meter. Its fascination lies in the singer's ability to fit in any number of words in each line. The words are in English. (Dictionary of Afro-Latin American Civilization, Benjamin Nunez, 1980)



GEOGRAPHY

Port of Spain, the capital city and chief seaport of Trinidad and Tobago, situated near the northwest corner of the island of Trinidad, facing the Gulf of Paria. The city has a sheltered harbor and carries on a large trade, chiefly involving the export of copra, cocoa, sugar, fruit, coffee, rum, asphalt, and petroleum. It also serves as a distributing center for Venezuelan trade from the Orinoco region.

Industries in or near Port of Spain produce rum, bitters, beer, cigarettes, oils, tile plastics, lumber, textile, and canned fruit. Good roads connect the capital with the rest of the island. (Encyclopedia Americana, Volume 22, 1990)

Venezuela, because of its closeness to Trinidad, was often used a location to hide from the authorities. Smuggling of goods was extremely frequent. Criminals could often escape prison by fleeing the country to Venezuela, where a new identity could be found.

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Area: 5,128 sq km (1,980 sq miles); of which Tobago is 300 sq km (116 sq miles).

Population (official estimate at mid-1988): 1,235,400.

Capital: Port of Spain (estimated population 59,200 at mid-1988).

Language: English (official); French, Spanish, Hindi and Chinese are also spoken.

Religion: 60% Christian (34% Roman Catholic), 25% Hindu, 6% Muslim.

Climate: Tropical; average annual temperature is 29°C (84°F); annual average rainfall is 1,630 mm.

Time: GMT -4 hours.

Public Holidays

1991: 1 January (New Year's Day), 11-12 February (Carnival), 29 March-1 April (Easter), 16 April* (Id al-Fitr), 20 May (Whit

Monday), 30 May (Corpus Christi), 19 June (Labour Day), 1 August (Discovery Day), 31 August (Independence Day), 24 September (Republic Day), 21 September* (Divali), 25-26 December (Christmas).

1992: 1 January (New Year's Day), 2-3 March (Carnival), 4 April* (Id al-Fitr), 17-20 April (Easter), 8 June (Whit Monday), 18 June (Corpus Christi), 19 June (Labour Day), 7 August (Discovery Day), 31 August (Independence Day), 24 September (Republic Day), 10 September* (Divali), 25-26 December (Christmas).

* Dependent on lunar sightings.

Currency: Trinidad and Tobago dollar; TT \$100 = £13.49 = US \$23.53 (30 June 1990).

Weights and Measures: The imperial system is in force, but the metric system is being introduced.

The two islands which constitute the modern state of Trinidad and Tobago were first linked by British colonial administration in 1888. Trinidad had been discovered in 1498 by a Spanish expedition, led by Christopher Columbus, and was subject to Spanish control until it was captured by Britain in 1797. The island was formally ceded to Britain by Spain in 1802. Tobago was plundered and claimed by a succession of European navies until Britain took possession in 1762 after 100 years of French occupation; France ceded the island to Britain in the following year under the Treaty of Paris, but it was not until 1814 that Britain was formally granted the island in perpetuity. As was also the case elsewhere in the Caribbean, African slaves were forcibly transported to the islands in the 18th century, to provide labour for European-owned estates, mainly plantations of sugar cane. The Africans were joined, after the emancipation of slaves in 1834, by large numbers of indentured Indians, Chinese and Madeirans, brought in to sustain the supply of cheap agricultural labour.

THE MOVE TO INDEPENDENCE

For a long time, the racial diversity thus created, and the resultant competition among the various ethnic groups in the populations of the two islands, provided Britain with ample excuse to withhold political concessions. However, disturbances resulting from the depressed economic conditions of the 1930s provided suitable conditions for the foundation of labour movements, which, in turn, evolved into political organizations, particularly after the introduction of full adult suffrage in 1946. Party politics was unstructured during the 1940s and early 1950s, but developed into its modern shape in 1956, when the People's National Movement (PNM), founded by Dr Eric Williams (a formidable intellectual who subsequently dominated the politics of the country until his death in 1981), established itself as the islands' leading nationalist political party by winning control of the Legislative Council, under the provisions of the new constitutional arrangements that provided for self-government. Dr Williams became Trinidad and Tobago's first Chief Minister.

Trinidad & Tobago: "Capitalism Gone Mad"

At the southern tip of the Windward Island chain, nine miles off the coast of Venezuela, lies the twin-island nation of Trinidad & Tobago. Like Jamaica, Trinidad is an economic and political leader in the English-speaking Caribbean. It is a place where trends are made and broken—as in 1962, when the withdrawal of both Trinidad and Jamaica from the West Indies Federation spelled the end of the federal venture. Since the 1970s, Trinidad & Tobago's oil-based economy has been the wealthiest in the region, making the country's 1.2 million people the major market for intra-regional trade. The end of the oil "boom" in 1982 has not only spelled disaster for Trinidad, therefore, but has been a negative blow to its AECOM trading partners as well.

The history of Trinidad & Tobago has left it with an ethnic and cultural mix unique within the English-speaking Caribbean. Originally a Spanish colony, Trinidad gave haven to several thousand French royalists fleeing Guadeloupe, Martinique and Haiti during the French revolution. By the 1790s Trinidad had changed from a "backward Amerindian colony governed by Spain into a Spanish colony run by Frenchmen and worked by African slaves."¹ Britain conquered Trinidad in 1797 and took possession of it under the treaty of Paris in 1814. In 1889 the neighboring British island of Tobago was annexed to Trinidad.

After the emancipation of the slaves, the British brought hundreds of thousands of indentured laborers from India to work on Trinidad's sugar estates. The East Indians became the backbone of the country's agricultural peasantry, while the freed slaves moved away from the estates to form an incipient

West Indies Federation. This struggle, together with Trinidad's relative financial independence due to oil, rendered its leadership comparatively resistant to capture by U.S. influence after independence in 1962.

"The center of West Indian society as a culture *sui generis* is Trinidad and not Jamaica," writes Gordon K. Lewis.² This is so, he argues, because Trinidad escaped the stifling effects of prolonged unbroken British rule. Instead, its culture is a rich amalgam of African, East Indian, Spanish, French, British, and North American influences. In addition, the division within the ruling class between British Protestants and French Catholics allowed breathing space for a working-class culture to develop.

Trinidad is best known for the pre-Lenten festival of Carnival, which draws on both the French Catholic tradition of Mardi Gras and the black emancipation celebration called Canboulay. Trinidadian culture is flavored by the irreverent *vaudeville* and *picong* (exchange of personal insults) of the calypsonians, who perform their new compositions each year at Carnival time [see Part VII, Ch. 4]. In much the same vein, electoral campaigns are marked by ribald mud-slinging and personal rivalries, often at the expense of substantive political issues. FROM: THE CARIBBEAN, Catherine A. Sunshine 1985 p. 133-134

urban working class. In 1857, oil was discovered in southern Trinidad, and U.S.-based oil companies arrived in the early 20th century. Oil accounted for almost 60% of Trinidad and Tobago's exports by 1935, the rest consisting mainly of sugar and cocoa. The growth of the oil sector set Trinidad apart from most of the Caribbean islands, where the peasantry predominated and the working class was small. It meant that the Trinidadian masses were split very early into industrial and agrarian sectors, broadly corresponding to the racial split between blacks (in the oil industry and urban areas) and East Indians (in the rural sugar-growing areas). Tobago, however, remained almost entirely black.

A second major factor which shaped the country's history was the construction of the U.S. naval base at Chaguaramas during World War Two. With "Yankee dollars" pouring into the economy, many people left their homes to seek work on and around the base, further enlarging the working class and superimposing North American influences on the already complex Trinidadian cultural scene.

The presence of the base also influenced the anti-colonial nationalist movement which flowered after the war. Led by black intellectuals, it was embodied in the People's National Movement (PNM) of Dr. Eric Williams, a scholar educated at Oxford in England and later in the United States. Williams welcomed foreign investment, which he saw as a basis for industrializing Trinidad, but rejected colonial and neocolonial political control. On April 22, 1960, the PNM led a march through Port-of-Spain demanding that the U.S. give Chaguaramas back to Trinidad to become the capital site for the

FROM: Caribbean Generations, Shirley C. Gordon, 1983 p 270
CARIBBEAN GENERATIONS

5 In 1959 the Government of Trinidad objected to the 99 year lease to the Americans for the base at Chaguaramas. Here is part of a speech by Dr Eric Williams, Prime Minister.

What are his objections? Why had the present Government not been able to control the lease in 1941?

The position, to put it bluntly, is this. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago knows nothing of what is going on at Chaguaramas. The Americans ignore us completely, and behave as if the 1941 Agreement gives them the right to do as they please. Chaguaramas means we are a part of modern total war, on the air, on land, on sea and under the sea. American reports and defence hearings in Congress are conspicuously silent on Chaguaramas. Either it is too insignificant – in which case American stubbornness is sheer malice towards the P.N.M. [People's National Movement], or Chaguaramas is too significant – in which case we are involved in God knows what. As head of the Government I receive day after day interminable reports about what is going on at Chaguaramas, or about what people suspect is going on. They may or may not be true. It is impossible for me even to attempt to find out what is true and what is not true. What is important is that no government ought to find itself in such a position in respect of a foreign power, and if the Americans were not here, then we would not have to carry this heavy and unnecessary burden. We will not stand it any more.

Of all the images portrayed of Caribbean women, those most frequently cited have been in the idiom of the calypso. Although the calypso originated in Trinidad and is identified mainly with the southern Caribbean, it is an art form which is well received by both men and women throughout the region. Elder, writing in 1968, tells us that 'the calypso is predominantly a man's song about his own emotional confrontation of the world of rivals, his conquests and his defeat, his hopes and his fears' (Elder 1968, p. 29). The male singer's portrayal of women has constituted the core of calypso music for the last several decades, a fact which has been noted by many observers (see, for example, Elder 1968; Rohlehr 1970; Warner 1982). Gordon Rohlehr notes that 'The calypso . . . is of prime sociological importance to anyone who seeks to study some of the attitudes of the West Indian male towards women' (Rohlehr 1970, p. 89).

What are these attitudes as revealed by calypso? Elder, using statistical methods to analyse Trinidadian popular music by leading singers over a 50-year period, concluded that 'the female figure as theme predominates over the whole calypso tradition . . . aggressiveness in calypso towards the female figure has increased steadily throughout the calypso tradition' (Elder 1968, p. 33).

Male/female themes might be roughly collected under four categories. First are those which centre around the uneasy relationships between the sexes. The male-female relationship is portrayed as based on mutual suspicion, mutual exploitation. For the male it is often 'pursuit, conquest, desertion' (Rohlehr 1970), although he frequently refers to the 'smartness' of women. 'Man smart, woman smarter' is the challenge to warlike and mutually antagonistic behaviour to prove otherwise.

Secondly, there are the calypsos based on male 'ego-inflation' (Warner 1982, p. 99). As Warner explains it in his book on calypso, 'by far the most overworked theme is that of the calypsonian's alleged insatiable sexual appetite, which causes innumerable females either to cry in ecstasy, beg for more or groan in agony if they cannot cope with their too-ardent lovers'. Calypsonian Sparrow, says Rohlehr, 'has done more than anyone else to project the idea of the West Indian male as a walking phallic symbol'. As Sparrow's 'Village Ram' boasts:

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... if a woman ever tell you that I
Ever leave her dissatisfy
She lie, she lie, I say she lie.

And Mr Rake-and-Scrape avers that, for him, any woman will do for his sexual gratification:

I'm a busy man with no time to lose
Ah pass my hand, can't hand ch...
So any kind o'woman, one foot or one hand
Dey cannot escape from me Mr Rake-and-Scrape.

Thirdly, there is a large body of calypsos which deal with 'denigration and degradation' of the female (Warner 1982, p. 99). In the crudest possible terms, women are castigated as being ugly, dirty, stupid, vile, predatory, smelly, evil, etc. (see examples given in Warner 1982; see also Rohlehr 1970; Hodge 1974). Part of this includes the categorization of women by stereotypes which convey 'semantically offensive overtones' (Elder 1968, p. 25) such as 'Hog-mouth Mary' and 'Gate-way Janie'.

Finally, there are those calypsos which deal with 'pejorative accounts of female acts', in which the male is frequently victim (Warner 1982). The woman is cast in various negative postures: demanding money for sex, attempting to saddle the male with false paternity, cuckolding him, trying to ensnare him with witchcraft, etc.

Throughout, the woman as the victim of male condemnation is also subjected to threats of violence and verbal abuse as a means of keeping her in line. 'Girl you looking for blows,' Sparrow warns his sweetheart Rose. He tells the world:

Every now and then cuff them down
They'll love you long and they'll love you strong
Black up dey eye, bruise up dey knee
And they will love you eternally.

However, the female is also seen as quite capable of defending herself physically. Shadow's Jane in 1976 was threatening that

I might pelt a big stone and mash up your jawbone
You better leave me alone.

The calypso is recognized as double-edged. Matched against the calypsonian's bravado and contempt is his fear of the female, whom he perceives as scheming and untrustworthy, and who, when all else fails, will resort to trickery including obeah and black magic to bind him. Views of the female as scheming were also held by the men in the Barbados study, who described women as 'avaricious, materialistic and calculating'. These men, like the calypsonians, viewed their relationships with women as 'uneasy' and 'dangerous' (Barrow WICP 1986b).

It is of interest that the more recent development of popular music in Jamaica — the ska to reggae to dee-jay tradition — has followed the same pattern as calypsos where themes are concerned. The earliest themes dealt mainly with issues of social protest and were against male authority figures such as the police, judges, soldiers, the rich elements of society castigated as 'Babylon', etc., just as Elder found for the earlier period in Trinidadian calypso. Analysis of contemporary Jamaican popular music would show that an inordinate amount of song themes, especially in the newest dee-jay style, are similar to the calypsos in so far as they deal in female denigration and degradation versus male elevation.

from: Working Miracles, Olive Senior, 1991 pgs. 167-168

The Media

FROM: THE CARIBBEAN, Catherine A. Sunshine, 1985 pp 112-113

Within the U.S. media's global reach, the Caribbean is an especially fertile ground for influence through newspapers, television, radio, and film. This is true first of all because much of the Caribbean speaks English, and until recently was under British control. In his book *The Media Are American*, Jeremy Tunstall describes Britain as the "linchpin" of the worldwide spread of the U.S. media. Britain's ascendancy as the first media power made English the language of mass communications, and collaboration between the U.S. and British media paved the way for U.S. penetration of the Commonwealth, or British Empire, market.¹ Secondly, both the Caribbean and Latin America are subject to special controls operating to ensure U.S. hegemony in the hemisphere. In media, as in the labor movement, the United States began serious efforts to gain control during the First World War and consolidated that control at the end of World War Two.

The Major Dailies: Voice of the Bourgeoisie

The major media is privately owned in most of the larger Caribbean territories, including Jamaica, Trinidad, Barbados, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, and the French and Dutch Antilles. Newspapers and radio stations operate in competition and without formal government restrictions, leading the U.S. to deem the media "free" in these countries.

In reality, however, each country is dominated by one to four daily newspapers owned by wealthy families or commercial conglomerates. While other newspapers are not illegal, they are overshadowed by the establishment papers and operate under financial and sometimes political pressures. Jamaica's only daily paper is the conservative *Daily Gleaner* (along with its evening edition, *The Star*). It is published by the Gleaner Company, which is controlled by members of the island's elite "21 families." The company's board of directors is headed by the powerful Ashenheim family which also holds interests in cement, steel, sugar, insurance, real estate, tourism, and manufacturing. The more liberal *Daily News*, acquired by the Manley government in 1979, was closed down by Seaga in April 1983. Seaga also purged the state-owned JBC television network of progressive journalists shortly after he came to power.

Besides the *Gleaner*, the other influential dailies in the English-speaking Caribbean are the Barbados *Advocate* and *Nation* and the Trinidad *Guardian* and *Express*. The latter are both owned by Trinidadian conglomerates, the *Express* by the Neal & Massy group and the *Guardian* by the McEneaney-Alstons group. These conglomerates are the largest and most diversified indigenous capitalist groups in the Caribbean. McEneaney-Alstons also owns the Barbados *Advocate*, formerly a member of the U.S.-based Thomson chain.

The major Caribbean dailies are generally conservative in their editorial slant, although dissenting viewpoints appear in columns and letters to the editor. They support capitalism and middle-class consumerism; they are anticommunist; and they rarely challenge the principle of U.S. hegemony in the region or the world. All the major papers supported the U.S. invasion of Grenada, even in Trinidad where the government opposed it; in fact the Trinidad *Express* and *Guardian* led the attack on the Chambers government for refusing to join the U.S.-led force.

Other sources used:

Fifty Caribbean Writers, Daryl Cumber Dance, 1986

Caribbean Writers, Donald Herdeck, 1979

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THE THING WITHOUT A NAME

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The only thing that Popo, who called himself a carpenter, ever built was the little galvanized-iron workshop under the mango tree at the back of his yard. And even that he didn't quite finish. He couldn't be bothered to nail on the sheets of galvanized-iron for the roof, and kept them weighted down with huge stones. Whenever there was a high wind the roof made a frightening banging noise and seemed ready to fly away.

And yet Popo was never idle. He was always busy hammering and sawing and planing. I liked watching him work. I liked the smell of the woods - cyp and cedar and crapaud. I liked the colour of the shavings, and I liked the way the sawdust powdered Popo's kinky hair.

'What you making, Mr Popo?' I asked.

Popo would always say, 'Ha, boy! That's the question. I making the thing without a name.'

I liked Popo for that. I thought he was a poetic man.

One day I said to Popo, 'Give me something to make.'

'What you want to make?' he said.

It was hard to think of something I really wanted.

'You see,' Popo said. 'You thinking about the thing without a name.'

Eventually I decided on an egg-stand.

'Who you making it for?' Popo asked.

'Ma.'

He laughed. 'Think she going use it?'

My mother was pleased with the egg-stand, and used it for

about a week. Then she seemed to forget all about it; and began putting the eggs in bowls or plates, just as she did before.

And Popo laughed when I told him. He said, 'Boy, the only thing to make is the thing without a name.'

After I painted the tailoring sign for Bogart, Popo made me do one for him as well.

He took the little red stump of a pencil he had stuck over his ear and puzzled over the words. At first he wanted to announce himself as an architect; but I managed to dissuade him. He wasn't sure about the spelling. The finished sign said:

BUILDER AND CONTRACTOR

Carpenter

And Cabinet-Maker

And I signed my name, as sign-writer, in the bottom right-hand corner.

Popo liked standing up in front of the sign. But he had a little panic when people who didn't know about him came to inquire.

'The carpenter fellow?' Popo would say. 'He don't live here again.'

I thought Popo was a much nicer man than Bogart. Bogart said little to me; but Popo was always ready to talk. He talked about serious things, like life and death and work, and I felt he really liked talking to me.

Yet Popo was not a popular man in the street. They didn't think he was mad or stupid. Hat used to say, 'Popo too conceited, you hear.'

It was an unreasonable thing to say. Popo had the habit of taking a glass of rum to the pavement every morning. He never sipped the rum. But whenever he saw someone he knew he dipped his middle finger in the rum, licked it, and then waved to the man.

'We could buy rum too,' Hat used to say. 'But we don't show off like Popo.'

from V.S. NAIPAUL
MIGUEL STREET

I myself never thought about it in that way, and one day I asked Popo about it.

Popo said, 'Boy, in the morning, when the sun shining and it still cool, and you just get up, it make you feel good to know that you could go out and stand up in the sun and have some rum.'

Popo never made any money. His wife used to go out and work, and this was easy, because they had no children. Popo said, 'Women and them like work. Man not make for work.'

Hat said, 'Popo is a man-woman. Not a proper man.'

Popo's wife had a job as a cook in a big house near my school. She used to wait for me in the afternoons and take me into the big kitchen and give me a lot of nice things to eat. The only thing I didn't like was the way she sat and watched me while I ate. It was as though I was eating for her. She asked me to call her Auntie.

She introduced me to the gardener of the big house. He was a good-looking brown man, and he loved his flowers. I liked the gardens he looked after. The flower-beds were always black and wet; and the grass green and damp and always cut. Sometimes he let me water the flower-beds. And he used to gather the cut grass into little bags which he gave me to take home to my mother. Grass was good for the hens.

One day I missed Popo's wife. She wasn't waiting for me.

Next morning I didn't see Popo dipping his finger in the glass of rum on the pavement.

And that evening I didn't see Popo's wife.

I found Popo sad in his workshop. He was sitting on a plank and twisting a bit of shaving around his fingers.

Popo said, 'Your auntie gone, boy.'

'Where, Mr Popo?'

'Ha, boy! That's the question,' and he pulled himself up there.

Popo found himself then a popular man. The news got

around very quickly. And when Eddoes said one day, 'I wonder what happen to Popo. Like he got no more rum,' Hat jumped up and almost cuffed him. And then all the men began to gather in Popo's workshop, and they would talk about cricket and football and pictures - everything except women - just to try to cheer Popo up.

Popo's workshop no longer sounded with hammering and sawing. The sawdust no longer smelled fresh, and became black, almost like dirt. Popo began drinking a lot, and I didn't like him when he was drunk. He smelled of rum, and he used to cry and then grow angry and want to beat up everybody. That made him an accepted member of the gang.

Hat said, 'We was wrong about Popo. He is a man, like any of we.'

Popo liked the new companionship. He was at heart a loquacious man, and always wanted to be friendly with the men of the street and he was always surprised that he was not liked. So it looked as though he had got what he wanted. But Popo was not really happy. The friendship had come a little too late, and he found he didn't like it as much as he'd expected. Hat tried to get Popo interested in other women, but Popo wasn't interested.

Popo didn't think I was too young to be told anything.

'Boy, when you grow old as me,' he said once, 'you find that you don't care for the things you thought you woulda like if you coulda afford them.'

That was his way of talking, in riddles.

Then one day Popo left us.

Hat said, 'He don't have to tell me where he gone. He gone looking for he wife.'

Edward said, 'Think she going come back with he?'

Hat said, 'Let we wait and see.'

We didn't have to wait long. It came out in the papers. Hat

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said it was just what he expected. Popo had beaten up a man in Arima, the man had taken his wife away. It was the gardener who used to give me bags of grass.

Nothing much happened to Popo. He had to pay a fine, but they let him off otherwise. The magistrate said that Popo had better not molest his wife again.

They made a calypso about Popo that was the rage that year. It was the road-march for the Carnival, and the Andrews Sisters sang it for an American recording company:

*A certain carpenter feller went to Arima
Looking for a mopsy called Emelda.*

It was a great thing for the street.

At school, I used to say, 'The carpenter feller was a good, good friend of mine.'

And, at cricket matches, and at the races, Hat used to say, 'Know him? God, I used to drink with that man night and day. Boy, he could carry his liquor.'

Popo wasn't the same man when he came back to us. He growled at me when I tried to talk to him, and he drove out Hat and the others when they brought a bottle of rum to the workshop.

Hat said, 'Woman send that man mad, you hear.'

But the old noises began to be heard once more from Popo's workshop. He was working hard, and I wondered whether he was still making the thing without a name. But I was too afraid to ask.

He ran an electric light to the workshop and began working in the night-time. Vans stopped outside his house and were always depositing and taking away things. Then Popo began painting his house. He used a bright green, and he painted the roof a bright red. Hat said, 'The man really mad.'

And added, 'Like he getting married again.'

Hat wasn't too far wrong. One day, about two weeks later, Popo returned, and he brought a woman with him. It was his wife. My auntie.

'You see the sort of thing woman is,' Hat commented. 'You see the sort of thing they like. Not the man. But the new house paint up, and all the new furniture inside it. I bet you if the man in Arima had a new house and new furnitures, she wouldnta come back with Popo.'

But I didn't mind. I was glad. It was good to see Popo standing outside with his glass of rum in the mornings and dipping his finger into the rum and waving at his friends; and it was good to ask him again, 'What you making, Mr Popo?' and to get the old answer, 'Ha, boy! That's the question. I making the thing without a name.'

Popo returned very quickly to his old way of living, and he was still devoting his time to making the thing without a name. He had stopped working, and his wife got her job with the same people near my school.

People in the street were almost angry with Popo when his wife came back. They felt that all their sympathy had been mocked and wasted. And again Hat was saying, 'That blasted Popo too conceited, you hear.'

But this time Popo didn't mind.

He used to tell me, 'Boy, go home and pray tonight that you get happy like me.'

What happened afterwards happened so suddenly that we didn't even know it had happened. Even Hat didn't know about it until he read it in the papers. Hat always read the papers. He read them from about ten in the morning until about six in the evening.

Hat shouted out, 'But what is this I seeing?' and he showed us the headlines: CALYPSO CARPENTER JAILED.

It was a fantastic story. Popo had been stealing things left and

right. All the new furnitures, as Hat called them, hadn't been made by Popo. He had stolen things and simply remodelled them. He had stolen too much as a matter of fact, and had had to sell the things he didn't want. That was how he had been caught. And we understand now why the vans were always outside Popo's house. Even the paint and the brushes with which he had redecorated the house had been stolen.

Hat spoke for all of us when he said, 'That man too foolish. Why he had to sell what he thief? Just tell me that. Why?'

We agreed it was a stupid thing to do. But we felt deep inside ourselves that Popo was really a man, perhaps a bigger man than any of us.

And as for my auntie . . .

Hat said, 'How much jail he get? A year? With three months off for good behaviour, that's nine months in all. And I give she three months good behaviour too. And after that, it ain't going have no more Emelda in Miguel Street, you hear.'

But Emelda never left Miguel Street. She not only kept her job as cook, but she started taking in washing and ironing as well. No one in the street felt sorry that Popo had gone to jail because of the shame; after all that was a thing that could happen to any of us. They felt sorry only that Emelda was going to be left alone for so long.

He came back as a hero. He was one of the boys. He was a better man than either Hat or Bogart.

But for me, he had changed. And the change made me sad.

For Popo began working.

He began making morris chairs and tables and wardrobes for people.

And when I asked him, 'Mr Popo, when you going start making the thing without a name again?' he growled at me.

'You too troublesome,' he said. 'Go away quick, before I lay my hand on you.'

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V. S. NAIPAUL.

Miguel Street is the third book written by V. S. Naipaul. It is made up of a number of stories about the inhabitants of a fictional street. The author creates the impression of a fixed context within which his characters are vivid and individual. Some are absurd, some are amusing, but whatever their individuality, each is in some way pathetic. For *Miguel Street* is not just a funny book about odd people: it is a moving picture of frustrated lives and wasted abilities in a limiting society.

The extract from *Miguel Street* is the story of B. Wordsworth, a poet-calypto-man, who lives and dies in total obscurity.

B. Wordsworth

Three beggars called punctually every day at the hospitable houses in Miguel Street. At about ten an Indian came in his dhoti and white jacket, and we poured a tin of rice into the sack he carried on his back. At twelve an old woman smoking a clay pipe came and she got a cent. At two a blind man led by a boy called for his penny.

Sometimes we had a rogue. One day a man called and said he was hungry. We gave him a meal. He asked for a cigarette and wouldn't go until we had lit it for him. That man never came again.

The strangest caller came one afternoon at about four o'clock. I had come back from school and was in my home-clothes. The man said to me, 'Sonny, may I come inside your yard?'

He was a small man and he was tidily dressed. He wore a hat, a white shirt and black trousers.

I asked, 'What you want?'

He said, 'I want to watch your bees.'

We had four small gur-gur palm trees and they were full of uninvited bees.

I ran up the steps and shouted, 'Ma, it have a man outside here. He say he want to watch the bees.'

My mother came out, looked at the man and asked in an unfriendly way, 'What you want?'

The man said, 'I want to watch your bees.'

His English was so good, it didn't sound natural, and I could see my mother was worried.

She said to me, 'Stay here, and watch him while he watch the bees.'

The man said, 'Thank you, Madam. You have done a good deed today.'

He spoke very slowly and very correctly as though every word was costing him money.

We watched the bees, this man and I, for about an hour, squatting near the palm trees.

The man said, 'I like watching bees, Sonny, do you like watching bees?'

I said, 'I ain't have the time.'

He shook his head sadly. He said, 'That's what I do, I just watch. I can watch ants for days. Have you ever watched ants? And scorpions, and centipedes, and *congorees*—have you watched those?'

I shook my head.

I said, 'What you does do, mister?'

He got up and said, 'I am a poet.'

I said, 'A good poet?'

He said, 'The greatest in the world.'

'What your name, mister?'

'B. Wordsworth.'

'B for Bill?'

'Black. Black Wordsworth. White Wordsworth was my brother. We share one heart. I can watch a small flower like the morning glory and cry.'

I said, 'Why you does cry?'

'Why boy? Why? You will know when you grow up. You're a poet too, you know. And when you're a poet you can cry for everything.'

I couldn't laugh.

He said, 'You like your mother?'

'When she not beating me.'

He pulled out a printed sheet from his hip-pocket and said, 'On this paper is the greatest poem about mothers and I'm going to sell it to you at a bargain price. For four cents.'

I went inside and I said, 'Ma, you want to buy a poetry for four cents?'

My mother said, 'Tell that blasted man to haul his tail away from my yard, you hear?'

I said to B. Wordsworth, 'My mother say she ain't have four cents.'

B. Wordsworth said, 'It is the poet's tragedy.'

And he put the paper back in his pocket. He didn't seem to mind.

I said, 'Is a funny way to go round selling poetry like that. Only calypsonians do that sort of thing. A lot of people does buy?'

He said, 'No one has yet bought a single copy.'

'But why you does keep on going round, then?'

He said, 'In this way I watch many things, and I always hope to meet poets.'

I said, 'You really think I is a poet?'

'You're as good as me,' he said.

And when B. Wordsworth left, I prayed I would see him again.

About a week later, coming back from school one afternoon, I met him at the corner of Miguel Street.

He said, 'I have been waiting for you for a long time.'

I said, 'You sell any poetry yet?'

He shook his head.

He said, 'In my yard I have the best mango tree in Port of Spain. And now the mangoes are ripe and red and very sweet and juicy. I have waited here for you to tell you this and to invite you to come and eat some of my mangoes.'

He lived in Alberto Street in a one-roomed hut placed right in the centre of the lot. The yard seemed all green. There was the big mango tree. There was a coconut tree

and there was a plum tree. The place looked wild, as though it wasn't in the city at all. You couldn't see all the big concrete houses in the street.

He was right. The mangoes were sweet and juicy. I ate about six, and the yellow mango juice ran down my arms to my elbows and down my mouth to my chin and my shirt was stained.

My mother said when I got home, 'Where you was? You think you is a man now and could go all over the place? Go cut a whip for me.'

She beat me rather badly, and I ran out of the house swearing that I would never come back. I went to B. Wordsworth's house. I was so angry, my nose was bleeding.

B. Wordsworth said, 'Stop crying, and we will go for a walk.'

I stopped crying, but I was breathing short. We went for a walk. We walked down St. Clair avenue to the Savannah and we walked to the racecourse.

B. Wordsworth said, 'Now let us lie on the grass and look up at the sky, and I want you to think how far those stars are from us.'

I did as he told me, and I saw what he meant. I felt like nothing, and at the same time, I had never felt so big and great in all my life. I forgot all my anger and all my tears and all the blows.

When I said I was better, he began telling me the names of the stars, and I particularly remembered the constellation of Orion the Hunter, though I don't really know why. I can spot Orion even today, but I have forgotten the rest.

Then a light was flashed into our faces, and we saw a policeman. We got up from the grass.

The policeman said, 'What you doing here?'

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B. Wordsworth said, 'I have been asking myself the same question for forty years.'

We became friends, B. Wordsworth and I. He told me, 'You must never tell anybody about me and about the mango tree and the coconut tree and the plum tree. You must keep that a secret. If you tell anybody, I will know, because I am a poet.'

I gave him my word and I kept it.

I liked his little room. It had no more furniture than George's front room, but it looked cleaner and healthier. But it also looked lonely.

One day I asked him, 'Mister Wordsworth, why you does keep all this bush in your yard? Ain't it does make the place damp?'

He said, 'Listen, and I will tell you a story. Once upon a time a boy and girl met each other and they fell in love. They loved each other so much they got married. They were both poets. He loved words. She loved grass and flowers and trees. They lived happily in a single room, and then one day, the girl poet said to the boy poet, 'We are going to have another poet in the family.' But this poet was never born, because the girl died, and the young poet died with her, inside her. And the girl's husband was very sad, and he said he would never touch anything in the girl's garden. And so the garden remained and grew high and wild.'

I looked at B. Wordsworth, and as he told me this lovely story, he seemed to grow older. I understood his story.

We went for long walks together. We went to the Botanical Gardens and the Rock Gardens. We climbed the Chancellor Hill in the late afternoon and watched the darkness fall on Port of Spain, and watched the lights go on in the city and on the ships in the harbour.

He did everything as though he were doing it for the first

time in his life. He did everything as though he were doing some church rite.

He would say to me, 'Now, how about having some ice-cream?'

And when I said yes, he would grow very serious and say, 'Now, which cafe shall we patronise?' As though it were a very important thing. He would think for some time about it, and finally say, 'I think I will go and negotiate the purchase with that shop.'

The world became a most exciting place.

One day, when I was in his yard, he said to me, 'I have a great secret which I am going to tell you.'

I said, 'It really secret?'

'At the moment, yes.'

I looked at him, and he looked at me. He said, 'This is just between you and me, remember. I am writing a poem.'

'Oh.' I was disappointed.

He said, 'But this is a different sort of poem. This is the greatest poem in the world.'

I whistled.

He said, 'I have been working on it for more than five years now. I will finish it in about twenty-two years from now, that is, if I keep on writing at the present rate.'

'You does write a lot, then?'

He said, 'Not any more. I just write one line a month. But I make sure it is a good line.'

I asked, 'What was last month's good line?'

He looked up at the sky, and said, '*The past is deep.*'

I said, 'It is a beautiful line.'

B. Wordsworth said, 'I hope to distil the experiences of a whole month into that single line of poetry. So, in twenty-

V. S. NAIPAUL

two years, I shall have written a poem that will sing to all humanity.'

I was filled with wonder.

Our walk continued. We walked along the sea-wall at Docksite one day, and I said, 'Mr Wordsworth, if I drop this pin in the water, you think it will float?'

He said, 'This is a strange world. Drop your pin, and let us see what will happen.'

The pin sank.

I said, 'How is the poem this month?'

But he never told me any other line. He merely said, 'Oh, it comes, you know. It comes.'

Or we would sit on the sea wall and watch the liners come into the harbour.

But of the greatest poem in the world I heard no more.

I felt he was growing older.

'How you does live, Mr Wordsworth?' I asked him one day.

He said, 'You mean how I get money?'

When I nodded, he laughed in a crooked way.

He said, 'I sing calypsoes in the calypso season.'

'And that last you the rest of the year?'

'It is enough.'

'But you will be the richest man in the world when you write the greatest poem?'

He didn't reply.

One day when I went to see him in his little house, I found him lying on his little bed. He looked so old and so weak, that I found myself wanting to cry.

He said, 'The poem is not going well.'

B. WORDSWORTH

He wasn't looking at me. He was looking through the window at the coconut tree, and he was speaking as though I wasn't there. He said, 'When I was twenty, I felt the power within myself.' Then, almost in front of my eyes, I could see his face growing older and more tired. He said, 'But that—that was a long time ago.'

And then—I felt it so keenly, it was as though I had been slapped by my mother. I could see it clearly on his face. It was there for everyone to see. Death on the shrinking face.

He looked at me, and saw my tears and sat up.

He said, 'Come.' I went and sat on his knee.

He looked into my eyes, and he said, 'Oh, you can see it, too. I always knew you had the poet's eye.'

He didn't even look sad, and that made me burst out crying loudly.

He pulled me to his thin chest, and said, 'Do you want me to tell you a funny story?' And he smiled encouragingly at me.

But I couldn't reply.

He said, 'When I have finished this story, I want you to promise that you will go away and never come back to see me. Do you promise?'

I nodded.

He said, 'Good, well listen. That story I told you about the girl poet, do you remember that? That wasn't true. It was something I just made up. All this talk about poetry and the greatest poem in the world, that wasn't true either. Isn't that the funniest thing you have ever heard?'

But his voice broke.

I left the house and ran home crying, like a poet, for everything I saw.

I walked along Alberto Street a year later, but I could

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find no sign of the poet's house. It hadn't vanished, just like that. It had been pulled down, and a big, two-storeyed building had taken its place. The mango tree, and the plum tree and the coconut tree had all been cut down, and there was brick and concrete everywhere.

It was just as though B. Wordsworth had never existed.

from *Miguel Street*

NAIPAUL, *Vidia S. (Trinidad and Tobago).*

Born in Trinidad 1932.

EDUCATION: *Trinidad and Oxford University.*

PUBLICATIONS: *The Mystic Masseur 1957—a novel.*

The Suffrage of Elvira 1958—a novel.

Miguel Street 1959—collection of stories.

A House for Mr Biswas 1961—a novel.

The Middle Passage: the Caribbean Revisited 1962—non-fiction.

Mr Stone and the Knights Companion 1963—a novel.

An Area of Darkness: an Experience of India 1964—non-fiction.

WHO ARE THE REAL AMERICANS?

Since the "discovery" of North and South America by Europeans in the fifteenth century, the use of the geographic term America has varied, reflecting changing circumstances and different cultural perspectives.

Although Native Americans were the first to arrive--over 15,000 years ago--none of the names by which they referred to the land as a whole has survived in common usage. The first Europeans to visit North America, the Vikings, referred to it as "Vinland." Columbus, thinking he was in Asia, called the islands he discovered the "Indies." Even after reaching the mainland, Columbus still thought it was part of Asia, persisting in that belief until his death in 1506. John Cabot, the Italian sailing for Britain, reached the coast of North America in 1497, but he also thought he had reached Asia, probably the northern coast of China, and referred to his discovery as "New Found Land." Neither the Native Americans nor these early explorers were given the honor of naming the two continents. That honor, through a twist of circumstance and good publicity, belonged to the Italian merchant and banker, Amerigo Vespucci.

Amerigo Vespucci, a native of the Italian city of Florence, worked for the Medici family and was the supplier for Columbus's third voyage. Intrigued by the stories of the "Indies," he joined an expedition in 1499 organized by Alonso de Ojeda, who had accompanied Columbus. They explored the coast of South America along what is now Venezuela and Brazil. In 1501 Vespucci returned with a Portuguese expedition and sailed down the coast of Brazil, probably as far as the mouth of the Rio de la Plata. It was Vespucci's letters about these journeys, written in colorful language and full of exotic details, that established his fame in Europe. He was one of the first to be convinced that the land he had discovered was a "New World:"

There is much more to this earth than Europe and Asia and Africa. There is also a New World, a new half of the earth, a never-before-dreamed-of western Hemisphere. There is a whole new continent waiting for the men of Europe to explore and possess and theron to build a new civilization . . .*

Vespucci's letters caught the imagination of many Europeans and went through numerous printings. One of those to read them was a German cartographer, Martin Waldseemuller, who published a map of the world in 1507 that included two narrow land masses representing the continents of the New World. Across the southern continent, he wrote "America." In his preface, Waldseemuller explained, "Since another fourth part (of the world) has been discovered by Americus Vesputius--I do not see why anyone should object to its being

*Frederick J. Pohl, Amerigo Vespucci: Pilot Major, NY: Octagon Books, 1966.

CENTRAL AMERICA

Colonialism, Dictatorship, and Revolution

m: Modern Latin America
Skidmore & Smith, 1984

Central America has received scant attention from scholars in the United States. This neglect is partly due to the relative paucity of archives, libraries, and research centers in the nations of the isthmus. It is partly due to the smallness of the individual countries, which makes them appear less significant than Argentina, Brazil, or Mexico. And it is also due to the common assumption that the countries of Central America are backward: the least developed areas in a developing world. Dominated by dictators, the "banana republics" of the isthmus were viewed as sleepy relics of the past, the last places where popular revolt would strike.

The recent upheavals in Nicaragua and El Salvador have sharply challenged this image. If we discard modernization theory and instead follow an approach which places Central America within the context of the capitalist world economy, the history of the region begins to acquire new meaning. As we shall see, Central America came to develop classic plantation economies, and this fact had a decisive effect on social-class relations and political outcomes. The isthmus thus provides yet another variation on the interplay between socioeconomic change and political transition.

Central American history furthermore offers an opportunity to examine and comprehend the policies of the United States. Through trade, investment, invasion, and diplomacy, the U.S. obtained extraordinary influence over trends and events in the region. The use (and abuse) of this power not only yields insight into the behavior of the United States. It also enriches our understanding of the ways that Latin Americans have interpreted the motives and actions of the "colossus of the north."

Colonial Background

Nature endowed Central America with singular beauty. And from Guatemala to Panama, the isthmus exhibits many contrasts: a spectacular mountain range, studded by volcanoes of 10,000 feet or more; some arid zones; and verdant jungles along the coasts. Much of the soil is fertile and the year-round climate is temperate, warm in the mornings and cool in the afternoons. There are lakes in the mountainous areas but no major navigable rivers (with the possible exception of the Río San Juan in Nicaragua). Nor does either coast have adequate natural deep-sea harbors. Nature can bring calamity, too, through torrential rains, hurricanes, and violent earthquakes.

During precolonial times Central America was a meeting ground for Meso-American, South American, and Caribbean cultures. In contrast to Mexico and Peru, it was not the site of a centralized Indian empire. Indigenous peoples lived in stable, autonomous communities and engaged in trade with one another. After 500 B.C. a relatively advanced civilization appeared in the highlands of Guatemala and El Salvador, and it was greatly influenced by Olmec culture from the Veracruz-Tabasco coast of Mexico. Nahuatl settlements later followed, and classical Mayan culture appeared in the lowlands of northern Guatemala. The period from A.D. 600 to 900 marked the apex of the Old Maya Empire, as it was formerly called, though it did not constitute a highly organized political unit.

Spaniards first came to the area in 1501. Vasco Núñez de Balboa sighted the Pacific Ocean in 1513 and established his power in what is now Panama. In the 1520s, already under pressure from Spanish crown authorities, Hernán Cortés went as far south as Honduras. Pedro de Alvarado launched an expedition from Mexico City around this same time and, like other conquerors, he was able to take advantage of hostilities between two Indian groups, the Quichés and the Cakchiquels (who became his allies). As also happened elsewhere, the conquerors soon fought among themselves. Alvarado's column reached a stalemate in its encounter with the forces of Pedro Arias de Avila, better known as Pedrarias Dávila, who founded Panama City in 1524.

In the mid-sixteenth century the Spanish crown established the Kingdom of Guatemala as part of the viceroyalty of New Spain. The Kingdom included what later became Costa Rica, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Belize (British Honduras), and the Mexican state of Chiapas. Its capital was the highland city of Antigua, Guatemala, then referred to as Santiago de Guatemala. Panama fell under the jurisdiction of Peru.

The diversity of Indian cultures meant that Spaniards penetrated Central America in stages, not all at once, and each conquest required

José de Bustamante managed to maintain Spanish control of Central America, mainly by forging an alliance with *ladinos* and Indians against the upstart creoles. He was forced out in 1818, however, and Spain's adoption of a liberal constitution in 1820 sent repercussions throughout the area. In mid-1821 Agustín de Iturbide's declaration of the *Plan de Iguala* in Mexico forced the independence issue. Partly fearing "liberation" by Mexican troops, the socially conservative landowners decided to break with now-radical Spain, and in January 1822 proclaimed annexation of the isthmus to royalist Mexico. The following year Iturbide's abdication led to complete independence. Chiapas remained with Mexico. The other states, from Costa Rica to Guatemala (excluding Panama), became the United Provinces of Central America.

Despite discord and disagreement, Central America managed to separate itself from Spain—and from Mexico—in a relatively peaceful fashion. The peoples of the isthmus did not suffer nearly the same level of physical destruction that occurred elsewhere in the 1810s. And as a result, the colonial social order survived almost intact.

The isthmus thus achieved full independence as a politically unified republic. The ideal of unification had long inspired local patriots, and would continue to be a highly valued goal in years to come. But it also proved hard to sustain.

As happened elsewhere in Latin America, the Central American political elite divided into two factions: Liberals and Conservatives. The Liberals advocated continuation of reforms started by the Bourbon monarchy. They called for increased restrictions on clerical power, for the abolition of slavery, for the elimination of burdensome taxes, and for the promotion of economic development. They drew their support from emerging professional classes, white and *ladino*, and from upper-middle sectors excluded from the circles of the landed creole aristocracy. They espoused the idea of unification, too, and had considerable strength in the outlying provinces.

Conservatives stood for order, moderation, and stability. They upheld Hispanic institutions, especially the church, and they expressed suspicion of progressive reform. Led by creole landowners, they first advocated free trade, then reverted to a protectionist stance when they felt the impact of British commercial competition.

Violence erupted in the 1820s and Liberals appeared to have the upper hand. The constitution of 1824 bore resemblances to both the U.S. constitution and the Spanish constitution of 1812. In 1829 Liberal forces under Francisco Morazán of Honduras defeated a Conservative army, and in the wake of victory Liberals began a campaign to eliminate Conservatives from positions of power. Before long the tide would turn.

Rafael Carrera and Conservative Supremacy

The year 1837 brought shocks to Central America. In the mountain regions of Guatemala there began a massive rebellion, a peasant revolt that challenged the Liberal state. Village priests exhorted their poverty-stricken parishioners to join the uprising, proclaiming that a cholera epidemic—which started late the year before—was a sign of heavenly wrath. Indians flocked to the cause. Race war spread from Guatemala to the other provinces.

Leader of this movement was José Rafael Carrera, a *ladino* swineherd with no formal education. In mid-1837 he defined the goals of the revolt as: (1) reinstatement of traditional judicial procedures, (2) restoration of religious orders and ecclesiastical privilege, (3) amnesty for all those exiled in 1829, and (4) obedience to Carrera himself. His forces soon controlled Guatemala, and in 1840 he defeated Morazán.

The triumphant Carrera emerged as the dominant figure in Central American political life, a position he held until his death in 1865. Starting in 1839, the Guatemalan legislature proceeded to dismantle the Liberal program. Merchant guilds were reestablished, the archbishop was asked to return, education was turned over to the church. Roman Catholicism became the official state religion, and priests regained protection of the ecclesiastical *fuero*. Carrera maintained his grip on the military, and in 1851 he assumed the Guatemalan presidency as well. It was an era of Conservative ascendancy.

The Carrera revolt ushered in some lasting changes. A few Indians, but more especially *ladinos*, began to play active roles in political life. The white elite regained its social supremacy but lost its monopoly over the state. And under Carrera, the government abandoned the goal of trying to assimilate Indian masses. It adopted instead a policy aimed at protecting the Indians, much as the Spanish crown had done, and this policy helped contribute to the segregation that has persisted to this day.

The Carrera era also brought an end to the Central American confederation. In 1838 the congress declared each of the states to be "sovereign, free, and independent political bodies." The ideal of unification had come to be identified with the Liberal period of 1823–37 and was seen as a failure, so Carrera discarded the dream. At the same time, he sought to impose like-minded Conservatives in the (increasingly sovereign) states. In Nicaragua this impulse eventually culminated in one of the more bizarre episodes in the history of inter-American relations—the William Walker affair.

Geographical and economic considerations had long stimulated interest in the idea of an inter-oceanic route through Central

Colonial Central America grew modest amounts of coffee. Costa Rica began serious production in the 1830s, shipping exports first to Chile and later to Europe. Guatemala promptly followed suit, and by 1870 coffee was the country's leading export, a position it has held ever since. El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Honduras joined the coffee trade in the 1870s and 1880s. Central American coffee exports have not risen to enormous volumes—never accounting for more than 15 percent of the world supply—but they have always been of high quality.

Coffee had important social consequences. Since it was grown in the cool highlands, along the mountain slopes, it did not everywhere require large-scale usurpation of land from the peasants. There were substantial takeovers in Guatemala and El Salvador, though perhaps less dramatic than occurred in Porfirian Mexico. In Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica most peasants lived in the lowlands, however, so dislocations were less common. Also many coffee plantations were modest in size, and they were usually owned by Central Americans. Foreign investors came to play an important part in coffee production in late nineteenth-century Nicaragua, and Germans acquired substantial amounts of coffee-growing land in Guatemala. But in general, coffee production remained in Central American hands.

Though liberal leaders sought to encourage immigration (more than Mexico's *científicos*), Central America never received the kind of massive, working-class influx that went to Argentina, Brazil, and the United States. Labor for coffee cultivation instead came from the mostly Indian and *mestizo* peasants. In time they fell into two groups: *colonos*, who lived on the plantation and leased small plots of land for subsistence cultivation; and *jornaleros*, day laborers who worked for wages while living at home and retaining control of some land. In either case they retained close contact with the earth and retained outlooks of traditional peasants, rather than forging class consciousness as a rural proletariat.

The banana trade would eventually become emblematic of Central American culture, but it had a small-scale start. In 1870 a New England sea captain named Lorenzo Baker began shipments from Jamaica to the east coast of the U.S., and in 1885 he joined with Andrew Preston to form the Boston Fruit Company. In the meantime Costa Rica had engaged Henry Meiggs, the dynamic railway entrepreneur, to lay track along the Caribbean coast in exchange for grants of land. Meiggs turned the contract over to two of his nephews, Minor Cooper Keith and Henry Meiggs Keith. In 1878 Minor Keith began shipping bananas to New Orleans, and soon established the Tropical Trading and Transport Company.

In 1899 the two companies merged, with Preston as president and Minor Keith as vice-president, to form a singular enterprise: the United

Fruit Company (UFCO). Here began a remarkable chapter in the history of U.S. investment, penetration, and control in Central America.

UFCO, or *la frutera* (the fruitery), as Central Americans called it, established a virtual monopoly on the production and distribution of bananas. Through government concessions and other means, the company acquired vast tracts of land in the hot, humid, sparsely settled Caribbean lowlands. Through the Meiggs connection it dominated transportation networks and owned a major corporation, International Railways of Central America. It built docks and port facilities. In 1913 UFCO created the Tropical Radio and Telegraph Company. *La frutera* possessed a large number of ships, widely known as the "great white fleet," and it had enormous influence on marketing in the United States. UFCO tolerated and even encouraged small-scale competition, but it was never seriously challenged in the decades after World War I.

The banana trade created enclave economies par excellence. UFCO supervisors and managers came from the U.S., most notably from the South, and black workers were imported from Jamaica and the West Indies. One result was to alter the racial composition of the eastern lowland population. Another was to create harshly enforced racial divisions within *la frutera* itself.

The industry became a giant foreign corporation. Some banana lands remained in local hands, but UFCO possessed control of technology, loans, and access to the U.S. market. Because of natural threats from hurricanes and plant disease, UFCO also sought to keep substantial amounts of land in reserve. These could usually be obtained only by government concession, a fact which required the company to enter local politics. The picture is clear: UFCO provided relatively scant stimulus for Central America's economic development, but became directly involved in local matters of state.

Coffee and bananas dominated economics after the turn of the century. As shown in Figure 9-1, the two products accounted for more than 70 percent of Central America's exports in 1913 and 1938 and nearly as much in 1960. The proportion declined by the early 1970s, as cotton and such other goods as meat, sugar, shrimp, refined petroleum (from refineries in Panama) and light manufacturers gained in importance, but the traditional products still carried great weight.

One implication of this fact is obvious: the Central America economy became thoroughly dependent on the export of two commercial crops, coffee and bananas. The economic fortunes of the isthmus now depended almost entirely on the vagaries of the international market. When coffee or banana prices were down, earnings were down, and there was little room for flexible response—since coffee and banana plantations could not be easily or quickly converted to producing basic foodstuffs (assuming that the owners wanted to do so, which was hardly

such areas as electrical equipment, prepared foods, pulp and paper products, and fertilizers—as the isthmus embarked on the path of import-substitution industrialization. But CACM made little headway in the agricultural sector, where protectionist policies remained the rule, and it failed to meet the challenge of unemployment (which stood at 9.4 percent in 1970).

CACM also suffered from political disputes. Honduras had begun to complain about the distribution of benefits in the mid-1960s and withdrew from the market after an armed clash with El Salvador in 1969 (described below). Honduras has since negotiated bilateral agreements with the other countries—except El Salvador—but CACM lost a good deal of precious momentum.

Notwithstanding these efforts the regional economy has remained primarily agricultural, and its society has continued to be mostly rural. Around 1900 less than 10 percent of the population lived in cities. By 1970 the figure ranged between 20 and 40 percent (compared to 66 percent for Argentina, for example, and 61 percent for Chile). Even the biggest cities of Central America have been small by international standards. In 1970 Guatemala City, by far the largest, had well under a million inhabitants (731,000), and the other capitals had populations ranging from 200,000 to just over 400,000. Urbanization came late to Central America.

This delay has, in turn, produced a major social fact: Central America has never had a substantial urban working class. There are some workers in the cities, of course, and there have been sporadic efforts at unionization since the 1920s. But the de-emphasis on manufacturing and the smallness of the cities have not given rise to the scale of working-class movements that appeared in Argentina, Chile, Brazil, or Mexico. (In Nicaragua, for example, the unionized share of the economically active population in 1973 came to a paltry 2 percent.) A principal collective actor has been largely absent from the scene: just as Argentina has not had a classic peasantry, so Central America has lacked an urban working class.

Furthermore, the historical de-emphasis on manufacturing meant that the agricultural sector would never be challenged by an industrial sector. To be sure, CACM helped give shape and strength to a fledgling business group, but it did not lead to an outright assault upon the social order. Consequently there would be little incentive to form the sort of multi-class populist alliance that often emerges from sectoral conflict (as in Argentina, where Perón joined together industrial workers and entrepreneurs in a common attack upon the rural aristocracy). In the absence of an industrial threat, landlords and peasants, mostly Indian in Guatemala, faced each other in the Central American countryside. When conflict occurred, it would accordingly tend to follow class lines. Control of land would be the overriding issue.

The most active groups in Central America's cities have generally consisted of middle-sector merchants and professionals—lawyers, journalists, intellectuals, and students. They have not displayed much middle-class consciousness, but they have spawned some reformist political movements and produced a considerable number of civilian political leaders. As time passed their role in state and society steadily increased.

Despite this growth and development, the masses of Central America have remained poor. Per capita incomes are low (between 528 and 1,512 U.S. dollars in 1980) and wealth is tightly concentrated. As indicators of social welfare, national literacy rates reveal that in 1970 only 45–60 percent of adults could read and write in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua (Costa Rica, always the exception, was near to 90 percent). The proportion of young children (ages 7–13) who went to school was 70 percent or more for all countries but Guatemala—the largest country, where it was 50 percent. But this was more than offset by the low proportions of teenagers attending secondary schools: less than 20 percent in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua, only 33 percent in Costa Rica. If Central America's children were getting any education at all, their exposure to school was generally brief.

In time, this pattern of development and deprivation would exert tremendous pressure on the region's political systems. Understanding of this process requires a brief examination of each country's recent history.

Panama: A Nation and a Zone

Panama did not become an independent republic until after the turn of the century. During the 1800s it was a province of Colombia. Because of poor communications and distance from Bogotá it had become semi-autonomous. The energetic president of Colombia, Rafael Núñez, tried to assert central control during his tenure in office (1885–94), and partially succeeded. After his death the country fell into disarray, and Liberals and Conservatives began a frightful struggle that culminated in Colombia's "War of the Thousand Days" (1899–1903). The conflict ended with the Liberals in defeat, the economy in paralysis, the government near bankruptcy.

In view of these conditions Panama might have sought independence on its own, as it had long been chafing under rule from Bogotá. Ultimately, however, Panamanian sovereignty would not arise from an indigenous popular movement. It would grow out of big-power diplomacy and international intrigue.

At issue was an inter-oceanic canal, a time-honored vision for Central America. Plans went back as far as the seventeenth century. In 1878 the government of Colombia authorized a French group under Ferdi-

tides Royo abruptly resigned, turning office over to the vice-president. Royo cited poor health but most observers believed that he had been dismissed by the National Guard, possibly because of Royo's inability to deal with labor unrest—or because of the presidential ambitions of the leader of the Guard, General Rubén Darío Paredes. Either way, one thing was clear: Men in uniform were in control.

Costa Rica: Fragile Democracy

Costa Rica has long been unique. Despite its name ("rich coast"), it was of minimal economic importance to Spain, and as the southernmost area in the kingdom of Guatemala it was relatively remote from the rest of Central America. Sparsely populated from the outset, it never developed a large-scale black or Indian subservient class. Nor did it have a wealthy landed oligarchy.

Coffee cultivation began on modest, family-sized farms in the 1830s. The flourishing commerce gave rise to a substantial and prosperous agrarian middle sector—and to a merchant class in the cities—without creating a landless peasantry. United Fruit established banana plantations on the east coast in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and bananas soon became the country's leading export.

For economic and demographic reasons Costa Rica emerged as a racially and socially homogenous society. By 1925 about 80 percent of the population was white, 4 percent was black (mostly workers on banana plantations), 14 percent was *mestizo*, and less than 1 percent was Indian. Middle-class culture prevailed, and racial conflict was largely absent.

Social consensus led to broad acceptance of constitutional politics. Early twentieth century governments fostered welfare programs (so Costa Rica, like Uruguay, inevitably came to be compared to Switzerland). Conservatives exchanged power with Liberals. There was not much to fight about, and democratic traditions began to take root.

Then worldwide depression in the 1930s bred social discontent. The National Republican Party came forward as an alternative to communism. The Liberal-Conservative distinction faded and, with leftist support, National Republicans won the presidential elections of 1936, 1940, and 1944. A progressive social security system and labor code were put in place.

Two leading factions then emerged. One was the vehemently anti-communist National Union Party, led by Otilio Ulate Blanco. The other was the left-of-center (but anti-communist) Social Democratic Party, organized by former Conservative José ("Pepe") Figueres Ferrer. In the 1948 elections both movements joined in a coalition against the National Republicans. Violence flared, disputes erupted, and Figueres as-

sumed authority. Acting with vigor and decisiveness, he dissolved the army, levied new taxes, called a constituent assembly, and—as was occurring at this time elsewhere in Latin America—outlawed the communist Popular Vanguard. The dust settled and Ulate Blanco took office in 1949.

Figueres won the presidency in 1952 and normalcy returned. He stimulated agricultural exports and negotiated a new contract with United Fruit, under which the Costa Rican share of profits increased from 10 to 30 percent. With support from Washington he withstood an uprising in 1955. The election of 1958 went smoothly. Said Figueres after the loss by his party's candidate: "I consider our defeat as a contribution, in a way, to democracy in Latin America. It is not customary for a party in power to lose an election."

Subsequent events would bear out his claim. Voter participation in Costa Rica has generally been over 80 percent, one of the highest rates in the world (compared to 55–60 percent in the U.S.). And moderation has prevailed: less than 10 percent of the vote has gone to extremist candidates of left or right. In contrast to so much of Central America, Costa Rica has a strong and viable political center.

Economic straits, as always, put the system to a stringent test. Under the dubious administration of Rodrigo Carazo (1978–82) Costa Rica ran up a foreign debt of \$4 billion U.S. dollars, enormous for a country its size. The growth rate declined from 8.9 percent in 1977 to –2.4 percent in 1981, during which year the local currency (the *colón*) was devalued by more than 400 percent. Unemployment climbed to 10 percent and appeared to be still rising.

The election in 1982 of Luis Alberto Monge, a cautious politician and fiscal conservative, offered hope that Costa Rica could weather its financial crisis. It would require firm direction. Whether Costa Rica's fragile democracy could meet the challenge was an open question.

Nicaragua: From Dynasty to Revolution

For much of its history Nicaragua has been a pawn of outside powers, especially the United States. During the nineteenth century it received unceasing attention from avaricious adventurers, many of whom sought to build a canal, and it endured the brief but ignominious presence of William Walker. The pattern would continue into the twentieth century.

The British conceded the Caribbean basin to the U.S. sphere of influence in the 1890s, and Washington eagerly seized the opportunity. The U.S. occupied Cuba, "took" Panama, and established a protectorate in the Dominican Republic. To justify these and future actions, Theodore Roosevelt proclaimed in 1904:

tional Guard, which he constantly nurtured and protected; the landed elite, with whose members he entered into numerous partnerships; and the United States, whose political power structure he knew so well how to manipulate.

Amassing an enormous fortune for himself and his family, Somoza promoted Nicaragua's economic growth and cultivated U.S. aid. He was struck by an assassin in 1956 and rushed to a hospital in the American-controlled Canal Zone. Ever grateful for Somoza's rabid anti-communism, President Eisenhower sent his personal surgeon to try to save the dictator's life. Somoza nonetheless succumbed.

The family enterprise endured. The elder son, Luis Somoza Debayle, took over and was elected to the presidency by an 89 percent majority in 1957. A trusted family associate, René Schick, assumed office in 1963. Four years later Luis Somoza died of a heart attack. Power then passed to Anastasio Somoza Debayle, a West Point graduate and, like his father, head of the National Guard. Self-seeking, ruthless, corrupt, Somoza clamped an iron rule on the country, but offended thoughtful Nicaraguans by his excesses. It was rumored, for example, that he exacted large-scale economic profits from the reconstruction of Managua after a devastating earthquake in 1972.

The complete absence of representative institutions meant that opposition to Somoza could take only one form: armed resistance. In the 1960s a strong guerrilla movement emerged, and it consisted of three major groups. One, known as Prolonged Popular War (GPP), formed in the early 1960s among rural peasants of the mountainous north. Second were the *Proletarios*, who splintered from the GPP in 1973 to carry the movement to workers and especially intellectuals in the cities. Third were the *Terceristas*, a politically moderate and anti-communist group led by Edén Pastora, renowned from his military exploits as the legendary "Commander Zero." Taking their name from Augusto César Sandino, the movements all combined to forge the *Sandinista* National Liberation Front.

After years of struggle the Somoza regime suddenly collapsed in 1979, just as Batista had given way in Cuba two decades before. Safely exiled in Miami, Somoza would lay the blame on forces beyond his control. "The Nicaraguan people have not thrown me out. I was thrown out by an international conspiracy that today has a majority of communists and that today desires Nicaragua to be a communist country." Anastasio, Jr., later met his death at the hands of assassins in Paraguay.

Once in power, the *sandinistas* proclaimed two broad policy goals. One called for implementation of an "independent and nonaligned" foreign policy, which meant no further submission to the U.S. The other envisioned the creation of a "mixed economy" in order to achieve socioeconomic justice.

The revolution got off to a promising start. President Carter invited

Nicaragua's leaders to the White House, sent \$8 million in emergency relief to Managua, and secured an additional authorization from Congress for a \$75 million aid package. Their domestic task was eased by the magnitude of the Somoza family fortune, which included about 20 percent of the country's cultivable land. It was therefore possible for the revolutionary government to nationalize these holdings and to initiate an agrarian reform without having to face the diehard opposition of an entrenched landed aristocracy.

The Nicaraguan revolutionaries quickly attacked the same social problems the Cubans had become famous for liquidating, such as illiteracy, inadequate preventive medicine and insufficient vocational and higher education. Nicaragua welcomed approximately 2500 Cubans (the count was carefully monitored by the CIA and State Department)—doctors, nurses, school teachers, sanitary engineers—to help the revolutionary government raise basic living standards. Cuban military, police, and intelligence personnel also arrived to help consolidate the regime against what the *sandinistas* (and Cubans) were convinced would be counter-revolutionary attacks from within and without.

The Nicaraguans also solicited help from the U.S., which responded in late 1979 with a very modest USAID program of \$75 million. Far more important financial help came from West Europe—especially West Germany, France, and Spain. The Soviets, on the other hand, offered no hard-currency credits. The Nicaraguans therefore appeared as of early 1983 to have a better chance to avoid complete trade and financial dependence on one ideological bloc than did Cuba in 1959–61.

The Nicaraguan euphoria did not last long, however. In the U.S. the Republican Party electoral platform of 1980 formally deplored "the Marxist *sandinista* takeover of Nicaragua," and the Reagan administration thereafter began a persistent campaign to undermine the *sandinista* government. One key issue centered on intervention, as President Reagan and Secretary of State Alexander Haig accused Nicaragua of lending support to guerrillas in El Salvador; the Nicaraguans responded by accusing the U.S. of training anti-*sandinista* rebels in neighboring Honduras. Another disagreement focused on Nicaragua's military buildup from 20,000 to 50,000 troops (including reservists and militia): Washington contended this could only be intended for subversive purposes, while Managua insisted it was for legitimate self-defense. Nicaraguans grew apprehensive over this marked deterioration in relations with the United States. As junta member Daniel Ortega Saavedra remarked in August 1982, U.S. officials "leave open the possibility of invading or sending mercenaries against Nicaragua. . . . Our country has been invaded by the United States various times before, and we have every right to believe that, under the present circumstances, this could happen again."

There were internal difficulties too. After some hesitation the *san-*

beyond doubt: The armed forces retained ultimate power in Honduras, and the temptation to meddle in the affairs of other countries continued to exist.

El Salvador: From Stability to Insurgence

Oligarchic control eventually took hold in nineteenth century El Salvador. In 1863 Rafael Carrera launched an invasion from Guatemala and imposed a Conservative of his own liking, but Liberals countered with a successful revolt in 1871. Legal decrees in the 1880s prohibited the collective ownership of land by Indian communities and thus paved the way for the usurpation and consolidation of land by a tiny aristocracy—*las catorce*, the notorious “fourteen” families (which have meanwhile expanded in number and size). Coffee became the leading export crop, commerce flourished, and from 1907 to 1931 political power rested in the hands of a single family, the patriarchal Meléndez clan.

Peasants did not accept this passively. Angered by the loss of land, they staged four separate revolts between 1870 and 1900. The movements were crushed but they carried a message: like the *zapatistas* of Mexico, the peasants of El Salvador were willing to fight for their rights.

The ruling coalition of coffee-growing oligarchs, foreign investors, military officers—and church prelates—prevailed throughout the 1920s. The crash of 1929 had severe repercussions in El Salvador, since independent small farmers and plantation laborers suffered greatly from the drop in coffee prices. In 1931 a U.S. military attaché, Major A. R. Harris, filed this report:

There appears to be nothing between . . . high-priced cars and the oxcart with its barefooted attendant. There is practically no middle class between the very rich and the very poor. . . . Roughly 90 percent of the wealth in the country is held by about one-half of one percent of the population. Thirty or forty families own nearly everything in the country. They live in regal splendor [while] the rest of the country has practically nothing. . . . A socialistic or communistic revolution in El Salvador may be delayed for several years, ten or even twenty, but when it comes it will be a bloody one.

It would not take that long.

On May Day 1930 a popular throng of 80,000 held a demonstration in downtown San Salvador against deteriorating wages and living conditions. The next year an idealistic landowner and admirer of the British Labour Party, Arturo Araujo, won the presidential election with the support of students, peasants, and workers. Somewhat naively, he announced that the Salvadoran Communist Party would be permitted to take part in municipal elections in December 1931. Exasperated by this prospect, the armed forces dismissed him from office on December 2 and imposed a right-wing general, Maximiliano Hernández Martínez.

The peasants broke out in rebellion. In late January 1932, as a chain of volcanoes erupted in Guatemala and northwest El Salvador, bands of Indians armed with machetes made their way out of the ravines and tangled hillsides down into the towns of the area. Led by Agustín Faribundo Martí, a dedicated communist who had fought alongside Sandino in Nicaragua, the peasants murdered some landlords and plunged the country into a state of revolt.

Hernández Martínez responded with ferocity. As military units moved in on the rebels the conflict took on the appearance of a racial war, as Indians—or anyone resembling Indians—suffered from the government attack. In the tiny country of 1.4 million inhabitants between 10,000 and 20,000 Salvadorans lost their lives.

The events of 1932 sent several messages. Peasants learned to distrust city-bred revolutionaries who might lead them to destruction. Indians began to seek safety in casting off indigenous habits and clothes. On the political level, leftists concluded that they could still cultivate followings in rural areas, especially in the absence of a reformist alternative. The right drew a stark lesson of its own: the way to deal with popular agitation was by repression.

A proto-fascist sympathizer, among the first to recognize the 1936 Franco regime in Spain, Hernández Martínez stayed on till 1944. Military officers seized power with the consent and blessing of *las catorce*. Major Oscar Osorio headed a moderate dictatorship in 1950–56. In 1960 his handpicked successor, Colonel José María Lemus, was overthrown by a civilian-military group with slightly leftist leanings under Colonel César Yanes Uriás. Just one year later Yanes Uriás was ousted by rightists under Lt. Col. Julio A. Rivera, whose Party of National Conciliation (PCN) took control of the state. This alliance of civilian conservatives and military officers would reign supreme till the late 1970s.

A reformist challenge finally came from José Napoleón Duarte, who founded the Christian Democratic Party (PDC). As mayor of San Salvador (1964–70), the dynamic and articulate Duarte built up a strong following among intellectuals, professionals, and other urban middle-sector groups. The PDC bore a commitment to peaceful reform through electoral means. Though Duarte may have won the presidential election of 1972, the recalcitrant military turned power over to one of its own, Colonel Arturo Armando Molina. Duarte himself was imprisoned, tortured, and exiled—but he did not take to the hills.

Conditions in the meantime worsened for the peasants. Coffee exports were thriving but the poor were suffering. About 80 percent of the people lived in the countryside, and by 1975 about 40 percent of the peasants had no land at all—compared to only 12 percent in 1960. Increasingly unable to gain access to the soil, the *campesinos* of El Salvador were getting ready to rebel.

way. Consequently the election became a contest between the political right and the tattered remnants of the center.

Voter participation was remarkably high, if official statistics can be believed, and the results gave power to the right. Duarte's Christian Democrats won 35.3 percent of the votes, or 24 out of 60 seats in the constituent assembly. D'Aubuisson's party, the National Republican Alliance (ARENA), won 25.7 percent, or 19 seats, but managed to form a working coalition with other right-wing groups and take control of the assembly. "Major Bob" became the head of El Salvador's constitutional convention. The interim presidency went to Alvaro Magaña, an apolitical and soft-spoken economist who had for many years served as director of the National Mortgage Bank.

But the battle continued in the countryside. Guerrillas made periodic raids. Aided by U.S. military "trainers" (not called "advisers," in order to avoid association with Vietnam), government forces conducted sweeping search-and-destroy missions. Villagers and peasants grew fearful of both sides. By early 1983 the conflict appeared to favor the guerrillas. On its outcome hinged the future of El Salvador.

No less important was the battle for U.S. public opinion toward El Salvador. As of early 1983 the U.S. was supplying \$205 million in economic aid and \$26 million in military assistance, with higher requests pending in Congress. Few observers doubted that without this aid the regime in El Salvador would collapse. Growing opposition to the U.S. aid came from Congressional liberals and religious groups, especially the Catholic Church, still incensed over the 1980 killing of four American Catholic women in El Salvador, apparently with El Salvadorean army collusion, if not direct involvement. The intensity of U.S. opposition feeling could be seen in the bumper stickers that read "El Salvador is Vietnam in Spanish."

Guatemala: Reaction and Repression

Guatemala has a long history of strong-man rule. After Rafael Carrera died in 1865, Justino Rufino Barrios established a 12-year dictatorship (1873-85) and Manuel Estrada Cabrera followed with a 22-year, iron-fisted regime (1898-1920), the longest uninterrupted one-man rule in Central America. In 1931 General Jorge Ubico came to power, and immediately launched a campaign to crush the fledgling Communist Party. Instead of relying on coffee planters alone, Ubico built a tentative base among agrarian workers by abolishing debt slavery. The national police maintained law and order. As Ubico once said of his tactics: "I have no friends, only domesticated enemies."

A wave of strikes and protests led Ubico to resign in July 1944. He was replaced by a military triumvirate, and this in turn was ousted by



U.S. policy in Central America prompted a great deal of public controversy and debate in 1983. Above, cartoonist Tony Auth satirizes President Reagan's position and the hesitancy of the U.S. Congress in voicing opposition; below, Steve Benson dramatizes the left-wing threat to U.S. interests. (Reprinted with permission of the Washington Post Writers Group.)



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in China in the mid-thirties when the communist movement was getting started. . . . Well, if we don't look out, we will wake up some morning and read in the newspapers that there happened in South America the same kind of thing that happened in China in 1949." The test came in Guatemala.

UFCO publicists and the Dulles brothers accused the Arbenz regime of being "soft" on communism, and branded it a threat to the U.S. security and to the free world at large. They cultivated fears that defeat in Guatemala might lead to a Soviet takeover of the Panama Canal. They warned that if Guatemala fell, then the rest of Central America might go as well (the "domino theory"). But the principal issue was agrarian reform. Such writers as Daniel James of *The New Leader* warned that communists would use the program as a stepping-stone to gain control of Guatemala. Whatever his intentions, the U.S. insisted, Arbenz was just a "stooge" for the Russians.

In August 1953 the U.S. decided to act. John Foster Dulles led a campaign in the OAS to brand Guatemala as the agent of an extrahemispheric power (the Soviet Union) and therefore subject to OAS collective action under the Rio Treaty of 1947. When the Eisenhower administration pressed for this interpretation at a Caracas meeting of the OAS in early 1954 all it got was a declaration stating that communist domination of a member government would cause concern and should in theory lead to collective action—but with no specific mention of Guatemala.

The Arbenz government now saw that U.S. intervention was likely. The regime cracked down on domestic opposition and turned to Eastern Europe for small arms, which were en route by May. Meanwhile the U.S. government was demanding, in increasingly blunt language, compensation for U.S. property in Guatemala, meaning, of course, United Fruit.

Having failed to get OAS sponsorship for intervention in Guatemala, the Eisenhower government opted for covert action. The State Department had mounted the diplomatic offensive; now it was the turn of Allen Dulles and the Central Intelligence Agency. The CIA organized an exile invasion under an obscure renegade Guatemalan colonel, Carlos Castillo Armas. A rebel column of a few hundred men was assembled across the border in neighboring Honduras. They were equipped and directed by the CIA, which set up and operated a rebel radio station and provided a few World War II fighter planes to strafe Guatemala City. Under attack by these planes, and convinced that a large army was approaching the capital, Arbenz lost his nerve and gave up. The Castillo Armas rebels rolled into the capital virtually unopposed.

The new government purged communists and radical nationalists,

reversed the expropriation of United Fruit lands, and dutifully signed a Mutual Defense Assistance Pact with the U.S. in 1955. The errant Central American republic had been brought back into line by a relatively cheap and efficient CIA operation. These were the postwar years of maximum U.S. influence, nowhere more conspicuous than in Central America.

The U.S. was strongly denounced by Latin American nationalists for its intervention in Guatemala, and to this day it is a symbol for Latin Americans of cynical U.S. action. As described twenty years later by a CIA officer who had been intimately involved in the overthrow of Arbenz: "Castillo Armas was a bad president, tolerating corruption throughout his government and kowtowing to the United Fruit Company more than to his own people. The United States could have prevented this with the vigorous exercise of diplomatic pressure on Castillo Armas to assure that he pursued social reform for the many rather than venal satisfaction for a few. Instead, Washington breathed a collective sigh of relief and turned to other problems." Even so, the fate of the Arbenz regime would serve as a warning to nationalist leaders who contemplated challenging U.S. corporations.

The 1954 coup marked a turning point in Guatemalan history. It virtually eliminated the forces of the political center (as represented by Arévalo and Arbenz). So the country had only a left and a right, and the right was in control. Coffee planters, other landowners, and foreign investors and their subsidiaries regained their power under the protection of neo-conservative military regimes. Since then individual rulers have come and gone but this alignment has persisted. Castillo Armas was assassinated in 1957. General Miguel Ydígoras Fuentes, who had lost to Arbenz in 1950, ruled from 1958 to 1963. Then came Colonel Enrique Peralta Azurdia. From 1966 to 1970 the presidency was held by Julio César Méndez Montenegro, a talented civilian who traced his political lineage back to Arévalo, but the armed forces kept him tightly in check. He was followed by Colonel Carlos Arana Osorio (1970–74), by General Kjell Langerud García (1974–78), and by General Romeo Lucas García (1978–82). In March 1982 power was seized by Efraín Ríos Montt, a flamboyant young officer and born-again evangelical Christian; in mid-1983 he was ousted by General Oscar Humberto Mejía Victores. The more the leaders changed, the more the system stayed the same.

One feature of this entire period, especially after the mid-1960s, was the frightful abuse of human rights. Paramilitary death squads, most notoriously *Mano Blanca* ("White Hand") and *Ojo por Ojo* ("Eye for an Eye"), carried on a murderous campaign against political dissenters. No less than 30,000 people were killed between 1966 and 1982. The gov-

ALTURAS DE MACCHU PICCHU, III

El ser como el maíz se desgranaba en el inacabable granero de los hechos perdidos, de los acontecimientos miserables, del uno al siete, al ocho, y no una muerte, sino muchas muertes llegaba a cada uno: cada día una muerte pequeña, polvo, gusano, lámpara que se apaga en el lodo del suburbio, una pequeña muerte de alas gruesas entraba en cada hombre como una corta lanza y era el hombre asediado del pan o del cuchillo, el ganadero: el hijo de los puertos, o el capitán oscuro del arado, o el roedor de las calles espesas:

todos desfallecieron esperando su muerte, su corta muerte diaria:
y su quebranto aciago de cada día era como una copa negra que bebían temblando.

PART II, called The Heights of Macchu Picchu is made up of twelve poems suggested by a visit Neruda made in 1943 to the old ruins of Macchu Picchu, high in the Andes.

THE HEIGHTS OF MACCHU PICCHU, III

The human soul was threshed out like maize in the endless granary of defeated actions, of mean things that happened,
to the very edge of endurance, and beyond,
and not only death, but many deaths, came to each one:
each day a tiny death, dust, worm, a light flicked off in the mud at the city's edge, a tiny death with coarse wings
pierced into each man like a short lance
and the man was besieged by the bread or by the knife,
the cattle-dealer: the child of sea-harbors, or the dark captain of the plough,
or the rag-picker of snarled streets:

everybody lost heart, anxiously waiting for death, the short death of every day:
and the grinding bad luck of every day was like a black cup that they drank, with their hands shaking.

Translated by James Wright

DESCUBRIDORES DE CHILE

Del Norte trajo Almagro su arrugada centella.
Y sobre el territorio, entre explosión y ocaso,
se inclinó día y noche como sobre una carta.
Sombra de espinas, sombra de cardo y cera,
el español reunido con su seca figura,
mirando las sombrías estrategias del suelo.
Noche, nieve y arena hacen la forma
de mi delgada patria,
todo el silencio está en su larga línea,
toda la espuma sale de su barba marina,
todo el carbón la llena de misteriosos besos.
Como una brasa el oro arde en sus dedos
y la plata ilumina como una luna verde
su endurecida forma de tétrico planeta.
El español sentado junto a la rosa un día,
junto al aceite, junto al vino, junto al antiguo cielo
no imaginó este punto de colérica piedra
nacer bajo el estiércol del águila marina.

PABLO NERUDA

DISCOVERERS OF CHILE

Almagro brought his wrinkled lightning down from the
north,
and day and night he bent over this country
between gunshots and twilight, as if over a letter.
Shadow of thorn, shadow of thistle and of wax,
the Spaniard, alone with his dried-up body,
watching the shadowy tactics of the soil.
My slim nation has a body made up
of night, snow, and sand,
the silence of the world is in its long coast,
the foam of the world rises from its seaboard,
the coal of the world fills it with mysterious kisses.
Gold burns in its finger like a live coal
and silver lights up like a green moon
its petrified shadow that's like a gloomy planet.
The Spaniard, sitting one day near a rose,
near oil, near wine, near the primitive sky,
could not really grasp how this spot of furious stone
was born beneath the droppings of the ocean eagle.

Translated by Robert Bly

PART IV, called "The Liberators" is the longest section in the book, with over fifty poems. It concentrates on the liberations in the various South American countries from the European nations that had colonized them. We have chosen the twenty-eighth poem, on the liberator of Haiti, Toussaint L'Ouverture. There are fine poems also on O'Higgins, Lautaro, San Martin, Bolivar, José Martí, and others.

¡ Y si después de tantas palabras,
no sobrevive la palabra!
¡ Si después de las alas de los pájaros,
no sobrevive el pájaro parado!
¡ Más valdría, en verdad,
que se lo coman todo y acabemos!

¡ Haber nacido para vivir de nuestra muerte!
¡ Levantarse del cielo hacia la tierra
por sus propios desastres
y espiar el momento de apagar con su sombra su tiniebla!
¡ Más valdría, francamente,
que se lo coman todo y qué más da! . . .

¡ Y si después de tanta historia, sucumbimos,
no ya de eternidad,
sino de esas cosas sencillas, como estar
en la casa o ponerse a cavilar!
¡ Y si luego encontramos,
de buenas a primeras, que vivimos,
a juzgar por la altura de los astros,
por el peine y las manchas del pañuelo!
¡ Más valdría, en verdad,
que se lo coman todo, desde luego!

Se dirá que tenemos
en uno de los ojos mucha pena
y también en el otro, mucha pena
y en los dos, cuando miran, mucha pena . . .
¡ Entonces! . . . ¡ Claro! . . . Entonces . . . ¡ ni palabra!

And what if after so many words,
the word itself doesn't survive!
And what if after so many wings of birds
the stopped bird doesn't survive!
It would be better then, really,
if it were all swallowed up, and let's end it!

To have been born only to live off our own death!
To raise ourselves from the heavens toward the earth
carried up by our own bad luck,
always watching for the moment to put out our darkness
with our shadow!
It would be better, frankly,
if it were all swallowed up, and the hell with it!

And what if after so much history, we succumb,
not to eternity,
but to these simple things, like being
at home, or starting to brood!
What if we discover later
all of a sudden, that we are living
to judge by the height of the stars
off a comb and off stains on a handkerchief!
It would be better, really,
if it were all swallowed up, right now!

They'll say that we have a lot
of grief in one eye, and a lot of grief
in the other also, and when they look
a lot of grief in both. . . .
So then! . . . Naturally! . . . So! . . . Don't say a
word!

*Translated by Robert Bly
with Douglas Lawder*

"LA CÓLERA QUE QUIEBRA AL
HOMBRE EN NIÑOS"

La cólera que quiebra al hombre en niños,
que quiebra al niño, en pájaros iguales,
y al pájaro, después, en huevecillos;
la cólera del pobre
tiene un aceite contra dos vinagres.

La cólera que al árbol quiebra en hojas,
a la hoja en botones desiguales
y al botón, en ranuras telescópicas;
la cólera del pobre
tiene dos ríos contra muchos mares.

La cólera que quiebra al bien en dudas,
a la duda, en tres arcos semejantes
y al arco, luego, en tumbas imprevistas;
la cólera del pobre
tiene un acero contra dos puñales.

La cólera que quiebra el alma en cuerpos,
al cuerpo en órganos desemejantes
y al órgano, en octavos pensamientos;
la cólera del pobre
tiene un fuego central contra dos cráteres.

26 octubre 1937

"THE ANGER THAT BREAKS A
MAN DOWN INTO BOYS"

The anger that breaks a man down into boys,
that breaks the boy down into equal birds,
and the bird, then, into tiny eggs;
the anger of the poor
owns one smooth oil against two vinegars.

The anger that breaks the tree down into leaves,
and the leaf down into different-sized buds,
and the buds into infinitely fine grooves;
the anger of the poor
owns two rivers against a number of seas.

The anger that breaks the good down into doubts,
and doubt down into three matching arcs,
and the arc, then, into unimaginable tombs;
the anger of the poor
owns one piece of steel against two daggers.

The anger that breaks the soul down into bodies,
the body down into different organs,
and the organ into reverberating octaves of thought;
the anger of the poor
owns one deep fire against two craters.

Translated by Robert Bly

EXPECTING THE BARBARIANS

12.11.17

What are we waiting for, assembled in the public square?

The barbarians are to arrive today.

Why such inaction in the Senate?

Why do the Senators sit and pass no laws?

Because the barbarians are to arrive today.

What further laws can the Senators pass?

When the barbarians come they will make the laws.

Why did our emperor wake up so early,
and sits at the principal gate of the city,
on the throne, in state, wearing his crown?

Because the barbarians are to arrive today.
And the emperor waits to receive
their chief. Indeed he has prepared
to give him a scroll. Therein he engraved
many titles and names of honor.

Why have our two consuls and the praetors come out
today in their red, embroidered togas;
why do they wear amethyst-studded bracelets,
and rings with brilliant glittering emeralds;
why are they carrying costly canes today,
superbly carved with silver and gold?

Because the barbarians are to arrive today,
and such things dazzle the barbarians.

Why don't the worthy orators come as usual
to make their speeches, to have their say?

Because the barbarians are to arrive today;
and they get bored with eloquence and orations.

Why this sudden unrest and confusion?
(How solemn their faces have become.)
Why are the streets and squares clearing quickly,
and all return to their homes, so deep in thought?

Because night is here but the barbarians have not come.
Some people arrived from the frontiers,
and they said that there are no longer any barbarians.

And now what shall become of us without any barbarians?
Those people were a kind of solution.

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OF MEXICAN-AMERICAN
LITERATURE

THE EMERGENCE OF THE NEW CHICANO

by Guillermo Fuenfrios

Chicano is a new word, not yet in the dictionary. Who is he? How many are there? The U.S. Census (1970) has estimated there are five and a half million, while a former director of the President's White House Committee on Mexican American Affairs has estimated eight to twelve million. The Chicano is born of contrary forces in our history; he is conqueror and conquered, *gachupin* and *indigena*, *patron* and *peon*, "Aztec Prince and Christian Christ." He has internalized all of them. "In our hearts Cortez still tortures Cuauhtemoc," says a Chicano writer; and Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales, in his epic of modern Chicanismo "I Am Joaquin," says, "I ride with Revolutionists/ against myself." The word Chicano is born of these contradictions. Some of the older generation object to the term for they say it derived from *chicaneria* (chicanery). Some say it referred to the lowest of the low, the street people of the burro alleys and goat hills. Some say it originated in barrio slang for a *mexicano* from Chihuahua—thus, a Chi-cano. Some have dignified it with ancient origins, saying it comes from the Nahuatl word *Mexicanoob*, referring to the god Quetzalcoatl, in which the *x* was pronounced *sh*, and mispronounced by the Spaniard: *Meshicano* became *Mex-*

Azlan

icano, and finally *shicano* became *chicano*. The young Chicano, Guillermo Fuenfrios, eschews the semantic game and says simply that he is a "pluralistic man who stands on the bridge of history" and who defines himself by what he has become and is becoming. (*The Emergence of the New Chicano*, by Guillermo Fuenfrios.)

Octavio Romano has pointed out in his remarkable essay on the historical and intellectual presence of the Mexican American; the emergence of a new kind of Chicano. The young bilingual college student who, through reading Latin American authors, has discovered the full range of the meaning of biculturalism. This new Chicano is able to enter into a full and comprehensive understanding of both of the dominant cultures of the American continent, and yet by a link to his origins is in contact with the full social range from the fields to the ivory tower. He is an amalgam of indigenous American *razgos indigenos*, the scars of history on his face and the veins of his body. (Alurista), of Europe and Africa through his Spanish heritage and by education Anglo-America.

He is by nature a pluralistic man, a universal man, combining the racial strains and cultures of the entire world in his own person. Jose Vasconcelos coined the term "La Raza Cosmica" to describe him. The term is apt. With the possible exception of the Hawaiian, there are no people on earth with a more legitimate claim to universality. It is no wonder that he has successfully resisted the best efforts of the New American empire to melt him down into a mere American. All this universality, however, has had its price in suffering and isolation. He has paid with his toil in the fields and sweat shops, his tears of rage and humiliation, and his blood at the hands of lynch mobs and on the battlefields of World War II, Korea and Vietnam. The memory of people

La Causa: The Chicano

in Mexico and the agony of the Mexican revolution are still fresh in his mind. He lives as an exile in a land that belonged to his fathers. Despised equally by Mexican (see Paz - *The Labyrinth of Solitude*) and American, is it any wonder that in his search for identity he has rejected both labels and picked up the term Chicano from the dust of opprobrium where it had languished for years? Formerly denoting derision of the indigenous origins of the Mexican peon, it is now the proud symbol of militancy and newfound pride of origin for students and activists throughout the Southwest. In conjunction with indigenous roots is the resurrection of the ancient Aztec myth of Aztlán, the ancient northern homeland of the Nahuatl-speaking peoples. The intellectual and spiritual direction of the Chicano movement appears to be toward revindication of the American past after four hundred years of its debasement of European ethnocentric racism. As a result, the Chicano is becoming consciously tricultural. The question which confronts us now is: What are the implications of this phenomenon for the Chicano, the Mexican and the European descendants in the New World?

It is significant that this emergence from the subconscious into the conscious of the non-European element of "la Raza Cosmica" should come about at a moment of crisis in Western Civilization unparalleled in human history. Cortazar, Borges, Paz, Borges, Marcuse, Norman O. Brown, McLuhan, William Burroughs, Leslie Fiedler, as well as many other writers, painters, musicians and scientists from all over the world, have pointed out the apocalyptic nature of the world in which we live. The somewhat unreal threat of the nuclear age is now being overshadowed by more inevitable dangers such as population explosion and ecology disaster. Many of these mind-boggling horrors can be traced directly to the excess of modern technological society, of which the United States is the most spectacular example. We have

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seems in our time the total impotence of Western-Christian-Marxist-Humanism to curb the disastrous long-range effects of technological development. The emergence of the Humanists from the Ivory Towers and Churches into the streets of Selma, Washington and Chicago, has only hastened their demise by making them more easily eliminated. The spread of the Capitalist-Marxist technological materialist society can be denoted in every urban center in the world.

Norman O. Brown refers to this process as the victory of linear-rational thought, or Protestant literalism, over symbolic and poetic thought. Marcuse calls it the success of the performance principle. In Freudian terms it is the victory of the Ego over the Id, the rational suppressing the non-rational. The process began in eighteenth-century France, and men of prophetic vision have pointed to its dangers since the first: Rousseau, Jefferson, Blake, Schopenhauer, Baudelaire, Nietzsche, Jose Enrique Rodo, and more recently those mentioned beforehand. Western society, while tolerating these Isaiahs at best, and persecuting them at worst, has generally accused them of being enemies of progress and has paid them little heed. The magic of technology is more theatrically effective than that of the poets.

But now, the non-rational element in man, having been banished from his consciousness, threatens to completely dominate his actions. A glance at the morning paper is all the proof we need. Zodiac Killer, Vietnam, professional football, the freeway crunch, ad infinitum. Twenty-four hours in Los Angeles is sufficient to bring to the surface the forgotten words of the Biblical prophet speaking of the Apocalypse: "The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood." Echoes of Nazism are heard in the words of our freely-elected dignitaries. Spiro Agnew, Julius Hoffman, Judge Chargin, of San Jose. Dressed in the cloak

of sweet reason and law and order, the Beast of Revolutions seems to stalk our land.

Where, where, one asks one's self, can one look for hope? Casting about in the darkness, I am reminded of the words of St. John of the Cross: "Admirable cosa es que, siendo tenebrosa, alumbrase la noche." The darkness of night, by blinding our most rational sense, illuminates our most rational sense, illuminates our spirit. Brown, in *Love's Body*, points to the need for a change of consciousness from linear literalism to poetic symbolism, "to rise from history to mystery."

Marcuse, in *Eros and Civilization*, calls for the resurrection of the spirit of Orpheus and Narcissus. Octavio Paz, in *Corriente Alterna*, says: "La actitud occidental es enfermiza. Es moral. Gran aisladora, gran separadora, la moral parte en dos a hombre. Volver a la unidad de la vision en reconciliar cuerpo, alma y mundo." And thus we see all about us efforts to escape from the tyranny of reason and return to mystical and symbolic forms of thought. The phenomenon of drugs is no coincidence: it is a direct response to the psychic oppression of our culture. It is only part of a great spiritual reawakening which has led our most prophetic thinkers to the study of both Eastern and Western mysticism. Bab Ras Dam, formerly Richard Alpert relates a remark made to him by a Tibetan holy man: "God came to America in the form of LSD." Certainly the simultaneous discovery of the Sacred Mushrooms of Mexico and the invention of LSD in a Swiss laboratory point to a similarity with other outcroppings of the Zeitgeist such as the multiple simultaneous inventions of the automobile, the airplane, etc.

By this time the reader must be asking himself, OK, OK, but what does all this have to do with the Chicano? Very well, the Chicano stands squarely at the point where both East and West meet. He has access to the occidental modes

of rational thought; he is heir to the lyrical and poetic tradition of the Mediterranean, and he has recently discovered the dignity and wonder of the non-rational indigeneous mind.

For the Chicano, Indian forms and symbols are no affectation. They are in his blood, his religion and his culture. Who but the Chicano is better suited to bridge the gap between Western rationalism and non-Western symbolism? To translate technology into poetry? Is he not in the position to remember the body, the spirit and the world, put asunder by a technological imperialism?

Oh, Chicano: you are here at the crisis of man's existence on the earth, the legitimate heir to the culture of the entire community of man: Wandering Jew, exiled Arab, dispossessed Indian, Spanish bastard and American orphan, you have in your language all the cultures of Europe; in your blood the mystery and wisdom of Native America and the Orient and Africa—the "Cosmic Race." Find your voice and sing and you will save the world.

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EL GRITO

by Guadalupe de Saavedra

Reies Tijerina has defined the Chicanos as a "New Breed"—like "the Hebrews in Egypt," he has said. The rites of passage from the hyphenated man, the "passive" Mexican-American "who drank the blood of Christ," to the Chicano, who "will not crawl" and who desires "to be a man," have historically been the pain of the youth. And so the journey begins in the school. In his "grito," the young barrio poet Guadalupe de Saavedra voices the student's restlessness, anger, (ru-

tration, and pain as he moves from personal rebellion to the ideology of Chicanismo. ("El grito," *La Raza Yearbook*, Sept., 1968.)

to worms and the educator raised
in boyle heights who hides behind
the thin veil of anonymity

until yesterday you called me a good chicano.

i was meek, humble, god-damned ignorant.

i was young, passive,

another pawn in a game you play.

i bent my knee, smiled, echoed,

"my country . . . right or wrong."

i squatted, listened, as a bastard beagle preached,

"come now, let us reason together."

i drank the blood of christ,

yet vendidos bled me dry.

i was a good american,

i licked the hand that fed me crumbs.

until yesterday you called me a good chicano.

now the years have fled, i'm back,

you crawl—behind a skirt.

i spit my greetings upon you,

denier worm seek a coward's grave.

i stand before you—humbly,

i am Saavedra: a writer, a poet

a man re-born a man,

has learned to stand up, bear the

burden of his people on his back,

—no longer dead, i—alive.

my heart cries to my people:
numerous,
united we shall be but one voice.
for our great grito,

ADELANTE MIS TIGERES ANGELINOS!
ARRIBA MI RAZA DE BRONZE . . .
QUERIDA!
QUE VIVA MI RAZA . . .
MI RAZA QUERIDA!

see my people rising,
my peasant blood sings with pride.
see my people refuse to bend,
prostitutes for an anglo dog.
see a multitude of clenched fists,
casting off shackles of death.
see brothers joined hand in hand,
muscular and strong, march before the sun,
tender the flame of justice,
forge the swords of tomorrow.
see, feel silver raindrops,
run down my cheeks of brown.
until yesterday you called me a good chicano.
today you refer to ours as a bad chicano.
you label me a disgrace,
because i dare to speak of truth,
because i dare not be silent,
because i dare destroy the image
you have built of me,
because i choose not to live
or end my life in an eternal siesta.
you point at me as militant,

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because i will not crawl,
because i have learned to walk,
because i seek to uproot the hell
of being the system's dog,
patten on the head . . . "NICE BOY,

PANCHO,"

while a finger is jammed right up my ass,
because i desire to be a man.
listen. listen.
there is a message in the wind,
as a people cry against the rains of injustice
each day new voices join

in a united front,
to take the lead in a common cause,
ADELANTE TIGERES ANGELINOS

EDUCATION AND DE-EDUCATION

In the schools the young Chicanos have engaged in a "struggle for their souls." The anguish of high drop-out rates, "illiteracy in two languages," and drug addiction is reflected in the rueful irony of "The Writing on the Blackboard" by teenage students in Los Angeles (*Con Safos*, Fall, 1968). Education is de-education to the Chicano child, for he has been taught to forget his language and his culture, writes Professor Sabine R. Ullbarri in "The Word Was Made Flesh" (*Cultural Heritage of the Southwest*, Cabinet Committee Hearings on Mexican-American Affairs, El Paso, Oct., 1967). To some educators the "learning problems of most Mexican-American children generally arise from the home situation" (*Education of the Mexican-American*, Ruben E. Aguirre), but the U.S. Office of Education's National Advisory Committee on Mexican American Ed-

ucation has indicted the educational system in general ("The Mexican American Child: How Have We failed Him?" *Quest for Equality*, U.S. Office of Education, National Advisory Committee on Mexican American Education, Dr. Amando Rodriguez, director, 1968). And the Chicano students have voiced their own opinion of the schools in a harrio-wide strike of the Los Angeles high schools under the slogan "Education, Not Eradication!" ("The Blow Outs," *Chicano Student News*, March 15, 1968).

The Writing on the Blackboard

Students of Los Angeles

i am
a chicano
one of that lovely race
a race bred on love but fed hate
i am

Michael Sanchez, age 15

The only thing you have to do is die
Baby, don't let them tell you anything else;
You don't have to lower your hems.
You don't have to pay your taxes.
They may boot you and send you to jail,
But you don't have to let them;
You can run, defend yourself, or end it all
in this wicked world.

Olga Ceballos, age 15

CHINO

I knew some guy named Chino. He was real nice. He was a Cholo. He was from Clover. He used to always get loaded, loaded on anything. He didn't really care about anything. He would always get torcide in and out. I remember one time me and him and my cousin Dimples went to a party. There was a gang fight. He beat up some guy. He was real nice. He was going to get married with my cousin Dimples. He loved her a lot. He loved her so much he put a tatoo on her. It said CHINO just like that. The last time I saw him was at his funeral. He was 19 years old before he died. My cousin had broke up with him. He told me that he was still looking for her. He was never going to give her up because he loved her alot, and his kid, his daughter. It was chicken the way he died. The guys from 3rd killed him with guys knives, chains. He was real nice. He could have been my cousin in law.

Hilda Leal, age 13

I love a hamster because we had these hamsters and they died. I hate my school because there are bad people over there. The End.

Genevieve Diaz

E. A. Mares

He would arrive like the approach of a sudden storm coming in from the west. First there was the din of the iron-rimmed wheels as they scraped and thumped on the pebbles, rocks, and hard-packed dirt of New York Avenue, as the dirt road leading into Old Town was somewhat pretentiously called. Then came the clatter of hooves mingling with the groaning wheels, the rattling old boards of the wagon, the creaky harness and the crack of a whip in the clean blue air of a late summer day. Out of this clamor would come the joyous and piercing shout of Florinto—Heyaaahhh! Heyaaahhh!—as he encouraged Relámpago, his old long-suffering, and reluctant donkey tugging at the harness to make the effort to pull the clap-trap cart just a little further on, un poco más allá, más allá.

For us, the children of Old Town, nothing in our experience quite compared with the arrival of Florinto.

"¡Aquí viene Florintooh! Here he comes! Here he comes!"

"Heyaaahhh! Heyaaahhh! Relámpago! ¡Andaleeh!"

"Pablo, throw a rock at him. Watch what'll happen!"

"I will, but you better not tell on me when school starts. Sister Caritas will really give it to us."

"Híjola, he stopped the cart! Run, run, he'll catch us for sure!"

This general uproar caused by the sudden appearance of Florinto in our midst was the moment of highest drama in our days which were not without other adventures, especially toward the end of summer when we knew we would have to crowd our good times into the short space remaining before grade school started once again.

I was one of the youngest and smallest members of the Old Town "gang," as we called ourselves. Despite my age and size, I was always ready to plunge into the mysterious world that Old Town was for every member of the gang. On many a summer afternoon, I sneaked out the bedroom window of my home during nap time, rounded up the other boys, and launched a commando raid on the forest of magical fruit, the

cherry orchard, which belonged to Mr. Alarid, my parents' landlord. I was among the daring few who slipped through the broken door panel and crept up the stairs of the "haunted house" at the corner of Old Town Plaza. It was a deserted adobe building filled with junk and abandoned furniture covered with sheets which the layered dust of many years of neglect had turned the color of weathered parchment. For us it was gothic and forbidding because an old woman had lived and died there. Some said she had murdered her children and no one would ever go near her and that was why the building was locked up. If you listened carefully, you could hear her crying and howling in the wind which came whistling through the cracked vigas and the broken windows. The moaning sound would wither all but the stoutest hearts. I was also one of the altar boys who raided the priest's wine cupboard behind the altar of San Felipe Church and drank deeply of that sacred beverage. Not even the hours of dawn which turned the statues of every medieval saint lurking in the dark corners of the sacristy into exterminating angels deterred us from those frequent and delicious raids on the wine. But there was something about Florinto which made me hesitate and retreat from the aggressive and cruel teasing with which the gang taunted him.

It was certainly not fear of Sister Caritas which prevented me from tormenting Florinto. My knuckles still hurt when I remember how she would rap us because of our misdeeds. She would stand me in line with the other rowdy children of San Felipe School, hands extended palms down, and then strike us one by one with a wooden ruler. Sometimes the ruler would break into flying splinters as it crashed down on the backs of our hands. Nor was it only respect for the opinion which my parents and all the grownups had of Florinto which made me pause and reflect about teasing him. They thought him to be an "inocente," one who was capable of no evil and who, indeed, was especially protected by God. Rather it was the burning depth of his eyes which fascinated me, made me wonder if he saw something which I could someday understand.

I even felt ashamed of myself for participating in and enjoying the mild practical jokes which the altar boys played on Florinto. There was the Sunday morning, for example, when my friend Pablo who was serving Mass with me lured Florinto into creating a disturbance in Church. "Florinto, si pegas un gritito, if you shout or make a little noise during Mass, I'll give you a nickel," Pablo said to him before the service began. Right after Father Nuñez finished his sermon, Florinto made a noise from between his tobacco stained teeth which sounded something like an owl—"whooh whooh, whooh whooh." No one dared laugh out loud, especially those

parishioners who were caught in the dark glances and frowns of the women in black dresses and black shawls, the grandmothers and widows and elderly aunts of Old Town, but many blushed and coughed nervously in their effort to feign a composure which had, in fact, been shattered. Florinto looked at the gathered faithful with mischievous eyes and a wide and proud smile, much as a young child who has just performed a very successful stunt or prank. Father Nuñez, a strict Jesuit fresh from Spain, glared at Pablo and me. He knew who the culprits were. The very next day, Monday morning, Sister Caritas administered the inevitable justice to us. Our hands, as well as our behinds, were very sore for a little while.

I'll never forget the day Florinto's mother died. It was the same day the carnival came to celebrate the Old Town fiesta. My grandmother, my mother, and my many aunts took me, an unwilling hostage, to the velorio, the wake which was held for the departed. Florinto lived with his mother and his elderly sister in an ancient adobe house, really a converted stable, on the Rancho Seco Road, a mere wagon rut winding off New York Avenue. Florinto's mother died in the morning. When we arrived, early in the evening, she was laid out in black and holding a black rosary with a silver cross in her hands. We viewed the body and prayed the rosary led by Juana la Rezadora, the veiled and saintly woman who said the rosary and mourned at all the Old Town funerals.

Then we filed into the kitchen for the ritual meal. The long table was filled with huge kettles of posole, steaming dishes of tamales, and plates of empanaditas fresh from the oven. Every neighbor had contributed something and everyone was there, except Florinto. Much later, just before midnight, he returned from the carnival.

"Florinto, shame on you!" His sister scolded him. "Your mother's body is still warm and you are out celebrating at the carnival. Have you no shame?"

"¿Pues que mal hice?" he asked in a just and resonant voice. He said that he had been celebrating because his mother was now in heaven and he knew that only her body was here and that all good friends and vecinos of Old Town would be praying for her soul. He said that was why God had sent the carnival, to celebrate this occasion with joy. "No hice mal." No one, of course, was able to answer Florinto.

At Christmas time Florinto would go from house to house. "On 'ta mis crismes?" he would ask. It was the middle of the Great Depression and everyone in Old Town was poor, but no one turned Florinto away empty handed, even if the gift was only a couple of oranges, or an old piece of clothing. Once, for Christmas Midnight Mass, Flor-

into showed up wearing in great splendor the pale blue pin-striped Palm Beach suit my father had given him much earlier in the year. The next day, Relámpago was seen to be sporting Mr. Duran's one-time favorite sombrero.

During the rest of the year, Florinto supported himself by collecting old clothes, rags, and the garbage once a week from all the homes in Old Town. Some people paid him fifty cents, others only a quarter. He would go from house to house in his cart pulled along by Relámpago. It was on these occasions that we children experienced the most welcome and exhilarating moment of the entire week.

"¡Aquí viene Florinto!"

First we heard a far-off tremor in the air, the beginning, so it seemed, of a small earthquake. Then the very curtains of heaven were rent in half by the thunderous cry: "Heyaaahhh! Heyaaahhh!" At that moment, in the screeching uproar of metal wheels on the graveled road, Relámpago would heave into sight with his head raised high and proud.

"Let's chase Florinto!"

"Get some rocks!"

"Throw the rocks and run because he'll get you."

"Yeah, Florinto is fast! You've gotta watch him!"

"¡A la chingada!"

There in the middle of all the dust and noise stood Florinto in his cart looking as I imagined a Biblical prophet to look. His white and untamed hair formed a riot of light about his head. His body was ramrod straight and his eyes were filled with a secret and fiery knowledge. He held the reins firmly in his gnarled fist while high above his head he whirled his right arm like a sling shot as he prepared to fling small stones at us. Miraculously, no one was ever hit by Florinto's stones, which shot past our ears with a menacing whiz.

I would hang back from the gang at these times and hide myself behind a convenient elm tree, or behind Mr. Alarid's garage door. From some such vantage point I would watch the attack and subsequent panic and rout in the wake of Florinto's counteroffensive.

On one of those memorable days, I was so transfixed by the drama that I forgot to run away. Florinto stopped in front of me. The other boys had scattered into alleys and over backyard fences and he knew there was no sense continuing the chase. He knew that I had not participated in the attack on him but that I had witnessed it. He said nothing to me. He stood there. We stared at each other. What I clearly remember now, all these many years later, was the intensity of that moment beneath the blazing

summer sky. His eyes seemed youthful in an otherwise old and deeply wrinkled face, and as always there was the hint of mild humor in his expression.

We stood there in a moment of time that had no beginning and no end. His eyes held me and as I looked into them I had the sensation that the whole history of my family was unfolding in that gaze. I saw my father and my father's father before him, and an infinite regression of lives and passions and histories which had led to this moment. They were all there: the Mares brothers who drove cattle north from Guadalajara deep in Mexico across the Jornada del Muerto and then on to Santa Fe and Taos; the Martínez clan which settled in Abiquiu and pushed branches of the family into the valleys of the Chama and up into the high country of the Sangre de Cristos; the Gutierrez and Garcias who helped found Old Albuquerque and built the San Felipe Church as a testament to their great need to span the distance from earth to heaven; the Devines, those restless Irishmen who were dreamers, soldiers, adventurers, poets and musicians. I saw the generations of sons and daughters of the Mares and Martínez families who had endured everything and survived, even the wars and depressions which had led to the loss of their land and sent them hurtling south again, down the tracks of the Santa Fe Railroad, south to Albuquerque, to Old Town, to marry with the Irish Devines. I knew what it was to be a *coyote*, a half-breed who was to live forever on the fringes of the swirling cultures to which I was heir. I could not, at that time, have found the words to express this effect which Florinto had on me. It had come from the dream time, only for a moment, and then had returned to the dream time. Florinto never uttered one word. He only smiled. Then he turned abruptly, walked back to his cart, climbed on board, and gave rein to Relámpago. Florinto never looked back as the cart went rumbling down the road, down New York Avenue.

Another summer had come and gone, and then another and another, and after that I lost track of them. World War II had ended and a trickle of tourists, soon to become a flood, came to Albuquerque to visit Old Town. About that time, the city decided to pave New York Avenue and change its name to Lomas Boulevard, which had a more authentic, native ring. A long dead tongue of asphalt now ran from Old Town clear up into the Heights at the other end of town. The Anglos who lived in the Heights began to travel down the new road into Old Town in ever large numbers. They would come in their shiny cars and wearing their beautiful new clothes. They would walk around the plaza, take pictures, visit the San Felipe Church, and go to one of the restaurants on the plaza where they would

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enjoy "authentic Spanish food," which was really Indian and New Mexican food prepared with a very mild chile sauce. They came, most of all, to recreate in their minds a fantasy of the "Spanish way of life," to confirm what they had seen in countless Western movies, complete with real Indians who sat around the plaza selling the jewelry they had made. The merchants of the city moved quickly to take advantage of the tide of money which poured into Old Town. The Spanish-speaking families which had lived there for centuries were shunted aside, forced by new zoning laws and by economic pressure to move to the poorer neighborhoods near the Rio Grande. Florinto's crumbling home on the Rancho Seco Road fell victim to a bulldozer and he and his very old sister found an even more delapidated shed near the river bank, with a tiny corral for Relámpago.

Old Town had a smart prosperous appearance now but it was no longer the same community. I tried to hold on to the vision Florinto had shared with me for one moment so many years ago. But as I struggled with my own adolescence that vision began to blur in the face of the changes which were taking place in myself and in the surroundings where I lived. One by one the elders of the community died and with them went their songs and their stories and much of the Spanish language. Their sons and daughters packed up and left in ever-increasing number for California where life was supposed to be fast and there were more and better jobs to be had. The yearly fiesta was still celebrated but it became more organized and formal and much more commercial. The carnival was still fun but there were more fights and stabbings than ever before. I enjoyed the brashness, the new excitement in myself and in the plaza, but there was a part of me which I did not understand then that longed for the stories told by the viejitos, for the ballads and corridos played on a cherished guitar or a violin in the cool evening in the plaza, for at least one song to rekindle the fire at the very center of the bowl of life rimmed by mountains to the east and volcanos in the west and reflected in the infinite and immense sky above, for one more triumphant cry from Florinto.

Our gang was beginning to scatter but there were still enough of us left in Old Town to gather in the city park nearby, or loiter around the drug stores and filling stations, or the plaza itself, where we could watch the tourists and flirt with the pretty girls who would walk by. One day, late in the afternoon and toward the end of summer, we sat listlessly on the worn-out tires in the empty lot behind Hedges' filling station. We cracked gross adolescent jokes and watched the endless traffic go by on Lomas Boulevard.

"This new road is sure going to be the end of Florinto," I said.

"Yeah, Ernesto, as the newsreel says at the movies, 'time marches on,' hah hah." No one thought Pablo's humor was very funny.

"Pablo, where are you going to school this fall?"

"I dunno, Fidel. I guess Albuquerque High. How about you?"

"I guess Saint Mary's. I dunno. What are you going to be, Frankie, when you grow up?"

"I am grown up, cabrón."

"You now what I mean, Frankie jodido. Are you going to school or what?"

"I dunno."

"Well," Ramon said, "we have to go to school until we're eighteen. Then I'm cutting out for the coast, man."

"Yeah, well that's okay," Abel said. "I don't care what I do or where I go just so long as those nice-looking women are waiting for me there." He already considered himself a Don Juan.

"I haven't seen Florinto in a long time," I said.

"Nah, neither have I," said Pablo. "He's getting pretty old though."

"I bet Relámpago is getting stiff legged by now."

"Don't worry about Florinto so much, Ernesto. His time has come and gone," Frankie said.

"But summer used to be more fun when we could chase him. Hijola. Do you remember when—"

"Yeah, but those days are done for," Frankie interrupted me. "Besides, he'd get killed on Lomas now."

For me the idea of a world without Florinto was unthinkable but I said nothing. A car honked somewhere off in the distance. There was the shrill sound of brakes, then silence, and once again the common rumble of traffic. We had already smoked a few cigarettes and we had passed around the terrible sweet wine, Orchard Delight Tokay, that Frankie had bought at the Palms Bar with his phoney I.D. card. David, "El Sonso" as we called him, was bored and spoke to no one because no one wanted to butt heads with him. He had a forehead with the bone structure of Neanderthal Man. He was not the toughest kid in the gang but no one in Old Town could stand up to him in a head butting contest. I could take only one or two head-on butts with him and the searing pain would make me give up. It was late and twilight was beginning to drift toward night. We were about to part, head for our separate homes and call it a day when suddenly we heard a murmur far down Lomas Boulevard. The murmur

turned into a ripple and then quickly built up to a raucous tumult of sound. Just another great big Mack truck, we thought, probably Navajo Freight.

"Heyaaahhh! Heyaaahhh! ¡Ándale Relámpago! Heyaaahhh!" We were so stunned that we didn't move. Instead of the Mack truck, there came Florinto hauling a load of clanging trash cans and empty paint buckets which he had picked up at some construction job. Our astonishment lasted but a second. "Florinto, Florinto, Florintooo!" the battle cry went up. The older boys, aware of their growing strength, only skimmed small stones at him, but everyone joined in the chase.

Everyone except me. Once again I stood back and looked steadily at what was happening. Florinto, older now but in great form, stood straight in his cart and held his own. Relámpago, a true veteran, never lost his stride or even wiggled an ear to acknowledge the hail of small stones.

"Heyaaahhh! ¡Relámpago! ¡Malcriados! ¡Diablitos! ¡No saben lo que hacen!" he shouted in a still vibrant voice. His right arm flailed the air in the grand old manner and he let fly a truly fearsome stone which shot right through our midst without harming anyone.

Passing cars swerved and honked furiously. Red-faced drivers shook their fists in impotent rage at Florinto. Nothing touched his composure. He ignored the blaring cars as if they were fragments of a passing nightmare. He had something more serious on his mind and would not be distracted. He had set his course on a destination un poco más allá, further on down the road, around the distant curve into the dream time where the carnival whirled and the good times rolled forever. He cracked the whip above Relámpago's head and pushed on towards the realm of song and the burning bush at the center of life. Florinto went clattering off into the night. He had cast the final stone, the mirror stone of memory, against death and oblivion and it had found its mark.

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The Scholarship Jacket

Marta Salinas

The small Texas school that I attended carried out a tradition every year during the eighth grade graduation; a beautiful gold and green jacket, the school colors, was awarded to the class valedictorian, the student who had maintained the highest grades for eight years. The scholarship jacket had a big gold S on the left front side and the winner's name was written in gold letters on the pocket.

My oldest sister Rosie had won the jacket a few years back and I fully expected to win also. I was fourteen and in the eighth grade. I had been a straight A student since the first grade, and the last year I had looked forward to owning that jacket. My father was a farm laborer who couldn't earn enough money to feed eight children, so when I was six I was given to my grandparents to raise. We couldn't participate in sports at school because there were registration fees, uniform costs, and trips out of town; so even though we were quite agile and athletic, there would never be a sports school jacket for us. This one, the scholarship jacket, was our only chance.

In May, close to graduation, spring fever struck, and no one paid any attention in class; instead we stared out the windows and at each other, wanting to speed up the last few weeks of school. I despaired every time I looked in the mirror. Pencil thin, not a curve anywhere, I was called "Beanpole" and "String Bean" and I knew that's what I looked like. A flat chest, no hips, and a brain, that's what I had. That really isn't much for a fourteen-year-old to work with, I thought, as I absentmindedly wandered from my history class to the gym. Another hour of sweating in basketball and displaying my toothpick legs was coming up. Then I remembered my P.E. shorts were still in a bag under my desk where I'd forgotten them. I had to walk all the way back and get them. Coach Thompson was a real bear if anyone wasn't dressed for P.E. She had said I was a good forward and once she even tried to talk Grandma into letting me join the team. Grandma, of course, said no.

I was almost back at my classroom's door when I heard angry voices

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CUENTOS CHICANOS

and arguing. I stopped. I didn't mean to eavesdrop; I just hesitated, not knowing what to do. I needed those shorts and I was going to be late, but I didn't want to interrupt an argument between my teachers. I recognized the voices: Mr. Schmidt, my history teacher, and Mr. Boone, my math teacher. They seemed to be arguing about me. I couldn't believe it. I still remember the shock that rooted me flat against the wall as if I were trying to blend in with the graffiti written there.

"I refuse to do it! I don't care who her father is, her grades don't even begin to compare to Martha's. I won't lie or falsify records. Martha has a straight A plus average and you know it." That was Mr. Schmidt and he sounded very angry. Mr. Boone's voice sounded calm and quiet.

"Look, Joann's father is not only on the Board, he owns the only store in town; we could say it was a close tie and—"

The pounding in my ears drowned out the rest of the words, only a word here and there filtered through. "... Martha is Mexican. . . . resign. . . . won't do it. . . ." Mr. Schmidt came rushing out, and luckily for me went down the opposite way toward the auditorium, so he didn't see me. Shaking, I waited a few minutes and then went in and grabbed my bag and fled from the room. Mr. Boone looked up when I came in but didn't say anything. To this day I don't remember if I got in trouble in P.E. for being late or how I made it through the rest of the afternoon. I went home very sad and cried into my pillow that night so grandmother wouldn't hear me. It seemed a cruel coincidence that I had overheard that conversation.

The next day when the principal called me into his office, I knew what it would be about. He looked uncomfortable and unhappy. I decided I wasn't going to make it any easier for him so I looked him straight in the eye. He looked away and fidgeted with the papers on his desk.

"Martha," he said, "there's been a change in policy this year regarding the scholarship jacket. As you know, it has always been free." He cleared his throat and continued. "This year the Board decided to charge fifteen dollars—which still won't cover the complete cost of the jacket."

I stared at him in shock and a small sound of dismay escaped my throat. I hadn't expected this. He still avoided looking in my eyes.

"So if you are unable to pay the fifteen dollars for the jacket, it will be given to the next one in line."

Standing with all the dignity I could muster, I said, "I'll speak to my grandfather about it, sir, and let you know tomorrow." I cried on the walk home from the bus stop. The dirt road was a quarter of a mile from the highway, so by the time I got home, my eyes were red and puffy.

"Where's Grandpa?" I asked Grandma, looking down at the floor so she wouldn't ask me why I'd been crying. She was sewing on a quilt and didn't look up.

"I think he's out back working in the bean field."

I went outside and looked out at the fields. There he was. I could see him walking between the rows, his body bent over the little plants, hoe in hand. I walked slowly out to him, trying to think how I could best ask him for the money. There was a cool breeze blowing and a sweet smell of mesquite in the air, but I didn't appreciate it. I kicked at a dirt clod. I wanted that jacket so much. It was more than just being a valedictorian and giving a little thank you speech for the jacket on graduation night. It represented eight years of hard work and expectation. I knew I had to be honest with Grandpa; it was my only chance. He saw me and looked up.

He waited for me to speak. I cleared my throat nervously and clasped my hands behind my back so he wouldn't see them shaking. "Grandpa, I have a big favor to ask you," I said in Spanish, the only language he knew. He still waited silently. I tried again. "Grandpa, this year the principal said the scholarship jacket is not going to be free. It's going to cost fifteen dollars and I have to take the money in tomorrow, otherwise it'll be given to someone else." The last words came out in an eager rush. Grandpa straightened up tiredly and leaned his chin on the hoe handle. He looked out over the field that was filled with the tiny green bean plants. I waited, desperately hoping he'd say I could have the money.

He turned to me and asked quietly, "What does a scholarship jacket mean?"

I answered quickly; maybe there was a chance. "It means you've earned it by having the highest grades for eight years and that's why they're giving it to you." Too late I realized the significance of my words. Grandpa knew that I understood it was not a matter of money. It wasn't that. He went back to hoeing the weeds that sprang up between the delicate little bean plants. It was a time consuming job; sometimes the small shoots were right next to each other. Finally he spoke again.

"Then if you pay for it, Marta, it's not a scholarship jacket, is it? Tell your principal I will not pay the fifteen dollars."

I walked back to the house and locked myself in the bathroom for a long time. I was angry with grandfather even though I knew he was right, and I was angry with the Board, whoever they were. Why did they have to change the rules just when it was my turn to win the jacket?

It was a very sad and withdrawn girl who dragged into the principal's office the next day. This time he did look me in the eyes.

"What did your grandfather say?"

I sat very straight in my chair.

"He said to tell you he won't pay the fifteen dollars."

The principal muttered something I couldn't understand under his breath, and walked over to the window. He stood looking out at something outside. He looked bigger than usual when he stood up; he was a tall gaunt man with gray hair, and I watched the back of his head while I waited for him to speak.

"Why?" he finally asked. "Your grandfather has the money. Doesn't he own a small bean farm?"

I looked at him, forcing my eyes to stay dry. "He said if I had to pay for it, then it wouldn't be a scholarship jacket," I said and stood up to leave. "I guess you'll just have to give it to Joann." I hadn't meant to say that; it had just slipped out. I was almost to the door when he stopped me.

"Martha—wait."

I turned and looked at him, waiting. What did he want now? I could feel my heart pounding. Something bitter and vile tasting was coming up in my mouth; I was afraid I was going to be sick. I didn't need any sympathy speeches. He sighed loudly and went back to his big desk. He looked at me, biting his lip, as if thinking.

"Okay, damn it. We'll make an exception in your case. I'll tell the Board, you'll get your jacket."

I could hardly believe it. I spoke in a trembling rush. "Oh, thank you sir!" Suddenly I felt great. I didn't know about adrenalin in those days, but I knew something was pumping through me, making me feel as tall as the sky. I wanted to yell, jump, run the mile, do something. I ran out so I could cry in the hall where there was no one to see me. At the end of the day, Mr. Schmidt winked at me and said, "I hear you're getting a scholarship jacket this year."

His face looked as happy and innocent as a baby's, but I knew better. Without answering I gave him a quick hug and ran to the bus. I cried on the walk home again, but this time because I was so happy. I couldn't wait to tell Grandpa and ran straight to the field. I joined him in the row where he was working and without saying anything I crouched down and started pulling up the weeds with my hands. Grandpa worked alongside me for a few minutes, but he didn't ask what had happened. After I had a little pile of weeds between the rows, I stood up and faced him.

"The principal said he's making an exception for me, Grandpa, and I'm getting the jacket after all. That's after I told him what you said."

Grandpa didn't say anything, he just gave me a pat on the shoulder

and a smile. He pulled out the crumpled red handkerchief that he always carried in his back pocket and wiped the sweat off his forehead.

"Better go see if your grandmother needs any help with supper."

I gave him a big grin. He didn't fool me. I skipped and ran back to the house whistling some silly tune.

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THE WOMEN GATHER

(for Joe Strickland)

the women gather
because it is not unusual
to seek comfort in hours of stress
a man must be buried

it is not unusual
that the old bury the young
though it is an abomination

it is not strange
that the unwise and the ungentle
carry the banner of humaneness
though it is a castration of the spirit

it no longer shatters the intellect
that those who make war
call themselves diplomats

we are no longer surprised
that the unfaithful pray loudest
every sunday in every church
and sometimes in rooms facing east
though it is a sin and a shame

so how do we judge a man
most of us love from our need to love not
because we find someone deserving

most of us forgive because we have trespassed not
because we are magnanimous

most of us comfort because we need comforting
our ancient rituals demand that we give
what we hope to receive

and how do we judge a man

we learn to greet when meeting
to cry when parting
and to soften our words at times of stress

the women gather
with cloth and ointment
their busy hands bowing to laws that decree
willows shall stand swaying but unbroken
against even the determined wind of death

we judge a man by his dreams
not alone his deeds
we judge a man by his intent
not alone his shortcomings
we judge a man because it is not unusual
to know him through those who love him

the women gather strangers
to each other because
they have loved a man

it is not unusual to sift
through ashes
and find an unburnt picture

EGO TRIPPING

(there may be a reason why)

i was born in the congo
I walked to the fertile crescent and built
the sphinx
I designed a pyramid so tough that a star
that only glows every one hundred years falls

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into the center giving divine perfect light
I am bad

I sat on the throne
drinking nectar with allah
I got hot and sent an ice age to europe
to cool my thirst
My oldest daughter is nefertiti
the tears from my birth pains
created the Nile
I am a beautiful woman

I gazed on the forest and burned
out the sahara desert
with a packet of goat's meat
and a change of clothes
I crossed it in two hours
I am a gazelle so swift
so swift you can't catch me

For a birthday present when he was three
I gave my son hannibal an elephant
He gave me rome for mother's day
My strength flows ever on

My son noah built new/ark and
I stood proudly at the helm
as we sailed on a soft summer day
I turned myself into myself and was
jesus
men intone my loving name
All praises All praises
I am the one who would save

I sowed diamonds in my back yard
My bowels deliver uranium
the filings from my fingernails are
semi-precious jewels
On a trip north
I caught a cold and blew
My nose giving oil to the arab world
I am so hip even my errors are correct
I sailed west to reach east and had to round off
the earth as I went

The hair from my head thinned and gold was laid
across three continents

I am so perfect so divine so ethereal so surreal
I cannot be comprehended
except by my permission

I mean . . . I . . . can fly
like a bird in the sky

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THREE

*O*ne night at Christmas when I was six years old, my mother swallowed a chicken bone. The Professor, eternally absorbed in his insatiable thirst for knowledge, never observed that holiday—or any other—but the household servants always celebrated Christmas Eve. They set up a crèche with crude clay figures in the kitchen; then everyone would sing Christmas carols and give me a present. Several days in advance they prepared a dish that had originally been concocted by slaves. In colonial times, the prosperous families gathered on December 24 around a great table. The remains of the masters' banquet made their way into the bowls of the servants, who chopped all the leftovers, rolled them in cornmeal dough and banana leaves, and boiled them in great kettles, with such delicious results that the recipe was handed down through the centuries and is still repeated every year. Today, however, the dish is not made from the table scraps of the masters; each ingredient must be cooked separately in a tedious and time-consuming

ISABEL ALLENDE -
EVA LUNA

process. In the back patio, Professor Jones's servants raised chickens, turkeys, and a pig they fattened all year for that one occasion of gluttony. A week before the event, they began forcing nuts and tum down the gullets of the fowls and feeding the pig liters of milk with brown sugar and spices so the animals would be juicy and tender. While the women steamed the banana leaves and readied the pots and braziers, the men slaughtered the fowls and the pig in an orgy of blood, feathers, and squeals, until everyone was drunk from liquor and death, and sated from tasting the meat, swigging the thick broth in the kettles, and singing lively tunes to the Baby Jesus until they were hoarse. Meanwhile, in the other wing of the house, the Professor lived a day like any other, not even realizing it was Christmas. The fateful bone passed undetected in a morsel of dough, and my mother did not feel it until it lodged in her throat. After a few hours she began to spit blood, and three days later she slipped away without any fuss, just as she had lived. I was at her side, and I have never forgotten that moment, because from that day I have had to sharpen my perception in order not to lose her among the shadows-of-no-return where disembodied spirits go to rest.

She did not want to frighten me, so she died without fear. Perhaps the chicken bone severed something vital and she bled internally, I do not know. When she realized that her life was draining away, she took me with her to our room off the patio, to be together until the end. Slowly, not to hasten death, she washed herself with soap and water to get rid of the odor of musk that was beginning to disturb her. She combed her long hair, put on a white petticoat she had sewn during the hours of siesta, and lay down on the same straw mattress where she and a snakebitten Indian had conceived me. Although I did not understand then the significance of that ritual, I watched with such attention that I still remember her every move.

"There is no death, daughter. People die only when we forget them," my mother explained shortly before she left me. "If you can remember me, I will be with you always."

"I will remember you," I promised.

"Now go call your godmother."

I went to look for the cook, the enormous mulatto woman who had helped me into the world and who at the proper time had carried me to be christened.

"Take good care of my girl, *madrina*. I'm leaving her in your hands," my mother said, discreetly wiping away the thread of blood trickling down her chin. Then she took my hand and, with her eyes, kept telling me how much she loved me, until a fog clouded her gaze and life faded from her body without a sound. For a few seconds I thought I saw something translucent floating in the motionless air of the room, flooding it with blue radiance and perfuming it with a breath of musk, but then everything was normal again, the air merely air, the light yellow, the smell the simple smell of every day. I took my mother's face in my hands and moved it back and forth, calling "Mama, Mama," stricken by the silence that had settled between us.

"Everyone dies, it's not so important," my *madrina* said, cutting off my mother's long hair with three clicks of the scissors, planning to sell it later in a wig shop: "We need to get her out of here before the *patrón* discovers her and makes me bring her to the laboratory."

I picked up the braid of hair, wrapped it around my neck, and huddled in a corner with my head between my knees; I did not cry, because I still did not realize the magnitude of my loss. I stayed there for hours, perhaps all night, until two men came in, wrapped the body in the bed's only cover, and carried it away without a word. Then the room was pervaded by unremitting emptiness.

After the modest funeral coach had left, my *madrina* came to look for me. She had to strike a match to see me because the room was in shadows; the light bulb had burned out and dawn seemed to have stopped at the threshold. She found me in a little bundle on the floor. She called me twice by name, to bring me back to reality: Eva Luna . . . Eva Luna. In the flickering flame of the match, I saw large feet in house slippers and the hem of a cotton dress. I looked

up and met her moist eyes. She smiled in the instant the uncertain spark died out; then I felt her bend over in the darkness. She picked me up in her stout arms, settled me on her lap, and began to rock me, humming some soft African lament to put me to sleep.

"If you were a boy, you could go to school and then study to be a lawyer and provide for me in my old age. Those sticky-fingered lawyers are the ones who make the money. They sure know how to keep things in a muddle. Muddy waters," she used to say, "means money in their pockets."

She believed that men had it best; even the lowest good-for-nothing had a wife to boss around. And years later I reached the conclusion that she may have been right, although I still cannot imagine myself in a man's body, with hair on my face, a tendency to order people around, and something unmanageable below my navel that, to be perfectly frank, I would not know exactly where to put. In her way, my *madrina* was fond of me, and if she never showed it, it was because she thought she had to be strict, and because she lost her sanity at an early age. In those days she was not the ruin she is today. She was an arrogant dark-skinned woman with generous breasts, a well-defined waist, and hips that bulged like a tabletop under her skirts. When she went out on the street, men turned to stare; they shouted indecent propositions at her, and tried to pinch her bottom. She did not shy away, but rewarded them with a smack of her pocketbook—What you think you're doin', you black devil, you?—and then she would laugh and show her gold tooth. She bathed every night standing in a tub splashing water over herself from a pitcher and scrubbing with a soapy rag. She changed her blouse twice a day, sprinkled herself with rose water, washed her hair with egg, and brushed her teeth with salt to make them shine. She had a strong sweetish odor that all her rose water and soap could not subdue, an odor I loved because it made me think of warm custard. I used to help her with her bath, splashing water on her back, enraptured at the sight of that

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dark body with the mulberry teats, the pubis shadowed by kinky fuzz, the buttocks as stout as the overstuffed armchair that cushioned Professor Jones. She would stroke her body with the rag, and smile, proud of her voluminous flesh. She walked with defiant grace, head high, to the rhythm of the secret music she carried inside. Everything else about her was coarse, even her laughter and her tears. She became angry at the drop of a pin, and would shake her fist in the air and swing at anything in reach; if one of those swipes landed on me, it sounded like cannon shot. Once, not meaning to, she burst one of my eardrums. In spite of the mummies, which she did not like at all, she worked as the Professor's cook for many years, earning a miserable wage and spending most of it on tobacco and rum. She looked after me because she had accepted a responsibility more sacred than blood ties. Anyone who neglects a godchild is damned to hell, she used to say. It's worse than abandoning your own child. It's my obligation to raise you to be good and clean and hardworking, because I will have to answer for you on Judgment Day. My mother had not believed in original sin, and had not thought it necessary to baptize me, but my godmother had insisted with unyielding stubbornness. All right, *comadre*, Consuelo had finally agreed. You do whatever you want. Just don't change the name I chose for her. For three months my *madrina* went without smoking or drinking, saving every coin, and on the designated day she bought me a strawberry-colored organdy dress, tied a ribbon on the four straggly hairs that crowned my head, sprinkled me with her rose water, and bore me off to church. I have a photograph from the day of my baptism; I was done up like a happy little birthday present. She did not have enough money, so she paid for the service with a thorough cleaning of the church—from sweeping the floors and waxing the wooden benches to polishing the altar ornaments with lime. That is how I came to have a little rich girl's baptism, with all the proper pomp and ceremony.

"If it weren't for me, you'd still be a pagan. Children

who die without the sacraments go to limbo and stay there forever," my *madrina* always reminded me. "In my place, anyone else would have sold you. It's easy to place girls with light eyes. I've heard the gringos buy them and take them to their country. But I made a promise to your mother, and if I don't fulfill it, I'll stew in hell!"

For her, the boundaries between good and evil were very precise, and she was ready to save me from sin if she had to beat me to do it. That was the only way she knew, because that was how she had learned. The idea that play and tenderness are good for children is a modern discovery: it never entered her mind. She tried to teach me to be quick about my work and not waste time in daydreams. She hated wandering minds and slow feet; she wanted to see me run when she gave an order. Your head's full of smoke and your legs are full of sand, she used to say, and she would rub my legs with Scott's Emulsion, a cheap but famous liniment made from cod-liver oil, which, according to the advertisement, when it came to tonics was equal to the philosopher's stone.

My *madrina*'s brain was slightly addled from rum. She believed in all the Catholic saints, some saints of African origin, and still others of her own invention. Before a small altar in her room she had aligned holy water, voodoo fetishes, a photograph of her dead father, and a bust she thought was St. Christopher but was, I later discovered, Beethoven—although I have never told her because he is the most miraculous figure on her altar. She carried on a continuous conversation with her deities in a colloquial yet proud tone, asking them for insignificant favors; later, when she became a fan of the telephone, she would call them in heaven, interpreting the hum of the receiver as parables from her divine respondents. She believed that was how she received instructions from the heavenly court concerning even the most trivial matters. She was devoted to St. Benedict, a handsome blond high-living man women could not leave alone, who stood in the fire until he crackled like firewood and only then could adore God and work his

miracles in peace, without a passel of panting women clinging to his robes. He was the one she prayed to for relief from a hangover. She was an expert on the subject of torture and gruesome deaths; she knew how every martyr and virgin in the book of Catholic saints had died, and was always eager to tell me about them. I listened with morbid terror, begging in each telling for new particulars. The martyrdom of Santa Lucia was my favorite. I wanted to hear it over and over, in minute detail: why Lucia rejected the emperor who loved her; how they tore out her eyes; whether it was true that her eyeballs had shot a beam of light that blinded the emperor, and that she grew two splendid new blue eyes much more beautiful than the ones she had lost.

My poor *madrina's* faith was unshakable; no misfortune that ever befell her could change it. Only recently, when the Pope came here, I got permission to take her from her nursing home to see him; it would have been a shame for her to miss seeing the Pontiff in his white habit and gold cross, preaching his indemonstrable convictions in perfect Spanish and Indian dialects—as demanded by the occasion. When she saw him advancing down the freshly painted streets in his fishbowl of bulletproof glass, amid flowers, cheers, waving pennants, and bodyguards, my *madrina*, who is now absolutely ancient, fell to her knees, persuaded that the Prophet Elias was on a tourist's trip. I was afraid she would be crushed in the crowd and I tried to get her to leave, but she would not move until I bought a hair from the Pope's head as a relic. Many people seized that opportunity to become righteous; some promised to forgive their debtors and, to avoid saddening the Holy Father, not to mention the class struggle or contraceptives. In my own heart I had no enthusiasm for the illustrious visitor, because I had no happy memories of religion. One Sunday when I was a little girl, my *madrina* took me to our parish church and made me kneel down in a curtained wooden box; my fingers were clumsy and I could not cross them as she had taught me. I became aware of a strong breath

on the other side of the grille: Tell me your sins, the voice commanded, and instantly I forgot all the sins I had invented. I did not know what to answer, although I felt obliged to try to think of something, even something venial, but I could not dredge up a single transgression.

"Do you touch yourself with your hands?"

"Yes . . ."

"Often, daughter?"

"Every day."

"Every day! How often?"

"I don't keep count . . . many times . . ."

"That is a most serious offense in the eyes of God!"

"I didn't know, Father. And if I wear gloves, is that a sin, too?"

"Gloves! But what are you saying, you foolish girl? Are you mocking me?"

"No-no," I stammered in terror, at the same time thinking how difficult it would be to wash my face, brush my teeth, or scratch myself while wearing gloves.

"You must promise not to do that again. Purity and innocence are a girl's best virtues. You will pray five hundred Ave Marias in penance, so God will pardon you."

"I can't, Father," I answered, because I could only count to twenty.

"What do you mean, you *can't!*" the priest bellowed, and a rain of saliva sprayed over me through the grille. I burst from the box, but my *madrina* nabbed me and held me by one ear while she consulted with the priest on the advisability of putting me out to work before my character was even more warped and I lost my almighty soul forever.

After my mother's death came the hour of Professor Jones. He died of old age, disillusioned with the world and his own learning, but I would swear that he died in peace. Faced with the impossibility of embalming himself, thus assuring a dignified eternity amid his English furniture and his books, he left instructions in his will for his remains to be sent to the distant city of his birth. He did not want the local cemetery to be his final resting place, to lie covered

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with foreign dust beneath a merciless sun, and in promiscuous proximity with who knows what kind of people, as he used to say. He spent his last days beneath the ceiling fan in his bedroom, steaming in the sweat of his paralysis, and with no company but the man with the Bible, and me. I lost my last fear of him when his thundering voice changed to the unrelieved shallow breathing of the dying.

I wandered freely through that house closed to the outside world, headquarters to death ever since the doctor had begun his experiments. The servants' discipline collapsed the minute the Professor could no longer leave his room to threaten them from his wheelchair and harass them with contradictory orders. I watched them, every time they left the house, carrying off silverware, rugs, paintings, even the crystal flasks containing the Professor's formulas. The master's table with its starched tablecloth and spotless china stood unattended; no one lighted the crystal chandeliers or brought the Professor his pipe. My *madrina* lost interest in the kitchen and served up fried bananas, rice, and fish every meal. The other servants gave up on the cleaning, and grime and mildew advanced along the floors and walls. No one had tended the garden since the incident of the *surucucú* several years before, and the consequence of this neglect was an aggressive vegetation threatening to devour the house and overrun the sidewalk. The servants slept through the siesta, went out at any hour of the day, drank too much rum, and played a radio all day long, blaring boleros, cumbias, and rancheras. The miserable Professor, who in good health had tolerated nothing but classical records, suffered inexpressible torment from all the racket, and tugged unceasingly at his bellpull to summon a servant, but none came. When he was asleep, my *madrina* climbed the stairs to sprinkle him with holy water she had filched from the church; it seemed a sin to let the man die without the sacrament, like a common beggar.

The morning the Protestant pastor was shown in by a maid dressed only in underpants and brassière because of the sweltering heat, I suspected that order had sunk to its

lowest point and I had nothing left to fear from the Professor. I began to visit him often, at first peering in from the threshold, then going farther and farther into the room, until finally I was playing on the bed. I spent hours with the old man, trying to communicate with him, until I was able to understand the mumbling blurred by both his stroke and his foreign accent. When I was with him, the Professor seemed temporarily to forget the humiliation of his decline and the frustration of his paralysis. I brought books from the sacred bookshelves and held them for him so he could read. Some were written in Latin, but he translated them for me, apparently delighted to have me for a student, loudly lamenting the fact that he had not realized sooner I lived in his house. I may have been the first child he had known, and he discovered too late his vocation as a grandfather.

"Where did this girl come from?" he would ask, his gums chewing air. "Is she my daughter? My granddaughter? A figment of my sick mind? She has dark skin, but her eyes are like mine. Come here, child. Come close so I can see you."

He was unable to connect me with Consuelo, although he remembered very well the woman who had served him loyally for more than twenty years and once had swelled up like a zeppelin following a bad attack of indigestion. He often talked about her, certain that his last days would have been different if she had been there to care for him. She would not have betrayed me, he used to say.

It was I who put wads of cotton in his ears so the songs and dramas on the radio would not drive him mad. I washed him, and slipped folded towels beneath his body to prevent his mattress from being soaked with urine; I aired his room, and spooned pap into his mouth. The old man with the silver beard was my doll. One day I heard him tell the pastor that I was more important to him than all his scientific discoveries. I told the old man a few lies: that he had a large family waiting for him in his country; that he had several grandchildren, and a lovely flower garden. In

the library there was a stuffed puma, one of the Professor's earliest experiments with his miraculous embalming fluid. I dragged it to his room, put it on the foot of his bed, and told him it was his pet dog—didn't he remember? The poor animal was pining for him.

"Write in my will, Pastor. I want this little girl to be my sole heir. Everything is to go to her when I die." I heard him say this in his half-language to the minister who visited him almost every day, ruining the pleasure of his death with threats of eternity.

My *madrina* set up a cot for me beside the dying man's bed. One morning the invalid awoke more pale and tired than usual; he would not accept the *café con leche* I tried to give him, but did allow me to wash him, comb his beard, change his nightshirt, and sprinkle him with cologne. Propped up on his pillows, he lay absolutely silent until midday, his eyes on the window. He refused his strained food for lunch, and when I settled him for his siesta, he asked me to lie down beside him. We were both sleeping peacefully when he stopped living.

The pastor arrived at dusk and took charge of all the arrangements. Sending the body back to Professor Jones's homeland was not at all practical, especially since no one there wanted it, so he ignored those instructions and buried the Professor without fanfare. Only we servants were present at the dismal service; Professor Jones's reputation had been eclipsed by new advances in science, and no one bothered to accompany him to the cemetery, even though the notice had been published in the newspaper. After so many years of seclusion, few remembered who he was, and if some medical student referred to him it was to mock his head-thumping for stimulating intelligence, his insects for combating cancer, and his fluid for preserving cadavers.

After the *patrón* was gone my world crumbled. The pastor inventoried and disposed of the Professor's goods, using the excuse that he had lost his reason in his last years and was not competent to make decisions. Everything went to the pastor's church, except the puma, which I did not

want to lose; I had ridden horseback on it since I was a baby and had so many times told the sick man it was a dog that I ended up believing it. When the movers tried to put it on the truck, I kicked up a fearful row, and when the minister saw me foaming at the mouth and screaming, he chose to yield. I suppose, besides, that it was no use to anyone, so I was allowed to keep it. It was impossible to sell the house; no one wanted to buy it. It was marked by the stigma of Professor Jones's experiments, and it sits abandoned to this day. As the years went by, it was said to be haunted, and boys went there to prove their manliness by spending a night among scurrying mice, creaking doors, and moaning ghosts. The mummies in the laboratory were transferred to the Medical School where they lay piled in a cellar for a long time. Then, one day, there was a sudden resurgence of interest in the doctor's secret formula, and three generations of students industriously hacked off pieces and ran them through different machines, until they were reduced to a kind of unsavory mincemeat.

The pastor dismissed the servants and closed the house. That is how I came to leave the place where I was born—I carrying the puma by its hind legs and my *madrina* carrying the front.

"You're grown up now, and I can't keep you. You'll have to go to work and earn your living and be strong, the way it should be," said my *madrina*. I was seven years old.

My *madrina* and I waited in the kitchen; she sat ramrod straight in a rush chair, her bead-embroidered plastic handbag in her lap, her breasts swelling majestically above the neckline of her blouse, her thighs overflowing the seat of the chair. I stood beside her, inspecting out of the corners of my eyes the iron utensils, rusty icebox, cats sprawled beneath the table, the cupboard with its fly-dotted latticed doors. It had been two days since I left Professor Jones's house, but I was still bewildered and confused. Within a few hours I had become very surly. I did not want to talk

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with anyone. I sat in the corner with my face buried in my arms, and then, as now, my mother would appear before me, faithful to her promise to stay alive as long as I remembered her. A dried-up, brusque black woman, who kept eyeing us with suspicion, was fussing about among the pots of that unfamiliar kitchen.

"Is the girl yours?" she asked.

"How could she be mine—you see her color, don't you?" my *madrina* asked.

"Whose is she, then?"

"She's my goddaughter. I've brought her here to work."

The door opened and the mistress of the house came in, a small woman with an elaborate hairdo of waves and stiff curls. She was dressed in strict mourning and around her neck she wore a large gold locket the size of an ambassador's medal.

"Come here where I can see you," she ordered, but I could not move, my feet seemed nailed to the floor. My *madrina* had to push me forward so the *patrona* could examine me: the scalp for lice, the fingernails for the horizontal lines typical of epileptics, the teeth, ears, skin, the firmness of the arms and legs.

"Does she have worms?"

"No, *doña*, she's clean inside and out."

"She's skinny."

"She hasn't had much appetite lately, but don't worry, she's a good worker. She learns easy, and she's got good sense."

"Does she cry a lot?"

"She didn't even cry when we buried her mother—may God rest her soul."

"She can stay a month, on trial," the *patrona* declared, and left the room without a goodbye.

My *madrina* gave me her last advice: don't talk back; be careful not to break anything; don't drink water in the evening so you won't wet the bed; behave and do what you're told. She started to lean over and kiss me, but thought better of it, gave me a clumsy pat on the head, and turned

and marched purposefully out the servants' entrance—but I knew she was sad. We had always been together; it was the first time we had ever been separated. I stood where she left me, eyes on the floor, fists clenched. The cook had just fried some bananas; she put her arm around my shoulders and led me to a chair, then sat down beside me and smiled.

"So, you're going to be the new girl. . . . Well, little bird, eat," and she set a plate before me. "They call me Elvira. I was born on the coast. The day was Sunday the 29th of May, but I don't remember the year. All I have ever done in my life is work, and it looks like that will be your lot, too. I have my habits and my ways, but if you're not sassy, we'll get along fine. I always wanted grandchildren, but God made me too poor ever to have a family."

That day was the beginning of a new life for me. I had always worked, but not, until then, to earn a living, just to imitate my mother, like a game. The house where I held my first job for pay was filled with furniture and paintings and statues and ferns on marble columns, but those adornments could not hide the moss growing on the pipes, the walls stained with humidity, the dust of years accumulated beneath the beds and behind the wardrobes. Everything seemed very dirty to me, very different from Professor Jones's mansion where, before his stroke, he had crawled on all fours to run a finger around corners for dust. This house smelled of rotted melons, and in spite of the shutters closed against the sun, it was suffocatingly hot. The owners were an elderly brother and sister—the *doña* of the locket and a fat sexagenarian with a pitted, fleshy nose tattooed with an arabesque of blue veins. Elvira told me that for a good part of her life her *doña* had worked in a notary's office, writing away in silence and storing up a craving to scream that only now, retired and in her own house, she could satisfy. She spent the day issuing orders in a piercing voice, pointing with a peremptory finger, wittingly haranguing and harassing with the world and with herself. Her brother limited himself to reading his news-

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paper and racing form, drinking, dozing in a rocking chair in the corridor, and walking around in pajamas, slapping his slippers on the tiled floor and scratching his crotch. In the evenings he roused from his daytime lethargy, dressed, and went out to play dominoes in the cafés—every evening, that is, except Sunday, when he went to the racetrack to lose what he had won during the week. Besides the brother and sister, the inhabitants of the house were a maid—big-boned and birdbrained, who worked from morning to night and at the hour of the siesta disappeared into the bachelor's room—the cook, the cats, and a scruffy, tongue-tied parrot.

The patrona ordered Elvira to bathe me with disinfectant soap and burn all my clothing. She did not shave my head, as they did to servant girls in those days to get rid of lice, because her brother kept her from it. The man with the strawberry nose spoke gently; he smiled often, and was always pleasant to me even when he was drunk. He took pity on my misery at the sight of the scissors and rescued the long hair my mother had kept so well brushed. It is strange that I cannot remember his name. . . . In that house I wore a dress the doña had sewed on her sewing machine, and went barefoot. After the month's trial had passed, she explained I had to work harder because now I was earning wages. I never saw them; my madrina collected the money every two weeks. At first I anxiously awaited her visits and, the minute she appeared, clung to her skirt and begged her to take me with her, but slowly I got used to the new house. I looked to Elvira for help and made friends with the cats and the parrot. When the patrona washed out my mouth with baking soda to cure my habit of muttering to myself, I stopped talking aloud with my mother, but continued doing it in secret. There was a lot to be done; in spite of the broom and the scrub brush, the house looked like a cursed caravel run aground on a reef; there was no end to cleaning that shapeless floescence that crept along all the walls. The food was not varied or abundant, but

Elvira hid the master's leftovers and gave them to me for breakfast because she had heard on the radio that it was good to begin the day with something on your stomach: So it will go to your brain, little bird, she used to say, and you will grow up to be smart. No detail escaped the spinster: today I want you to scrub the patios with Lysol; remember to iron the napkins, and be careful not to scorch them; clean the windows with newspaper and vinegar, and when you get through I will show you how to polish the master's shoes. I never hurried to obey, because I soon discovered that if I was careful I could dawdle and get through the day without doing much of anything. The doña of the locket began issuing instructions the minute she arose; she was up at the crack of dawn, dressed in her strict mourning, locket in place and hair intricately combed, but she would get confused about what orders she had given and it was easy to fool her. The patrón showed very little interest in domestic affairs; he lived for his horse races, studying bloodlines, calculating the law of probabilities, and drinking to console himself when he lost his bets. There were times his nose turned the color of an eggplant, and then he would call me to help him get into bed and to hide the empty bottles. The maid wanted nothing to do with anyone, least of all me. Only Elvira paid any attention to me, making me eat, teaching me how to do domestic chores, relieving me of the heaviest tasks. We spent hours talking and telling each other stories. It was about that time that some of her eccentricities began to surface, like her irrational hatred of blond foreigners, and her horror of cockroaches, which she battled with every weapon in reach, from quicklime to broom. On the other hand, she said nothing when she discovered that I was feeding the mice and guarding their babies so the cats could not eat them. She feared a pauper's death, that her bones would be tossed into a common grave, and to avoid posthumous humiliation she had bought a coffin on credit, which she kept in her room and used as a catchall for odds and ends. It was a box of ordinary wood, smelling of carpenter's glue, lined

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in white satin, and trimmed with blue ribbons she had taken from a small pillow. From time to time I was given the privilege of lying inside and closing the lid, while Elvira feigned inconsolable grief and between sobs recited my nonexistent virtues: "Oh, Most Heavenly Father, why have You taken my little bird from me? Such a good girl, so clean, so tidy—I love her more than if she was my own granddaughter. Oh, Lord, work one of Your miracles and return her to me." The game would last until we both burst out laughing, or till the maid lost control and began to howl.

All the days were exactly the same except Thursday, whose approach I calculated on the kitchen calendar. All week I looked forward to the moment we would walk through the garden gate and set off to market. Elvira would help me put on my rubber-soled shoes and my clean dress, and comb my hair into a ponytail; then she would give me a centavo to buy a brilliantly colored round lollipop, almost impervious to the human tooth, that I could lick for hours without noticeably reducing its size. That treat lasted for six or seven nights of intense bliss and many giddy licks between difficult chores. The *patrona* always took the lead, clutching her handbag: keep your eyes peeled, pay attention, stay right beside me, the place is alive with pickpockets. She marched through the market briskly, looking, squeezing, bargaining: these prices are a scandal; jail is the only place for moneygrubbers like these. I walked behind the maid with a bag in each hand and my lollipop in my pocket. I used to watch people, trying to guess their lives and secrets, their virtues and adventures. I always returned home with shining eyes and a joyful heart. I would run to the kitchen, and while I helped Elvira put things away I besieged her with stories of enchanted carrots and peppers that turned into princes and princesses when they fell into the pot and jumped out of it with sprigs of parsley tangled in their crowns and broth streaming from their royal garments.

"Sh-h-h! The *doña* is coming. Grab the broom, little bird."

During the siesta, the hour when quiet reigned in the house, I used to abandon my tasks and go to the dining room. A large painting in a gilded frame hung there, a window open onto a marine horizon: waves, rocks, hazy sky, and sea gulls. I would stand there with my hands behind my back, my eyes fixed on that irresistible seascape, lost in never-ending voyages and sirens and dolphins and manta rays that sometimes leapt from my mother's fantasies and other times from Professor Jones's books. Among the countless stories my mother had told me, I always preferred those in which the sea played some part; afterward I would dream of distant islands, vast underwater cities, oceanic highways for fish navigations. We must have a sailor ancestor, my mother said every time I asked for another of those stories, and thus was born the legend of the Dutch grandfather. In the presence of that painting, I recaptured those earlier emotions, either when I stood close enough to hear it speak or when I watched it while I was doing my household chores; each time I could smell a faint odor of sails, lye, and starch.

"What are you doing here!" the *patrona* would scold if she discovered me. "Don't you have anything to do? We don't keep that painting here for your sake."

From what she said, I believed that paintings wear away, that the color seeps into the eyes of the person beholding them, until gradually they fade and vanish.

"No, child. Where did you get such a silly notion? They don't wear away. Come here, give me a kiss on my nose and I'll let you look at the sea. Give me another and I'll give you a centavo. But don't tell my sister, she doesn't understand. Does my nose disgust you?" And the *patrón* and I would hide behind the ferns for that clandestine career.

I had been told to sleep in a hammock in the kitchen, but after everybody was in bed I would steal in the servants'

room and slip into the bed shared by the maid and the cook, one sleeping with her head toward the top and the other with her head toward the foot. I would curl up beside Elvira and offer to tell her a story if she would let me stay.

"All right. Tell me the one about the man who lost his head over love."

"I forgot that one, but I remember one about some animals."

"There must have been a lot of sap in your mother's womb to give you such a mind for telling stories, little bird."

*I remember very well, it was a rainy day; there was a strange odor of rotted melons and cat piss on the hot breath blowing from the street; the odor filled the house, so strong you could feel it on your fingertips. I was in the dining room on one of my sea voyages. I did not hear the *patrona's* footsteps, and when I felt her claws on my neck, the surprise jerked me back from a great distance, leaving me petrified in the uncertainty of not knowing where I was.*

"You here again? Go do your work! What do you think I pay you for?"

"I finished everything, *doña . . .*"

The *patrona* picked up a large vase from the sideboard and turned it upside down, dashing stinking water and wilted flowers to the floor.

"Clean it up!" she ordered.

The sea disappeared, the fogbound rocks, the red tresses woven through my nostalgia, the dining-room furniture—all I saw were those flowers on the tiles, growing, writhing, taking on a life of their own, and that woman with her tower of curls and locked throat. A monumental "No!" swelled inside me, choking me; I heard it burst forth in a scream that came from my toes, and watched it explode against the *patrona's* powdered face. When she slapped me I felt no pain, because long before she touched me I felt only rage, an urge to leap upon her, drag her to the floor, claw her face, grab her hair, and pull with all my might.

But the bun yielded, the curls crumbled, the topknot came loose, and that entire mass of brittle hair lay in my hands like a dying fox. Horrified, I realized that I had snatched the *doña* bald-headed. I bolted from the room, ran through the house and the garden, and rushed into the street without any sense of where I was going. After a few minutes the warm summer rain had soaked me through, and fear and wetness brought me to a halt. The shaggy trophy was still in my hands; I flung it to the edge of the sidewalk where it was carried off with other debris in the drainage ditch. I stood for several minutes observing the shipwrecked curls swirling sadly away, and once they were out of sight I began to walk aimlessly, convinced I had come to the end of my road, sure there was no place I could hide after the crime I had just committed. I left familiar streets, passed the site of the Thursday market, continued through the residential zone of houses shuttered for the siesta, and walked on and on like a sleepwalker. The rain had stopped and the late afternoon sun was evaporating moisture from the wet asphalt, swathing the world in a sticky veil. People, traffic, noise—a lot of noise: construction sites with gigantic, roaring yellow machines, ringing steel, screeching brakes, horns, the cries of street vendors. A vague odor of swamp and fried food drifted from the cafés, and I remembered that I usually had something to eat at this hour. I was hungry, but I had no money, and in my flight I had left behind the remnants of my weekly lollipop. I reckoned that I had been walking in circles for several hours. I was awestruck. In those days the city was not the hopeless disaster it is now, but it was already growing—shapelessly, like a malignant tumor, assailed by lunatic architecture in an unholy mixture of styles: Italian marble palaces, Texas ranch houses, Tudor mansions, steel skyscrapers, residences in the form of ships, mausoleums, Japanese tea-houses, Swiss chalets, and wedding cakes with plaster icing. I was in shock.

Toward evening, I came to a plaza bordered with ceibas, solemn trees that had stood guard over that place since the

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War of Independence; in the center was a bronze equestrian statue of the Father of the Nation, a flag in one hand and reins in the other, humiliated by the irreverence of pigeon shit and the disillusion of history. In one corner of the square, surrounded by curious onlookers, I saw a white-clad *campesino* in a straw sombrero and sandals. I walked closer to watch. He was reciting in a singsong voice, and for a few coins, in response to the individual client, he would change his theme but continue to improvise verses without pause or hesitation. Under my breath I tried imitating him, and discovered how much easier it is to remember stories when you rhyme—the story dances to its own music. I stood listening until the man picked up his coins and went away. For a while I amused myself by searching for words that sounded the same: what a good way to remember; now I would be able to tell Elvira the same story twice. The minute I thought of Elvira, I could almost smell the odor of fried onion; I felt a cold chill down my back as I realized the truth of my predicament. Again I saw my *patrona's* curls rippling down the drainage ditch like a dead cat, and the prophecies my *madrina* had so often repeated rang in my ears: Bad, bad girl. You'll end up in jail, that's how it begins. You don't mind, and then you act smart—and you end up behind bars. Listen to what I'm telling you, that's how it's going to be. I sat down on the edge of a fountain to look at the goldfish and at the water lilies drooping from the heat.

"What's the matter?" It was a dark-eyed boy wearing khaki pants and a shirt much too large for him.

"I'm going to be arrested."

"How old are you?"

"Nine, more or less."

"Then you have no right to be in jail. You're a minor."

"But I scalped my *patrona*."

"How?"

"With one jerk."

He sat down beside me, watching me out of the corner

of his eye and digging the dirt from beneath his fingernails with a penknife.

"My name is Huberto Naranjo. What's yours?"

"Eva Luna. Would you be my friend?"

"I don't hang around with women." But he stayed, and until it got late we were showing each other our scars, sharing secrets, getting to know each other, and beginning a long relationship that would lead us along the paths of friendship and love.

From the moment he could look after himself, Huberto Naranjo had lived in the street, first shining shoes and selling newspapers and then scratching a living through hustling and petty thievery. He had a natural gift for conning the gullible, and I was given immediate proof of his talent there at the plaza fountain. He began a spiel to catch the attention of passersby, and soon had gathered a small crowd of clerks, old men, poets, and a few *guardia* stationed there to be sure that everyone walking past the equestrian statue showed the proper respect. His challenge was to see who could grab a fish from the fountain; it meant plunging your upper body into the water, rooting around among the aquatic plants, and blindly feeling along the slimy bottom. Huberto had cut the tail of one fish, and the poor creature could only swim in a circle like a top or lie motionless beneath a lily pad, where Huberto knew to fish him out with one swoop. As he triumphantly hoisted his catch, the losers paid up—with both shirt-sleeves and dignity considerably dampened. Another way of earning a few coins consisted of betting on finding the pea beneath one shell of the three he moved rapidly across a piece of cloth unfolded on the ground. He could slip off a stroller's watch in less than two seconds, and in the same amount of time make it vanish in thin air. Some years later, dressed like a cross between a cowboy and a Mexican charro, he would sell everything from stolen screwdrivers to shirts bought in factory closeouts. At sixteen he would be the leader of a street gang, feared and respected; he would own

several carts selling roasted peanuts, sausages, and sugarcane juice; he would be the hero of the whores in the red-light district, and the nightmare of the *guardia*, until other concerns took him off to the mountains. But that came much later. When I first met him, he was still a boy, but if I had observed him more carefully I might have seen a sign of the man he would become; even then he had ready fists and fire in his heart. If you want to get ahead, you have to be macho, Huberto Naranjo used to say. It was his crutch, based on male attributes that were no different from those of other boys, but that he put to the test, measuring his penis with a ruler or demonstrating how far he could urinate. I learned that much later; when he himself scoffed at such standards—after someone told him that size is not irrefutable proof of virility. Nevertheless, his ideas about manhood were deeply rooted from childhood, and the things that happened to him later, all the battles and passions, all the encounters and arguments, all the rebellions and defeats, were not enough to change his mind.

After dark we made the round of nearby restaurants, looking for something to eat. Sitting in an alley across from the back door of a cheap café, we shared a steaming pizza that Huberto had traded for a postcard of a smiling blonde with stupendous breasts. Then, climbing fences and violating private property, we twisted our way through a labyrinth of courtyards until we reached a parking garage. We slipped through a ventilation duct to avoid the fat guard at the entrance, and scrambled down to the lowest level. There, in a dark corner between two columns, Huberto had improvised a nest of newspapers where he could go when nothing better presented itself. We settled in for the night, lying side by side in the darkness, drowning in fumes of motor oil and carbon monoxide as thick as an ocean liner's exhaust. I made myself comfortable and offered him a story in payment for being so nice to me.

"All right," he conceded, slightly baffled, because I be-

lieve that in all his life he had never heard anything remotely resembling a story.

"What shall it be about?"

"About bandits," he said, to say something.

I took inspiration from several episodes I'd heard on the radio, some ballads I knew, and a few ingredients of my own invention, and began spinning a story of a damsel in love with an outlaw, a real jackal who resolved even minor disagreements with bullets, strewing the landscape with widows and orphans. The girl never lost hope of redeeming him through the strength of her love and the sweetness of her character, and while he went around perpetrating his evil deeds, she gathered in the very orphans created by the insatiable pistols of the evildoer. When he showed up at the house, it was like a gale from hell; he stomped in, kicking doors and emptying his pistols into the air. On her knees she would plead with him to repent of his cruel ways, but he mocked her with guffaws that shook the walls and curdled the blood. "How've you been, honey!" he would shout at the top of his lungs, while terrified youngsters ran to hide in the wardrobe. How are all the kids? and he would open the door and pull them out by the ear to see how tall they were. Aha! I see they're getting big, but don't you worry. Before you can say *boo!* I'll be off to town and I'll make some new orphans for your collection. And so the years went by and the number of mouths to be fed kept growing, until one day the sweetheart, weary of such abuse, realized the futility of continuing to hope for the bandit's salvation and decided to stop being so good. She got a permanent, bought a red dress, and turned her house into a place for parties and good times where you could buy the most delicious ice cream and the best malted milks, play all kinds of games, and dance and sing. The children had a wonderful time waiting on the customers; poverty and misery were ended and the woman was so happy that she forgot all the unhappiness of the past. Things were going very well, but gossip reached the ears of the jackal

misfortune, perished from hunger, beatings, and tropical diseases. Not a breath of any of this was reported on the radio or published in the newspapers, but Elvira found out through rumors on her days off, and often talked about them. I loved Elvira very much; I called her grandmother, *abuela*, I would say. They'll never part us, little bird, she promised, but I was not so sure; I already sensed that my life would be one long series of farewells. Like me, Elvira had started working when she was a little girl, and through the long years weariness had seeped into her bones and chilled her soul. The burden of work and grinding poverty had killed her desire to go on, and she had begun her dialogue with death. At night she slept in her coffin, partly to become accustomed to it, to lose her fear of it, and partly to irritate the *patrona*, who never got used to the idea of a coffin in her house. The maid could not bear the sight of my *abuela* lying in her mortuary bed in the room they shared, and one day simply went away, without advising even the *patrón*, who was left waiting for her at the hour of the siesta. Before she left, she chalked crosses on all the doors in the house, the meaning of which no one ever deciphered, but for the same reason never dared erase. Elvira treated me as if she were my true *abuela*. It was with her that I learned to barter words for goods, and I have been blessed with good fortune, for I have always been able to find someone willing to accept such a transaction.

I did not change much during those years; I remained rather small and thin, but with defiant eyes that nettled the *patrona*. My body developed slowly, but inside something was raging out of control, like an unseen river. While I felt I was a woman, the windowpane reflected the blurred image of a little girl. Even though I did not grow much, it was still enough that the *patrón* began to pay more attention to me. I must teach you to read, child, he used to say, but he never found time to do it. Now he not only asked for kisses on his nose; he began giving me a few centavos to help him bathe and sponge his body. Afterward he would lie on the bed while I dried him, powdered him, and put

his underwear on him as if he were a baby. Sometimes he sat for hours soaking in the bathtub and playing naval battles with me; other times he went for days without even looking in my direction, occupied with his bets, or in a stupor, his nose the color of eggplant. Elvira warned me with explicit clarity that men have a monster as ugly as a yucca root between their legs, and tiny babies come out of it and get into women's bellies and grow there. I was never to touch those parts for any reason, because the sleeping beast would raise its horrible head and leap at me—with catastrophic results. But I did not believe her; it sounded like just another of her outlandish tales. All the *patrón* had was a fat, sad little worm that never so much as stirred, and nothing like a baby ever came from it, at least when I was around. It looked a little like his fleshy nose, and that was when I discovered—and later in life proved—the close relationship between a man's nose and his penis. One look at a man's face and I know how he will look naked. Long noses and short, narrow and broad, haughty and humble, greedy noses, snooping noses, bold and indifferent noses good for nothing but blowing—noses of all kinds. With age, almost all of them thicken, grow limp and bulbous, and lose the arrogance of upstanding penises.

Every time I looked outside from the balcony, I realized that I would have been better off had I not come back. The street was more appealing than that house where life droned by so tediously—daily routines repeated at the same slow pace, days stuck to one another, all the same color, like time in a hospital bed. At night I gazed at the sky and imagined that I could make myself as wispy as smoke and slip between the bars of the locked gate. I pretended that when a moonbeam touched my back I sprouted wings like a bird's, two huge feathered wings for flight. Sometimes I concentrated so hard on that idea that I flew above the rooftops. Don't imagine such foolish things, little bird, only witches and airplanes fly at night. I did not learn anything more of Huberto Naranjo until much later, but I often thought of him, placing his dark face on all my

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fairy-tale princes. Although I was young, I knew about love intuitively, and wove it into my stories. I dreamed about love, it haunted me. I studied the photographs in the crime reports, trying to guess the dramas of passion and death in those newspaper pages. I was always hanging on to adults' words, listening behind the door when the *patrona* talked on the telephone, pestering Elvira with questions. Run along, little bird, she would say. The radio was my source of inspiration. The one in the kitchen was on from morning till night, our only contact with the outside world, proclaiming the virtues of this land blessed by God with all manner of treasures, from its central position on the globe and the wisdom of its leaders to the swamp of petroleum on which it floated. It was the radio that taught me to sing boleros and other popular songs, to repeat the commercials, and to follow a beginning English class half an hour a day: *This pencil is red, is this pencil blue? No, that pencil is not blue, that pencil is red.* I knew the time for each program; I imitated the announcers' voices. I followed all the dramas; I suffered indescribable torment with each of those creatures battered by fate, and was always surprised that in the end things worked out so well for the heroine, who for sixty installments had acted like a moron.

"I say that Montedónico is going to recognize her as his daughter. If he gives her his name, she can marry Rogelio de Salvatierra," Elvira would sigh, one ear glued to the radio.

"She has her mother's locket. That's proof. Why doesn't she tell everyone she's Montedónico's daughter and get it over with?"

"She couldn't do that to the man who gave her life, little bird."

"Why not? He left her locked up in an orphanage for eighteen years."

"He's just mean, little bird. They call people like him sadists."

"Look, *abuela*, if she doesn't change her ways, she's going to have a hard time all her life."

"Well, you needn't worry, everything will work out fine. Can't you see she's a good girl?"

Elvira was right. The long-suffering always triumphed and the evil received their due. Montedónico was struck down by a fatal illness, pleading from his deathbed for forgiveness; his daughter cared for him until he died, and then, after inheriting his fortune, married Rogelio de Salvatierra, giving me in passing an abundance of material for my own stories—although only rarely did I respect the standard happy ending. Little bird, my *abuela* used to say, why don't people in *your* stories ever get married? Often only a word or two would string together a rosary of images in my mind. Once I heard a delicious new word and flew to ask Elvira, *Abuela*, what is snow? From her explanation I gathered it was like frozen meringue. At that moment I became the heroine of stories about the North Pole; I was the abominable snow woman, hairy and ferocious, battling the scientists who were on my trail hoping to catch me and experiment on me in their laboratory. I did not find out what snow really was until the day a niece of the General celebrated her *début*; the event was so widely heralded on the radio that Elvira had no choice but to take me to see the spectacle—from a distance, of course. A thousand guests gathered that night at the city's best hotel, transformed for the occasion into a wintertime replica of Cinderella's castle. Workmen trimmed back philodendron and tropical ferns, decapitated palm trees, and in their place set Christmas trees from Alaska trimmed with angel hair and artificial icicles. For ice-skating they installed a rink of white plastic imitating polar ice. They painted frost on the windows and sprinkled so much synthetic snow everywhere that a week later snowflakes were still drifting into the operating room of the Military Hospital five hundred meters away. The machines imported from the North failed to freeze the water in the swimming pool; instead of ice, all they obtained was a kind of gelatinous vomit. They decided to settle for two swans, dyed pink, awkwardly trailing a banner between them bearing the name of the

débutante in gilt letters. To give more panache to the party, they flew in two scions of European nobility and a film star. At midnight the honoree, swathed in sable, was lowered from the ceiling in a swing built in the shape of a sleigh, swaying four meters above the heads of the guests, half-swooning from heat and vertigo. Those of us on the fringes outside did not see this, but it was featured in all the magazines; no one seemed surprised by the miracle of a tropical capital hotel shivering in Arctic cold—much more unbelievable events had happened there. In all that spectacle, I had eyes for only one thing: some enormous tubs filled with natural snow that had been placed at the entrance to the festivities so the elegant guests could throw snowballs and build snowmen, as they had heard is done in lands of ice and snow. I pulled free from Elvira, slipped between the waiters and guards, and ran to take that treasure in my hands. At first I thought I had been burned, and screamed with fright, but I was so fascinated by the color of light trapped in the frozen, airy matter that I could not let go. A guard nearly caught me, but I stooped down and scooted between his legs, clutching the precious snow to my chest. When it melted away, trickling through my fingers like water, I felt deceived. Some time later, Elvira gave me a transparent hemisphere containing a miniature cabin and a pine tree; when you shook it, it set loose a blizzard of snowflakes. So you will have a winter of your own, little bird, she told me.

At that age I was not interested in politics, but Elvira filled my head with subversive ideas to offset the beliefs of our employers.

"Everything in this country is crooked, little bird. Too many yellow-haired gringos, I say. One of these days they'll carry the whole country off with them, and we'll find ourselves plunk in the middle of the ocean—that's what I say."

The *doña* of the locket was of exactly the opposite opinion.

"How unfortunate that we were discovered by Chris-

topher Columbus and not an Englishman. It takes determined people of sturdy stock to build roads through the forests, sow crops on the plains, and industrialize the nation. Wasn't that what they did in the United States? And look where that country is today!"

She agreed with the General when he opened the border to anyone wanting to flee the misery of postwar Europe. Immigrants arrived by the hundreds, bringing wives, children, grandparents, and distant cousins; with their many tongues, national dishes, legends, holidays; and nostalgias. Our exuberant geography swallowed them up in one gulp. A few Asians were also allowed to enter and, once in the country, multiplied with astounding rapidity. Twenty years later, someone pointed out that on every street corner there was a restaurant decorated with wrathful demons, paper lanterns, and a pagoda roof. Once the newspaper reported the story of a Chinese waiter who left the customers unattended in the dining room, climbed the stairs to the office, and with a kitchen cleaver cut off the head and hands of his employer because he had not shown the proper respect for a religious tradition when he placed the image of a dragon beside that of a tiger. During the investigation of the case, it was discovered that both protagonists of the tragedy were illegal immigrants. Asian passports were used a hundred times over; since the immigration officers could barely determine the sex of an Oriental, they certainly were not able from a passport photograph to tell them apart. Foreigners came with the intention of making their fortune and returning home but, instead, they stayed. Their descendants forgot their mother tongue, conquered by the aroma of coffee and the happy nature, the spell, of a people who still did not know envy. Very few set out to cultivate the homesteads granted by the government, because there were too few roads, schools, and hospitals, and too many diseases, mosquitoes, and poisonous snakes. The interior was the territory of outlaws, smugglers, and soldiers. Immigrants stayed in the cities, working diligently and saving every centavo, ridiculed by the native-born, who thought

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extravagance and generosity were the greatest virtues any decent person could have.

"I don't believe in machines. This business of copying the gringos' ways is bad for the soul," Elvira maintained, scandalized by the excesses of the newly rich, who were trying to live life as they had seen it in the movies.

Since they lived on their respective retirement pensions, the elderly brother and sister had no access to easy money; as a result, there was no money squandered in that house, although they were aware of how the practice was spreading around them. Every citizen thought he had to own an executive-model automobile, until soon it became almost impossible to drive through the choked streets. Petroleum was traded for telephones in the shapes of cannons, sea-shells, and odalisques; so much plastic was imported that highways inevitably became bordered by indestructible garbage; eggs for the nation's breakfasts arrived daily by plane, producing enormous omelets on the burning asphalt of the landing strip when a crate was cracked open.

"The General is right. Nobody dies of hunger here—you reach out your hand and pluck a mango. That's why there's no progress. Cold countries have more advanced civilizations because the climate forces people to work." The *patrón* made these assertions lying in the shade, fanning himself with a newspaper and scratching his belly. He even wrote a letter to the Ministry of Trade, suggesting the possibility of towing an iceberg from the polar zone, crushing it, and scattering it from airplanes to see whether it might change the climate and combat the laziness of his countrymen.

While those in power stole without scruple, thieves by trade or necessity scarcely dared practice their profession: the eyes of the police were everywhere. That was the basis for the story that only a dictator could maintain order. The common people, who never saw the telephones, disposable panties, and imported eggs, lived as they always had. The politicians of the opposition were in exile, but Elvira told me that in silence and shadow enough anger was brewing

to cause the people to rebel against the regime. The *patrones* were unconditionally loyal to the General, and when members of the *guardia* came by the house selling his photograph, they showed them with pride the one already hanging in a place of honor in the living room. Elvira developed a relentless hatred of that chubby, remote, military man with whom she had never had the slightest contact, cursing him and casting the evil eye on him every time she dusted his portrait.

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Author's Note

Most Samoan proper nouns have meanings.

Matai titles are usually derived from historical events and are handed down from generation to generation.

The names of most of the main characters in this novel have been coined or chosen deliberately to fit the allegorical nature of the work.

For instance:

Tauilopepe means: The Young Child Who Was Chosen Specially.

Lupe:	Pigeon
Masina:	Moon
Malo:	To Win
Pepe:	Young Child
Toasa:	Sacred Warrior
Sapepe:	Aiga of Pepe
Tagata:	Human Being
Moa:	Center of the Belly
Faitoaga:	Cultivator
Galupo:	Sea Wave of the Night

BOOK ONE



God, Money, and Success

WENDI, ALBERT

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1

The Price of Copra

It had rained nearly all day, and Tauilopepe had remained in the main fale (house) plaiting sennit. Now it was evening, time for prayers, and the throbbing chorus of cicadas ached through Sapepe village. Masina, Tauilo's mother, came in from the kitchen fale where she had been helping cook the evening meal, opened the large wooden trunk, got out the Bible which had been in her aiga, her family, since the missionaries came, and sat down facing her son. Tauilo stopped plaiting and put on the shirt that was lying beside him. The rest of the Aiga Tauilopepe, his wife and three children and other relatives, entered and sat down at the back posts of the fale.

Masina coughed, put two fingers to her mouth, and through the gap between them spat a thin streak of spittle out into the falling dark. She began to sing a hymn. The others joined her, but a moment later Tauilo was neither singing nor listening. Head bowed, he sat mentally adding up the profits he hoped to make from the copra he was going to sell at Malo's store the next day. He broke from his thoughts when his only son sat down beside him. Sensing that Pepe was going to speak, he placed his hand over the boy's mouth gently. He could feel Masina looking at him, so he started singing again.

Should get twenty pounds, he concluded as the hymn faded into the amen. Masina began to read from the Bible. Tauilo remembered that they owed Malo fourteen pounds; it was a man's duty to pay his debts; all that work for nothing; all to Malo. Pepe moved up against Tauilo's side and put his head on his father's knee. Tauilo tried to concentrate on the

reading but failed. The bitter thought of all that money disappearing into the steel drawer in Malo's store defeated him. And at least two pounds had to be donated that Sunday to the upkeep of their pastor Filipino. "Keep us, O Lord, from straying into the sinful ways of the world," Masina prayed. Immediately he felt guilty, and for the rest of the prayer he repeated every word to himself to try to distract his thoughts from the debt. He'd leave it to God, he decided as Masina said amen and closed the Bible.

Tauilo still kept his eyes shut. He'd been cheated. By whom he didn't know or want to know; he'd been cheated, that was all. When he heard the crunching sound of bare feet coming toward him over the pebble floor he opened his eyes. His wife, Lupe, loomed above him in the gloom. She placed the kerosene lamp in front of him, gave him a box of matches, and waited for him to light the lamp. He pushed the box open, pushed too hard, and the matches spilled into his lap. He cursed under his breath, picked up a match, and struck it furiously across the box. The match exploded with light. He glared up at Lupe. Seeing how angry he was, she looked away quickly and lifted the lampshade. He stabbed the burning match at the wick. The lamp spluttered, then its light ballooned across the fale. He looked across at Masina; she looked away from his anger too. He looked at the other members of his aiga. They got up silently and left the fale. Lupe put the lamp on the floor near the massive center post and went to the kitchen fale. He watched her go. Pepe jumped up noisily to follow her.

"Don't ever do that again!" Tauilo warned him. Pepe looked questioningly at him, sat down again, and started to jab his fingers into the floor. Tauilo cuffed him across the head. Pepe jumped up again and ran out of the fale.

"Where's the meal?" Tauilo called to the kitchen fale. Masina sat gazing out into the darkness.

Soon his two daughters entered with food mats laden with fried fish and taro. He didn't look at them. Vao, the elder

girl, with bowed head, placed the food mat in front of him, retreated, and sat down at a back post. The rest of their aiga, except Pepe, entered with basins of water and baskets of food and arranged themselves beside Vao, all ready to serve Tauilo and Masina. They remained silent and avoided looking at him.

Tauilo didn't wait for Masina, who usually said grace before this main meal of the day; he mumbled a short prayer and dug into his food. Masina glanced at him, then started to eat also. They ate in strained silence.

Moths and tiny beetles danced around the lamp, safe from the wax-colored lizards watching them from the rafters, as the crying of the cicadas faded into the night which now drenched the village. From the neighboring fale, pockets of light in the darkness, came the clatter of dishes and the muffled sound of conversation and laughter. The tide was surging in over the reef. It would soon be licking the crablike roots of the mangrove trees behind the Tauilo's home.

Tauilo finished eating and pushed away his food mat now littered with fish bones and taro crusts. Vao brought him a chipped enamel basin of water. He washed his hands and mouth and dried them on the hand towel she gave him. She returned to her place. The rest of the aiga started their meal. Tauilo watched them and picked at his teeth with his fingers.

He suddenly noticed Pepe wasn't there. He was going to ask why, when Pepe slipped in from the darkness and sat down between Lupe and Vao. Lupe placed a large fish, which she had reserved specially for him, on his food mat. Pepe ate eagerly.

The track to the pool was a wet snake with its head buried somewhere ahead in the darkness and the lapping of waves. The mud was slippery under his feet. Tauilo usually bathed at night, a habit he had acquired from his father when, as a boy, he had accompanied him to the pool. The stench of pigsties veined the still air. He stopped, blew his nose into the

end of his towel, coughed and spat, and continued on his way.

He looked down at the pool. It seemed to have snared the last traces of light. Beyond it the sea and sky were an invisible murmur of water shifting and stirring. He picked his way down to it over the rocks and boulders. They felt smooth and warm.

Tauilo's skin prickled, anticipating the cold that would shock it. He dived into the water. The cold stung him; he surfaced, gasping, and swam swiftly to the bank. He lathered his body with the piece of soap he had brought with him and tumbled back into the water to wash it off. After a while the cold didn't bother him, so he floated and gazed up at the few stars blinking in the black belly of the sky. Dogs barked from nearby fale. He didn't think of the debt until the cold seeped back into his bones. He flipped over, swam to the bank, clambered up, got his towel, and dried himself quickly. His bladder ached. He urinated into the rocks. He heard a crab scuttling under the rocks and remembered he hadn't urinated by the pool since that time long ago when his father had caught him and slapped him again and again on the back and shoulders. The memory of those painful blows reminded him of the debt, and his frustration and anger returned.

When Tauilo entered the fale Masina was reading to Pepe from the Bible, and his daughters and Lupe were hanging up the mosquito nets. They paused, briefly but noticeably, when they saw him. He went to the wooden trunk where most of their clothes were kept, got a bottle of coconut oil, and rubbed oil into his body until it glistened. He wrapped his sleeping sheet around himself, flattened down his unruly hair with his hands, and sat down a short distance from Masina and his son. Lupe and the girls left for the pool.

The mosquito nets stirred lazily in the breeze that was beginning to blow in from the sea. Masina's voice flowed into his mind, but the words were the blank, flimsy whiteness of

the mosquito nets, the flicking of the beetles against the glass lampshade, the shadows crouching at the edge of the light.

Pepe yawned. Masina told him to go to bed and to remember to say his prayers. Tauilo glanced at his son. Pepe smiled back, got under the sleeping net, said his prayers loudly so Masina and his father could hear him, and, ending with an extra loud amen, stretched out on his mat and pulled his sleeping sheet up to his neck. Tauilo looked out at the darkness, and because some of his anger had gone, the shadows no longer seemed hostile.

"Is the copra ready?" Masina asked. Tauilo flicked the remainder of his cheroot out of the fale and watched it fizzling on the damp ground. Masina began to speak again. He got up and left the fale.

Flying foxes screeched from the mango trees which divided his land from that of the Aiga Toasa. He walked toward Toasa's fale. Always, when he had nothing else to do at night or when he was feeling troubled, he visited Toasa and played cards, the old man's favorite occupation.

His father and Toasa had grown up together. They had spanned fifty years before his father died in 1928. In his memories of them Tauilo could never quite separate one from the other. They had both brought him up, nurturing him as one father, yet they were so different: Toasa full of laughter and vigor; Tailopepe Laau, his father, aloof and silent, almost unapproachably cold. He had thought of them as making one complete human being—Toasa the flesh and bone and his father the calculating mind, the real power behind their leadership of Sapepe. But when his father died Toasa absorbed unto himself the being of his father, as it were.

Tauilo stopped outside Toasa's fale and looked in. Toasa was sitting in the middle of the fale, scrutinizing the rows of playing cards in front of him on the floor as if he was studying a difficult puzzle. One of his sons, a few years older than Tauilo, was making a fish trap at the far side of the fale. A

large mosquito net, shivering in the breeze, stretched across the fale behind the old man, its harsh whiteness heightening the color of his darkly tanned body, which was bare to the waist. His abundant belly hung in folds over the thick leather belt that held up his lavalava. Periodically he slapped at the mosquitoes which settled on him, but his eyes never left the cards. Tauilo pepe entered.

Toasa looked up. "Have you come, Tauilo?" he said. Toasa was the only man in Sapepe who didn't address Tauilo pepe by his full matai title, but then Toasa didn't address the other matai by their titles either but called them by their ordinary names. Grinning broadly, Toasa waved Tauilo down to sit opposite him. "Just what I've been waiting for—a fish to snare!" Tauilo didn't really want to play cards, but Toasa, as usual, was intent on beating him at Suipi, the game he had started to teach Tauilo on the day he proved to Toasa's satisfaction that he could shuffle a pack of cards properly.

Before he was comfortably settled Toasa collected the cards and started shuffling them. He squared the pack and banged it down in front of Tauilo, who cut and handed it back to him. "Now, watch the champion move!" Toasa said, dealing out the cards faster than anyone else Tauilo had ever seen.

Toasa won the first game easily, quickly.

The women of the aiga entered and strung up more mosquito nets. They and the children got under them, and the oldest woman started to tell the children the legend of Sina and the Eel.

"Those papalagi have got airplanes now," Toasa said during the second game.

"Airplanes?" his son asked.

"Flying machines," replied Toasa, taking another point with a loud whoop. His son looked puzzled for a moment but then returned to his work.

Tauilo wondered how Toasa knew about the airplanes, es-

pecially as he hadn't visited Apia for over a year. To most of the people of Sapepe the outside world was something heard about but never quite believed, a world as mysterious as those airplanes, those flying machines that Toasa had mentioned so casually, as if he knew all there was to know about them. Apia was a place to be visited perhaps twice a year, marveled at, and returned from with bewildering tales of mechanical marvels, ice cream, big stores that sold everything a person could want, and a picture theater where cowboys (brave heroes) and Indians (villains)—in true stories, mind you—killed one another without any thought of Jehovah or of moral consequences. But beyond these tales and the familiar and secure world contained within the coral reefs lay a fairyland ruled by papalagi, the builders of those airplanes and the messengers of Jehovah, the papalagi who, after establishing Christianity in Samoa, had themselves reverted to pagan ways.

As he played, Tauilo thought of the first time that Toasa and his father had taken him to Apia. A group of Sapepe rowers rowed them in a fautasi, because there were no roads to town then. When they arrived the two men dressed him in his best clothes. Then his father held his hand as they led the frightened boy from the jetty to the main street. Only a few impressions remained: how the men took him to the town market—the biggest and noisiest and dirtiest building the boy had ever seen—and to the milk bar where he had his first thrilling taste of ice cream; how he tried to make the ice cream last as he walked between his father and Toasa through the town and they named the main sights for him; but how the sweet cold thing melted quickly in the heat and he cried as his father wiped his hands and clothes clean from it; how, tired and hot from walking, they rested in the marketplace packed with people and, eating bread and butter (a luxury he had never tasted before), watched the carriages and wagons swaying past, while he wondered why the weird contraptions and horses were in such a hurry and where they

were hurrying to; how Toasa unconsciously blocked the path of a young papalagi—dressed in white trousers, white shirt, and tanned shoes, which the boy could see his reflection in—who pushed Toasa off the footpath; and how Toasa didn't rebuke or hit the papalagi for his rudeness as he usually did when a Sapepean was rude to him; and how he, Tauilo, wondered why and was ashamed for Toasa, ashamed and embarrassed for Toasa and his father, who in that moment of frightened humility ceased to be the giants they had always been in his thoughts; how, after the papalagi had humiliated Toasa and his father they bought some things to take back, got into the fautasi, and were rowed home, with neither man speaking to the other, and with the boy vowing that he would someday kill that papalagi and noticing how the two men were avoiding having to see their shame in each other's eyes.

"Airplanes have two wings and an engine." Toasa interrupted Tauilo's thoughts.

"Wings?" his son asked. There was a noticeable break in Toasa's play.

"Yes, wings," Toasa said, covering up his lack of knowledge by playing enthusiastically.

Tauilo suddenly remembered the small wireless at the pastor's house. That must be where Toasa had got his information about airplanes. The wireless, which had been given to their village by the government, kept telling them about "Progress"—a mysterious but evidently very important thing, because the wireless always emphasized it—which was being established in Samoa by the New Zealand Administration. "Progress"—which most Sapepeans were suspicious of chiefly because they didn't understand what it meant—was something that would lead to a higher standard of living; it was a force and blessing which would benefit their children and future generations, the wireless claimed. And Tauilo, who had experienced more than most Sapepeans of this "Progress" in action in Apia and at the theological college he

had attended, believed in it and wanted to possess it not only for his children but for himself.

"There, beat you again!" Toasa announced. Tauilo tossed in his cards, hoping Toasa had had enough, but he gathered them up and began to shuffle them again. "Two more games," he said. Most of the lights across the road had gone out. Tauilo cleaned his left ear with a drilling motion of his forefinger.

Someone in the mosquito nets started snoring. Toasa reached behind him for his bamboo ali and hurled it at the net. It landed with a dull thud on the someone's head; there was a yelp of protest, then silence again.

"Your copra ready yet?" Toasa asked. Tauilo nodded as he fanned his cards. "Should get quite a bit for it, eh?" Toasa said. "Knew a man in the old days. Worked till his back was bent like a camel's to make a fortune in copra. Know what happened? He collected about ten tons. Wrecked his wife, children, aiga, and horse doing it. The palagi trader gave him all the credit he wanted while he was slaving to get his copra, and when it was ready told him the money it brought was just enough to pay the debt he'd run up at the trader's store. Poor, ignorant fellow! He tried to kill that palagi trader. Was arrested and charged with assault and put in jail!" Toasa stopped playing and laughed. Tauilo looked at Toasa's son; they smiled at each other. Toasa laughed on, his spraying spittle peppering Tauilo's face, and as he laughed and repeated parts of his story, a very upsetting thought seeped into Tauilo's mind: Toasa was laughing at *him*. Feeling hot, he pushed his sleeping sheet down off his shoulders.

Toasa swooped up the last two points and won again. Tauilo collected the cards to shuffle for their last game.

As the game progressed, with Toasa chuckling and joking about fools and copra and unscrupulous traders, an accusing thought clogged Tauilo's head. He had always known that Toasa cheated at cards. In the past it had been something to laugh about, for it had meant nothing; but now—feeling that

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Toasa was laughing at him—when he caught Toasa's right hand sweeping up a card he had hidden in the folds of his lavalava, "Stop cheating!" he heard himself say loud and clear. "Every night you insult me by cheating!"

Toasa stared at him in disbelief. "Is it *that* important?" he said.

Tauilo flung down his cards, sprang to his feet, and stamped out of the fale.

He got under the mosquito net and lay down beside Lupe. She rolled onto her left side, turning her back to him. He moved against her back and embraced her. "Don't come to me because you want to use me to lose your fears and anger about everything," she whispered. He clutched her shoulder and turned her over onto her back. "Don't!" she said, but she didn't push him away. She lay still.

"You're my wife," he muttered, his face buried in the softness of her neck. Her body was like unforgiving stone. "Don't do that to me. Hold me!"

"Don't just use me," she said. But he ignored her. So she tolerated him.

2

In the Rain

Tauilopepe watched the skeleton of his conscience glowing rib by rib as the gray morning light filtered through the fale blinds and dispelled the dark trapped in the net and the fale dome. He gazed at Lupe for a long while, reached out to wake her and apologize to her, but didn't; he rolled out of the net, put on his stained singlet and working lavalava, and taking his bushknife from the thatching of the kitchen fale, crossed the road and walked between the sleeping fale. Only a few pigs and hens were about, foraging in rubbish heaps and puddles. Everything was covered with a fine layer of dew. He climbed over the high rock fence behind the village onto the track that led to his plantation. Gray clouds gripped the mountain range to the east. No birds. Nothing to break the monotony of gray sky.

When he reached his plantation he immediately started to slash the creepers off the banana trees. He worked with a furious intentness. Ants and bugs stung his arms and face, and he was soon soaked to the skin. The bushknife got tangled in the creepers and was wrenched from his hand. He paused, gazed up at the mountain range stretching like a storm cloud right across the center of the island, sighed, and wiped the rain and sweat off his face with the end of his lavalava. It had started to drizzle.

Near noon, the light drizzle having stopped, Tauilo stretched out in the shelter of a clump of banana trees and for the first time that day felt pangs of hunger tugging at his belly. He ignored them stoically. A spider dangled from the banana leaves toward his face. He reached up and crushed it.

His plantation, part of the aiga land that went with his

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Orators and Gold

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All the ceremonials were over. God's blessing and protection had been asked for, and the kava had been pounded, mixed with water, shared out, and drunk, as was the custom. Because Toasa, Tauilopepe, and Malo held the three most important Sapepe titles, Toasa occupied the middle post at the right-hand side of the fale, Tauilo the post directly opposite Toasa, and Malo the middle front post. The other matai, the heads of the other twenty or so Sapepe aiga, occupied the remaining posts. On the back paepae were gathered a large group of untitled men who had come to listen, observe, and learn from their elders. In Toasa's kitchen fale, half-hidden from view by a thick hibiscus hedge, many people were busy cooking food which would be served to the matai at the end of the meeting. A silent crowd of children sat in the shade of the kapok trees beside the main road. The late morning sky was webbed with luminous strands of white cloud.

Like the untitled men on the paepae, Tauilo had rarely missed these important meetings when his father was alive. Through them and through Toasa's expert tutelage he had become a proficient orator. But, even when he had received the aiga title and hence become a member of the matai council, he seldom spoke at the meetings. Now, however, he had to speak because he wanted a major share of the uncultivated land; he knew that the importance of his title gave him a right to such a share, but he needed Toasa's support, because Malo was maneuvering for the same thing.

Malo, dressed in khaki, with expensively sandaled feet, brilliantined hair, and bespectacled face, sat fingering the account book in which all the matai's debts were recorded.

Toasa was plaiting sennit; his lavalava had slipped down, exposing the tattooed lower half of his back and top of his buttocks. He appeared not to be listening to the speeches, but everyone knew that he wasn't missing anything.

The matai spoke one after another. They all agreed to the land being brought under cultivation, but no one discussed the question of when and how it was to be divided. For most of them the meeting was just another opportunity to display their verbal brilliance; to a few of them the food at the end was most important. All of them knew that Malo was after a major share of the land, and they resented him for it but were afraid to challenge him openly because of their debts to him. They were waiting for Toasa to stop Malo from getting an unfair share by using their debts to frighten them into supporting him. Only Toasa seemed impervious to the tense silence that fell as soon as Malo started speaking. Malo's oratory was the style of the town: a glib, crisp mixture of almost colloquial language and often inappropriate poetic phrases and proverbs. The sharp light reflecting off the stones of the paepae was trapped firmly in the rims of his spectacles.

"Business is business," Malo said. "And land is now good business. We must wake up to this fact and cultivate our land *now*. Use the money to build a new school and hospital. If most of you are too weak to cultivate the land, then you must leave it to those who can. And, with God's help, the strong will conquer this land for the benefit of Sapepe!" Tauilo fidgeted uncomfortably. Malo explained that their forefathers had come out of the sea, driven by war and the godly desire to find peace; they had claimed all this district for their heirs and had defended it against others so that all Sapepeans could lead prosperous lives. Their forefathers had known nothing about making profits out of the land. Can we blame them? he asked. No, because their beloved fathers hadn't gone to school, hadn't known what money was; the papalagi hadn't arrived with the marvelous blessings of education, the Bible, and money. He wiped his face with his

handkerchief. He was the only Sapepean who used handkerchiefs. They were living in a predominantly papalagi world, he continued, and, even if papalagi were greedy and arrogant, Samoans could no longer do without them and what they had brought, were bringing, and would continue to bring.

He paused for a few seconds and scrutinized his audience. If they wanted to be equal to the papalagi they had to use the papalagi's weapons. Paused again, dramatically. If their land was well planted and looked after it would yield them the necessary money, the necessary *dough*, to give their children a good life. (Malo, the other matai knew, was well acquainted with town slang. They also believed he was the only Sapepean who could speak English fluently.) When he stopped speaking this time they thought he had finished, but when he picked up the account book and put it in his lap they knew he wasn't going to stop hunting them. If they didn't want to cultivate the virgin land they had to allow the stronger members of their peaceful community to do so, he told them. Then, smiling benignly, he declared that he had never cheated them in anything, that he paid their teacher's salary and most of the money toward the upkeep of their pastor and church. Paused. Coughed. If they couldn't carry out the back-breaking job of clearing and cultivating the land they had to say so—it wasn't a sin to admit one was weak. He reminded them of the parable of the talents and said that it was the duty of the strong to protect their less fortunate brothers.

Toasa coughed. Malo stopped speaking.

They all looked at Toasa. The old man had stopped plaiting and was gazing at Malo. They sighed in thankful relief. "Yes, the land must be divided fairly," Malo continued valiantly. Toasa's cough had broken the spell of fear which Malo had cast over the matai. "This land bequeathed to us by our forefathers to be cared for as we care for our children. Soifua!" Malo ended his speech.

They all expected Toasa to speak then but he didn't. He coughed loudly again and looked at each matai in turn. When his gaze settled on Tauilo he nodded, and Tauilo realized, with his heart thudding loudly, that the old man wanted him to speak. Half a lifetime of trying to master the awesome skill of manipulating language and the massive and intricate heritage that went with it were now to be demonstrated in his first major speech before the council, before the expert, critical scrutiny of Sapepe.

He spoke and, to his surprise, the words came easily. When he sensed that Toasa was listening attentively he knew he was displaying his thoughts in the right words in the right way. For method was everything to Toasa: style and technique were the justification for almost everything. If you had to do something, anything, you had to do it better than it had ever been done before. Even when you shat you had to do it with style, he remembered Toasa joking once.

" . . . The land is our greatest blessing from God, our most precious inheritance from our forefathers. Without it we would have no roots, we would be a canoe without a secure anchor, birds with no permanent and safe nesting ground. The land defines us, gives meaning to our titles and history; and besides our titles and the memories we will leave behind us when we die it is the only worthwhile possession we can bequeath to our children. Therefore it must never be alienated. Our forefathers—and they were farsighted, valiant men—made sure our land was not lost; they knew that without it we would be nothing."

He paused and looked at his listeners. "Not all that the papalagi has brought and is bringing has been good. Our way of life, our precious faa-Samoa, is changing—some say for the worse, some say for the better. This humble person for one believes that some of the changes, such as the new education and medicine, have been very beneficial. This humble person, who has no right to speak so loudly and at such great length before you today, wants these benefits, these blessings, for

Sapepe. This unworthy person believes too that we can acquire these blessings with God's guidance."

Lowering his voice, he explained: "For a long time now I have, in my own stumbling way, searched for the best means of acquiring these blessings for our beloved district. I have gone to God and asked Him in prayer. And in His Wisdom and Grace the Almighty has whispered to my heart that we, His beloved children, must now use the most valuable gift He has bestowed upon us. And what is that gift, Dignity of Sapepe? As I have already stated, it is our land. Yes, the land and the wealth it keeps locked in its body. . . ."

He continued elaborating on this point, immersed in the poetic flow of his own imagery. A little later he was saying: "This person agrees with Malo, who is the most able and generous and hardworking among us, that the land must be cultivated and its wealth used to educate our children, build a hospital, construct a tap water system, and—most important of all—used to build a more beautiful church to glorify our most generous Father in Heaven. Malo himself has shown us through his efforts how the land can be cultivated using the new implements and knowledge of the papalagi, cultivated so efficiently that it will yield a limitless bounty. Malo has shown and is showing us the way. Let us follow him."

Another dramatic pause. Malo's eyes were shut and he was smiling. Tauilo looked away from him to Toasa and said: "We must divide the uncultivated land among all the aiga and we must divide it *equally*. That is my unworthy opinion. Even if one aiga is weaker than another it should still get an equal share—that is the true faa-Samoa, the true way of justice which God and our forefathers laid down." He noticed that the other matai were trying not to look at Malo, who was now staring at him. "However, in my humble opinion Malo was correct to remind us of the parable of the talents, and we should now agree that we all believe in using our talents to the fullest, and we must exhort our children and aiga to do likewise. Nevertheless, how an aiga chooses to use

its share of the land should be left to that aiga. That is this humble person's advice. You may choose another way. This humble person, whose mind is still young like new grass, will accept any decision you make."

After another brief pause, he concluded, "Dignity of Sapepe, this morning will be remembered in our history as one of the great mornings, second only in importance to that morning when Jehovah and His story reached our shores. This morning will be remembered as the morning the Dignity of Sapepe chose to heed God's advice, which He has so wisely put into our hearts, and to reap the rich promise of our land. . . . Soifua, and may God's blessing be always on our council!"

When Tauilo finished speaking Toasa slapped his thigh and laughed. "Our young friend has an eloquent tongue," he said. "I haven't heard such good oratory for a long time. And he owes it all to me, his gifted teacher!" Except for Malo everyone laughed.

When Tauilo got home late that afternoon, after he had helped Toasa eat a whole suckling pig, he hurried into the fale and told Masina what the council had decided. She simply nodded her head and went on smoking.

"What do you think?" he asked.

She looked up at him. "Why don't you become a deacon?" she said, ignoring his question. "The pastor has been wanting you to be a deacon for a while now."

"All right," he replied without much thought.

The full implications of his commitment to Masina dawned on him as he strolled toward the kitchen fale where Lupe was fanning a fire over which a pot was boiling. He stopped. Ever since he inherited the aiga title Masina had wanted him to become a deacon. It was her way of showing Sapepe that her son (and the Aiga Tauilopepe) had not failed, that the disgraceful episode at the theological college was well in the past, something to be forgotten. He had refused her, con-

vinced that Sapepe would never let him forget his disgrace; but as he stood there in the blazing heat with Lupe watching him he experienced a dizzying feeling of freedom. He was sure that God had intervened on his behalf that morning at the meeting. Becoming a deacon would be one way of repaying God.

"What's the matter?" Lupe called. He shook his head and went into the kitchen fale. He sat down on the log beside her, picked up a piece of firewood, and jabbed it into the fire. The fire spat sparks. They watched it. "I am with child," she said.

"What are we going to call him?" he asked, as if he had known all along that she was pregnant. She grinned at him. He laughed and drummed the stick against the side of the soot-coated pot as the breeze shuffled through the eaves and folded blinds and played in Lupe's hair. He saw Pepe walking toward them. Behind their son some boys were sticking wickets into both ends of a cricket pitch they had marked out. Tauilo was sure that their unborn child would be a boy. And the future was a dazzling vision of a huge plantation and two male heirs. Nothing was impossible. The flames danced in his eyes. With Toasa's support at the council meeting he had been given the right to cultivate the largest portion of the land: a wide, well-watered valley that stretched from the end of his aiga's land right up to the foothills and the rim of the range. It was all virgin bush, but in his mind's eye he saw it transformed into a lush, profitable plantation.

Vao and Niu approached the kitchen fale, with buckets of water hanging from yokes across their shoulders. He realized they were developing into comely young women, especially Vao. His daughters went around to the back, put down their loads, sat down on the paepae, and began to talk. He vowed he would pay more attention to them.

A pig darted across Pepe's path as he neared the kitchen fale. His hand curved down swiftly to a stone and, in one sweeping motion, threw. He missed. Tauilo laughed, and be-

fore the pig disappeared into the taro patch behind the kitchen fale he pushed it out of sight with a stinging stone. Pepe whooped. Then he came and leaned against the fale post beside Tauilo.

"Where've you been?" Lupe asked.

"Helping some people with their umu."

"You spend most of your time helping others and not me and your sisters," she said.

Pepe shrugged his shoulders, knowing she was only pretending to be angry. "Do you believe in aitu?" he asked.

"Who's been talking to you about aitu?"

"No one. Did you know there's a headless, wailing, weeping, ferocious aitu living in Toasa's plantation?"

"So it's Toasa who's been telling you that?"

"This aitu eats bananas and rats and owls and missionaries," Pepe said. His parents laughed. Pepe watched them skeptically. "Toasa's going to take me to see him someday. I wanted Toasa to take me right away, but he said someday. It's always someday. Even the lions."

"The what?" asked Lupe.

"The lions," said Pepe. "Toasa reckons there are lions right on top of the mountains. You know, where all the rivers in Sapepe start from. He's the only man who's seen the lions." His parents struggled to suppress their laughter. "I believe Toasa even if you don't!" he said. His parents tried to look serious. "Do you know the valley behind our plantation?" Tauilo nodded. "Well," continued Pepe, "Toasa believes if you burn down all the trees in the valley and dig up the ground you'll find gold there."

"That's our valley now," Tauilo said. "Toasa made sure we got it."

"Does that mean we can burn down the bush and dig up all that gold?" Pepe asked.

"But there's no gold in Samoa," Lupe said, trying to look serious.

"There *is* gold!" laughed Tauilo. "Gold that grows out of

the fertile ground." He sprang up and danced mincingly around the fire while Pepe and Lupe laughed and Vao and Niu watched them from outside the kitchen fale.

That night Tauilo didn't go to meet Moa; he spent a long time beside the lamp, reading the Bible.

6 To Market, To Market

They were traveling straight for the morning sun. The truck groaned on, its wheels crunching at the unsealed road and kicking up a cloud of dust. It was Malo's truck; Moa had got it for Tauilo. He glanced through the rear window at the baskets of bananas. Five young men of his aiga sat on the baskets, guarding them. All the men of his aiga had spent the previous day cutting down the bunches and packing them. The work had been arduous, for they had to carry the heavy baskets on their shoulders three miles from the plantation to the village. A clinging heat started to stir in the compartment.

The driver was Malo's fat brother, Timu. He was dressed in baggy khaki trousers and a tattered T-shirt with a faded picture of Superman on the front. Because of his enormous belly Timu looked as though he was finding it extremely difficult to steer the truck and change gear.

"Hot, isn't it?" Tauilo remarked.

"Yes, very hot," Timu replied. Tauilo lit a cigarette and gave it to him. "Thanks," said Timu. "Got a big load of bananas there. Going to sell them at the Apia market?" Tauilo nodded. "Going to make a lot of money," said Timu. Tauilo lit a cigarette for himself.

Pepe, who was sitting between them, all the while watching Timu's actions and the dials on the dashboard, bumped against Timu when the truck hit a deep rut. "First time

after he had said a short prayer of thanks to God for guiding Tauilopepe back to the true path. Then, without waiting for Tauilo, he broke a biscuit of cabin bread in half, put it into his mouth, and crunched it noisily. "Don't forget God and His Church when you succeed," he said through a bulging mouth, "because it will be He who will open the treasures of this world to you. We'll accept you into the church as a deacon two Sundays from today, the Lord willing."

Tauilo picked up one biscuit of cabin bread and started to eat. Being a deacon had definite advantages, he thought, feeling the sweet pulp of well-chewed cabin bread slipping smoothly down his throat. As he lifted the mug of cocoa to his lips he looked up at Filipino's photograph. Then he raced Filipino through the cabin bread and cocoa.

"I'd like you to take the sermon the first Sunday next month," Filipino said when they had eaten everything. "If you need any help in preparing your sermon, remember I'm always here, always available."

Tauilo had never felt so complete as now when he pictured himself up there in the pulpit telling the people of the mysterious ways of Jehovah. He would have to buy a new suit and a black tie, and he must remember to wear his new sandals.

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Lions and Aitu

The sound of the sea faded as they penetrated deeper into the plantations, about a hundred men in single file meandering over the track, all carefully avoiding the puddles. It was early morning and some of them were still half-dazed with sleep; they were hungry also for they hadn't eaten. They carried bushknives and axes. Dew dripped off the vegetation, and a few birds streaked over the trees, heading for the sea and the village the men had left behind. Ahead, a blanket of mist covered the bush-clad range. The sun was not yet visible over the barrier of trees to their left, and they hoped that a kind shield of cloud would keep it off them while they worked. The night before, Tauilo had summoned about half the Sapepe matai to his fale, and after a heavy meal had told them of his plans for clearing his new land. Toasa had immediately offered to allow the men of his aiga to work for Tauilo. Most of the other aiga heads offered also.

Some of the men started to sing a sea chant: the stirring rhythm of paddles and sea, of taut muscles, and the promise of a large catch rose up to the waking sky. Tauilo didn't join the singing; he was busy thinking up methods of getting the most work out of the men. In front of him shuffled Toasa leaning on his walking stick. He had insisted on accompanying the work party despite Tauilo's warning that the heat and distance might prove too much for him. Tauilo was glad he had come though. With the old man watching them the men would be sure to work hard. Tauilo hoped that Lupe and the women of his aiga were starting to cook the food to feed the men in the afternoon. The food had cost him over half the contents of one of his money-filled corned-beef tins.

Cacao trees, burdened with scarlet fruit, lined the sides of the track; among them were gatae shrubs and sometimes sugarcane, taro, and taamu; beneath them lay a carpet of cacao leaves. He heard Toasa's labored breathing and wanted to help him, but he knew the old man would refuse help. He was stubborn and vain, boasting often of the times he had lifted hefty loads twice his weight and walked miles with them, swum oceans, knocked out men with one punch. No idle boasting either. All the old people could vouch for Toasa's strength.

The sun emerged from the trees, sucking the mist off the range and the dew off the bush. The murmur of the sea had ceased. A flying fox circled above them; then, when someone shouted, it curved off and disappeared. They came to a stand of papaw trees, yellow with ripe fruit; some of the men picked the fruit and distributed them. Tauilo accepted some slices. The thick sweet juice dribbled down his chin as he ate. No one sang now. It was going to be a hot day. That night they would sleep deeply, with aching bones and muscles, and with the ferocious sun still pulsating in their heads. But before sleep they would listen again to the healing sermon of the sea.

They were climbing now, knowing that over the hill lay the valley and, a few miles further up, hard grinding work. Sweat. Strained muscles. Fearless insects stinging their bodies. Wood dust in their eyes. And hunger.

The plantations grew fewer, looked more impermanent and neglected after they passed Tauilo's plantation and began dipping into the valley. There were only a few banana trees and taro, smothered by creepers, and stands of massive trees became more numerous—wild defiant barriers against the wind—and silence, always the green threatening silence. The track was harder to follow. Bushknives slashed at the undergrowth blocking their way. The dank smell of rotting wood and leaf and wet earth pervaded everything.

Then came the clearing, stretching for a hundred yards or

so—a carpet of tenacious creeper over lava rock. Beyond it, virgin bush confronted them. They stood and stared at it in silence: they had been away too long, had become men of the easy shore lands: this gigantic wall of tree and liana and creeper they had combated only in their nightmares; now it was real, and they felt puny, helpless. Some of them looked at their bushknives and axes and shook their heads. This work needed fire, blazing hungry flame. Tauilo stood beside Toasa, not knowing what to do to restore the men's faith in themselves. He stabbed his bushknife into the ground.

Only Toasa broke from the line and started to make his way across the clearing, his walking stick stabbing footholds into the creepers, like a blind man painfully searching his way across unfamiliar territory. The men watched him. Halfway across the clearing he stopped and turned to face them. Somehow he no longer looked ridiculous set against the background of bush—this lone figure of an old man who had come home to the aitu and lions and legendary creatures he insisted on filling the children's imaginations with. Suddenly they saw his body shaking. His face contorted in a strange way and they thought he was weeping. But the sound which issued from his mouth and echoed across the clearing was laughter.

One by one they made their way toward him. Tauilo was the last.

"There she is," Toasa said, sweeping his walking stick across the bush. "No one has touched her before. Anyway no one who's alive to tell us, eh? She has remained pure since God created these islands. Line up!"

All the men except Tauilo, who remained beside Toasa, formed a line at the foot of the green wall. "Remember, no one has touched her before!" Toasa shouted. The men advanced cautiously. "What are you waiting for, eh? You don't want to deflower her? You scared of her?" A few of the men laughed. Tauilo advanced to a short tree and chopped it down with one blow of his ax. "There, see that?" called

Toasa. "It's easy. She won't scream and charge you in court with rape!" Many of the others followed Tauilo's example. "Good! Come on now, raise your baby-sized manhoods and chop, cut, burn!" The line advanced; the axes and bushknives started biting into the flesh of the living wall.

When the first big trees thundered to the ground, tearing and leveling all the small vegetation before them, some of the men cheered. Their axes and bushknives took on greater fury. Soon the snapping, chomping sound of iron biting deep shattered the silence and chased the birds like wood chips into the air and away toward the range. Toasa moved from group to group, encouraging them to hack and chop. "Prove your manhood!" he said.

As the men advanced, leaving behind them fallen trees and cleared undergrowth alive with bugs and gnats and ants, Toasa tired of what he had turned into a game. That walk across the clearing had reminded him of a previous journey he had made across a similar clearing. (Or had it been the same clearing?) But when had he made that journey, walking ahead toward the bush with other men watching him, stopping, turning, and laughing for no reason at all? Had he only dreamed it? A nightmare perhaps? Or was it just a trick his imagination was playing on him? An old man's mind wandered, forgot things, made up things. Only one thing was not a trick: he had felt as he walked across the clearing that this would be his last journey into the bush. He sat down on a boulder in the shade and smoked, and studied Tauilo.

To Toasa the bush had always been a mystery—impersonal and aloof yet always there watching, like the sea. After appeasing it with prayer and ritual his ancestors had taken from it only what they needed; had cleared only small areas for food gardens. They had learned through the centuries to live with the mystery and the gods in the mystery. They had believed that the gods and the land and the bush and the sea and all other living creatures were indivisibly part of that perpetual cycle of birth, life, death, and rebirth. They had

drawn boundaries over the land from the shore to the mountain ridge, but it had been for ownership, not to burn and clear the land for farming and profits. Ownership of land gave meaning to their way of life, to the titles and status of their aiga. Disputes over land had often resulted in open warfare, but when the feuding ended the victors left the land as it had been—bush-clad, proof of one's mana, the scene of one's valiant deeds.

When the papalagi came they outlawed the bush. They bought land, bush-free land, in other districts, with guns, cheap goods, and lies. Then with fire and steel they drove the bush and gods inland, and erected barbed-wire fences. All for copra. With the missionaries, these papalagi settlers shattered the taboo that had ensured the survival of that cycle in which man had respected all other living things. Now Toasa was witnessing his own people continue that process of destruction. Even the mosquitoes seemed agitated; he counted four on his arm but left them alone. In that slow walk across the clearing he had finally accepted the inevitable. He had looked at the bush, then back at Tauilo; he had realized he was standing between them and had decided to make way. That was why he had laughed. To Tauilo the past had no real meaning. He had seen that often enough in his eyes after he had returned from theological college. The deck of cards had been cut years before, even before these men were born, and he, Toasa, had lost. Luck, as Lafo said, was either for you or against you. You either had it or you didn't. And he didn't have it, not anymore; the papalagi had made sure of that. The world he was trying to prop up would sooner or later collapse completely.

When he was a boy the changes introduced by the papalagi had bewildered him. He thought again of Taulopepe Mosooi, Taulopepe's great-grandfather, the only matai who had resisted missionary penetration into Sapepe, and who had died in the last pre-Christian battle, hurling himself at the enemies' spears, yelling, "I'll die a man!" One last defiant ges-

ture. After him Sapepe had accepted totally, relinquished the old religion, and everything else which offended the missionaries, to gain the mana of the new God. The years accelerated the establishment of the Church. He, Toasa, growing up with Tailopepe Laau and conditioned by a faith which had become a vital part of the Sapepe way of life, he too had accepted Christianity, even though the pull was strong in him of what the missionaries and pastors condemned as "a pagan past without light."

But this had not meant the adoption of papalagi values and ways. When he assumed the aiga title his leadership was rooted firmly in tradition and the values of the faa-Sapepe, the Sapepean way, or in what he believed these values had been. Together with Tailopepe Laau, the other half of what he called his "private aiga," he had successfully curbed the missionaries and traders, prevented wholesale radical change. Even Malo, he had believed, through whom the threat of the town was growing stronger, could do little to alter the balance of power in Sapepe. The Sapepean way of life could not be changed, he had believed then, for had it not been given to them by Jehovah, who alone could change or destroy it? Most of the matai of his generation had believed this also, so that Christianity had not weakened their way of life but strengthened it. He had encouraged this belief. But now most of those men were dead.

A male child came into his life, his friend Tailopepe Laau's youngest son. He loved him more than his own children, and he helped Tailopepe Laau to bring him up. Toasa had hoped that the boy would continue their system of leadership, and he hadn't really wanted to take part in Tailopepe Laau and Masina's relentless attempt to make their son a pastor. But he did; and he felt hypocritical for having done so. The boy returned from Malua Theological College a failure to his parents, who felt he had disgraced their aiga, and a failure to Toasa, who felt he had turned into a stranger, a man of the town.

When Tailopepe Laau died only he, Toasa Faaola Matagifa, was left, the last of a generation. Eccentric. Cantankerous. Obsolete. A quaint cardsharp who no longer fully trusted the younger matai, especially those like Malo and Tailopepe. To such men loyalty to anyone or anything was barterable; integrity was a commodity which could be sold and bought. So now, as he watched the men working, as the trees crashed to the ground, he concluded that, like the bush, he had become obsolete. His one inconsolable regret was that Tailopepe, the son of his friend, of the man he had loved so much, would be responsible for the final destruction of his world. At the meeting of matai, by allowing Tailo the best share of the land, he, Toasa, had chosen Tailo as his executioner.

Slapping at the mosquitoes on his arms, he flicked his cheroot into the creepers and watched it die slowly. The desperate hope came that perhaps the strength of the past which encompassed Sapepe would absorb the new changes, would subtly modify them as it had absorbed and modified Christianity. He squinted as he looked up at the sun now near its zenith. At least the sun would never change.

The trees kept on falling.

When Toasa saw Tailo approaching him he straightened up and was again the old man whose sole preoccupation in life was card playing and the acceptance of whichever way the cards fell.

"The work is going well," Tailo said. Toasa nodded. Tailo sat down beside him. They watched the men working.

"Going to be a deacon, eh?" Toasa said. Tailo grinned. "That's good. Your father was a very good deacon despite the fact he could hardly read or write." Tailo cringed visibly, and Toasa wanted to hurt him. Why? He didn't know or care. "Neither could I. Never bothered to learn, never saw the use for it, eh. But your father had a prodigious memory. Like a book centuries old. He could remember far more than

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I could of Sapepe history. Even a storehouse of songs, chants, and rituals that went out when the missionaries came in. But I suppose you knew that about him?" Tauilo nodded. Toasa knew Tauilo was lying—Taulopepe Laau had revealed almost nothing of what he knew to others, and especially not to his own son. Toasa had never understood why his friend hid behind an impregnable mask of secrecy, especially from his own wife and children. But he had never asked him. There had been an unwritten pact between them—there were to be no questions; they had each to accept the other as he was and to trust each other to the point of death. It had proved a lifetime trust which neither of them had ever broken or doubted.

"Your father was a great fellow," he said. "I would have given my life for him, and I'm sure he would have given his for me." He saw Tauilo shift uncomfortably. "But I suppose you know what trust is. Honor, integrity, and all that ancient excrement, eh?" Tauilo tried to smile. "Did you know we were the only people who ever reached the top of the mountain range?" Tauilo shook his head. "The only two since the missionaries and traders nailed us to the seashore. Do you know what we found?" He paused, and looking steadily at Tauilo said, "*We found lions and aitu and important memories.*"

For an instant Tauilo looked stunned. Toasa thought, Ah, he's afraid I've gone mad. So he went on. "We were only twelve years old—foolishly brave because we didn't know what fear was. One night we dared each other. Later we'd have liked to break the challenge, but we didn't want to admit to each other we were still without hairs, eh." He laughed. Tauilo didn't laugh. "We stole out early in the morning, and I can still remember the barking dogs, the cold feel of the dew, the noisy pigs, and the fear. We pissed over the rock fence and watched the steam rising as the water slapped into the ground. Your father's back was turned to me. He was a prude; he never discussed sex or farted openly

or told bawdy jokes. A bit like you!" He glanced at Tauilo and saw the downcast eyes.

"Well, we hurried through the trees, carrying our basket of taro and bottles of water. No one knew we had left. We thought we'd be back the same day. At first the going was easy—we knew the track well. But two hours later the track ran out and we were scared. We looked at each other and knew we couldn't break our bargain. 'Come on,' said your father. He always led when the going got tough. I was his shadow, tagging along because a shadow can't do anything else. We didn't take the trail we came on today: we dipped into the valley from the western side. He stumbled. I caught him, straightened him up. 'Shall we go back?' I asked. Without speaking he crawled ahead through the undergrowth down toward the valley floor and into a clearing where we rested and gnawed at our dry taro and gulped down the water. Afterward I pulled up my lavalava and shat. He looked away. And he laughed, eh. The first time he'd ever laughed at anything like that. And I had to laugh too. And our fear started to disappear. Going up the valley onto the foothills was easy. We pretended we were warriors stalking enemy troops.

"It was late afternoon when we reached the top of one of the hills halfway up the range. We rested under the wild trees and watched the wood pigeons and remembered what Taulopepe Faiga, your grandfather, had told us about the great pigeon hunters of the ancient days. War and pigeon hunting were the sport of alii; something gone now, forgotten. Anyway I shouted, and in a clatter of wings the pigeons were gone. I've never seen any as free since then. Free. Keeping to the range, away from the rifles. It's slaughter to hunt with guns. No skill or art about it. In the old days a hunter would even wait for days to snare a pigeon, using a live, trained decoy to lure it into a trap. That was art. All gone. Today, it's aim, fire. Beauty exploded in a brutal instant, eh!" His voice reached a passionate intensity. Then he remem-

bered where he was and who he was talking to, blinked, and laughed.

"We got up and went on. Always up and ahead, with the sun sinking and our fear returning because we'd heard of the *aitu* the missionaries had exiled to the bush and range. Ancient *aitu*, gods who'd fallen from grace, out of date yet still believed in when the dark fell. Over lava boulders we crawled, scratched and bleeding. Helping each other up toward the sky and the wind curling through the trees. Then we were there, on the top, under the highest trees. And the ocean was before and behind us, slipping away into nothing at the ends of the world. Below us the ridges and valleys and the plains lay blue and still, as peaceful as our forefathers must have seen them when they first settled here. Anyway we sprawled out and fell asleep. The *aitu* didn't haunt us. We didn't even feel the mosquitoes."

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He stopped again and saw that *Tauilo* was looking at the range. "We woke at dawn, wet and cold and hungry, our bodies blistered with mosquito bites. And our fear returned when we realized where we were, feeling the *aitu* and the gods watching us from the trees, from the mist. Your father got up, saw I was crying, and said, 'They won't hurt us. *I know.*' Your old man was always a strange fellow. I never once saw him afraid of the supernatural. I think he actually believed in the ancient gods. Not that it stopped him from being a good Christian deacon. One god isn't so different from another. It all depends on the man. When he said that, I suddenly felt free—the mist, the shadows, the wind, the bush, and the gods—or whatever they were—weren't against us but were *with* us. Do you understand? They were our friends." He sniffed hard and spat.

"Then we saw the rock platform under the highest tree, facing the east. We went to it. You know what we found, eh? . . . Two conch shells cracked and brown with age. Nothing else. Nothing to show who'd brought them all that way. Do you know what conch shells were in the old days?"

Tauilo shook his head. "In many villages they were symbols of the gods, the voices of certain gods. But I didn't know that then. Up to that moment your old man had always been the brave one, so I thought I'd better prove I had hairs too. So guess what I did, eh? I picked up one of the shells and got ready to blow it. The shell was nearly to my lips when—boom—your old man hit it out of my hands. I just stood there, really angry with him. He picked it up gently and put it back on the platform.

"'Why did you do that?' I asked. He only glared at me. It was only an old useless thing, and there he was looking at me as if I should be dead. 'Why?' I said again. I sat down when he told me what his father had told him about conch shells. He sat down too and we stared at the shells for a long, long time. When the first rays of the sun hit them your father and I made a bargain: we would never reveal the location of the platform to anyone else. Not even to the people we trusted. Why we made that bargain we didn't know. Only that we felt it was important to make it, to keep the shells a secret, perhaps forever. It *was* important. Do you understand what I mean, *Tauilo*? There are things a man—and your father and I became men when we made that journey—must commit himself to, even if most people consider them meaningless. To us, the conch shells *were* important."

His voice broke, and he looked at *Tauilo*, who was watching the men working. "Anyway," he sighed, "we agreed to keep the shells and shrine a secret. And to make sure we'd never reveal their whereabouts we agreed to refer to them as 'lions.' Of all the names we could have called them, we called them *lions*." He laughed lightly, but he was feeling tired, sensing that *Tauilo* was far away, lost in the fertile valley. "When we returned home we got the thrashing of our lives. They'd spent the whole night searching for us. But we never told them where we had been. Never." He paused. "I wonder what would have happened if I had blown the conch, the voice of the gods, eh? Do you think they would've returned

out of the grave? . . . Lions, aitu, and memories!" He slapped Tauilo's shoulder and started to laugh. Stopped suddenly and said, "What are you going to plant?"

"Cacao, taro, and bananas," replied Tauilo.

"And money, eh!" said Toasa. "Pity money doesn't grow on trees. It'd be a lot easier for everyone if it did, wouldn't it?"

Tauilo said nothing.

The sun had clambered past noon and chased the shadows from the two men sitting there impervious to the heat. Toasa gazed up at the range, now a dark blue haze against the blinding sky, and thought of the journey that had turned him and Tauilopepe Laau into men and inseparable friends. When he became aware of Tauilo again his heart longed for the boy he had loved who was now lost within the stranger beside him. Then he remembered Pepe and determined to try again. Pepe understood the lions and aitu. Were the lions still up there, waiting to be found, waiting for the human breath that would bring them back to life? Maybe waiting for Pepe? Pepe was *his* son.

At first Tauilo had listened attentively to Toasa's tale, eager for a glimpse of the father he had never really known. But Toasa had revealed little of him. He had exaggerated as usual, Tauilo thought: they had probably never been up on the range, had never endured that trek; the whole story was a product of Toasa's imagination. As for the lions and aitu, that was just too much. Toasa was becoming senile. So he had stopped listening, catching only bits of the story and nodding his head.

Not long after Toasa finished his story, Lupe and Pepe and other members of the Aiga Tauilopepe arrived, carrying baskets and pots of food dangling from yokes. In the brilliant light they looked like panting beasts of burden. Pepe, who was carrying a black kettle, broke from the group, ran to Toasa, and handed him a large baked taro. The old man

broke the taro in half and they started eating. The others took the food and rested in the shade.

A tree swayed and crashed down. Pepe stared wide-eyed. "Did you see that, eh?" he asked Toasa. "Just missed those men. You think they would have got killed? Do you think so, eh?"

"Would've flattened them," replied Toasa. "Flattened them like flies." Tauilo winced.

"No hope, eh?" said Pepe.

"No hope whatsoever. Even a miracle wouldn't have saved them."

"What's a miracle?" asked Pepe.

"A miracle?" Toasa paused and, looking at Tauilo, said, "That's when something comes out of nothing and nothing comes out of something. Like when fish grow legs and walk ashore."

"Oh," said Pepe. Toasa laughed. He looked at Tauilo and dug him in the ribs with his elbow. "What kind of fish are those?" Pepe asked.

"Miracle fish," replied Toasa.

"Can you eat them, eh?" asked Pepe, developing the joke further.

"Only miracle workers can eat them." Toasa swallowed the last bit of taro and belched.

Pepe handed him his own piece of taro and asked, "Are there any miracle workers in Sapepe?"

"Oh, those. Yes. They're odd fellows, very odd."

"Why odd?" asked Pepe. Tauilo wished the senseless conversation would stop.

"Well, because they're hairless, eh. Every time they perform a miracle they lose ten hairs. So too many miracles result in baldness."

Pepe laughed and said, "Was Christ bald then?" A tense pause. Tauilo glared at Pepe and Toasa looked at Tauilo, amused.

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"No, Jesus wasn't bald."

"Therefore Jesus was no miracle worker, eh!" reasoned Pepe. Tauilo waited eagerly for Toasa's answer, for the heretical declaration, but he hadn't taken Toasa's subtle brain into account.

Suddenly Toasa stood up and said, "Attention!" Pepe snapped to attention. Tauilo was confused, so confused he was angry with being confused. He thought Toasa really was senile but waited to see what he and Pepe were up to. "At ease, lion!" Toasa ordered. Pepe obeyed smartly. Tauilo's confusion became more junglelike. Toasa was either senile or he had gone mad. Tauilo cursed to himself. Another tree crashed down; the sound boomed across the valley.

"Who are we?" chanted Toasa.

"Lions three—you, me, and
the miracle fish; the mountain,
sky, and bloody sea!" recited Pepe.

Lupe and the people in the shade laughed. Tauilo's confusion changed into embarrassed, angry bewilderment. Toasa wasn't senile or insane, he was just plain stupid.

"Who are we?" chanted Pepe.

"Aitu three—you, me, and
Filipo's tea; money,
sharks and Sapepe's pig!" recited Toasa.

Some of the men stopped working and laughed.

Lupe came over and sat behind Tauilo. "Is the food ready?" he asked her in an attempt to stop himself from listening to Toasa and Pepe.

"Yes," she replied. "How long will it take? The work, I mean?"

"Don't know."

"Lot of work," she said.

Tauilo couldn't take his attention from Toasa and Pepe. They had stopped laughing and were now whispering to

each other and pointing at the range. "Is there enough food?" he asked Lupe.

"I think so."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, I'm sure."

"You don't have to get angry," he said.

"I'm *not* angry."

"You are!" he accused her. Another tree thundered to the ground.

"I'm not, but you are!" she replied. They suddenly noticed that Toasa and Pepe were looking at them, and they stopped quarreling. One punch and she'd be out cold, Tauilo thought. Would serve her right for talking back. Lupe got up and returned to the shade and the other women. When he felt that no one was looking at him he moved into the shade too. But Toasa and Pepe followed him and sat only a few yards away from him.

"What is your name?" he heard Toasa ask Pepe. The laughter was gone.

"My name is Pepe Tauilopepe. Descendant of the House of Sapepe, Heir to the Estate of the Dead, future Protector of the Living, Guardian of the Unborn," Pepe recited. It was the same ritual that Toasa had taught him at Pepe's age, a ritual he had responded to wholeheartedly then but discarded at theological college—and rightly so.

"What must you do?" asked Toasa.

"Be a leader, strong and merciful. Be a man, just and . . ."

"Be a man just and *fair*," Toasa prompted. Pepe recited the whole answer again.

"What must you remember always?" Toasa asked.

"That the Dead of Sapepe are with us, and we, the Living, are with the Dead and the yet Unborn, forever and inseparable. Our duty is to uphold what the Dead bequeathed to us to guard and bequeath to the Unborn when we too join the Dead," chanted Pepe.

Tauilo recaptured the time when he had visited Toasa and

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told him how he had learned at the pastor's school that Moses was the prophet who had miraculously caused water to flow out of a barren rock. Toasa had started there and then to teach him the oral ritual he was now reciting with Pepe. A few days later he had informed Toasa that the pastor was sure Jehovah had created mankind from Adam and Eve and the snake. Toasa laughed and told him the Sapepe myth of the Creation.

"In the beginning there was only the Void," Toasa had told him. "Different colors formed in the Void. These colors turned into solid matter, combined, and formed the world. The gods then covered the world's nakedness with creepers. After centuries of light and darkness the creepers rotted and turned into maggots. Out of these maggots emerged Man, who, on his death and the falling of the dark, turned into maggots again." Tauilo was extremely loyal to Toasa then, so he didn't tell the pastor about this heretical story. He even believed maggots were beautiful, and he continued to visit Toasa in the evening to learn the ancient beliefs and history of his people. But now, as he gazed at the land being cleared, he resolved that his son's future was with the land and the promise of profit it held, not with Toasa and his peculiar madness. And yet, as he listened to Toasa and Pepe, he thought of the Living and the Dead and the Unborn, and remembered the maggots, a terrifying squirming mountain, feeding on itself and disgorging mankind. He got up, took his bushknife, and hurried to bury his fears in the ritual of work.

An hour or so later everyone gathered in the shade, and the men had their meal of tinned herrings, corned-beef stew, baked taro, and bananas. Swarms of flies buzzed around the food; the women warded them off with small branches while the men ate. Vao and Niu went around with buckets of water, filling enamel cups which the men emptied in long gulps. All the men were streaked with dirt and stank of sweat and wood sap; their hair was brittle dry from the heat and webbed with dead insects, bits of leaves, and wood chips. They ate without talking: there were groaning bellies to fill,

cool baths and sleep to think about. But they still had hours of work to do, a taunting sun to tolerate and curse until it fled laughing over the western ridge, and the long, dreary march home.

Pepe shared Toasa's food mat. They were the only ones with enough energy to talk. "How are your manhoods now?" Toasa asked the men. A few of them looked up from their food. "Can't stand up, eh? The bush too much of a woman for you?" Some of the men grinned. Tauilo gritted his teeth. "When I was your age I could work all day long. Chopped down whole forests and still had time to snare a shark or two at night." The grins turned into chuckles. "Used to eat them raw too. Good for the liver, and the female sharks loved it!" The chuckles changed into lewd laughter. Some of the women giggled. Tauilo tried to smile. "Looking at you tired fellows, anyone would think you've been working," Toasa continued, until he had most of them talking and joking back.

"Were there any trees in your day?" a man asked.

"Trees! Just oceans of them. So tall you couldn't see their tops, eh. The trees you've been chopping are only weeds."

"What about axes?" asked another man.

"Axes? Who needed them? We used to break trees down with our bare hands!" Toasa said. Except for Tauilo he had them laughing, even most of the women.

Lupe handed around two packets of tobacco. The men rolled cigarettes and lit them with a smoldering branch that Niu brought. After the cigarettes and a short rest they returned to work, the women started back to the village, and Pepe and Toasa slept in the shade.

Shortly after, most of the men stopped working and looked up, shielding their eyes with their hands. Tauilo noticed their silence and looked up too. They had never seen so immense a tree: its sheer height took Tauilo's breath away for a moment. He joined the others under the tree—a banyan tree. It looked like a gigantic octopus squatting on the land, its tentacles rooted firmly into the earth, and casting an eerie

trembling shadow which seemed to frighten the surrounding bush and the valley itself. Tauilo sat down on a tree trunk. Centuries old, the banyan looked as though it had always been there. Men had probably come, looked at it with bewildered astonishment, and passed on into oblivion. The base of the banyan was larger than the paepae of the biggest fale in Sapepe. It would even dwarf the church. Only the sea could match it.

Two men rushed to it and began chopping at one of its roots. The others laughed. It would take a month to destroy it, Tauilo thought, a month of strained muscles and curses and perhaps final defeat. A month wasted and his money running out. Fire might do the job, but . . .

"What shall we do with it?" a man asked.

"We'll burn it down some other time," Tauilo replied.

They passed on to less formidable trees that were more pliant to their vanity. But as Tauilo worked, he stopped often and gazed up at the banyan. He couldn't understand why he was growing angry; it had to do with Toasa's tale of the trek and the lions and aitu and the maggots, and Pepe, and now the banyan, all these made him feel *small*, made him feel he hadn't achieved anything worthwhile, and he didn't want to feel that way. He swung his ax, felt it sink into the flesh of the tree he was felling, and enjoyed the sense of power, his power. He suddenly wanted a woman, a big insatiable woman who needed a lot of power to satisfy her.

When the sun squatted on the shoulders of the western ridge Tauilo ordered the men to stop working. They woke Toasa and Pepe and started trailing homeward, already feeling the cool water on their skins, the hot food in their bellies, smelling the sea and tasting the salt in the night breeze that would surely rise from the sea, hearing their children. And their women around them like the sea. And sleep.

"Going to call the new plantation Leaves of the Banyan Tree," Tauilo said. A few of them nodded. The rest were too tired to care.

9

Truly Inspired

Hidden in the mangrove trees, Tauilo counted the money he had left in the one remaining corned-beef tin. He compared what he had spent in feeding the men with the area they had cleared and planted, and concluded that every penny had been worth it. Nearly a hundred acres of taro and banana and cacao trees planted in just over a month.

The tangled roots and branches of the mangrove trees were like an impregnable wall around him. Through the gap above him he glimpsed a sky covered with a mattress of gray cloud, but he knew it wouldn't rain. He counted the money twice aloud. The tide was out and he was buried to his ankles in mud. Only ten men hadn't lasted the month of exhausting work: five had taken ill, the others had just stopped coming. Tauilo peeled fifteen one-pound notes from the roll, debated a moment, then put two of them back. He'd give thirteen pounds to the men; perhaps they would use it for a feast. He squatted back on his haunches. There had been times when the men had nearly given up, but he had challenged them with day-long displays of hacking and chopping, no rest even for food, from morning to sunset, until he could hardly swing an ax. It had worked. The men had kept up. He sighed, his mind caressing the dazzling picture of his new plantation, the crops growing lushly, bearing fruit, and then more money.

A large black pig, caked with mud, broke through a gap in the tangled roots, snout nosing the mud aside. Tauilo scratched his genitals and thought of Malo's house and store, and of Moa. The pig grunted and looked warily at him. His hand edged down and around the empty corned-beef tin. The

A TALENT

ALBERT WENDT

WESTERN SAMOA

until she pulled out her basket from under their only bed, and then turned to leave again. 'Where are you going?' he asked her. (Now in her sixty-seventh year, she was bent and shrivelled like a crooked orator's staff onto which a meagre distribution of flesh had been fastened; she reminded him of an underfed sow which had given birth to a gluttonous brood of piglets.) She continued to leave, and he remembered she was deaf in one ear (the left one). 'Where are you going?' he almost shouted.

Without turning or stopping, she said, 'Out!'

'To where?' he called. No reply, only the sound of her feet shuffling out of his hearing. So he cursed her too, called her a sour and ignorant woman whom he didn't deserve as a mother.

He got a pillow, which was stained with coconut oil, off the bed, flung it down on to the floor, thumped his head back into it as he lay down and tried to sleep. Found he couldn't, not with the heat and the flies and the mangrove stench and his hunger and his wife and children and now his mother deserting him.

After what seemed an hour, his body blistered with sweat, he realised, with even more depressing depression, as it were, that no other whole family in Sapepe had ever deserted their matai² — it just wasn't done. Everyone was going to accuse him of having been mean and heartless and cruel towards his family. (For a mother to leave her son was irrevocable proof that her son was a stone-hearted ingrate.) Trust everyone to blame him and not his ungrateful family! But did he have any choice — no one was going to believe him. He had to get his family back, and stop his village from ridiculing him for a sin he wasn't guilty of. Anyway, he asked himself, who were going to serve him as a matai? Who were to cultivate the plantation, cook his food, and do all those chores meant only for women and untitled males? His belly roared more hungrily and convinced him further to get his wife back (and she wasn't really a bad woman, at least she didn't nag him and she was a good cook and she did satisfy his modest sexual needs — and the more he thought about this and his modest sexual needs became more immodest, so to speak politely, the more he was persuaded he wanted her back); he also needed his mother and children — they respected him (and he admitted to himself that there weren't many people who respected him), and he did love them, for wasn't it a sin for a father not to love, treasure, cherish, and console his own flesh and blood?

But how was he going to get them back? This question hit him in the core of his head like an expertly delivered right-hook, and forced him up to a sitting position, his left hand clutching at his forehead. He couldn't just go to her and, in front of her whole pretentious family (who were nobodies), plead with her to return with the children — it wasn't proper or fitting for a matai (and a man) to humiliate himself that way. No. No, he wasn't going to ask them back! But as his hunger squirmed more painfully, he tried to force himself to swallow his pride: he would only have to humiliate himself once, other men wouldn't hold it against him, and he could always make it appear that she was deliberately humiliating him (and in public at that). Later, he concluded it wasn't

² matai = head of family (patriarch).

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Salepa had a very lively sense of his own worth and assumed that his special talent would get him everything he wanted.

It hadn't rained for over a month, and, sitting in his fale,¹ which was the smallest one in Sapepe village, Salepa (everyone called him Sale) cursed the endless heat and the flies and the stench of the mangroves and the shrieking of his neighbour's children and the audibly complaining hunger in his belly and his wife Lagilelei (everyone called her Lagi) who had left him, taking their three children with her, the week before. After cursing his wife — calling her a mean, sullen, ungrateful, ugly bitch who had sucked the marrow out of his gullible bones for eighteen years — he recursed all the other things he had cursed before cursing his wife. The fourth time he repeated this, he was a pulsating bundle of angry muscle and mouth and breath cursing the whole 'sinful planet' (his phrase) and the whole meaningless forty-four years of suffering (for no reason at all) which had brought him to that September without rain and the moaning of his empty belly.

His mother, Faaluma, who he thought was out in the kitchen fale cooking him a meal, entered the fale quietly, and he didn't notice her

¹ fale = Samoan hut.

proper him considering this important problem while he was desperately hungry, a hungry person wasn't logical, he'd think about it later after he had eaten. Remembered that his mother, who was supposed to have prepared his meal, had gone, and he nearly wept with frustrated hungry anger.

He got up reluctantly (it was absolutely beneath the dignity of a matai to cook his own food), went into the kitchen fale (and it was difficult for his empty stomach to carry his huge body there), started a fire, and put some bananas (there was nothing else to eat) on it to boil. While the bananas boiled, he searched the whole fale for some money to buy some tinned fish or meat to go with the bananas. Flung everything aside. No money. She had taken it all. Tried not to weep. Decided to go to the only store in Sapepe and get some food on credit. Remembered they already owed a lot of money, and Tauiloapepe, the owner of the store, had told them they weren't allowed any more credit. Arse! Arse! Arse! he swore aloud.

Through the falling darkness and the thick crying of the cicadas, he hurried to the store, avoiding being seen by anyone; waited under the breadfruit trees outside the store until all the other customers had left, and then entered and found only Tauiloapepe sitting behind the counter, reading a magazine.

As always, the store smelled of kerosene. Salepa didn't hesitate: tears started streaming down his face as he moved up to the counter and gazed at Tauiloapepe who looked up, saw the tears, and asked, with obvious concern, 'What has happened, Sale?'

'My wife and children!' he replied. 'My poor wife and children!' More tears.

Tauiloapepe was the wealthiest and most powerful matai in Sapepe, but, as Salepa had discovered years before, under the hard exterior of the shrewd businessman was the soft heart of the failed theological student. Tauiloapepe had been in his youth; or, in other words, an easy touch if one knew the correct way to touch. 'Has some trouble happened to your family?' Tauiloapepe asked.

Salepa swallowed and wiped his tears with a corner of his tattered lavalava.³ 'As you know, sir, they - my poor family, that is - went to visit her family last week: her old mother is very ill - dying, they tell me.' Paused. More tears.

'Yes?' Tauiloapepe prompted him.

'I need to go to them,' replied Salepa. 'One of my children - you know, my little son Amiga - is very, very ill, sir.' Wiped his tears again, noted that he had convinced Tauiloapepe, and said, 'I need your help, sir. This poor worthless person needs your help, sir!'

'Will \$5 do?' asked Tauiloapepe.

Salepa nodded his head. 'Thank you, sir. I also need some food to take them. As you well know, sir, my wife's family is very poor!'

Salepa left the store a few minutes later with three tins of herrings in tomato sauce (his favourite), three tins of corned beef (again his favourite brand), \$5 clutched in his left hand, and two large tins of powdered milk for his 'sick son'.

³ lavalava = wrap-around garment.

That night he ate a tin of herrings and a tin of corned beef with the bananas. Then, feeling dizzy from over-eating, his large belly now weighing him down, he showered in his neighbour's shower, as was his family's practice because his family didn't have a shower of their own. (His neighbour, Sava, was a distant cousin so he *was* family.)

He decided to visit Apia the next day, see a cowboy picture maybe, and then, on his way home, call in and see his wife, children, and mother. No need to hurry.

He fell asleep thinking of his son: he was sure the boy would blossom into an important and wealthy man like Tauiloapepe who would care for him in his old age.

He was up early the next morning because he wanted to catch the first bus into Apia where he would breakfast at Savalalo Market on hot pancakes and tea - a luxury he didn't enjoy often enough. Before showering, he realised he needed a shave so he borrowed his neighbour's razor; as usual, he promised to replace the blade. He put on his one and only good shirt (a white one which he wore to church every Sunday), his only unpatched lavalava (a black one which he had borrowed the year before from his brother who lived and worked in Apia as a government driver), and his only belt (a thick leather one which he had stolen the previous Christmas from one of the town stores). He whistled as he combed his hair, realised he needed some hair oil, thought of his cousin and neighbour Sava but persuaded himself not to as there was a limit to the generosity of any human being, even blood relatives, and decided he would buy a tin of brilliantine hair oil (his favourite) in Apia that day - thanks to Tauiloapepe's generosity.

When the bus stopped in front of him, he noticed it was full, so he injected an expression of pain into his face and then limped up to and into the bus. Most of the passengers in the front seats noticed his limp, and three of them stood up and asked him to sit down. Thanking them, he sighed as he sagged into the nearest seat just behind the driver. The young man, who had given him the seat and who was now standing in the aisle, offered him a cigarette but he refused it, saying he was very ill and was on his way to Apia Hospital to consult a papalagi⁴ doctor there.

After consuming twelve pancakes and four mugs of hot tea, he wandered round the market, pretending he was going to buy some food-stuffs: he'd examine the taro⁵ or bananas, ask after the price, the vendor would quote it, and he'd shake his head, mutter Too much! Too much!, and move on to the next vendor. One of the taro vendors, a Sapepean he knew well, asked him why he was all dressed up. Going to see the Public Works about a job, he replied. What kind of job? the man asked. Driving one of the Cabinet Ministers' cars, he said; and, before the man could ask him where he had learned to drive, he said he had to hurry or he'd be late for his appointment. Only a few paces away, he gasped, stopped, fumbled in his shirt pocket, and then returned to the taro vendor.

'Think I've lost all my money!' he said, 'Or some Apia thief has stolen it!' Searched in his pocket again, this time more frantically. 'How am I going home?'

⁴ papalagi = name for white European.

⁵ taro = edible potato-like bulbous root.

'Can I help?' the vendor asked.

'No, the money should be in my clothes somewhere,' he said, re-searching the folds of his lavalava and then his shirt pocket.

'Here, take this,' the vendor offered, stuffing a dollar note into Salepa's shirt pocket.

'No, no, no!' protested Salepa and tried to return the money but the man pushed his hand away.

Two Sapepe vendor victims later, Salepa had collected a further \$4. He now had \$9.25 altogether, and it was only mid-morning. He went to the fish counters, found he couldn't get up to the front because of the crowd bustling around the counters, again pretended he was crippled in his left leg, and one lady, who looked like the wife of a pastor, asked him if she could buy the fish he wanted for him. He thanked her, handed her \$8 and told her to buy as many strings of fish as possible — he needed the fish for his daughter's wedding that evening, he added. He watched her fight her way through the crowd.

She handed him the basket in which she had put the strings of fish she had bought for him. Eight strings at a dollar a string, she told him. He thanked her and started limping away from her, with the basket. She rushed up to him and shoved a dollar note into his shirt pocket. To help with his daughter's wedding, she whispered to him.

He sold seven strings to various people at \$1.50 each, as he went along Beach Road; kept one string for his brother Folo, the driver at P.W.D. \$12.75 he had now. And he whistled as he went to see his brother.

Folo, who had left Sapepe nearly ten years before, had eight children (five were attending school and the fees were high), lived in a rented fale (more a shack than a fale) on rented land (a half-filled in swamp section at Fugalei), was perpetually consulting one traditional healer after another to try and cure his ever-aching stomach, and was earning only about \$35 a month. Unlike other Sapepeans who envied any of their relatives who worked for wages in Apia, and especially those who were government employees, Salepa didn't envy his brother at all: Folo was too obedient, servile, and unimaginative and deserved all the suffering, especially the aching guts, he was receiving.

His brother gladly accepted the string of fish — unlike Salepa, he hadn't eaten that morning. He had been out fishing most of the night but hadn't caught much, Salepa said to him. Folo asked how their mother was. She was healthier than ever and sent him her blessings and she needed some money for her church donation that Sunday, Salepa replied. Again unlike Salepa, Folo never refused any requests from his mother, and Salepa knew this. He didn't have any money on him, said Folo, but he'd go and borrow some from his supervisor. How much was needed? Folo asked. Three dollars would be enough, replied Salepa.

Salepa couldn't control his curiosity, as though he wanted to savour every detail of Folo's suffering, when Folo returned and gave him the money. How much did he have to pay back to his supervisor? he asked Folo. \$3 plus twenty per cent interest, Folo replied, his eyes gazing at his feet. A lot of money, remarked Salepa, folding up the \$3 and sheathing it in his shirt pocket.

On his way back to the market for lunch Salepa wondered why such a person as Folo — and he did love him — continued to tolerate such a humiliating fate.

After lunching on two large helpings of chop suey, rice, and taro, which he paid 80 cents for, he counted his money under the table (there were innumerable thieves in Apia). \$14.95. Excellent take, the best he had made so far in one morning, he congratulated himself.

Still two hours before the matinee started.

On his way along the waterfront towards the Tivoli Theatre, he came across a small poker game taking place under one of the pulu trees. He stopped and, with a scatter of onlookers, watched the three men playing. He knew that such games were illegal but he just couldn't resist it when one of the players threw in his cards and left. From their appearance, the two remaining players looked really formidable Apians well-schooled in all the arts of relieving unwary villagers of their money.

'May I?' Salepa asked. One of the players, a stringy man with a badly pockmarked face and a thin moustache and a large bald spot and thick dirty hands, nodded to him to sit down.

'Where are you from?' asked his partner who, bare to the waist to reveal rippling muscles and an eagle tattoo on his chest, had a stye in his left eye.

'From a village in the back,' Salepa deliberately used a favourite expression used by Apians to emphasise their pretension of superiority to villagers.

'Which village?' the stye-eyed one asked as he shuffled the cards. Salepa gave him the name of the remotest village on Upolo. He noticed (but deliberately ignored) the wink which stye-eyed gave his friend; he now knew what kind of poker the two Apians, Stye-Eyed and Dirty-Hands, wanted to play with him.

'Are we playing for money?' he asked.

Stye-Eyed and Dirty-Hands looked at each other in disbelief. 'Yes,' Stye-Eyed replied, 'but the stakes aren't high. We're only playing for fun.'

'Five cents?' Salepa asked, taking out all his money so they could see it and be overcome with greed.

Dirty-Hands nodded, his eyes caressing Salepa's money. 'Five cents down but you can bet up to ten cents. Is that all right?'

'As long as it's for fun,' said Salepa. He tossed five cents into the centre. His opponents did the same.

Stye-Eyed dealt out the cards after Salepa had cut the pack.

Salepa lost \$2 quickly. He asked one of the onlookers for the time. One hour before the matinee. 'Got to go soon,' he informed the others. 'How about raising the stakes to ten cents and up to twenty cents betting?' Stye-Eyed and Dirty-Hands agreed greedily. And Salepa lost another \$2 in one game. He suggested doubling the stakes as he could only play three more hands because he had to be at the police station at 2 p.m.

'Why are you seeing the police?' Dirty-Hands asked.

'The Commissioner is my relative. Have to see him about some family business.'

Both Stye-Eyed and Dirty-Hands couldn't believe it when Salepa won

all the next three hands and \$8 of their money, got up and said he really had to go.

'But you can't just leave with all our money!' Stye-Eyed protested, his milky-white eye gazing threateningly at Salepa.

'You've got to give us a chance to win our money back!' threatened Dirty-Hands.

'Who says?' Salepa asked. 'As I've told you already, I've got to see my cousin the Commissioner of Police.'

'He's not your cousin!' challenged Dirty-Hands.

'Want to find out?' asked Salepa. 'Just touch any part of me and you'll find out soon enough!'

As he moved away, he heard Stye-Eyed calling, 'Some day, fat man, we'll fix you!' Salepa turned and waved to them with the hand in which he was holding the money he had won off them.

He now had over \$20.

Too full from lunch and disappointed with the western because there wasn't much fighting in it (and he didn't understand a word of all that English), he had fallen asleep half-way through the film. People near him had to wake him up repeatedly so as to try and rid their ears of his loud snoring. Now, as he waited in front of the market for his bus, he found he was hungry again, so he went, bought two pineapple pies and a large bottle of orange soft drink, devoured them, and then bought six loaves of fresh bread, two dozen coconut buns, some butter, and a tin of jam to take to his wife and her nobody family.

The bus swerved and they were round the last bend and into his wife's village. Surreptitiously so the other passengers wouldn't notice, he folded the paper money round the change, leaving out only \$2, and carefully hid the money under the back of his belt. His wife's family was located in the middle of the village beside the church. He called to the driver to stop, and got off the bus, with his arms wrapped tightly around his large parcel of food.

He refused to lower his head as he walked toward the main fale of his wife's family, sensing they were all watching him and castigating him and joking about his size and just behaving rudely like nobodies that they were. He couldn't see his wife or mother or children anywhere. Arse to them all! he swore under his breath.

Once inside the fale and seated crosslegged on the floor and leaning back against the centre front post, Salepa was greeted in the customary way by his wife's father, Sosoatu, a lean fisherman who possessed a lackadaisical silence about him similar to the sea's silence at night. Sosoatu's oratory was slow but enthusiastic and mentioned nothing about what was wrong between them. Salepa's reply, as usual, was exaggerated, over-enthusiastic, and similarly avoided any mention of what was wrong between them. While Salepa orated, he looked around the fale and then into the kitchen fale and then into the nearby fale that belonged to the family, but he couldn't see his wife or children or mother anywhere. After the formal greetings, the two men talked, with Salepa, as usual, doing most of the talking as he couldn't tolerate any lengthy silent pauses in any conversation he was involved in. An hour or so later, evening settling down over the village, Salepa still couldn't

see his family anywhere but he wasn't going to ask.

Before the hurricane lamp was lit, all of Sosoatu's family — his wife and ten children and their children and a numerous assortment of other relatives — came into the fale. As was the practice, it was time for evening lotu.⁶ (All through it, everyone would avoid looking at Salepa, as if he was invisible.) After the hymn and Bible reading, Sosoatu acknowledged that Salepa wasn't invisible by asking him to say the prayer. The theme of Salepa's prayer was forgiveness: he pleaded with God to teach each and everyone of them to forgive one another; he emphasised the importance of forgiveness between husband and wife. When he opened his eyes at the end of his prayer, he saw his wife and children sitting among the people at the back posts of the fale. They immediately left with everyone for the kitchen fale to prepare the evening meal.

At mealtime, during which, as was the custom, only Sosoatu and his wife and Salepa were to eat first and be served by everyone else. Ponaivi, Salepa's eldest daughter who was eighteen years old but still without noticeable breasts, brought him his food on a foodmat. He smiled up at her. Her face, which she turned away immediately, remained an unforgiving blank.

He took his anger out on his food, eating every morsel on his foodmat.

After the meal, during which his wife's mother (a fat woman with a permanent scowl on her face) had refused to speak to him, Fusi, his second and most favourite daughter (he was proud of her beauty which was already turning the heads of every male in Sapepe) brought him a towel, a clean lavalava, and some soap. He thought she would smile at him; she didn't.

He returned from his shower to find himself alone in the spaciouly large fale (even Sosoatu was nowhere in sight). A mosquito net, obviously meant for him, had been strung up at one end of the fale. Arse to them all! he swore under his breath as he whistled and combed his hair and sat down in front of the net as if he wasn't concerned about anything. Arse to all them nobodies, including his daughters who were acting exactly like their nobody relatives!

A short while later, Sosoatu entered and told him that he was sorry he couldn't stay and keep him company as he had to attend a church meeting at the pastor's house that night, and left quickly. So there he was — all alone in an empty fale with the hurricane lamp hanging from the rafters ablaze with accusing light for all the inhabitants of his wife's nobody village to see he was all alone and being punished for being cruel to his own flesh and blood.

He lay down on the pillow and the sleeping mats in the net and pretended he was asleep, forgetting it was very, very early. She'd come to him in the night and beg for his forgiveness, he thought.

She didn't.

This game continued for three days and three nights during which time Salepa optimistically expected Lagi, his wife, to visit him at night but she never did; he also expected his children, especially his ten-year-

⁶ lotu = devotions.

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old son Amiga, to at least smile at him, but they didn't. (His family didn't even sleep in the same fale as him.) He was treated as an important but unwelcomed guest: he was confined to the main fale from the time he awoke in the mornings to the time he went to sleep at night, provided with good food, clothes, and conversation with Sosoatu during meal times, but, like a guest, he wasn't invited to participate in any family activities. When he offered to go fishing with Sosoatu, who usually went fishing every day except Sunday, Sosoatu told him he wasn't going that day. Early one morning he saw his daughter Ponaivi cutting the grass outside the kitchen fale, and he went out to help her but, as soon as she saw him, she ambled off to the tap where her mother was washing a large pile of washing. During meal times, when his wife and children helped serve him his food, he tried to look for a chance to speak to anyone of them but no opportunity was ever allowed him by his watchful opponents. So during the day time, he played patience with a pack of cards which he found on top of the family food safe, and tried to devise a way of defeating them; he also made numerous trips to the family lavatory which was situated on stilts about twenty yards from the shore over a rickety causeway made of stones and hunks of coral, and he didn't care that he was doing all this in full view of his wife's family and village. Arse to them all; he'd wait them out: they'd soon tire of feeding him, having him around as an expensive guest, and they'd either hint to him that he leave, or come out openly and discuss the trouble between them.

Nothing of the sort happened for a few more days, and it wasn't until Sunday after to'onai⁷ that he found the opportunity to talk to Lagi. He didn't go with Sosoatu to the pastor's house for to'onai not because he didn't want to but because Sosoatu didn't invite him to; he ate alone in the main fale, served by many of Sosoatu's family who, throughout the meal, once again avoided looking directly at him but their ominously arrogant presence made him feel like an insect that was being scrutinised minutely and then being rejected as being worthless. He gobbled his food and thanked them. No one said anything, they all got up and left to have their to'onai in one of the smaller family fale at the back, and left him gazing out at the lagoon flashing in the late morning light like a knife blade. Just as he was drifting off to sleep, he caught sight of Lagi taking a mat and pillow towards one of the shady mango trees near the rock fence bordering the family compound. She spread out the mat in the shade and then lay down on it. He pretended he was asleep but he observed the rest of the family until they were all asleep, then, pretending he was going into the plantation, he clambered over the rock fence, and crept along behind the fence until he was under the mango tree and behind the fence opposite his sleeping wife. He rested for a few moments, trying to control his breath and anger — and he was pulsating with anger: it was humiliating what he was doing, what his wife was forcing him to do. Then, after peeping over the fence and surveying the family compound and noting that nobody was awake, he climbed over the fence (and he was careful not to dislodge any of the rocks), and lay down in the narrow gap between the foot of the fence

⁷ to'onai = Sunday lunch, usually held after morning service.

and Lagi, so her family wouldn't see him.

Only her face was exposed, a white sleeping sheet covered the rest of her, and she was snoring softly through her slightly parted mouth. For what seemed an insane moment — and he nearly gave into it — he wanted to strangle her, yes, his hands wrapping around her fat throat, his fingers digging in and in forcing her rebellious tongue to unclench and lengthen out of her disobedient mouth dripping saliva and froth, her eyes bulging like the eyes of dead fish, her limbs twitching. She stirred and turned over to her left side and faced him and he broke from the spell.

Why was he spending all this time and effort and trouble and humiliation over that ungrateful cruel woman, he'd never fathom. She was bloody ugly as well. Once she had been quite comely, but such comeliness had disappeared into fat. He could get any woman he desired, he thought. But could he? He shut his eyes and tried to obliterate the sight of a short fat man being laughed at by a group of children and women. Slowly, hesitantly, he opened his eyes and reached out and touched her lightly on her arm.

Her eyes blinked open and she stared at him. For a moment, he couldn't believe she was awake.

'Don't touch me!' she said and then turned her back to him.

'You were awake all the time?' he asked.

'I've got nothing to say to you!'

'You were awake all the time, weren't you?' he repeated, convinced that she had been awake and had *planned* for him to come to her. She maintained her silence. He clutched her shoulder and tried to turn her round to face him, but she shrugged off his hand. 'I'm talking to you!' he threatened.

'But I'm not talking to you!' she replied.

'Why did you plan this meeting then?' he asked.

'I didn't!'

'You did!'

'I didn't!'

'You did!'

'Keep your voice down!' she said. It was all so ridiculous, he realised suddenly, so he said nothing as he breathed his anger up into the tangled branches of the mango tree.

'Why did you do it?' she asked finally.

'Do what?' he pretended not to know what she was referring to. (He had *acquired* — and he never used any other word for it — \$10 off their Sapepe pastor. Lagi had found out about it, and, when she had castigated him for it, calling him a thief, he had beaten her with his fists.)

'You know what!' she said.

He sighed. 'I don't know what,' he said, his anger gone.

'Why did you steal that money?' she said.

'I didn't steal it,' he replied.

Ignoring his answer, she said, 'You promised you'd never do it again but you went right ahead and did it, and you did it to our Man of God!'

'He gave me the money,' he insisted.

'But you told him one of your stories. You lied to him.'

'Our pastor is a generous man. He has more than enough money to

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feed his family, whereas people like us don't. He was only helping us. And I'm going to pay him back anyway!' He reached over and caressed her shoulder, and this time she let him.

'Why can't you be like other men?' she asked. 'Why can't you be like Folo who has a steady job and supports his family that way? Or cultivate a plantation, or do something honest and honourable like that?'

'I'm no good at any of those. You know that, you've seen me trying for the last five years. In all that time, I never once used my only talent. I tried, Lagi. I really tried, but I couldn't bear being a failure any longer; I couldn't bear watching you and our children being hungry and poor. We couldn't even afford school fees for our children. I had to use my one and only talent. I couldn't help it any longer. Some men are born like me: our only talent may be against the law, but it's the only talent we possess. And you know what Jesus said about not wasting your talents.' He realised she was crying softly into her pillow. He caressed her shoulder and back as he continued whispering that he couldn't help what he was because God had meant him to be that way. Eventually, she turned over and faced him. Before she could say anything, he promised he would never again use his only talent to acquire money, and other things like that, off other people. Tears brimmed out of his eyes. She smiled at him and told him that it was time they all went back home to Sapepe, and that she was sorry she had left him. In turn he vowed he would never beat her again, and that if he ever broke this promise, may God strike him dead. Did she believe him? he asked. She smiled and nodded her head.

Women were so gullible, he thought, as they walked back to the main fale to pack their things for their return home.

The following morning they returned to their fale in Sapepe, the money, which he had obtained in Apia, dropped out of his lavalava as he undressed. He stooped down quickly. Too late. Lagi had seen it. She picked it up and returned it to him as if nothing unexpected had occurred, and, by reacting in this unexpected manner, she immediately made him suspicious, but he took the money and put it in the large family chest where they kept all their clothes and valuables.

For the whole of that day and the next one, she mentioned nothing about the money to him, and he surmised that perhaps, like any other sensible wife who needed money to keep her family alive, she had reconciled herself to his talent. On Thursday night as they lay in their mosquito net, she informed him, casually, that she had used \$15 of the money to pay their debt at Tauilopepe's store.

'But . . . but . . .', he started to protest, remembered his promise to her, stopped and whispered, 'That's good, very good.'

'We'll give the rest of the money as a donation to our pastor this Sunday,' she said. And what are we going to use for money next week? he wanted to ask her but didn't when she moved over and embraced him and, in a few minutes, was expertly satisfying his modest sexual needs. He fell asleep believing she was the best wife any man could have.

On Monday afternoon, their son returned from school with a note demanding immediate payment of his school fees or he wouldn't be allowed back into school. Lagi read the note, handed it to Sale, and

then left for the kitchen fale as if the note had nothing whatsoever to do with her. After lotu that evening, his mother, who had returned home a few days before after living with cousins in the next village, informed him that she needed \$5 for Women's Committee affairs and that Lagi too needed money for the same purpose. Late into the night, the problem of where he was going to get the money from held him between its teeth and shook him, and he again cursed his fate and a September without rain.

Before daybreak, he woke Lagi and told her that he was going into town to see if he could borrow the money from Folo. He knew that she knew that he was lying but was surprised when she did nothing to stop him. As he got into the bus, Lagi and their children and his mother waved to him as though they were giving him unconditional permission to use his talent to its most rewarding potential. Without any reservations his family — bless them! — had finally accepted who he was totally; they had seen the light and would never regret it, he concluded. In relation to his family, he could now be completely himself openly, honestly, without shame.

At first, he went to Apia only once a week. (And sometimes, if his take was large, only once a fortnight.) His weekly take was never below \$5, enough at first for what they needed to buy from the store and contribute towards Sapepe and family affairs. As time passed, however, the more money he brought home, the more money his family expected the next time he went in: his wife and mother expected new clothes, so did his daughters; instead of eating tinned fish, they now ate tinned corned beef and other expensive food daily; and everytime he visited Apia, they expected him to return with exotic food such as apples, saveloys, salted beef, cabin bread, coconut buns, and finally, after he brought home \$30, they asked him to buy them a radio, then, later on, a large wall mirror and tallboy, and later on still sandals for everyone in their family; Lagi even got him to buy himself a second-hand woollen charcoal suit to wear to church. Consequently, three months after he started, he discovered he had to take more precarious risks to satisfy their demands. It became more and more difficult to find victims — people were beginning to recognise him. After he narrowly escaped being caught one afternoon, he returned home and told Lagi that he needed to stay out of Apia for at least a month. She ignored his plea and informed him that she and Faaluma had planned to visit Apia with the Women's Committee that Saturday and needed \$10 for fares and spending money. It was impossible for him to *work* (and his whole family now used this word to describe his Apia activities) in Apia that week, he told her. She refused to satisfy his modest sexual needs that night (and the next two nights). On Thursday night, after he promised he would visit Apia the next day and get the money they needed, she rewarded him with her expert talent. (And he had to admit that this *was* her most precious talent which, once she had allowed him the right to legally exercise his only talent, she had developed to complement his talent in skill and intensity and demand: she now couldn't do without his talent, and he couldn't do without hers, one talent fed off the other, an insatiable and compulsive craving.)

After acquiring \$15 off a group of taro vendors, he was arrested as he boarded the Sapepe bus that afternoon.

A week later he was tried — Lagi refused to attend his trial — and sentenced to six months in prison.

His mother visited him a month afterwards in jail and informed him that Lagi had run off with another man (and how was she, a sick old woman, going to support his children? she asked). The following Friday, Ponaivi, his eldest daughter, who because she was breastless had always worried him, eloped with a youth from the next village; and Fusi, his favourite daughter, went off (against her grandmother's wishes) to live with her mother's family in Savaii. His son Amiga was expelled from school for not paying his fees.

Arse, arse, arse! he cursed his fate. It was all God's fault for having created him with his peculiar talent.

QUESTIONS

1. At the beginning of the story Salepa tells himself how important it is to get back his wife. To what extent does the rest of the story confirm that she is valuable to him?
2. Do you feel the same way about Salepa when he gets money from his brother, Folo, as when he gets it from the card sharps, Stye-Eyed and Dirty-Hands?
3. Why don't we hear why Salepa's wife left him until quite late in the story?
4. When Salepa's wife agrees to have him back he gloats that she is gullible. Is this the view we form of her by the end of the story?
5. Salepa prided himself upon his availability to use the gullibility of others to his own advantage. Was he a good judge of character?
6. What do you think of Salepa's view of his fate; "*It was all God's fault for having created him with his peculiar talent!?*"
7. "*We don't simply judge Salepa as being immoral; we also find him interesting and amusing*". What do you think of him?

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The Teachers

*For Mother who was never
taught to read or write*

Holy men, you came to preach:
'Poor black heathen, we will teach
Sense of sin and fear of hell,
Fear of God and boss as well;
We will teach you work for play,
We will teach you to obey
Laws of God and laws of Mammon . . .'
And we answered, 'No more gammon,
If you have to teach the light,
Teach us first to read and write.'



KATH WALKER

White Man, Dark Man

WHITE MAN

Abo man, we
To you have brought
Our social science,
And you we have taught
Our white democracy.

DARK MAN

White man, who
Would teach us and tame,
We had socialism
Long before you came,
And democracy too.

WHITE MAN

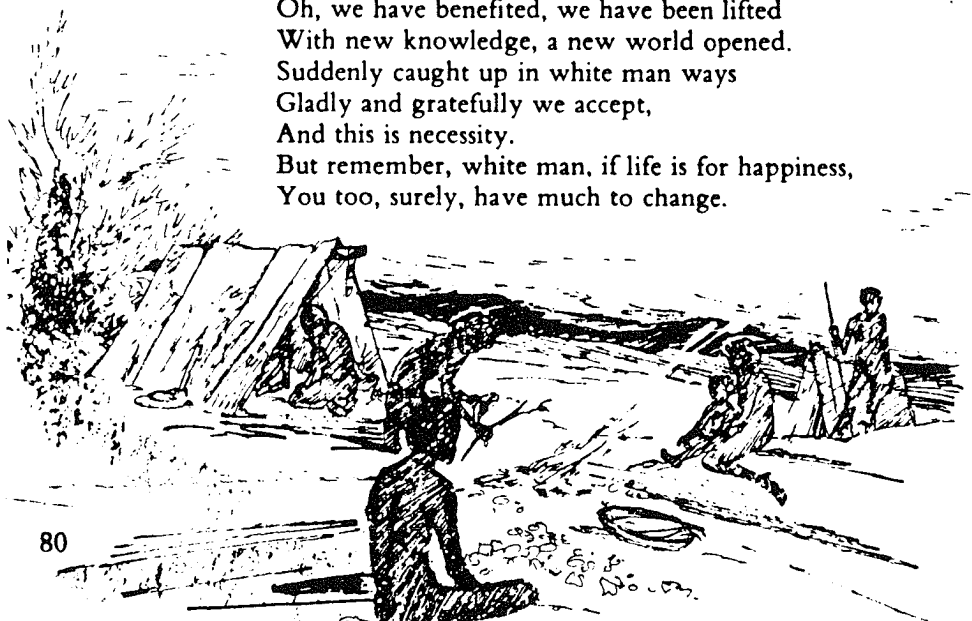
Poor blackfellow,
All you ever had
Was ancestor Biarni,
Except the big bad
Bunyip and his bellow!

DARK MAN

White fellow, true
You had more for pride:
You had Jesus Christ,
But Him you crucified,
And still do.



We who came late to civilization,
 Missing a gap of centuries,
 When you came we marvelled and admired,
 But with foreboding.
 We had so little but we had happiness,
 Each day a holiday,
 For we were people before we were citizens,
 Before we were ratepayers,
 Tenants, customers, employees, parishioners.
 How could we understand
 White man's gradings, rigid and unquestioned,
 Your sacred totems of Lord and Lady,
 Highness and Holiness, Eminence, Majesty.
 We could not understand
 Your strange cult of uniformity,
 This mass obedience to clocks, time-tables.
 Puzzled, we wondered why
 The importance to you, urgent and essential,
 Of ties and gloves, shoe-polish, uniforms.
 New to us were jails and orphanages,
 Rents and taxes, banks and mortgages.
 We who had so few things, the prime things,
 We had no policemen, lawyers, middlemen,
 Brokers, financiers, millionaires.
 So they bewildered us, all the new wonders,
 Stocks and shares, real estate,
 Compound interest, sales and investments.
 Oh, we have benefited, we have been lifted
 With new knowledge, a new world opened.
 Suddenly caught up in white man ways
 Gladly and gratefully we accept,
 And this is necessity.
 But remember, white man, if life is for happiness,
 You too, surely, have much to change.



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Mother, what is that one sea,
 Sometimes blue or green or yellow?
 'That Biامي's waterhole.
 He big fellow.'

'Mother, what make sunset fire,
 Every night the big red glare?'
 'Biامي's gunya out that way,
 That his camp fire over there.'

'How come great wide river here,
 Where we swim and fish with spear?'
 'Biامي dug him.
 You see big hills all about?
 They the stuff that he chuck out.'

Note: Among white people Biامي is the best known of the great Aboriginal Ancestors who made the world and men. They were not gods, not worshipped, but were highly venerated.



NO MORE BOOMERANG

No more boomerang
No more spear;
Now all civilized—
Colour bar and beer.

No more corroboree,
Gay dance and din.
Now we got movies;
And pay to go in.

No more sharing
What the hunter brings.
Now we work for money,
Then pay it back for things.

Now we track bosses
To catch a few bob,
Now we go walkabout
On bus to the job.

One time naked,
Who never knew shame;
Now we put clothes on
To hide whatsaname.

No more gunya,
Now bungalow,
Paid by higher purchase
In twenty year or so.

Lay down the stone axe,
Take up the steel,
And work like a nigger
For a white man meal.

No more firesticks
That made the whites scoff.
Now all electric,
And no better off.



Bunyip he finish,
Now got instead
White fella Bunyip,
Call him Red.

Abstract picture now—
What they coming at?
Cripes, in our caves we
Did better than that.

Black hunted wallaby,
White hunt dollar;
White fella witch-doctor
Wear dog-collar.

No more message-stick;
Lubras and lads
Got television now,
Mostly ads.

Lay down the woomera,
Lay down the waddy.
Now we got atom-bomb,
End everybody.



WE LOOK AFTER OUR OWN

KATH WALKER

AUSTRALIA

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Kath Walker is well known in Australia for her poems. This story, which is based on actual events, is published for the first time in *Stories From Three Worlds*.

The old man sat, half inclined against the wall. His back was playing up again. The Easter holidays would soon be with them. The drought continued to dry up the land. The lake, usually teeming with wild life, looked limp and even the hyacinths were turning yellow.

He thought of the bougainvillea. How vivid they were. When they bloomed, their beautiful floral clusters of purple, brick red and white decorated the landscape.

Funny, he thought, how pretty they looked, like they thrived on droughts. Perhaps when they felt the spirit of death close by they tried to please him by blooming all over.

His mind slipped away and back to his youth. Riding the hills, stirring the dust in the hot tropical sun. Smelling again the sweat of horse, saddle and blanket, mingling again with his own human sweat.

He smiled as he saw himself, much bigger then, not wasted away to skin and bones like now. They were hard days but good. He thought of his woman and how she stayed with him and the dust and flies and droughts. Rearing the children, more often alone as he rode the track stockdriving.

Always there to comfort him when he returned, until that day the

spirit of death kindly but firmly touched her shoulder and stilled her heart and left him lonely and alone.

Now he lived with his daughter. The drought was taking its toll. The farmer up the road had, that morning, shot six of his cows. Stock food was too scarce and too dear to buy.

He shifted his position towards the right, to ease his aching back, as he watched his daughter carry two buckets of water up from the water bins. He wished he could help her. She looked older than she was. It's hard on women where dust and flies and drought are a way of life.

When he couldn't keep up with the rest of the stockmen, he gave it away and settled down with his daughter and her husband who worked at the abattoirs three miles away.

Lately he found himself dozing, falling asleep often and his eyes were failing him. He forgot things too. After his retirement he became bored with nothing to do.

He was still an active man. He applied for, and got, a job on the local council but, when he turned seventy, they told him they could no longer employ him. They needed younger men.

His needs were simple, he worked hard and paid for whatever he wanted in saved up cash. No credit system for him. If he didn't have the money for what he wanted, he went without until he had saved enough. He owed nothing to any man or firm.

His daughter interrupted his dreamings. 'Time for a bath, Dad', she said.

He tried to put his feet firmly on the floor and stand up, but somehow he couldn't make it. His daughter came, put her strong arms around his waist and half carried, half dragged him to the bathroom.

She noticed he looked much thinner and his strength was falling. He was no longer the big man she remembered. Now, he drew on her strength and she knew he was fast getting worse. He had developed bed sores which, no matter what she did, would not clear up. She had to carry him often now and it made her tired and bad-tempered.

Her husband suggested she put him in a home for the aged. This horrified her. Their kind had always looked after their own, young or old.

They were proud islanders whose great-grandfathers had been kidnapped into Australia to work the canefields of Bundaberg.

She was fifteen when she married her man. He was the only man she ever went out with or even wanted to. Their five children had grown up, married and gone their own ways.

She knew her man was worried for her health and the thought of putting the old man into a nursing home, she knew, horrified him as much as it did her.

Without telling her, he went to see their local member of Parliament, who promised to call and talk to his wife.

A week later she woke with a splitting headache. Her man had already left for work. She dragged herself out of bed and went to her father's room. He lay on his bed staring vacantly at the open window.

The day promised to be even hotter and more humid than ever. The sky was devoid of clouds. She gently touched her father. He seemed in a sort of coma. She drew the bedclothes off and tried to lift him into

a sitting position. A sudden panic gripped her. She knew her father was dying. She spoke. He didn't answer, didn't seem to even hear her.

She fled from the room and flung herself onto the sofa in the lounge and gave way to a sudden burst of uncontrollable crying.

She never heard the man come up the path nor did she see him stand undecided at the open doorway.

'Mrs Edwards', he said. 'It's me, Mr Knight. Your husband asked me to call and see you about your father'. She hurriedly wiped her face on the hem of her gown.

'It's not our way to send our old ones away from us. We look after our own. We look after our own', she sobbed, her voice rising as she struck her tightly clenched fist into the palm of her other hand.

Mr Knight entered the room and sat down on a chair and waited for her to calm herself.

'We always look after our own', she cried again, 'but I can't bear to watch my father die'.

He calmed her as he talked of a religious nursing home in town. He talked of her own failing health and her husband's worry about her and her father.

She quietened down then and listened as he explained to her that he would phone the home to see if they would take her father. She made him a cup of tea and, after he had drunk it, he left promising to let her know at once if there was room for her father.

After he left she cleaned the kitchen and washed up. Her father seemed to be sleeping so she did not disturb him.

Shortly Mr Knight returned to tell her that the nursing home was prepared to take her father.

'You can visit him whenever you like,' he said, 'and it's but half a mile away so he won't be far.'

'Will they take him today, Good Friday? It's a holiday', she asked.

'Yes, there is no problem', he replied. Mr Knight took the mattress off one of the spare beds and placed it in the panel van. He bought sheets and a pillow as she changed her dress and combed her hair.

'Take him to the front entrance, they will be waiting for you', he said.

He carried the old man out to the van, surprised at how light and thin he was. He placed him gently on the mattress and covered him with the sheet. 'Will you be alright or should I come with you?' he asked. 'Do you feel up to driving the car?'

She told him she could manage and thanked him for all his trouble. He waited until she had turned the van towards the township before he entered his own car.

Her face wet with her falling tears, she pulled up at the front entrance of the nursing home. She took a look at her sleeping father, walked into the waiting room and rang the bell.

She heard the rustle of the nun's habit as she came down the corridor. 'Yes dear, what can I do to help you?' the nun asked with a smile.

'Sister, my name is Mrs Edwards. I have come about my father. Mr Knight rang about him coming into the home today.' She spoke rapidly in case her voice failed her.

The sister's smile vanished. 'My dear there must be some mistake, we

thought, that is we didn't realise, I mean. Look dear, is your father lighter or darker than you?' the sister asked.

'Why do you ask that sister?' Mrs Edwards asked. 'Are you prejudiced? Are you racist?'

'No, no, not me my dear,' replied the sister. 'You don't understand. It's the other patients. They may say terrible things to your father and he may get hurt'.

'Sister, my father is dying and I can't bear to watch him die. I can't bear to do that,' Mrs Edwards replied.

'I am sorry my dear but he might hear other patients saying terrible things and'

'Sister,' Mrs Edwards broke in, 'my father does not even know me and I don't think he can hear what anyone is saying. We always look after our own but my father is dying sister, dying'.

'I'm sorry my dear but have you tried the general hospital? I'm sure they will take him there. You will have no trouble getting him in', the sister said. Mrs Edwards stood up and walked towards the door.

'Be of good cheer, dear. They will look after your father. I'll see you to your car.' The sister opened the door for her.

She peeped at her father lying so still, then she climbed in. The sister stood on the footpath.

Mrs Edwards turned the key in the lock as the sister said, 'God bless you dear'. Her foot felt for the accelerator and she had difficulty seeing the dashboard through a veil of tears.

'And God pity you sister,' she said as she drove away in a swirl of dust which rose between her car and the nursing home.

Easter Sunday dawned bright and clear. The humid heat of early morning told of another dust-filled day and still no sign of rain. Mrs Edwards leaned against the garden gate watching the road to town. She awaited her relatives and friends who would come from near and far. They would come to comfort her and strengthen her to help her bury her dead.

She bent her head to listen as the town's church bells called and pealed, summoning the Christians to prayer, to mourn, to remember, a son, a father and a past crucifixion.

(This is a true story as told to Kath Walker in North Queensland.)

QUESTIONS

1. Early in the story, how does the author develop our interest in, and sympathy for, the old man?
2. Why don't we learn that the old man and his family are Aborigines until the same moment as the nun? How does this make the nun's reaction specially shocking for the reader?
3. What does the nun's comment about the General Hospital show about her?
4. What is the point of the last sentence?
5. How does the meaning of the title become fuller after we have read the story?

A White Problem

Our past record

Among the first English settlers to come to Australia were a number of men who were troubled by what they saw as the 'plight' of the Aborigines. In the early days of the colony high value was placed on the rewards of a Christian way of life and it was felt by some that the Aborigines, as well as the convicts, would benefit from conversion to Christianity.

Despite the efforts of the British government to protect the Aboriginal, conflict soon arose between the new settlers and government officials and the 'first Australians'. Some settlers attacked the Aborigines with guns or gave them poisoned flour. Any black uprisings brought down 'slaughter expeditions'; in most cases the law turned a blind eye. White men took over Aboriginal tribal lands, drove away the animals they relied upon for food and introduced diseases, such as small pox, which wiped out huge numbers of black people. As the years passed some Aborigines were driven further inland; others became virtual slaves of the white man. The white settlers introduced the black man to alcohol; the black woman to prostitution. Aborigines were subjected to white man's law which usually settled things in the white man's favour. Aborigines acting in accordance with their own tribal laws felt an enduring sense of injustice.

For 152 years the Aborigines were 'protected' by segregation on reserves. The land selected was usually remote and barren and the spiritual significance of tribal lands to Aboriginal people was ignored. The cheapest housing, food rations and clothing were

supplied. Progressively degraded, the Aborigines built up an antagonism toward the whites. The white Australians considered them inferior and so made them 'wards' in all their legislation.

By the 1930s a rise in Aboriginal population and the influence of the anthropologist, Professor A. P. Elkin, led the Commonwealth and State governments to bring out a new policy of 'assimilation', but this was not officially introduced until the late 1950s. So, in Western Australia, until 1954, an Aboriginal had to get government permission before he could marry.

As you know, the Australian States grew up separately. Each developed its own policies toward Aborigines and this situation still exists. However, in 1901, Australia became a federation and all States gave up some powers to the new Commonwealth government. Do you know your own Constitution well enough to know what powers were given to the Commonwealth to act on Aboriginal affairs and in what areas?

If you are interested in the past, perhaps you could find out how the Federal government behaved toward Aborigines between 1901 and 1967.

In 1967, the Federal government, by a Referendum, asked all adult Australians to give it greater power over Aboriginal affairs. A majority of Australians agreed to the proposed amendment to the Constitution. Can you find out how the Referendum was worded; what new powers the Government obtained; how the Constitution was re-



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**WHERE
ARE
THEY
NOW
?**

Estimates of Aboriginal population vary from 100,000 up to 160,000. The Melbourne Age (14/11/72) reported that: 'Australia's present Aboriginal population of about 140,000 is expected to exceed 300,000 by the end of the century. The growth rate is at least double the rate of increase of the total population of the country.'

About 70,000 live in or near the major cities and country towns, about 50,000 in missions and settlements mainly in the northern and central parts of Australia and up to 15,000 live on pastoral properties.

A few hundred live in independent communities in the north. A small number have been completely assimilated in the white community where they live and work with equal status but most of them have not been assimilated and live in comparatively poor circumstances.'

THE BLACK AUSTRALIANS

would? Can the Federal government now tell the State governments what they have to do?

1973

Why, in 1973, did the Federal government tell the State governments that they 'must toe the line'?

Can you discover what the dispute between the Federal government and the Queensland State government, concerning Aboriginals and the Torres Strait Islanders, was about?

What case was put forward by the Prime Minister in saying that Aboriginals were 'shamefully treated'?

On what did the Queensland Premier base his claim that his State had a good record?

The past in Queensland

From the legislation of 1897 onward, protection of Aboriginals in Queensland has meant control of marriages of Aboriginals, laws against inter-marriage with whites, control of their property without their consent, forcible removal of individuals to

reserves and of camps away from the vicinity of towns. This legislation, which some would describe as 'paternal and restrictive apartheid' (or separate development), continued without much modification until 1965. 6

Queensland's expenditure on Aboriginals up to World War Two was higher than that of other States and Queensland was the first State to introduce a special minimum wage for Aboriginals (this was about two-thirds that paid to white workers). But a lower standard of life was accepted for them than for whites. Equal pay was denied on the grounds that Aboriginals were inferior workers. There was no recognition of the principle that all men have an equal need for (or right to) clothes, food, housing, health or education.

Wages for Aboriginal station hands were reduced to three-quarters of the award once they reached the age of forty (if they were still 'active workers'). A station manager had the right to demand free labour from the wife of his Aboriginal employee. Adults were, and some still may be, paid part of their



"Plans of work down the mines and shanties for everyone".

6



As with other industrial nations, our treatment of the indigenous people has been a product of exploitation of the whole environment, at the behest of private enterprise and for a quite contemptible immediate gain.

C. D. Rowley,
The Remote Aborigines

Aboriginal failure to 'get on' is due to the shortcomings of their own culture. Another view

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wages in 'hand money' or 'pocket money' and had the remainder paid into their bank-books.

Though recently some Aboriginal workers have been able to hold their own pass-books, even today Police Protectors may still hold the bank-books of Aboriginals. These Protectors may have been as many as a hundred miles away; they decided what proportion of the wage was paid into the book, regardless of what the Aboriginal worker wanted and when they received letters of request they determined whether they would permit the worker to spend money on the goods he wanted. Some Protectors are alleged to have stolen money from illiterate Aboriginal workers.

This system has been called humane by comparison with the Northern Territory in the 1960s, where wages were only half the Queensland award rates. In 1966, in the Kimberleys and northern South Australia, there was no minimum wage rate nor any law enforcing payment in cash. It has been alleged that some Aboriginals in these areas were paid in methylated spirits, which they drank.

Where workers came from a country reserve in Queensland, they were paid as single men, but had to contribute to the policeman in charge of their settlement for support of their families living there. In addition, Aboriginal workers paid taxation, on the same rates as all Australians, and furthermore, until 1965, the Department of Native Affairs deducted annually, from the money paid into Aboriginal bank-books, five per cent of a single man's earnings and two and one half per cent of a married man's earnings for the Natives Welfare Fund.

Things began to change during the 1960s. In 1960 at Cairns the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Advancement League issued a Declaration of Rights, demanding equality of wages, possession of bank-books, direct payment of wages, and worker's compensation.

Following further such criticisms, especially those of the Australian Council of Trades Unions, Queensland's government raised wages for Aboriginals, increased their one week annual leave to three, and removed the station manager's right to the free labour of his employee's wife.

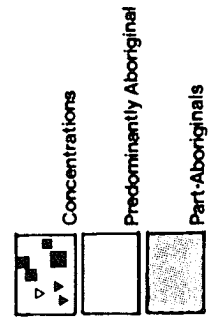
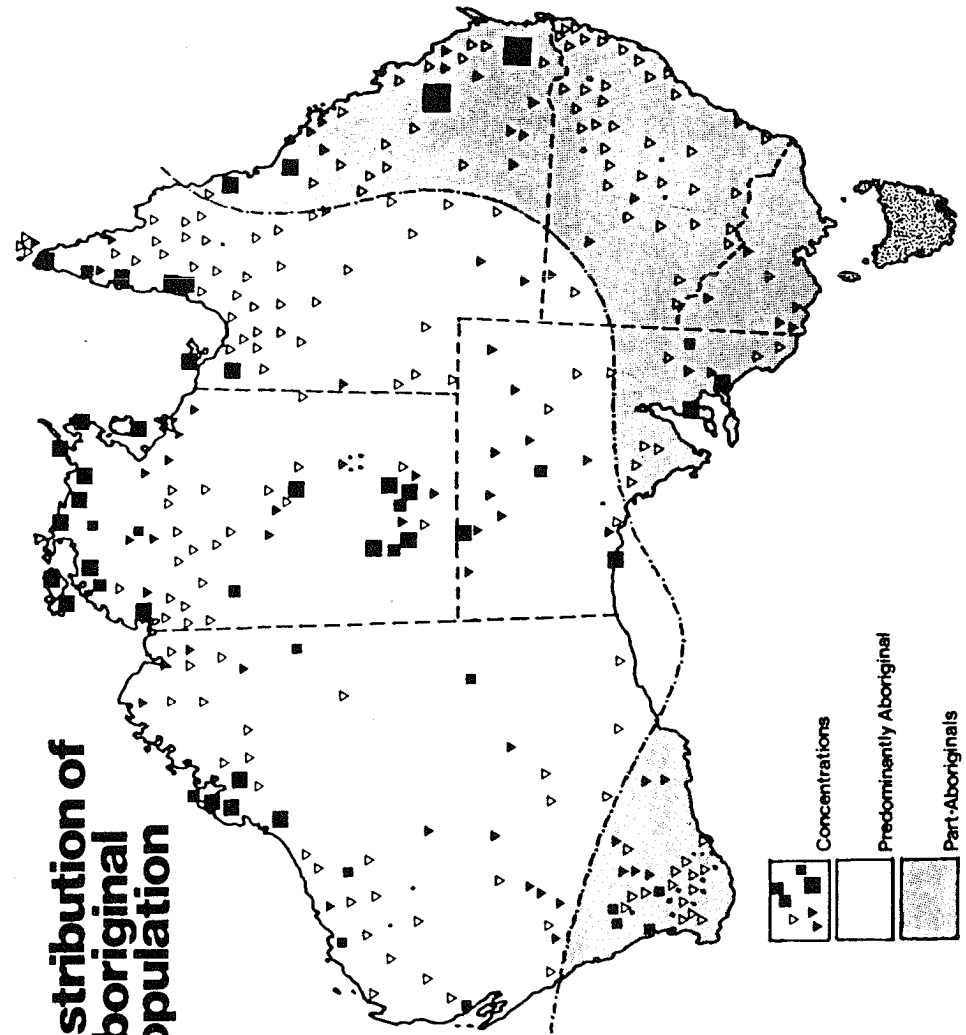
Meanwhile the Australian Workers' Union applied to the Queensland Arbitration Court to have deleted from wage awards any sections which excluded Aboriginals. No doubt, Aboriginal membership of trade unions can greatly help to abolish the whole system of economic inequality and give Aboriginals some chance of becoming 'integrated'.

In 1971, the Queensland government, under Federal government pressure to change its laws, legislated to allow Aboriginals to leave a reserve whenever they wished and to prevent Aboriginals from being forced, against their will, to live on a reserve. One year later the legislation had still not been proclaimed, and the Queensland government was still being criticised for not making Aboriginals equal citizens.

Mr Whitlam, then Leader of the Opposition, attacked the Queensland Premier because the legislation did not give Aboriginals land rights to their reserves. Other criticisms were that Aboriginals did not gain control over the running of the reserves; that the State government still had over-riding control of all Aboriginals living on reserves (about 30,000); and still had the power to stop persons visiting a reserve.

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Distribution of Aboriginal population



White law vs. black law

How did Aboriginal culture change after contact with the more materialistic British pioneers? Did greed oust myth?

Not only was there a clash between white law and tribal heritage but missionary superintendants and police were required to suppress 'injurious customs'. The Aboriginal decision making organisation was broken. Without continuity of leadership from the elders there was no social control. This was largely brought about by rapid depopulation; the result of slaughter and disease. Economic resources were lost, and the remnants of tribal groups were lumped together in a few reserves in remote areas.

Loss of control over sacred places undermined the authority of the elders and weakened religious beliefs which gave tribes a purpose for living.

Whites took away their water-holes in arid areas and destroyed the native animals, and then attacked the Aboriginals if they used their hunting skills to take sheep or cattle. Unable to live from hunting, Aboriginals adapted to their environment and became employees. They could not supply anything for markets and their only experience in agriculture or the pastoral industry was being told what to do and being paid in goods not cash. So they had no opportunities to learn how to use money or how to adjust to a completely changed environment—a new materialistic world.

Aboriginals were seldom, if ever, aggressive. They had no practice in systematic warfare nor anyone of authority to negotiate war settlements. They were victims of their own peaceful system. Their religion taught them the acceptance of the inevitable whereas white men might have taught them the moral

virtues of hard work, diligence, thrift, saving and perhaps inculcated the belief that material success in this life is an indication of salvation in the next. Aboriginals still lack the urge to compete. In Aboriginal society each contributed to the common lot according to his ability.

Aboriginals clung to gerontocratic rule which was necessarily conservative. It was stern and harsh when a sexual taboo was violated or ritual observances ignored to the threat of the spiritual health of the tribe. The severity of the councils of the elder men brought them into conflict with white law. Aboriginal religion had no experience of alcohol to draw on and so too the councils of the elder men had no experience of what to do in a desperate crisis such as the 'invasion' by the whites.

Aborigines will get more legal advice

Victoria's Aborigines will soon get a full-time field officer to help them with legal problems.

The secretary of the Victorian Aborigines' Legal Service, Melbourne barrister Mr. A. R. Castan, has invited applications for the field officer's job and also for a secretary assistant.

He said the field officer would have to work closely with other organisations in the Aboriginal community and seek out situations in which legal assistance would help Aborigines.

Mr. Castan said the service would prefer an Aborigine for the job with some administrative experience and practical or academic social work qualifications.

Some activity work for you

1. Would you agree with this statement? 'Aboriginal culture, if we will learn from its religious values, may contribute more to living in this pollution-threatened continent than we have ever been able to.'
2. Can you find evidence of Aboriginals rejecting some of their tribal values and accepting the values of white society? Is this a good or bad tendency?
3. How is the Aboriginal agitation for land rights related to Aboriginal religious beliefs?
4. Find out:
 - (a) whether lower wages can still be paid to Aboriginal workers in some parts of Australia;
 - (b) what degree of representation Aboriginal workers get when the ACTU presents a National Wage Claim to the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission.

There is still a clash between white law and tribal law. In 1967 in Port Headland, for example, Yadabooka was sentenced to five years for manslaughter, although tribal custom and tribal elders demanded that he kill the offender. If whites forbade the old ways of righting wrongs, then Aboriginal

social order was bound to dissolve into chaos. Today, almost without exception, Aboriginals appear in courts because whites have taken them there. And there are no Aboriginal lawyers to explain the Aboriginal background to the offences.

Equal rights for whites movements in the Northern Territory

RACIST OR NOT?

We're no racists, say NT rights men

The Northern Territory White Rights Movement is trying to change its image.

Want to know

"Our committee wants to know what the policies of the Government are and see them implemented for the good of the Aboriginal people.

"Nothing has come out of previous Government policies and all Mr. Bryant

seems to be doing is spending a few more million dollars," Mr. MacFarlane said.

The committee which he heads has asked the Federal Government for \$5000 so it can gather evidence to support its demands for a Royal Commission into the Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

The money was requested in a telegram sent to the Prime Minister (Mr. Whitlam) at the weekend.

The movement, unofficially known as Equal Rights for Whites, is attempting to throw off its racist tag.

It has been suggested that it be known as The Committee to end Discrimination.

The chairman of the 12-man committee formed at a public meeting in Katherine last week (Mr. Les MacFarlane) said yesterday movement members were sick of being called racists.

"We are not concerned with people, we are con-

cerned with policies," he said.

"We are genuinely trying to do something for both the European and Aboriginal communities.

Meanwhile, the MHR for the Northern Territory (Mr. Calder) has supported the rights movement.

'Deep concern'

He said the attendance of 600 at the Katherine meeting showed the tremendous depth of concern felt by people in the district.

"I don't believe it was a racist meeting — simply an expression of concern at attitudes shown by Mr. Bryant and some of his advisers in their recent statements and actions," he said.

"Like people at the Katherine meeting I believe the Minister is getting on to dangerous ground."

the Age March 1973

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What is your opinion?

The meeting at Katherine was shown on the television programme, 'This Day Tonight'. Speakers were shown making remarks to the meeting such as those of a Mr Len Smith: 'The Australian Aborigine is inherently lazy. Education is a waste of time and money for them . . . They're just bludgers and prostitutes'.

Asked to reply on this programme, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, at that time, Mr Gordon Bryant, said the head of his Department had attended the meeting

and they would consider the complaints. But he commented sharply that 'there are dreadful and degrading conditions imposed on Aborigines throughout Australia'; that there are 400,000 square miles in the Northern Territory for the white Australians who are currently angry at Aborigines receiving a 1,500-2,000 square mile grant at Wattie Creek. 'Aboriginal reserves in the Northern Territory only occupy 96,000 square miles', he said.

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Things to do

Using your school library or resource centre, research answers to these questions.

1. Is there an Aboriginal culture today?
2. Is it fair to judge Aboriginal behaviour and culture by making comparisons with your own culture?
3. Is there still time for a reconciliation between the two traditions—white 'development' and black 'dreaming'?
4. What were the characteristics of Aboriginal art? Are present-day sales of souvenirs to tourists degrading Aboriginal culture?
5. Is our system of political parties and Cabinet decisions any better than the Aboriginal council of elders and deference to the most experienced individuals?
6. Are Aborigines a unified group of people today or a population of diverse groups with varying kinds of difficulties?
7. Would it be easier for Aborigines to be 'assimilated' if the Christian churches accepted Aboriginal beliefs?
8. Do part-Aborigines owe their success to the white side of their parentage or to the Aboriginal side?



If a mission is functioning properly it should be working its way out of a job.

Sir Paul Hasluck,
Governor-General of Australia

Present Needs

Missions, reserves and settlements

There are still one third of Australia's Aboriginals (about 50,000 people) living on missions, reserves or settlements. Aboriginals on Northern Territory settlements can, at present, be paid a 'training allowance' which is less than the basic wage, and often they remain on 'training allowances' indefinitely. They are under the control of the often paternalistic Mission Superintendent.

One of these missions is the Santa Theresa Mission, fifty miles south-east of Alice Springs, where 600 members of the Aranda tribe live in 480 square miles of desert. This is a rock, sand, limestone-cliffs area; a gidyea-tree plain. Tapping of underground water and the building of a hospital were paid for by government grants. Houses were originally built from limestone blocks cut from the cliffs.

Can such missions provide answers to the Aboriginal search for cultural and economic advancement? It cannot grow cash crops. One of its aims is to establish the Catholic faith. The Superintendent, Father Clancey, justifies this aim by claiming that Aboriginals have lost their spiritual life and have to have some replacement for their old religion. He deplores the fact that Australians have been aiming at making Aboriginals 'little capitalists'. 'My policy,' he says, 'is to persuade people to leave . . . to go to school . . . to advanced studies . . . to take their place in towns.'

If the Aranda people leave this desert reserve, how will the white community receive them? Will they be obliged to lose their culture and tribal identity and assume the ways of the white man?

How true is this comment: 'At present tribal and semi-tribal Aborigines face a Hobson's choice: either stay on their settlements or reserves and see the erosion of their traditions by the dominant white culture or attempt to join the white society on its own terms.' (*Age*, 15/12/72).

Another Northern Territory Mission is Amoonaguna, a Government reserve outside Alice Springs. Here tourists may see pretty brick houses, a meeting hall and a modern shop which sells boomerang souvenirs. However, Tony Clifton reported to the *Melbourne Age* that the Mission's back regions, which house most of the Aboriginals, are almost devoid of shade for the rectangular aluminium sheds standing on concrete. These sheds have no glass in the windows, no insulation against the summer 48°C temperatures, no electricity, and no running water. Many Aboriginals prefer to live in the dry creek beds.

Palm Island reserve in Queensland was criticised recently by Mr Gordon Bryant. The island's 2,000 people, he said, were 'denied freedom of movement and control of their affairs'. Could this be so?

Under the provisions of the Queensland Aborigines Act 1971 and the Torres Strait Islanders Act 1971, one has to obtain permission to visit Palm Island. Any person breaking this condition is liable to forcible ejection and a fine of \$200. People have to apply under the schedules of the Act for permission to live at Palm Island, and this permit may be withdrawn without reason being given. It is the Aboriginal who has to

show cause why his permit should not be revoked. The Act also enables Aboriginals to apply for a permit allowing them to declare themselves 'slow workers' and receive less than the minimum or basic wage. It enables the Director of Aboriginal Affairs or the District Officer to require that the whole or part of an Aboriginal's earnings be paid to him directly. The Aboriginal still has to apply, for instance in Cairns, if he wishes to spend his own money.

Almost all the Aboriginals on Palm Island who are employed work for the Queensland government.

Rightly or wrongly, Aboriginals are fearful of the clauses of an Act which permits persons to enter their reserves to prospect or mine. They allege bitterly that when Comalco took interest in the bauxite deposits in the area, the Mapoon Mission in the Cape York Peninsula was closed. In early 1962 a police

launch arrived in the early hours of the morning, removed people from their beds, and burned the houses to prevent any return to them. Aboriginals claim that similar things are still happening in Queensland today, albeit on a smaller scale.

Victoria's two Aboriginal reserves, at Lake Tyers in Gippsland and Framlingham in the Western District, have recently been handed over by the government to the Aboriginals. Those at Framlingham have made a success of farming the land, but lack of farming, organising knowledge and sobriety have, up to the present, brought little success at Lake Tyers.

Can you find out how the New South Wales, South Australian, or West Australian governments are handling their Aboriginal reserves today?

Why don't you ever hear about Tasmania's handling of Aboriginals?

Health

In 1951 all Australian governments spelled out their policy that a positive health programme, including child welfare services, was essential to Aboriginal advancement. Not only was it necessary to control and eradicate disease, but nutrition, housing, water supply and sewage disposal had to be satisfactory.

Since that time, claimed Colin Tatz, before the National Seminar on Aboriginal Health Services in 1972, the bland have led the bland in attempting to present a picture of substantial progress. Even then-Prime Minister McMahon, in January 1972, said 'In health, too, good progress is being made.' When it was observed, from time to time, that Aboriginal babies were still dying, somehow government departments were able to discover that it was the fault of the Aboriginals—'psychological factors', their 'semi-nomadic life', 'too keen on the grog', they 'just won't learn hygiene'—their customs, their culture, their cussedness.

In October 1972, the Report of the Inquiry into the Medical and Hospital Services in the Northern Territory was tabled in Parliament. It found fault with the entire system. It saw health services for Aboriginals as ineffective, paternalistic, not integrated and not based on the cultural needs of the recipients. 'Hospitals' on government settlements are run 'on the cheap' and are not hospitals at all. Malnutrition is most widespread. Few nursing sisters have, or gain, any real knowledge and understanding of the customs, traditions and language of their patients, and may therefore not achieve the acceptance and trust which they desire.

How many Aboriginal corpses, living or dead, are needed?
Professor Colin Tatz,
University of New England

We are producing a race of cripples—children who will never be able to live normal lives.

Dr H. C. Coombs,
Chairman of the Council
for Aboriginal Affairs

Native rate sick figures 'fiddled'

A leading academic has accused the Commonwealth Health Department of 'fiddling the figures' on Aboriginal sickness rates in the Northern Territory.

Professor Colin Tatz claimed that from 1953 to 1962 the statistics supplied by regional districts to the Darwin office of the department showed a very different picture than that published in the annual reports of the Director-General of Health.

Professor Tatz is professor of politics at the University of New England.

The former Minister, Gordon Bryant, inspecting a settlement



Doing their own thing

Migration of Aborigines to cities is high and is increasing. Since the Arbitration Court decision to introduce, by stages, equal pay for blacks and whites, pastoralists have employed about a third less Aborigines than they did. A drift from cattle stations to missions and reserves and then to the cities is likely to continue.

There are now possibly ten thousand Aborigines living in Sydney. For company and security they tend to get together with relatives who have moved to the city earlier. As black unemployment is seven times that of the community in general they can only afford cheap housing in slum ('inner city') areas, and they often overcrowd the houses. A common rent for a low-grade house is \$40 a week and \$56 would be a common unskilled worker's wage.

Then the problems multiply—poverty, lack of education, unemployment, ill-health, drunkenness, petty crime, and finally hostility from white Australians living near by.

This is what happened in early 1973 in Redfern and Chippendale in Sydney, where one third of the twenty year old Aborigines were unemployed; where whites claimed they were not safe at night (their wives were afraid of being molested) and where whites 'were always being bitten for two bob'.

For the past fifty years Aborigines have found refuge in the nineteenth century houses of the Louis Street area, where only one quarter of the houses have running water, bathroom or kitchen. Perhaps three thousand Aborigines were living there recently when a Sydney development company purchased the area for demolition and rebuilding. Police evicted the Aboriginal tenants, who went temporarily to a church hall. Some returned to the deserted houses, squatted there, and were jailed.

A committee was set up by Dick Blair, (of the Aboriginal Legal Service), which sent pleas to Mr Bryant, then Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, to purchase the area for an

Aboriginal community. This community would have its own hospital, kindergarten and school, would pay rent to the government, and would control the behaviour of everyone allowed to live there.

This idea of Aboriginal communities controlling themselves, preserving what they want of their traditional ways, asserting their own social system, and dealing with the surrounding community through the economic relationships of employment, appealed to Mr Bryant. He has long advocated giving power to Aborigines to build their own structures of social cohesion and discipline from their own ways of thought rather than from ours.

However there was soon a bitter white reaction locally. Thirty white residents of the adjoining area held a protest meeting against the scheme. They were supported by Aldermen of the South Sydney Council, who said the scheme was 'benign apartheid'; that the Aborigines must be split up and that the

only way to assist them was to assimilate them. Miss George, of the National Aboriginal Consultative Education Committee, counter-attacked:

'Would you like to be split up? Don't you feel happier living with your own people?'

Mrs Faith Bandler, the General Secretary of the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, is proposing that the Federal government buy land on city outskirts where Aborigines could farm, grow vegetables, and catch a train to daily employment in the city.

In the north there are other experiments being made to set up independent Aboriginal communities, where Aborigines can return to the land yet co-exist with the general economy.

Perhaps you could find out about the Aboriginal mining community in the Pilbara area of Western Australia or the Arnhem Land attempts to make productive enterprises out of running cattle, traditional crafts and breeding turtles or crocodiles.



New policies

Following his appointment, as Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Mr Gordon Bryant, (who promised to stir up the dust) went on tours of Northern and Western Australia to meet Aboriginals and discuss their problems with them.

One of his sweeping new plans was the setting up of the all-Aboriginal Consultative Council of thirty to forty members, elected from the Aboriginal and part-Aboriginal population. Maps were drawn up which now provide the electorates for this Council in all mainland states and in the Northern Territory. This was done in conjunction with the Commonwealth Electoral Office and government mapping experts. The Council's purpose is to advise the Aboriginal Affairs Minister. Mr Bryant also intended to expand the Aboriginal staff of his Department, believing Aboriginals are often the best people to handle their own problems; indeed, he hoped that there would be positions made available to Aboriginals within the Commonwealth Public Service as a whole.

He was committed to granting Aboriginal tribal ownership and control of reserves. Mr Justice E. A. Woodward is preparing a report on the best methods of granting land rights and the form these should take. Mr Bryant said:

'We have to define a new concept of land ownership—not leasehold or freehold but something else. We have to combine usage, and the Aborigines' concept of land as part of the spirit of their life and livelihood'.

This is a future development which you could follow in the press, or Hansard or on television. In early 1973, the Government undertook to provide \$50 million, over the

next ten years, to buy land for Aboriginal communities.

Mr Bryant obtained \$10.85 million extra to be spent on Aboriginals straight away, and pressed for the enlarging of his budget to assist Aboriginals catch up to the rest of the community. One of the items on which the extra money is currently being spent is a \$850,000 programme to provide legal aid to all Aboriginals coming before Australian courts. He also hoped to dramatically and quickly improve Aboriginal health and lower the inexcusable infant mortality rate. He intended too, to launch an Australian-wide study in order to get all Aboriginals on award wages.



- Will his initiatives succeed?
- What steps need to be taken to ensure that Aboriginals make a success of their new rights to properties?
- Have the new policies 'promised mountains, but delivered only molehills'?
- Will the Black Power movement soon have nothing to be violent about?

COMMONWEALTH ABORIGINAL SECONDARY GRANTS SCHEME— EXTENDED PROGRAM 1973

Applications are invited for 1973 Aboriginal Secondary Grants under the new terms of eligibility announced by the Prime Minister. The grants will be tenable from first term 1973.

ELIGIBILITY

The grants are open to full-time students of Australian Aboriginal or Torres Strait Island descent who—

- A. • were 14 years of age but under 21 years on 1 January 1973;
 - will be attending in 1973 an approved primary or secondary school in any Australian State or Internal Territory;
 - are likely to benefit from remaining at school
- OR
- B. • were under 14 years of age on 1 January 1973;
 - will be attending in 1973 an approved secondary school in any Australian State or Internal Territory.

The continuation of a grant is subject to the student attending school regularly and to his conduct and progress being satisfactory.

The grants include assistance with living costs, school fees, clothing and text books and other expenses associated with attending school.

APPLICATIONS

Application forms and further details may be obtained from the Commonwealth Department of Education at the address below or from offices of the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs or some school principals.

APPLICATIONS SHOULD BE SUBMITTED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE TO:

The Regional Director
Victorian State Office
Commonwealth Department of Education
450 St. Kilda Road
MELBOURNE, VIC. 3004
Telephone 747 2948



DEPARTMENT OF ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS VACANCIES

The policy of self determination for Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory is aimed at encouraging these communities to decide the pace and nature of their future development as significant components within a diverse Australian society. To assist them to accomplish this, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs is seeking new recruits. Men of experience, who accept the Government policy, have an understanding of Aborigines, and are capable of establishing a mutual respect with Aboriginal Communities, are needed to carry out a non directive advisory role, aimed at encouraging the communities to become self reliant and to make their own decisions as to their future. Vacancies exist for the following positions —

Regional Welfare Officer — 3 POSITIONS

Salary — \$9650-10,290 plus district allowance (see footnote)
Location — Darwin, Alice Springs and Nhulunby (Gove)
Duties — Responsible for the direction, supervision and integration of all phases of the work of the Department, including Aboriginal, Child, Family and Social Welfare.
Qualifications — Appropriate academic qualifications in a field of social science and wide administrative experience desirable. Experience in Aboriginal and other social work an advantage.

District Welfare Officer 8 POSITIONS

Salary \$7934-8525 plus district allowance (see footnote)
Location — Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek, Alice Springs, Warburton and Giles — both located at Alice Springs, Alyangula (Groote Eylandt), Nhulunby (Gove).
Duties — Under direction of the Regional Welfare Officer, in charge of welfare activities including Aboriginal and other welfare services.
Qualifications — Experience in Aboriginal and other welfare activities. Proven administrative ability desirable.

Superintendent SEVERAL POSITIONS

Salary — \$8818-9409 plus district allowance (see footnote)
Location — at any of the various Aboriginal Settlements in the Northern Territory.
Duties — Responsible for the social advancement programme for the Aboriginal population, the control of staff on, and the efficient management of a Settlement.
Qualifications — Administrative and organising experience, and ability to supervise and integrate the work of staff desirable.

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Qualifications — Administrative and organising experience, and ability to supervise and integrate the work of staff desirable.

Gordon Bryant, M.H.R.
Labor's first minister for Aboriginal Affairs

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Can you answer these?

1. Do Aboriginals share possessions with friends and relatives, fail to save money, and fail to compete with whites because of their tribal heritage or because they are a rejected group of fringe dwellers?
2. How could local government be used to promote local harmony between Aboriginals and whites?
3. How can Aboriginal groups command respect from local whites?
4. Which technique might do more to advance Aboriginal groups—government systems of administration or small face-to-face action groups in towns and schools?
5. Do we recognise the right of the Aboriginals to be a distinctive people? Will we provide for their representation as a distinctive people?
6. Will we change the whole course of our history and acknowledge that Aboriginals have rights because of their prior occupancy of Australia?

*Though baptised and blessed and Bibles,
We are still tabooed and libelled.
You devout salvation sellers,
Make us equals, not fringe dwellers.*

Kath Walker,
Aboriginal Poet

Preserving the Aboriginal Heritage



Uta Jungala at work on traditional painting at the Papunya settlement in the Northern Territory

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chapter 5

The Melanesian Way



For most of my years in Papua, most Papuans and most expatriates have regarded it as axiomatic that the white man's way was best.

Not quite all expatriates. Some, like Sir Hubert Murray, felt a genuine admiration for the Papuan life-style, and were not too sure that Papuans would benefit in the long run by abandoning it for that of the white man. Some Papuans, on the other hand, recoiled from what they felt to be the harshness and selfishness of the white man's highly individualistic way of life. But most Papuans, dazzled by the white man's technology and affluence, aspired to become brown Australians.

The belated burgeoning of Paguinean nationalism, dating roughly from, and probably not unconnected with, the establishment of the University of Papua New Guinea in 1967, has changed all that. Now there is a highly vocal demand that "western cults" must be rejected, and that things must be done in a Melanesian way.

What is this "Melanesian way"?

It is, or was, a life-style which was communalistic and egalitarian, making its decisions by consensus and achieving its aims by co-operation. It is a very attractive style, and it is understandable that many young Melanesians, repelled by the harsh individualism and competitiveness of the white man's world, feel a deep nostalgia for it, and want to preserve or restore it. I sympathize with them. But can it be done?

If we take a hard look at the circumstances under which the

PERCY CHATTERTON
DAY THAT I HAVE LOVED

Melanesian life-style came into being, we find that it grew up in small communities which lived precariously, hemmed in by hostility—the hostility of nature, the hostility of men, and the potential hostility of spirits. These communities could not afford the luxury of dissent, of a minority in opposition to the majority. They could not afford to have the poor envious of the rich. And they had to co-operate in order to survive. Their life-style was imposed upon them by the circumstances under which they lived.

I believe it to be starry-eyed to postulate some innate flair for egalitarianism and co-operation in the Melanesian character, a flair which will cause these qualities spontaneously to flower again once the wicked white colonialists have gone away, taking their nasty individualism and competitiveness with them.

On the Papuan coast the basic social, economic and political unit was the descent group, a group of generally about fifty people all fairly closely related, with the possible addition of one or two adopted members. The secondary unit was the village or hamlet-cluster, comprising a number, not often exceeding ten, of such descent groups living in one place and co-operating to maintain a modest prosperity and to present a united front to their enemies.

Only rarely were there units bigger than a single village or hamlet-cluster; and even these units were not allowed to exceed certain manageable optimum limits. These were normally approximately fifty for a descent group and about five hundred in the case of a village or hamlet-cluster. If they grew bigger than this, the descent group would split into two, or, in the case of an over-big village, one or more descent groups would hive off and establish a new village. This happened because experience had taught that beyond these limits the easy-going Melanesian way would no longer work.

Within these limits it was possible to arrive at decisions by consensus, because the people making them were inter-related and inter-dependent. Within these limits too it was possible for the descent group headmen (a more suitable word than "chiefs") to maintain order and coherence within the framework of custom and tradition, without the aid of a panoply of codified laws, courts, police and prisons.

With the old compulsions towards consensus, co-operation and

egalitarianism gone, and with the people of Papua New Guinea coming together in a large-scale, multi-tribal "nation", can the Melanesian life-style flower again? I would like very much to think so, but I doubt it.

In addition to all this, the Melanesian life-style emerged in a subsistence economy, and in a special kind of subsistence economy—one which lacked storable grain crops. On the Papuan coast the most storable crop was the yam, which barely lasted in good condition from one harvest to the next. Affluence by hoarding was impossible; the best that could be aimed at was prestige by giving away. In a cash economy, many Pagineans have come to realize that money can be hoarded, and that there are savings banks only too willing to assist them in hoarding it.

Chief Minister Michael Somare has, with courage and sincerity, declared himself for a new egalitarian society in Papua New Guinea. But many of the people he rules have bitten into the apple of affluence; not a very big bite yet, perhaps, but enough to give them a taste for, and even an addiction to, this seductive fruit. They'll never be quite the same again.

In the Hebrew story of creation, an angel with a flaming sword barred the way back to the Garden of Eden. The angel who bars the way back to the Melanesian Eden grasps in his hand a transistor radio, its sword-like antenna glittering hypnotically.

One of the chief characteristics of traditional Paginean life was its element of discontinuity. Such activities as clearing land for new gardens and planting, tending and harvesting food crops had their times and seasons. Certain kinds of fishing, especially the catching of crayfish, turtles and dugong, were also seasonal. Life was a series of starts and stops; and since traditional education was geared to these activities it also proceeded by starts and stops.

This element of discontinuity was present in traditional religion too. The great feast-dances in honour of the spirits of the dead began with a few tentative, seductive drum taps in the still heat of the early afternoon, and worked slowly up over a period of weeks to a climax of non-stop dancing in which the dancers sometimes dropped in their tracks from exhaustion and had to be dragged away and revived. Then, following the distribution of the food collected

on the sacred platform, the ceremony abruptly ended. The head-dresses and ornaments were put away for some future celebration and the participants went back to more mundane occupations.

In place of this start-stop life style we have substituted 8 am to 4 pm office hours, school attendance five days a week and religious services at set hours and to a set pattern on Sundays, year in year out. In my early years at Hanuabada it was not uncommon for a young man doing quite well in an office job suddenly to throw it up and go back to a life of hunting, fishing and gardening. He was bored with continuity. Life in the subsistence economy was harder work than a wage-earning job in an office, but it had more variety, and if he had a watch he could throw it away. As to the Sunday services, it was one of my pastor-colleagues who once said to me, "Rice is alright, but you get tired of it if you have it cooked in the same way at every meal."

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We probably can't afford to admit Melanesian discontinuity into our offices and factories, but we could perhaps find a place for it in our educational system. One can envisage start-stop style courses, each one designed to teach a particular skill (using the word in its broadest sense) at a particular level. The length of the course might vary from a few days to a few years, according to the nature and level of the skill taught, but it would have a starting point and a climax. Once the climax was reached, it would stop, and the educand would wander off either to chase some further skill or to earn a living with those already acquired. Self-service schooling, in fact. This kind of thing is already being done in some of our vocational centres. It could be extended over a much wider field, both subject-wise and age-wise.

Such a system, which, if I have understood him correctly, is very much the kind of thing which Ivan Illich has advocated, could be operated in the first place alongside the present system of western style schooling, which is only catering for about half Papua New Guinea's juvenile population anyway. By rescuing us from the burden of stuffing our pupils with knowledge they don't want and will never be able to use, it would enable us to spread our effort over a larger proportion of the school-age population than we are able to reach at present. This, in turn, might help us to solve some of the social problems which at the moment seem so insoluble.

Equal in popularity with "the Melanesian way" as one of the in-phrases of emergent Paginean nationalism is the phrase "our traditional culture". Many of those who use this phrase appear to be under the impression that by reviving a few traditional dances divorced from their original significance or by growing their hair long they are preserving their traditional culture.

In my book, "culture" means a way of life—the whole of it. It includes language and religion, as well as songs and dances. Indeed, the songs of Papua New Guinea involved language, and many of the dances involved religion. They were not danced for fun, though no doubt the participants got a lot of fun out of them. They were danced as religious ritual, generally as part of the cult of the spirits of the dead who were commemorated by them.

There is, of course, no harm in reviving out of context particular features of traditional culture. Indeed, I'm all for it. But let us recognize that that is what we are doing, and cut out the blah-blah about "preserving the traditional culture". It seems to me somewhat comic when a young coastal Papuan bearing some such name as John, Peter or Thomas, and sporting a beard which his ancestors would only have grown as a sign of mourning, declaims about the importance of preserving the traditional culture, and then proceeds to sing a Motu "love song", set to a pepped up version of a nineteenth century English hymn tune, accompanying himself by strumming a Spanish guitar made in Japan, and from time to time refreshing himself from a "stubby" of the great Australian ritual beverage, beer. How phoney can you get?

I have spoken of language and religion as being essential constituents of a culture, and it looks as if a renewed appreciation of Papua New Guinea's traditional languages is well under way. But what of traditional religion, which, in coastal Papua at any rate, was based on a belief that the influence of the spirits of the dead is still active in the lives of the living? Is there any likelihood of its survival or revival? I rather doubt it.

The Human Rights Ordinance, in providing for freedom of religion, specifically includes "the traditional religious beliefs of the indigenous inhabitants". But it seems to me likely that fewer and fewer Pagineans will exercise their right to practice the rituals of their forefathers. The new generation now growing up will probably

make their choice between Christianity's God and Technology's Mammon. The spirits of the departed, their power to influence the lives of the living unacknowledged, will go back in dudgeon to their abode in Tauru, beyond the western horizon, or on the slopes of Durigolo, among the peaks of the Owen Stanleys, or wherever.

The Chief Minister of Papua New Guinea's first national government, the Honourable Michael Somare, really put the cat among the ecclesiastical pigeons when he referred to "a western cult known as Christianity".

To what extent was this "crack" justified?

The first thing I would say is this: that if the four Galilean fishermen who became Jesus' first disciples, or for that matter if Jesus himself were to re-appear on earth at this moment, they would find themselves far more at home in a Paginean fishing village than in London, New York, Sydney, or even Port Moresby. And if they did turn up in Port Moresby they would probably make for one of the shanty settlements rather than for the Gateway Hotel.

Naturally so. For the life-style and traditional values of Galilean fishermen and carpenters in the first century A.D. had far more in common with the Melanesian life-style and traditional values than with those of the 20th century technological culture. By the same token, the message of Jesus is more readily understood by, and certainly more acceptable to, Melanesians than to the people of the technological "west", most of whom have either renounced it or pay merely lip service to it.

When we turn from the world of the New Testament to that of the Old Testament, the resemblance is still more marked. Sorcery, inter-tribal feuding, pay-back killings—they're all there. Said a Papuan student, "The Old Testament shows us what we are like; the New Testament shows us what we ought to be like".

Another Papuan, long ago one of my pupils and now a bishop in the United Church of Papua, New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, put it this way: "The stories (in the Bible) are of events that occurred long long ago in countries a long way from here. Yet we do not feel ourselves strangers to the people about whom these stories are written. They acted as we act. They thought our thoughts.

They lived in a small-scale society in which everyone knew everyone else—and that's our world too."

These words were spoken at a service of thanksgiving for and dedication of the first complete Bible in Motu, to the preparation of which I have referred earlier. Bishop Ravu Henao continued, "It must be very hard for white people to understand the world of the Bible, but for us—it is just one step and we are there."

His hearers apparently thought so too, for within half-an-hour of the conclusion of the service 700 copies of the 5000 printed had been sold, and within a couple of weeks fewer than 1000 were left and an order for a reprint was on its way.

But all this is probably not what Mr. Somare was thinking about at all. He was thinking rather about institutional Christianity, as brought to Papua New Guinea by 19th century European missionaries; and it is true that their activities did have a destructive effect on traditional customs and values. Some of these were perhaps customs and values which the missionaries could hardly be expected to live with, and which the people who embraced them were better off without anyway. But others were customs and values which could have been, and should have been, preserved.

It is attractive to speculate on what might have been if the early missionaries had been content to proclaim Christian beliefs and Christian values, and leave Pagineans to build their own "cult" around them. Attractive, but not at this stage very useful.

Substituting drums and conch shells for organs and harmoniums, translating western rites into Paginean languages, and building churches that look like ancestral spirit houses are poor palliatives, but perhaps better than nothing. We shall probably have to wait for a new generation of indigenous church leaders, cured of the habit of looking over their shoulders to their overseas fathers-in-God, before the time will be ripe for the emergence of a genuinely Melanesian Christianity.

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TOURISM: DOES IT HELP TO PRESERVE OUR CULTURE?

Peter Kros

It is widely believed that tourism is one of the best assets of a so-called underdeveloped country. A wide variety of claims are made for tourism:

it brings foreign exchange into the country which can be channelled into other industries;
it gives employment to the local people;
it helps to promote the country's image abroad;
it helps to create international understanding; and
it gives work to local artists and craftsmen, thus helping to preserve traditional cultures.

Many observers, however, have begun to feel that the so-called benefits of tourism hardly offset its dangers. Among the evil effects of tourism are:

the pollution of the social and physical environment;
an increase in racial prejudice and tension; and
a tragic loss of authenticity of local arts and crafts. Moreover, it has been pointed out by the German educator, Heinz G. Schmidt, that the commercial benefits of tourism to the underdeveloped country are much less attractive than is usually assumed. Most of the profits from tourism usually go into the hands of foreign companies that are registered abroad. And while it is true that foreign exchange is spent by tourists in their chosen holiday country, much of this currency has to be spent by the developing country to keep the holiday-making machinery working smoothly. Luxury hotels are built with foreign and imported materials. They employ foreign expert staff and consultants, and tourists usually insist on various items of imported foods and, particularly, drinks.

There is no doubt that the tourist industry provides employment for local people, but most of this employment is provided on the lower, service level: waiters, cleaners, taxi drivers, guides, prostitutes.

The idea that tourism promotes the country's image abroad is a very dubious one indeed. Tourist agencies advertise developing countries as 'the last unspoilt paradise on earth'. In other words, they tend to sell an image of innocent backwardness that hardly reflects

the ambitions of new nations. The tourist going to the West Indies or to Papua New Guinea expects to find idyllic beaches and smiling natives willing to please. They are led to believe that poverty is romantic and that 'primitive' cultures are exotic. They assume that 'native dances' are primarily being performed for the purpose of being photographed by tourists.

Partly because of the way in which the travel agents prepare the tourist for his trip, and partly because of his own ingrained attitudes, the tourist does not really mix with the local population. Most of the time he remains cooped up with his fellow tourists in his 'beach ghettos', and his relationship with 'natives' is confined to haggling with artefact dealers and brash joking with guides and waiters. Far from promoting international understanding, therefore, tourism tends to increase prejudices. The arrogant tourist is perpetually irritated by the lack of technological efficiency in his host country. He complains about the lack of certain services he is used to at home, and which he considers essential to civilized living. He gets angry when a 'native' does not understand English, and his method of making him understand is to shout louder. He does not view the population of his host country as people, but merely as 'natives' who are either 'friendly' or 'colourful' or 'lazy'.

The local people naturally resent the arrogance of the tourist, his neocolonialist mannerisms, and his assumption that everything in the host country has a price, and a price that he should find easy to pay. Contact with tourists often causes frustration among the local people; hatred of riches, and xenophobia.

There is some truth in the assertion that tourists spend money on local crafts and arts. They pay for performances of dances, and they buy artefacts, thus giving an income to people who might otherwise not have a cash income. On the other hand, this financial benefit is greatly offset by the loss of authenticity of local crafts that is the inevitable result. In the tourist

ON NOT BEING ALLOWED TO PLAY THE FLUTE

Yauwe Maki

I want to point out some of the wrong things the missions have done in Gomia, my village.

The worst thing they have done is to prohibit the playing of bamboo flutes. The bamboo flute was not introduced or brought in from outside. It was a part of the traditional culture of my people. It was discovered and used by my great, great ancestors of the olden times even before white men had come to this country.

When the world was created and man was created my great, great ancestors arrived in a place near Mt Wilhelm. They then walked across Mt Touna. Departing from this area they went to Gomia, bringing with them the bamboo flutes and the sounds of two birds, *kure* and *neri*. Both these birds belong solely to the Gomia people. They are sacred to us. These sounds were passed on to our grandfathers and our fathers. From my father I learnt how to play them.

We were using the bamboo flutes when the white missionaries arrived. As well as the sounds of *kure* and *neri* we had other bird sounds as well. These were given to us by other tribes. When the missionaries arrived they forbade us to carry on with many of our traditional ceremonies. These included the playing of the bamboo flute, boys' initiation ceremonies, girls' first menstruation ceremonies, and all death ceremonies, including the feasting and celebrations.

At that time we did not know what was happening; we did not understand, and we obeyed the missionaries. Nowadays many of our children go to school like you yourself, Kopon. I can read and write and speak Pidgin and I have read the Bible—God's Word, as the missionaries said. But I have not read or seen anything that says we must stop our traditional ceremonies, and I cannot see any reason why we had to stop them.

I now realize these missionaries were wrong. If the ceremonies of our culture had been introduced from outside they could have been wiped out and forgotten. But they were created for the people who originated from here and they belong to our people. These customs were not bad; they were good for us. They helped us to grow better food and to make our pigs grow bigger. They helped the people to enjoy themselves and were an important part of our social life.

Nowadays when I listen to the radio I often hear the bamboo flutes being played. I like that, but I ask myself why we cannot play ours. I am very happy that people like you are concerned about the loss of our traditions and I hope so very much that you can help. While I am still alive I want to bring back these ceremonies to my people. The bamboo flute playing was stopped when I was a young man. I am getting old now, and if I die before I can pass on to the young men the skill of playing the bamboo flute that skill will die too. I am the only one left who knows how to play the flute.

I know that we cannot completely restore all our old traditional ceremonies—not as they were done in olden times—but we can bring them back and relate them to our lives today. I beg you to do everything in your power to help this to come about.

These are my feelings—very strong feelings—but I know that I speak on behalf of the people of Gomia too. We are concerned that the younger generation receive the knowledge of our traditional village background, and we want to see this happen now.

Yauwe Maki was a member of Gomia Council, Chimbu District.
Translation by Kopon Mongomane.

singing of the *timit* songs, we would forget them, or, even if we remembered them, they would not be effective. After the singing we had to wash our mouths with salt water to stop saliva from being produced for some time.

When we all sat round the hole, Saub said:

Now you have left your mother's womb.
You have come to this place to receive power.
With this power you must go out and lead—
lead in initiation, lead in fight, lead in peacemaking.
The strength now has been given to you.

After these words he began to sing. These songs were heard by all, but they were being passed on to me alone. Only I would be allowed to use them in the future. One of the *timit* songs goes as follows:

O ai oo ma moa gai oo
o cagao ooo
ma moa gai o o.
Sh sh sh o o.
Ai o o makuma gao
o agai o o mokina gai o e e.
Ai o moana gai o agau o
mikuma gai o arao.

O I am in a pig's canoe,
I am in a canoe.
Sh sh sh o o.
I have become
a new spirit.
I am in a pig's canoe.

These incantations refer to the pig, which is my *canoe head* and the magic animal of my clan. The incantation is to enable the high-powered *gapar* spirit to enter the pig and act through it. The pig thus possessed becomes a symbol of the power of the clan.

When he had finished singing, I came out of the men's house and was taken home. Here I was made to sit on two bags of *galip* nuts and was decorated with food—yams, coconuts, sweet potatoes and sago were hung on me like shells. Those of my uncles who were

conducting the ritual of my initiation then came to pick that food off. It was another way of demonstrating my debt to them. By taking the food directly off my body another spiritual link was created between us. They then gave me a leaf containing lime, mustard, and ginger to eat. It burnt my tongue severely. It was the last of the endurance tests.

At last I was dressed in all the magnificent ornaments of Sana. This beautiful decoration is known as *yamdar*. I wore a crown of birds of paradise feathers on my head, and on my forehead I wore the *doatakin* band. This was made of human hair and identified me as a senior *orob*, or ritual leader, of the community. Round my neck was a *tarer*—a band of dogs' teeth. A *numboag* covered my chest. This was *tapa* cloth studded with large mother of pearl shells. I wore armlets and wristlets covered with dogs' teeth. On my forehead and shoulders were *usigs*—pairs of pigs' tusks. These represent great wealth among my people. Perhaps the most spectacular ornament I wore was the *nemberan*—a *tapa* cloth apron on which a face had been embroidered with cowry shells. This face represented a *brag*—an ancestral spirit—and it symbolized the new power that was transferred to me in this ceremony. My insignia of office were a tall walking stick decorated with birds of paradise feathers, *usigs* and a painted basket.

People now came to greet me and to celebrate my initiation with me. Some of my uncles jokingly stuck cockatoo feathers into my hair. These were called *kandapan*. Each feather was supposed to represent one adultery that they had committed. They joked and said, 'Look, now that you are a chief and a clan leader, you must show your strength in every way. If you are really a man, you should be able to seduce four women, just as I have done.'

The *yamdar* dress was not the only one I wore that day. I am not only the head of my family, I am also the head of my wife's family. Because there was no senior man in her line, the important title of *onkau* was passed on to me. After wearing *yamdar*, I was dressed up again with the regalia of *onkau*. This showed that I was the head of my wife's family. *Onkau*, however, is not as important as *yamdar*.

Two days later I went to Wotam to be decorated by my mother's family. Here I was given the shells and decorations of *mindamot*, another important title. My

The Melanesian Way

An essay is an analytical, critical or reflective piece of writing in prose. The essayist has to express himself clearly and logically as well as with imagination and literary style.

In the preface to his collection of essays titled The Melanesian Way, BERNARD NAROKOBI says: 'Some people say this nation of ours will be united through parliament, public service, roads, bridges, armed forces and the like. I say, maybe, maybe not. The one thing that can unite us is ideology, or philosophy.'

This vision is at the very core of his championing of the 'Melanesian Way'. There are some, however, who disagree with NAROKOBI and one such is BERNARD MINOL. You might agree with one or the other, or you might have a different point of view all together. If you do, make sure that you can argue as convincingly as these men do.

It's the 'Melanesian Way' but what does it mean?

Since writing on the rich and beautiful ways of the Melanesians, many people have asked me what I mean by that expression and whether I am serious in what I say. Many have supported me, perhaps through spiritual unity and intuition, with little or no understanding of what it is all about.

It is now time to reflect more on Melanesian ways. My first response is — by their actions or omissions, you will know.

To me, the peaceful, non-violent, person-to-person way in which the Bougainville-Papua New Guinea Government conflict has been resolved is a proud tribute to the wisdom of Melanesians. That is a Melanesian way.

I, perhaps more than anyone else, am proud of the leaders on both sides who, with initial distrust, but some trust, have come together, talked together, developed and created trust in each other. This is a Melanesian way.

This is human development of the highest quality by Melanesians.

Our Melanesian ways stem from the unquestionable fact that we are an ancient people, born to liberty, born to ancient culture and civilisation.

We are not one year old, nor are we 200 years old. We are

**'Insistence on our way is not racist'
In defence of the Melanesian Way**

I am often asked, 'What is the Melanesian Way?' but I refuse to define the Melanesian way for a variety of reasons.

First, because the question is often asked by cynics and hypocrites and I refuse to be serious with such people. They don't ask in sincere search for knowledge, but in spiteful arrogance.

Secondly, because the Melanesian way is a total cosmic vision of life, it is not only futile but trite to attempt a definition of it.

Thirdly, to seek a definition of the Melanesian way is to seek to quantify and build the outer and the inner walls of the Melanesian way of life. This I refuse to do because it is like Moses asking the God of Israel to tell him who God was. God did not reveal Himself by a definition, but by a statement that I am who am.

I am not the author of the phrase 'Melanesian Way'. I do not even know the meaning of Melanesia, although I believe it comes from a European language and probably means negroid or black. It might even mean native or kanaka. Whatever its original meaning, Melanesia has come to include several South-West Pacific islands.

These are: East and West Papua New Guinea and their smaller islands, the Solomon Islands, Fiji, Vanuatu or New Hebrides, and New Caledonia.

The popular view of Melanesia was that it consisted of thousands of hamlets, villages, clans and tribes which were closed to each other, and had no means of contact with each other beyond the hill, the valley, the river and the island, except through warfare. Our people are believed to be pagans who worship idols and live by uncontrolled sexual misconduct, who by nature are quarrelsome, belligerent, aggressive and warlike.

Most Western writers and observers, basing their views on ethnographic works, study Melanesia from one angle or another. If they are interested in interpersonal relations, they will almost inevitably describe sex roles, male domination, tense or hostile relations between male and female and child marriages and bride price.

If they are legally minded they will find an absence of courts, constables, codes of kings and conclude Melanesians lived by anarchy and lawlessness.

If they are scientifically minded they will find an absence of the wheel, gunpowder, city skyscrapers, sprawling suspension bridges, and quickly conclude that Melanesians had no civilization, no technology, no mathematics and no science.

If they are men and women of letters they will find the absence of scrolls or written literature and quickly conclude that Melanesians lived without knowledge, learning or wisdom.

Missionaries come to Melanesia and find an absence of church buildings, mitres and rich priestly attire, ordained priests, hierarchy of bishops and angelic host of brothers, sisters, deacons, catechists and laity. They conclude Melanesians lived under an atmosphere of godlessness, or if they are more charitable, they say the people lived under a form of primordial religion called animism.

Over the centuries, Melanesians have come to see themselves as they are understood and written up by foreigners. Melanesians are walking in the shadows of their Western analysts, living under dreams and visions dreamt and seen by Westerners.

For over one hundred years, we have been subjected to microscopic study by Western scientists, scholars, and experts only to emerge second rate. Whatever our dreams, our visions, our histories, and our values, we were told our history began when Captain Moresby sailed into our shores or when German missionaries decided to make plantations out of our land.

Every experience of our long history was anthropology or archaeology for drop-out Western scholars seeking the promised land in our environment. To the extent that they fall fascinated they over-idealise Melanesia. To the extent that they despise Melanesia, they disregard its inherent virtues.

Having described what is the Melanesian way, I wish now to briefly offer my reasons for insisting on the inward study of the Melanesian way, in order to develop our true identity.

For thousands of years we had no written word. In spite of this 'impediment', our people guarded with their lives great truths and virtues and passed them from father to son, and from mother to daughter.

As a result, while the Western world was busy exploring, exploiting and conquering, we Melanesians went on with the business of life and living. Without the benefit of the wheel or the gun powder we continued to travel and make links with the peoples of distant islands and mountains.

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the spirit of self-reliance has always been in Melanesia.

We are often preached at by missionaries to be charitable and to give and not to count the cost. We are often urged by service organisations to engage in community work as if we have never known community service in our villages. In saying this I do not deny that the village 'closeness' is no longer true for towns and cities. Wantoks don't live close to each other any more or have the time and resources to help each other. There is definitely a need for organisations like St Vincent de Paul, Red Cross, the Port Moresby Development Group and Apex. I cast no aspersions on the sincerity of their members and am a member myself of some of these. I often wonder, however, whether some of these organisations exist as elite clubs to propagate themselves and to justify many smart business deals and activities that cannot measure up to either Christian or Melanesian standards of care and concern for one's fellow.

We must be careful not to destroy the Melanesian values of self-sacrifice for the benefit of others, or make beggars and dependants out of our people by good works and deeds. Let me emphasise this point. I am not against charity organisations. There is certainly a place for charity organisations like St Vincent de Paul in Port Moresby where for whatever reasons tribal and 'wantok' links have broken down, and a need for government or publicly financed institutions for the aged, the blind, the deaf, the dumb, the lame and the disabled throughout Melanesia. Relatives and 'wantoks' can no longer look after their physically handicapped without help, and need the support of all of us.

Too often we join charity organisations for wrong reasons. Our foreign brothers and sisters seem to undertake charity or welfare work to justify their financially advantageous positions. Papua New Guineans are often made to feel that volunteer service is something imported to our shores and planted in our hearts. How wrong this attitude is. It is nothing more than 'Euroegocentricity'. Many Papua New Guineans support their aged parents, infant school relatives, widowed parents, and divorced sisters without ever asking for financial support from the Government, the Church, private enterprises or charity organisations. They do this because tradition dictates it.

Income tax laws hardly help Papua New Guineans because they are devised for the foreign so-called nuclear family. Often a Papua New Guinean will support ten or more close relatives

besides his own immediate family of five or more, and yet our income tax laws only entitle a taxpayer to claim four dependants for up to a sum of K250. The State does not seem to realise that the relatives and wantoks that I, as a taxpayer, support are the same people the State has been established to serve. These legal limitations upon income tax claims disregard my personal support and contributions to my fellow citizens who also happen to be my relatives.

I realise income tax laws have only been amended recently to make them simpler to suit administrative convenience. However, I believe any law which has a profound impact on the cultural values of our people deserves public scrutiny, comment and opinion before it is given to Parliament. Our people are not sufficiently politically aware to make any significant impact on the bureaucratic control of the Parliament and other government institutions.

BERNARD NAROKOBI

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Dancing Yet to the Dim Dim's Beat

'Dancing yet to the Dim Dim's Beat' — say it out aloud and you will find it has a regular insistent rhythm to it, like the beat of a drum. The whole poem is onomatopoeic. Onomatopoeia in poetry merely means the selection and use of words that imitate or recall sound. Read this poem aloud and you will notice the predominance of 'd' sounds, the repetition of 'yes' in every stanza and the line: 'Thud dada thud da thud dada thud' are all working together to create the auditory effect of drums.

Dancing yet to the Dim Dim's Beat

We are dancing
Yes, but without leaping
For the fetters of dominance
still persist
Yes, still insist
On dominating
Holding us down

We have been dancing
Yes, but not for our own tune
For we are not immune
Yes, for our truly, our own truly
Music of life is eroding
Yes, the mystic tune holds
Us spellbound
Our independence abused

We have been dancing
Yes, we have our senses throbbing
Like an adolescent's ignorance
Yes, we have been misled
For the throbbing is a mishmash
the mirth you hear
Yes, it is about our own
Mis-shapen rebirth



Godfrey Misale

We have been dancing
 Yes, our anklets and
 Amulets now are
 Yes, grinding into our skin
 No longer are they a decor
 Yes, they are our chains

We have been dancing
 Yes, but the euphoria has died
 It is now the dull drumming
 Yes, of the flat drums
 Thud dada thud da thud dada thud
 Yes, It is signalling, not the bliss,
 But the impending crisis.

VINCENT WARAKAI

- Onomatopoeic words and usage exists in all languages. Can you think of onomatopoeic words, phrases or even songs from your own language?
- Have a look at the other poems in this selection. Can you locate other examples of onomatopoeia, whether in single words or phrases or lines?

305

The Bush Kanaka Speaks

In this angry outburst, 'The Bush Kanaka Speaks', KUMALAU TAWALI, reflects a later stage in changing social attitudes. The bush Kanaka is no longer overawed by the white man's ways. He questions them and finds them lacking.

Earlier in this book, we saw how different layers of meaning can be found in a piece of writing. In this poem the figures of the Kanaka and the Kiap seem to point to many areas of conflict between old and new — physical, social, cultural and political.

*TAWALI uses **rhetorical questions** in this poem. These are questions that are asked for effect rather than to seek information. Rhetorical questions are often answered by the writers or speakers themselves.*

The Kiap shouts at us
forcing the veins to stand out in his neck
nearly forcing the excreta out of his bottom
he says: you are ignorant.

He says: you are ignorant,
but can he shape a canoe,
tie a mast, fix an outrigger?
Can he steer a canoe through the night
without losing his way?
Does he know when a turtle comes ashore
to lay its eggs?

The Kiap shouts at us
forcing the veins to stand out in his neck
nearly forcing the excreta out of his bottom
he says: you are dirty.

He says we live in dirty rubbish houses.
Has he ever lived in one?
Has he enjoyed the sea breeze
blowing through the windows?
and the cool shade under the pandanus thatch?
Let him keep his iron roof, shining in the sun,
cooking his inside, bleaching his skin white.

The Kiap shouts at us
forcing the veins to stand out in his neck
nearly forcing the excreta out of his bottom,
He says: you'll get sick.

He says: you'll get sick
eating that fly-ridden food.
Haven't I eaten such food all my life,
and I haven't died yet?
Maybe his stomach is tender like a child's
born yesterday. I'm sure he couldn't
eat our food without getting sick.

Every white man the garment sends to us
forces his veins out shouting
nearly forces the excreta out of his bottom
shouting you bush Kanaka.

He says: you ol les man!
Yet he sits on a soft chair and does nothing
just shouts, eats, drinks, eats, drinks,
like a woman with a child in her belly.
These white men have no bones.
If they tried to fight us without their musiket
they'd surely cover their faces like women.

KUMALAU TAWALI

- Has this poem made you re-assess your estimate of 'bush Kanakas'?

307

Hohola in the Night

'Hohola in the Night' is a startling poem. P. KAMA KERPI shocks you into sitting up and taking notice of what he is saying. Which shock tactics does he use?

Bright western skies die.
You have waited the anxious hours
of a woman in her first pregnancy.
The hour like a wounded soldier,
struggling to your dismay.
Now; moments to display your beauty arrive.

You smile like a titled warrior,
Pride your mask.
You transfigure into Helen,
to capture my admiration.
You have cast a spell over me.

I admire you.
Man created heaven,
symbolic of progress.

Yet;
you;
 a camouflage:
 a deceiver:
 a pregnant woman with a deformed child.
You whisper the devilish whisper of a harlot,
of her virginity to an innocent teenage
male virgin in bed.

Oho! Hypocrite
I admire you.

Hohola infested with hook worms,
Sick and diseased.
I smell the dead corpse
in the still air.
You breathe out unbearable smell.

Though splendid your beauty
I hear a siren of a police van far to my left
Scream of a raped female to my right
Before me in under dim lights
A woman selling her body to a queue
And five juvenile delinquents
Follow me.

Hohola you send a wave of fear
Like the fear of death descending on my aged father
Or the fear to get VD from my high school girl
While making love.

Hohola I wish you were a second
Gomorrah.

P. KAMA KERPI

- Make a list of the images, similes and metaphors that Kerpi uses in this poem.
- What do these relate to?
- Are the images appropriate to the poet's subject matter?
- Did you think poems should always deal with 'beautiful things'? What do you think now?
- An **allusion** is a reference to historical and literary events and people with which the reader may be familiar. Does the allusion to Gomorrah reinforce Kerpi's point of view?

308

Yupela Meri i senis Hariap pinis

Not long ago I used to go up the Heklaka hill.
When I looked below over the green valley
I could see smoke popping up here and there —
From amongst the jar trees and kunai grass,
And I could see you young girls
Working very hard in your gardens,
In your traditional pulpuls
With pig grease reflecting in the sun
From your beautiful skin.

But now
When I go up the Heklaka hill
And look below over the beautiful valley
I can see grey smoke popping out of mills and factories
From among the huge ugly lumps of metal
And I can see you young girls
In blue jeans and jackets
With high heel shoes and stinky perfumes
Purses in one hand and newspapers in the other.
As you walk from shop to shop gardening
With your breasts sweating in the breast bags.

Oh yupela i senis hariap pinis!
Not long ago your names used to be Urakume, Mohoe and Ilaie
You never looked at boys nor talked to them
Always eyes were on the ground
With bilums on your heads.

But now
All your names have changed
To Marys, Bettys, Jennys and Roses
And you go around hand in hand
With your mangi poroman without bilums
Oh yupela ol meri i winim
Pinis misis Queen!
Na yu Goroka, yu laik winim Tokyo and New York!



Titus Tilley

Mass Media, Mass Mania

Yummy, sweet marie, tea cake
KO kraka, PK, KK,
Tic tac Fanta tango
Toothache, decoy, decay
koikoi anyway
Fall out, pull em out
Strong teeth? No way!

Talking about lime fresh
Blue Omo for brightness
Palmolive, brighter soap, whitey soap
Soft soap, dope soap
Whiter wash, wash wash, brain wash
Brain blank, blank cheque, blank bank
Check out!

Buy now, buy new, buy big, buy bulk
Buy more, buy me, buy now, Dinau
Buy! Buy! Goodbye self-reliance
Sell! Sell! sell self, sell soil
Sell soul, sell out, sell bottles,
Sell empty promises,
SOLD OUT.

NORA VAGI BRASH



Marlon Kuelinad

- What is Nora Vagi Brash parodying in this poem? Why?

3/11

ENTERING THE WHITE MAN'S WORLD

by Albert Maori Kiki

312

The first white man I ever saw was a trader called Allen who lived in Orokolo and who bought copra, which he paid for in beads and twist tobacco. I remember being surprised and even a little disappointed because he looked so much like a normal human being and not at all like someone come back from the island of the dead. For our people had strange notions about Europeans in those days. They were supposed to be our dead relatives who had to change their appearance when they returned to live with us. Seeing us, their former brothers and children, they would often cry in their houses, but they could never show their emotion in the open . . . for there was a big man always watching them. The slightest mistake they made, or any attempt on their part to betray their secret, and they were sent back to the island of the dead. In fact, whenever Europeans packed up their belongings to go on leave or to return to their country, we used to say that they had committed an offence and were being sent back to the island of the dead by the big man. We further believed that whenever one of our people died he would walk under the ground until he got to the house of a white man. There his body would be washed, and the 'bad' skin would be taken off. Once he was all white, he would be put on the next ship sailing to the island of the dead. Such ideas persist among some of our people even to this day. I remember when I returned from Fiji in 1957 I was asked whether I had seen the factories there. I said I had, and then they asked me: 'And did you see the people working in those factories?' I said, yes: much of the work is done by the machines, but there are some white people there working the machines. But they looked at me with a superior kind of smile and said: 'Oh well, you just don't know: they are our relatives, working there.'

But there was no air of the supernatural attached to Mr Allen, a friendly trader who was very popular in Orokolo. I was much more fascinated by his wife, a very thin woman with sharp features. When I later learnt about angels I always pictured them like Mrs Allen. The thing that excited us most about her, however, was her shoes: they were long, pointed things, with very high heels that made deep

marks on the beach. We boys followed her and fought for the privilege of being the first to step onto her footprints. She was very kind to us and allowed us to play with her little daughters, who had many wonderful toys. I can remember being so enchanted by a little embroidered doll's pillow that I pinched it and never gave it back. . . .

However, it was not until they dragged me to school that I came into contact with the hard reality of the white man's world. There was only one school in Orokolo then and it belonged to the London Mission Society. Though the administration had no policy about compulsory schooling, the mission made great efforts to bring all of us into school, and since most of us were reluctant to go, they would make periodical raids on the village to snatch truants. When I came down from my mother's village to Orokolo I was already about ten years old and felt reluctant to go and sit on the same bench with younger boys. Therefore I avoided school. But one morning I was caught. I can remember that day very well. It was a fine morning and it was one of those lucky days when fish were very plentiful right near the beach. The women had come back with a big catch and one of them gave my mother some. She wrapped one up in sago for me and I was eating it. Then someone called out from the other end of the village that they were again looking for boys who did not go to school. I hid under a pile of coconut leaves which my father had put aside. They were going to be burned to provide light on one of his nightly fishing expeditions. But someone must have betrayed my hiding place. I was discovered and carried—screaming and kicking—to the school. Immediately on arrival I was given a sound beating by the teacher because I had refused to come earlier. An English missionary, the Reverend Dewdney, was in charge of the mission and the school, but his assistants and teachers were Samoans. My own teacher was born in Papua, because his father had come to the country long ago for the London Mission Society. He spoke our language very well.

The first lesson I attended was given by his wife. She wrote the numbers one to ten on the blackboard and we were asked to copy them. I wrote them all very well, except 2 and 7, which I wrote back to front.

I never liked the school. Our teachers were very ready with the cane, and beat us for the slightest mistake or offence. We were taught simple English and arithmetic, but by the time I left I could not speak much English, except for 'come' and 'go' and such simple, basic things. Much of our time was spent cleaning the mission yard, making fences and looking after the missionary's cows. I became quite an expert in milking them. I was most grateful to the Reverend Dewdney, however, when he taught me a little bit of first aid. It

his job earlier, I don't know. What he was shouting at me as he took the letter I did not understand. But he set his dog on me to drive me away and the dog bit me, drawing blood from my leg. The scar is still faintly visible to this day.

I must have become very proficient in making tea without spilling it on the saucer, or I must have impressed my superiors in some other way, because after about a year I was made interpreter to patrol officer Bill Maddock, who was to open a new station at Ihu on the Vailala River. My English was barely good enough to do this work. I could cope well enough with the routine work: the patrol officer told the people to keep their village clean, to build their houses farther apart because of fire, to build a road, to form a co-operative for selling copra. He recruited labour for road building and for work on the station. But sometimes I could not understand what he said, and fearing to admit it, had to improvise.

The most interesting experience was an expedition into Kukukuku country. It was not very successful because the people ran away whenever they got news of our coming and we found nothing but deserted villages, with just a few dogs and tame hornbills strolling around. However, we did manage to meet the odd small group of warriors and were able to give them the message of the government and the good news about the civilized life they would be taught to lead.

The patrol officer told them: you must not run away when we come to talk to you; you must not fight your next-door neighbours, the killing of people is against the law of the people on the coast and they don't like it; you must learn to stay together and you must stop moving around, you must settle in one place. This last injunction must have sounded stranger than any other to the Kukukukus. But I did not feel bold enough to explain to the patrol officer that moving around is a necessity of life in those parts. That we move, not because we are simply restless, but because we have to follow the game.

I worked for the patrol officer for a year, got fed up and ran back to Kerema. The idea of doing hospital work had not left me, and learning that there was a new medical assistant I applied once more for a *doktaboi* job. The interview given to me by Mr Albert Speer is one of the most memorable events in my life. He was the first white man who ever asked me to sit down in his presence. I was afraid to accept, but he finally made me do it. I sat there stiffly, with my hands clasped rigidly between my knees while he talked to me. He asked me whether I knew what it meant to become a medical orderly. Would I be prepared to do night duty? Observe the rules? Above all he warned me, that I was going to work with women, and

that I must respect these women. In those days there were no Papuan nurses, only orderlies, and they were all men. Many of the women patients were frightened of the men, who treated them roughly. Some came down with their husbands, and many ran away before their treatment was finished. Mr Speer was greatly worried about this. I promised to do all I was told, and was accepted at a salary of £1 a month. This was quite a lot in 1947—as tea boy the previous year I had earned only half as much.

I learned a great deal from the medical assistant. Not only did he teach me to dress wounds and to look after patients, but he made me do office work and sometimes I typed all his correspondence. He was the first person to take a serious interest in my career. Often he took me home, showed me pictures of Australia and told me about the countryside where he lived and which he loved. I remember seeing a photograph of sheep for the first time in my life—though the image of sheep had pursued me through Sunday school class. He spoke about the beauty of Sydney and about the cold in Australia, but I said I was not frightened of any cold because in my mother's village it could become very cold at night and we had no clothes there to protect us. We went fishing together and we talked about the water, about fish, about crocodiles and all sorts of things. I told him I wanted to go back to my village, to settle down, but he said, no, there is something important for you to do: you must go and get knowledge and take it back to your people, do not go back empty handed. I said: my mother is getting old, I must look after her. And I know how to shoot birds. I can spear a pig and build a house. He said, these things are very important, but it is also important to learn to build the country. Your country will need men, and I think you are one of them. I want you to get more training, learn more about the white man. These were strange words to me indeed. I had never thought about my country. I knew my loyalty to my mother's people and again to Orokolo. But it was Albert Speer who first made me conscious of Papua New Guinea. Sometimes he spoke to me about the future of this country. He told me that in future black men will rule this country. I could not believe him. He was the first man ever to say such a thing to me. The missionaries had never said anything like it. But he told me that many things he was saying I wouldn't understand until later, in years to come.

The only time he got furious with me was when I wanted to get married. There was a girl whose father was a carpenter in town and who took a liking to me and wanted to marry me. She was pretty and I liked the idea. But her elder sister also liked me and in the end I decided to marry both of them. I thought it would be nice to marry sisters because life would be more pleasant. They would not

quarrel like women of different families. I could see myself becoming respected at home, because although I was a small boy, returning with two wives would make people treat me like an important man. But when I told Mr Speer he got furious and struck me on the ear, and I cried and he shed his own tears. He told me that I was the first Papuan he had ever struck. And he said again: I must make sure that you get your education. He told me that I must wait, and after training I could get married to an educated girl and have a good home.

The urge in me to go home and settle down was strong. My mother had always thought I was learning bad things at school. She kept saying: you have forgotten the secret of your people. My uncles also wanted me to return. They thought I had become a good specimen for a front man.

I loved my mother more than anybody. But in the end I listened to Albert Speer. He had great influence over me. I did not believe him when he told me that one day I would lead my people. But he was the first white man who ever ate with me; the first white man ever to become my friend. I found it impossible to disappoint him and so I dropped the idea of marriage.

Some time after that he told me: you can do something better than this, I shall send you to my home at Goulburn, where you will attend a secondary school. My parents there will look after you. He tried very hard to send me to Australia. If the minister for territories had given permission I would have been the first Papuan to be educated in Australia. But he refused and suggested that I should be sent to Sogeri school instead.

I did not understand until much later that it was then the official policy of Australia to educate Papuans and New Guineans only up to a certain point and no further.

So Mr Speer decided that going to Sogeri would be better than nothing. In December 1948 we set out for Moresby together and I spent a week there with him before going to Sogeri school. Port Moresby made a tremendous impression on me. We arrived there on the day Prince Charles was born and all the huge ships in the harbour (I had never seen such ships in Kerema) were brightly decorated with flags and coloured lights. I remember that Mr Speer took me shopping in the large Burns Philp store. I looked at this huge building with some pride because my father had worked on its construction as a labourer. Among the confusion of goods inside I was most impressed by the tailors' dummies, and felt a great temptation to steal one. As we came out of the building Mr Speer stopped a police van to beg a lift, for there were no buses or taxis then. He sat in the front next to the white police officer. I hopped

on the back with the constables but could feel they didn't like me there. When the van stopped the white police officer saw me sitting in the back and he shouted 'Catch him!' And immediately I was grabbed by the constables and handcuffed. All this happened within seconds, before Mr Speer could explain that I was with him. Though I was released at once, it made me feel very uncomfortable throughout the rest of my stay in Moresby.

I spent from 1949 to 1951 in Sogeri school. It was there that I learned to speak English properly. All our teachers were Australians with the exception of a few Papuan tutors who were ex-students of Sogeri themselves. I enjoyed my stay in Sogeri very much. It was away from the coast and was real forest, reminiscent of home. There were many birds and wallabies. I enjoyed games like baseball and cricket but was most keen on the debating society. I can remember a debate on equal rights for women in which I passionately argued against equality. I was still very much influenced by our traditional thinking on this matter. I also enjoyed the concerts and can remember standing on a platform singing songs in my mother's language. Pretty tunes to the others, but a tremendous private joke to myself, because I was abusing everybody in the audience.

Many of the students were restless and troublesome. They argued about what they thought was bad food in the institution and they complained about the low wages awaiting them after training. But there was no political consciousness yet, nor did we think at all about racial discrimination. This question simply did not arise because our Australian teachers were there on one level, and we were on another and it did not even occur to us that we might aspire to the same level.

The biggest thing Sogeri did to me was that it brought me together with other boys from all parts of Papua and New Guinea and I learned to know and like them. Many of them have remained my friends throughout life.

In the final year at Sogeri we all automatically took a teachers' course that would enable us to take a teaching job, though we were not yet regarded as qualified teachers. However, I was never to become a teacher. When I finished at Sogeri I saw an advertisement inviting applications for ex-Sogeri boys to receive medical training in Fiji. I applied to the director of medical services, Dr Gunther, and as I was supported by Mr Speer, I was accepted.

I shall never forget what Mr Speer has done for me, and even though he is only a few years older than myself, I have come to regard him as a father. From Fiji I wrote to him asking whether he would allow me to adopt his name as a sign of recognition; and this is how Albert came to be added to Maori Kiki. Later on when I married and had children, I called my son Percy after Mr Speer's

father and I called my daughter Jane after his sister. Albert Speer is now in Moresby as Executive Officer in the Community Health Division. When I saw him recently I told him: When you retire I want you to come and live with me in Orokolo and when you die I will bury you with my own hands. But he didn't like it. He said he would have to go and die among his own people.

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C

hildhood

I was born in Rabaul on 9 April 1936—one of the first children from Karau to be born in a hospital. Had we been at home at that time, my mother would have been taken to the *haus karim*, our traditional type of maternity home, where she would have given birth with the competent help of some elderly women. She would have had to stay there for four months before presenting me to my father. But my father was a policeman living far from home in the Gazelle Peninsula, and so I was born in Rapidik Hospital.

I spent my first six years in Rabaul. I learned to speak Pidgin at home and when playing with the children of other policemen. When I played with the village children in Vunamami, I learned to speak Kuanua, the language of the Tolai people. It was not until I was six years old, when my father went on leave to Karau, that I began to learn my own language, which is Murik.

I consider myself lucky to have had such a start in life. One of our greatest and most urgent tasks in Papua New Guinea today is to forge a new national unity out of the multiplicity of cultures. In such a situation it is a distinct advantage to have been exposed to two cultures in one's childhood. I always thought of myself as having two homes. I grew up understanding that, in spite of so many superficial differences, there are many similarities between us.

Somare, my father, went home to Murik in 1942 in order to take up his chieftaincy. I can only vaguely remember the feast. Somare had to make a big feast for his Uncle Emang, who handed the title to him. When Sana, Somare's father, died he left his children in the care of Emang, his cousin. Emang had been instructed to hand the chieftaincy to Somare when it was time. Now, in the custom of our people, when Somare assumed the responsibility of the chieftaincy, it was

MICHAEL SOMARE —

not *he* who was being honoured, but Emang.

My father had to decorate Emang with pigs' tusks and feathers, and Emang had to be placed on a platform like a big chief. My father prepared a twelve-pig feast for him. This was an expression of respect and gratitude. He thanked Emang for having looked after Sana's children all those years, for looking after the chieftaincy and preserving its dignity, and for now handing it over to his nephew.

It was during this feast that I was adopted by my Uncle Saub. This adoption ceremony was the first really dramatic event in my life. At the time, I was not entirely sure what was happening, or why. During the height of the festivities, when the *brag* masks were dancing, my father picked me up and placed me between the two masks. The masks lifted me up and, between them, carried me over to my Uncle Saub. They handed me to him. Then Moig, the daughter of the deceased brother Naringo, was handed to the *brags*. The *brags* carried her to my father.

Such an exchange of children is quite common in Murik. It is one way of further cementing the family links. My father had now made Saub responsible for handing over the chieftaincy to me. After this exchange of children there could be no question of jealousy or rivalry over the chieftaincy. Saub became my new father and would train me for my future responsibilities. I went to live in his house and was to take a leading role in Saub's family when I grew up. I would have to take responsibility for all the works—the building of houses, the preparation of feasts, the organizing of rituals for Saub. Most of Saub's traditional wealth, such as shell money and ritual objects, would now pass to me.

After the ceremony my father returned to Rabaul to resume his post in the police force. He left me and my sister Maki with Uncle Saub. Soon after his departure the Japanese bombed Simpson harbour and invaded Rabaul and Wewak. I was not to see my father again until the end of the war.

We were still confused by the news that reached us in Murik when one day the Japanese landed in Darapap. They quickly made friends with our people. They brought many presents of food, clothes and all sorts of good things, and

they passed around plenty of whisky. So our people had a big celebration on the arrival of the Japanese.

Next morning, when nobody was bright after all the drinking of the previous night, the Australians started bombing. They started over Wewak and moved towards the mouth of the Sepik river. Everyone was surprised. Nobody had expected that the coming of the Japanese would cause bombing. Our people quickly fled the village, but as we lived in the swamps and there was no bush to hide in, we had to build little huts in the mangrove stumps. Saub took us to live in a place called Songar. But the Japanese soon decided to bring us back to the village, and so we returned to Karau, Mendam and Darapap.

Since most of our houses in Karau had been destroyed by the bombs, our people decided not to build up the old village. We built new houses on the beach among the casuarina trees, next to the Japanese camp.

But the Japanese hadn't come only as fighters. They also tried to give some simple education to the people. Of course, their main aim was to train people for military purposes. They took young boys from twelve to fifteen and gave them an army training of some sort. The boys were taught to use rifles, to dismantle them, and so on.

At the same time they decided to provide some type of school for us younger children. They wanted to give us a Japanese type of education so that we would be able to understand them and they would be able to understand us. It was Captain Sivata who was responsible for the school. He told us that he was a Japanese-American, and after the war broke out he had made his way to Japan to fight with his people. Captain Sivata had taught himself Pidgin—a kind of broken Pidgin—and at first he was the only one who could speak to us.

None of us was forced to go to the school, but our parents were asked if they wanted to send their children. I remember that at first the other children were frightened of the Japanese, but I was not frightened because I had lived in Rabaul, and I had seen many white people before. To us the Japanese were white people.

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I remember my first day with them. We children were taken to see the Japanese soldiers while they were having their meal. They started showing us pictures of Japan; Japanese homes, Japanese cars, and things happening in Japan; Japanese aeroplanes that were bombing New Guinea, and Japanese generals—their big men.

The first thing I learnt was how to count. Captain Sivata said, 'Bango,' which is the Japanese word for 'number'. We didn't know what it meant, but we all repeated after him: 'Bango.' Then he showed us one pawpaw or one stick or knife and said, 'Ichi,' which means one. Then he showed us two pawpaws or two sticks or two knives and said, 'Repeat after me: ni.' And so we were taught to count from one to ten: *ichi, ni, san, shi, go, roku, shichi, hachi, ku, ju*. Then he taught us the vowel sounds and we had to repeat: *a, e, i, o, u*. Then we had to say them with consonants: *ka, ke, ki, ko, ku, na, ne, ni, no, nu*.

We learned a few Japanese words and we were taught a few Japanese songs. I can still remember some of these, but I have forgotten what the words mean. The Japanese national anthem goes like this:

*Kimi ga yo wa
Chiyo ni yachiyo ni
Sazareishi no
Iwao to nari te
Koke no musu made.*

While the bigger boys were practising with rifles, Captain Sivata would take us down to the beach facing the sun. Sivata called the sun 'coming summer'. He made us close our eyes and bow down. We were not taught to say any special prayers to the sun; we just had to bow down and think about him.

In the days when the Japanese still received plenty of cargo, they gave us biscuits and lollies, and we were often given tinned food in school. The Japanese assigned special duties to us children. Some of us were sent out to collect special oysters (known as *kina* in Pidgin), others were sent

to collect vegetables. The Japanese used to call out demanding two boys for this and three boys for that. That is when our knowledge of Japanese numbers was most useful.

Our parents also worked for the Japanese. They had to collect firewood for them; and when their cargo stopped coming the Japanese had to get all their food locally: Most of their food—such as sago—they got from the Sepik.

I cannot remember exactly how long I went to their school, but it must have been for nine months or maybe a year. In any case, I went to their school until they left. This was my first education.

I remember the time came when the Japanese said to us: 'We are not winning. The Americans are coming.' So we had a big goodbye for them, and many of our people wept. I remember seeing them go. Captain Sivata and the rest had all been made prisoners, and they were taken on to the barges that the Australians had landed. I remember that my uncle and all the other people in the village had prepared some smoked fish for them to take along.

Our people found the Japanese extremely friendly. In some other places people got very rough treatment. Maybe they would not supply them with food, or maybe the Japanese there were just tough, but in Murik we had no complaints about them. When our fathers first saw these strange 'white' people landing, they thought they were our dead forefathers coming to rescue us. That's why they were very well received to start with. The Japanese whom we saw in Darapap and Karau were just *normal* people. We did not see them fight—except, when the Americans or Australians were bombing, we saw them firing with their machine guns from behind the logs they had cut for the purpose.

The Japanese had to maintain law in the district, and they had their own police. Some of our people became policemen too. Some even became *kempatais*, that is, captains in the Japanese army, and they did everything except actual fighting.

The Japanese did not plunder our gardens, and they respected the local women. I suppose they had to respect the women because they were among their chief suppliers of

food. They had to go and catch fish. Perhaps another reason why the Japanese respected local people in this area was that our villages were surrounded by lakes and swamps, and the Japanese knew they had no proper escape routes and would need the cooperation of the local people.

I remember only one case of severe punishment. My Uncle Karao was an ex-policeman with the Australian police. In those days some policemen were quite rough with their own people, and Karao was one of the roughest. The people reported Karao to the Japanese so that they would do something to him. The Japanese got him and beat him with a big mangrove stick. They gave him a punishment such as you seldom see today.

But on the whole we had very good relationships with the Japanese. We often danced for them, and they performed their sword dances for us.

It was not until after the departure of the Japanese that I began to find out what real village life was like in Murik. My early school days had now come to an end, for, at that time, there was no Australian school in Murik to take the place of the Japanese one. For the next few years I lived the free life enjoyed by children in our traditional societies in every part of Papua New Guinea.

We lived right on the beach and much of our time was spent in the water surfing. We made ourselves surfboards from broken canoe sides and marked them with our totem designs. These designs were called *muntai*. There was also a kind of cork tree that was occasionally washed up on our shore after floating down the Sepik river. We were always watching for these trees because they made especially good surfboards.

Perhaps our favourite occupation was fishing. Our elders had taught us how to pick the right reed or soft bamboo and how to make it into a fishing spear. We were taught to dry it in the sun until it was hard and to make a head of multiple prongs with sharpened wood or wire. We learned how to find schools of fish and to throw the spear two or three inches in front of the fish. If we aimed at the fish directly, it was likely to slip away from underneath our spear. If we aimed in front of it, the splash of the spear touching the water made

it move straight on into the prongs of our spearhead. We learned much about the movement and the behaviour of fish. We knew that when the sea turned brown and when there was a lot of foam on the water it was the time when the fish left the lagoon and went back to the sea.

We spent whole days fishing. We boys went out in groups to sit on the beach and roast the fish we had caught. Sitting on the beach and resting after our meal we often held drawing competitions. Each boy would draw his *muntai* designs into the sand. He might draw his canoe marks or the marks his clan used on their paddles and spears. No one had as yet taught us how to draw these marks, but we watched the old men at work and copied them as best we could. Girls would draw their tattoo marks. Then we decided who was the best artist.

Most of the day boys spent among boys. But on moonlit nights there were games for boys and girls together. Everyone went down to the beach with his special girlfriend. We pretended that these girls were our wives to be. When we reached the beach boys and girls formed two opposite teams to play 'catchmore'. The boys were waiting on one side and the girls came running from the other side towards us. They had to try and cross a certain line. We tried to catch them and make them 'prisoners' before they could cross the line. The prisoners were taken to the 'chief', who was sitting under a special tree. When all the girls had been taken prisoner we changed sides and it was our turn to run. Sometimes we called this game 'dogs and pigs'.

When we got tired we would sit down and sing. We had songs about the moon and songs about beautiful sunsets. We knew lots of songs from other villages and in other languages. Whenever children accompanied their parents on canoe trips to Wewak or Angoram or Aitape, they would try to learn some songs and games and bring them back to us. Children were always proud if they could bring back something new. We performed some of the circle dances that had been brought to us from Aitape and Kairuru Island.

We tried to remember days that were important in our lives by marking trees. Usually it was the day and the place

where we met a girlfriend that were thus marked. When we liked a girl we sent messages to her through one of our sisters or cousins. We asked her whether she could meet us on a certain day at a certain spot. We had names for all the points in the lagoon, and we had names for all the meeting places that were farther inland. If the girl agreed, we would make our separate ways to the secret meeting place in little canoes. When we met we sometimes exchanged presents. The boy, perhaps, brought some fish, the girl, a small basket. Maybe we exchanged betel nut. If the boy and the girl decided to mark the day of their meeting, the boy then climbed up a high tree and stripped it of all its branches, leaving only a small crown at the top. We always chose trees that were higher than the rest so that these trees could be picked out easily from a distance. The next day the boy would proudly point out the tree to his friends. They then knew that this was the spot where he had had an important date, but he would not usually tell them whom he had met. Even today people paddling through the lagoon can usually tell you the names of all the boys who marked the various trees.

These secret meetings between girls and boys were purely romantic. No boy could sleep with a girl until he had passed his second initiation. Even then sexual relations outside marriage were not permitted and seldom occurred.

Trees were usually marked by boys, but sometimes girls too performed the task. Murik girls are bold and independent. Unlike girls in other parts, they climb trees, and it is a common sight to see a girl climb a coconut tree.

Not all the marked trees commemorate a meeting between boy and girl. Sometimes the tree indicates that there was an important meeting of a group of boys. When boys had had an unusually successful fishing expedition and wanted to celebrate with a feast among the mangroves, they sometimes marked a tree to remember the day. In such cases they often cut signs into the bark—clan symbols indicating who was present at the occasion. But when we met girls, we did not mark the trees with our clan symbols, for we were anxious to keep our identity secret from adults.

Trees thus marked were nearly always mangroves, but sometimes casuarina trees on the beach were also marked. During my school days I marked a tree in Wewak. It can still be seen.

Life in the village was never dull. There were frequent feasts. Our people understood life to be a celebration. Nothing became a dull routine to them. In this modern age objects are mass-produced in a factory. The naming of things has become an impersonal activity. In Murik every human act was important and significant. The marking of a canoe, for example, became an important event in a person's life. Our livelihood depended on canoes and on fishing. When our people first settled in Murik, the sandbanks were large enough to allow some planting of sweet potatoes. But since then the sea has washed away most of the good soil, and our people must either go to the mainland to farm the land there, or they must trade the fish for other food stuff.

In Murik a canoe was usually built jointly by two brothers. One of the brothers would own the front and the other the back of the canoe. To launch a canoe they had to prepare a big feast for the whole village. People might come even from Mendam. Then the owners and their friends sailed the canoe far out into the sea until it almost disappeared behind the horizon. When the canoe returned and approached the shore the people waiting there shot their spears at it. They usually aimed at the *rangarangan*, which is the decorated part on top of the mast, and at the sail. The owners had to bring in their canoe through a hail of spears. While this was happening the conch shells were blown and the drums beaten. When the canoe had braved this onslaught, it was considered fit for use, and the owners started fishing in it as soon as they had repaired any damage.

Even though we had no formal education, we learned a great many things in the village. We absorbed the customs and the values of our people. We observed how our elders conducted their affairs. We learned, without being formally taught, the democratic processes of village government. Before the Australians appointed the *luluai* and the *tultul*, we had no equivalents to these. We had chieftaincies, but

the chief's function was mainly to lead the discussion and help the village elders to achieve a consensus when decisions had to be made. Even after *luluais* and *tultuls* had been appointed as go-betweens with the Australian Administration, our people still sorted out their problems in the traditional manner.

Disputes and fights in Murik broke out mainly over fishing rights, trees, land and women. If a man found someone fishing in his waters or reaping his tree, he usually plunged a spear at him straight away. But after that the matter had to be taken back to the chiefs for settlement. If a woman was caught in adultery, there was an immediate fight between her husband and the adulterer. If the man was from another village, the case was considered much more serious, and a fight could break out between the two villages. But soon the fight would be stopped by the leaders of the two villages and the man and the woman brought before the chiefs in a public hearing. It was considered important that everyone have the right to listen to such proceedings. No dispute could be solved until it was made fully public. The man and the woman were questioned: 'Why did you do such a thing? What were your reasons?' In the end a price was set for compensation.

Our people never inflicted capital punishment for adultery. They believed that almost any dispute could be settled by talk. They believed in reconciliation rather than retribution. Even in cases of witchcraft or suspected witchcraft it was considered wrong to retaliate. You defended yourself by exposing the evildoer. Exposing his machinations to the public rendered him helpless. Our people strongly believed that, once you had saved yourself from witchcraft in this manner, you should not pursue the matter further and should not take any punitive action.

Our people believed that most diseases and death were caused by either spirits or witchcraft. There were visionaries in the village who saw the culprits in dreams. If a man suspected another of making magic against him—suppose it was reported to him that someone had picked up his cigarette end or a piece of hair from his body—then he would tie

tanget leaves to his spear and plant the spear in front of the man's house. This was a challenge, and the man had to come forward and justify himself. It was believed that, if he had been engaged in evil magic, he would now be incapable of proceeding with it.

For those of us who have been exposed to Christianity and Western schools it is difficult to believe in divination by dreams and similar methods. However, I have had some personal experiences that I cannot explain by anything that I was taught in the white man's school. I remember a time in 1966 when my baby daughter, Bertha, was seriously ill. We had spent the day on the beach in Wewak. Bertha had been placed in the sand, but when we came home she cried and cried and could not stop. We tried everything to soothe her, but she would not stop. We had never seen the baby like this before, and we became very worried. In the evening Mondai, Uncle Saub's wife, came. She told us that where we had sat on the beach was a well-known *masalai* place—a place where spirits moved about. She promised to discover the cause of Bertha's sickness. She chewed bark, spoke incantations and went to sleep. We knew that we were not allowed to disturb her when she went into this type of sleep. We waited anxiously for several hours. When she finally awoke, Bertha became better immediately. Mondai said that a *masalai* had taken away Bertha's spirit, and in her dream she had gone and seized it back. I simply could not believe it. But it is a fact that Bertha recovered.

When someone dies, various methods are used to try to find out who the murderer is. Sometimes people go to the cemetery with a piece of bamboo and ask the spirit of the dead person to enter the bamboo. The bamboo, thus charged with the spirit, begins to lead the murderer to the magician and forces him to speak.

Another method is to place the dead person on a raft with all his decorations. Several men hold up the raft. Another places a sacred spear in front of it and says to the dead person: 'Tell us who poisoned you. Was he from Darapapi or Karau? Whose house was it?' If it was a natural death, the raft remains quiet. But if the person was murdered, the raft

moves with inexorable force in the direction of the killer's house.

I once had this strange and terrifying experience when one of my female relatives died. I was among those who carried the raft on which she lay. The questions were asked, and suddenly the raft began to move. It felt heavy and pressed me forward. Again I would not believe it, but I could not explain it either. I first thought that the people behind me were pushing, but it seemed to me that the very weight of the body had increased, and the raft mysteriously forced my steps.

However, even when our people expose an alleged killing by witchcraft, they should not make counter magic. Our elders believe that it is enough simply to expose the enemy.

During my childhood I saw little disease in the village. Our people were healthy and strong. They had effective cures for some of the more common ailments. When a man had an ulcer on his foot people would dig a hole about two feet deep. A fire was made in it and the waste from betel nut chewing, bits of betel nut, lime, and pepper stick burnt. The sick foot was wrapped in large leaves such as those of the banana or the taro and placed over the hole. The leaves were to prevent the smoke from escaping. The ulcer would start bleeding, but the heat and the smoke soon dried it up. Another method of curing an ulcer was to apply the reddish juice from the bark of a certain mangrove to it.

Our women in particular were knowledgeable about herbs and leaves. They had their own methods of preventing conception or of blocking the womb forever. Our people believed that a man should not produce more than four or five children from all his wives. Even a wealthy man would have found it hard to accumulate enough shell money and other ritual property to provide for all of them adequately. It was considered unfair to bring up a child who was unable to carry out his ritual exchange obligations. Most women, therefore, stopped giving birth after their second child. Only in recent years has this custom broken down.

The greenish juice of the *kep* tree was used to block the womb. The juice was drunk together with sea water from a

coconut shell. Vomiting was one of the side effects. Women took this regularly after menstruation and it helped them postpone pregnancy for some time. Our people believed that a woman should not give birth again until her older child was running about. When a woman decided that she would have no more children at all, she squeezed the roots of coconuts together with the leaves of the *kep* tree. The drinking of this mixture prevented conception permanently.

I spent only a few years in my village. School soon took me away for most of the year. But even in the short time I spent at home I learnt to respect our traditional way of life. I learnt that a man must stand up on his own feet, that he must know how to catch his own fish and plant his own food. He must be able to fend for himself in all situations. Our fathers used to say to us when we were boys: 'Don't follow your mother and your father all the time. If you want to grow up a strong man, move with other boys or you will lose initiative. Later, when you are a man and you are surrounded by enemies, it won't then be a question of what your father can do for you. That is the time when only your own inventiveness counts.'

My people taught me that men are equal and should have equal opportunities. Disputes can be solved by discussion, and decisions should be arrived at by consensus. A man must protect himself against evil attacks, but once he has publicly exposed his enemy he need not think of any further revenge.

The missionaries who tried to destroy our culture never properly understood our system of values. They considered all our customs evil and pagan. They forbade the blowing of flutes and the dancing of masks. They pushed the *haus tambaran* out of our village squares and built their churches there instead. They did not understand that the *haus tambaran* contained the very spirits that motivated our people.

I saw missionaries breaking and burning our sacred flutes. Around 1920 a German Father came to Karau from Aitape and burnt the *haus tambaran* containing our people's most sacred possessions. Only a few of the most important *kakars* could be rescued from the flame. Later, Father Lehner of the Marienberg Mission bought some of the most sacred objects

SANA

from the *haus tambaran* in Darapap. The councillor, who had secretly sold the objects to the missionary without knowledge of the elders, received six months' gaol sentence from the *kiap*. But the mission returned only two out of the four objects they had bought. They never explained what they had done with the others.

Some Murik villages have been completely pillaged. Their festivals have ceased, their initiations discontinued, their sacred works of art burnt or stolen or sold. In Darapap I have consistently encouraged some of the elders to keep up the ceremonies, to protect and preserve our artistic heritage.

We do not wish to become a nation of black Australians. Only if we learn to understand the values of our traditional cultures will we be able to bring to the task of modern nation building that special touch that will allow us to build a unique country.

VICISSITUDES IN CHRISTIANITY

by Ahuia Ova.

Goka belonged to another man. But her husband was always too jealous of me, and beat her all the time. She said, 'I do not know this man; but you are giving him to me yourself all the time. My skin is badly paining. So, very good, you give me to that man. I will go and marry him, then afterwards you will know.'

I did not know about her, but on account of the man's jealousy and his talking about me to her, that made me to intending to go for Goka. And I went with wiseful until we came to court, and I won the case and married her.

[Hereupon, it appears, Ahuia was dismissed from Church membership; and ceased for the time being his attendance at divine service.]

Once when I was at home T— M— visited me. He walked into my house and said, 'The peace of the Lord God is come to your house'. I replied, 'Very good.'

I was very glad, because for a long time I was out from Christian on account of my marriage to Goka. [Ahuia now resumed his attendance at church, though still debarred from communion.] But afterwards all the deacons and Christians were grumbling about me. They were saying that the men who have double wives are not to go into the church. But when I heard this I never stopped going to church.

One evening I was visited by Mr Clark, and I went to him and he said, 'You must not be moving about [bothered] until one of your wives end. Then you will join the church'.

And I replied, 'Good'. And I lived with good and also went to church with strong and I preached in village too. Before Mr and Mrs Clark went for leave in England, he heard that I had been preaching in the village. He was very pleased and wanted me with all his means.

After they had left for England on their furlough, the complaints of the deacons were heard by the teacher named P—. When he heard these nonsenses, he preached about them at one Sunday afternoon service. This is what he said, 'Don't you all know a man named Abraham? Has he married double wives, or not? We all read the

Book and we all know it very well. And how is that?' I was reminded by his preaching and I knew it was about me.

I was living under care of T— M— because he was a best friend of mine. And afterwards T— M— said to me, 'This is the best way for you to do, to bring out all your dancing ornaments and other adornment things and burn them off.' Therefore I brought out my headdress and other dancing adornments and heaped them up on the beach and I instructed the boys to burn them up. They were all properly burnt off.

One day, later on, Judge Herbert came to me, and he walked into my house because he wanted to see that headdress. He asked my wife, 'I want to see the headdress.' And my wife Goka answered to him, 'T— M— has ordered this man to burn up the headdress and the other dancing adornments, and nothing has been kept back at all.' When the Judge heard this talk made to him by my wife, he grew angry on me for as much as six months' time. But afterwards his anger went away, and we had a proper talk together.

When I was living at home sometime I had a misfortune: I had a big sickness. This was after Mr and Mrs Clark left for England, on their leave. I nearly died. And at that time some of the deacons came to see me, and went back and told some of their male friends, 'That man's head is bad'. And the words came to me, and I was very upset.

When Mr Clark was in London he praised my name in front of many people. He did not know that after he was gone the deacons said my head was bad, and that I was angry and that I made a dance. This dance feast was for the 'dead bone' of my adopted son named Mataio (Motu call this *mase-turiana*; in Koita it is *ita*).

When Mr and Mrs Clark returned here they also heard this, and they came to me and wanted to persuade me to return to church. They said, 'Will you come to church?' And I replied to them, 'Wait awhile. I must prepare my heart.' But they came to me all the time, and kept on persuading me. And I told them that I had not been going to church at all: but my mind was waking continually and not sleeping at all.

Of course my body was dancing and making a feast in the village. I told them this, and his wife said to him, 'Now you hear what he says. Do you think he is out of his mind? You have been giving him too much talking.' We had a very long talk that day, and they left me. So from that day they never visited me for some time.

Some time afterward the Catholic Mission came to me, and they took my two granddaughters. And therefore my mind was very doubtful. And some time after that the Governor brought his wife, and both came up to my house.

It was on one Saturday afternoon: I had invited them to come. We had a good talk in the house, and the Governor saw my two granddaughters, and he asked me, 'Who do these two girls belong to?' And I replied to him and said, 'They are the daughters of my adopted son Oata. Their father died and I took them as my adopted granddaughters, and they have now been taken by the Catholic Mission and put in their school.'

And the Governor said, 'Why is that? They must not go unless you tell them to go, because you are their guardian.'

And also I told him that this makes me of a doubtful mind: should I go to the L.M.S. or to the Catholic on account of these girls? And the Governor answered to me and said, 'You are doubting about going to one side or the other. They are just the same. So don't be afraid about it. Just stay on. They will not kill you for staying as you are. Just please yourself.' So I am now living as the Governor told me.

Therefore the Catholic Mission have now baptized these two girls Goka Oala and Vani Oala, and put them in the school. They go to their school continually; but sometimes when we happen to be at Laloki for gardening we take them with us and spend one month, three weeks, or sometimes two weeks time, because we got a permission from Father for this purpose.

But my mind cannot be changed. I do not mind being put off from the Church for my trouble sake. But my mind is still believing the Lord God and cannot be removed from him. The man who baptized me was Dr Lawes, and while I am living at present I must believe both religions, L.M.S. and Catholic—not only one religion but two of them. It is because I understand that they are working for one God. One is not working for one God and one for another. Of course they have different religions, but they are for one God.

DISILLUSIONMENT WITH THE PRIESTHOOD

by Leo Hannet

When I was five years old, I thought priests were wonderful, because they wore trousers. They looked different from anybody else. They looked white and wealthy and they wore a variety of beautiful garments and everybody paid them special respect. Christianity had a lot of prestige on Nissan Island in those days. If there was a service at the other end of the island, we would all walk over there and attend it. I suppose it was the novelty of being a Christian that excited people. My father was one of the first converts in the village and as far back as I can remember I wanted to become a catechist like my uncle.

But it was not until I was ten years old, that I first seriously thought of going into the priesthood. That was the time of our first communion and it made an overwhelming impression on me.

We had been trained for this important event for a year and a half. We had learned the prayers by heart, and the formulas and the rituals. Again and again we had been repeating them word by word. We were told that we would receive Jesus into our body and that we would become new types of people.

Then one day we were made to get up very early. I lined up with about thirty others, proudly wearing the new laplap I had forced my parents to buy me for this day. To me this was the greatest day of my life, on which Jesus was going to enter my body.

I felt elated, yet I had difficulty even with this my very first confession. We were supposed to reveal every little thing that we had done. Whether we had hit someone or stolen something; and whether we had played up with some girls.

But in our society there was a lot of boy-girl sex play among the very young.

Boys of fifteen or sixteen would have to exercise restraint but we young ones were merely laughed at when we played around. To our people there is nothing better than love and they would not think of blaming small children when they played that sort of game.

I could remember that when I was about five years old, some older children had forced me to act this mother and father game—but now I was too ashamed to tell the priest about it. My mind had already

been spoiled by this new ritual and I had been made to think of it in terms of sin. So I had to invent all kinds of little sins which I had never committed but which I confessed to the priest instead.

My real sin worried me for many years, and even in the seminary I kept thinking that I was finally going to tell it to the priest—but I never did.

After this first communion we had to go to communion every day for a whole week and after that we had to make our weekly confession. And still I kept making up sins to give the impression that I was not hiding anything. I repeated the same thing all the time: I stole someone's food; I told a lie to my parents; I was lazy at school; I spoke badly of someone else; I talked too much; I didn't say my prayers; I didn't pay attention to what the priest was saying. Some priests were very hard on us and would make us recite the whole rosary. Others were more lenient and asked us to recite an act of love, which is a formula for inciting you to love someone. This was always followed by an act of contrition: telling God that you were very very sorry for what you had done.

We had to learn all this in English, even though we knew little more English than 'Father'. Much later, I discovered that for more than a year I had repeated, parrot-like, the formula I had learned with my first confession:

'Bless me Father, I have sinned very much
this is my first confession . . .'

When I finished my primary standard four, I was sent to the Marist Brothers at Kieta. During the first week we were given cards to fill in to say what we wanted to become, when we left school: priests, brothers, catechists, council men, *kiaps* and so on. I chose the priesthood without any hesitation.

Those of us who had chosen the priesthood, were immediately given special privileges. The brothers came and talked to us more often. They showed us more kindness. I did well at this school and after doubling standards five and six I was sent on to the preparatory seminary at Chabai on Bougainville Island. Here we were to get used to the idea of priesthood and were to practise obedience.

We had twenty-eight rules to observe: when to wake up, when to keep silent; how never to look a woman in the eye and very many small little rules, so many you could not avoid breaking them. For the first year I was terribly pious, observing everything as best I could, but during the second year I became rather lazy, because we spent so much time working in the garden.

There was a convent near the school, but of course we were never allowed any contact with the girls. We were never allowed to be alone with a woman, not even a close relative, without special permission

from the priest. We were taught to keep aloof and that we must speak to women only of things that were holy. We were told never to look a woman in the eye, lest she might tempt us. We were to look past her into space.

Looking back now, I feel that in the priesthood one feels much more tempted by women than outside it. Many priests I knew seemed to look on women not as human beings, but merely as symbols of sex and sin.

But at the time I was not critical of these things. I worked very hard at my Latin in those two years, and my motives for becoming a priest became much purer. They were now based on religious ideas, and I was not merely seeing the priesthood as a status symbol as in my earlier days.

Becoming a priest now meant that I was to be the servant of no man, but that I would serve Christ who is God. I would be able to deal directly with God, I would hold him, I would create Him by saying mass, I would use words that would make God come!

At the same time I was filled with some kind of missionary zeal. I must help to free my people from their benighted state of superstition, must save them from the sins in which they had wallowed so long. The European missionaries would leave one day, and we the local priests would have to take over the work. I saw my vocation.

At a certain time of the year we had a retreat. All school was stopped. We had to retreat to think about ourselves and to imitate the Saints. Some of the students took this very seriously and they would castigate themselves. One in particular beat his head with his fists every time his mind wandered during a service and he would use exclamations like 'My God help me!' But the rest of us thought him a bit strange.

At birth I had been given Leo as my patron saint, the Pope who had driven the Huns out of Rome. At confirmation I was given the patron of Saint Joseph, the husband of Mary, who was chaste and who never thought evil of Mary and who was a model of chastity. But I was much more attached to the saints I had picked myself. The first was Saint Philomena, whose name was found on a stone in the catacombs. The myth says that they tried to force her to marry a man she did not love. But she suffered torture in order to remain pure. I was very dedicated to her, and it came as a deep shock to me later in Rabaul, when I was told that she had been thrown out of the Church! I had always prayed to her and had even written off to Europe to get some more books on her life. She had been my intercessor with God, and now I had to be told, that Pope John had ousted all the mythical saints from the Church and would recognize only the historical ones.

I was left with Saint John Viani the Patron Saint of the hopeless ones and the useless ones. Through him, God could still make use of those whom others considered utterly useless. But he frustrated me often, because I felt he was too high above my reach.

In 1958, after completing two years in Chabai, I was sent to the secondary seminary in Rabaul. I was to spend five years here till matriculation.

It was in Rabaul that my disillusionment with the Church first began. In Rabaul we became more conscious of the enormous difference in the standard of living between priests and pupils. In Buka we had accepted this as a natural order of things: as a privilege towards which one had to rise very slowly. But in Rabaul many of the students felt upset, when on a big feast day, we had to kill a cow for the priests, and after doing all the work of the cutting up we were merely given the head and some odd bits and pieces, while the priests enjoyed all the good meat. One of the seminarians got so annoyed that he sneaked out a letter to the Bishop of Bougainville about it. Of course, according to the rules of the seminary, all our letters got censored, but this one found its way out and the Bishop was very kind and wrote back asking why they were treating his boys like that? Naturally the Father was very wild with us for giving the seminary a bad name.

But these were minor matters. What really upset me in Rabaul was the discovery that the priests themselves were not free from racial prejudices. At the time there were two cinemas in Rabaul, one for natives and one for Europeans. The Fathers, trying to be liberal, I suppose, occasionally took some of the light-skinned students to the European cinema: the Gilbertese, some Papuans and one or two Tolais. We Solomon Islanders were told that we were too black!

But we did not only have two different cinemas, we also had two different masses: one for Europeans and one for natives.

I remember that once a Papuan came into the European mass, and he was literally chased out of the church by the Australian priest, who, incidentally, was a member of the Legislative Council!

The mission was placed in the middle of a large plantation and frequently I was sent to do adult education work among the labourers. But I found it very hard to talk to them about the kindness of God, when I saw how badly they were treated and how poorly they were paid. In fact the labourers on the mission plantation were no better off than the workers on the private plantations. They lived in large, rough dormitories and their food was cooked in a forty gallon drum cut in half. In those days they received ten shillings a month in wages. They had to start work very early in the morning and the brother in charge treated them roughly and would even beat

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them occasionally. I was deeply shocked to find many homosexual practices among the labourers. They were all married men, but the Church, that always talked about the holy unity of the family, forced them to live in dormitories and did not allow them to bring their wives.

When I returned to the mission station from the labour camp it always seemed to me that the Bishop lived like an aristocrat. He kept himself very remote from us and didn't even know the names of his students. Sometimes when he brought important visitors to the school, he had to feign familiarity with us in order to hide the fact that he didn't know our names.

Yet my disillusionment in Rabaul was not really with the Church as such. I still knew that our Bishop in Bougainville was very kind and I simply began to distinguish critically between different missions.

In Rabaul I first became aware of the jealousies between the different Mission societies. The seminary was a regional seminary; it was not supposed to be attached to any mission but it was directly under Rome. It was the Pope's own seminary, yet the different missions were all competing. The Sacred Heart Fathers in Rabaul would always point out to us that by joining their mission we would be better off and have less financial worries than if we became secular priests. The Marists from Bougainville would come from time to time and tell us we must become Marists, because it was always best to go through Mary; and the Holy Ghost Society would tell us that it was better to go through the Holy Spirit because that would bring us nearest to the Holy Trinity.

All this was against the principles of the seminary. They were supposed to teach us about religion in general—not about their particular brand of devotions.

I had always thought of the priests as very very holy men, but now I began to see their jealousies and the competition amongst them.

In 1962, while I was still in Rabaul the famous Hahalis 'affair' blew up. I was emotionally involved in the whole thing, because I had gone to school with Francis Hagai, who was one of the leaders of the Hahalis Welfare Society. At Kieta he had been the prefect in school when I was the youngest student there, and he always looked after me at the time.

The way I saw it, the Hahalis Welfare Society was merely out to improve the material lives of the people. The Church had started them off on this road with the foundation of the St Joseph's Welfare Society, which had collected money to build better homes. The people had been induced to become carpenters in imitation of the husband of Mary.

Thus it was the Church that had made people conscious of the need to better themselves. When the Government came and asked them for taxes, they wondered whether they should give away all that money (for which they would see little return) when they might in fact use it to build themselves better homes. Instead of paying the money to some remote government in Port Moresby the people decided to use it for something that would change their lives substantially.

But the Church took a very different view of Hahalis. From the pulpit they denounced all the Hahalis women as prostitutes and they interpreted the whole movement to be nothing but a cargo cult.

I felt that the priests had misunderstood the whole thing. I was deeply disappointed at the way in which they denounced Hahalis in public. It is completely against our custom to put a man to shame in public, because of all the family and in-law ties. I could not bring myself to believe that my people were as bad as the Church had made out. I loved my people too much. I knew that cargo cults existed. My father, like the rest of the people, had been involved in such activities—in spite of the fact that he was a catechist. Like most people of his generation he led a kind of double life. But I felt that the Church had lost touch with the people—that if they had given better leadership, instead of rejecting Hahalis outright, they might have led the people the right way. And so over the Hahalis issue my loyalty was split between my people and the Church.

For the first time also, I became very critical of the Administration; their attempt to solve the whole issue simply by flying in police was extremely insulting.

My awkward position between my people and the Church got highlighted every time I went home on leave. Each time the priests were giving me a little more respect, because I had risen a little higher towards the priesthood. They would give me special presents and invited me to meals at their table, but when I went there with one of my brothers they would ask me in and leave him standing outside. The better they treated me, the more aware I became of how they treated the rest of the people. Eating at their table, I could well remember the days when I was a houseboy in the mission. Often the priests were feasting when a boat with new goods had come in. I would stand there in the background and they would go on talking late into the night and wouldn't care a damn whether I was hungry or not.

I was embarrassed, when they told me about the evil ways in which my people were living. They would not hesitate to tell me all about the sins of my own brother—to talk like that was completely taboo in our own society, but they either didn't understand that or they didn't care.

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My senior brother, who was a *kukurai* and a catechist, got no such special treatment. When he had to go and see the priests they made a point of keeping him waiting. The Church only paid him ten shillings a month and two sticks of tobacco for being a catechist, and the government only gave him occasional token gifts for being a *kukurai*. He became very bitter and once he told me: 'Next time I shall go to the church naked, because clearly that is expected of me. Next time I will go to the government naked! I am forced to stay at home doing the work of the church and the government instead of going to the plantation to get money to improve my family. . . .'

The more I saw of the attitudes of the priests in Rabaul and at home the less I wanted to become one. But I was in a real dilemma, because my people trusted me and they thought that I was going to the highest secondary school in the Territory and they expected me to complete the course. So although I was beginning to have grave doubts about my future, I went on to the Higher Seminary in Madang. The decision was a hard one and at times I was even thinking of escaping it all by becoming a monk.

The rector of the Madang Seminary had come to Rabaul and told us about the different life we were going to lead in Madang. We were going to live in separate rooms and we were going to enjoy better food. We were going to be treated like adults and we were going to make our own decisions. However, when we got there, it was dormitories once again and we were treated like children once more and forced to obey all sorts of regulations. The Bishop explained it all away: we had to be modest, we had to practise the virtue of poverty and so on and so on. When we complained about the food we were told that we were too materialistic.

The Madang Seminary did one very important thing for me: the course in philosophy we were given enabled me to make more critical judgments. I became much more aware of the world outside the seminary. In Rabaul I only saw the conflict between the Church and the village but now in Madang I was first conscious of wider issues. This was the time when the Bougainville copper issue first came up. It was also the time of Mr Eastman's U.N. Mission. All these things made us think a great deal about New Guinea as a whole, its political future, and its social problems. I was then much influenced by another student, John Momis, who had received all his secondary education in Australia. Together we formed a group of students to discuss these issues. But the priests disapproved of this: they were always blessing the *status quo*. They blamed Momis and me for the growing restlessness among the students. Finally we called a meeting with the Fathers and the students in order to express some of our views. The priests told us to talk openly and to air all our grievances.

We took their word for it and told them exactly what we thought of the attitudes of the priests to New Guineans; how they supported the principle of double standards etc. etc. But the rector of the seminary took offence and he wrote back to the Bishop of Bougainville asking him to remove us from the seminary.

But the strangest part of it all was that though the priests were so critical of John Momis and Ignatius Kilage and myself, yet they used us as showpieces when important visitors came to the seminary. Sometimes they used us to prove that they were providing a liberal and progressive education. When the United Nations Mission came to Madang, Mr Eastman from Liberia said that we were the only *élite* group in the Territory and the seminary was about the only institution in the whole country that he praised. The priests were most ambivalent about the whole thing.

But we took our cue from Pope John, who was a very liberal Pope and who wanted dialogue with all other religions and all other attitudes to life. So we believed that even as priests we should be open and that there was no subject that we should not discuss.

It was in this spirit that we started the magazine *Dialogue* as a means of communication with other tertiary institutions, like the Papuan Medical College and the Teachers Training College. I was chosen as the editor. The first issue we brought out was a very mild one. Our theme was brotherhood. We said that in spite of all the difference in the Territory we were all brothers under the skin. We also talked about the misuse of 'freedom' in the world today and we criticized the corruption and the promiscuity of modern society. This went down well with the Administration and with the Church. We got many letters of congratulations from the Church and from people like J. K. Macarthy, Dr Gunther, Professor Spate and Mr Justice Minogue. Even some of the planters wrote in to express their approval. Several sent us money.

The second issue was very different in tone. This was the time of the Tonolei timber lease on Bougainville. The Administration had made the Buin people sell 500,000,000 super feet of standing timber for only £60,000, whereas previously they had paid the same amount of £60,000 for only 200,000,000 to the Vanimo people. This seemed blatantly unjust. Moreover a simple calculation showed that owners had in fact received a mere four shillings and sixpence per acre of good timber! At the same time the C.R.A. was negotiating for land on Bougainville to mine copper; and again the people felt they were not being given a fair deal. Only Bishop Lemay spoke up for them as usual.

I tried to express our feelings about all these issues in an article called 'Now is the Moment of Truth'. I said it was time we stopped

patting each other on the back. We ought to start speaking honestly to each other. I was warning the indigenous people—to forestall any shock amongst them—that the white men were human after all, that they were not demigods or sacred cows, though they might assume such postures.

I criticized the Administration, who were always playing the role of 'father', but who in reality were selling us out to the C.R.A. and the Bougainville timber company. I pointed out that according to the United Nations Charter the Administration should be protecting the rights of the people.

I went on to accuse the planters, who were playing a divide-and-rule policy in the House of Assembly, forcing our people to agree with them, yet stabbing them in the back.

I said that the Church was always talking about the dignity of man and about the enhancement of the personality—but how could we enhance our personalities when we were left in the mud with no one to support us? When the Church was not living up to her own vows, must we still believe in Christianity? Or was the crucifixion merely a cruci-fiction?

I concluded that the Church, the Administration and the planters were all birds of a feather.

We printed one thousand copies of this issue and we sent it out to all the District Commissioners, the important people in the Administration, the Bishops and Church people and even to people in Australia.

At the time our rector was away at a conference. One of the priests saw a copy of the magazine and he was very upset. He said he had been unable to sleep that night and that he was disgusted with us. We still had 500 copies left to distribute and he wanted us to burn the lot. He spent a long session with us reading a section from St James, where Jesus talks about how we ought to be very kind to our fellow men. We reminded him that he had himself been very critical of the Administration only the previous day—and he felt extremely hurt.

We sent out the remaining 500 copies and soon we got letters upon letters of complaint and disgust. Planters abused us, Administration people complained, nuns wrote to say they would pray for us. The Bishop of Aitape—who had sent us money after the first issue—now expressed his disgust. Only Justice Minogue wrote in to support us.

I was called before the District Commissioner and I was shown a telegram from the Department of District Administration in Port Moresby asking whether I was a Communist and whether this issue had been written under any outside influence. Some people blamed the American Negro priest for it all—though the poor man was a completely harmless and inoffensive man who wouldn't hurt a fly.

After this issue of *Dialogue* we fell very low in the eyes of the Church and the Administration and the public. Even in Rabaul, seminarians received catcalls of 'Dialogue! Dialogue!' from Europeans. Several people were sent up to spy on us, to worm their way into our confidence and discover the 'outside influences' that had made us produce this issue of the magazine. Needless to say, all future issues of *Dialogue* were censored.

Great pressure was brought upon me to resign from the seminary. Of course, they could not kick me out, because according to the rules we had to resign voluntarily, just as we had joined of our own free will. After the *Dialogue* incident I decided that I would not return to Madang after my holidays. But my people persuaded me to go back for another year, so I returned and stuck it out until I came to the university in 1966.

However, throughout this last year I was already clear in my mind that the Church was not what I had expected it to be and that the priesthood was not for me. I knew now that I must lead a different life and that I would be able to help my people better outside the Church. While I still respected the priesthood as such, the ideal priest was nowhere to be seen. Moreover, I felt that too many of the church rituals had been over-institutionalized and that these things forced you to do a lot of acting and they did not help you to become a better person. Above all, I felt that the Church was not open and not frank and that they had rejected the dialogue and wanted to continue with their eternal monologue.

My main criticism of the Church was, and still is, their attitude to my people. The very idea of evangelism implies a condemnation of our people—it represents an attitude that does not permit us to be ourselves.

Now—several years after I have left the seminary—I am not sure whether I can still call myself a Christian. Perhaps I am more of a humanist. Of course, certain Christian values still remain with me: a sense of dedication; a feeling of obligation towards my people; the knowledge that my life is not my own. I still believe that there must be cause and effect in creation, that there must be some transcendental being—but whether he is the God of Christian worship, I don't know. I am also convinced that there is still a great need for religion in the world. But I no longer believe that Christianity is the only religion. During my seminary studies I have been much moved by Hinduism and other religions of the East. And thinking back on my very early childhood I gradually begin to see some meaning and purpose in the many traditional rituals and formulas my father taught me.

THE OLD MAN AND THE BALUS

by John Waiko

The sun was setting in the west, while I was planting *taro* tubes in our garden. I hid the digging stick in the grass, lest a magician, passing by, would take it away to make magic on it. Many a bad *taro* crop had been caused by such magic.

Tired, I sat on a log and gazed at the sun. Then I recalled a dream I had the night before. My father, Taniambari, who had died a long time ago, appeared in our garden: A long *onjire* vine was tied to his hop, the other end of it was tied to a huge *taro*. Dragging this *taro* across the garden several times, he finally left it standing upright in the middle and untied it.

He turned to me and said: 'Worry not your spirit, fear not the magician who will come out to this garden to it. That man,—and he pointed his huge *taro*—'is the father of all *taro*. He will call his children from all lands and they will come and grow in your garden. Neither spirits nor magicians will have the power to prevent them. Remember that I . . . ' But he did not finish his speech. At that very point, Yavita, who was sleeping next to me, kicked me and I woke up and lost my lovely dream. If only I could have asked my father about the wild boars that came and did damage in my garden, he could have given me wisdom to deal with them.

Now the sun was hidden in the tall trees. The cricket had smelt the night before me and began to sing. I picked up my knife from the ground and walked a bamboo's length towards a pile of logs. I picked up one of the smallest, to be used as firewood and started to walk homewards. On my way I picked some pepper leaves, which are good to chew with betel nuts. I began to look forward now to the evening chewing.

I reached the village just before dark. I threw down the firewood from my shoulder and put away my knife and axe in the joists. I sat down on the platform of the house.

Jimana was making a fire and Yavita came with a huge bunch of betel nuts.

'Father,' Yavita said. 'This tree was so tall that it bent when I

climbed up to get the nuts. It cracked under my weight, but I managed to slide down so quickly, I reached the ground before it actually broke!'

'I always warn you to be careful,' I told him. 'The *Gamana hospetolo* (government hospital) and the *misini hospetolo* (mission hospital) all want *moni*, and where shall we take *moni* from? If you have an accident, we would just have to let you die.'

My wife Dane now brought a bowl of cooked *taro*, bananas and sweet potatoes. I invited Yavita to eat, but he seemed uneasy, wishing to speak, but not knowing what words to choose.

Dane came and helped him: 'This morning Yavita came and asked whether he could take you to the white man's village in *Pos Mosbi*. I told him that it was not good: many times the white man has put you into his bad house before. The *kiaps* don't like you. If you go to the white man's village, you may never return.'

There was complete silence. By now the night had fallen and it was completely dark.

Dane said: 'Put some more wood on the fire. This is the time for spirits to walk about. The night seems dark to us, but to them it is as bright as daylight.'

'Mother,' Yavita said. 'Do not think that every white man is bad. They are like ourselves: we too have bad men amongst us.'

'Yavita,' Dane replied. 'I am not a small girl. Your father and I have lived many years before you were born. Even before we were married and while you were still in our marrow, the *kiap* treated us like small children. Perhaps you, who have gone to school and learned their language, have become friends with them. Perhaps you are digging their wisdom. But we—there has always been a big stone between us and the white man. We have never understood each other. Remember our saying: once a banana leaf is torn apart by the wind, it will never come together again, until its life is finished. Then it dries, falls to the ground and rots. We will never know each other until we die. You are a fresh leaf, as yet untornd by the wind. But remember that strong winds may yet come to shake you . . . '

I did not want to enter the discussion. I said: 'Yavita, you are feeling sleepy. See if you can make some fire under the men's house.'

Yavita got up and carried a few logs with him. Jimana also now went to make fire under the women's house. It was a very cold night. When Dane saw that the fire had come up, she picked up her mat and walked into the house to warm her feet. I could hear her talking to her daughter: 'I expected you to be snoring by this time!'

And Jimana replied: 'I want to say something to you before I go to sleep. Why won't you let our father go to the white man's village? He has never left this village, except to go to the white man's bad

house. His brothers were taken to the coast as mission boys or they went to become plantation labourers. Now is his chance . . .'

'Jimana,' Dane said, 'I am not trying to stop Dademo from going. He can "go well"—but who is going to pay for it? He will have to take the *balus* and somebody has to pay for it. The *balus* is not like a canoe which you can paddle along the water. If it breaks, you can swim to the river bank. But what if something is wrong with the *balus*? Will your father avoid death by flying away?'

I went inside too now, and lay down on the floor where the warmth of the fire was coming up from underneath. Yavita came up into the room and crossed his legs.

'Father, why didn't you take part in the discussion?'

'Your mother is the treasurer. She keeps our *moni* for us. She is worried about our garden: a boar broke through the fence last night and ate some *taro*. That canoe over there needs to be finished and we need some vines and sticks to mend our platform.'

'Father, will you come with me if Mother agrees?'

'Yes, if you can give me a good reason for going. You must prove to your mother that there will be no danger.'

'I shall tell you the reasons in front of Mother tomorrow. But now we must sleep, so we can go to the garden early in the morning. I want to mend that broken fence.'

'Let your words go,' I replied, 'and sleep well.'

I withdrew my feet from the place that was becoming very hot. I supported my head on my hand, my elbow being the 'leg' of my headrest. In the dark, I kept thinking about the white man's village for a long time.

Early in the morning I was lying on the black palm floor. My body was asleep, but my mind was awake. Hearing footsteps, I peeped through the holes of the floor, and I saw Dane who passed underneath our house to the fireplace. She was carrying a clay pot and some uncooked *taro*.

It was a foggy morning and I did not want to get up. I was going to shut my eyes again, but Dane now called out:

'Wake up! The sun has already broken! You will have to eat when you return from the church service—because *taparoro* must come first.'

I had completely forgotten that it was Sunday morning. I woke up Yavita and we went to the river together. But it was so cold that we washed only our faces.

When we returned a conch shell was blown to ask the people to enter the church building. I joined an unbroken line of people who were walking towards the church. As we entered, we placed *taro*, potatoes, coconuts, bananas, pumpkins and cucumbers by the door.

We had no money to give, so we gave to God the food we eat and grow.

I went and knelt on the right, which was the men's side. The women and girls sat on the left. I made the sign of the *korose*, said my prayer and sat down. An evangelist called Nicodemus Kove started the service by announcing the hymn 'How sweet the name of Jesus sounds in the believer's ear.' The women sang on the top of their voices, but the men did not sing well. Probably too much betel nut chewing had spoiled our throats.

After the hymn, the Good News was read by another evangelist. It was taken from the letter written by *Poul* to the *Romu* people. This reading did not win my attention, until towards the end, when the evangelist read:

' . . . for I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from his love. Death cannot. Life cannot . . . wherever we are, high above the sky or in the deepest ocean, nothing will ever be able to separate us from the love of God. . . .'

The sermon followed, but I was not interested, because my mind went out of my skull and I tried to remember my dream. I do not know how long the service lasted, because my mind was filled with what we had discussed the night before.

When the service was over, the people stood around outside the church, shaking hands with their friends. They were teasing the evangelist, because, they said, he had started the last hymn at too high a pitch.

I walked home in the bright hot sun. Dane gave me a bowl of food. 'This is yours,' she said. 'Eat it before Yavita and his friends come.'

Soon I saw Yavita coming with a large crowd of friends. I turned to Dane: 'How big is the food?'

'The cooked food is not enough for all his friends. But there are coconuts on the trees, and ripe bananas in the house.'

When Yavita and his friends sat down, Dane brought three dishes with cooked *taro* and said: 'You are many, and the food is small. But if you eat too much, then you will get big stomachs like pigs and the girls will not like you.'

When Yavita's friends had finally returned to their villages, I asked him to give me the reason why he wanted to take me to *Pos Mosbi*. Yavita said:

'Our elders are not stones to live always. They'll die and take their stories, magic and ceremonies with them. We who go to the white man's school are not under the armpit of the elders to hear and learn. Therefore, I want to take our father to *Pos Mosbi*. I want him to tell me some of those things and I will write them down, so that eventually my own children will be able to read them in a book.'

Dane, thinking over it carefully now, had to agree with Yavita: 'You young ones fly away like a bird from its nest, but when you return you cannot tell which is your nest. . . . ' But then she started worrying: 'How will we get *moni* to pay for the *balus*?'

Yavita said: 'Not all white men are bad. One of my teachers said, that if we manage to bring our father to *Pos Mosbi* then he will pay us back the *moni* for bringing him over and for sending him back.'

I still remained silent. I was afraid of the white man, because I still remembered, how he put me into his bad house, when I refused to agree that our village should be moved. On the other hand I wanted to go to the white man's village and vomit my knowledge for Yavita.

Dane scratched her head and asked Jimana to bring her string bag.

'There are these things we have to think about,' she said. She began to explain on the fingers of her left hand: 'The first finger is *kainselo takesi* (council tax). We do not seem to get any benefit from this, but we still have to pay it. Then we have to pay Jioni's school *takesi*. Then this finger is *ospere takesi* (hospital fees) when we get sick. But we should not worry too much about this, because we have our own ways of healing sores and sickness. Then the last finger here stands for our father's going to *Pos Mosbi*.'

Dane pulled the string bag towards her. She opened it and pulled out a well-wrapped parcel. She opened it gently and revealed a torn old book with many loose pages. She opened it on the centre pages and counted out the money she found there: 'There is one red paper *moni*, one blue paper *moni*, four green paper *moni* and two brown paper *moni*.'

Dane held all these papers in her hand and asked Yavita to count them and see how much we had.

'The first red one is ten pounds. The *moni* inside the red one is equal to the fingers of our two hands. The blue paper *moni* has five pounds inside it: that is equal to the fingers of one hand. Your green *moni* is four pounds. The two brown *moni* are worth ten shillings each. So altogether our *moni* is twenty pounds. That is all the fingers and toes of one person. Will this amount cover the cost of all the things I mentioned?' Dane asked.

'No,' said Yavita.

'Then our father cannot go with you.'

'Don't worry,' Yavita said. 'You see, Mendode is in the army in *Pos Mosbi* and when he sees our father he will surely give some money.'

'I think that our father may go, because there are two of you to protect him and see that he returns safely. But one thing I must

make clear to you, Yavita. If our father does not come back, do not expect to find me when you return to this village.'

The decision that I was to travel with Yavita was not made known. We were afraid that people would be jealous of me and they might try to work magic against me. Only on the last evening, before we were to leave Tabara did we tell the elders in the village. We were not having a feast—Yavita's 'go well' feast had been celebrated two weeks before—but we had invited some of our friends and there was food more than enough. The food was spread out on banana leaves and everyone sat around and ate. The few old men who had no teeth were given soup made from soft *taro* and coconut milk.

In the middle of the eating, Yavita suddenly said: 'My elders, this is not a feast, but an evening meal during which you are going to advise me. But I also want to tell you that tomorrow I want to take our father away to the white man's village. I know this will surprise you. . . .'

There was great excitement and some annoyance.

'Who told you to take your father away?' said Koioubai, the eldest in the group. 'You cannot do that. How old are you?'

Some elders stopped eating. One old woman said:

'We did not gather here to keep quiet and say nothing: Yavita! Are your ears hearing me? Shut your one ear and clean the other so that our advice may enter your clean ear and not flow out of the other. Our advice must sink into the holes of your skull. We cannot understand why you stay in school for so many years. Many young boys go to school and they finish within the fingers of one hand. Then they work to get money. But you have been going to school for all the fingers of my two hands and all the toes of one foot except for the big toe. That is a long time and your name is shooting up like a lizard climbing a *kamumu* tree. Now remember: if you slip, or you do something wrong, that wrong will also be visible to all on the top of the *kamumu* tree and bring us shame. Then you will become like the *ogoto* bird that sweeps away to hide its unpleasant feathers. That is all I have to say. I have to stop now, because there are others who want to give you their advice.'

Another elder cleared his throat and began:

'Yavita! Remember that your mother is the bone and your father is the flesh of your being. Schooling is only a very thin skin. When you were a child, a helpless person, they helped you. They gave you food. They brought the biggest portion of the fish they had caught, for you to eat and grow. I do not want to go on, but remember it is better to cover your own bones and flesh with your own skin.'

Then a toothless old man joined in:

'My words are not long, but short. We expect you to come back

and help us. White man's words, clothes, food and girls are sweet as honey. I wonder whether you will be strong enough to break away from the sweet honey, for we are treated badly by the white man in this village.'

A storm wind was blowing from west to east and it seemed that rain would fall any time. Now Koiubae hit his lime gourd with the lime stick, like a rooster beating his body with his wings before crowing. This was a warning that he was going to say something:

'Yavita! You are going to take your father to the white man's village. My blood has touched my bone and my body is cold. Your father never went out of this village, but I did. I went and worked on the Girigiri plantation. And when I think of those days, my blood touches my bone and I become cold. I do not know whether some of the things I saw have changed or not. But man is not a snake to shed his skin and wear a new one. . . .'

Now the sky was as black as charcoal. There was big lightning and a strong thunder. The thunder was like two huge rocks cracking together. Everybody ran to their houses and soon heavy rain poured down. If anyone were to go out then he would be dead by morning, because the rain came down like spears from high above the sky.

Before going to bed that night, I said to Yavita: 'The rooster crows four times to announce the morning. The first three times it is still dark; but the fourth time it is daybreak. So do not sleep too much.'

I was restless all night. At the time of the second cock-crow I could hear Dane getting up to prepare the food. At the third crow she went back to her house and I could hear her getting the string bag and counting the money. When she came to wake us up with the cooked food, the cock crowed for the fourth time and all the roosters and hens flew down from the trees where they had been sleeping.

While we were eating Dane gave me a last piece of advice: 'Do not eat food and drink water given to you by the white man without thinking. Do not drink the water that makes people mad and lands them in the bad house. Remember that white man's magic is very hot.'

Koiubae came down from his platform and sat down near our fire. He said to me:

'You are going to the white man's village with your mind in your skull. You have not left your mind in the village. Your mind, your body and your thoughts are with you. You are not a small boy so that I must tell you what to do. You know how to avoid magic.'

The sun was rising in the east and its rays shot through the leaves of the trees like sparks of fire. We shook hands with everybody and

said 'stay well' to the people in the village. Some women began to cry as if someone had died.

It was a long and tiresome journey. We walked along the Gira River as far as Nindewari village. There we crossed the river by canoe. Now there were many hills before us.

No one plants his gardens in the land between Nindewari and Ioma. This is the hunting ground for many tribes. I had been in this area often, as a carrier for the white man. Those were days when I was young and strong and I could walk up and down those hills with heavy loads on my shoulders. But man was born to grow old and die. Now my knees had become bad. My legs had once been obedient, but now they nearly refused to carry me over those hills.

All day we walked and in the afternoon we were drenched by very heavy rain. Only late in the night we arrived in Ioma. Yavita took us to the evangelist's house. I fell asleep there almost immediately and woke up only when it was daylight.

This day was a *Trinde*. We were told that the *balus* came every *Trinde* and *Mande* and that on *Trinde* it would come in the afternoon.

This day seemed longer than other days to me. The sun was rising slowly to stand above us. I knew that before long now I would be flying in the sky like a bird. My mind was fighting my skull. If only I could have spoken to my father about this, when he appeared to me in my dream. I could have said to him: 'Do not forsake me, when I fly, helpless like a bird in the sky.'

After eating, we combed our hair and put all our things into Yavita's box. The place for the *balus* was very very long. There was a small house there and we sat down outside it and waited. I still could not believe that I was going to fly. My body was heavy, as though I was sleeping.

I said to Yavita: 'You have not taught me how to behave, eat and dress in front of the white men.'

But he said: 'Do not worry. Be what you are. It is better to be what you are, than trying to be somebody else and make mistakes.'

Yavita did not seem to worry about the *balus*. He was laughing and telling stories and talking to some of his friends whom he met on the *ples balus*. I wished I could go to sleep and dream about my father. If sleep were like a river I would go and jump into it. I wanted to tell him that I was going to the white man's village and ask him to protect me. But he must have known, and perhaps he was with me already. He knew how the white men had treated me when they came to my village. And then I remembered also what the evangelist had said on Sunday: 'that nothing could ever separate us from the love of God.' I wondered now if the angels would help me, if the *balus* wings suddenly broke and we came crashing down.

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Then suddenly somebody shouted: 'I see it, I see it!' I looked at the sky but saw nothing. Then everybody rushed out of the little house with excitement and the people all pointed at a certain place in the sky.

I looked up again and then I saw the *balus* coming like a bird out of the trees. At first it looked like the smallest *suriri* bird, but it became bigger and bigger. Soon it looked like a hawk. It circled twice, then it came down like a hawk to the ground. But hawks dive to the ground silently. The *balus* came with a great noise. It was like the noise of all the cockatoos put together plus *dunana*, the thunder.

The *balus* came to where I was standing, turned round and stopped. The noise died down. A door was opened and people came out and bags of rice and cases of meat were unloaded. The *balus* looked exactly like a hawk. It had two wings and two legs. It had a tail and a head. But the *balus* had no beak and no eyes, no mouth and no claws.

There was a white man who had brought the *balus*. He looked tired and angry and he shouted: '*Ani pasinja?*'

Then Yavita stepped forward and said: 'Yes two,' and gave him our *tiket*. We went into the *balus* and I sat on a *sia*. The white man turned round and faced the head of the *balus*. He touched a small stick in front of him and the *balus* started to shout. Yavita put the *berete* round my waist. The noise was becoming louder and the *balus* began to move. The white man looked back at us quickly, then he turned round again. His hands moved and touched the small black and white sticks and the *balus* began to run like lightning on the ground. Then it dived away.

I did not want to see it diving, so I shut my eyes and bowed down. The noise was very frightening now and all my intestines, heart and everything inside me climbed up into my neck and waited there.

The *balus* rose quickly and Yavita said we were over the trees. But I still shut my eyes. The noise made by the *balus* now resembled the shrieking of cockatoos when they bite a lizard on a *simani* tree. Yavita did not seem to worry. I knew that he wanted me to open my eyes and see things. But worries came to me like waves breaking on a rock. I kept myself strong, by forcing the words of the evangelist into my skull: 'Our fears for today, our worries about tomorrow: wherever we are, high above the sky or in the depth of the ocean—nothing will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is in *Jesu Keriso*.'

The *balus* was like a madman who is shaking his arms and legs. My heart did not come down from where it stayed hanging in my throat. The more the *balus* climbed, the nearer my heart came to my mouth. Then for a moment, the *balus* acted as if it was falling like a

leaf to the ground. And my stomach walked up to join my heart in the mouth.

When the *balus* was tired of climbing, it put its head straight. Now it felt like floating down the Gira River in a canoe, when the waves throw you up and down.

'I want you to see what it is like up in the sky,' Yavita said. I opened my eyes for the first time. First I looked to see if Yavita was there with me. Then I looked to the left and saw what Yavita wanted me to see. I did not know what to say. The tall trees I see walking on the ground were not there. Everything looked very flat, like a river. But on the right there was a great fence of mountains that closed in the river of land. The sun was about to sink behind that mountain fence.

I wondered how long the *balus* would take to get to Popondetta. It had once taken me a week to walk to Higa Furu, which is near Popondetta. 'Will we travel like this days and nights till we reach Popondetta?' I asked Yavita. 'And when is the *balus* falling to the ground for us to get out?' But Yavita said: 'No, it won't be long before we go down to the ground.' And I was amazed at the speed with which this *balus* could run. I saw a black and white cloud in front of the *balus*. I always thought that clouds were tied to the sky above by some strings. But now this cloud was just floating in the sky, no strings. I thought the man would take the *balus* from the cloud, but he made the *balus* go straight through it. I closed my eyes quickly and the next minute the *balus* was shaking like a madman. It went up and down like a canoe paddling against the waves in the sea. I thought that the cloud was something hard that would tear the *balus* to pieces. But we soon came out of it and I opened my eyes again.

The *balus* lowered itself and began to circle the village of Popondetta. It was the biggest village I ever saw. The roofs of the houses were shining white. On the roads below strange pigs in different colours were running up and down. I was looking down at the white roofs which became bigger. Then the *balus* bent over to one side—all my fear came back to me and then we swooped down like a hawk trying to catch a rat.

The *balus* touched the grass. It ran madly, but the man touched the little black sticks in front of him and it stopped. Then, and only then, my heart and my stomach came down from the neck to their proper places and I took a deep breath.

When the door was opened and we came to the ground, I cast my eyes here and there. I saw a white pig that came running towards us in the distance. But this strange pig had no legs. Its head was blunt, there was no nose, no tail. It ran very fast, as if to attack a man. It

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came with a noise, like a *balus*. 'It must be a wild one,' I thought, and I looked around for a tree to climb if it should attack me. But there was no tree near and I decided to hide in the *balus* in case of danger. As the pig came near I could see its two white eyes, but I could not see the mouth.

But to my greatest surprise, there was a man inside the head of this pig-like thing. I was frightened, but Yavita came and said: 'Father, that is a *taraka*. The place for the *balus* is far away, so the *taraka* is coming to take us to the village.' I bit my finger. As it came nearer to us, it stopped running and began to walk and then it stopped. The man came out of the head. I was anxious now to have a look at it and we walked over and touched it.

It was exactly like a pig, but it had no hair, no mouth, no flesh and in fact it had no intestines. I bit my finger again, because there was no string attached to it. Who had made the pig *taraka* and how, I could not tell.

Then some thought suddenly entered my skull and into my brain. I had forgotten to say thank you to God, because he had taken the *balus* safely through the clouds and down again to the ground. When the *balus* stopped and I came down to the ground, I was busy looking at the pig *taraka* and I forgot to say thank you. Up in the air, when my heart rose to my mouth, I was a frightened baby in the hands of God. But once safe on the ground, I felt like a grown man and the hands of God seemed remote. Up in the clouds, there was only God to ask for help, but here on the ground I felt safe, because my dead father and mother were near me.

GRANDFATHER'S MAGIC

by Kalamend Sukot

The Second World War reached our little island of Djaul on Sunday, January 9, 1943.

From Sumuna village we could clearly see the warships on Sunday morning. Soon the war planes appeared, which our people called *balus matmat*.

Young, old, short, tall, crippled, blind and deaf men and women all rushed into the bush, carrying their children on their backs. Children and women were crying as they were forcing their way through the thick and thorny bush.

Only my grandfather laughed, saying: '*Ol meri, tasol.*' He had three wives, and six sons and two daughters. Everyone had left the village except my grandfather, who relied on his magic. He slowly rose from his hard, wooden bed, saying: '*Yu ken kam, lapun i stap.*' He was boasting with his power.

When the Japanese warships approached, he took his small basket and walked down to where he practised the magic: He called to the *tambaran*, saying: '*Batua, sup! sup! sup! sup! sup!*' These words mean: spirits of my ancestors, jump, jump, jump now, jump! He had often used this incantation for fighting and killing and destroying people in the villages, but now nothing happened. The warships moved steadily on, and my grandfather realized his first failure.

My grandfather then called on the spirits to stop the bullets but to his great surprise a tree right in front of him was burnt and crashed to the ground. Then he realized that the foreign power was more powerful than his own. He lost hope and strength and ran off into the bush. He was so frightened that he ran into the thick, dense bush, where much cane was growing. His dirty red laplap got caught on the end of a stick and was pulled off. But he did not bother to turn back and left his laplap swinging from the cane.

The poor old man finally made his way to a group of men and women down by a small creek. When they saw him naked they asked him what had happened to his cloth and he replied: '*Mi tupela kanda i pait; na i winim na i kisim laplap.*' The women felt embarrassed seeing the naked old man, but he said to them: '*Sem no ia, taim no gut.*'

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They gave him another laplap to wear, but he hung it round his neck saying, it was too heavy to wear for an old man during the war.

The *luluai* and the missionary worked hard to try and bring the people together, saying the Japanese had come to help them. But my grandfather said slowly: '*Giaman, tasol. Ol Siapan i laik kilim man ia.*' He called his wives and children and went to look for a cave, where the Japanese could not find them. There they made their small garden and planted their food.

Then there came a time when the Japanese wanted to count all the people in the village. The Japanese leader ordered the *luluai* to call everybody together. Kminel the missionary and Nomba the *luluai* went to look for my grandfather and told him to come back to the village.

But instead my grandfather sent his six sons to the village, with another magic to put the Japanese to sleep. He was going to follow at night with his wives and children to kill them. At midnight he was awoken by a thunderstorm, rolling and growling over the dark mountain. Lightning flashed in the sky, the cold wind murmured in the dark valley below and the owls were hooting in the trees. My grandfather said: '*Tapungan, kara siak,*' which means: Let's go down. The night journey was long and rough and they walked in complete silence, the wives and daughters leading the old man. The sons saw their father coming and they met him and told him that the magic was useless. Japanese guards were still surrounding the place.

But my grandfather would not give up and he decided to make another kind of magic to call a special pig to eat the Japanese.

He went into the bush and began to call hopefully: '*Mok mok ngani Siapan!*' which means: Pig, pig eat the Japs. While he was still calling out hopefully, his brother's pig came. When he saw it he chased it away angrily saying: '*Ian garek manu,*' which means: Not you! He then called again, but the special pig would not come.

But when the Japanese learned that this old man was making magic that frightened people they decided to have him flogged with up to thirty strokes. Although the unsuccessful grandfather had failed so many times, he decided to make another magic which was to protect him from the pain of the beating.

When he was given the first stroke he shouted out loud and called his sons and daughters. By the fifth stroke his voice faded away. The skin began to fall off his body. He stopped moving altogether when he received the seventh stroke. Then the Japanese leader decided that they had better leave him at that time. So they left him and his sons came and carried him away. They washed him with cold water, gave him food and put him to bed to rest.

From that day on he never tried to use the power of magic again,

because he realized that it was useless. When he recovered he became quite friendly with the Japanese.

One day a Japanese came up to him and said: '*Man buta sut kaikai orai,*' thus asking him to shoot one of his pigs to eat. My grandfather agreed and said: '*Okay, sut mi buta orai.*' The pig was shot and eaten by the Japanese. In return they gave him rice, tins of fish and bush knives.

The Japanese did not respect people or their properties. When they got to a village they forced the people to work hard, digging tunnels and carrying their cargo. Sometimes they took wives away from their husbands. They killed anyone who spoke against them and so the people kept quiet even when they were badly treated.

When the Japanese were finally defeated, this poor grandfather went to live with his family in the bush, where his life was accompanied by the singing and crying of wild birds. When he grew old he went every morning at six o'clock to see the sun rise over the Kuriku hills and in the evening he went to see it set over the Lakarui hills.

He loved to hear the birds cry in the morning, when they flew out to look for food and in the evening when they returned to their nests.

In 1954, when he was going to die he called us together and said: 'I am going to die soon, and I wish you a pleasant life in your own time.' He divided his land amongst us and said: 'Look after the land well, for it saves men's lives. Work hard on it and use it wisely, for it helps men and their lives on earth.'

Betel-nut is Bad Magic for Aeroplanes

The title, Betel-nut is Bad Magic for Aeroplanes, immediately arrests our attention, and sets the mood for the story's ironic humour.

*Irony is yet another tool used by writers to make their writing forceful. We are familiar with **verbal irony** in speech — when we say one thing but mean something different by implication. **Situational irony** is present when an event that we think is going to turn out one way in fact turns out differently. Irony can be tragic or comic, according to the circumstances and the mood of the speech or writing.*

Style refers to the way a writer uses language. Style can be described using such words as 'simple', 'ornate', 'formal', 'informal', 'realistic' and 'idiomatic'. JOHN KASAPWALOVA's successful recreation of an idiomatic Papua New Guinean spoken English adds to the fun of this story.

One Saturday afternoon in May 22 this year some of we university students went to meet our people at Jackson's Airport in Seven Mile. They arrived and we happy very much. Then we all comes to that backyard corner. That one place where Ansett and TAA capsize boxes for native people who go by plane.

We was standing about thirty of we, waiting to catch our things. We was chewing plenty buwa like civilized people. We was not spitting or making rubbish. Only feeling very good from the betel nuts our people had brought to Moresby.

Then for nothing somebody in brown uniform with cap like pilot, and wearing boots like dimdim and black belt, he comes up to one our people and he gives some Motu and English. That one our people didn't understood. So soon that uniform man was redding his eyes and rubbing his teeths just like white man's puppy dog. Maybe something like five minutes died but still he talk. Bloody bastard! He wanted our people to stop chewing buwa because TAA and Ansett jets had come and plenty plenty white people inside the terminal. They must not be offended to see us chew betel-nut. Anyways, this brown puppy dog of white man angried himself for nothing. His anger now made big big pumpkin inside his throat for because he was 'educated native' and he didn't wanted kanaka natives doing like that in front of Europeans.

Soon quickly one native uni. gel student seen what's

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from
THROUGH MELANESIAN EYES

happening. She goes and she asks why he was giving Motu and English to our people. He whyed. She seen quickly that his why is no good. So the uni. gel student she says to him to go away. Chewing buwa is our custom for many, many civilizations. Bloody bastard! Maybe this one first time natives talked him like that way, because quickly he becomes more angry. He started talking big and making his fingers round like hard cricket ball.

I seen what's hairpin too and I fright really true. But I walks over and I asks. The uni. gel she explains and he talks also. We talk loud and many peoples they see us too and he say, 'Stop being cheeky. Just shut up and do what I tell you. You are breaking the law!' So I says, 'What law are we breaking? Tell me! What ordinance are we breaking?'

The puppy he gets very angry and he say 'Don't be smart! Just shut up and stop chewing betel-nut. You are breaking the law!'

Then my anger really wanted to stand its feet, so I says 'Bullshit. We are neither spitting nor throwing rubbish. Black people never made that law and this is black people's land. There's no such law.'

'All right you think you smart! You want me to report the boss?'

'I don't know your boss. Run to him if you want to smell his boots. Go on report if you want!'

His face smoked and he walked away to get his boss. I says good words to our people and we continue chewing our buwa. We was really getting tired. Our boxes sleeping somewhere we donno. I chewed my buwa but little bit my stomach was frighten because the security man will bring his boss. Then maybe big trouble! Bloody bastard!

Not long. Soon the brown puppy dog comes with their white papa dog and two other brown puppy dogs too. They was all wearing khaki uniforms, caps, boots and black belts. They seen us and we seen them too. They come to us. My heart started winking and breathing very fast. The white papa dog, his face like one man I seen one day near Boroko RSL Club.

O sori! I looks at him and truly my chest wanted to run away. His bigness, his face red and especially his big big beer stomach, they frighten me already. Maybe if you seen him too, ei, you will really laugh. Bloody bastard! His stomach was too big for him. I can seen how his belt was trying its best to hold the big swelling together. His brown shirt was really punished and all of

we can sees how it wanted to break. But no matter, because the stomach was trying to fall down over the black belt like one full-up bilum bag.

Me, it was already nearly too much. I straighten my legs quickly because something like water was falling down my leg inside my long trousers. I dunno what something and maybe only my fright trying his luck on me. But I didn't look at my long trousers. Too many people watching and also my head was boiling sweat from the hotness.

Anyways, the security guards came to us. But now we three university students, we was standing together and looking them very proudly. Too late now. We was not going to run any more. We decided to defend our rights. At first they didn't know what to say and only they talked quietly inside their throats. Then their boss, the Australian papa with big stomach, he started showing we his teeths. Oi, we was frighten by his hard voice. He says to me, 'Listen boy, who gave you permission to chew betel-nut here? You are breaking the law, the legal laws of this land. And when they (pointing to his puppies) told you to stop, you said you didn't believe in the law and will continue to break the law!'

Straightaway my face blooded because many black, white and yellow people, they was watching us too and this white papa dog, he was talking bad like that way to me. Plenty times I hear white people calling black men 'bois' so this time I hear it and my mind was already fire. I wanted to give him some. Maybe good English or maybe little bit Strine. So I says loudly to him, 'All right white man, on what moral grounds is it unlawful for me to chew betel-nut here? This is a free country of which we black people are citizens and unless you can show me the moral basis for your "so called laws" I cannot recognize and therefore comply to that law!'

Well, he was very very angry now because one black man answering him in very good English. Maybe he didn't understand what I say.

'Listen boy, don't be smart. You are breaking the law and the law is laid down by the lawful government in the book.'

I knows straightaway that he is another one of those ignorant, uneducated white men. I getting very angry too.

'OK then, show me that ordinance which specifically lays down that we natives are not allowed to chew betel-nut within

the precincts of an air terminal, in our own country. As a citizen I have at least the right to be shown that law before you crassly accuse me of breaking the law. Until such times as you do so we shall consider you a liar and one using his delegated authority to intimidate the black people of Niugini.'

'Shut up! You are nothing more than a cheeky brat!'

'Your resorting to insults is unwarranted here. All I'm demanding from you is the proof for the existence of such a law. Come on show me the exact ordinance.'

'I don't have to show you the written ordinance. The lawful authority is vested in me as an officer to arrest you if I want to. It's written in Commonwealth Safety Regulations Act, section 32.'

'Bullshit. I want to see it with my own eyes! Listen mate. Why aren't you arresting those white kids inside the terminal for chewing PK? What's the difference between their PK inside the terminal and our betel-nut outside on the road pavement?'

'Shut up you cheeky brat!' Then he wanted to grab my little neck. I was only short so I jumped back and he missed. But his face was red fire. 'Since you are not going to obey, we shall arrest you!'

He was making we feel like we was some 'bad cowboys' or criminals.

All we three university students we was already hotted up and we was arguing with him very loudly. But when he tried that one on me, that was finish for everything. I lost my manners. I lost my calmness and also my boiling anger and fear. My heart was knocking my chest very hard. Only one thing I wanted to be — a true kanaka. So I threw my voice at him nearly spitting his face.

'Don't you dare lay hands on me white boi. This is black man's country and we have the right to make our laws to suit us. Commonwealth Government is not the Nuigini House of Assembly. If you think your laws are justified, you are nothing more than a bloody white racist! A bloody white racist, you hear!'

I was shaking. The overseas people who was arrived and also black people, they was watching. Our people was just waiting for him to hit me and then they would finish him on the spot. Maski Bomana. We will only eat rice and have good times there. The Australian papa dog, he seen too many black faces around

him. Too much for him. I think our argument already full him up. He starts walking away and threatening we.

'We'll fix you, you cheeky brat! Don't you run away. I'm going to ring the police.'

'Ring the police if you want to! Always like you white racists. Each time you know you are wrong or want to bully us black people, you have to use the police on us.'

The brown puppy dogs didn't know what to do so they followed their white boss, the papa dog with big stomach. I think all the water in my blood was all red now. I breathing very fast but maybe that was because I already frighten about the coming of the police. I seen many times how they do to protect white men's lives or property. Only last week I seen them hitting some Chimbu men because they was enjoying life from drinks. I wanted to throw some stones at the police cars but they was too fast and they took the Chimbu men away to kalabus.

Then something maybe like five minutes and we hear big siren noise. Two blue polis cars and one big lorry. That one had gorilla wire all around it and truly big enough to capture maybe twenty or thirty natives inside it. The cars and the lorry was all for we three university students. They stopped the traffic and about six black polis bois jumped down. I was really frighten. But papa dog he gets his courage and they march to us. We was standing calmly, because we was ready now. Any time! The polis bois they seen us not making big trouble so they run away with the big lorry, but they stopped the two blue cars.

They comes marching up to we and our people. Also university bus already come and we busy loading up the boxes, bags of yams and drums. But papa dog he no play now. Bloody bastard! His teeths was already making noise to the polis bois.

'Officer I want you to charge him now.'

The polis bois they look very stupid because they didn't know what's up. Only I can seen their eyes. They was very hungry and truly wanted to catch us because white man he said to them. My anger comes back to my head very quickly. I happy little bit, but, because the polis bois was black men and not white.

'Officer before you charge me, I would like to know what you are charging me for and perhaps, allow me to give my side of the story.'

The officer he stands very stupidly. He has no words to say. So white papa dog he tells him more.

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'Officer, I want you to charge him with the use of obscene language in public and also breach of the Commonwealth Safety Regulations Act, section thirty-two.'

All of we was too surprised and we make one big whistle because he was already lying.

'Obscene language, my foot! All right if you reckon I used obscene language, just exactly what words did I use? Go on, tell the officer the exact words I use.'

'Officer charge him. I wouldn't even repeat the words in front of the lady, in any case.'

The lady who papa dog was pointing to, she was the university gel student with us. So she says, 'Officer I don't mind at all, just ask him to prove to us what obscene words we used.'

The polis bois they says nothing only wanting to take us away to kalabus.

'Officer they have breached the law under section 32 of the Commonwealth Safety Regulations Act and he was using very insulting language something like "this is bloody black fella's country." I have my witnesses here.' He showed them his puppy dogs.

We knewed fully he was truly telling lie. He only want to kalabus we because we was opened our mouths against him.

'Look officer this man is lying and we have here at least thirty witnesses to tell you exactly what I said. I called him a bloody white racist which is what he really is. I had simply questioned him his rights to force us to stop chewing betel-nut here. We weren't throwing rubbish or spitting.'

The polis bois was getting very annoyed and they wanted to catch me. But I was only very small and I jumped back. Then one officer he say, 'You have to come to the police station.'

'What for?' I asks very angry. 'We've done nothing wrong. If you are going to believe the word of this white man against our thirty witnesses right here, then I suggest that you are nothing more than puppet tools for white man.'

My words hit their shame because many black people was watching them too. Quickly they didn't like me. Bloody bastards! They want to friend with white man.

'Just shut up and come to the police station!'

Truly by now I wanted to give them some. But oi, their size and also their big boots! If they give me one, I will really have many holes in my bottom. But I says maski.

'You can't arrest me without telling me what the charges are. Let go my hands! We came to see that our people get to the university and I'm not going anywhere until our people are comfortably seen back to the university!'

I run away free and we start our people into the bus. The polis bois and the white papa dog, they didn't know what to do, so they was standing there like bamboo, all empty. Soon our peoples they come back to university in the bus and we three university students, we goes and we argue some more.

In the end, they tells we three to get into the police car. We goes in but then we sees how the polis bois was going to leave the papa dog behind and take us to Boroko Police Station. So we quickly opens the doors and we runs out. They catch us very quickly again then I says loudly, 'We are not going to the police station unless that white man also comes with us. It's hardly justifiable for the police to be his spokesman because this will conveniently screen him from any embarrassment.'

What can they do? They knows they was wrong so they calls him back. They pushed we into the back seat, then they opens the front door for the papa dog. So I talks loudly and strong.

'Get in there white man!'

He blooded more and we laugh inside. The polis they was all very silent. We speeded to Boroko Police Station. I knows that place often.

They bringed us to one big table and many police men behind it. The papa dog he didn't waste time. He open one book and he show them.

'I want you to charge them for trespassing under section thirty-Under this regulation I have the authority to arrest or have arrested any persons I see to be causing danger to the safety of aeroplanes....'

Then I know he was truly telling more lies and I shout straightaway, 'What a lot of rubbish. We weren't carrying anything inflammable. We were simply chewing betel-nut on the road pavement outside the terminal.'

The white sergeant police, he turns fastly and like one lion's mouth, he yells me, 'Listen boy, keep your mouth shut!'

His voice was too big for me. His eyes wanted to shoot and his blue uniform swelling from his fatness. I wanted to say more. But too late! I sees his bigness and I hear his voice and that one finished me up quick. Anyways we was very tired now and we

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shut up good. Maybe we let him give us some now and maybe later we fight him inside court house. So the papa dog gives more lies.

'I also want to charge him with the use of obscene language in a public place. He was using the words and I quote "this is fuckin black fellas' country".'

He tell them more and he shows them more from his book. But the police sergeant and his bois didn't knew what means 'obscene language.' They look for one dictionary and we was standing there like five or maybe ten minutes waiting for them. They didn't find what means that word. I seen the sergeant pull one telephone and talks to it.

Like two minutes later, we was took to one office inside, near the back. That one office, his name CIB office. We walks in, the four of we and we seen one man sitting inside. He looks like very important man. Long trousers, shoes and tie. We sit down and again the papa dog he starts more talking. Ei, he talks very long, and this makine me feel like one real 'bad' cowboy or something. Finally the important man shut him up.

'You can either charge him with one or the other. With regards to the section thirty-two, a similar case took place in Lae last year and I remember clearly the new precedent set then. If you want to charge him with that you have to write away for the Controller General's permission from Melbourne.'

The papa dog, he nearly cried because he knewed and we knewed that he wronged all the time. Then my turn for explain. I told him about the argument and everything.

'I have my two witnesses here to testify. I didn't use "fuckin black fellas' country." I do admit having spoken to him in a firm voice but what I called him was a "bloody white racist." As far as I'm concerned these are not obscene words. They are political terms which I often ascribe to persons committing injustice to others, and I would just as readily call a black man a "bloody black racist" if I saw him committing an injustice to a man of another ethnic origin.'

The important man held his head for long time and we wait like sleeping pigs. Then he looks up and writes down the white man's name, address and phone. After that he told him to go. I wanted to say something but my mouth shut very quickly. The important man, he writes our names in his book then he say, 'I will notify you on Monday as to what the charge will be. In the

meantime you may go.'

We walk out and we was feeling little bit happy. But I remember we have no money for bus to Waigani. The police they should pay us. So I walks back to the CIB office. 'Sir the police had inconvenienced us in the first place and I think it is only right they should take us back to the university.'

The important man walk out with us to the front office and he called on sergeant.

'Sergeant, arrange for a car to take these students safely to the university, will you.'

That one sergeant same one before. He didn't like it, to treat us good. We three university students, we come back to Waigani. We was chewing our betel-nut on the way.

- Did you spot any **comic irony** in the story? Here is one instance (there are many others): It is ironic that the story ends with the students being transported in style to campus when earlier it had looked as if they were in for severe punishment!
- Did you enjoy the humour and the style in this story?
- Think of a funny incident and try to write a story around it.

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Which Way, Big Man?

By NORA VAGI-BRASH

Which Way, Big Man? is a satirical play. A **satire** is a form of writing that holds up aspects of a person or a society to ridicule. The aim of the satirist is not merely to amuse, but to make us see the folly of our ways.

NORA VAGI BRASH shows a keen insight into the foibles of the new elite. She also has a gift for comic characterization, saucy dialogue, and an instinct for the funny situation, all of which make her an entertaining dramatist and a keen satirist.

The play was adapted for radio by PETER TRIST.



Marlon Kuelinad

CAST OF CHARACTERS

GOU HAIA	Public servant
SINOBI HAIA	His wife
PETA	Domestic servant
HEGAME	Gou's cousin
PRIVATE SECRETARY	
PAPA	Gou's father
MARIAN	Clerk/typist
JAMES	Clerk

CHUCK BRAGGIN-CROWE	Businessman
VI BRAGGIN-CROWE	His wife
SAGA	University student
PROFESSOR NOUAL	Linguist
MRS URA KAVA	Reporter
DR ILAI KAMAP	Academic
NEWS ANNOUNCER	

SCENE ONE

SINOBI: (calling) Gou, darling? Do you prefer the plain or the stuffed Spanish olives? I'm just making up the shopping list.

GOU: (calling) Oh I don't mind, Sinobi! Listen, come in here to the lounge and have a drink. Vodka and tomato or something different?

SINOBI: (sighs) I'll have some Martini vermouth.

GOU: (Sound of pouring into glass) There you are dear (Pause) Ice? (Sound of clinking glasses) Cheers! (Sound of drinking) Ah! That's better (Sigh) Well, what did you do today?

SINOBI: Have you forgotten already? I've been at the New Amengo Embassy, organizing that cocktail party! We're to raise funds for the Drop-out Rascals! I'm on the Committee, you know!

GOU: Oh yes, that's right.

SINOBI: It was just heavenly! Carpets wall to wall, air conditioning — and a gorgeous indoor swimming pool! Oh that reminds me! I had a letter today from Gloria! They've moved into our new PNG Embassy residence over there. And they have an indoor swimming pool too! (Sigh) Oh Gou, perhaps one day we'll be in a position to get one! (Pause) I ever you get that promotion!

GOU: Perhaps ... one day. (Pause) Any new faces there — apart from the usual crowd?

SINOBI: Not really! Just the usual. Mostly nice people though. Oh yes! There was someone new! The wife of the managing director of 'Nirez'! You know, the new perfume company set up by National Promotion? It will be just like the French perfume.

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GOU: I suppose the fashion-conscious ladies of the city will be pleased.

SINOB: There were also some village women there. You know, mothers of the Drop-outs, and so on! Goodness knows why they asked *them* to come! They just sat by themselves in a corner and didn't say a word. Don't know how to behave at such functions!

GOU: But we must educate our village people! It's our duty to help the less fortunate!

SINOB: Quite frankly, I don't approve of it. Oh! By the way I heard at the meeting that the PM is to form a new Ministry. Is that true?

GOU: (*whispers*) It's not official — so don't say anything yet. (*Pause*) What's the time now?

SINOB: Nearly six o'clock. If that digital electric clock is correct.

GOU: I'd like to hear the news, if you don't mind.

SINOB: Oh you don't want to hear that gibberish in Pidgin and Motu! Why not wait till the main news at 7 o'clock in English? (*Sighs*) Gosh! I'm feeling peckish — haven't had a thing since afternoon tea. (*Calling off*) Peta! What's for dinner? Come in here.

(*He comes inside*)

PETA: (*moving on*) Yassur missus! Na me workim rice, na kaukau, na abika, na pis na coconut.

SINOB: Yack! You eat that! You make us a salad and grill the T-bone steaks. There's plenty of lettuce and tomatoes in the fridge. Hurry up now!

PETA: Yassur missus. Mi go now.

SINOB: Wait a minute! I haven't finished yet! Now Peta, next time you ask first *what* I want for dinner, *before* you cook native food! I can't stomach it! Now, take these glasses! We'll go out on the patio. (*Moving off*) Come on Gou, darling, let's sit on the new white iron chairs. (*Fade*) They're so gorgeous! Bring us new drinks outside, Peta!

(*SINOB and GOU move out*)

(*Sound of door opening and closing*)

PETA: (*softly*) Yes Missus! Yes Missus! (*Sigh*) Blari shid! Dispela em wanem kind meri? Em sindaun na singaut — 'Peta!, Peta!' Ahh! Dispela kanaka meri kama wanpela witpela missus stret! (*Short bridge music*)

SCENE TWO

GOU: (*fade up*) Oh! I had a very busy day I'm afraid. Had a meeting with the Admin. Staff at 10. Then coffee. Then the Director called me in for a chat and coffee, then we went to a long lunch with the minister at the Lakatoi Hotel. We had smorgasbord. Nice turkey and ham.

SINOB: So we've both had a busy day! (*Calling*) Peta! Peta! How's the steak? Don't burn them! I want mine medium rare! (*Enter PETA*) Oh *there* you are. well?

PETA: (*moving on*) Kaikai i redi nau. Mi putim long tebel. Nogud bai i kol.

SINOB: Bring the protable table out here on the patio. We'll eat here in the cool. Hurry up now Peta. I don't want that steak to be spoilt.

GOU: I'll go and help him.

SINOB: No! He's the servant. What do we pay him for? He's got little enough work to do. Sit down dear. (*Pause*) Oh I do like that rose bush we got from the University garden lady. It's going to look lovely when it grows along the railing. Just like the one at Professor Noual's place. Oh! Here's the food now, at last!

(*Sound of utensils: plates, forks, etc.*)

SINOB: Put them straight, Peta. And don't forget the napkins and the finger bowls.

PETA: Yes, missus!

GOU: The steak looks good. Like some salad on your plate, dear? Thank you Peta, you can go now.

(*Sound of knocking on door*)

GOU: Oh I'd better see who that is.

SINOB: No! You go, Peta.

PETA: Yes missus!

SINOB: They can wait. It's very bad manners for visitors to come at meal times. (*Pause*) Hmmm! This steak is lovely and tender, but I don't think I'd better eat it all. I've had too much! I'm not *really* that hungry after all.

(*PETA comes back*)

GOU: Yes Peta? Who is it at the door?

PETA: Em cousin brada bilong yu. Hegame. Em i stap ausiait.

GOU: Tell him I'm having my dinner. Tell him I'll be with him when I finish.

PETA: Yes Masta. (PETA goes off)

SINO: Oh! These people! I suppose he's come for money. Man! You can't educate these people. You keep telling them we pay rent, electricity, food, servants. And they still come here begging! Tell him to go away Peta.

GOU: Maski Peta! I'll go and see him. Besides it's nearly time for the news (Fade) Excuse me, dear.

SINO: But you haven't finished yet. (Calling off) Money doesn't grow on trees! We just paid 400 kina for school fees, and besides I don't know where I've put my purse!

(Pause)

SCENE THREE

GOU: (Moving on) Oh hello, cousin Hegame! It's been a long time since you have visited me.

HEGAME: Sorry Gou, for this unusual visit. I know you are a very busy man. But I had to come to you because there's no one else to go to. My wife's given birth and I need to borrow 10 kina please. I'll be able to pay you back next fortnight when I get overtime pay.

GOU: Oh, cousin, I can only let you have 2 kina. This month I've got a lot of expenses. You know, bills. It's not easy living in the city. You village people are lucky because you have your own gardens to get food. Here in town we have to buy food. Why don't you stay and have some food with us? Here's the 2 kina before I forget, and I ...

SINO: (Calling loudly) Peta! Clear the table! Give the rest to the dogs.

HEGAME: (embarrassed) I ... I ... er ... thank you, cousin, for offering food. But I ... er ... I ate before I came. I must go now. (Fade) Thank you cousin. (Fade) Thank you cousin.

GOU: Oh. I'm sorry Hegame. I ... er ...

(Door closes)

SINO: (moving on) Well where is he?

(Pause) Oh! He's gone. I couldn't help hearing what he asked for. I knew he'd come for money! How much did you give him?

GOU: Only two kina. Poor man. Remember he is my cousin.

SINO: Oh! This wantok business! Look, we can't afford to flash

our money around — not even 50 toea. You know how expensive things are! Don't be so soft, Gou!

GOU: Look, it only came out of my cigarette budget. I've never felt so embarrassed in my life. Telling Peta to clear the table and give the rest of the food to the dogs! I'd asked him to eat with us. And he hadn't gone out of hearing, when you started accusing me of giving out too much money.

SINO: I'm sick and tired of people coming here for money! This is not a Development Bank Loan office! The whole reason we have this decent house is because of me. Do you understand? I made it possible for us!

GOU: That's enough, Sinob! One more word about it and I'll be out that door to the pub for some peace! Hey it's time for the news! Switch on the radio near you please.

(Sound of radio switch)

NEWS ANNOUNCER: (fade up)

And here are the headlines:

A new Government Department has been formed and the appointment of its first director has been announced.

An increase in the number of crimes in the city has been attributed to unemployed school leavers.

Now the news in detail.

The Prime Minister has announced the formation of a new Department to be known as the Department of National Identity.

The new minister will be Mr Selep Rilai Ansi.

The new director will be Mr Gou Haia. The spokesman added that this Department will promote the image of the Melanesian Way of life both here and overseas.

The statistician announced to-day that figures for crime rates in ...

(Radio switched off suddenly)

SINO: Oh! Congratulations darling! This is terrific news! Just what we've been waiting for!

GOU: Well there you are! That's why I was waiting to hear the news. 'Director of the Department of National Identity'! How do you like the sound of that?

SINO: Let's have some champagne! And we *must* have a party to really celebrate! I can't wait to tell everyone the news! Listen Gou? Can you get your Secretary to come here first thing in the morning, to help me with preparations?

GOU: Sure. She won't mind.

SINO: It's her job to assist in every way! Oh! There's so much to do. I'm so excited I can hardly think! I hope my new dress will be finished from the dressmakers! (*Fade*) I'll probably need new shoes, and of course will have to get my wig set, and then there's the food and . . .

(*Music bridge to end scene.*)

SCENE FOUR

PETA: Missus, onpela Kuskus meri i kam na waitim yu insait.

SINO: Tell her to come in here, Peta. I've been expecting her.

(*Pause*) It's the secretary woman. (*Calling*) In this way if you don't mind. (*Pause*) Sit down.

SECRETARY: Thank you Mrs Haia. I hope I'm not late. It's just 10 o'clock now.

SINO: Oh! I'm only just up from bed. Now get your pad and pencil. I want you to take this list down for your boss's celebration party. For his promotion you know.

SECRETARY: Yes, Mrs Haia. We are all very proud of his success. He's worked hard to get it.

SINO: Oh yes! But you know the old saying: 'Behind every successful man there's a woman'? Anyway, down to business.

SECRETARY: I can take shorthand. You just dictate to me, Mrs Haia.

SINO: First, of course, the Minister for National Identity, — Mr and Mrs Selep Rilai Ansi! (I don't really like his wife — she's hardly more than a village woman — but still we must invite them both — it's only proper.) Oh! Don't write all that down!

SECRETARY: No, Mrs Haia. I understand.

SINO: The Managing Director of Nirez, the Perfume company. And his wife — Mr and Mrs Braggin-Crowe! They are *terribly* nice people! Do you know them?

SECRETARY: No, Mrs Haia.

SINO: Oh well! Well, Mr and Mrs Maus Wara — he's in Information (just back from New York). Dr and Mrs Ilai Ikamap — the medical people. And, let me see, we should ask some *nice* academic from the University. Some of those Africans are smart. Oh yes, Professor and Mrs Noual of the University. And that Mr Saga — the young man who has

been getting all that publicity. He's a bit radical, but everyone's talking about him.

SECRETARY: What about people from your husband's staff?

SINO: Oh yes! I *suppose* they will have to come . . . How many so far?

SECRETARY: That will be about 30, including the office staff.

Now, this party is to be on this Saturday night. Is that right?

SINO: Yes. Now you get in touch with the catering people. I want the best of everything! Just like the Embassy parties. Hot and cold savouries, wines, beer, everything! Order good glasses for the important people and plastic cups for the office staff.

SECRETARY: Betel-nuts, Mrs Haia?

SINO: Of course not! There are never any at the Embassy parties! Make all those invitations out to be sent today. And show me the catering list this afternoon. Now, I'll have to ask you to go. I have an appointment at the hairdresser's.

SECRETARY: Yes Mrs Haia. Good morning.

(*Music bridge*)

SCENE FIVE

GOU: (*Calling*) Hurry up in the bathroom dear, it's almost 7 o'clock. The first guests will be arriving about eight.

SINO: (*calling off*) I'm just fixing my make up. Don't rush me, Gou! These false eyelashes are hard to set.

(*Door bell rings*)

GOU: Oh! Gosh! There's someone already! I haven't even got my shirt on! (*Calling*) Peta! Leave what you're doing in the kitchen and answer the door! I'm going to the bedroom.

PETA: OK! Mi lukim husat i stap. (*Pause*)

(*Sound of door opening*)

PETA: Ahh! Papa! Yu kam insait! Kam insait! (*Calling*) Masta! Missus! Papa i kam.

SINO: (*whispers*) Gou! It's your father! Why has *he* turned up *now*? Just as we're flat out getting ready for the party! What a time to come! Make it clear that we're having important people tonight.

GOU: Shh! Sinob, he will hear you! (*Calling*) OK, Papa! Come inside. I'll be out in a minute.

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FATHER: Eh! Peta! Pren bilong mi. Man! Mi kam lon wei, na mi lez lik lik.

PETA: Eh! Papa. Na yu sit dawn lon dis pela sia. Pikinini bilong yu ikam nau.

FATHER: Man! Mi no sid daun long sia mi sid daun long graon tasol. *(Pause)* *(Sighs)* Ahh! Em nau!

GOU: *(Moving on)* Father! How are you? We ... er ... weren't expecting you.

FATHER: Eh! Pikinini bilong mi! Yu tok Inglis. Na mi trim tok olsame. Your house here, is too far up hill and road. My bones tired from walk. Now I find you is good.

GOU: Father, I have been promoted. I'm to be the Director of the Department of National Identity. Do you understand?

FATHER: Pikinini, yu tok wanem long dispela? Mi no save. Yu tok Ingles, na mi no kisim as long tok bilong yu.

GOU: It means I'm to be the boss of a big office. The number one boss.

FATHER: Number one, eh?

GOU: Yes! Tonight, Sinob and I are having a party to celebrate. *(Calling)* Peta? Bring some food for Papa, please.

PETA: *(Off)* Yassur!

FATHER: Ahh! Mi hamamas tru long dispela tok. Na yu baim pik bilong wokim dispela sing-sing?

GOU: No Papa! It's not a sing-sing! It's ... well — a party, where people come to drink, eat biscuits, olives, peanuts, and talk. Then maybe dance a little bit. In town this is called a 'cocktail party'.

FATHER: Ahh! 'Kockitale Parti'? Olgeta taim mi save harim dispela 'Kockitale parti'. Mi ting em pullim tail bilong kakarok! Tasol em wan kain sing-sing ah! *(Pause)* Na, dispela opis bilong yu — oli kolim Nasem Andenti — en wanem samting?

GOU: You mean National Identity? Yes ... well it means ... er ... something like knowing ourselves ... what we really are. Samting bilong yu mi yet.

FATHER: Son, na bilong wanam yu no salem pas i kam long ples? Na mama na line bilong yu kisim plenti kai kai. Mi kilim plenti pik na kisim buai. Mi hamamas tru long mekim bikpela pati bilong yu!

GOU: Tenk yu tru papa! but ... I ... I must now do things in the way of the town. This is the way things are done here. It

would not be right if we had a feast here in town.

FATHER: Ah! Pikinini bilong mi! Oloman bilong peles bai oli lap long yu, sapos yu no wokim sing-sing. Oli bai i tinkim yumi rabis man.

GOU: This party is the town's way. My friends come from Australia, England and America and we must do things to please them.

FATHER: Maski pikinini! E, i tingting bilong mi tasol! Yu wokim long lait bilong yu, na waintaim prend bilong yu.

GOU: Papa. You go with Peta to the bathroom and wash. Peta will give you some clean clothes of mine. Then you come and see the party. But papa, my wife doesn't want us to chew buai here. But there's plenty of beer and cigars. Peta will look after you.

FATHER: *(off)* Tenk yu, Tenk yu tru.

(Door closes)

GOU: *(calling)* Sinob! Come out here please.

SINOB: *(off)* Where is your father? Did you tell him?

GOU: He's gone with Peta to clean up, and change clothes. Then come to the party.

SINOB: To the party? The last thing I wanted was for your father to stay for the party! What will the people think? You better introduce him — and say he doesn't speak English. Tell him not to smile either. His teeth are as black as the bottom of a village cooking pot!

GOU: That's enough, Sinob! Tonight is supposed to be happy. And besides, I didn't ask the old man to come. Besides you had better make believe that we still have a bond between us and the village people. Despite the fact we rarely visit them. It's only the proper thing to do.

SINOB: All right. But I'll hold you responsible for any disasters that might happen tonight. Don't forget that.

GOU: What about Papa's things here on the table?

SINOB: Peta! Peta! Quick time! Gou, you go to the bedroom and finish getting dressed.

GOU: *(moving off)* All right Sinob. But don't forget what I said. *(Door slam)*

PETA: *(calling)* Yes missus?

SINOB: Take these things outside! Bring a can of air freshener, and spray this room out! It smells like Koki market! Use all the spray if you have to. *(Fade)* Just get rid of the smell —

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understand? Hurry up now ...

(Door slam)

PETA: Yes missus. (Pause) (To himself) Ah! Man! Dispela meri olgeta taim tok kilin, kilin, wok, wok! Wanem kain ia? Mi les long dispela kanaka misis. Em winim misus Quin pinis!

(Sound of spray can)

PETA: Ah! Papa yu cam? (Laughing) Ah! Man yu luk namba wan! Klin tru!

FATHER: (happy) Tenk yu, Peta! Ah! Yu wok long pikinini bilong mi, a? Yu ting wanem? Em gutpela man, laka?

PETA: Ah! Papa! Masta Gou — em gutpela man. Meri bilongen ino gut! Mi no laikim em. Olgeta taim i laik koros tasol!

FATHER: Mi no laikim em tu! Olgeta taim, i save koros long pikinini bilong mi na i save toktok planti!

(Distant sound of door closing)

PETA: (whisper) Eh, Papa. Maski! Tupela i kam nau Nogut tambu bilong yu rausim mi. (Fade) Mi go insait long haus kuk?

GOU: How are you feeling, now, Papa?

FATHER: Very good. Good waswas. Mi hamamas tru.

SINOB: (Calling) Gou? Come out here on the patio please.

FATHER: Yu lukim meri bilong yu.

GOU: You sit down there, Papa, and rest for a while. (Moving off) Yes dear I'm coming. (Pause) Well, what is it now?

SINOB: Look, why did you give the old man one of your good white shirts? He'll only put betel stain on it. And why has he put those flowers in his hair? It's stupid.

GOU: Shh! He'll hear you. He looks all right! He's creating a party mood.

SINOB: He's creating a mood in me all right. Remember it's you they'll laugh at, not me! (Pause) (Hard) He's your father!

(Bridge music)

SCENE SIX

SINOB: Gou! Quickly someone's arrived! I can hear the door bell. Does my hair look all right? Quickly! Come to the door!

GOU: All right. Take it easy! Relax.

(Pause) (Door opening)

GOU: (off) Oh! Welcome! Do come in. I'm Gou Haia — (Moving

on) Do you both know my wife, Sinob?

VI: Of course! We're on committees together!

SINOB: Gou, this is Vi Braggin-Crowe — and her husband, Chuck. (Whispers) The manager of the Nirez perfume company!

BRAGGIN-CROWE: Great to see you. Hey! You folks have a really nice house here! It's like the one we moved from at Boroko. We're on Touaguba Hill, now, you know.

GOU: Now let's get you both some drinks. Come this way please. (Pause)

MRS BRAGGIN-CROWE: (off) Why thanks a lot, Gou. It's real good to meet you.

GOU: (off) There's some more guests coming Sinob.

MARIAN: (moving on) Oh hi! Sinob! How are you? Haven't seen you for ages. It seems years since we both worked in Admin typing pool. Gosh you look really beautiful tonight.

SINOB: Hello, Marian. I didn't know you were working in my husband's office. (Pause) Listen, come over here — there's something I have to tell you, it's father important.

MARIAN: Oh, sure. By the way these are my friends from the office — Tau and James.

JAMES: Hello Mrs Haia. Good evening, Mr Haia.

SINOB: How do you do? You both go inside. I want to talk to Marian for a minute (Calling) Oh there's Professor and Mrs Noual! Good evening Professor! Glad you could come.

PROFESSOR: Ah my dear Sinob, I'm glad I could come.

SINOB: Go on inside, my husband will get you drinks!

MARIAN: Now, what is it, Sinob?

SINOB: (whisper) I'd like you to know that now I'm the wife of the Director of National Identity — and with due respect to my husband, I'd appreciate your calling' me Mrs Gou Haia. After all, you're only a typist.

MARIAN: (surprised) Well! (Pause) I beg your pardon, then Mrs Gou Haia. I'll go in to join my friends now — that is, if you don't mind?

(Sound of party music: distant)

MARIAN: I hear the music's started! This promises to be a very interesting party. (Fade) See you later then — Mrs Gou Haia.

SINOB: (mutters to herself) Ohhh! You'd better just watch your step, young lady! (Pause) Oh! There you are, Vi! Hope Gou got you a drink?

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VI: Thanks, honey. I've got a bourbon. Who was that girl you were talking to? She's a pretty little thing.

SINOBI: She's a cheeky devil! someone ought to teach her manners. Or I should have her fired. Calling me by my first name!

VI: Good for you! I don't even let my husband's secretary call me by my first name!

SINOBI: You're so right Vi! People have to realize where they belong! Otherwise we'll have everyone crawling around for everything they can get out of us.

(Music up slightly)

VI: I'd keep an eye on her if I were you. Just look at the way she's dancing with that boy! The hip movements! By the way, who's that young fellow in the Toana outfit?

SINOBI: He's a Kiwi — you know, New Zealand? Incidentally, my husband wants him to join the staff — as an adviser. He was in Welfare in Auckland. I don't think much of his wife — mousey little thing. Oh! Have you met Mrs Ura Kava from the newspaper. This is Mrs Braggin-Crowe, Ura! You know, of Nirez Perfume?

(Crowd chatter. Music stops: crowd chatter up)

MRS URA: Hello there! We must have a feature from you for our women's section. Hey, Sinob it looks a lovely party. All credit to you. Tell me, how does it feel to be a Director's wife?

SINOBI: Heavenly! I might even be able to go abroad on an overseas trip with Gou!

SINOBI: I'd love to go to Switzerland.

VI: What about an overseas appointment?

MRS URA: I don't see much relevance between PNG and the Swiss! Why not Africa or another third world country. At least we've a lot in common with them?

SINOBI: We can learn a lot from the Swiss. Anyway they're the bankers. You never know the future. Come on girls — inside and join the fun. *(Fade)* I'll just go and check on the hot savouries.

(Crowd chatter up, then under)

GOU: Oh! Hello there, Marian. I saw you enjoying that dance with young Tau.

MARIAN: Yes! I'm enjoying the party. Now you should let your hair down, as the Aussies say — and enjoy yourself too! It's your big celebration night.

(Music over crowd: then under)

GOU: That sounds like an invitation! Come on, let's dance.

MARIAN: OK! *(Laughing)* Hey you're not bad! I've never thought of you as a dancer!

GOU: Perhaps because I never had time! *(Laughter)*

(Music and crowd up, then under)

SINOBI: Oh there you are, Professor! Hope Gou got you a drink!

PROFESSOR: Thanks, yes! It's a good party. By the way who's that pretty young thing dancing with your husband?

SINOBI: She's just a typist. I don't know why Gou is wasting time with her!

PROF. NOUAL: Quite a bouncy little thing, isn't she?

SINOBI: Bouncy, all right! She should go on a diet! She's that type, you know Professor, without any *real* educational qualifications. Not University material.

PROF. NOUAL: She used to go around with one of the students. Saga — he's over there with Dr Ilai Kamap.

SINOBI: Oh yes! I haven't really met him — but of course I've read about all his statements. Very radical, isn't he?

PROF. NOUAL: Well that's a matter of opinion. Let me introduce you to him. *(Calling)* Saga! Over here a minute, will you. *(Pause)* Saga, this is our charming hostess, Mrs Sinob Haia.

SINOBI: How do you do! Hope you are being taken care of. You too, Dr Ilai Kamap.

SAGA: I'm looking after myself quite well. *(Fade)* Think I'll have another drink.

SINOBI: Oh! He's gone back to the bar! Oh! Er ... have a savoury, doctor? They're imported smoked salmon....

DR KAMAP: Thank you. Delicious! Did you notice in the paper today about the national language question?

PROFESSOR: A bit presumptuous, don't you think?

SINOBI: I don't think there should be any change in language. It's only the village people who speak Pidgin and Motu. All the school children are taught English and it would cost a lot more to rewrite the texts. I mean everyone should speak English. Er ... will you excuse me for a moment?

DR KAMAP: of course! *(Pause)* My theory is that, because there are 700-plus languages here — I propose a new language which would include elements from each basic dialectical area. From this a new language would be created. It will be a first language creole.

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PROFESSOR: Pidgin is already a national language.

DR KAMAP: Anyway, there should be another committee set up to discuss the linguistic issues, the lexical and semantical dimensions most appropriate to the registers of discourse needed for particular occupations.

(Party music up)

PROFESSOR: Well yes . . . I think you have a reasonably valid point, old chap. (Fade) Now what I believe is necessary is that the whole language question should be in the control of experts and . . .

(Music up and under)

URA: That's a lovely dress, Sinob. It really suits you!

SINOB: I had it *specialy* made, Ura! You know, that lovely shop in Lawes Road! It's based on traditional PNG patterns. My private dressmaker is so artistic!

URA: It's really attractive, Sinob! And the colours are so sophisticated! (Fade) Those full sleeves are so flattering — I always like sleeves more than a dress without any arms and . . .

(Music up and under)

MARIAN: Hey Saga! Did you hear those two talking about dresses? I saw some dresses just the same as the one Sinob's wearing in a Trade Store yesterday! I thought she was too high class now for the Trade Stores!

(Laughs)

SAGA: Well what a load of maus wara they go on with! Hey I wonder if they've got any buai at this party?

MARIAN: I doubt it, Saga! I'm sure Sinob wouldn't want to upset the whities with buai! But let's go over and ask Gou's father. He might have some.

SAGA: Yeah! He looks a good old guy. But out of place at this phony party!

(Music out, crowd under)

MARIAN: He's lonely over there! It looks like he could do with some company. Hey Saga, haven't you had enough to drink?

SAGA: No, I can take plenty more yet! (Pause) It's ridiculous our people just aping the expatriates! Why not have our traditional sing-sing? (Fade) Isn't that good enough for them?

(Crowd noise distant: hold under)

MARIAN: (Fade up) Hello there Papa! You all right, ah?

SAGA: Hey Papa! You got buai?

PAPA: Yes! Mi gat! Tasol nogud oli korosim mi.

SAGA: No ken wari. Em peles bilong yumi tasol. Man, this our country!

PAPA: Plis! Noken meknais! Tambu bilong mi koros tru.

MARIAN: Ah! Papa! Em i orait. Mipela sidaon waitem yu, na tok tok.

PAPA: Em, ya! Plis, noken larim meri bilong pikinini bilong mi, i lukim! Mi no laik bai i korosim mi!

SAGA: Ah! That's good kambang!

MARIAN: Shh! Saga! Here come Sinob!

SINOB: (moving on) Look here! If you people want to chew that stuff — get outside! I don't want that in my house! Now go!

SAGA: You've gone really crazy! Look at your imitating these neo-colonials! This party — the atmosphere — everything! You're just bloody crawlers! The lot of you!

SINOB: (very angry) You're a fine one to talk about imitating the colonials! Just look at you — with the white man's beer in one hand and cigarettes in the other! You're drunk and disgusting! (Calling) Peta! Come and sweep up this mess!

PETA: (moving on) Yassur! Man! Dispela pati i givim planti wok long me!

MARIAN: Saga! Let's go — come on! You've had too much to drink! I'll drive you and . . .

SAGA: (interrupting) No! I'll say what I have to!

(Calling) Listen all you people! Come here and listen!

(Crowd noise up and under)

SAGA: You lot are exploiting our taxpayers! Living high and draining public funds!

SINOB: Shut up! Get out before I call the police! Get out!

GOU: Sinob please! Calm down! Everyone's watching! I'll get the driver to take them home.

SINOB: (half crying) I don't care! They can all go to hell! You take that pamuk typist away too.

MARIAN: Are you calling me a *pamuk*? How dare you speak like that to me!

SINOB: (screaming) I saw the way you were dancing with my husband! I've got eyes! (Grunting) There! (Slap) That's for you!

MARIAN: Don't you hit me Sinob! (Grunt) I can fight too!

(Slap)

(Crowd, excited, up)

GOU: Stop this at once, Sinob! You're drunk! I'm sorry everyone terribly sorry this has happened I really . . .

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SINOBO: (*shouting*) Shut up! You brought her here to humiliate me!
I know now why you, come home so late! Saying you've been
working! You've been with *her*!

(*Excited crowd murmur up and under*)

MARIAN: That's not true, Sinob!

GOU: Sinob! That's enough! Marian, you and Saga should leave
now. Please. . . .

SINOBO: (*very slurred*) It's not enough! Not enough! (*Crying*) Why
can't you all get out! And get your father out too! (*Crying*)
(*Move off*) I . . . don't ever want to see them again. (*Door slam*)

PROF. NOUAL: Well, Gou. This was all most unfortunate. I'll say
goodnight.

GOU: Thank you. Good night . . . er . . . everyone . . . I . . . I'm
. . . I

VI: (*sarcastic*) Goodnight! And thanks . . . a lot!

(*Crowd: Voice: 'Good night Mr Haii'. Then fade: doors
slamming off*)

PAPA: Pikinini, noken wari long mi! Bai mi go na silip long haus
bilong Hegame. Mi bringim planti trabel long yu, waintaim
meri bilong yu. Ehh! Planti trabel!

GOU: Nogat, Papa. Mi sori tru, yu bin lukim dispela samting i
kamap. Em ino rong bilong yu! Em i pasin bilong taon!
Dispela taon i bin bringim dispela long mipela.

PAPA: Tru! Ol pasin bilong taon i nara kaen. Tasol pikinini, mi
papa bilong yu! Mi mas tokim yu wanpela samting. I luk
olsem meri bilong yu i bosim yu. Yu noken mekim olsem!
Kam na lukim mi, na Mama bilong yu — long Kristmas. Na
bai mipela mekim bikpela kaikai long yu. Long pasim yet
bilong ol tumbuna.

GOU: Tasol bei yu westim planti moni tumas Papa! Yu noken
westim moni long mi.

PAPA: Tasol yu pikinini bilong mipela! Ol pipal bilong ples bai
lukluk long mipela. Mama na mi i sem, sopos yu no laikim
kaikai bilong mipela. (*Pause*) Nau bai mi silip.

GOU: Papa bet i stap long narapela rum. Bai yu slip gut
insaed.

PAPA: Ah! Flo i nap long mi! (*Sighs*) Bet i malmalum tumas!
(*Pause*) Gut nait. Mi silip . . . nau. . . .

GOU: (*softly*) Gut nait, Papa bilong mi. Em ya. Putim dispela pilo
anainit long het bilong yu, Papa. (*Pause*) There! (*Pause*) Ah . . .
h . . . h . . . already you are asleep. (*Sighs*) And so . . . here I

am, your son . . . the Director of National Identity. . . .'
(*Theme: 'Which Way, Big Man?' fades up*)

- Read the play aloud in class.
- The names of the characters are puns. Thus Sinob is a pun on 'snob'. Can you find the other puns?
- There is much verbal and situational irony in this play. For example, it is ironic that Gou Haiia is appointed Director of the Ministry of National Identity and celebrates by having a Western-style cocktail party. Can you spot other ironies?

Bernard M. Narokobi

ART AND NATIONALISM



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From the earliest times of exploration by the wandering men of the Western world, the peoples of the Pacific have been imbued with romance and fascination. The early explorers who sailed the world's oceans believed there was an island, rich in gold, to the east. That island was New Guinea. But, because the navigators made a number of stupid mistakes, New Guinea was not actually explored until relatively late. The early maps show Papua as a separate land mass. A study of Mr Quinlivan's independence display of the old maps gives a fascinating account of these mistakes by the world's greatest navigators of the time. Alan Moorehead's "Fatal Impact" that took the lives of many Pacific peoples did not take its toll in Papua New Guinea until some time later.

In one of the reports of these early explorers, this rich island of gold was believed to have four kingdoms. The kings lived inland and were very powerful. It is possible that the very early explorers who went to the Philippines, to the Spice Islands, and later to the Americas, might have heard the story and been afraid of the powerful kings.

Whatever it was, the present country of Papua New Guinea was left untouched. Other South Pacific islands, — Hawaii, Tonga,

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Samoa, and Fiji — were visited more frequently. Luckily, much of our art and culture remains intact, even today.

There developed a fantasy that on these sweet and enchanted islands lived simple, primitive, and uncultured natives. We fell into that same romance when we were eventually uncovered. Even today our full humanity, and our view of the universe, is understood in terms of anthropology and not in terms of beings with a valid view of the cosmos.

Today, some people continue to cherish this myth. Not only do these people hold this belief, but they go further and say that our people lived by hunting each other. They say this as if hunting humankind has never been a trait of all men everywhere. They judge our people primitive, pagan, uncivilized, and needful of all the great and sophisticated techniques and values of Western civilization.

This philosophy has resulted in mass murder of the Pacific peoples. This death is now firmly established in Papua New Guinea and is spreading like fire on Waigani grass lands. Living was an art or a skill our people learned well, long before contact. Our people knew well that living in small interdependent communities offered the best security. But this is not the art, the subject for this talk.

More and more people are now realizing that in fact the natives of these dreamed-of lands inhabit a world of complex human relationships, complex trade partnerships, and a vast wealth of knowledge and experience sufficient for their needs. Some of this wealth is manifested through the myths, symbolism and legends of our people. The supernatural symbolism, and legends of our people. The supernatural powers and the forces prevailing upon life are not only mystical and divine, but also very real and as earthly as the human beings, the animals, the fish, and the plants.

The finest art of our people symbolizes the best man can do to merge his humanity with the divine. It expresses the mystical reality of our people, who live and die and still live on the one plane. Some art is believed to be divine in origin, while other arts could not be traced to a source. The study of the art of Papua New Guinea is central to the discovery and the proper understanding of the richness of our souls. In the past, our art was seen in the context of simple carvings or intricate weavings of the primitive peoples. Hence we find static museums in the Western world, storing the primitive art objects.

Today, no true student of our art would deny that a glimpse into the enchantment of our lives can be got by an awareness of the life

and the power of even a single work of art. A finely carved piece of wood becomes a being, the guardian spirit of an entire clan. A mask becomes the power behind all the great deeds of a tribe. A figure with varying colours from the mother earth becomes the centre place for meditation and serenity.

Papua New Guinea is a land of rich originality in art. It is also a complex mixture of rich variety in art. No one who has lived in a village for even a week will come out unconvinced that Papua New Guineans live in a world of two or three dimensions at once. Through their fine art they can, and do, communicate with the divine. Through their art they realize their humanity.

Recently, during the independence celebrations week, the Creative Arts Centre put on a display of what they called the "seized collections". While I was there, watching every piece of fine work of art of our people, I became deeply moved. There in that display room the atmosphere vibrated and became alive with the life of these living figures. They seemed to be saying to me, "We are your souls. Take care of us."

Those figures, whether they were hanging down on nylon strings or standing up on cement blocks, vividly conveyed messages to me. They were saying, "We are on trial. We are so very heavily dependent on the Western man now for our survival. Take us to your hearts and protect us." And yet I felt they had enough power within themselves to protect themselves, and that, whatever happens, they will survive the trial of time.

There is nothing more devastating in a nation's life than having its finest works of art on trial. There is nothing more harmful to a nation and its people than having its men and women of creative talent condemned by ignorance and omission, or not recognized for the spirit they inject into their nation.

We, Papua New Guineans of today, inherit one of the richest artistic heritages of all people. Our people had, through difficult terrain, developed distinct stylistic expressions, peculiar to their communities. They went further than that. Each family, and in some cases each person, was the heir or the proprietor of a particular style or motif. It is important to know that, while technical knowledge of the art of creating a human figure, a snake, a bird, or a fly was individualized, our art forms were still open to exchange, either internally or between different communities. Contrary to what many people believe, our art forms were distinct and personal, but at the same time they were quite open to movement among different groups. Even before the Western influence our artists were

already at work uniting our people, not as a mass of human numbers, but in recognition of what each artist and his people enhancing the power and the quality of their own lives. It was an individualized unity that recognized the distinct quality of the artist in his community.

It would be a mistake to believe that art in Papua New Guinea was entirely the expression of the supernatural entities of life. Art was functional too, in that various objects were often carved for no other reason than to do a job or for decoration. In other words, there was popular as well as sacred art. Sacred art is often translated into popular art, but not all of it can be. Likewise, certain popular art is never an art for the sacred objects, although some can be.

To my knowledge, no careful studies have yet been made of the scope of our art. The records we have come from foreign explorers, foreign missionaries, and foreign anthropologists. One thing that stands out in all of these records is the generalizations they give. Virtually no one has tried to study or even record art in the context of individual artists, their sensitivities, their visions of life, and their hopes and fears.

With the establishment of our political independence, our first task is to restore our self-respect, pride, and dignity. There is no better way to do this than to recognize our living and our dead artists whose works symbolize our true selves. That, then, is our first task: to recognize our artists in their own right as men and women of creativity. These people should be resurrected and studied in schools and universities. To this extent, but not beyond, we should popularize our artists and their works.

Our second task is to establish shrines and monuments dedicated to these men and women of art. Our nation is a nation of divided unity. In other words, there is a remarkable sense of the oneness of man and the universe, revealed by individualistic carvings and paintings. We have to make a history out of that reality. There is no greater way of doing this than to recognize that the Trobriand artist, the New Ireland artist, the Orolo painter, the Sepik mask maker, to mention but a few, are equally relevant and valid to their communities and to all of us, both today and tomorrow.

Today we have little to be proud of and much to be ashamed of when we realize that we know more about foreign artists than we know about our own. True, the appreciation of art is universal quality and we should be free to appreciate other art. But our art must be, at the very least, as meaningful to us as the foreign art. It should mean more to us. And we should do everything possible to

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protect what we have and promote it without debasing its quality. The point is that our art is often presented to us as the grotesque markings of a primitive people, which the passing of time will exterminate.

At this historical vantage point, I can see all our forms of art converted into cheap, popular, and bare artistic styles. There is a danger that in our desperate search for political and constitutional unity we might create cheap theories, base paperbacks, and dramatic expressions as true representations of our rich, varied, and unique art forms. Nothing could hasten our spiritual death more than to embark upon a popular cowboy-and-Indian or the more recent kung fu culture.

The movies, liquor, and the shotgun have been introduced into our country. In other communities these items have killed off millions. These instruments have resulted in the gradual death of our lives. The Western cloth, the camera, the pen, and the art of writing are now part of our lives. Either we use them to give recognition to our art or we use them to debase and eventually destroy our art.

Our people are slowly becoming awake to the death of their true culture with the introduction of liquor and other items. Will it be too late to salvage our sinking souls?

Art can be a basis for pride in our rich heritage. But it should not be a cheap and popular art that tries to say that all artists are the same anyway. True art should be enjoyed by all. But it is not true art that copies people's masterpieces on to cheap cloth or poor paper. Our art must recognize the uniqueness of each artist. New political or religious movements create an incentive for new art forms. But that art has to be genuine and non-commercial if it is to be worthwhile. Papua New Guinea's political unity has offered, as it will continue to offer, an inspiration for new forms of art. But again it is my hope that this kind of art will be counted for its quality and not for its ready response to political demands.

We have a lot to do. There is still time to do it, but I am afraid too many of us give lip service to this burning cry. We are yet to build our national museum, let alone provincial or communal museums. But we must not rely on the museum to be the caretaker of our art. Ours should be a living and mobile museum.

The Creative Arts Centre needs greater support. It should become the true centre for learning, where old and young artists can meet and communicate through art. It should be the living centre for all the artists of different communities of our country to meet

and teach us all about our past. We can no longer be content simply with the idea that the old man will hand down his skills to his sons and daughters. The fact is that the old men and women are dying. The young have other priorities.

Today's generations, today's government, and today's people have an obligation to support genuine efforts to preserve and promote the true art of our people.

The Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies also needs support. There is a burning need to record the dying sounds of our people. There is a great need to photograph and record our architectural styles. Stories, myths, histories, the views of the cosmos, and the entire mystery or knowledge of our lives as our people knew them should be carefully recorded.

In the long run we will be remembered as a people not for how well we mastered the Western or the foreign institutions; nor will we be remembered for how well we consume the seasonal art the Western man is producing and promoting everywhere through radio, television, books, and other printed material.

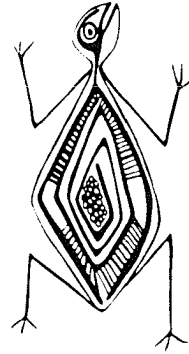
Our myths, legends, and histories are enough to provide material for millions of novels, comic strips, and cheap films that will make cowboy-and-Indian and kung fu films look unimportant.

However, in my view, the future generations of this country, and of the world, will remember our people for the genuine art they produced and for how well the succeeding generations cared for it and tried to use new forms of expression to give life and meaning to it.

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Bernard M. Narokobi

**TOWARDS A MELANESIAN
CHURCH**



community of believers until there is more honesty and democracy in the Church.

I feel a personal relationship with God and with Christ. But when it comes to feeling part of the bishops' college or part of the papal parish, I am afraid I feel very far away from them all. At times I feel the priests and the bishops are obstacles to my relationship with God and Christ. I feel they often worry more about building roads, schools, airstrips and hospitals than they worry about the humanity and the dignity of my culture.

I feel they often worry more about the number of persons who attend mass and church than they worry about the quality of Christians and Christian communities. I believe the missionaries worry more about words and sounds than they worry about whether these have any relevance or meaning to my people. With some notable exceptions, bishops appear to me to be more concerned with authority and diplomacy than with actually taking risks supporting those who struggle for peace and justice.

I am always praying to God and to Jesus that nothing will happen to change my faith in his infinite love, mercy and good judgement. However, I am coming more and more to believe that at least the Catholic Church is more legalistic than it is fair to its faithful followers. I am coming more and more to believe that the Catholic Church is more concerned with its universality in the exterior than it is with the universality of the brotherhood and sisterhood of all people.

I am prepared to say that there was a time in history when the Catholic Church was legitimately worried about its survival. I believe that era is gone forever. We must more and more trust in the infinite power of God and Jesus. We must more and more be willing to put on new shirts, different shirts, for different times and different people.

In Papua New Guinea we are burdened with the decisions that were made in Europe. I see no useful purpose in our accepting these decisions. I see the need for diversity in the forms of worship, but I see no need for too many Christian churches in Papua New Guinea.

The Catholic Church throughout the ages has promoted uniformity in forms of worship. In my view this undue emphasis on the external symbolism has resulted in outright subjugation of our traditional forms of worship. It further prevents us from exploring new methods of worship. Today, for example, many Catholics in the East Sepik area feel it's a great shame to sing hymns in the style of their traditional chants.

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Is it unreal to hold the view that in Papua New Guinea we should work towards a truly indigenous Church? Is it un-Christian to claim that Papua New Guinea does have a view about life that is special, unique, and particularly ours, which the Church should accept in its work of redemption? Is it irrelevant for Papua New Guinea to now claim that some of our cultural practices should become acceptable practices of the Church? And what of theology, that awareness of the Infinite Being? Haven't we Papua New Guineans a view of God that should be preserved and promoted together with the revealed messages of God through Jesus Christ and the prophets?

These are questions I have thought about for many years. My ideas are always growing and developing. In some areas my ideas are always changing. In this article I want to talk about the Christian Church: its past, its present and its future. What has the Church done to our people? What has it done for our people? What have we done for the Church, and what can we do for the Church?

I must make this point very clear. When I talk of the Church in the past I am referring to the priests, brothers, sisters, bishops and the pope in the Catholic Church, and the pastors or ministers in the other Christian churches. Even today, in spite of much propaganda, I still do not feel I am part of the Catholic Church, though I profess all its major doctrines. I will never feel part of the Christian

Far too much is being assumed by the Christian churches. Many of these assumptions have little, if any, relevance to the cultural background of our times. Some, for example, assume Christianity is a culture that is universal and equally applicable in China, New York, England, or Papua New Guinea. I believe this is an erroneous assumption leading to arrogance, imposition, and lack of the necessary dialogue that must exist between all persons, especially the missionaries and the "missionized".

Many missionaries assume they are wanted. Some set up parishes and administer them as if they are not living on foreign land. The courage of Christ is being used to spread the good news, but very often it is done with the least possible awareness of the changing needs of our people. It is no wonder that some priests are amazed at the lack of initiative and spontaneity of the people.

The Church, and in particular the Catholic Church, has arrived at a point where no foreign missionary should stay on in a community or parish unless the parish requests his stay. This will necessitate structural changes in some places. No longer should the bishop have all the control. The parish should have a council that takes an active interest in the pastors.

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The pastor must, to some extent, depend on the people he or she is serving. The bishop should help believers find new ministers. He should offer counsel and guidance in spiritual matters to ensure that these communities do not depart substantially from the basic doctrines of the faith. Some parishioners should be involved in the recruitment of missionaries from lands that can still supply us with missionaries. Parishes should be organized to enable parishioners to plan how funds are to be raised, to plan priorities, and to spend according to these plans. Our people will not feel the structural Church is their Church until they share in its anxieties, its difficulties, its hopes, and finally its vision for all mankind.

Unless the missionaries readjust their thinking they will find themselves continually in conflict with Papua New Guineans and their changing needs, real or apparent. The missionaries must be able to enter into dialogue with the thinkers, not merely by offering blanket answers such as, "Call in and have a chat with me", but by going out to meet the thinkers, thinking ideas through and being prepared to admit that certain practices of the churches are not essential for human growth.

Papua New Guinea is not a desert without people with cultural beliefs. Papua New Guinea has people who are deeply committed to their own cultural ethics. It follows that, as the Christian Church

presses on with its eternal mission of bringing all people to God, it must develop a body of rules enabling it to accept the traditional social behaviour of the local people.

Some examples should highlight my point. When we are baptized at infancy most of us take on a European name. I was given the name of Bernard. Among some people this has resulted in the rejection of traditional names. I see no reason why people should not use their traditional names as baptismal names. It should also be possible for confirmation or baptism to take place at the age of twelve, thirteen, or fourteen to coincide with the traditional age of initiation.

Polygamy and polyandry are acceptable social practices. The practice of having two wives is contrary to Christian ethics. But it should not, in my view, be a basis for preventing people from attending church services or receiving some sacraments such as baptism, extreme unction, and confirmation. I would even go so far as to permit Holy Communion and confession for some people.

The Church could teach one-man-one-wife as the ideal for a perfect Christian in the same way that it teaches that one should not steal. But we know many people do steal. The Church teaches that murder is wrong. But the Church condones killing in a justified war. The Church should accept its progressive role. It is dealing with weak human beings.

We Papua New Guineans traditionally believe in man's totality. Man is body and spirit. Man and woman have spirits. Trees, rocks, animals all have spirits. In some communities there are hierarchies of deities or gods. In my village each clan has a spirit deity, or *Waren*. The whole village also owns a *Waren*. There is a feminine creator called the *Chokek* and the "Above All" called the *Irunin*.

I see no conflict in my professing the divinity of Christ, his sonship to God, and his equality with the Holy Spirit and at the same time believing in my ancestral link with the spirits of the old through all times. I do not think that it is in any way less Christian if I offer a sacrifice of, for example, a hen to my ancestral deity, the *Kravan*, in the hope that he might take it and give it to the Lord Jesus, than if I ask St Bernard or the Blessed Virgin to intercede for me.

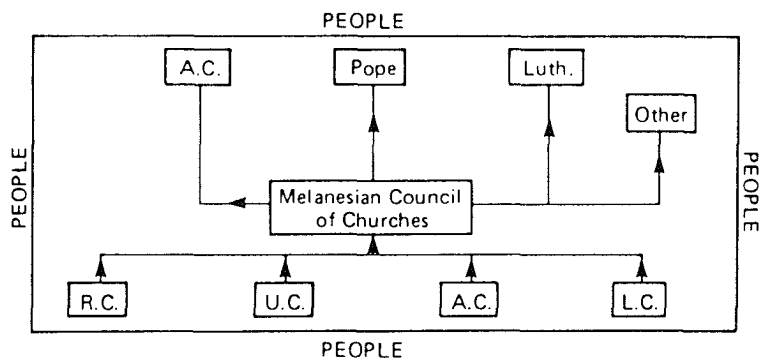
Sanctity cannot be exclusive to one race of people alone or to one age or era alone. Among God's saints must be some of our ancestors. It follows that if we do not even concede their presence we are killing our ancestral spirits. In this way we kill our earth.

Christianity is two thousand years old. Its divine origin is acknowledged. Christ's guarantee that he will be with the Church

until the end of time is recognized. The time has arrived for the Church in Papua New Guinea and elsewhere to concentrate less on legalistic structures and more on democratic approaches. Above all, it must be fully engaged in humanizing and divinizing the earth and its people.

The church and its servants must recapture the vision of its founder. It must outgrow its European historical backgrounds. Certainly for us in Papua New Guinea the Church has no justification in hiding behind the results of the power struggles that went on in Europe and elsewhere.

The present Melanesian Council of Churches (MCC) should develop into the most important national body for Church matters. For the member churches that do not depend on any other outside body for their ultimate authority the MCC should be the final authority. Those churches that surrender decision-making to another authority outside Papua New Guinea should still refer decisions that affect our country to the MCC. The accompanying plan shows the structure.



If the Christian Church is to be a living symbol of human unity then it must begin to live that unity. At the moment it presents itself as an instrument of contradiction and conflict. Those who profess faith in Christ must organize themselves and offer hope through the way they live their lives. Today's world is suffering from the schisms, divisions and materialism that were a legacy of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. There is no reason to accept these as inevitable.

Papua New Guinea offers a hope, perhaps the last hope, that we can do something new, build something new out of the collection of

errors and achievements of all the earth since history was recorded. Unless Christianity is able to offer a new hope, man is doomed to place his hope in little men and women who promise, for political gain, to bring peace, justice, and humanity to all men and women already troubled by the released energy on earth.

The future of man should not be placed too much in the hands of a few pious bishops and popes. The future of man must be in the hands of men and women everywhere. Leaders of men and women should first and foremost be men and women of practical vision. They should lead by living with the people, working with them, and slowly leading them to total freedom.

Whilst I am hopeful, I believe God must be getting impatient with men and women on whom He is relying for his radical revolution.

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