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AYI KWEI
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C O N
CONTACT
A STORY

BEDE ONUOHA

What is African Socialism?

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LEWIS NKOSI

Doing Paris with Breyten

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Africa expects ...

THE IMPOSITION OF OIL SANCTIONS against Southern Rhodesia on 17 December 1965 continues the sad succession of actions so long urged but now futile. All those who have spent years trying to persuade Western countries to act against white supremacy in Africa will recognise the familiar pattern. In 1964 the International Conference on Economic Sanctions against South Africa called for "a policy of *total* economic sanctions against South Africa" (their italics). In 1965 Britain and the United States of America agree to apply oil sanctions, together with a hotch-potch of partial trade sanctions against Southern Rhodesia. South Africa remains unthreatened, and will presumably help to keep Southern Rhodesia going. The Portuguese are keeping the pipeline to Umtali open at Beira. When sanctions were urged before, they were feasible: now they are not.

Men who have all their lives worked for nonviolent change have in the past few years had to accept the indispensability of the use of force to end white supremacy in southern Africa. Their call for force against Southern Rhodesia has been flatly rejected by Britain — one of whose spokesmen has even protested that Britain will not be "pushed around" by African states trying to make Britain do her duty. The real military weakness of Southern Rhodesia and the newness of her rebellion would have made — would perhaps still make — armed intervention by Britain short, sharp and successful in its outcome. By the time she does decide to act militarily — if the initiative is still with Britain — South Africa will be ready with a military airfield in the Caprivi strip and her substantial war machine geared for long expected action across the Limpopo. British armed intervention will then repeat the futility of her sanctions policy. And the white supremacist camp south of the Limpopo will have dug itself in for a campaign which may then indeed fulfil the direst prophecies of those who have opposed the use of coercion — violent or non-violent — against the South African Government. For that campaign will be of a kind that may maim human relationships across the colour line throughout the world, as well as risking global war and certainly destroying South Africa's people and her riches.

To avert this ultimate disaster in South Africa, the African states must act together, must indicate their determination to "push Britain around" with a vigour that will overcome the presently superior racial and economic pull of the white supremacists. Their resolutions has — with gaps — already been effective in small ways. The gaps must close if the OAU is to effect conclusive action to stop the growth of white supremacy in Africa, let alone to eradicate it. Conclusive action towards putting down the Southern Rhodesian rebellion is of three main kinds — armed action by Britain; armed action by the African states with or without allies from outside; insurrection by the African people of Southern Rhodesia, armed from outside. Unquestionably the first should be tried first, but should it fail, one or both of the other forms of action will follow, almost certainly in 1966.

WHAT IS AFRICAN SOCIALISM?

BEDE ONUOHA

By arrangement with Andre Deutsch Ltd., publishers of The Elements of African Socialism, by Father Bede Onuoha, selected extracts from this important contribution to thought on the subject of African Socialism are reprinted here.

Inevitably only a sketchy outline of Fr. Onuoha's argument and statement of principles can be presented. The comparison of African Socialism with Marxist-Leninist Communism and with European Socialism has been entirely omitted, as has the chapter on "African Socialism and Religion". The references to vital matters such as education, leadership, trade unionism and many more have been sparing in the extreme. The importance of presenting Fr. Onuoha's case appeared to outweigh the risks of its being misunderstood as a result of this unavoidable condensation.

The sub-human condition in which most Africans live, today, haunts their educated compatriots and makes them blush. In the face of the challenge posed by the situation, ideologies and abstractions leave them cold. Solidarity with the dispossessed members of their race compels African leaders to adopt a highly pragmatic approach to structures and dogmas which the well-to-do people of Europe hold dear.

The starting point, therefore, is the reality of underdevelopment in Africa, the reality of poverty, hunger, disease and ignorance, of mendicity, raggedness and unhygienic surroundings. The squalor and promiscuity in which people live in African villages, the ugliness of under-fed children, the sheltered life of women who cannot leave their homes for lack of decent clothing, the destitution in which the aged die, the sufferings of the sick, the unbearable drudgery of farm work with primitive tools under the tropical sun and, above all, the humiliation attached in world consciousness to the colour of his skin, involving his culture and dignity as man — these are the premises from which African thinking and politics set off.

Political independence secured, all African leaders are deeply committed to a revolutionary recasting of traditional structures and a total revision of institutions inherited from the colonial past. An intense process of decolonisation, affecting not only public institutions but also people's minds and social relationships, must be backed by a firm will to resist any form of neo-colonialism in the economic, cultural and political fields. The objective is both positive and negative: negatively, to get out of old-time humiliation and alienation and, positively, to build a new nation.

To bridge the gap, both ideological and structural, between

expectation and realisation, between independence and national goals, African political leaders have cast around for a suitable instrument or mechanism, and, one after the other, throughout the length and breadth of the continent, from Algeria to the Congo and from Senegal to Malagasy, as if by some common intuition, they have unequivocally declared themselves in favour of what they call "African Socialism".

It is beyond doubt that traditional African society was based on a profoundly socialist attitude of mind, and governed by indigenous socialist rules, customs and institutions. But these were not the product of Marxist thinking.

This is the justification for the attribute "African" standing before the word "Socialism". It points to the originality of African Socialism. African Socialism is an expression of the desire of all Africans to *find* themselves, *be* themselves, and *assert* themselves. It is a crystallisation of the African genius and a declaration of ideological independence in a world flooded with learned masters.

Implied in this standpoint is, first of all, a realisation that traditional African society has a message for the modern world. In spite of its many limitations, it had a beauty all its own. It was highly integrated in a peculiar way and embodied those traits by which Africans are to be distinguished as a people. Secondly, there is a regretful awareness that exposure to European education, culture and institutions had almost completely voided the African of his true self, alienated him from his own culture and broken the continuity of his development; and thirdly there is a belief that it is possible for him to recapture the traditional values and outlook of his race and to adapt these to the needs of the twentieth century, namely, the need for scientific progress and international co-operation.

It seems possible to identify eight practical principles related to the organisation of society which are inherent in the concept of African Socialism namely, of (1) Fraternity, (2) Leadership, (3) Dialogue, (4) Planned Development, (5) Harmony, (6) Autonomy, (7) Positive Neutrality, (8) Pan-Humanism.

In Africa, in ancient times as today, *the common good* should be supreme. This "good", is the socialised Africa of our dream, will be presided over by a single man who will be "leader" by reason of his ability, dedication, and popularity. This man will not work in isolation but will be in perpetual contact and interaction with the rest of the community through their elected representatives; out of this interaction will evolve a great enthusiasm for progress and a rational plan for achieving it. The role of this plan will not be to concentrate power in the hands of the leader but rather to stimulate life among the people and regulate and co-ordinate their initiatives in the traditional spirit of equity and fairness to all.

Our first three principles are derived from African tradition, from the African concept of familyhood or community. The fourth principle is derived from world Socialism, the idea that society should evolve on the basis of a plan. (The first development plan on a national and long-term scale ever drawn up was in Russia

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following the October Revolution, 1928-1932.) The fifth principle — that of harmony — is the corrective which Africans would bring to the experiences of the economically developed countries, whether Socialist or Capitalist. The last three principles regulate our foreign policy.

Our treatment of African Socialism here is in the realm of thought. The practical application of the principles will be the business of political and economic technicians on the spot in Africa. However, our study will be incomplete if we do not suggest in broad outline what type of institutions, in our opinion, will best crystallise the ideals of African Socialism.

[The succeeding extract consists of a number of condensed passages. EDITORS.]

1 AN EXECUTIVE HEAD OF STATE. Granted that he will be truly socialist, populist and African at heart, our principle of "leadership" demands that the national leader be vested with executive powers.

2 A SINGLE NATIONAL PARTY. We submit the following conclusions:

(i) Political freedom and democracy are perfectly reconcilable with the one-party system *provided* this party is not partisan but actually embraces the entire nation.

(ii) With the single mass-party system a people *who wish to govern themselves democratically* can achieve their end more fully than with a multi-party system in which each party represents only a section of the population.

3 A RESPONSIBLE TRADE UNIONISM. There is so much hardship, unemployment and under-employment in Africa today, that workers are easily content with things that fall far short of justice. An unjust wage is better than no wage. It may, therefore, be difficult to convince Labour Unions that they should be more radical than they are or think they are. Where our programme of African Socialism has not been introduced, or where there is no Socialist-orientated Economic Council regulating investment, prices, wages and rent, a strong Labour Union movement is *the next best thing*.

4 A MIXED ECONOMY. All authorities on African Socialism hold that African Socialism will not make a principle of State ownership and direction of all productive wealth. Statism is too simple a solution for a complex problem. Africans think that Socialism is quite compatible with the rich variety and healthy competition resulting from the so-called "mixed economy".

(i) *The Co-operative Sector.* Since co-operatives foster the community spirit and modernize village life, agriculture should become our co-operative sector *par excellence*. And since co-operation is the embodiment of distributive justice in business life, it should have a handsome share in the production and distribution of the national wealth, beginning with the basic needs of the family.

(ii) *The Private Enterprise Sector.* If our blue-print is the traditional African economic structure, then there is no doubt that African Socialism has for its objective *the widest possible dispersion* (as opposed to concentration) of ownership. The aim is to establish an economic order in which every active citizen, whether he is a farmer, civil servant or factory worker, will enjoy the

Rev. Father John Francis Maxwell, Diocesan Director of the Catholic Social Guild, Diocese of Southwark, England, suggests a beautiful plan for the radical restoration of justice: he proposes an employee stock-ownership programme to be made obligatory by law after a successful period of trial, as follows:

1. Small family enterprises should enjoy legal protection.

2. In all incorporated enterprises, employment and investment contracts should be so arranged by law that (a) investors receive a *limited* cumulative dividend or fixed interest on their investment; (b) workers cease to be merely wage-earners and, in due course, under conditions, become company members.

3. There should be created a National Bonus Share Pool in

which the benefits of national capital growth deriving from self-financing arrangements are pooled in the form of bonus shares available to every working person in the nation including civil servants. This demand is made on the grounds that the larger part of the growth or appreciation in fixed assets is due to the work of employees including management, and that those who have been the physical causes of this growth should, in strict justice, be its beneficiary owners. Investors have done nothing to cause this growth. They are entitled to no more than a limited, cumulative dividend on their investment. Employee stock-holding should, therefore, be mandatory on the part of business. After a period of trial during which membership should be voluntary, all corporations and companies should be required by law to be members of the national share pool.

4. Every five years, companies should be required to value their tangible fixed assets by some general standard of valuation and to issue a correct report on it.

5. Each year, companies should be required by law to value and report the increase in productivity per man-hour and the increase in average real earnings of workers.

6. Wages and salaries should rise in proportion to productivity.

7. Finally, "there must be controlling bodies, higher than the individual corporation or company, but subordinate to the government of the country, whose function is to control salaries and wages, to limit dividends according to the degree of risk, and to control expansion of tangible fixed assets. . . . There is need for some professional quasi-judicial and directing council or court which could, if necessary, exercise equitable and authoritative judgment and control over certain activities of even the largest and most powerful corporations."

This programme might well form the cornerstone of African Socialism. It satisfies all our desires: it provides us with a brand new approach to socialism, away from class conflict and totalitarianism; it is a replica of the old African system: the Maxwellian programme is a perfect application to modern industrial business of the traditional African economic order — "private enterprise under effective control"; it destroys capitalism, the arch-enemy of all socialism, but saves private enterprise, the guardian of human dignity in economic life; in a short time it will eliminate the rootless, propertyless, second-class citizen from our society and abolish the exploitation of man by man.

There is no suggestion that the reform of the corporation is a panacea or the end of all our problems. It should be regarded merely as the most strategic platform from which African Socialism can best resolve the numerous challenges facing it.

(iii) *The Public Enterprise Sector.* State enterprise there will necessarily be, but only for *empirical* reasons, such as to remove from individuals enterprises that, of their very nature, carry dominating power in society; to control enterprises that would otherwise be controlled by expatriates: or to supply public services which private enterprise avoids because they are not lucrative.

5 AFRICAN SCHOOLS. Immediately after political independence, every country in Africa feels the need to revise the system of education inherited from the colonial past in order to inculcate a

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social conscience in the younger generation, to de-colonize and Africanize all branches of study, to meet the technical and spiritual demands of all-round development, and to unite the citizens and hasten the movement towards the formation of *one* nation out of so many tribes, sects and factions.

It is futile to talk about African Socialism if we do not have African Socialists. Socialism is not like a political party to which one can belong just by casting a vote. To use the words of Dr. Nyerere: "Socialism — like Democracy — is an attitude of mind. In a socialist society it is the socialist attitude of mind, and not the rigid adherence to a standard political pattern, which is needed to ensure that the people care for each other's welfare." (*Ujamaa*.) This "socialist attitude of mind" does not come spontaneously in most people: it must be taught and learned. It must be given not only to school children but also to teachers, legislators, judges and lawyers, industrialists, and to the entire intellectual élite of the country.

In general terms, African Socialism is the firm and deliberate will, on the part of African nations which have effectively rid themselves of all forms of colonial conditioning, to create a new society of free but socially responsible citizens where traditional African values of human solidarity, national unity, social equality and economic democracy will be immortalized.

In terms of economic organization, African Socialism may be defined as a radical form of economic democracy dedicated to the elimination through legislation of the European system of capitalistic profiteering, but not of private enterprise; and to the revival, under modern conditions, of the traditional African socio-economic system in which literally every worker was also a proprietor, and ownership of productive property was not a monopoly of the central political authority nor of a few individuals, but was the pride of every citizen.

Expressed in psychological terms, African Socialism becomes a socio-cultural philosophy, a civilization and way of life, based on traditional African humanism and seeking to eliminate exploitation and social stratification by providing every individual citizen with equal and easy access to ownership, economic activity, cultural enrichment and spiritual maturity within a framework of political democracy.

In order to attain these lofty goals, African Socialism will utilize the following instruments *as of necessity*: a single mass-party system with a presidential form of democratic government; a scientific system of 'dialogue' between the summit and the base and all the different complementary parts of the society; a centrifugal pattern of mixed economy; a reformed and democratic system of company and labour-contract law; a system of national share pool available to all; a system of education that is free, African and socialist; and, to crown it all, a superstructure of Pan-Africanism.

Looking back at UDI

ZIMBABWIAN

LOOKING BACK on the crisis events that followed each other so hectically from 25 October to U.D.I. on 11 November, we begin to wonder whether Messrs. Wilson and Smith realise now how absurd their "solemn treaty" and Royal Commission ideas were. How could Africans have ever trusted a treaty made by Smith when all African nationalist leaders are in detention for at least the next five years, when gaols are overflowing with people who have been charged under the Law and Order Maintenance Act, when all African political parties and activities are banned, when the Land Apportionment Act, the cornerstone of apartheid, is being applied ever more stiffly, when Africans are being evicted from all "European land" and from offices in the centres of towns, when the wage system continues to be based on skin colour, when African educational facilities are being cut, when technical education is being closed to Africans, when the position of the chiefs is being prostituted and when increasingly the African is being forced into a harsher bondage than ever before?

Though indeed some of Mr. Wilson's efforts may look absurd now, there is no doubt that he was himself deeply disappointed by the uncompromising attitude

of the banned Zimbabwe African National Union leader, Rev. Ndabaningi Sithole, and of Mr. Joshua Nkomo, leader of the People's Caretaker Council (successor to the Zimbabwe African People's Union). As unhelpful as their demand for majority rule now, he found that they seemed to hate the idea of unity among themselves more than they apparently disliked white domination.

Mr. Wilson came here without a friend in Rhodesia. He had hoped to get the concurrence of the Nationalist leaders in his battle against Mr. Smith. Instead he found that the nationalists expected Britain to use force against her kith and kin for the cause of alien Africans who were themselves even failing to present a united front in opposition to white domination. Our leaders have shown themselves to be toothless lions. They are an embarrassment to everyone whose condition for assisting them is that they accept a common front against the white regime. Even the O.A.U. has failed to obtain this unity.

The main stumbling block has been the demand of the P.C.C. that ZANU should disband and join them and that the ZANU leaders should become ordinary members of their party. Few people can accept being slighted.

The truth here is that we have up to now failed to put our country before party differences. We bear a large share in the blame for the chaos in our country and among our own ranks. If we cannot stop our bickering then domination under Smith should be here for a long time to come.

ONE CAN UNDERSTAND the refusal of the nationalist leaders to compromise on majority rule now. While the leaders languish in restriction, it is inhuman to expect them to

compromise with their tormentors. Yet Britain's suggestions about promoting African education might have offered a way round U.D.I. and on to majority rule, had accepting such offers not carried with them the risk of our selling our country by allowing Rhodesia a legal minority independence.

We are actively interested in finding wider avenues of education for our people. In so far as the white settlers argue that we cannot run Rhodesia properly, and in so far as they hold the reins of education, this argument can never cease because we know that the Europeans will limit our education and expand the security forces to maintain Smith's police-dog state.

We have a vested interest in governing our country to all our people's satisfaction. We might have accepted a time period within which mass education at technical, secondary, and primary levels could be vastly increased. A period of three to five years would not have been too long, provided that we could have been certain that after that period majority rule would be assured. We utterly reject any suggestion that we should accept promises of better things after the advent of a minority rule that might be permanent.

Condoning the refusal to co-operate is the argument that U.D.I. would be advantageous to us. This gamble will only pay off if Smith's regime collapses after only a short while. Our freedom is not "round the corner". Our country is too rich and beautiful for the Katanga Lobby international capitalists in London and elsewhere to leave us in peace. Had we a humid climate, were our lands desert, we should now be free. We shall, of course, be free. Any day may be Zimbabwe Day: let it come during Mr. Smith's term of office.

For Serowe a village in Africa

BESSIE HEAD

SUMMERTIME IN SEROWE is an intensely beautiful experience. It rains unpredictably, fiercely, violently in November, December, January. Before the first rains fall it gets so hot that you cannot breathe. Then one day the sky just empties itself in a terrible downpour. The earth and sky heaves alive and there is magic everywhere. The sky takes on a majestic individuality and becomes a huge backdrop for the play of the rain. Not ordinary rain but very peculiar rain.

All through December and January the rain sways this way and that on the horizon. The wind rushes through it and you get swept about by a cold fresh rain-wind. Sometimes all the horizon rain sweeps across the village in glistening streams. Then the grass roofs of the mud huts shine like polished gold. The barren earth, grazed to a shred by the goats, becomes clothed by a thin fine carpet of green. Under the trees there is a sudden, lush wild growth of long green grass. Everything is alive in this short dazzling summer. Forgotten are the long months of bleaching scorching sun and intense blue skies. The sky is now shaded with large brooding clouds.

It takes such a long while for the insects to come out of hibernation. But in December the earth teems with them. There are swarms of flies, swarms of mosquitoes and swarms of moths—sometimes as big as little birds. Crickets and frogs are all over in the pools and around the village; there is a heavy rich smell of breathing earth everywhere.

Somehow, by chance, I fled to this little village and stopped awhile. I have lived all my life in shattered little bits. Somehow, here, the shattered little bits began to come together. There is a sense of wovenness; of wholeness in life here. There were things I loved that began to grow on me like patches of cloth . . .

THERE ISN'T ANYTHING in this village that an historian might care to write about. Dr. Livingstone passed this way, they might say. Historians do not write about people and how strange and beautiful they are—just living. There is so much necessity living they do and in this village there is so much mud living. Women's hands build

and smooth mud huts and porches. Then the fierce November, December thunderstorms sweep away all the beautiful patterns. After some time these same patient hands, hard and rough, will build up these mud necessities again.

There are just people of Africa here and endless circles of mud huts. They do not seem to be in a particular confusion about anything. The politicians are very agitated because the whole of Southern Africa is a melting pot, they say. But the women just go on having babies and the families sit round the fire at night chatting in quiet tones. Everybody survives on little and there may be the tomorrow of nothing. It has been like this for ages and ages—this flat, depressed continuity of life; this strength of holding on and living with the barest necessities.

THEY SAY THIS and that about aid. They seem to know nothing of the desperate longing to bring out our own creativeness. In Southern Africa this desperation is fierce because we feel that opportunities to venture out on discoveries of our own are going to be forcibly denied us for a long time. We are all really startled alive by the liberation of Africa, but we have been living in exclusive compartments for so long that we are all afraid of each other. Southern Africa isn't like the rest of Africa and is never going to be. Here we are going to have to make an extreme effort to find a deep faith to help us to live together. In spite of what the politicians say people are not going to be destroyed. Not now. There is all this fierce hatred and it is real. There are the huge armies prepared for war against unarmed people and we are all overwhelmed with fear and agony, not knowing where it will end.

Some of us cannot battle with this conflict any more. I cannot. But wherever I go I shall leave a chunk of myself here because I think of myself as a woman of Southern Africa—not as a black woman but as an ordinary and wryly humble woman. There was this immense conflict, pressure, uncertainty and insecurity that I have lived with for so long. I have solved nothing. I am like everyone else—perplexed, bewildered and desperate. ●

Books & the Arts

Combinations & permutations

Collingwood August

African/English Literature by Anne Tibble (Peter Ower, London, 32s. 6d.)

LONG BEFORE BLACK AFRICA was "discovered" Europeans were already deceiving each other about that part of Africa. And they still are—one of the latest deceivers (though she does this through ignorance) is Anne Tibble. Her contribution is sub-titled a "survey and anthology."

Now, what I know about African literature, apart from that of Southern Africa, is dangerously little; but I have one consolation—though a negative one: What Anne Tibble knows about the literature of Southern Africa is even more dangerous than what I know about African literature as a whole. Let me then meet her on Southern African ground and deal only with the section dealing with South African literature in the first part of her survey. (I can only hope she has been less inaccurate in dealing with the rest).

In his book, *Chaka the Zulu*, Thomas Mofolo, Anne Tibble tells us, ". . . seeks to show how the boy Chaka came to be the blood-thirsty homicidal maniac that he undoubtedly became." And this after telling us that "Thomas Mofolo's sources were memories, legends, hearsay. Yet he believed himself . . . to be making a serious contribution to History."

How can Anne Tibble psycho-analyse any real person (as distinct from a character invented by writers of fiction) on the basis of a novel? She *must* know that novelists and film-producers are for ever taking liberties with History.

She then goes on to tell us that "According to Mofolo the child Chaka was what Europeans call 'illegitimate' and by implication Anne Tibble seems to believe that European customs regarding sexual behaviour are higher than those of Africans for she then eschews "illegitimate" by coining a new word "non-legitimate." Here she is treading on very delicate ground indeed. I hope she has read the anthology section of her book for there she includes a contribution by Prince Modupe, part of which reads: "The first

Off-beat assignments

Marion Friedmann

thing we were made to understand is that the finest service a tribesman can perform is to continue himself in his children. After we were taught our *duty* of perpetuation, and that it is a sacred duty, we were taught the rules governing it.

"We were taught that the manner of growth in a girl is that she is sealed and that no man may break this seal until the girl is given him for a wife with the consent of her family and his. If one of us were to break this seal for our pleasure, we would disgrace ourselves, our family, our entire age-group, the tribe. Even if this monstrous act went undiscovered until the girl's marriage, it would become known then, the marriage cancelled, the girl brought to public trial, her duty then being to name the man who had despoiled her. . . . She was banished from the tribe. Death would have been a kinder sentence. There was simply no place for an ostracised person to go."

Now, Shaka (this is the correct spelling of his name) was born into a society holding the same, if not stricter norms, regarding sexual behaviour. Mofolo (unfortunately he is dead) and Anne Tibble will have to produce better evidence to show that Shaka was "non-legitimate"—how this euphemism fascinates me!

Peter Abrahams, an admirable writer, is included in the anthology. But, somehow, Anne Tibble has chosen from the mass of his writing an example that reveals this author's ignorance. Here is part of it:

"'Show the mother,' Joseph—the Zulu—said . . . 'Show the mother you are not circumcised yet.'

"I showed her.

"'This is strange,' she said. 'Have you no initiation schools?'

"'No!' Joseph said.

"'Then when do you enter manhood?'

"'He does not know.'

"My sixth birthday came."

Zulus do not circumcise ritually—not since Shaka stopped it. Moreover, among those South Africans who undergo ritual circumcision no boy would be circumcised at the age of six years—that comes very much later—and when circumcised he would not go about showing himself indiscriminately to women (and even to uncircumcised boys). Granted, this is Abrahams's fault but Anne Tibble should not perpetuate wrong information. I am sorry to spoil such a beautiful story, but writers must not take licence with the facts of life.

Anne Tibble's biggest blunder (helped by Mphahlele—whom she seems to regard as the greatest authority on African writing) concerns A. C. Jordan's *Ingqumbo Yeminyanya*—"The Wrath of the Ancestors." On her own, she believes that an English translation of this book exists and she sounds surprised that the British

Museum does not know anything about such a translation. Let me set her mind at rest—a translation has not yet been published. If she knew how to do her homework, a simple post card to Jordan would have solved this difficulty for her.

This is how Mphahlele has misled Anne Tibble: "He—comments that now there is no hereditary chiefdom left in South Africa and, therefore, Jordan's plot may have little present relevance." I must differ—and in the strongest terms. What are people like Cyprian Dinizulu, Victor Poto, Sabata Dalindyebo and several others, if not hereditary chiefs—indeed kings, apart from what the government is trying to do with them? Such ignorance, held with such strong conviction, makes me doubt that I have spent the first 31 years of my life in South Africa as a black African.

That the plot "may have little present relevance" is an irresponsible literary view. Jordan's book (which I have read several times) is not about the institution of chieftainship as such. Jordan, in my view, seeks to show that society—any society—is fragile and may be broken by the imposition of different norms when it comes into contact with another culture. He has only used the educated chief (and his wife) to symbolise "modern" society while his people the Mpondomises represent "traditional" society. Jordan's book *has* present relevance for Mphahlele, for me, and for anybody else Mphahlele cares to name in any society.

But, more important, I hope that Mphahlele is not suggesting that the past is not relevant to the present.

Anne Tibble makes many other mistakes but they are not as serious as those already mentioned. Noni Jabavu, as an example of the minor mistakes, is not "the only woman writing among the Xhosa people of the East Cape Province of South Africa" and her two books *Drawn in Colour* and *The Ochre People*, are not novels—as the bibliography would have us believe.

The "collection," which consists of extracts from novels, biographical writings, plays, poems (covering mainly the period from 1956 to 1964), forms the second part of this book and need not have been published, for a large part of it comes from already existing collections. I sometimes imagine that publishers play a game among themselves shuffling African writing just to see how many combinations and permutations they can deal.

A last word to publishers of African anthologies: If you must publish this kind of thing, please get Africans to do the necessary editing—they are less likely to go wrong than your Anne Tibbles. Of the writers included in this particular collection, several could have done better—A. C. Jordan, for example. ●

Ladies in the Veld by Brian Roberts (John Murray, 25s.)

TAKE THE AUTHOR of *50,000 Miles Round the World* and the author of *Around Patagonia*; contrive for them to visit South Africa on off-beat journalistic assignments between the Zulu War of 1879 and the First Anglo-Boer War of 1881; make both of them women; throw in a sentimental journey by an ex-Empress, a Zulu King eating his heart out in exile, and British Colonialism, thundering and blundering: take these goodies and you have the book of a fast-moving musical. You have also a factual and fascinating chapter of South African history.

Theresa Longworth, who preferred to be known as Lady Avonmore, fought a series of legal actions to establish the validity of her marriage to William Yelverton, who later succeeded to the title of Viscount Avonmore. The litigation created tremendous public interest and lasted for almost eight years. The lady lost but hastened to write up in one form and another the mass of material provided by her matrimonial affairs. The proceeds of her first two books barely paid her legal costs but she was launched on a series of lecture tours, a second semi-autobiographical novel, and a journalistic career.

News that the ex-Empress Eugenie was about to visit her son's grave in Zululand reached Theresa in India; she hoped for a good story and set off forthwith for Africa. By subterfuge and hint, using the grand manner and her "title" she succeeded, although penniless, in catching up with Eugenie, but to no avail: she was kept at a distance from the Empress by an efficient and hostile entourage. Now she was jobless and friendless in a far country—but not gutless. "The unlooked-for difficulty is the very thing to develop every resource in my

"Tell us in time!"

Mlahleni Njisane

character," she had, with justice, declared. For a short while—her health failed her—she wrote a controversial no-holds-barred column for the Pietermaritzburg *Witness*, and died obscurely in Natal.

Lady Florence Dixie, sister of the 9th Marquis of Queensberry and aunt of Lord Alfred Douglas, was strongwilled and rebellious as a girl, and did not outgrow her nonconformity. When her child was two months old, she set off with her husband and brother for Patagonia, returning after trial by starvation, earthquake and fire, with a pet jaguar called "Affums" in attendance. Her *Across Patagonia* became a best-seller.

In 1880, the Boers raised the flag of rebellion at Heidelberg. The *Morning Post* decided to liven up a trite enough situation — the tweaking of the Lion's tail — by sending out a female correspondent to cover the First Anglo-Boer War, and assigned Lady Florence to the story. At this stage of her life she was a vociferous Jingo who had learnt imperialism at Disraeli's knee. She was thus mortified on her arrival in South Africa to find that the British had not only suffered a defeat but were hastening to make peace with the rebels. On horseback or by wagon, sleeping often in the veld, and accompanied by her amiable husband, she made her way to Pretoria where she listened shamelessly to the proceedings of the Royal Commission through open windows. Her despatches were stridently jingoistic and indignant, but she was bored.

A contemporary note is struck by aspects of the situation: a spokesman for Africans pleaded against the restoration of the Transvaal to the Boers. For the past four years, he said, the Africans had looked to Britain for protection. "If this protection was to be withdrawn, it would lead to bloodshed and anarchy. He ended with an earnest prayer to England not to forsake them after they had been both loyal and devoted."

Her meeting with Cetshwayo was one of the events which changed Lady Florence from a Tory to a radical Liberal. She believed that the British "settlement" of the Zulu problem after the Zulu war was shameful, not least in their exiling of the King. Back in London, she campaigned vigorously and persistently, a campaign which paralleled that conducted by Bishop Colenso (with whom she was in touch) in Natal. Her campaign succeeded in part but she felt that although Cetshwayo was restored, the new settlement was still unjust.

Later crusades included Home Rule for Ireland and Women's Rights.

In his writing, Brian Roberts maintains an unassuming and pleasant tone. This glimpse, from an unusual angle, of events in South Africa is well worth reading. ●

Mississippi: the Closed Society by James W. Silver (Victor Gollancz, London 30s.)

Transformation of the Negro American by Leonard Broom and Norval Green (Harper & Row, London, 43s.)

RACISTS HAVE LOST all the wars but won every peace. In 1877 the Great Compromise handed the Negroes back to the racists to make amends for the barely ten-year-old Reconstruction Period. The 1910 Act of Union in South Africa surrendered to the Boers the right to do as they pleased with the Africans. And now Rhodesian whites are making feverish attempts to achieve a similar Compromise and to set up another Voortrekker Monument in Salisbury in defence of white racist expansionism ("white civilisation").

It is as though this century has not experienced genocidal mass destruction attempts such as those of Auschwitz-Birkenau. South Africa, Rhodesia and the Deep South are threatening to outclass Hitler, protected as they are under the canopy of the Closed Society's independence, "state rights" and elitist franchise rights.

This tragico-futile drama—which has so often ended in the rebuff of the Afro-Asian U.N. delegations in their efforts to indict racism and white supremacists in Southern Africa—is now tending to make heroes of the heirs to Hitler's legacy. The Boer racial juggernaut in South Africa, the white settlers in Rhodesia, most of whom have continued the northward trek from South Africa, the Nazi mercenaries of the Congo—all these have very much inspired the White Citizens Council and the Ku Klux Klan of America's Deep South.

American Board Missionaries sent to South Africa are alleged to have asked: "Which savages must we convert: the white or the black?" Dr. Silver, a historian, repeats the question, of Mississippi: "Which race," he asks "has been living nearer the law of the jungle?" (p. 85). Dr. Silver lives and works in the Closed Society, in which "the nigger must be made a nigger first," an "amiable and happy beast perfectly adapted to his wretched position." (p. 84). This is called protecting "white civilisation", this is white chivalry protecting its womanhood while ravaging black women.

The book brings out the significance of Toynbee's twofold penalisation of Negro slaves, "racial discrimination and legal servitude" (*A Study of History*, 1934, p. 218). Mississippi and Southern Africa have retained both in spite of the fact that the American Constitution has established a democratic framework within which even the Closed Society is expected to function. In both societies, the Deep South and South Africa, the presumptive status of every black is

slavery, pure or modified into apartheid, according to the demands of modern racism.

VERY LITTLE IS KNOWN of the specific human value-conflict which makes the Mississippi University President, in upholding and conniving at the evils and corruption of the Closed Society, the barbaric practices of the KKK and White Citizens Council, to declare that he can do better for the society than "in a silly martyrdom for one Negro". (p. 94). What makes a man of such standing to see *only one Negro* in the Clyde Kennards, the Medgar Evers, the 1964 Civil Rights workers murdered in Mississippi, the Jonathan Daniels murdered in Selma, the Harlem, Chicago, Philadelphia, Los Angeles and Langa-Sharpeville riots and massacres? Some of the victims were white and he should have remembered them.

The picture is not, however, "now fairly familiar to most of us." Facts about the Closed Societies, the Laager Mentality, and other Nazi race murders are always known fully only *after* the curtain has been bombed down. Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time* has not made its point, and he need not ever silence his pen until racism has been tackled from where the last World War left off. Little is known about the fate of "the dissenter who would disparage the local customs" and rock the white supremacy boat. One mechanism used for self-insulation in such societies is groping through a "twilight of non-discussion", the closed mind, especially in the universities.

The characteristics of the Closed Society make interesting reading. Part Two of the book consists of letters in which the author maintains his objectivity as he does earlier in his recounting the 1928 classic lynching (pp. 85-6). He hardly twitches even when referring to the White Citizens Council "strong reinforcement" which they eagerly grasped in the person of Rabbi Benjamin Schultz (p. 131). I commend Dr. Silver for his meticulous objectivity. Who can blame him for his compulsion to tell the world that "a kindly old gentleman" remembers with pride how he solved the labour problem "when the coloured crew walked off *just because one of the Negro workers had been hanged for talking back to the boss.*" (p. 85). Dr. Silver has told you—and in time! And if he is maliciously pilloried as a result will you shrug your shoulders and say he asked for it?

TO THE GREAT CREDIT of its sociologist authors, *Transformation of the Negro American* conveys an intelligible message even to those uninitiated readers whom sociological jargon otherwise tends to push out into effective "social distance". It gives a perspective and imagination which reminds the reader of Banton's analysis of ethnic relations in Britain.

Written in the midst of the current turbulent actual transformation and its "long hot summers", it is a bold sociological prognosis presenting a balanced objective analysis whose calm reflection tends to irk the passionately committed and involved.

The main purpose of the book is to trace the evolution and crystallisation of Negro techniques and strategy through four significant phases which so readily suggest interesting parallels to students of race-torn areas like Southern Africa. "The Reconstruction lasted scarcely more than a decade". The Southern white supremacist clique soon had their way against the weak-kneed "liberals" who, for some reason, seem always ready to sacrifice the blacks in order to placate their white "brothers", the Smiths, etc.

After the Reconstruction white supremacy was firmly restored as a value to bolster up white elitist rule in the Deep South (as in South Africa after Union), and "accommodation" became accepted by Negroes as a survival value. The values and hopes born of the Reconstruction and emancipation were quickly set aside through totalitarian ruthless measures, until Negro accommodative adjustments approached something akin to "infantile regression". The Negroes were disenfranchised and made to accept inferior and menial jobs as an act of grace (p. 7). The leadership, best exemplified by Booker T. Washington, enjoined the Negroes to "cast down their buckets where they are" as hewers of wood and drawers of water.

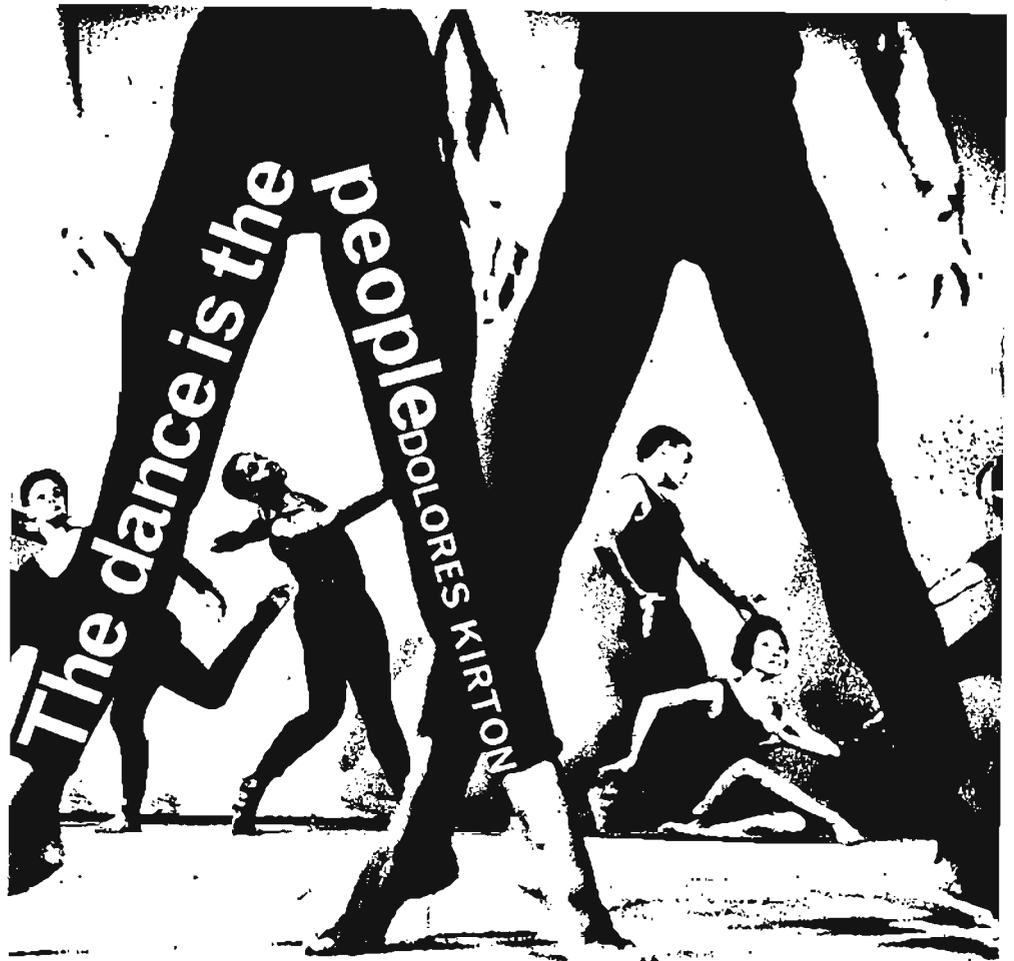
The authors also review some important cultural (non-racial) differences in addition to social class and regional differences (Chapter 2) between Negroes and whites, suggesting that there is a "Negro Way of Life". My feeling is that not enough emphasis is laid on the *historical racial factor* which to me completely discredits the well-deserved reputation theory. It might have been helpful to the readers if they resolved the problem a little more probingly as to which are the causative factors and which the consequences.

GRADUALISM as another phase is characterised by emphasis on winning the support and approval of whites of goodwill (respectable support), on self-improvement and self-blame (p. 53), and it failed because it meant isolation from the mainstream of American life, and because it also presented a one-sided picture of the problem of discrimination.

Chapter 4 deals with the present political mood of "freedom now" marked by a growing participation of young activists and a broader mass involvement. The emphasis focuses on "action now" and a break with the "faiths that failed". This was done through boycotts, freedom rides, sit-ins, mass protest marches, etc. Both individuals and Negro organisations seemed "tracked down by the Zeitgeist—the spirit of the time" (p. 66), and it demanded direct action.

The final chapter pinpoints the main factors behind the transformation—education, occupation, economic advancement, the redistribution of population, urbanisation, and the most striking being "the sharp rise in Negro aspirations" and a shift from gradualism to "freedom and equality now". The authors might have given a higher weighting to the role of the emergence of African independent states. Against this they emphasise the unwillingness of American Negroes to lose their higher standards of living, education, etc. by going to Africa. I suggest that the Garvey Movement, the Black Muslims, and the independence of African states have had a more profound effect on Negro masses in creating a new self-image, raising their own self-esteem, and the new aspirations, outlook and mood of "freedom in our own time" than the authors assign to them.

They also visualise a future riddled with a complex of conflicting interests and values which will remain perhaps unreconciled, and of course the stubborn persistence of *de facto* segregation in spite of the gains in various other fields. One final observation I wish to make is that the white backlash has had its black backlash which must be feeling quite encouraged by its recent gains. One wonders if Dr. Nkrumah's famous biblical adaptation does not apply more directly in the American context than it does, perhaps, in the African: "Seek ye first the political kingdom (the vote) and the rest will be added unto you!"



The Commonwealth Arts Festival, by presenting exotic acrobatics, missed the point.

MY DISAPPOINTMENT with the dance section of the Commonwealth Arts Festival set in with the performance of the Sierra Leone National Dance Troupe in the Great Dance Gala. Their presentation simply did not live up to the reputation they have, being for the most part circus-like, spotlighting the acrobatic performers. There were exceptions in their performance—the Spirit dances, the Susu dancers—portraying legends of Sierra Leone in a short two minutes, the Baboon Dancers, and Mende Cane Dancer who showed ingenuity and ability.

One would expect a great deal more "dance" from a company of sixty, musicians included. The company has performed here previously and the speciality acts were probably there to fill a popular demand. It was unfortunate, that the four women who accompanied the group by playing calabashes and singing were not featured: they seemed quite capable of giving a good performance on their own.

If this programme was representative of the traditional dance of Sierra Leone, then one can say, again excluding such unique dances as the Mende Cane Dance, that the natural dance of the country is very limited.

DOLORES KIRTON, who teaches the dance in a San Francisco college, visited London during the Commonwealth Arts Festival.

The Tanzanian Stilt Dancers offered little relief from the Great Dance Gala's rather boring programme though dancing on stilts four feet tall and faltering not once. After the initial curiosity there was little to hold interest. The United Kingdom erased all emotion with their staid, undemanding, ever-so-slightly rhythmical traditional dances, as did Trinidad with a very over-done Limbo Dance and Dominica with an under-done couple dance. The best performances of the best dances were by Ceylon with the majestic Dance of the Elephant; Kenya with a traditional dance in preparation for warriorhood and the Embu Drummers who clearly show the inter-relationship of African Music and Dance. Bwola, one of the oldest dances of Uganda and considered a royal dance done only on special occasions presents the case in favour of committing the sacrilegious crime of taking traditional African Dance out of context. Undoubtedly there are those dances which cannot readily be transferred from their situation of origin to the stage, yet all of the African dances performed in the Great Dance Gala—far from being choreographed for the festival—were taken out of context with changes occurring in reference to time, space, entrances and exits.

PERFORMERS WERE BETTER away from the misconceived Great Dance Gala.

The Dance

The programme given by the National Dance Theatre of Jamaica and stolen by the invited Frats Quintet with a group of Jamaican Folk Songs was a good attempt for the first national dance company of this country. The major choreographic and performance talent seemed to centre in the person of Rex Nettleford whose well-conceived works communicated themselves. Mr. Nettleford has the greatest range of movement in the company and gives the impression of moving effortlessly. The three works worth mentioning are Dialogue for Three—a struggle between one man and two women, with the women having the final say; and two comic works Games of Arms and Kas Kas.

This Dance Theatre has a great deal of growing to do in terms of developing its dancers. Most of the dancers would be considered, at most, average in technical ability. The strength of the company came across best when they were doing dance that was founded on ethnic material as opposed to the more abstract modern dance. There was the feeling that most of the company had not been trained in modern dance and that they were simply going through assigned movement.

PRECEDING THE NIGERIAN FOLK OPERA, *Oba-Koso*, there were two dance presentations. The first from North-East Nigeria, the Dumas, danced by four couples, was too lengthy as it tended to be extremely repetitive. The most interesting aspect of the dance was the flautists, who with their involvement, moving from one area of the stage to another, and their fine musicianship added substance to the performance. The second dance, Ikepegebegbe, from Mid-Western Nigeria, traditionally a dance from the "New Yam Festival," was the climax of the evening. These young girls, seven to twelve years old, did more than execute difficult acrobatic stunts rhythmically—they danced as well. The combination was a beautiful one. Each girl initiated her solo by running in a circular direction and ending downstage centre to perform her acrobatic-dance combination, after which she danced back to her position upstage centre. Their chief accompanist, a calabash player, was very helpful as he seemed to indicate the timing for entrances and give encouragement to the girls.

Following the dancers was the Nigerian Folk Opera, *Oba-Koso*, "The King Does not Hang." The story, briefly, is concerned with a King who promises five years of peace to his townspeople, against the wishes of two very strong and battle-hungry warriors. One of the warriors, with the help of a witch, puts the other to sleep and cuts off his head at an arranged duel. The King, enraged, orders the winning warrior to be burned alive, but he comes out of the fire unharmed and joined by the townspeople riots against the King. Followed by his wife, who later also deserts him, the King leaves town and hangs himself in the forest. A representative group of the townspeople appear, repenting their action against the King, and beg him to return from death. The voice of the King is heard on high telling the townspeople that he must remain with his ancestors, but if they are loyal to him he will always be with them and kill their enemies with thunder from above. The townspeople joyously shout "*Oba-Koso*" (the King does not hang) and so ends the opera.

The King, Alafin Sango, played by the author, Duro Ladipo, was certainly a royal-enough figure. He did not communicate more than royalty in his acting, however: at the tragic moment when he is forced to leave his kingdom, the king strides off the stage as royally as always. A great deal was lost because of the language barrier, yet it should not be necessary to understand the language of any type of opera. Communication is the job of the actor—a job which was not well done by most of the cast. Lamidi Gbadamosi, who played Gbonka, one of the warriors, was the most competent actor in the production. The greatest weakness of this folk opera was that entrances were always the same: townspeople entered upstage; pulled the sleeves of their robes over their shoulders; fell to the floor in honour of the king; sat up and began their dialogue. In their turn the warriors entered (one or both doesn't matter), did a strong, rapid dance pattern, sat down and addressed the king. There was such a definite movement ritual that characters had on entering and leaving the stage that upon the entrance of a particular character one would sigh—here we go again!

The production was interesting on the whole with some good moments but suffered

in poor staging, unnecessary lapses of time between scenes, and acting that was only adequate.

ERROL HILL, THE AUTHOR-DIRECTOR of *Man Better Man* (Trinidad) has proven himself outstanding in both writing and directing. The Trinidad production was one of excellence in all areas of musical theatre. The story line incorporates a great amount of the ethnic folklore and gives insight into personality types, values and everyday concerns of the people.

This three-act musical play used the calypsonian singer, the traditional dance and song, the important member of the community, the obeah man (witchdoctor) in a delightful way. The production, filled with comedy to the point that one might not have been able to see the tragedy, is a fine musical theatre piece. Erroll Jones having beautiful hands, a great voice and fine acting ability, was superb in the character of Diable Papa as was Andrew Dupigny exceptionally good as the old villager Peloo.

The cast, as a whole, was a fine one. The music, staging, sets and other technical theatre aspects could stand up to any musical its size. Seeing the production for the second time one only enjoys it more. Mr. Hill, cast (including musicians) and crew, and all responsible for the production of *Man Better Man* are to be highly congratulated.

THE DANCE AS AN ELEMENT of theatre, was neglected in *Oba-Koso*, though Nigeria is one of the richest countries in terms of traditional dance. It was used excellently in the musical from Trinidad—*Man Better Man*. The traditional dance of the Commonwealth countries as seen in the Festival programme almost failed, in its manner of presentation, to do the job of communicating its people, values, beliefs and history, to the outsider so he might leave the performance more enlightened than he was on entering. It is more reasonable to assume that it was not the failure of dance as much as the short-sightedness of the programme director. It seems all too easy for the outsider to see only the "exotic," "strange," "sensual" or "bared breasts" with no understanding or feeling about the complete dance—the people.



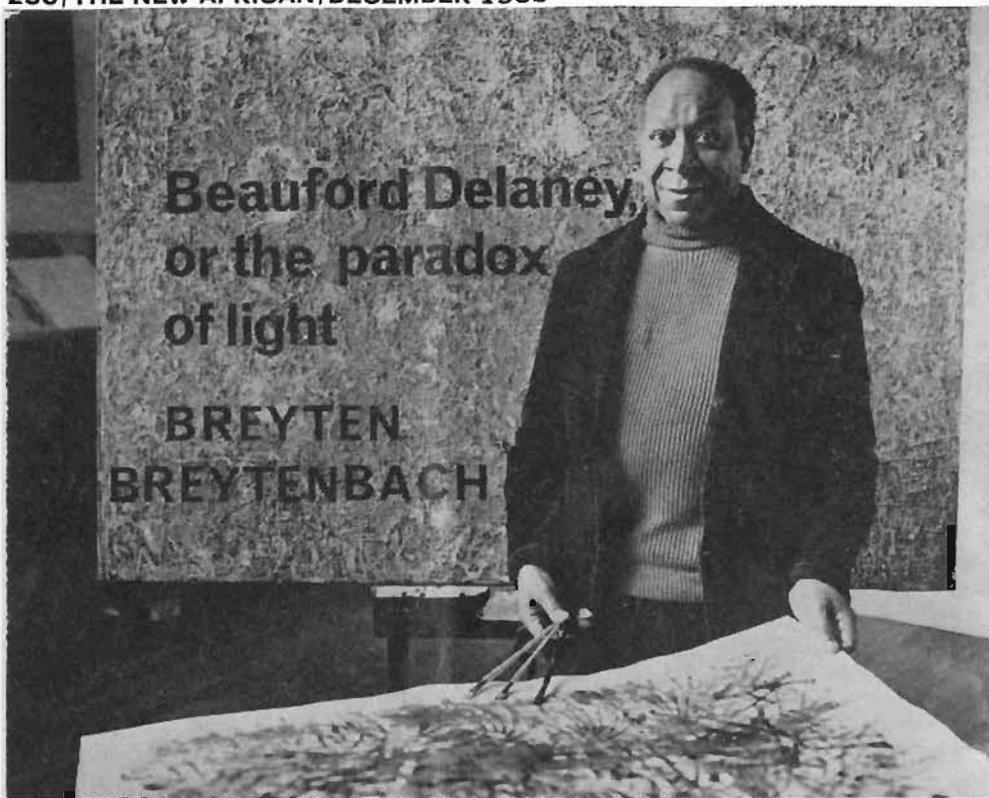
Top A scene from *Oba-Koso*, the Yoruba folk opera.

Centre Susu dancers from Sierra Leone with the Fulah orchestra.

Bottom Uganda dancers who danced Bwola, one of the oldest dances of Uganda and considered a royal dance done only on special occasions.

Page 233 National Dance Theatre of Jamaica — a rehearsal.





HERE IN MONTPARNASSE—the mountain of the gods—rot concentrates; a blubbery boil glowing with corruption, pretentiousness and weakmindedness. If you linger long enough at some sidewalk-café among the other flies looking intellectual over their coffee, you may see a wizened old man under a beret padding along the boulevard. Ash down the front of his jacket. Seemingly unaware of the buzzing of ambitious artists. More likely than not, he will turn out to be Beauford Delaney. No use to point out the real or imagined filth of the world to him; he will shrug his shoulders, roll his eyes and impress you with the necessity for a historical view. He probably won't remember where he's heading for unless it is to go and appreciate the work of some young painter, or to hunt for a new translation of Rimbaud's poems, or just to wander by the river, skywatching.

Beauford Delaney is a painter like the rest of us here—except for the police, the birds and the civil servants. The man lives a paradox. He arrived here many years ago on his way to Rome, intending to stay over for the weekend; he still hasn't reached Rome. He seems to have adapted himself easily to this difficult city, but probably risks his life every time he crosses a street. As an artist he has been admired and written about for years by people like Henry Miller and James Baldwin; yet he remained relatively unknown, living very modestly indeed. He was born and brought up in

America while dreaming of an idealised Africa which he has never had the occasion to visit.

And so too for his work. To arrive at his door one goes through several courtyards, up many stairs (Turkey? New Orleans?) filled with the noises people make, coming through thin walls. On entering his studio one is struck by the light coming from the paintings crowding his walls. One by one the paintings begin to impose themselves, like suns. Many of them at first seem to be just areas of yellow or red. Imperial colours. ("But we don't want to be imperial you know . . ." he says.) One wants to look at them for a long time. They are not abstract—because in the final instance this is yellow or red paint on canvas which one may touch or smell—but nonfigurative in the sense that there is no recognisable human, animal or vegetable shape in them, at least not on the surface. He paints very thickly and oil-paint, as you know, forms an opaque crust when it dries. Yet, in some subtle way, the light seems to come from *behind* this paint. This is not, as with the impressionists, a break-up of the colour-prism to suggest form; rather, it seems to be a transparent skin stretched over a source of light. But this is light with bones in it.

Or again, he may paint the realistic portrayal of a woman reclining in an arm-chair. Very few painters are so coherent and free in both nonfigurative and figurative work—for him the two aspects are interchangeable. Here the paint will be the luminous flesh of the crossed legs, the sheen of gooseflesh between hem and garter, and the outstretched arms. (And he claims to

have exorcised all passion!) One arm will rest comfortably in mid-air, or rather on the air. Because the painting itself demands that there be no arm-rest to the chair. So much for bottled realism! This doesn't shock, but it does erode one's smugness—why no rest? what does it mean?

Or he may paint a man with a silvery face, foreshortened in such a way that he leans forward and out of the painting. These undemonstrative (and subtle) innovations are more than just technical or stylistic tricks. They create the emotional climate of the work; they are expressive of definite ways of *seeing* things and people; they are statements of ideas which can only be what they are in that particular way; they are from and in the limitations and liberties of painting as such. Herein lies the value of Beauford Delaney as a painter: he's not content with the fabrication of square-shaped decorations to beautify some living-room wall. He must constantly reveal a very personal vision—of experience, of dreams, of realities—which finds a resonance in us.

THUS, THE PAINTING will mould its own reality, physical and emotional. And in a direct way. What he paints is not symbolical of something else, it is that thing. In another big canvas representing a group of jazz-musicians he has, as always, taken many liberties with the shape and dimensions of the bodies and instruments, as also with perspective and space. This creates a definite mood—a real happening, of hot jazz being blown, and how, and why. The paint itself can here only suggest sound, or at least the vibrations thereof. Another painting shows us the head of a young man surrounded by red petals. It seems to be a dreamer, but is the background supposed to be flowers? or light? or membranes? or mice?

These are of course my impressions. You may see or feel it differently. But I doubt it. These canvases are not generalised perceptions or "psychological studies." They are (paradoxically) newly-created, breathing things, or feelings, or even thoughts. As unique as a drop of water.

The painter of our times is very often a parasite on society, or a dubious hawk of his value as the "mirror of new conceptions . . . of torn mankind." (I don't intend this as social comment and I don't necessarily believe one shouldn't scrounge off society. We're all suckers!) But Beauford Delaney makes *his* painting irreplaceable. We'd be much the poorer without them. Filth may be the norm then (and I must justify my lack of indignation), but Beauford Delaney seems to have attained a state—a *human* state (including all the strains: the enlightenment, the passion, the slyness, the "cool," good and maybe bad)—where he can create beauty painted through a quiet eye with compassion and a gentle peace, as man may sometimes aspire to be. No false idealism, no withdrawal from life. Just an affirmation, the manifestation of what he is.

BREYTEN BREYTENBACH is a South African artist and writer who lives in Paris.

Lewis Nkosi DOING PARIS WITH BREYTEN



drawings by O. Calcutt

Her white dress in the sun was an unbearable shimmer sloping to her body's motion and she passed from sunlight to shadow, mounting the steps. . . . Then her white dress faded beyond a fanlight of muted colour dim with age and lovely with lack of washing, leaving George to stare at the empty maw of the house in hope and despair and baffled youthful lust.

William Faulkner/*Soldier's Pay*

I watched a good-looking girl walk past the table and watched her go up the street and lost sight of her, and watched another, and then saw the first one coming back again. She went by once more and I caught her eye, and she came over and sat at the table.

Ernest Hemingway/*The Sun Also Rises*

1

PARIS IN SUMMER! In the white light of August we grew dim with heat. We sat at Cafe Le Select on Boulevard Montparnasse watching the girls arrive and depart. For days we watched them. At the end of the first week it seemed to me that we had done nothing but watch girls arrive and depart from the cafes. They bore themselves gravely against the wild light of August, against the very motionless stillness of summer, their elegantly French bodies hallowed in a nimbus embrace of startlingly white brightness, sometimes arriving delicately at the crowded cafe, pausing briefly near the entrance to survey the perpetually

shifting scene, then in a carefree moment of sudden, inscrutable decision, stepping firmly toward an empty seat; and the silhouetted men who had hoped against hope that this "careless, unemphatic" body would deposit itself in the empty, the empty adjacent seat would watch it go by, growing lax with despair.

Though they pretended otherwise in their cultivated French *ennui* the girls' departures seemed to me even more spectacular! They would get up from the tables with an air of utmost gravity, pushing back their chairs with little scraping sounds; then carefully weighing their bodies against the concentrated vision of lascivious males, they would pick their way adroitly among tables and chairs, all the time cajoling the eye with an amazing hip-rolling motion that instantly informed the cafe with an atmosphere of an absurdly desolate regret for something we all felt to have been within reach but which we had failed to notice or possess.

It seems to me that French girls do not walk at all! Their movement is a perpetual dance, a subtle abandonment of the body to the gay crowded activity of the street. In no other city have I seen girls walk like that. As days went by it seemed somehow that every walk away from a cafe was a wealthy event to be solemnly witnessed and marvelled at. The swaying hips, the quivering quick narrow breasts inadequately sheltered behind low-necked sweaters, the sly subtle mutilation of air by bare arms and bronzed legs which shocked by their eager surrender to the bawdy, fatal, joy of

sensual movement—Sex: however, unconscious and reluctant these momentous motions and casual pausings, they brought the slumbering sexual images naturally to mind. Something dark and ancient was being celebrated every time a French girl walked away from a cafe. In my mind these girls awakened memories of Zulu women balancing incredible cargo on their sturdy, beautiful necks and the effortless manner in which they negotiated their way up the incline of a hill. To walk like that a girl has to lose all fear of the body and be on terms of absolute trust with it.

PARIS IS OF COURSE a city hopelessly obscured by history, and yet forever accessible even to those who have never seen it, through this history. It is obscured because so much has been written about Paris that it is no longer possible for anyone to arrive in the city for the first time without looking at it through glasses coloured by a wealth of fiction and literary romance. For Africans who neither had the literary technique nor much use for documented history, it is awesomely astounding to see how much of eighteenth and nineteenth century Paris still abides to intrude into the 20th century. It is an intimation of a Past forever engraved in stone, secreted in darkened ageless buildings and weather-bitten statuary.

My first encounter with Paris was in my early boyhood in Durban, South Africa, even before I had raised any hopes of ever walking her streets in some distant future.

Having discovered at an early age that I wanted to write I began a systematic raid of the libraries during which I was continuously but graciously rebuffed by embarrassed English lady librarians, until, one day, in angry desperation, I cornered a mobile library for non-whites in (of all places) Red Square, that scene of many stormy political meetings, during which my rights to read were hotly demanded and unjustly disputed. In those first books I borrowed I was introduced for the first time to the literary embodiment of European history by the works of Dumas, Flaubert, Balzac and Hugo, and I began my first journey to France and to Paris. I grasped at the Collins classics primarily because for any slum boy the neat leather-bound books looked invaluablely posh and expensive; the vocabulary gave me as much pleasure as it gave me trouble; but such is the power of adventure and romance on a boy's imagination that I struggled through the novels with an array of dictionaries until I had garnered a formidable word-list that astonished my essay master. It is to the credit of Dumas' compulsive readability that I pursued his three musketeers through their daily assignments until, many books later, they were no longer sufficiently young or agile to carry them out; whereupon I turned my attention to the rising fortunes of their offsprings till the day I ran out of Dumas' novels. Hugo's *Les Misérables* reduced me to tears and for years I was haunted by the spectre of poor starving wretches in dark narrow streets. It was a picture of Paris that was only counter-balanced by that other Paris of Louis XIV and his powdered, coiffured, glittering courtiers.

My Paris is therefore stubbornly eighteenth and nineteenth century—a city of horses and cobbled streets, a city of revelry, intrigue, romance, violent revolution and desperate sexual liaisons; a city of duels and dark assignations. For me Dumas and Hugo have ruined forever the actual city; I can't possess the Paris of 1965 without possessing the literary ruins of another Paris irrecoverably lost in the shadow of dream and romance. Asleep in the Paris hotel room of 1965 I can still hear the horses of Porthos and D'Artagnan cantering in the midnight streets outside and the dark narrow lanes of Victor Hugo's Paris are still there, fearful with the squandered secrets of yesterday. In fact, so possessed is my imagination that when I see a French lady pouring out tea I stare instinctively and apprehensively at the large stone on her finger, for the 19th century novelist taught me to expect a thimbleful of poison to be stored up inside that gleaming stone, the contents of which might be emptied into somebody's cup at the flicker of the modest eyelashes.

It is perhaps understandable that when I encountered my real Paris for the first time in 1963 I felt that I had been inexcusably let down. It seemed to me that the beautiful city of my dreams had fallen before advancing hordes of American tourists whose pockets bulged with dollars. Each time, or



nearly each time, I put my hand under the cafe tables in St. Germain-des-Prés it came into contact with lumps of chewing gum left there by American coeds from Louisville, Kentucky, or wherever they are supposed to come from! French people, on the other hand, were skinning everyone within range of the cash register. One night in Montmartre we had to protest loudly that we were no American tourists, though we spoke English, before a third had to be taken off the price of the drinks! That—the meanness and the bad weather—finally proved too much for me and I was glad to leave for the quiet of Normandy. It was only during the subsequent visits that I saw the Paris which I had not permitted myself to see during that first encounter. I suppose for everyone there is still enough of the old Paris to cherish the city—there is the air of informality and freedom, the much storied Parisian indifference to what people do with their lives, the inimitable style of the French woman and the much enduring beauty of the city's architecture.

2

I learned to know Paris and French affairs much better than before—I got a certain familiarity with Paris.

The Notebooks of Henry James
THE FIRST TIME I saw Paris was in the summer of 1963 when I was on my way back to Africa. An American television company had signed me on as an interviewer for a series of programmes on African writers. In the hope of tracking down M. Leopold Senghor, the poet-president of the Senegalese Republic, M. Leon Damas, the Martinique poet and French critics specialising in the field of African literature, we flew into Paris on a Thursday in the evening of August 1, 1963. It was a trying time for me; after the hustle and bustle of London interviews my nerves were shot; I was feeling—well, yes—feeling

very black, very irritable, demanding of Paris that it should be everything it was rumoured to be—and more! I find that the entry I made in my ill-kept diary on that occasion tells a grim story of nerves, dark depression and disappointment:

“The drive to the air terminus (Invalides) was disappointing. Paris is so bleak and drab, it reminds me of Ronnie Segal's description of it: ‘an old whore in a dirty shabby corset.’ It started to rain while we were on our way to the terminus. Then we had to wait for a taxi while it poured down on us. Saw my first French policeman wearing a black cape over his dark uniform. Certainly not as tall and forbidding as policemen look elsewhere. Looks rather like an actor impersonating the police. . . .”

On that first, dark, rainy day into the city the outer edges of Paris had seemed to me no more than a “vast post-war slum” and it took me somewhat longer to discover that soft, rose-hued Paris of imperishable beauty and ineluctable romance. It was during the four days I spent in the city in the April of 1964 which confirmed the grievous error I had made on that first dark encounter with Paris. Then this year, through the kindness of a friend, my wife and I were left in possession of a three-roomed apartment on Rue Brézin, very near Montparnasse, from which we made daily sorties into the Quarter. The apartment we occupied was up on the fifth floor, with balconies overlooking a small park and square. Climbing up the narrow winding staircase every day was an arduous task, but one which we soon grew to appreciate after the French police who had been called out one night to suppress a party that had become too boisterous left without firing a shot. It seemed to them a long way to travel to the fifth floor on that winding old-fashioned stairway; so they contented themselves with shouting warnings, and threats from the street below.

It was a beautiful apartment and we slept with the windows open. Lying in bed at night it was possible to gaze across the empty square at the buildings opposite, which were then shrouded in darkness save for the lighted windows that looked like rectangular shapes of muted, coloured, lights against the darkened night sky. Watching Paris from the balcony at night always made me feel as though we were suspended in a void of darkness over the city. In the morning, before we were fully awake, French voices were already assailing the peace in the shopping street below; and in the park, across the street, white and Negro children frolicked in outbursts of energy and noise which were not dissimilar to random explosions of cannon fire. Indeed, the children captured the quarter early in the morning and did not break their siege until late forenoon when they were completely dazed by the sun. The adults, on the other hand, sat contentedly on benches placed inside the park, their faces uplifted to the sun in a dutiful pose of worshipful adoration. By nine o'clock in



the rear balcony the sun was already hot enough to sunbathe; occasionally, I came out in pyjamas to see a young woman, nude as a spear, standing at the balcony window of the apartment across the courtyard, her glossy, shadowless, white skin yellowed to dul gold by the rising sun; her form, so casual, so seemingly free, was always too stark not to be startling; and yet there was nothing erotic about it; I am perhaps making too much of a small incident; but it seemed to me that despite the rapid embourgeoisement of much that is radical and independent in Parisian life, that nude woman symbolised what is still the essence of Paris—a certain worldliness and freedom which attract new waves of exiles to this city every year, young people in flight from the inhibiting provincialism of their own native cities.

3

"What do you do nights, Jake?" asked Krum. "I never see you around."

"Oh, I'm over in the Quarter."

"I'm coming over some night. The 'Dingo.' That's the great place, isn't it?"

"Yes. That, or this new dive, 'The Select'."

Ernest Hemingway/*The Sun Also Rises*
ALL DAY LONG at the Cafe Select, on Boulevard Montparnasse, people arrived, mostly young men and women, to sit at the tables, sunning themselves like lizards. A number of them came to stare and be stared at, and for this purpose dark glasses were worn like armour. When the sun dipped down behind the buildings on the western fringe the migration began to the Coupole across the street. The Dome, the Coupole, and the Select are just three of the Montparnasse cafes which used to be frequented by some of the leading figures of the so-called Lost Generation; and it was surprising to me to find that after two successive generations, writers and artists who now find it unthinkable to be seen at places like Deux Magots,

still haunted these cafes in Montparnasse; and the impression they conveyed was always that of beleaguered artists manning the last front against the creeping inroads of the French bourgeoisie and dollar-laden tourists.

The Coupole, which is full almost every day round about midnight, looks like a large medieval banqueting hall with murals which were painted by famous artists before they became too famous to paint for nothing. We found Giacometti, the internationally famous sculptor, there one night, brooding over a piece of white paper upon which he had been doodling. "In this quarter," a young painter told me, "it is still a shock to hear anyone introduced as a businessman." Like many historic places the Coupole is now threatened with demolition and there are rumours that an American-owned business establishment is to be set up in its place.

At the Select across the street announcements are made at intervals through the loudspeaker system, summoning famous personalities to the telephone. At one time it is a well-known French theatre critic; the next moment it is the small, doll-like, blonde actress of the *nouvelle vague* films: blue eyes, skin like honey and white-fringed conical breasts visible for all the world to see under the plunging neckline of her mustard sweater and scanty bra.

What immediately shocks someone coming from London is to find this casual acceptance of the proximity of glamour and fame and the complete lack of hostility toward the artist. For ages the artist has been part of the community and no one reacts any more. In London any confession that one writes, paints or sculpts is treated as cause either for mirth, pity or as reason for the profoundest distrust. It is also generally assumed that any famous artist who visits a popular pub—except the obscure country places—is either not serious

or is shamelessly cadging for publicity. For a sculptor of Henry Moore's stature to be seen frequenting a pub in Soho would stimulate so much doubt about his sense of propriety as to be actually damaging to his reputation. That is because the relationship between the artist and his society in England is still essentially one of suspicion and distrust. Yet in Paris, there was Giacometti, to be seen almost every night either at the Coupole or the Dome, and his presence there was treated by the cafe crowd with respectful but most casual interest.

Our own guide into the Latin Quarter of 1965 was Breyten Breytenbach, a South African painter and poet who has lived in Paris for five years and speaks fluent French. Breyten is something rare among Afrikaners: he has pushed his rebellion against the Afrikaners' narrow parochialism to a point where, without making any political gestures, he has been able to mix and be accepted by some very left-wing artists in Paris. His estrangement from his own Afrikaner people was perhaps sealed when he married a Vietnamese girl, the daughter of a former Vice-President of South Vietnam. On one score at least the decision could not have been very difficult to make, for Yolande Breytenbach is a ravishing beauty; and being Paris-born she combines naturally and gracefully the occidental and the oriental sides of her upbringing.

Each day then we carried to the café our neat stack of notebooks, papers and pens which we heroically supposed were mightier than swords and each day we suffered cruel defeat in the face of other, more numerous, diversionary interests. How any writer has been able to work in a Paris café is the kind of mystery that I cannot hope to unravel. Yet it seems that the lonely and the homeless, the dwellers in cold-water flats, the romantic searchers and the predatory, have, each in his own season, sometimes found it necessary to annex a Paris café as a place in which to work, to rendezvous, or simply to become part of the daily drift to nowhere. I know of no other city where it is so easy to drift and more difficult to work.

For an African in Europe the Paris café is what gives street life its tang, sharpness and point. At the Coupole one night, a young Dutch painter told me: "I've visited London from time to time; I'm afraid I cannot live there. For a painter there is no community, no place to meet other painters, and everything closes so early!" He shrugged his shoulders and surveyed the boulevard which at the hour of midnight was swirling with September crowds. It is true, of course, that we have the English pub in London; but the business hours are so restrictive that they only compel the sleepless, neurotic artist as well as the potential sexual offender to roam the streets aimlessly after hours. "Time, gentlemen, time," a cry in which the English take such secret pride, is a cruel, mindless surrender to self-inflicted pain and discomfort. After 11 p.m. in London you really have no place in which to meet your friends except in some

noisy discotheque, or dreary expensive nightclub or some sad, indescribably pretentious restaurant.

Perhaps the observation is no longer fresh, but after spending two months in Paris it was possible to discover anew just how effectively the café has served Parisian society as the focus of the city's social life. The rich may have Maxim's but the poor have the café in which it is possible to lunch on a sandwich and cheap red wine while calmly enduring the withering scornful gaze of the *garçon*. I am also certain that not only are the sins of murder, adultery and theft conceived mostly at the café table, but important books, plans for revolutionary warfare and the assassinations of national figures thousands of miles away from French soil continue to be plotted at the café table.

In the space of one morning at the Café Select we had spoken to an African student from Kenya, a Negro musician from Martinique, a coloured painter from the United States. Walking by to buy English newspapers from a kiosk I caught a glimpse of a member of the Pan-Africanist Congress (South Africa) concealed behind his dark glasses; then sat down with a French girl who was a member of the Liberatory Committee of Portuguese Guinea and then chatted with a London representative of the African National Congress recently flown in to collect some paintings for his London exhibition. Indeed, I would not have been surprised to find a member of Dr. Verwoerd's Government similarly anchored in a nearby seat. Paris is truly a city of exiles and the café is its window to the world. Here it is well-nigh impossible for any young woman to nourish her dreams of solitude or to indulge small private griefs and disappointments without being offered a shoulder to cry on. And any Frenchman, however puny, imagines that his shoulder is broad enough to offer to any young woman in distress.

In London I have often been appalled by the depth of loneliness to which single girls from the provinces are condemned, especially if they are shy and retiring by nature. There is no way whatever to meet boys in an atmosphere of freedom, without feeling a sense of commitment, save by attending numerous, insupportably dull, parties from which any girl is lucky to emerge with a bumbling oaf who is capable of defending the cause of human reason in tolerably good English. As a consequence, any "decent" English girl who finds herself approached by a strange man in the street feels it her moral obligation to reach under her tweed skirt for a former Girl Guide whistle. Talk about "sexual revolution"; it would be more accurate to describe it as "sexual panic"!

One can understand, of course, why it is now generally believed that because French girls are friendly they are just as ready for a rumble. In Paris, especially in a café, there is no opprobrium which attaches to a girl for speaking to a complete stranger, an attitude which appeals enormously to a

great many Africans like myself, brought up to feel that it is failing in one's social obligation to sit next to a young woman without paying her some gallant attention, however unprepossessing she looks. I was therefore happily surprised by the freedom of Paris! Here at the crowded or almost empty café, dreams are finally harvested or nullified: the golden woman in your troubled feverish dreams arrives mercifully on the appointed hour to sit in full view at the table across from yours. Naturally, it may take a certain amount of ingenuity and hard talk to convince her that you are indeed the Prince destined to sweep her off her feet; but at least the woman of your fantasies is not forever imprisoned in some obscure dream of a super Mayfair nightclub or country estate, forever fleshless and inaccessible to your sweaty, tobacco-stained fingers!

4

In the corner a huge American Negro with his arms around a lovely French tart, roared a song to her in a rich beautiful voice and suddenly . . .

F. Scott Fitzgerald/*The Crack Up*

When evening came and the dense heat of a summer day had changed into a bracing sensual coolness of a Paris evening, we rode a cab from St. Michel to Rue Brezin, collecting liquor bottles as we went along. The old woman hauled the bottles down from the shelves as we pointed them out at the shop; then as we seized them, ready to leave, she held our attention with her fretful insistent desire to talk. "You're lovers?" she said. "Young love is a beautiful thing, no?" The French girl and I laughed, but did not explain that we were not lovers because it seemed a good thing to give flesh to the old woman's nostalgia for a departed youth. After the damp fog of England's racism it was also refreshing to find an old woman who was able to take interracial love so much for granted; indeed, this was a prelude to a bright, orgiastic night of dance, talk and drinking which went on for two days. The police came, shouted their threats, then left, and the party went on, a little quieter but still wanton enough, sharpened at times by intellectual contention. After a long evening of theoretical debate with someone a French girl gave up on the English language: "I'm too tired to think in English!" Raymond Kunene, the Zulu poet, shuttled between the bookshelves and the dance floor, was seen at one time executing a spectacular war dance which brought a passionate exaltation to the face of an old Negro painter, Beauford Delaney, for twelve years self-exiled from the United States. "I came to Paris for a weekend and stayed for twelve years!" Now drawn to the madcap frolic of that Zulu dance Beauford Delaney looked both sombre and fervid, sad and ecstatic, already beginning to ask himself what Africa meant to him, which is to say, he had already started on that long journey into the dark night of the Negro psyche where every question leads to the nightmare of slave ships. But if there is anything that Paris

teaches it is that exile is the modern condition; and yet for the Negro and the African this is also the century of reunion; here in the warm intimate hour of midnight, with the city slumbering in the darkness, exile spoke to exile, the South African to the doubly exiled American Negro, and out there at the café tables one knew there were others just as exiled, just as quick, just as reckless, just as driven, each knowing the truth of his loneliness only in the private cells of his body, or in the illuminated faces of those who had similarly suffered. Dancing, jumping up and down, fierce in dispute, gaiety and sadness was finally their portion. "Aren't they jus' beautiful people!" Delaney enthused.

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Words Words Words

COLIN LEGUM'S restrained pleading in *The Observer* London, was one of five distinct voices urging their Rhodesian opinions on the British public. Harold Wilson, wrote Legum, "is directly responsible for failing to make his intentions credible to even those Africans initially well disposed to his ideas. He seems to have acted on the assumption that Africans would automatically accept his bona fides. While Mr. Wilson's shrewd tactics are easily understood in Britain, to Africans they look like equivocations or deviousness." Less admirable perhaps than *Private Eye's* splendid invective but more likely to influence events. *Private Eye* accused Wilson of playing the whole Rhodesia issue for headlines, to strengthen his personal position, for electoral advantage, to split the Tory opposition, and even to help him weaken the present form of cabinet government in England. The socialist *Tribune* and, further left, *The Week* were mild by comparison. To lull British racism and to keep the headlines, snarled *Private Eye*, Wilson had to keep flattering Smith ("one of the most mediocre little burks in the Southern Hemisphere"). Thus also "the pledge never to use force, thus the cold brush-offs to the African leaders and the contempt for the concept—obviously repulsive to Wilson—of one man, one vote. At all costs Wilson had to rule out any idea that what he was doing in Rhodesia had anything to do with multiracialism . . . UDI was an insult to the Queen and her Governor; it was illegal; and it was anti-Britain. If there were any other issues at stake, Wilson did not seem to know about them." In *The Week* a contributor opposed the call that British troops be sent to put down Smith's rebellion with "the socialist axiom; the liberation of the working class must be the work of the working class itself. . . . My betting is that the only time we will see British troops sent to Rhodesia is when British big business investments are in danger. The job in Rhodesia is to assist in every way the struggle of the African people to liberate themselves."

THE TORY PRESS—but for the *Daily Mail*—and many Tory politicians have been calling for appeasement with Munich-like fervour. Some have mouthed regrets at Smith's rebellion others have not and a few, like Lord Lambton, M.P. on B.B.C. television, have simply said Smith would win anyway so why fight?

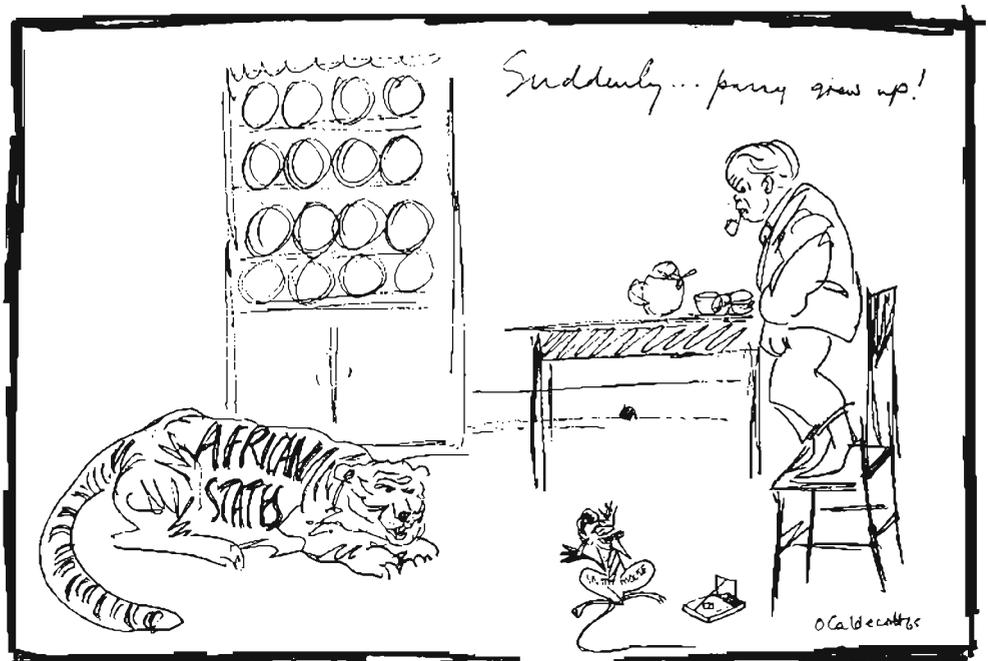
SO HERE WERE four voices: restrained pleading, splendid invective, and appeasement both equivocal and brazen. The fifth, an especially British article, came from *The Spectator* which has acted throughout as if almost nothing has happened. Its description of UDI was masterly:

"Mr. Smith's shortsightedness has resulted in the suspension of negotiations."

IT IS DIFFICULT to sort out cupidity from muddle in official British handling of the Southern Rhodesian rebellion, particularly over the radio station being set up in Bechuanaland. Perhaps someone in Bechuanaland can confirm the story that it is being built on land belonging to a white Rhodesian—of all Bechuanaland's 165,000 square miles. More difficult to check is the story that it has been bought from a firm in, of all places, Texas, which is itself busy selling Smith jamming equipment. He won't need the latter much in any case as the 10 kilowatt transmitter can only be heard in Salisbury at night. It would have had to have been at least 50 kilowatts to have been effective, and it should in any case have started operating months if not years ago to have been any answer to the Rhodesian Front's private Zeesen.

GOVAN MBEKI'S *The Peasants Revolt* (Penguin African Library) came out in July 1964, the month *The New African* began the underground trek from Cape Town to London. It is necessarily sketchy and incomplete—Mbeki wrote parts of it on lavatory paper in gaol in Port Elizabeth, parts of it came from his *Liberation* articles on the Transkei. Here and there are obvious and forgivably faulty later additions his

editors had to make: he was already starting his life sentence on Robben Island when the book was being prepared for the press. But it is a good addition to the small shelf of books on the Transkei, where the Republic's armageddon may well begin. Mbeki is a Transkeian, as well as being a South African and an ANC man. When the three banished Tembu leaders escaped to Basutoland and were suffering much privation there, Mbeki used to send a large part of his *New Age* salary to them each week, and put himself on a voluntary spare diet to make up for it. The banished men were not ANC supporters but they represented the kind of self-sacrificing rural leadership that Mbeki respected, but which the liberation movement in South Africa too long undervalued. He writes of the 1960-61 Pondoland revolt that "it brought alive to the leadership of the ANC in a manner it had never done before the vital need of linking up the struggles of the peasants with those of the workers in the urban areas." History may judge this late realisation harshly. It is a lesson not yet fully learned: vide President Kaunda's remarks to Nicholas Tomalin of the London *Sunday Times* (6 December 1965): "Dr. Kaunda would not be drawn into criticism of his Rhodesian friends. But he did say he felt the Opposition there was not as effective as it might be. The black leaders had chosen to organise mass support in the town where it could be easily suppressed, not in the country as Kaunda did



The threatened language

English loses ground
in South Africa.
Who is to save it?

JOHN POVEY

himself. And he spoke of the tendency among Africans in what seems a hopeless position to 'bourgeoisify' themselves; they imitate the boss and a good salary plus fine furniture comes to be all that matters. Effective African political action, Kaunda pointed out, has only come when the potential leaders decide to give up their all for this political struggle." Be that as it may, Mbeki gave up all and so have thousands of other Southern African heroes, both of town and country, now dead or locked away.

IN ITS DECEMBER issue, *WUS in Action*, published by the World University Service, Geneva, has revived with acknowledgements *The New African's* "Africana" column. The quoted newspaper's touch of cloacal humour is commendable in a country where the apartheid joke has worn a bit thin:

Forty-nine Cape Town multi-racial toilets, run by the City Council for the benefit of the public, have become the last places in South Africa which are still untouched by apartheid.

But City Council officials said they expected the Government to clamp down soon and compel the council to segregate these public conveniences.

One lawyer said: "These are virtually the last bastions of multiracialism in the country and in that sense they will soon be rare items. Before the 'WHITES ONLY' notices are placed on them, one of them should be transferred to the South African Museum".

Lawyers say there are two Acts of Parliament under which the Government could act against the toilets. There is the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act of 1953, and the Group Areas Act of 1957.

In the Group Areas Act "occupation" is the operative word as far as the toilets are concerned. So far the provision which defines occupation has been directed at people of different races sitting down together in cinemas and restaurants. They only break the law when they are seated, but when they stand up they are in the clear. Lawyers say that if the same criterion is applied to the multi-racial toilets, then standing in them would be legal, but sitting down in them would not.

Another lawyer said: "The Government could, of course, issue permits for people to use the toilets but this is not likely".

EVENING POST (PORT ELIZABETH)

WUS in Action's special Southern African issue covers CADET, the long-hoped-for adult education college for Bechuanaland, higher education in the Republic (by Dr. Dan Kunene, formerly of the University of Cape Town, now UCLA), Angola, Salisbury, Lesotho, and a SWAPO student's escape story, from Ovambo-land, South West Africa, to Finland.

LAMENT ABOUT THE DECLINE of English in South Africa is as tedious as yearning for "the good old days"—and as pointless. Complaints of degenerating pronunciation from some BBC norm, of the defiling of the pure spring of English by slang; stories of illiterate clerks and semiliterate engineers oppress us from every side. The fact that some of these observations may in themselves be true, does not compel the corollary that the pillars of the English language are about to collapse. Nevertheless the position of English in South Africa is threatened. Pressures both linguistic and political must make one concerned about the eventual fate of English in the country. English can be eliminated or, more possibly, reduced to a usage peculiar to the 1½-million-strong British tribe.

The language is daily losing ground among the 11 million Africans, at the mercy of an educational system—"Bantu Education"—which seems partly designed to weaken the 150-year-old grip English has on white South Africa's subject peoples.

The ruling Dutch-descended *Afrikaner-volk* are losing it too, but more by their own wish, since by many of them it is still resented as the language of their one-time British conquerors. The linguistic difficulties common in other areas are thus reinforced in South Africa by political decision and social attitude.

English in South Africa derives, of course, from the British acquisition of the Cape and the subsequent occupation of the Eastern Cape by the 1820 Settlers. Both mission and state education, from earliest times, brought English to the African community, among whom it became, in an unusually pure form, a *lingua franca* whereby the barriers dividing a multiplicity of munity is, by and large, convinced of the be crossed.

Penalties and inducements derived from the priority granted to English in government, law and education, as well as attempts at legislation, were used to try and eliminate the Boer *taal* from the country.

JOHN POVEY, a lecturer in English in the University of California, Los Angeles, visited various parts of Africa in August, including South Africa, where he had been on the staff of the University of the Witwatersrand.

They were not successful, and from them, no doubt, stems some of the linguistic antagonism that exists between the Afrikaners and other language groups in the country today.

The Afrikaner's accent indicates the attitude that if you do have to use English from time to time you will never speak it well enough to be mistaken for a *rooinek*. While the English, on their side, are too ready to assume that the obligation to bilingualism rests only with the other side.

For the Africans it is the one international language within reach—sought after, held to, but now increasingly denied to the coming generation.

FOR THE AFRICANS, indeed, the situation is, as always in this country, the most difficult and the most desperate. The African community is, by and large, convinced the importance of English. For them English is the essential tool of communication, the window to the outside world. It is a vehicle which more than African languages or Afrikaans can penetrate that hated isolation that is imposed by the government. The African writers use English to gain an international audience, to link themselves to a powerful literary tradition. They draw upon the resources of the language yet they extend and alter it so that it becomes a living and individual medium in their hands. Writers like Lewis Nkosi, Ezekiel Mphahlele, Bloke Modisane and Noni Jabavu have demonstrated what English can achieve when a fresh ear is linked to a different sensibility.

Government legislation, the Bantu Education Act, has decided that African education shall be conducted in the language of the individual tribes. There is some external evidence to show that the mother tongue is the most effective educational medium in the earlier stages of a child's training. The debate in other African countries which have accepted English as their second language centres only upon the question of the most convenient and effective time for introducing the child to the new language. However, no one would pretend that such concerns motivate the decisions of the South African government in their plans for African education. Their motive must be to deny as effectively as possible the chance of the

by Afrikaans teachers whose own English is often less than perfect. They learn the language in Afrikaans-medium schools where that solitary daily English period may be the one concession made to the national policy of bilingualism. Such students learn English with that ineffectiveness and lack of enthusiasm that marks, say, British school attempts to learn French. Such efforts are rendered negligible when the language is completely ignored outside the hour of instruction in the classroom.

Reinforcing the accidental incompetence of much teaching and the indifference of many learners is the Afrikaners' high suspicion of the tongue. They have a strong, and not unjustifiable, concern for what the English language can do. Not only can its superior commercial and international validity reduce Afrikaans to a merely local oddity, but it makes available in English a good deal of reading matter that is regrettably contradictory to the philosophies preached to the innocent children of the *Afrikanervolk*. English is a language tainted with political and social heresies. The struggle to develop Afrikaans has been politically inspired. It is the unifying force that distinguishes the cherished vision of the Afrikaner nation. For this reason the constitution affirms that both English and Afrikaans are the national languages — not either. Such choice would end Afrikaans as a serious force outside being a dialect of the platteland farmers. As it is, in reflecting nationalism, it allows these people to claim themselves as true South Africans in contrast to the British who expose their dual allegiance by using the language of another country.

IT MUST BE RECOGNISED that in South Africa, English is both utterly necessary and largely neglected or even opposed. Guy Butler called English "the language of dissent." In South Africa dissent is not a sign of an active play of intelligence but a political attitude fraught with danger to the *status quo*. Material in this language is all too readily found to be "Indecent, obscene, or objectionable, under sub-section 3b of section 113 of the Customs Act 1964." It is desperately necessary that English be kept alive in all parts of South Africa. In the face of the virtual opposition to the language that follows from some of the government's edicts, in the face of the often complacent indifference of the English, it is the one thing that holds South Africa still to the outside world. A total victory for Afrikaans would hold back the educational—and therefore political—advance of the African people. It would also make for the completion of that *laager* mentality that welcomes South Africa's total political isolation. To offset this very real threat in any organised way are a few dedicated academics and responsible writers, the English press, and those few valiant literary magazines that somehow manage to survive like *Classic* and *Contrast*. The stakes in this linguistic competition are the highest imaginable for the future of South Africa.

African student getting access to English. Without English there can be virtually no higher education and no effective communication abroad. The policy of denying the African English permits the primary assertion of their tribal rather than national identity. Not only does this device confuse the black/white simplicity of the racial issue but it would isolate such people from world concern and international agitation.

The need for improved and effective English teaching for African speakers is vast beyond belief. There have been valiant projects initiated but they can only tackle the very fringe of a totally degenerating situation. The work of Professor L. W. Lanham of Witwatersrand University can be used to help the African teacher of English. His linguistic researches have allowed him to isolate the points of maximum interference between the mother tongue and English. Thus the most common and gross errors can be diagnosed and corrected. But the interference differs from one tongue to another and the problem is continuous. The studies of Professors Butler and Branford at the new English Institute at Rhodes University give some attention to the teachers in the contiguous reservations of the Eastern Cape, who struggle to communicate English in the African schools. They attempt to give assistance to the floundering efforts of the African elementary school teacher so that some use can be made of the minimal attention that can be legally paid to English. These unfortunate teachers, with inadequate and sometimes incomprehensible English, are driven to teach those who hear only the local vernacular, who may, indeed, never hear an English speaker in their lives. Incompetence of technique, the worst kinds of dreary and unhelpful drill, the inadequacy of text material the discouragement the system invites, all create conditions in which English threatens to disappear. Mispronunciations are so regularly repeated in class speech that the learning of English becomes more like that old party game where you whisper a phrase to your neighbour who repeats what he thought he heard to his neighbour until the conclusion exposes the total gibberish from which no intelligible meaning can be derived. What could help would be the kind of ambitious programmes undertaken to the north. They utilise all

modern methods; the tape recorder, records, visual aids. But such a crash programme needs money and, more than money, training. It requires that kind of enterprise and direction which is most expressly contradicted by government educational policy.

NATURALLY THE SITUATION of the language amongst native English speakers is the least depressing. Certainly the English have sadly neglected the teachers in their English-medium schools. The profession does not attract the more able when being an Englishman is in itself a step upwards in the economic hierarchy of South African business. A recent questionnaire elicited the depressing information that some half of the teachers of English at the Junior High School level had not majored in English at their own training colleges. This is dangerous but not fatal, however, because there is a very real protection of the English of such children, incompetent as it may seem in the classroom. There is for English children the constant reinforcement of hearing the language spoken by native speakers amongst their friends and at home with their family. This reinforcement is not available to those whose English is only a second language.

The type of English that these South African children speak is another question. There have been many scare articles predicting the imminent decay of the Queen's English. Such columns usually finish their dire warnings with the demand that we all "wake up and do something about it before it is too late." What to these self-appointed policemen are signs of degeneration are in fact signs of change rather than decay. We should avoid the assumption that one implies the other in a language.

When there are fewer Canute-like commands in the schools to hold off the encroaching national idioms there can be a more effective concept of what English can be in an independent country. It can develop, as it is doing in other regions of the world.

FOR THE AFRIKANER the future of English is less encouraging. It is a second language and interference from their mother tongue makes for an accent and some constructions that are all but unintelligible to the native speaker. Afrikaans pupils are taught English

CONTACT

A short story

AYI KWEI ARMAH

HE STOOD BY THE DOOR a long time trying to make up his mind. For the first time in four months he was having to think of what to wear. All winter, whenever he had had to go out, he had automatically reached for the thick green Loden. It was the warmest overcoat he had. Now he was hesitating between it and a light trench coat.

It had been a warm day; not just warm by contrast with the winter cold before, but really warm by itself. The dull grey-white screen that had been the sky for months had disappeared. The sun now came down with a clean light that made everything seem new. Coming back to his room from the College Yard he had felt ridiculous with so much clothing on. From somewhere within his breast a certain gentle but persistent pressure seemed about to force him to laugh. He felt constrained just walking on the sidewalk. He had wanted to jump and touch the dripping awnings in front of the little shops along the road. Most of all he had wanted to tell the people in the street, to whom he was feeling very friendly, to take off their heavier clothes and enjoy the coming warmth and light.

Finally he decided to stick to the Loden. It was warm now, but he was in a mood to stay late at the party. And the night might turn cold.

Instinctively, as he stepped out into the street he braced himself for the rush of cold air he had come to expect; but the air was easy to breathe. The thing he had dreaded most about the winter was that it pushed him from one extreme of discomfort to the other. The cold had driven him into himself, into the awkwardness of all that mass of clothing and into the desiccated heat of his closed room, in the search for artificial warmth. The heaviness of the workload had accented this general sense of strain, the feeling that he was living against himself, forcing himself to do things he did not particularly want to do, working against his own pleasure.

Now the exams were over and he was left feeling wound up, exhausted yet straining forward in the expectation of some new excitement. Within himself he felt as if something that had been locked up for a long time was now striving to be free, that his congealed being was beginning to flow again, demanding contact with things outside of himself. The American students seemed to know what was happening and to find it vaguely funny, even indecent. In the Dining Hall they were all joking about a lewd poem in the morning's issue of the College paper calling Spring the time when every potent young man felt the urge, as the ending stated it,

To merge
With all that's female in the world
And some.

Most of the general interest was focused on the last line. Though this insistence on perversion made him slightly uncomfortable he had to agree that at a time like this those theories about man at his best wanting to be at one with the whole universe — theories that seemed utterly far-fetched in the inhibiting cold of the winter — seemed most reasonable, indeed obviously true.

AYI KWEI ARMAH now doing research in sociology at the University of Accra, Legon, studied at Harvard on a Nieman Fellowship.

HE HAD PASSED THIS WAY several times in the fall and winter and had always thought everything he saw depressing: the houses with their dull weathered exteriors, the brick pavements clogged with muddy piles of old snow. But now everything seemed to have ceased being a hostile grimy thing and to have become an almost friendly being. At street corners he waited without impatience for the lights to change, counting the number of seconds this took. He saw the tail lights of passing cars as confidential eyes winking their intended direction, or as wide grinning mouths as the cars came to a stop. The neon advertisements he passed did not look so offensively aggressive anymore, just energetically welcoming. People's faces looked no longer so hostile. Everything seemed to be beckoning to him to come along, not to be running away.

At the apartment house he climbed up to 3B and knocked. When the door opened he saw a tall, light brown fellow standing just inside. Obviously the Afro giving the party.

"Come on in!" The Afro closed the door again and held out his hand. "You're new. We haven't met. I'm Lowell."

"Kobina," the visitor said.

"Cob-eena, Cob-eena, that right? Great." He led the way to the bedroom. "The closet's full up. Put your coat on the bed. That's right." Then, "You didn't bring a chick?"

"Pardon?"

"A chick. You didn't bring a girl?"

"No, I didn't."

"That's OK," Lowell said, "we got some here. Black, brown, hiyella, white. Take your pick. Just go on up to some lonesome girl real friendly like. You can take care of yourself. Let's go get a drink first, and I'll introduce you."

The bathroom door was wide open. On the shelf above the sink stood stacks of large coloured paper cups pushed one into the other. The bath was filled by a large beer barrel with a long curved pipe leading out of it. Lowell took one of the paper cups, filled it with beer and offered it to Kobina.

"Thank you, no," he said. "I thought you were getting it for yourself."

"That's OK," Lowell said, "I'll give it to someone else. What will you have? There's all sorts of liquor but it's in the kitchen."

"No liquor," said Kobina. "Just something soft." Lowell grimaced.

"OK. Over here."

After finding Kobina a bottle of Seven-Up Lowell led him back into the corner of the large room where the girls were. Two of the girls, Afro-Americans, were flipping through a pack of records, reading the literature on them and saying nothing to each other. On a straw mat beside them an overdressed student, no doubt an African, was sitting facing an Afro-American woman talking with exaggerated seriousness. In the far corner a white girl with long dark hair was intensely fingering an oversize guitar that made her seem even frailer than she was. Near here was a mixed crowd of men and women most of whom seemed attracted to something going on in the centre.

"Anyone want some more beer?" shouted Lowell.

The two Afro girls continued to be fascinated by the record covers. The African dandy and his girl looked up a moment then went back to talking. Lowell moved over to the girl with the

guitar and the long hair.

"Want some beer?" Lowell asked her. The frown of concentration slowly faded from her forehead and she smiled.

"Sure," she said, and reached up for the cup. "You didn't get it just for me, did you?"

"No, I didn't. I got it for this cat and he doesn't drink. Nothing but soft drinks." He winked down at the girl. "Oh, Carin, you haven't met this cat, have you? He's an African. A new one, Cobeena. Cobeena, this is Carin. She wails." Kobina said hello and the girl said "Hi!" Then she added: "Don't pay any attention to Lowell. He just loves to irritate everybody."

"I just tell the truth," Lowell said. "And the truth about Carin is she ain't satisfied being what she is. She wants to be a wailing Negro."

"Do you play the blues?" asked Carin, ignoring Lowell. "Could you teach me to play the blues?"

"Carin, he's a African. They don't play the blues in Africa. Jesus, if you're going to try to be black you better learn. The stuff they play in Africa is all different. Hot and spicy like."

"I've been trying to play the blues and no one will teach me," said Carin.

"You've tried everything, Carin," said Lowell. Then turning to Kobina, "Carin's tried everything. She's tried to be a proper white lady and it bored her stiff. She's tried to be a beatnik. She couldn't dig all that lying around being depressed. She's tried folksinging, but she thinks even that is dull. Man, all that girl wants is to suffer. Just listen to her jazz about the blues. She loves suffering."

"Look, Lowell, I like the blues because it's beautiful. Some of the songs say things I've wanted to say all my life. What's so wrong with that?"

"That's not all. You don't just want to listen to the blues singers. You want to i-den-ti-fy. You're aching to be a low down oppressed Knece-grow. Now I call that greedy, yes greedy. White greedy. You know why? Because you've exhausted the pleasures of being privileged and white and now the next thing you want is a taste of the pain of being black."

The girl did not answer back. Visibly she retreated into herself. She hugged the guitar closer to her bosom and the frown of concentration returned to her brow as she slowly strummed across the strings. Lowell looked down at her and then at Kobina.

"Take care of her," he said, as he moved away.

Kobina sat on the window ledge near the girl, watching her. She was trying to play something complicated and her mind was obviously not in it.

Soon she gave up, put the guitar down beside her and looked at Kobina.

"I'm not very good at names," she said. "What's yours again?"

"Kobina."

"Carin."

"Yes, I know," he said.

She smoothed her skirt with both hands. It was black, and she had a close fitting brown sweater over it.

"How long have you known him?" she asked.

"Known whom?"

"Lowell."

"I just met him."

"Oh!" She sounded surprised. "He treats everybody the same way. Always bitter, trying to make you feel dirty whatever you do. He can't see anything beautiful anywhere."

"I don't really know him," Kobina said.

"Well, it's true," said Carin. "I try to understand. I try to imagine what I'd do and say if I were in his . . . if I were him. I know I'd be bitter, but I'd also try to find some goodness in my private life. I've often told him that's all we're all left with. All Americans are really in the same soup, black and white."

"What do you mean? White people have the advantage, don't they?"

"Oh, I didn't mean that. That's politics. I mean that's what happens in public. I think it's naive to expect anything but hypocrisy and corruption there. But we have our private lives. We can make something beautiful out of that. I mean we can choose our friends and know that they aren't bigots. But he doesn't believe even that."

"Maybe he's tried."

"Tried what?"

"To find sincere friendship. Maybe he's tried and failed."

"Oh come on. He doesn't try. It's his whole attitude. He's constantly pushing people away!"

"He's afraid, then."

"It's not just fear. He's positively hostile."

LOUD, RANDOM DRUMBEATS broke the general quiet. Lowell was carrying a large round conga across the room, slapping the skin enthusiastically. When he came to Kobina and Carin he put the drum down.

"Look, Carin," Lowell shouted, "this is what they play in Africa, not the blues. Every kid plays like a macstro, Cobeena, no?"

"Well," Kobina answered, "they have to be taught."

"Come on, play something."

Kobina smiled feebly and shook his head, but Lowell was not looking at him. He had turned round to face the mixed crowd.

"Hey, you all!" he shouted, "come on over here. You aren't all repairing that tape recorder. Here's a African going to give us some of that au-then-tic drum rhythm. Come round. Listen to him make the drum talk!"

A number of people detached themselves from the crowd and walked over to the drum. Kobina, so suddenly become the center of attraction, felt trapped, inadequate, about to be exposed as a fraud. Then he remembered that after all he did know a little something about the art of drumming and with that he saw a graceful way out of his difficulty.

"Back home," he began, "the talking drums come in pairs. Low tones and high. One male, one female. The dialogue between them. . ."

High, loud laughter cut into his words. It was Lowell's, and it was followed by nervous titters and knowing smiles from those near him. Lowell leaned forward to put his arms around the shoulders of the two Afro girls who had been examining the records.

"Man," he said with conspiratorial seriousness, "this thing is everywhere." There was more suppressed laughter. Carin leaned over toward Kobina and whispered in his ear, "Lowell's on a vulgar Freudian kick, too. He sees sex in everything." In the unexpected silence after the laughter Carin's last words were clearly audible.

"I don't see sex in everything!" Lowell protested. "It's just there by itself. I look at reality, and if it's got sex built into it that's not my fault." Someone from within the crowd shouted, "Lay off her, man!"

"Cobeena, it's the same idea with the bongos," continued Lowell with a knowing smile. "Only the . . . what did you call it . . . di-a-logue is a lot faster, more frantic. And more explicit." Lowell moved closer to the drum and squatted beside it, opposite Kobina.

"You don't have to play talking drums," he said. "Play anything rhythmic." That was simple enough. Kobina began to play: three full notes, two short, three again, then two.

"Good," said Lowell, "that's a good female rhythm."

"How come?" Carin asked. And someone snickered.

"Because it's circular, goes round and round, always comes back where it began." Then, triumphantly, he went on, "Now I suppose you want me to tell you why a circle is female?"

"Hush your dirty mouth, Lowell," said one of the record-studying Afro girls. "We all know that."

"OK, OK. Don't fight me," said Lowell. "Keep it up, Cobeena, and play it on the side. That's it." Kobina maintained the simple rhythm he had started. Lowell watched intently.

"See, there's gaps in your circles. What I'm going to do is fill 'em up. I'll be playing the male pattern. Anyone want to know why it's male?" He did not wait for an answer. "Because it's hard and straight and aggressive. The female plays in soft gentle passive patterns. It's incomplete. It wants completion." Now his face had gone so serious. "Then the male comes in and brings completion, with power and action and aggression."

He hit the drum hard, with a series of straight beats that made

a full pattern with the softer, smoother background played by Kobina. The two forgot about their audience and became engrossed in the rhythms coming out of their common drum. Lowell struck harder and harder, until, reaching the end of the sustained crescendo he hit the skin ecstatic times with his full palm, each beat taking a fraction longer than the one before, all ending with two muffled, satisfied notes, leaving Kobina's feminine rhythm going on underneath, softly as before, then softer, then softer.

Lowell straightened up. "Good old Freud!" he said. "He was so right. Everything's full of it."

"Full of what?" asked the same record-studying Afro girl, with a giggle. Lowell turned on her. "Thecth, little baby. Eth, ee, ekth: thecth."

"Come on, you're exaggerating. That's not the theory!" the girl persisted.

"If it isn't it should damn well be," said Lowell. He looked at Kobina. "They understand these things in Africa. They don't have to be taught *that*. Take Cobeena there, for instance. He knows."

"Leave him alone," the girl said. "He's smooching."

"Already?" Lowell laughed. "Well, didn't I say it? He understands." His voice trailed off in a prolonged low chuckle, then rose again. "Hey, Cobeena. Will you stop smooching for a second and tell me why you came here?" Kobina smiled with embarrassment and looked away from Carin. "Here?" he shouted his reply. "To study!"

"No, no!" said Lowell, "I didn't mean that. I meant what did you hope to find *here*, at this party?"

"That's some nosey question, Lowell," Carin said.

"Contact," said Kobina. "Meaningful contact."

"Man," said Lowell, "they are real high words for low desires. In plain, unintellectual language, you have an appetite, you need someone to satisfy it. So coming here is search behaviour. Kaput."

"Why do you have to make it all so crass?" demanded Carin.

"Look," said Lowell, "I don't think it's crass. I don't think it's anything. I'm just not going around giving it any noble names, that's all."

"I don't see what the argument is about," said Kobina. "Isn't everyone looking for someone they can understand?"

"Someone they can use!" corrected Lowell.

"Christ!" Carin let her guitar drop and she sat staring disgustedly up at Lowell.

"That's right," continued Lowell, ignoring Carin and fixing his eyes on Kobina, *that's right*. Don't let anyone kid you, and don't kid yourself. I've heard a lot of you African students talk. You all talk like preachers. Always this bootlicking idealistic stuff about the brotherhood of man and the respect of everybody for everybody else. Look at reality, man, and you'll see all that talk is baby talk. Only fools believe it. The way this world is run, it's people using people. We Afros may act dumb, but we know it, and it's something you Africans ought to know. But you think it all ends with your crude politics. Exploiter and exploited, oppressor and oppressed, that's only Lesson One. It goes beyond, into all of life. *Everyone fighting whoever gets in his way*. People using people. Men using women and vice versa, and it's childish romantic nonsense to try and escape that fact. You can't. You use or you get used."

As if for the first time, he became aware of everybody listening and looking. He looked around and his eyes came to rest on Carin. She had a hurt, incredulous look on her face, as if everything Lowell had said had been one protracted personal insult directed at her. Perhaps in response to this look, Lowell's face hardened into an expression of contempt.

"It's our fault," he continued, "it's our biggest fault as individuals and as a race, that we've made ourselves so easy to use. We've been too soft, too relaxed. Hell, we've been lying there, open and greased, inviting the aggression of some erect phallic culture."

Abruptly the full-volumed sound of amplified music drowned out the monologue. Someone adjusted the volume and a dozen people paired off and began to dance. Now Lowell's audience was reduced to Kobina and Carin, Carin still wearing her shocked expression.

"Listen to that music," Lowell said, less tense now. "It's yours. Soft, like ballads. Or worse, like Christian hymns. Round gaps waiting to be filled with something aggressive. We have that too. Spirituals. Soft self-pitying blues, wailing endlessly for love lost or never found, crying eternally for completion. Mush." He looked down at his hands and shook his head slowly. Then suddenly he added: "But we're outgrowing that. We're making aggressive music too."

He rose heavily, like a very tired man, and went over to the tape recorder. He stopped the machine, then wound the tape forward, stopping now and then to listen, until he found what he wanted. Jazz. A lone saxophone pierced the half silence, shrill, energetic, angry. Lowell walked back to Kobina's side.

"Get what I mean?" he asked. "That's a good run. A phallic melody. The cat feels stretched in pain, and he's telling it straight. No messin' around, no soft invitation. Just one long frustrated extension, reaching out." The solo shot up high, then exploded downward, ending in an exhausted series of bass notes. Lowell did not stop.

"It's what living in this culture does to you. It toughens you. At least makes you want to be tough. You want a prick even if you don't have one. Even our girls want to be men. They can't have that, so they want to control men. Penis envy. Poor bitches, they can't help it. This culture is dedicated to the externalised, oversize phallus. It's all around us. The cowboy hero and his potent gun. The American nation and its nuclear missiles. Iron pricks tipped with contraceptive uranium. And New York's skyscrapers. The biggest phallic symbols ever made."

Kobina opened his mouth: "Well, if American culture . . ." he began. Lowell cut him short.

"It's not just America. It's everywhere. You Africans and Asians talk of imperial penetration, imperial withdrawal. That's no choir boy talk. *Rape of Africa*, yes. Man, it's not just here. That's our mistake: refusing to see that this male-female user-used thing goes on everywhere, all the time. Those who don't know get used."

"But Lowell," came Carin's exasperated voice, "we aren't talking about masses and history and things like that. We're talking of person-to-person relationships. In personal relationships you can't put everybody into your cynical categories."

"I can and I will," Lowell replied. "People get used all the time. *Especially* in personal relationships." Again, Carin seemed to cease to exist for him. He talked to Kobina softly, bitterly, confidentially.

"Them symbols fly high, man. But the battle is with each of us right here. We use what we have. Let's face it. As a race we got licked. We got used. And we're still being used. But we can keep fighting on a personal level. So they raped us collectively. We don't have to let them rape us individually too. Let's be the ones on top, now." He seemed to have emptied himself. Without much effort he now switched his attention to the music, and to the couples dancing in the centre of the room.

"I'm going to dance," he said, and got up. He went over to a little knot of girls. In a moment he had pulled one of them away from the group, and they were facing each other, writhing lazily in effortless co-ordination with the beat of the music.

KOBINA LOOKED AT CARIN. She was staring downward at the abandoned guitar. He was thinking of what to say to her, when she spoke first.

"After listening to him, everything sounds dishonest and trite. Unless you say hard things, like he does."

"You don't sound trite to me," said Kobina.

"You're nice," said Carin.

"No, I mean it."

She stared downward again, looking at nothing. Then their eyes met.

"Some time ago," she said, "I found nothing wrong with the kind of sentiment he calls childish and romantic. Now I'm not so sure. I don't trust my own motives anymore. At times, just to not have to bother with it all, I feel like stating every thing at its lowest level, just like he does. If I find I like someone I suppose I'll have to say to them: 'I want to sleep with you. I need a stud.'"

He smiled at her. "That's not the way you feel and you know it.

The reward

Who am I

That by the gravelly wall
Sits with frantic eyes,
Straining unhearing ears
To catch the voice—
The roar and the mystery
That is in the fall of water
Through unseen,
Compact barriers?

The breast is dry,
Or dripping, drips with
Curdled milk:
The dead flies lie
Buried in their booty,
That
Which was one time
Labelled for human kind.

Black shoe,
In whose shine
I see the thinness of my flesh
And the premature grey—
The creaking of your soles
Out-noise
The drum-like rumbling of my bowels
Ignorant of food.
Walk on, black shoe.

But,
Do not tread on the hard-hot road,
It will wear thee out.

Let not your lustre be dimmed
by the dust of the side-path.
Mightier than princelings
walking on sheepskin,
The lining of my belly
shall carpet your way.

Walk on, black shoe.
Now,
The triad-hearth has rolled down
The hill,
And the steel-pot too.
The last ashes
Are blown away by the wind
And that is why
I am cold.
I walk on, black shoe.

The awakening

We are the lookers between the curtains
We are the viewers behind the veil
We see tinsel and think it gold
We take mica
For silver.

They ladled for us a bowl of
"Mushroom soup, please?"
"Yes," we cried
But tasting, found
A toadstool stock.

We gulped of the "lucent syrop"
Crying, "ah, ah"
Intestinal gripes,
A retch
Pooh, pooh
Vinegar
Thickened with cauliflower.

They named us heirs,
Everlasting heirs of the marble city
On the hill of gold:
But the morning broke
The morning broke and revealed
A mud hamlet
Perched
Upon a Vesuvius of
Boiling brimstone.

And thus,
We stood on that
Lush-green-grass bank,
Watched the little fish
Slip, slip through "the silver stream"
Flash green and red, rainbow-hued.
Then the water was
Cool, upon our hands.

We cried to see the water turn
Mud—
Wasted tears.

A tadpole in a
Muddy pond.

Don't be afraid to say it the way it comes to you. Express yourself."

"OK," she smiled back. "I too want the same thing. As much meaningful contact as possible. No hurting, no being hurt."

"The important thing is," said Kobina, "do you think it is possible?"

"What?"

"No hurting, no being hurt?"

"I don't know," she said. "I suppose it is terribly difficult, but I don't know if it is impossible."

"I doubt if it happens to one couple in a thousand."

"That's cynical. So you're also a cynic. What do you mean? Sexually?"

"Yes, sexually," Kobina answered. "But that is only the physical expression of what happens on every level, isn't it? There is never a real meeting, a simultaneous letting go."

"You sound as if you've given up on sex," she said.

"I never said that. I suppose I'll always be trying. For that thousandth chance."

"You believe in trying, then," she said.

"Yes."

"Same here," she nodded. "It's my personal utopia. Undress a cynic. . . ."

"TELL ME," HE SAID, "what do you find?"

She was looking around his room. She had not heard.

"Carin!"

"Uh huh?"

"What do you find?"

"Here?"

"No. When you undress a cynic. You were about to say."

"Oh," she said absently, "I don't know." Then suddenly,

"Perhaps . . ." she looked straight at him, "an erotic perfectionist?"

For some time he stroked her hair, following it down her back. Then fumbling with the skirt he found the little zipper on the side and pulled it. It opened quietly. She raised her arms as he pulled the sweater over her head.

He walked over to the closet with the clothes and was there a long time, hanging everything up very carefully. And then he came back and found her seated on the bed, her underclothes at her feet on the floor. She moved over for him.

His body did not belong to him any more. He could not control it, though in his mind he knew it was terribly terribly important for him not to rush on ahead of her. And yet the conscious efforts he made to tread slowly only made everything strangely stilted and mechanical. And all the time his body was threatening to find its own premature completion. He knew he couldn't hold himself back any longer.

"I won't be a conquering invader," he said. "That's exploita-

tive." She said nothing, but held him close to herself and wordlessly she took him and brought him in.

From the beginning he was never very far from the end. Several times he had to force himself to a full stop. Then he came, and it was despite himself, so that what he had hoped would have been climactic was only apologetic. At first she did not seem to have noticed, but kept moving, trying to match his dead erratic rhythm. Then she felt him irrevocably relaxed, and she too stopped her movement. She lay there uncertainly by him. Then when he rose to go to the little bathroom she followed him. While he washed himself at the sink she caressed his back. From him there was no response, no feeling.

"What's wrong?" she asked.

"You know," he answered. "It . . . I was lousy."

"I didn't think so." But she was aware her voice lacked conviction. Involuntarily she added: "You want the moon every time. It's a beginning, this."

He was a long time washing himself. She followed quickly and joined him in the room. She knew she could not change a thing by just talking, yet all the time she was dressing she felt compelled to talk to him, to try and reassure him.

"It takes a lot of, well, experimenting. And then you find out lots of things about each other. Besides, it's not surprising that the first time it's not very good. So much anxiety, so much unnecessary excitement."

"It makes me hate myself," said Kobina.

"That's because you're unrealistic."

"No." He shook his head. "I feel so selfish when it happens like that." Silently he went to the door and held it open for her.

As they stepped out into the street one distant clock, then another, began to strike the hour, twelve. It had gotten considerably chillier now. A young couple, closely huddled together, passed by them. The girl's shoes scraped the brick sidewalk with every step.

Carin squeezed Kobina's hand and said, "I bet they can see I had more fun." He said nothing. She gave up trying to make him talk and they just walked on.

JUST INSIDE THE PAMPLONA they ran into Lowell. He was with a new girl, someone they had not seen at the party.

"Hey!" he called, "Come sit with us. What will you have?"

Carin sat down. "Coffee," she said. "Black."

"Milk," said Kobina.

Lowell stared at the two as if they had made a joke. Then he laughed.

"That's a real switch," he said. "Conspicuous symbolic consumption of each other!" He looked brightly into their faces, but they were both looking nervously down at the polished Formica top of their table. The waiter came and Lowell ordered. Then, with his eyes fixed on the back of the disappearing waiter, he asked: "Just as a talking point, who used whom tonight?"

No one answered.



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