

It is, of course, well known that all African Nationalist parties on the continent are committed to the total destruction of ungodly imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism and sadistic white-supremacist-boer savagery. In a Union of African States, therefore, there will be no "racial" groups and, I am certain, that with the freedom of movement, from Cape to Cairo, Morocco to Malagasy, that will result from the breakdown of the territorial boundaries, the concentration of so-called "minority groups" will disappear and this will facilitate their assimilation into the one and indivisible African Nation, rich in culture and talent, materially and spiritually prosperous. Then, indeed, there will be neither Jew nor Gentile, neither circumcised nor uncircumcised, but all will be Sons and Daughters of Afrika, owing their loyalty only to Afrika, each contributing according to his ability to the welfare of the new African Socialist Community in the full knowledge that his contribution is appreciated and is worth while.

MERGING OF SONGS

In conclusion I wish to state that it is my belief that Afrika's contribution to the welfare of mankind will not only be in the material sphere and in the field of human relations, important though these are: Afrika will also make the signal contribution of merging the song of the industrial machine with the song from human throats, singing this time, not to drown sorrow but to give expression to the joy of achievement and thus teach the world that production can go on at a fast rate without the tension that characterises modern industrialisation. That will be a New Afrika, in the year 1973. ●

AFRICANA

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- "The Black man will have his own territory where he can aspire to political leadership. He cannot be given any political rights in a White South Africa," said Mr. Schoeman. "We will never change course for the sake of our children."—*Cape Argus* [G.B.]
- "Fresh" eggs always on sale—notice in East London supermarket.
- Coloured folk in the main oppose the Group Areas Act because the Government, hitherto, has failed to protect them against social mixture with the Bantu, with the result that the Coloured group is being bastardised and unwittingly unites with the Bantu in anti-White activities—letter in *Cape Argus* [D.P.K.]
- Mr. Waring: Don't imagine there are no millionaires in India and Pakistan, but people are dying in the streets of starvation.

Voice: And in South Africa, too.

Mr. Waring: That's a lie. That's a lie. That's a lie. The person who said that is a liar. You're a liar. You're a liar. You're a liar.—*Sunday Times*.

A Release of Energy

Nigeria, the Arts and Mbari

LEWIS NKOSI

THE MBARI WRITERS' and Artists' Club at Ibadan, the centre of the literary life of the young Nigerian writers, is a crumbly rundown building with a cemented yard, an open air theatre, and a library of Negro books. The club is behind a busy dirty street where bare-bosomed women sit plying their wares, anything from wrist-watches to underwear.

Around the club, all day long, there is the tremendous din of trade, anguished haggling over prices; for Nigerian cities are like vast market-places where everybody is trying to sell something to everybody else. Sometimes, while sitting on the veranda of the club, you can hear the sound of drums rolling steadily through the noonday heat; or a catchy highlife tune enthusiastically celebrating the vast fortunes of tropical love.

As you walk through the gate to the Mbari Club, as likely as not you will come across a huge German in wrinkled pants and Nigerian shirt lolling in a chair, drowsy and unshaven; in fact, he is probably thinking of the next exhibition the club might put on, or some new writing that Mbari might publish. He is Ulli Beier, lecturer in the extra-mural department of Ibadan University, editor of *Black Orpheus*, a literary journal publishing much of the new writing by Africans, and author of *Art in Nigeria*.

"When I came to Nigeria eleven years ago," Ulli Beier wrote, "Nigeria had no contemporary literature. Today there is enough new writing in Nigeria and other West African countries to make the creation of a new school curriculum, 'West African Literature', a serious proposition."

Nigeria has released a tremendous energy in the arts. At Mbari the painters and sculptors share breathing space with poets and playwrights—mostly young and under thirty; many of them are graduates holding English degrees from Ibadan University College. They know one another personally, read each others' works, and they deliver themselves freely of literary judgments on one another with an absolute lack of sentimentality.

Mbari is now almost synonymous with the names of three leading young Nigerian poets: Christopher Okigbo, who intensely admires and has been influenced by Ezra Pound; John Pepper Clark, who writes verse plays which have the sombre weight of Grecian tragedy; and Wole Soyinka, whose play, *A Dance in the Forest*,

LEWIS NKOSI left South Africa on an exit permit in 1960 and, after studying at Harvard, moved to London, where he is working as a journalist. The article on this page was written for, and has appeared in, *The Guardian*, London, for whose co-operation we are grateful.

won him a literary prize. Although they write about their country, and they have, from time to time, borrowed from their country's myths, these young writers' works are merely an extension of the European literary tradition. But they are informed by a freshness and strength that is often lacking in much of the writing of decadent Europe. John Pepper Clark, for instance, describes the god of creation in "The Imprisonment of Obatala" in sharp, vigorous images:

*And He, roped in the tightening pit of alarms
Dangles in his front, full length.
Invincible limbs cramp'd by love of their strength . . .*

WOLE SOYINKA HAS A REAL satiric streak in him; his strength comes mainly from his ability to stand outside himself; the self-contemplating irony also means self-discovery. In his poem about the African immigrant in London there is a beautiful mocking tone:

*My dignity is sewn
Into the lining of a three-piece suit.
Stiff, and with the whiteness which out-Europes
Europe.*

Okigbo, whose second volume of poems is to be published shortly, is small, sardonic, and detests much of the posturing to be found in the literature which consciously extols the virtues of being black. His favourite pastime is tracking down "negritude" poetry, which he finds intolerable, and reading it aloud, which makes it sound even more wooden, accompanying such a performance with cackles of laughter and much stamping of feet. Perhaps the poem he dislikes most is by the Senegalese poet Léopold Sédar Senghor, dedicated "To the American Negro Troops" of the Second World War whom Senghor describes as "warriors whose mouths are singing flowers".

Of the Nigerian novelists, Chinua Achebe is by far the best. He is a soft-spoken young man in his early thirties. In his first novel, *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe wrote in simple but masterly prose, recording faithfully and affectionately the life of an Ibo village he saw falling apart under the impact of a grinding technological civilisation, charged with a high-powered Christian religion. He has enormous integrity, and commands the respect of the younger, more experimentally daring writers. Achebe acknowledges the debt he owes to Conrad.

BEST KNOWN ABROAD and very controversially discussed at home is Amos Tutuola, who has delighted English readers with his re-creation of Yoruba myths in *The Palm Wine Drinkard*, *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*, and others. He works as a clerk in the Nigerian Broadcasting Company and has had little education. Often the younger writers appear to be amazed at his phenomenal success abroad, and while admitting his inventive powers as a story-teller they tend to attribute his success largely to exotic interest by English readers in the way "a primitive story-teller" has bent the English language to his resources. Tutuola churns out his stories in two weeks; there is a rumour that he refuses payment in cash and will accept only clothing material. When I made an appointment by telephone to see him for an interview he sounded quite doubtful; on my insistence

he finally agreed to see me the following evening, but in predictably African style, failed to appear. When we finally met a day later he dismissed the incident with a disarming candour: "Well, sir, you see the train disappointed me."

A pioneer novelist in English is Cyprian Ekwensi, whose descriptive passages vividly capture the teeming atmosphere of Lagos life. His second novel, *Jagua Nana*, relates the story of the dwindling fortunes of a pretty but ageing prostitute, and will be filmed shortly by an Italian company. Often Ekwensi shows signs of bowing to sensationalism, crowding his novels with loud violence and sex. He is uneasy with the young writers and tends to be imperious; on the other hand they regard some of his work with indulgent humour, often dismissing him as "a good journalist".

What is perhaps most striking about the literary atmosphere in Nigeria is the sense of freedom, of crowded intellectual disorder, the sweltering heat of talk, of discovery, of experiment, and of the candour of criticism—all of which must produce good literature. John Pepper Clark sits at "Kakadu Nightclub" in Lagos casually watching prostitutes plying their trade. He is soon joined by Yemi Lijadu. Wole Soyinka drops in later in the evening. Christopher Okigbo arrives after driving 80 miles from Ibadan; and there is soon a hubbub of talk against the din of blaring highlife music. These writers are young, ubiquitous, impatient, excitable; and they are all helping to tell the story of a nation. ●

In a World that Harries

Then and Now

CARL MAFOKO

BETTY BRACED UP on the bus seat as she pushed her hands deep in the armpits for warmth. Her mind was trifling with the idea of a friend that Lady Selborne had lost to Phelindaba.

Behind, the dreary stretch of the arm of the Magalie mountains loomed above the smoky village of Lady Selborne . . . a dying village with memories lingering about the yawning remains of houses.

Betty spoke. Her friend Jane was in a happy mood. "So at last they are gone, Jane!"

"Yes, Betty," Jane joined, taking up the end of the interesting news she had broken to her friend. "What else could result from her fancy? There you can see again the real Mary at work. What a clever girl she is! Her husband would not hear of it. The boring type I tell you. Are they not settled now, far from the quarrels."

"I pity her temper. Mary is too rash; what do you think, my dear?"

"And Dan was too good for them. Looks like he was in the aprons and his wife in the pants. Too good for that quarrelsome neighbour. Now it's all over."