Divinity

A RADIO PLAY

PART ONE

OBI B. EGBUNA

When a man finds himself at the point of inter-
section of two opposing dialectical forces, what
is he to do? Can he really adjust himself to these
two forces without being destroyed during the
clash of the opposing currents? Or can he simply
jump on to the crest of one wave without run-
ning the risk of being swept away by the
stronger tide? To me, and I'm sure to most
young men of my generation in Africa, this
dilemma is no mere academic abstraction, it is
real. And if in Divinity I've succeeded in shew-
ning how real this conflict can be in the soul of
the African youth of today, how tragic can be the
externalisation of this interiorisation of
this interior conflict and the African scene itself,
I shall have achieved my aim. O. B. E.

(Tom-tom beats a weird juju solo. This fades
away gradually—rapidly Knocking on door.)

DAVID: (Anxious) Father! Father! Are you in
your room?

CATECHIST: (In annoyance) What do you want,
David?

DAVID: To talk to you, Father.

CATECHIST: But I told you I'm not to be dis-
tracted till I've got this paper ready.

DAVID: That's what I want to talk to you about,
Father. I've just come from down the village.

(Pause) Father! You must listen to me!

CATECHIST: (Reluctantly) All right.

SPOT: (Door opens)

DAVID: You do sound snappy, all right!

CATECHIST: I am in no laughing mood, David.

DAVID: Yes, I can see that. Surely, Father, you
don't really mean to go through with this, do you?

CATECHIST: Lord have mercy on us! We are
going through all that again!

DAVID: Do you expect me to stay here and let
you commit what is virtually suicide?

CATECHIST: My dear son, far greater men than
I have vouched their lives for far less noble
causes than this.

DAVID: But why does it have to be, you, Father?

CATECHIST: Because I am the catechist in this
parish, that's why. I am doing what God
requires of his humble servant. So help me
God!

DAVID: Does God require you to fight a whole
village single-handed?

CATECHIST: He requires me to fight evil in all
its phases. The Ozo-Ebunu secret society is
the worst terrorist organisation conceivable.
I will break them tonight or perish in the
attempt.

(The tom-tom begins thumping away once more)

DAVID: Can you hear that, Father? The tom-
tom says you are walking straight into the
jaws of a crocodile.

CATECHIST: Time, the crocodile has bitten
off more than it can chew.

DAVID: That's what I'm afraid of, Father. These
people have always bitten off more than they
can chew. And then they chew it.

CATECHIST: How do you mean?

DAVID: You know what became of those who
defied Divinity.

CATECHIST: Stop calling the juju "Divinity,"
will you? You talk as if you were one of
them. The juju is no more spirit than that
Aladdin's lamp on the table.

DAVID: Father! Please lower your voice.

CATECHIST: I don't care what you hear. I've
said it before and I'll say it again.

DAVID: Ten years ago, a man said just that.
Instead of disproving the divinity of the juju,
its body was found at the bottom of the
river.

CATECHIST: Murder! That's what it was. Cold-
blooded murder.

DAVID: Seven years ago, a woman member of
the society got drunk and said more than she
should. She disappeared and has remained
untraced till today.

CATECHIST: Of course. That's why the evil
society must disappear from the face of God's
earth.

DAVID: And don't forget. Only about a couple
of years ago, the juju was dancing at Olika
Square when a man threw a spear at it. The
man went home to find that very spear pierced
through the heart of his own daughter. And
round her heart—a black circle. The mark
of the Ozo-Ebunu Society.

CATECHIST: Another foul trick, I tell you!

DAVID: And what about the hired gunmen who
shot at the juju from a tree top? The man
dropped down dead with a bullet through his
own heart. And again, when they examined
his body—the black circle on the chest. Is
that not an indication that the juju might have
something of divine power after all?

CATECHIST: Shut up, David! I can't have my
son talking like a non-catholic. Your
mother and I... may God rest her dear soul
. . . your brother and I brought you up in the
Christian faith. And you were responding
beautifully, till two years ago when you went
into the university. And got yourself involved
with that... what do you call it?... the
African Cultural Society. All this business
about reconciliation?

DAVID: Oh, I give up. Why does all this have
to happen just when I'm home on holidays?

CATECHIST: Sorry about that, son. (Firmly) But
what must be must be.

DAVID: Even if it means your death?

CATECHIST: Nothing will happen to your father,
son. God is on our side. Remember what the
Lord said. With faith in Him, one can move
mountains.

DAVID: The Ozo-Ebunu society is not merely a
mountain. Father. It is virtually a sub-planet.
So they say, anyway.

CATECHIST: Is that the best encouragement
you can give to your own father at a moment of
crisis?

DAVID: I am sorry, Father. But I am worried
about you. You are the only one I have left.

CATECHIST: What? Give them a basket of kola
nuts and a goat? And apologise to them on
top of it all?

DAVID: Apology won't kill you, Father. After
all, humility is a Christian virtue.

CATECHIST: It is not as simple as that, David;
to give up now means that they are right and
I, all that I stand for, are wrong. No, David.
It is too late.

DAVID: Then let me do it for you. It is never
too late.

CATECHIST: I won't hear of it. Take back what
I've said! Over my dead body!

DAVID: That's what I'm afraid of, Father. It
might just happen over your dead body.

CATECHIST: Let's consider this conversation
closed.

DAVID: As you wish, Father.

CATECHIST: And if anyone wants me, I've gone
to ring the angels.

DAVID: And after that, your midday rosary, I
suppose.

CATECHIST: Of course.

(Door slams shut)

OBI B. EGBUNA
DAVID: He has decided to wage war against the Ozo-Ebunu society single-handed.

FATHER G.: The Ozo-Ebunu. Let me see now. You mean the...

DAVID: Surely, Father Galligan, you've heard about the juju circle?

FATHER G.: Oh those vague whisperings here and there. And I know that the Archbishop's penalty for any Christian who has anything to do with this secret society is instant excommunication. But I do not know...

DAVID: I'm not surprised really. The juju is suicidal.

FATHER G.: I don't know much about it myself, David. What does the juju look like?

DAVID: He says he is neither apologising nor presenting his....putts it on.

FATHER G.: Very fine, I'm sure. What exactly does it do when it comes out? DAVID: They have decided not to let him go through our family head to stop it. They sent a goat and a basket of kola nuts. And, ha...

FATHER G.: Then, it is a masquerade of some sort. And what is your father going to do when it comes out?

DAVID: He says he is neither apologising nor presenting his.

FATHER G.: I'm disappointed that a University catechist of God. And this village...up with action. Yes, God him self struck Saul to...I know that the Archbishop has always existed, and will always exist. The minimum age for membership is twenty for men and twenty-five for women. They take an oath on admission and advocate the intransigence, the omnipotence, the omniscience...in short, the divinity of the juju.

FATHER G.: What does the juju look like?

DAVID: Indescribable, Father Galligan. It comes out,nas, at meetings, an important member of the society dies. And when it does appear, people come from all parts to see it, give their donations and ask the question. It is almost as tall as a palm tree. You can hardly muster courage to look at his face.

FATHER G.: Then, it is a masquerade of some sort.

DAVID: Father Galligan, it is not safe for me to answer that question. I'm sorry. But I can say this. Purely from the artistic point of view, it is the magnificent work of art, of raffia embroidery...

FATHER G.: Very fine, I'm sure. What exactly does it do when it comes out?

DAVID: It is the sobriety that puzzles me, Father Galligan. And this village...up with action. Yes, God him se f struck Saul to...I know that the Archbishop has always existed, and will always exist. The minimum age for membership is twenty for men and twenty-five for women. They take an oath on admission and advocate the intransigence, the omnipotence, the omniscience...in short, the divinity of the juju.

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FATHER G.: Well, David, I think I'd better go and see Father Galligan now.

DAVID: If God himself struck down Saul to make St. Paul out of him, how can He not make St. Paul out of him?

FATHER G.: Then it will have been an enviable task. Oh, let him have accomplished a martyr death worthy of a catechist of God. And this village which, up till now, has had only the tensity to produce a juju, will have had the opportunity to enoble a saint. Can't see you the propriety of your father's decision?

DAVID: It is the sobriety that puzzles me, Father Galligan.

FATHER G.: (Chuckles) You're so blaming it all on His Grace!

DAVID: Yes, he got the tele...

DANIEL: Delighted to meet you, Father Galligan.

FATHER G.: Has he gone to make your father change his mind?

DAVID: Oh, Father Galligan, I should like you to meet my cousin, Daniel. We are in the university together.

DANIEL: Delighted to meet you, Father Galligan.

FATHER G.: Hello, Daniel. Enjoying your holidays?

DANIEL: Yes, thank you very much.

FATHER G.: And what is your father going to do when it comes out?

DANIEL: Yes, em, well...

FATHER G.: Well, David, I think I'd better go and see Father Galligan now.

DAVID: And if the heathen strikes him down as a palm tree. You can hardly muster courage to look at his face.

DANIEL: Has he gone to make your father change his mind?

DANIEL: Yes, he is.

DAVID: My father has got his gun loaded. He says he won't let them come as far as our house. He is going to wait for them somewhere down in the bush on the hill. He wants to shoot the juju down. That way, he hopes to explode the mystery of the juju's divinity once and for all.

DANIEL: You make St. Paul out of him. Does it do when it comes out?

FATHER G.: (Impatiently) You surprise me, David. I am disappointed that a University catechist of God. And this village...up with action. Yes, God him self struck Saul to...I know that the Archbishop has always existed, and will always exist. The minimum age for membership is twenty for men and twenty-five for women. They take an oath on admission and advocate the intransigence, the omnipotence, the omniscience...in short, the divinity of the juju.

FATHER G.: What does the juju look like?

DANIEL: I know we are committed to negritude, David, but there is a limit to it.

DAVID: Oh, only as an aesthetic experience, Father. I wrote a paper about it for our African Cultural Society at the University. I'm Vice-Chairman, you know.

FATHER G.: No, I didn't know. But how did your father get himself involved in this juju business then?

DAVID: If the Archbishop had not declared this the anti-supervision year, all this would have started.

DANIEL: Has he gone to make your father change his mind?

FATHER G.: (Chuckles) I should leave the rationalisation of sobriety to men of greater (Knock on door)

DANIEL: (Hesitatingly) Oh, am I interrupting anything?

FATHER G.: (Exclaims) Hello Danny Boy. Step right in.

(Door shuts)

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DANIEL: Delighted to meet you, Father Galligan.

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