

Poets of Africa

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Poems From East Africa

DAVID COOK & DAVID RUBADIRI (EDS)



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POETS OF AFRICA

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East Africa

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POETS OF AFRICA

1. David Cook and David Rubadiri (Eds): *Poems from East Africa*
2. Okot p'Bitek: *Song of Lawino*
3. Okot p'Bitek: *Song of Lawino and Song of Ocol*
4. Okot p'Bitek: *Two Songs*
5. Okot p'Bitek: *Horn of My Love*
6. Margaret Dickinson (Ed): *When Bullets Begin to Flower*
7. Arthur Luvai (Ed): *Boundless Voices – Poems from Kenya*
8. Micere Githae Mugo: *My Mother's Song & Other Poems*
9. Jared Angira: *Tides of Time: Selected Poems*
10. Mutu wa Gethoi: *A Chequered Serenade to Mother Africa*
11. Taban Lo Liyong: *Words that Melt a Mountain*

Poems from East Africa

*Edited by
David Cook
& David Rubadiri*



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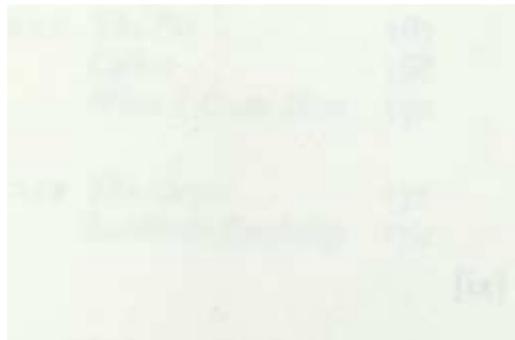
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INTRODUCTION

We are quite sure that critical comment would be out of place from the editors of a volume of new verse; and so in this introduction we shall restrict ourselves to explaining something of the scope and nature of this anthology.

We have attempted to assemble in this book a representative collection of poems written by East Africans, or written in East Africa by those involved in the literary scene, up to about Easter 1970. The only poems we have deliberately excluded from consideration are those which have already appeared in anthologies easily available in East Africa. Some fifteen of our chosen poems have been previously published in book form, and a few others are about to be so published; but these have either had extremely limited circulation locally, or are in collected writings by a single poet which may not for some time reach as wide a public as the writer might wish.

Another group of these poems will be familiar to some readers from the pages of *Transition*, *Ghala* and *£uka*. These are now presented in a more permanent form. Poems which have appeared in books or in the journals just named form about a third of the collection. In many cases, probably the majority, these poems now appear in revised versions which the authors regard as final. On the other hand, Okot p'Bitek's 'They Sowed and Watered' has, since we chose it, been transmuted into a section of *Song of Ocol*: no doubt many readers will be interested to compare the two quite different arrangements.

Another third part of this collection has been brought together from various student publications in East Africa; though these writings have always been selected from a full range of manuscripts submitted by each poet, and have often gone through a sea-change since their trial
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INTRODUCTION

appearances. And the remaining third of the poems we have chosen have not so far, to the best of our knowledge, enjoyed even a limited

circulation in print.

It has not always been easy to make or keep contact with half a hundred poets: our correspondence has ranged from Canada to India. One or two writers have preferred not to appear in this collection. In the case of six poems we have simply to reprint the version that we found published elsewhere; but in every other instance we have been in direct touch with the writers and feel confident that we have been able to produce precisely the poet's final decision on wording and punctuation.

The biographical notes are taken from data provided by the writers themselves.

Editing can seem a thankless task; and the editing of poetry may at times appear particularly paradoxical. But in spite of our moments of self-doubt or frustration, we have both been gratified as well as humbled by our responsibilities. Our contributors have been very cooperative. It is difficult to love an editor: but we have met with remarkable understanding and (even at the worst) forbearance. We have read hundreds of poems and we owe much to the many promising writers whose works we have not been able to include. When we started we were quite prepared to limit ourselves to a smaller collection than this has turned out to be: indeed it is slightly larger in the event than the upper limits originally proposed by our publishers. This is because we found more poems that we think to be good than we had expected.

[xvi]

jared anoira Hunger

The maize will grow once when

long rains have come and army worms have gone

rations

will sink

with hunger

and the coiled intestines

will straighten

But

that day shall find many in the invalid home with collar'd fathers at
bedside mass and others in graves with maggots on palatable meal

and for the grave majesties the maize cob shall be

for a rusty funeral feast.

JARED ANGIRA Dialogue

O Lord Make Haste to Help Me O Man Make Haste to Repent

O Padre open the Vestroom O Man Confess Your Sins

O Father I have no Sins O Man You Are Not Ready

Pulpit abandoned The weight of celibacy

Collection dish empty Poverty of churchgoers

Kneelers and tendants Satiety in sins

O Lord Make Haste to Save us O Man You Are Not Hungry

Lord will you Hear Our Cry About this World With End

Man I will hear your Cry About this World Without End

O Lord Shall We Communicate O Man I am God Almighty

O Lord Will You hear my request O Man about my kingdom

M

O Lord Its all about My adultrous Wife about My bills about My demotion about My failure about all these World With End

O Man about all these

See Your reverend Priest See Your Comrade Fortune See Your Comate Nature

O Lord Let My Cry Come Unto You

O Man Do you hear my Sermon?

O Lord Cannot I see your face

O Man empathy is mine, sympathy is yours,

O Man You'll never see My Face

O Lord Then You Are Not of Mercy of Grace!

[3]

jared angira No Coffin , No Grave

He was buried without a coffin without a grave

the scavengers performed the post-mortem in the open mortuary without sterilized knives in front of the night club

stuttering rifles staged the gun salute of the day that was a state burial the car knelt

the red plate wept, wrapped itself into its master's blood

his diary revealed to the sea the rain anchored there at last isn't our flag red, black and white? so he wrapped himself well

who could signal yellow
when we had to leave politics to the experts
and brood on books
brood on hunger
and schoolgirls
grumble under the black pot
sleep under torn mosquito net
and let lice lick our intestines
the lord of the bar, money speaks madam
woman magnet, money speaks madam
we only cover the stinking darkness
of the cave of our mouths
and ask our father who is in hell to judge
the quick and the good

[4]

well, his diary, submarine of the Third World War
showed he wished
to be buried in a gold-laden coffin
like a VIP
under the jacaranda tree beside his palace

a shelter for his grave

and much beer for the funeral party

anyway one noisy pupil suggested we bring tractors and plough the land.

[5]

jared angira Primus Prioiy

My man is gone away to serve

the Master his chief

At the set of the sun

the pigeons and wagtails are homing

Lurking along the cold side The black wall of euphorbia concrete

Down the valley I hear

the shepherds call The Wolves have howled

from the hillside caves

The half-potent old men

virility sailed away with time Minutes turned into years The worn-out old men

sing rustless epics from beer-party gospels:

The golden flutes I do not know, I do not know I cannot tell, And I cannot tell

When my Man will come When my Man will come I must live these days alone For my man must serve the Chief The weaverbird should

rest in her nest And stir not the heat-burnt hope For the fog is still
absent

Let peasants cry into the dusk The fields have partial answers Children
endlessly rock in the cradles Shall I go to find My Mate?

Hunger shall never let me rest The hours delve into years Soon I shall
have no tears to shed No laughter to burst I will not know When first it
started.

[7]

jared angira The Siege of Ramogi

That chloroform sleep woke me up in dream only to find Ramogi
under siege

the calabash lay in the fireplace where the fire had burnt it half and the
fire itself had gone out half

the half dead tree on the river bank lay growing on the ground

the fire had sunk below the granary and the eggs long hidden there
were in hatching by that heat.

I saw the drum hanged on a siala tree and 'osimbo' in a potato field

Ramogi stood unstirred on the lakeshore watching waves watching
diving fishermen raise and sink their heads and a spoilt son played the
guitar the harp lay idle near the 'duoP

The fishes cried and the crocodiles slept beneath the feet of Ramogi
who cast a look at the yonder bank and saw The Nilus flow.

jared angira The Street

Worms crawling Worms crawling

mercedes slides past blue shadow

garbage

swinging swinging

boozing boozing

zephyr slides past green shadow

garbage black shadow

Wananchi Wananchi

scratch scratch tiny nails blocked nostrils

vultures whirr vultures whirr

The band splashes up the night-club

rolls royce sleek and cool grey shadow

fireworks

diwali

warning light

[10]

by shops by shops

'closing down sale' non-citizen gloom shadow

mercedes

trinity mansion trinity shamba

and the street is clean the street is clean

peter anyang'-nyong'o Daughter of the Low Land

After I have communed with them,

With dead men's ideas;

'Nya dyang' ' comes to me With accusing persuasion:

'Come, "wuod twon",

My activities are vital.*

I do not let my testicles Be crushed when I am wide awake By the
ghosts of an alien clan In the half-lighted book-cave;

No!

When I sheathe the family spear And unfeather the poison-horned
arrow; When I expose the daughter of the low land To village gossip
and contempt;

Then the books that I read Smash my testicles in my sleep!

My testicles

Have not been smashed By heavy books!

'Ocol,

Drink from the roots;

You were first wedded to me And then to Plato And Aristotle.'

I do not sit there In that forest Of dead men's heads

Letting their heavy tongues -

Like 'rungus' -

Butt my balls to wind's dust;

No!

Like the emissary

Of a semi-famished land,

Or the scout of a belligerent army, I brew with the enemy
And drink with my people.

And when I return home To the daughter of the brave one, The yeast
from the low land Makes my manhood Rise.

henry BARLOW Building the Nation

Today I did my share In building the nation.

I drove a Permanent Secretary To an important urgent function In fact
to a luncheon at the Vic.

The menu reflected its importance Gold Bell beer with small talk,

Then fried chicken with niceties Wine to fill the hollowness of the
laughs Ice-cream to cover the stereotype jokes Coffee to keep the PS
awake on return journey.

I drove the Permanent Secretary back.

He yawned many times in back of the car Then to keep awake, he
suddenly asked,

Did you have any lunch friend ?

I replied looking straight ahead

And secretly smiling at his belated concern

That I had not, but was slimming!

Upon which he said with a seriousness That amused more than

annoyed me, Mwananchi, I too had none!

I attended to matters of state.

Highly delicate diplomatic duties you know, And friend, it goes against my grain,

Causes me stomach ulcers and wind.

Ah, he continued, yawning again,

The pains we suffer in building the nation!

So the PS had ulcers too!

My ulcers I think are equally painful Only they are caused by hunger,

Not sumptuous lunches!

So two nation builders Arrived home this evening With terrible stomach pains The result of building the nation -- Different ways.

[15]

henry barlow The Death of an Eland

Those eyes!

Those liquid green eyes Tearless yet crying Terrified and silent Imploring for mercy Those eyes haunt me.

We stood and looked at her

Emaciated with hunger and pain

Lying on her side with the festering leg

Dripping with pus held in the air

Trying in vain to heave itself up with her other legs.

Those eyes!

The terrified liquid eyes

Fervently transmitted pleas for Mercy

And the body shook with terror and pain

The emaciated legs kicked feebly

Trying to get her up

Where she had tripped and fallen.

There were ticks on her belly

Some were fat and bluish green

And there were numerous small brown ones.

The eyes begged!

Those haunting eyes.

[16]

The hunter said in a matter of fact way It is kinder to shoot her And raised his gun.

There was a kick and a feeble neigh The body relaxed; the neck fell back. The eyes looked at me Still pleading

As if the hunter had not been merciful And I stood there Feeling foolish I noticed the ticks -Still sucking.

I walked away

With liquid eyes

And followed the hunter.

[17]

HENRY BARLOW I Refuse to take your Brotherly Hand

Your nails are black with dirt, brother And your palms are clammy
with sweat I refuse to take the hand you extend in help I shall not join
hands with you brother For unclean hands make me uneasy For filthy
fingernails rob me of my pride.

You argue, gesticulating with your once Impeccably clean and
beautiful hands That before long it shall not matter For 'everybody' is
delving and digging And all shall have hands dripping with dirt.

That nobody shall know what clean hands look like And there shall be
comfort in the dirty crowd And enough to eat, for there are good yields
When the stinking manure is well dug in With strong and bold hands
in time.

Are you going blind brother?

I ask how many have the sludge Or the strong and bold hands like
yours With which to dig and delve?

Brother the hands of many are too weak with hunger And for many the
sludge is out of reach And yet for others the stink is too nauseating!

But all have eyes and hunger fills them with anger As they watch your
fingernails fill with dirt!

[18]

I have seen hungry envious eyes Watching silently through your chain-
link fence I have seen eyes in deep sunken sockets Burning with anger
intently watching you I have seen parched mouths water with saliva
And heard the rumbling of hollow empty stomachs As they watched

you feed the dog with meat From the heavy yields of the city sludge.

Have you entirely forgotten Brother The fragrance and comfort of clean hands?

The confidence, the peace you have when you know You'll leave no ugly smudge upon the sheet?

Don't you remember the repulsion you had When you shook hands with fat dirty men With their dirty clammy palms?

Let me alone Brother and from the top of the cliff Don't offer me your dirty hand in help.

Let me trudge the long way up For the short cuts are soiled and slippery Your palms are clammy with the sweat of fear And your fingernails are clogged with dirt.

[19]

henry barlow The Village Well

By this well,

Where fresh waters still quietly whisper As when I

First accompanied Mother and filled my baby gourd, By this well,

Where many an evening its clean water cleaned me; This silent well

Dreaded haunt of the long haired Musambwa,

Who basked

In the mid-day sun reclining on the rock Where I now sit

Welling up with many poignant memories;

This spot,

Which has rung with the purity of child laughter; This spot,
Where eye spoke secretly to responding eye;
This spot,
Where hearts pounded madly in many a breast;
By this well,
Over-hung by leafy branches of sheltering trees I first noticed her.
I saw her in the cool of a red, red evening.
I saw her
As if I had not seen her a thousand times before.
By this well
My eyes asked for love, and my heart went mad.
I stuttered.
And murmured my first words of love And cupped,
With my hands, the intoxication that were her breasts. In this well,
In the clear waters of this whispering well,
The silent moon
Witnessed with a smile our inviolate vows,
The kisses
That left us weak and breathless.
It is dark.

It is dark by the well that still whispers.

It is darker,

It is utter darkness in the heart that bleeds By this well,

Where magic has evaporated but memories linger.

Of damp death

The rotting foliage reeks,

And the branches

Are grotesque talons of hungry vultures,

For she is dead.

The one I first loved by this well.

RALPH bitamazire The Dog in Kivulu

The dog in Kivulu,

Thin, bony and yawning;

The dog in Kivulu,

Panting and squatting Like its master.

The dog in Kivulu,

Barking at naked children,

Children who sing a thanksgiving As they leave the rubbish heaps.

The dog in Kivulu,

Running away from fat flies And scratching its tail with teeth,

Biting nothing but its own gums,
Swallowing nothing more than its own saliva. The dog of Kivulu,
Guarding its drunkard master And the hoard of fermenting millet,
Kwete and malwa in clay-pots.

But the dog of Kivulu

Lies by, with nothing to drink;

Nobody calls it Acaali, the bitch,

It looks on - at the trenches -

And drinks the water from the catdeshed.

RALPH bitamazire I Love You, My Gentle One

I love you, my gentle one;

My love is the fresh milk in the rubindi Which you drank on the
wedding day;

My love is the butter we were smeared with To seal fidelity into our
hearts.

You are the cattle-bird's egg,

For those who saw you are wealthy;

You are the papyrus reed of the lake,

Which they pull out with both hands.

And I sing for you with tears Because you possess my heart:

I love you, my gentle one.

[23]

Ralph bitamazire Putting Butter on a Slice

Putting butter on a slice, and in the pan rice,

Wiping sweat with a towel, that is the world now, Opening a Nile with
an opener, drinking and talking, Lifting the telephone and signing a
cheque,

Drafting and glancing to check,

Hello and how are you, every morning

Planning - for the week-end,

To have a step with Joy and keep the legs moving,

A ride to the botanical gardens,

At Three Stars or Gardenier tonight we dine,

Playing records on the jukebox,

A sleepless night, without breakfast,

Waking rolled up on the Vono.

Putting butter on a slice, that is the world now. What is Bazaarrabusa
saying and meaning, 'The-one-with-love-that-echoed-mine',

Can I write a line like this?

Oh, I have no time for poetry:

Its world is Mars;

I will read and write it on computers.

This is Eden, pressing buttons to move,
With no need to think, only look at the moon,
No more need to write for Eden is Heaven,
Turning the tap and off glides the soot,
The mind abounds in love and fruit,
The power to read and to write works of art,
Ha~ melted to Eden from the heart.

Putting butter on a slice,
That is the world now.

[24]

What better heaven is there,
When body and mind are wholly in Eden Putting butter on a slice;
Eden is Heaven,
Where works of art are no more.

[25]

Ralph bitamazire Two Translations from Rutooro

I

Hear, hear this my poem Those who do not have any Take mine,
Hear this thunder of victory
The song of my ancestors: Short men I fling like stones,

Tall ones I cut like sorghum;

My mother sent me for water I brought her clots of blood,

My father sent me for firewood I brought him bundles of broken spears.

And they called me twin-father When in fact I never produced any,

I produced them only with Nyamucikinya

my small Spear, my poem.

II

I love you my Lord When I see you sigh,

I love you my Lord

When I see your lion stature I pant.

You charmed me:

You charmed me with the 'Earth's Laughter' When I see you I laugh alone;

You charmed with the 'Earth's joke',

When I see you, I play about;

When you are not near My body itches;

I love you my Lord.

[26]

a. s. bukenya I Met a Thief

On the beach, on the coast,

Under the idle, whispering coconut towers,
Before the growling, foaming, waves,
I met a thief, who guessed I had An innocent heart for her to steal.
She took my hand and led me under The intimate cashew boughs
which shaded The downy grass and peeping weeds.
She jumped and plucked the nuts for me to suck;
She sang and laughed and pressed close.
I gazed: her hair was like the wool of a mountain sheep, Her eyes, a
pair of brown-black beans floating in milk. Juicy and round as
plantain shoots Her legs, arms and neck;
And like wine-gourds her pillowy breasts;
Her throat uttered fresh banana juice:
Matching her face - smooth and banana-ripe.
I touched - but long before I even tasted,
My heart had flowed from me into her breast;
And then she went - High and South -And left my carcass roasting in
the fire she'd lit.

[27]

a. s. bukenya Whittitude

I envied his being Negro:

For there he was with his hardened face That told of night and her
mystery,

Of age and varied experience.

In shame, in fear, in joy, his hue the same, Unlike my baby skin that
told of all I felt. And while I pitied him for being black,

I feared he had a depth unknown to me, Which his darkness hid.

[28]

john butler Kisenyi

Let us not lie to ourselves.

A skeleton is skeleton Whether hot, white under the sun Or
metamorphosed by the mystery Of African African moon.

Let us not look either At this frantic place Only with beastly eyes Of
sanitary squads.

Do not see only Mud and mabati Baziba and Swahili.

For lip-locked, twain and twain In so secret darkness Sacredly,
compulsively Perform the rite.

Truly here is compulsion That is very heart.

[29]

Murray carlin Drummers at a Wrestling Match

Some urgency imprisoned among the drums Is never discharged; that
bending energy Is its own end, that tune is a deep confusion Not in
itself confused, not in its core:

There, there beats a vision of the old wars

Where the short panting of the gourds shaken

The shifting voice of the battle, the confusion of decision,

The drastic authority of the tenor drum

Leading them away, imposing a sudden order

New, yet old, make quarrelsome unison.

The drums are like men shouting with open mouths
On some continuous furious frieze of campaign:

So loud they are, their noise is a kind of silence.

Murray carlin The Mango Tree

Men of the milder zone, you find
Are used to the beauties of summer
space
Their tall trees cast their scent
For miles, the air being warm, the
wind

Steady, and blossoms in the sky . . .

But where the drop drops with a report
Upon the leaf; where the
curled Bark and the sticks begin to fly

Where the storms surging strain
To bend the big tops, and the flash
Lights every leaf, and men must race
The roaring myriads of the rain

That depth of hollow must and dead
Darkness under the mango tree
Gives shelter; it will lighten to
A green hall once the rains have fled

Approaching it, you may be afraid
As, in its equatorial
Glitter, tick and
hum, it stands
Rounded, having an enormous shade

There is a rustling floor there
It will carry its own seasons
Full green,
fresh green, rust
These can be seen throughout the year

Small blossom. Boys heave a stone
In the infathomable green
Or bring,
weighing on the great bough
Its fibrous sweet birth down.

[3i]

jim chaplin The Next Morning

Was this where I came staggering?

This the inviting portal to delight:

Three box-lids and a half-peeled log.

Was this the hall that opened wide? Promising soft richness of desire:

Two army blankets hung on a knotted string.

Was this she who called me in?

She of seductive grace beyond the others: Grasping, blowsed with our soft caressing.

Was that the man who came inside?

That peeling reflection of beer-shot eyes:

That pocketless, drained, dejected, I.

[32]

jim chaplin Slum Day

The monotonous tap of the blacksmiths' sounds. Long shadows zebra the roads;

Partners stretch and yawn,

Their girls catch up on sleep.

Dew lies still on the piled maize,

And children tumble their way to school.

The vendors squat behind their wares.

Careful spenders have enough for food,
The careless flounder in the shade Press emptiness against worn grass.
The pious wash and pray.
Heat stills the birds: the crickets sing.
Smoke curls to stifle the quiet air.
The lamps are lit: music begins to play.
As bars begin to fill,
The girls waken and parade.
Children quarrel their way to bed.
Life has been won from another day.

[33]

a. r. cliff-lubwa The Beloved

Lapobo,

Tall but not too tall,

Short but not too short,

She is of medium size.

Lapobo,

Her teeth are not as ash Nor the colour of maize flour,

Her teeth are white as fresh milk.

The whiteness of her teeth

When I think of her
Makes food drop from my hand.
Lapobo,
Black but not too black,
Brown but not too brown,
Her skin colour is just between black and brown. Lapobo,
Her heels have no cracks,
Her palms are smooth and tender to touch,
Her eyes - Ho they can destroy anybody.

[34]

saroj datta The Dead Bird

Dead on my palm

A slab of silent meat

Suspended between stiffness and rotting

Bones sitting stolid on my skin

The beak clamped tight

Unsoftened by the feathers

A final refusal

Hanging determined from the weak neck Eyes bright with liquid
Desperate with concentrated feeling Smouldering into me

The sun's lens-captured heat finding a point to scorch The curling

feathers, screams,
Imprisoning the whole world's silences
Recoiling from my foreign breath
Pink skin drily accepting feather ends
Rustling cage of feathers
Flapping and raging in my mind
Would never float wind-lightened
Empty itself of song
Because a pump refused to beat
An eternity of grace
Cradled and responsive in my hand.

[35]

sheikha a. el-miskery The Crack
Crack the glass,
And the crack Will always remain.
The human heart Has the same vein;
It's just as delicate To the strain.
Once it is hurt,
It is too hard To fade the stain.
Though parts can Fix together -

You've just to touch the wound, To make it drain again.

[36]

SHEIKHA A. EL-MISKERY Just d Word

When dogs encounter They hesitate,

They sense a kinship Stop, sniff, then part.

As birds glide they tune A mutual note,

Beak to beak greetings flare To form the music of the air.

Even cups in a tray Make a sound as they touch; Leaves rustle;

Yet the human voice is hushed.

Strangers silently we passed Only to look behind:

The other's head has also turned As if to greet my mind.

[37]

laban erapu An Elegy

When he was here,

We planned each tomorrow With him in mind For we saw no parting
Looming beyond the horizon.

When he was here,

We joked and laughed together And no fleeting shadow of a ghost Ever
crossed our paths.

Day by day we lived On this side of the mist And there was never a sign
That his hours were running fast.

When he was gone,

Through glazed eyes we searched Beyond the mist and the shadows
For we couldn't believe he was nowhere: We couldn't believe he was
dead.

[38]

laban erapu The Eyes That Wouldn't Wander

Yours were the eyes that wouldn't wander, We met and parted like
strangers, Strangers who would not forget But met again and again As
if by chance,

Bypassing each other and smiling As though to someone else.

What was it that led us Somewhere beyond The eyes of the crowd To a
lonely spot

Where the eyes that wouldn't wander Slowly rose and looked into
mine?

What was this feeling That raptured my nerves As your trim fingers
Linked with mine?

What power lay hidden

In those eyes

That wouldn't wander?

[39]

LABAN ERAPU / Beg ToU

I beg you,

If you feel something like love for me,

Not to let me know it now When I feel nothing so certain for you -Wait
until you've conquered my pride By pretending not to care for me.

I beg you,

If you think your eyes will give you away, Not to give me that longing
look When you know it will force the moment -Wait until our
heartbeats have settled Then put your head on my shoulder.

I beg you

Not to let us surrender to passion Until our liking has grown to love:

Let's stop and look back,

Let's draw apart and sigh,

Let's stand back to back,

Let's say good-bye for the day And walk our different ways Without
pausing to wait For an echo to our last word.

I beg you,

If you find yourself interlocked In my embrace,

To kiss me and keep me silent Before I start making promises That
time may choose to bypass -

[40]

Wait until our hands are free, Then listen to me;

Wait until our love is primed, Then give me your hand.

[41]

laban erapu The Guilt of Giving

You've seen that heap of rags That pollutes the airconditioned City Centre,

That louse that creeps about In the clean core of sophistication; You've seen him waylay his betters And make them start -Especially when they have no change.

You recall the day you came upon him And were startled by his silent presence Intruding into your preoccupation:

You hurled a coin

Which missed the mark

And rolled into the gutter

Where he groped for it

With a chilling grotesque gratitude

That followed you down the street.

You dived into the nearest shop To escape the stare Of the scandalised crowd That found you guilty Of recalling attention To the impenetrable patience They had learnt not to see.

[42]

LABAN erapu The Idol

Brown, proud and flawless, Wordless and passionless,

You stand on the shelf,

On the pedestal I built for you -An idol in a Christian house.

Curved, polished and oiled, Primed and perfect,

You came to my life A goddess to whom I offer My first and my last

prayer.

Serene and silent

You stand on your pedestal,

Aloof and alone,

Too high above the tears I shed For the love that was not,

Too far beyond the reach of arms

That rise in mute prayer

And beg to be released

From the hold

Of eyes to blind for tears

And a heart too stern

For pity.

[43]

david gill The Expatriate

Here I sit with every mortal gadget round me. Klemperer conducts from his narrow groove and Brahms breaks like a sea against the windows -an imposing European noise.

Or, if I wish, the radio with its sorcery of wires and valves will fill this room with tongues and tragedy.

Or when a glinting bird alights in view of these tall windows,

I snatch my violet-tinted, smooth-adjusting binoculars to see more definitely.

These things, my adjuncts, live with me, belong these Siebensachen
like Jupiter's old moons to Jupiter - and yet
I'm only conscious of their modern presence when
that boy appears
that small black boy that stands
so shyly at the window looking in
through sad soft eyes
like two dark holes
in a forest-wall.

[44]

DAVID GILL Feud

After the parents have gone to burn the houses of the parents below
and those below in turn have burnt the houses of those above
who started the burnings,

the children of the mountains, who were hidden but saw, are shelled
by the dawn from their pod of darkness and creep dry-eyed to the ring
of homely embers and stare at what half-charred remains there are: a
blackened stool, a cooking pot, some tins.

And then the unhabitual silence swells all intervals, no cocks are
crowing, goats all gone.

With desolate eyes they stare across the valley as the long sealed trains
of cloud slide past deporting their fathers and mothers . . .

[45]

david gill The Mission

For sixty years or more the mission church has let the lanterns of its chalk-white walls so shine before the shouting mountain men that some slight shift of soul may well be posited.

The sabbath drums boom out their routine summons among the candled coral trees - and down the mountain's grassy runnels tribesmen pour to worship and the whitewashed walls resound with battered diatonic hymns.

The preacher preaches love: love one another.

(How can we love the plainsmen when they burn our houses, steal our goats and rape our wives?

We'll love all men as Master Jesus did except the lowlanders.)

On Monday morn the curling fleece of smoke dilates above the plainsmen's huts. And down crash axed banana trees. And leg-trussed goats stagger and scream. Above the bedlam hangs the white star of persistent Christ.

[46]

DAVID GILL Swamp

Dry-season dust-tails dogged the cars along the orange tracks when we began to curb the croaking swamp. Stripped schoolboys hacked the ankles of the giant reeds. A song

rose somewhere as the rippling line advanced, disgruntled mostly, swiping with Birmingham bush-knives and curling sickles. Few really grasped the idea that civilized man will not endure a swamp.

Still seeing little sense in what they did,

they burnt the grass and dug some crooked drains.

White blooms of smoke grew huge above the swamp at dusk and exiled
all the frogs* refrains.

Rough places smooth, O make! Use hand and hoe! Control the lie of
land and guide the flow of rain. Be conquerors subduing all: my own
philosophy runs roughly so.

We cleared the thistles and the reeds, we dug our ditches deep; then
came the spearing rain.

And now the fatalists can smirk and say:

Look, sir, the grasses have grown tall again.

David Gill *Them and Us*

They are rooted here. Their tenuous life, haunted by ancestors, walks
beneath these leaves. Out of sight but always well in earshot our
neighbours weave the slow grass mats of their dark-green
unfathomable lives,

whilst we in our dry, well-furnished houses (the Protectorate served its
servants well) with house-boys polishing the spacious acres, stare out
across the smooth manorial lawns and red platoons of cannas through
the trees to alien hills that shoulder us away.

Crispin Hauli *The Song of the Common Man*

They drive me along,

they do they do,

These my brothers no longer brothers -Their hands are whips, along
they drive me,

No longer am I the same mother's child.

They push me along,

indeed they do,

These my sisters no longer sisters -Their mouths are cannons, spittle
of fire,

No longer am I the same father's pride.

They kick me along,

they do they do,

These my playmates no longer playmates -Their actions are fates, my
life they decide,

No longer am I the same free-born human.

They abuse me,

they do time and again,

Fellow humans load me with all their bundles -They are my masters,
and me a poor ass,

To be driven, pushed, kicked and abused.

[49]

sabiti kabushenga Saintless Still

I

We lived long time ago

Owners of these hollow droning voices.

To the remnants of that world

Belong our haggard looks

Our drilling long stares

Our motionless bodies

Once, awakening to come up,

Smiling,

Smiling because we understand We understand well,

We are only disfigured relics i Shaking from fossil extinctions,
Emerging.

Mountain rocks gape in jagged yawns, Winds blow,

Hot air.

We evolve Evolving

Stuffed images of prehistory Blending slowly into the march.

None asks for our names Nobody knows we are here.

Those who gaze Shift away Bending their brows Evasive,

Unsure how to greet us.

[50]

We stand expectant,

Naked stones

Hugging ribs with the dust from the pub Hoping one, amazed, may
repeat:

We know these faces;

In the long past,

We saw these faces somewhere,

But God,

We do not remember,

We cannot remember these men.

But they do,

Looking through ashamed recognition. See how they smile,

One says,

Let us stand them a pint Another one shakes his head,

No.

Visions do not,

Oh no.

Visions don't.

But we know we lived long time ago

We only smile

Ghastly.

Also recall,

They are impatient men The longing men With days to number Hours
to save Minutes to hurry.

[5i]

When evening breezes stir again, Mountains conspire with nights

Trees hustle us back

Along narrowing paths of lost recollection

We pace up

Hurried steps

Fleeing the humdrum

Escaping our humdrum.

Our doors locked

Rooms harbour unbelievable servants We chew our surviving dregs of
the day We think of tomorrow.

The day,

The hypnotic rays of the day,

An exile from our intimates.

We smile,

Again.

Good Lord Again,

The men we shall see The words we shall say.

We remember,

Natives of a deserted camp Moving naked in somnolence Thinking
only of the noon,

Alive with a sickness to the drying wells. Men without trust in fortunes
Yet look askance at a buzzing fly.

The same men

[52]

Who feel the draining day

And swallow to appease their thirst-crazed throats

Men who spit in dust

Evading their sweat with a greasy palm.

Perhaps somewhere Another is sighing:

It is the only substance.

IV

We cross fingers

Renouncing our past curses

We covet another drink

Sleeping

Forgetting

Our duties

Our rights

Nobody gives us any We regret none.

Only stinging winds Hot stinging winds of sand Desolate scrubby trees
And looming mountains There, and the naked men,

Stick hard on our palates Reminding us we are still here Perhaps still
holding on,

Clutching on the crest of a receding world Waiting, patient | Ready to
flare a good-bye A farewell

Before we silently wither.

SAB IT I KABUSHENGA Yet

Mr Gwentamu submits Deciding

Mrs Gwentamu persists Insisting

You can't say I did it

No, dear

Oh, dear

Then

Dear

You can't say I did it Did it, dear?

Though, my dear What, dear?

You don't know I don't know My dear You can't know And that's the
point That's the point I see

Of course you don't

I mean

You don't see

The point

Why

You can't see Dear

I can't see?

[54]

You can't really look and see I see

You don't That's the point i That's the point

The whole damned point

The reason

Why

You don't

Look at me

Or at you

About you

About me

About us

You can't see

No you can't

You can't

You really can't

You can't possibly do

See

Me

You

Why?

I don't know And that's the point Get the book It doesn't see But you read

[55]

Read Yes read Read to know To know Know The point What point?

I see

But you don't

When I do

Let us then

Go on

Go on

I know

Go on

And get off

I don't know

And that's the point

You said

There's no point

Because

We

We

You and me Both of us Know That

You know

[56]

You said I didn't say You did

You don't have to Know Who says What.

Everybody All of them The whole lot Know Every one Why

They don't Don't speak You see I see

Nobody knows

The whole damned thing

You see

I don't want

To know

Why

They say

It doesn't matter

It doesn't matter

Forget it

Forget it

[57]

Never mind

Mind

Nothing

What is nothing

Forget it

Forget it

Forget

Everything

Well

Damn it

Forget

Forget

Okay

Kiss me

I love you

You love me

Let us go

I am ready

Things off

And

I love you

Very much

Okay

That's ah

What

Everything

Yes,

God

[58]

What

I am frozen Hell

You can't say I did it Oh, dear

You can't say I did it

[59]

william kamera Poem in Four Parts

I

The leaves are withered Roses fold and shrink.

Dog, the panting athlete, shows his tongue. A dwarfed shadow flees -
Hides under my legs Nuts wrinkle and crack.

II

The sun is old

The west glows like a worm

Shadows are long

There are cool whispers in the trees The weavers make for their homes
Old Kibo in his 'kanga' appears.

III

Like honey you covered the lawn Fleeting beauty -In the cool of the
morning air Peace-placid and pleasant.

The moist crystals of yesternight Where are you gone?

I would have you for my own.

Surrendered at the approach of dawn.

[60]

Sun from his eastern cradle

Like a chameleon measures his steps

Stretches his tender arms

Over the silent hills.

The trees exchange greetings In the gentle whispers of dawn.

The lazy night is over.

The weaverbird disturbs my rest. Day hatching from the eastern shell
Uncovers ice-shouldered Kibo.

Life blooms with the rose In the cool of the morning air The lazy night
is over.

[61]

Jonathan kariara The Distance

The distance we've travelled together is short

A maid may easily do it.

We've travelled together We

plunged in

Where a maid would only have wetted her toes.

Crossed continents in boats that leaked

Our hands darted frantically as we

Moulded the clay to stop

The gaps -

And became ONE.

From you I took fire

My pots would have lain cracked

Abandoned in the sun.

Now I tap them delicately Fearing their silent completeness.

It's you I hear Rich and Resonant.

[62]

JONATHAN KARIARA GrOSS Will Grow

If you should take my child Lord Give my hands strength to dig his
grave Cover him with earth Lord send a little rain For grass will grow.

If my house should burn down So that the ashes sting the nostrils

Making the eyes weep Then Lord send a little rain For grass will grow.

But Lord do not send me Madness I ask for tears

Do not send me moon-hard madness

To lodge snug in my skull

I would you sent me hordes of horses

Galloping

Crushing

But do not break

The yolk of the moon on me.

[63]

Jonathan kariara A Leopard Lives in a Mm Tree

A leopard lives in a Mini tree Watching my home My lambs are born
speckled My wives tie their skirts tight And turn away -Fearing
mottled offspring.

They bathe when the moon is high Soft and fecund

Splash cold mountain stream water on their nipples Drop their skin
skirts and call obscenities.

I'm besieged

I shall have to cut down the muu tree I'm besieged I walk about stiff
Stroking my loins

A leopard lives outside my homestead Watching my women

I have called him elder, the one-from-the-same-womb

He peers at me with slit eyes

His head held high

My sword has rusted in the scabbard.

My wives purse their lips When owls call for mating I'm besieged

They fetch cold mountain water They crush the sugar cane But refuse
to touch my beer horn.

My fences are broken

My medicine bags torn

The hair on my loins is singed

The upright post at the date has fallen

My women are frisky

The leopard arches over my homestead

Eats my lambs

Resuscitating himself.

[65]

JONATHAN KARIARA Song

Greet for me the son of Karanja Tell him for me I greet him When the
goats are gathered And dusk trembles Waiting, waiting Greet for me
Wanyoike Son of Karanja

Oooi . . . oooi . . . Aaiya

Tell him I'll come I'll meet him Carrying with me Two twin sticks
Straight as an arrow And as fast Will bring with me Two sapling

youths To kill me the Maitha Pungent as snuff Swift

Oooi . . . oooi . . . Aaiya.

Greet for me the son of Karanja Tell him to hurry Or the cows will
yield no milk And his lady refuses to be bled Greet him tell him to
hurry Or the cobwebs seal his door A place for broken pots Where a
fire should have been

Oooi . . . oooi . . . Aaiya.

Jonathan kariara Vietnam

The field was full of bruised babies Blood, hardening Slowly stealing
on ashen faces Painted open lips.

Women sat reclining Monuments of peace Sculptured by .death.

The river heaved, eased Flowed on The river was gay Flowing on

For this field was frozen in blood And the river was leaving.

Boots had trodden this field Booby traps (set by those Who had left
with the river)

Had gripped babies In silence.

In the field the dead women Sighed

Remembering the dull thud

Of the metal fist

Of the interrogator

(These were not the sons of rice)

Remembered

The steely cold of a gun

Placed against the temple

Seeking entrance

No more, no more

Betrayal

[67]

The useless pain of snatching Life from the fertile flood.

In that moment

The women were winnowed

(The dross drifted with the river)

The seed was sown In blood

Other sons of rice would sprout

Sheathed

For these women

Were sowing

In blood.

The field was rich for

This was not despair

This was fate, pestilence

This silence was not acquiescence

This was patience

This death was eloquent

This was not new

This was the plague of the year before This would be wiped out.

This was never to be forgotten

For this was not war

As other wars are wars

For chroniclers

These other sons

Had been sent to stir the spirit

(Their blood mingled with the sons of rice)

They would smell this

In the field which The women Had sown In blood.

This seed would spread Sealed in the marrow Would spread

In the insane twitch of the mouth Of those who sailed with the river
Would spread To the House of Bone For the river had flowed.

[69]

JOSEPH kariuki Blind

When you left Without a word. My heart wept -

Not so much For lost love (And a touch),

But the more For the blinkers Which I wore

For so long.

For so late Did I worship Such an ingrate?

Joseph kariuki Release

You dragged me Thorough the gates of pain To song,

Love from my heart Spilling over;

Reason, like Lucifer's sin Burst away arid fled.

Now the freer motion Over the fertile ground Will reign.



[71]

Joseph kariuki Sleepless in Angola

They no longer sleep.

Dissonant machine-gun cracks And the wails of their dying Have drowned their dancing drums.

And tomorrow -

Will there be a tomorrow?

They can no longer sleep.

A wind of awakening blowing from the north -To dispel the despair of life's mockery So that by death their children may live Once again as men -Has called them to resist.

They are not alone:

Their moans find echoes in the torn continent. And the oppressors shall never again Till the envied blood-clogged earth In peace.

They shall no longer sleep.

[72]

amin kassam Martin Luther King

Under Abraham's vacant eyes He proclaimed a dream A dream

That blossomed a sun Where darkness had reigned A dream

That bestrode the eagle With ringing heart Wheeling high above
Flailing truncheons thudding On bare flesh From rocky desert He
carved a valley Where soil and clouds Embraced and fused With the
voice of man Buried in his neck

[73]

amin KaSSam Mombasa

Village grown large I return to the womb Smell of fish and sweat of
ages Stored in a bundle Of palm leaves

Where bark canoes used to dry With salt on their spines Fishermen
patching nets At edge of sea.

Shark spread on table Under mango tree -Nearby heaps of cassava
Maize and bananas was market.

Sand and mosquitoes

I remember

A cyclist returned at night Through empty streets Still tongue-tied.

[74]

amin kassam Sunset

warm scent lingers

to mark his passage through
leaves and flowers breathing perfume as under
the surveillance of furtive eyes he
buries his mane of fire
in the darkness of his paws and with
bloodshot eyes stalks
into the grass.

birds twitter with anxiety at the predator come to take his place for the
night.

[75]

amin kassam Waiting for the Bus

Old men wait at the stop Huddling from rain Under a tree As I pass
Running to catch up With my reflection In a puddle They laugh And
talk of death.

[76]

YUSUF o. kassam Mdji Maji

Sitting on a stool outside his mud hut,
The mzee scratched his head in a slow motion,
Trying to recall.

His dim grey eyes quiveringly stared into the distance And with a faint
faltering voice he spoke Of the wind that stirred sinister feelings,

Of the leaves that rustled with foreboding,
Of the men who talked of deliverance and freedom,
And of the warriors who pledged to fight.

Then he paused and snuffed some tobacco 'The Germans -' He shook his head and shuddered: 'Yes, they came - with guns, to be sure -Many guns.'

His glance slowly shifted in a broken semi-circle At each of the few listeners who squatted on the ground. He pointed to the distant hills on his right:

'For many days,
They resounded with drum-beats and frenzied cries;
Then with the spirits of alien ancestors
They thundered with strange unearthly sounds.'

Placing both his hands on his head,
He looked down on the earth and pronounced,
'They fired bullets, not water, no, not water.'
He looked up, with a face crumpled with agony,
And with an unsteady swing of his arm, he said,
'Dead, we all lay dead.'

While the mzee paused, still and silent,

His listeners gravely looked at each other Seeming to echo his last words in chorus.

Finally, exhausted, he sighed,
'The Germans came and went,
And for many long years No drums beat again.'

[77]

It was that memorable night when I heard it, Yes, I heard it all.
That night sleep deserted me,
Mocked at me and tantalized me;
So I lay awake, sharp in all my senses.
It was long past midnight:
Time dragged on, the clock wouldn't chime;
The dog wouldn't bark, nor the baby cry;
It was a moonless and windless night;
The whole universe seemed to stagnate In dark, dreary, dead slumber.
What was amiss? I knew not.
The dead quietness and solitude Seemed to be eternal, - but Waves of
babbling and muttering Began to trickle through the street;
A distant roaring of heavy trucks filled the air; Hurried footsteps
echoed through the street.
What was amiss? I knew not.
I pulled my curtain to see,
And there I saw it all -

Heavy boots, thick uniforms and solid helmets, Dimly discernible under the pale street lamp.

The atmosphere stood stiff and solid with Brawny-faced and clenched-teeth determination. Thus the cauldron had boiled that sleepless night.

The night had pulsed with passions high and wild; The streets were stained with new portraits framed; The wheel changed hands and new plans were filed. The morning saw the country strangely dressed,

And everyone attended the rally

To hear the eloquence from a strange face,

And everyone quietly nodded and said, 'Yes'.

People walk,

But where is the sound of their footsteps? People talk,

But where is their charm and humour?

It is warm and bright,

But I cannot see the sun!

It is cool and romantic,

But I cannot see the moon!

The trees sway,

Without the rustling of their leaves.

The music plays,

Without rhythm or enchantment.

The lamps light devoid of any glow;

Hot coffee is served devoid of any aroma.

I shake hands but cannot get the grip;

I hit a ball but it does not rise.

Someone pronounces, 'Arise'!

But where is the energy?

Another pleads, 'Enliven'!

But where is the blood?

A third says 'Illuminate'!

But where is the light?

I seek in vain for colour and lustre,

For the dew and spice,

For the warmth and radiance;

Yes, the very soil under my feet lacks fertility.

[80]

YUSUF O. KASSAM NgOma

The drum beats,

And with bare feet and red earth,

Rhythm erupts,

Muscles and drums synchronized.

Bodies sweat,

Vigorously,

Glistening round the flickering fire,

Erotic.

The night is long,

Drums beat more furiously,

Moving the kaleidoscope of frenzied expressions, And the pulse
outruns the drum beat.

The drums inspired the dancers,

Now the dancers inspire the drummers.

No more.

Relax.

Wipe the dust and the sweat.

But the pulse still beats,

Muscles twitch,

And drums echo,

All in a hangover of rhythm,

African rhythm.

[81]

The sun set, night came, and everything was dark:

It was a signal to stir.

Out in the rough sea the propeller churned,

And the bewildered rudder trailed behind;
The shovel dug the ground mile after mile;
Heavy rubber smouldered on lonely roads;
Chains of steel-plate crushed the plants and the stones, While a
droning echo filled the pierced sky.
Soon the sea, the land, the sky were all quiet;
The sweat was wiped and the pistons rested,
And all the movement came to a standstill.
Then came the long and nervous waiting:
The clock ticked,
The heart beat,
The sentry stepped,
The eyes gleamed,
And the morse peeped under a cold finger.
At dawn the clock pointed the hour, and 'Strike 5 , shrilled the sharp
calculated command.
At once the fever and the frenzy mushroomed,
While the rising sun splashed red everywhere:
Those who were then beginning to awake Never awoke again.

[82]

Under warm sunshine,

A pond of water rests, calm and serene.

The blue sky inhabits the middle of the pond, And its sides reflect the greenery, r Spotted with the yellow and the red,

The red and the violet.

The water, the sky, the vegetation,

Hand in hand convey harmony and peace. Then comes the splash!

And a tremendous stirring surges:

Reflections distort,

Giving way to a rushing flow of ripples, Ripples concentric,

Ripples innumerable,

All fleeing from the wound.

Time elapses,

Ripples fade,

Reflections regain their shape,

And once again emerges the pond Smooth and tranquil.

But the stone!

The stone will always cling to the bottom.

[83]

tab an lo liyong the age of innocence is passed

i confess ive never met a Chinese who looks old but irn told hell really look old

antiquity and china are twins dont confuse confucius with buddha tho
both are sages oriental ancient

i woke this morning to find lincoln down and george Washington lying
on the ground a statue

surely confucius must live if only to prolong the rarity

the chairman says no the gavel rules the day

senghor knows

where the vote comes from

sir

where does culture go

to atoms the child says

the gentle idiots who cannot scare the crow

[84]

we guard the ways of old and dont forget the church

abhorring shedding blood successes holy mark

macbeth had done the deed before he went to sleep

let the old man die with his hospitality and humanism

till Nile flows back victoria lake

[85]

taban lo liyong from: The Marriage of Black and

White

IV

Marry me

And we shall have children Who will not need sunbathing
Having been blessed with a skin The hue that is intermediate:

True representatives Of the race of the future:

Of the conscience that is to be A consensus of all there is
Of culture and skins:

People who speak a language That is universal

As the stocks from which it is derived:

The product of prides in races;

The successors over petty bigotry:

The race that will inherit The best there is from both;

Children grown strong Tempered by ill-knowledges That are
appendixes In the two camps Of colour curtains.

And Nietzsche was wrong Against racial mixing;

He is right - if

There is no psychological homework.

My skin is so black And potent as the coal That the miners bring out
From the bowels of the earth,

With plenty of energy entrapped.

Since the world is everyday traversed By Eskimos and the Deserters
alike:

Dwellers of adverse climates

With built-in protections for their own niches.

It is so clear that the issues

Of parents from the extremes

Are more favoured to live stronger

Than the parents blind in one eye.

C'mon

We are not freaks,

We are of the same species Despite the protective colouration,

Nature's own invention For her sons' accommodations To the various latitudes Before the sons could conquer Distance.

We are not freaks I mean you are not and I am not.

And our children won't be mules —

Dead ends of crossbreedings —

On the contrary, very robust,

Best fitted to live in this their world,

A world relative and comparative,

A world shrunk by Orville and Marconi,

A world that knows no boundary,

A world in flux,

With the colour disc in full swing Blurring the primaries,

A world betterworsened by

I-it.

[87]

taban lo liyong Gloria Bishop

Gloria Bishop

Perhaps I yearn to be mothered And you fitted in very well;

Perhaps you needed children And we obliged;

I had the chance to sit on your lap And be patted on the head,

And be told:

Son, your world is yours,

Go and play now,

Come back for suck Otherwise amuse yourself.

And sometimes:

Let's look at Whitman.

And I told the class:

Whitman said to Prostitute:

C'mon, get off the street,

Go home and wash yourself clean,

For tonight, I Whitman,

Will be your guest.

The class laughed,
I don't know why,
Cheap morality, perhaps.

Gloria,

You don't know a lot

(And that's an asset for successful teaching)

[88]

But you have unbounded energy

And the knack to direct our vision

Over the contours of literature

And these place you above everybody else.

Thanks be to you —

You were my confessor,

My encourager,

My inspiration.

A second mother to me.

[89]

tab an lo liyong from: Poems More

XVIII

Nothing makes me madder Than to find I am not the first
Where I was blazing a trail.

Scarcely six years old I heard there were machines Travelling up the air and under water.

I resolved to invent a one That would fly like a plane Under earth.

Certain animals Already do that I was told.

Confound them!

Let small pox, great pox, goat pox, pox pox, pix pox, pax pox, prax prox, prix prix prax, pix pax pox, pox them!

[90]

taban lo liyong from: Songs from the Congolese

VI

When I was young mother told me to shut up or else the ten-eyed giant would hear me.

When I was young mother told me to finish my food

r or else daddy would spank me dead.

When I was young sister told me to steal or else I would not get my meal.

When I was young mother told me to bathe or else the akula would catch me at night.

When I was young I was told to be home at night or else abiba would eat my liver.

When I was young teachers told me to pray at night or else Satan would be by my side.

Now that I am old the giant comes and visits me:

I can see his red ten eyes and bloody teeth;

Now that I am old I can feel the hand of father when with rage he beats
me as if I was a foe;

Now that I am old I still remember sister when hunger comes and
gnaws my entrails;

Now that I am old I know the Black Maria for sure as the truck to take
me for cutting up;

Now that I am old I know the eagle overhead is for sure that bird
which eats my life while I am alive;

Now that I am old I go to pray in order to get some quiet.

Stephen lubega Evening

Never has the death of a poet Been tolled by all the world,

God's work on earth, though,

Has its universal funeral in the west, Recurrent grave of day's mighty
soul.

Never was a victory so trumpeted,

As that of the sun climbing his fiery way And then in gorgeous colours
falling, Trailing stars.

Life and death, water and aridity Bow to his passing ray.

With his passing death stirs in the thicket. In church the bell is tolled.

In barracks at the last bugle note,

Soldiers like ants file.

The busy woman scolds her child, Drunkards like sick dogs retch

homewards, The night voice is a harsh guitar.

But on a hill among mnsizi trees Sweet nuns sing litanies,

Of that virgin whose Son we know.

Priests like lamp-posts in a graveyard, Stoop over the breviary.

There's a piping of crickets in the bush,

And a bellowing of frogs -

All sing the ancient elegy

For the sun that has died in the West.

[92]

Stephen lubega Requiem for Kagumba

Irreconcilable love and pity Butted against my heart;

For my gentlest and kindest,

The bravest and humblest friend, Kagumba, Dipped his life in a river.

Uganda's ring champion

Could not jab the mighty waters of Mayanja;

With his Diploma in Education

Could not teach the river

(Do not laugh, friends)

But with six others

His body submitted to the water.

I entered a gloomed grief That was handed down to me While still a child
By my gone grandmother.

I swallowed the best of my smiles And gave a timid bow to Death.

A hundred fears poured into my shrunken heart As fast as waves
against a wreck.

Gloved grief punched and hooked My ego

Only to crown me with dark haloes.

john s. mbiti The Crucified Thief

I am a crucified thief,

Dying for my unnumbered sins; Beside me dies the 'sinful' God Who
takes away the sin of the world.

His fingers freeze from cold,

His eyes are dark with desert dust, His throat is coarse from thirst.

He suffers thus for me and you.

I am a crucified thief,

Stealing away the love of God,

I am crucified with Christ,

To be with Him in paradise.

The sun above for fear hides,

The earth beneath in pain shakes, And buried souls awake to weep,
While angels bow and wink in tears.

Alone I stole, I stole But here with Christ I die.

He dies for crucified thieves,

And steals their sins away.

[94]

john s. mbiti New York Skyscrapers

The weak scattered rays of yellow sun Peeped through the hazy tissues
That blanketed them with transparent wax. And as the wrinkled rays
closed the day, Smoky chimneys of New York coughed Looking down
in bended towers,

And vomited sad tears of dark smoke.

As the wrinkled rays dismissed the day Smoky chimneys of New York
coughed Vomiting chunks of thick smoke Like rotten rust scraped
From their towering heights.

Dispersed and weak The shafts of yellow rays Descend

Peeping through the hazy tissues That blanket them with transparent
wax.

[95]

john s. mbiti My Father's Wooden House

Let not your grinning ads lure me

But leave me in my father's wooden house

Unseen

Amidst the woods of Africa's sunny plains

Surrounded by apes and hippos

Discerning the jazz of nocturnal birds and bugs.

Let me close to mother earth remain Embraced in her Nature's rugged cloak.

Out of this my lowly home Proceed my faithful dog to hunt,

The herdsboy removes to tender sheep and cows,

And evening hours in Nature's mirth abound

Around the smoky wooden fire

Which warms my father's wooden house.

Oh Manhattan Manhattan!

The chiefest isle beyond the seas,

I envy you not,

I covet not your naked thighs Artificially dyed in Parisian perfumes
And on the beach soliciting summer's tan,

With all your noisy calls to purchase

The latest mechanical gadgets

Whilst I with my slackening muscles work

And toil with Nature

Under my feet and about my way.

Manhattan in all your conglomerate noises Of muddled trains and
trucks and cars and helicopters Bustling ceaselessly through your
calendars,

Running and never resting:

Dull you remain to those tender touches Of man's friendships and love

[96]

Laughing with a gilded row of movable teeth
The symbol of your artificial ways.

So let me abide in Nature's threshold
Cautiously treading on the paths of cobras black,
And sleep on warping wooden beams
Overlain with antelope's hairy leather
Wearing and eating of Nature's overflows:

But let my feeling human heart
Forever remain with me,

Let me spend my years counting
The open stars above my head,

And let me greet my kin and neighbour
With a heart of love.

But you lofty Manhattan
With picture printed cards
Your sons and daughters greet
Par avion across the seas,

And let the sleeping pills
Your health sustain.

Shall I compare your towering majesty
Oh Manhattan,

To our grassy stubble roofs?

Yours is the vast road with cars and cans and banks,
But leave me unmolested
My gravel path to plod,

Holding the shepherd's crooked rod.

Oh leave me in my father's wooden house
Close to Nature,

And close to kin, neighbour and friend.

[97]

john s. mbiti War After War

We are tired of waiting for another war

Our trees their leaves have shed
The winter has come and gone
Spring flowers have blossomed and withered
And here we are
Still waiting for another war
Our atom bombs have rusty grown
And bald are the heads of those who made them
But we
The ugly martyrs of another war
Do not fear
We have seen wars
We know their taste is sweet
And their smell is good
Smoke from the guns is all we dream about
Waiting for our opulent leaders
To start another war
Waiting
Till the first shot is heard And the war trumpet is blown

[987

john s. mbiti Wearing Masks of Fear

We are the solitary street travellers,

Fearing death

And wearing masks of fear.

We've been waiting here

In the middle of a long narrow street,

Wanting to cross and walk eastward,

Eastward with our backs facing West,

But we fear death . . .

Death before us,

Death from the South and death from the North.

We are the solitary street travellers

Fearing death

And wearing masks of fear.

We are consumed by solitude -You and you and I

The three solitary men and women and children, Fearing death.

We fear to cross the street And fear to wait in the street And fear to wear our masks of fear.

[99]

ROSE MBOWA Ruin

Up on a hill it stood immovable.

Dark and gloomy in the dusk;

A heavy silence hung in the air Restraining her courage, her will;

But on she walked.

A cricket whistled breaking the silence, Lighting her path and her will;

Then suddenly it stopped,

As if suppressed by a heavy hand,

Still - on she moved.

Every move drew her nearer,

Every move gravitated towards the gloom; Giant trees, heavy and dark
before her rose, Guards on duty, erect in the dark,

Through them - she pushed.

With eyes closed, arms outstretched,

She groped in an envelope of black;

The air grew dense and doomed,

Her heart drummed faster and louder;

To the door - she stepped.

With trembling hands she pushed,

A squeal pierced the air;

Flashes blinded her sight;

And down she descended at a blow,

On the grim, rude stone.

[100]

rose mbowa That Game

With dazzling eyes: sweet poison in teeth,

He to the core armed plays his game; Triumphantly the fools applaud,

While the wise weigh;

With feet on edge, mouth in mid-air He cunningly his prey surveys;

Then suddenly he aims his shot:

Fool and wise applaud,

The game is won,

In the centre firmly he stands:

Luxuriously flies by that time.

The time has flown: no fruit has yet emerged: Fool and wise their
heads together bend; Meanwhile he comfortable puffs his pipe,
Belching the while for the richness of it all; Then suddenly -Eyes open:
ears unstop As the crowd clamours,

Clamours for its share:

Eyes left - right -Up and down he stares,

Starts -

Gripping the table he aims his shot:

Once sweet, bitter becomes the poison: Edgeward blows the storm,

Persists - accelerates Arms outstretch Eyes madly dart;

Topples - and stares into darkness.

[ioi]

ALEXANDER muigai The Troubled Warrior

I'll put aside my hoe:

Let them call me lazy.

I'll lay aside my stick:

Let my cattle rove alone.

I'll bid farewell my girl And my laughing sister Despite their sweet tears.

I'll pat my younger brother.

Then I'll go and kneel down Before the two heaps of stones Where my parents He;

I'll plead with them to call The blessing of their gods On me, a troubled youth,

Before I go in the pursuit.

Then I'll gird my loin-cloth.

Sling my bow and the sword Of my clan. Spear in hand I'll go to face the foe.

The dewy grass shall be My couch; on the cold rock My head shall rest;

The damp night air shall blanket me; And to the wild beast I'll be a guest.

I'll drink from the wandering streams; Suck on wild fruits.

Till I have faced my foe I'll be ashamed to face my home. Courage, hate and my enemy's fate Drive me on. Mighty he stands

[102]

But curse be on me if I show him my naked heels: No! Never, never!

Come death before surrender But I'll slay him - this I know.

Then I'll dry my bleeding Sword on my thirsty tongue; And proclaim
victory -The will of my fathers.

Thus, all having been done, And my poor heart settled,

I'll venture to go home.

I'll take up my hoe and dig; I'll pick up my stick and herd; I'll court my
girl and wed. Having done my duty,

I'll sit by the fire And grow old.

paul mukasa-ssali katebo Port

There's a strong wind that breaks on Katebo Port, Murmuring and
throbbing like a dim, dirge drum, And, welling roaring waves like a
full-throated song, Knocks at one's inner spirit with its swagger.

It's there we went fishing on memorable afternoons The pebbled beach
stretched out wet and gleaming With granite cliffs rising crescent in
translucent light: Livid and layered, pocked with tiny caves.

The canoes painted in gaudy greens, blues and reds With the soft
smack of the water lapping their flanks Suggesting the colourful gaiety
of canoe regattas The fishermen squatted, mending their nets,

Agile young men with untidy beards.

The women with slung, crying babies on their backs Game in groups to
buy sweet, slit smoked fish. Evening came and people went away
Except for the watchful boys with catapults ready To shoot at the low-
flying birds from the lake.

paul mukasa-ssali The Sentinel

The rising sun on a Sunday morning Sometimes catches the night
sentinel Unawares,

Curled in his sleep like an apostrophe, Still dotty with a drowsy mouth
-Obnoxiously open As if starting a tentative yawn.

[105]

paul mukasa-ssali When You Come

When you come, dear friend,

Don't surprise me at the blink of dawn With your dew-wet shuffling of
footsteps On the stair and along the corridor.

When you come, dear friend,

Give me word, drop me a line

But don't surprise me in bed unshaven

Smelling of sleep with no pyjama coat!

Besides, my room at that apprehensive hour With sprawled clothes
and towel on the chair Would be unforgettably chaotic.

But when you come, dear friend,

Don't be exasperating and keep me waiting So that I pace about the
room - alone,

Or put a disc on the record-player,

Waiting for your any-minute knock on the door.

[i°6]

magemeso namungalu The Town Beauty

There she lay in a pool of blood,

Speared and maimed,

Mute and lifeless,

Base and worthless.

There she lay, the butchered woman,

The butchered woman, daughter of a chief,

The daughter of a chief, the town beauty, Silenced by the rage of a
spear.

She lay in a pool of blood, nude as she was born, Fierce, as if hours ago
not lovely to touch, Already beginning to steam like fresh dung:

No one knew she was daughter of a chief.

She lay mid a group of frightened women -Women who were mad with
grief.

Men that were there fumed with fuy

That a beauty should enter the ground so young.

There she lay, silenced for ever,

With her beauty crossed,

Her eyes for ever shut to the world;

Soon the ground was to swallow her.

[j°7]

magemeso namungalu An Unlucky Lover

Oo, from which wing do you come?

Darling, I am all done:

It's the blood in my veins that speaks to you! Darling, just days ago -
just days ago I was married in the church to a tin of salt.

If only I was powerful - if only I was powerful, The church would cut
us asunder,

Then I'd marry you:

I'd sacrifice all to bring us together.

Darling, feel my unlucky body And see how much I've cooled -Cooled
because I - I don't know Whether you can admit a second-hand wife -A
second-hand wife to your bed.

Whatever you ask me, your old girl-friend,

I will obey.

After the marriage he left me a widow,

Left me husbandless, so young a girl,

And he went to a college in the States.

Am I his sister? Very no!

And, to be sure, I can't sexually starve:

I hope with you he'll find me gone;

With you I'll be gone if you agree.

Dear, that's all I have to say;

But without you, for sure, I'll die unhappy.

[108]

stella n gat ho Footpath

Path-let . . . leaving home, leading out,

Return my mother to me.

The sun is sinking and darkness coming,

Hens and cocks are already inside and babies drowsing, Return my mother to me.

We do not*have fire-wood and I have not seen the lantern, There is no more food and the water has run out, Path-let I pray you, return my mother to me.

Path of the hillocks, path of the small stones,

Path of slipperiness, path of the mud,

Return my mother to me.

Path of the papyrus, path of the rivers,

Path of the small forests, path of the reeds,

Return my mother to me.

Path that winds, path of the short-cut,

Over-trodden path, newly-made path,

Return my mother to me.

Path, I implore you, return my mother to me.

Path of the crossways, path that branches off,

Path of the stinging shrubs, path of the bridge,

Return my mother to me.

Path of the open, path of the valley,

Path of the steep climb, path of the downward slope, Return my
mother to me.

Children are drowsing about to sleep,

Darkness is coming and there is no fire-wood,

And I have not found the lantern:

Return my mother to me.

stella ngatho The Kraal

The kraal fence hides quarrels Of jealous wives,

it hides the miseries within and sadness

of wives fallen from favour.

It excludes anyone beyond its gate That reed fence

spells laughter, joy and happiness to the outside but hides the cruelty
of the husband within

to the tortured tormented wife, the sad one full of woes:

the favoured one full of ease and joy. Yes, that reed fence hides plenty.

[iio]

stella ngatho A Young Tree

Alone in the vast forest of elders

A young tree grows

Dreaming of days she'll be accepted

Surrounded by her silent mates

And beardy elders

She is gay and sad and happy, yet

Not knowing why.

Among the majesty of beardy elders
Wrapped in tottering beauty
Tinged with grey Knowing for once and all
She never will be happy
with her lot Till her branches touch the blue

Alone with her silent mates

Alone among beardy elders

Her mind meanders across

Broody shadows of time growing old,

Time arrested at dawn

Reaching out for peace

Amidst the elders of time.

Em]

victor ngwabe Makoha

A limping little cupid of farce An allegory of mortality.

Neither smile nor tears are

Capable of ushering in this uncertainty,

The Darling of Fate.

She knows his time is winged. Papyrus-reeds dewy shaken In a misty-
grey morning Splattering with rain drops and The hooting Owl.

Head free of hair, and papyrus-reeds Wound like a witch's snake
Around her neck,

Makoha!

A collection of dung-heap Inevitable earth, an Ash Wednesday.

[112]

richard ntiru Modena

When you have whispered it in my cocked ear With an equivocal voice
and quivering frame;

When you have sworn it was by me And not Tom, Dick, or Harry;

When you have recreated the memorable scene That night after the
Charity Ball When the heroine of contrived action Clutched at the
elusive moment of emaciated hope; When you have concluded with a
certain smile That the D.C. would do it secretly -Modena, do not mock
the bruised bosom of the widowed mother

When I make discoveries and speak truths Which we both knew but
never revealed:

How you explained your week-end absences By attending imaginary
funerals of imaginary relatives; How you realized your battered frame,

Like stale beer that has lost its spear,

Would not find any other male patron;

How you gave me hurried promotions From boy-friend to lover and then to fiance;

How you baited me with your selfish generosity;

Do not mock the wounded heart of the widowed mother When I promise you that I'll not keep an oath Extorted from me by your forked tongue;

Do not fool mankind any more

With elegies of innocence, chastity and youth;

Let the sun melt all the rings on men's fingers -After the first treachery, there is no other.

richard ntiru The Pauper

Pauper, pauper, craning your eyes In all directions, in no direction !

What brutal force, malignant element,

Dared to forge your piteous fate?

Was it worth the effort, the time?

You limply lean on a leafless tree Nursing the jiggers that shrivel your bottom Like a baby newly born to an old woman.

What crime, what treason did you commit

That you are thus condemned to human indifference?

And when you trudge on the horny pads,

Gullied like the soles of modem shoes,

Pads that even jiggers cannot conquer:

Does He admire your sense of endurance

Or turn his head away from your impudent presence?

You sit alone on hairless goatskins,

Your ribs and bones reflecting the light That beautiful cars reflect on you,

Squashing lice between your nails And cleaning your nails with dry saliva.

And when He looks at the grimy coating Caking off your emaciated skin,

At the rust that uproots all your teeth Like a pick on a stony piece of land,

Does He pat his paunch at the wonderful sight?

Pauper, pauper, crouching in beautiful verandas Of beautiful cities and beautiful people,

Tourists and I will take your snapshots,

And your M.P. with a shining head and triple chin Will mourn your fate in a supplementary question Question Time.

righard ntiru To the Living

Only those

Who have survived

The final anaesthetization;

Those who have enacted the final epilogue; Only these

Have the prescient perception

Of the inner idea of life

And can partake of the spectral dance;

Only they

Have the inner knowledge

Of the numbing nutation

On gravestill nights when nude priests,

In mortal ecstasy,

Bless multicoloured anti-amulets On virgin pelvicbone amphorae And
celebrate prenatal deathdays To the rhythm of the drum of death
Struck with the thighbone Of him who died on his bridal night.

These are they

Who have bared their bones

And submitted to the savage salvation

Of the caustic dew of the cold grave;

Only these

Understand the eloquence of the silence Between two echoes in a
haunted cave.

Who but they

Who walk beyond the twilight glimmer Between sleep and waking,

[ne]

Who bask in nocturnal sunlight

And breathe the cool diurnal darkbreeze,
Who have experienced
The realization of the inevitable dream,
Know the revitalizing power of the stilled blood ?

But we,

We who clutch at tattered totems And turn away from solar solace
When the innocence butter Melts in our hands at the ordeal,

We who raise open hands in supplication to Nyabingi -Hands that
would embrace -What dream are we capable of?

[n7]

richard ntiru Virgine Madre

Virgine Madre daughter of her son mother of her son Musaba's
marriage was not meant to last divorce due to incompatibility perhaps
there were antecedents she had a premarital son George defied
abortion Virgine Madre

Baine could get himself a new wife Musaba a new husband or
characters to that effect

music by the cranes

the cranes on the stage

Musaba must not miss her new lover

hair imported from Northern Canada

intense products of I.C.I.

islands of nature amid a sea of civilization

shades of black on a background of sickly yellow

self-suffocation

in cheap resplendent dress

as taut as her soul

betraying a large floppy behind

supported on two rickety thighs

(alas the stockings hung loose)

tapering to shoes three inches off the ground

she sat in the humid ballroom

issuing incense

from her I.C.I. manufactory

George belched in her face and haggled for a dance the price was a
bottle of waragi swig

and it was gone

she staggered on the floor awhile she was led by the back door . . . the
lights winked for five minutes they were shy to see the sight

o leka nnyabo togenda

she transcended advice the price was one pound for incest . . .

benedict onyango ogutu Voices of Transition

I hear sweet voice and my heart beats. Who calls? Does someone call
outside? Bellowing winds? Wind drowns all.

From bedside pillow I hear voices of leaves
Quiver in wind blown by zephyr
Hear rivers speak and springs whisper;
Birds whistle, insects click by.

Do you hear voices of leaves?

I hear someone call My heart beats

And drums, throbs like water-pump.

Voices from the dark From forest deep Whistling leaves Who calls?

I hear voices from wind talking Sound that shuttles me
Between Echo and ears.

I hear trees talking See them wiping tears
Their feet trickle with gore.

Don't you see trees walking

Trample in frenzy, dance

And climb my veins

Talking then recede like sail-away

Oar-boats on and on away

Where sky lips kiss

Distant hills and sea

Where sun abdicates from sky In silence

Sound of brave paddles die Like stalks of men not Good for firewood
lying Deserted like school in holiday Overgrown with loneliness

[I2I]

OKELLO oguli The Cross of Death

Nothing breaks the silence of sleep's territory, Only you and me,

Tree and Star,

Knees rubbing,

Cheeks melting and cooling In the sag and thrust of billowing;

Loving

With the power of wilderness And the Constance of Life,

Growing and deepening with each new sun And every new moon.

You and me

Us

We

Together in the eternity of passion.

We came together in the quiet heat Of tropical night;

I ask not from whence passion comes But accept the challenge of your
boiling breasts. Tropical night in December Night of passionate
abandon,

Cool glittering stars fused and fusing In the blackness of never ending
sky;

But all too soon

The whip of Crosses

Will rip the bliss of our

Lango night in December

And save your breasts for the Omnipotent

Bites of the teeth of worms!

[122]

okello oguli The Return

Dawn is breaking

Behind the hut and a vague glow marching Out, boldly,

A herald!

Like hot breaths of grass fire,

Bewitching bouncing frantic grasshoppers And the sly glide of the
chameleon.

There is a dim stirring in the bushes;

A Gasp as of a child in battle with Waking.

A forlorn squeal of a tiny bird Awakes the rest!

Their beaks grope the stubborn but Yielding clouds of Darkness,

Rising in longing,

Surging in growing chorus of impatient,

Frantic and dizzy beaks rushing to Dawn

The rush to dawn

To solve the riddle that lies deeply

In the wrinkled faces

And troubled eyes of the Natives.

okot p'bitek Return the Bridewealth

I go to my old father

He is sitting in the shade at the foot of the simsim granary,

His eyes are fixed on the three graves of his grandchildren

He is silent.

Father, I say to him,

Father, gather the bridewealth so that I may marry the girl of my bosom!

My old father rests his bony chin in the broken cups of his withered hands,

His long black finger-nails vainly digging into the tough dry skin of his cheeks

He keeps staring at the graves of his grandchildren,

Some labikka weeds and obiya grasses are growing on the mounds.

My old father does not answer me, only two large clotting tears crawl down his wrinkled cheeks,

And a faint half smile alights on his lips, causing them to quiver and part slightly.

He reaches out for his walking staff, oily with age and smooth like the long teeth of an old elephant.

One hand on his broken hip, he heaves himself up on the three stilts,

His every joint crackling and the bones breaking!

Hm! he sighs, and staggers towards the graves of his grandchildren,

And with the bony-dry staff he strikes the mounds: One! Two! Three!

He bends to pluck the labikka weeds and the obiya grasses, [124]

But he cannot reach the ground, his stone-stiff back cracks like dry firewood.

Hm! he sighs again, he turns around and walks past me. He does not speak to me.

There are more clotting tears on his glassy eyes,

The faint smile on his broken lips has grown bigger.

II

My old mother is returning from the well

The water-pot sits on the pad on her grey wet head.

One hand fondles the belly of the water pot, the other strangles the walking staff.

She pauses briefly by the graves of her grandchildren and studies the labikka weeds and the obiya grasses waving like feathers atop the mounds.

Hm! she sighs She walks past me;

She does not greet me.

Her face is wet, perhaps with sweat, perhaps with water from the water-pot

Perhaps some tears mingle with the water and sweat The thing on her face is not a smile,

Her lips are tightly locked.

She stops before the door of her hut

She throws down the wet walking staff, klenky, klenky!

A little girl in green frock runs to her assistance;

Slowly, slowly, steadily she kneels down;

Together, slowly, slowly, gently they lift the water-pot and put it down.

My old mother says, Thank you!

[125]

Some water splashes onto the earth, and wets the little girl's school books.

She bursts into tears, and rolls on the earth, soiling her beautiful green frock,

A little boy giggles.

He says, All women are the same aren't they?

Another little boy consoles his sister.

Ill

I go to the Town

I see a man and a woman

He wears heavy boots, his buttocks are like sacks of cotton

His chest resembles the simsim granary,

His head is hidden under a broad-rimmed hat.

In one hand he holds a loaded machine-gun, his fingers at the trigger

His other hand coils round the waist of the woman like a starving python.

They part after a noisy kiss

Hm! he sighs!

Hm! she sighs!

He marches past me, stumping the earth in anger, like an elephant with a bullet in his bony head!

He does not look at me

He does not touch me, only the butt of his weapon touches my knee lightly,

He walks away, the sacks of cotton on his behind rising and falling alternately,

[126]

Like a bull hippo returning to the river after grazing in the fresh grasses.

Hm! I sigh!

I go to the woman,

She does not look up to me,

She writes things in the sand.

She says, How are my children?

I say, Three are dead, and some labikka weeds and obiya grasses grow on their graves.

She is silent!

I say, your daughter is now in Primary Six, and your little boys ask after you!

The woman says, My mother is dead!

I am silent!

The agoga bird flies overhead

He cries his sorrowful message:

She is dead! She is dead!

The guinea-fowl croaks in the tree near by Sorrow is part of me,

Sorrow is part of me. How can I escape The boldness on my head?

She is silent!

Hm! I sigh!

She says, I want to see my children!

I tell the woman I cannot trace her father.

I say to her I want back the bridewealth that my father paid when we wedded some years ago,

When she was full of charm, a sweet innocent little hospital ward-maid.

[127]

She is silent!

I tell the woman I will marry the girl of my bosom

I tell her the orphans she left behind will be mothered, and the labikka weeds and obiya grasses that grow on the graves of her children will be

weeded,

And the ground around the mounds will be kept tidy.

Hm! she sighs!

She is silent!

I am silent!

The woman reaches out for her handbag.

It is not the one I gave her as a gift last Christmas.

She opens it,

She takes out a new purse,

She takes out a cheque.

She looks up to me, our eyes meet again after many months.

There are two deep valleys on her cheeks that were not there before

There is some water in the valleys.

The skin on her neck is rotting away,

They say the doctor has cut open her stomach and removed the bag of her eggs

So that she may remain a young woman for ever.

I am silent!

A broad witch-smile darkens her wet face,

[128]

She screams,

Here, take it! Go and marry your bloody woman! I open the cheque It reads,

Shillings One thousand four hundred only!

okot p'bitek They Sowed and Watered

They sowed and watered

Acres of cynicisms

Planted forests of laughters

Bitter laughters that flowed in torrents

And men shed tears as they rocked

And held their chests

And laughed and laughed

The floods of tears turned red

They manured the land And frustrations sprouted Bursting the soil
Like young bananas Fat frustrations flourished fast Yielding fruits
green as gall

On the hillsides They planted angers And their blossoms crimson red
Covered the hills like February fires

Their prickly leaves hard and yellow Pricked men's skins And wounds
festered

In the valley

A streamlet trickled

Its waters sluggish thick

Beside the streamlet rotting smelly

A lamb named Freedom

Dead as stone

[130]

A small herds-boy sat on the bank

He threw small stones

Which hit the carcass

Flies rose like white ants

The boy sobbed eyes full of pepper

Ten men stood on the other side

They roared lion-like

And laughed with mirth

The peals of laughter

Poisoned arrows

Hit the boy like swords of steel

And blood from his heart

Anointing the land

opinya h, w. okoth-ogendo The Gambler

A cockerel crows as a broken axe Falls at your feet.

Disarmed by time You stand unashamed,

Crying 'It is not fair'.

Tied by your own hate-traps And fouled by the urine of your flag-bearers,

You have gambled away the labours of our motherland; entered trade with death to batter humanity with the wave of a flywhisk.

You have locked up the fires Of living youth,

Damned in the torrents of conscience

and drenched your entrails with greed and with pride.

But you have lost the bet and your line shall we ostracise

Bury the stool of your mother's house for vengeance is unleashed and contempt is in our spittle.

And as public office Zigzags corrupt

like the trail of a drunken whore that menstruates,

and as gunmen freely execute insane commands We know that the time has come to kill,

To cleanse,

To free our motherland From the grip of a gambler.

[133]

marjorie oludhe-macgoye A Freedom Song

Atieno washes dishes,

Atieno plucks the chicken,

Atieno gets up early,

Beds her sacks down in the kitchen, Atieno eight years old,
Atieno yo.

Since she is my sister's child Atieno needs no pay,

While she works my wife can sit Sewing every sunny day:

With her earnings I support Atieno yo.

Atieno's sly and jealous,

Bad example to the kids Since she minds them, like a schoolgirl Wants
their dresses, shoes and beads, Atieno ten years old,

Atieno yo.

Now my wife has gone to study Atieno is less free.

Don't I keep her, school my own ones, Pay the party, union fee,

All for progress: aren't you grateful Atieno yo?

[134]

Visitors need much attention,

All the more when I work night. That girl spends too long at market,
Who will teach her what is right? Atieno rising fourteen,

Atieno yo.

Atieno's had a baby So we know that she is bad.

Fifty fifty it may live And repeat the life she had Ending in post-
partum bleeding, Atieno yo.

Atieno's soon replaced.

Meat and sugar more than all She ate in such a narrow life Were
lavished on her funeral. Atieno's gone to glory,

Atieno yo.

[135]

I see a road

that runs a hole through a heart and little cars travelling fast to further
a dream of little will o' the wisp holding a spectre of a flower and
blowing kisses in the wind,

that floats a soothing voice a cry to a heart new-filled to the brim and
love and longing stir it to ripeness affection lifts the soul

and dizzies the body to grope in a vacuum

For that which is gone

on that road to Mombasa

and little will o' the wisp

holds a spectre of a flower

and blows kisses in the wind.

The moon's lustre opens a yellow flower looking through blue eyes
flashing diamonds

a spark explodes in a grabbing heart

as it plucks out this flower

to treasure in a box at a comer

of a near-broken house

love beckons little will o' the wisp
as three hundred miles slice a heart in two
leaving a part in me
and flying the other half
three hundred miles.

[136]

David Rubadiri Death at Mulago

Towers of strength

granite

hard concrete

enduring

like life itself.

Up they rise

tall and slender

and around them

white coats flit

like the magic they spell.

New Mulago Hospital - the name shakes— she stood firmly on that
cool afternoon giving names ; tribe and sex,

A woman clad in busuti.

As the fullstop was entered on a white sheet of paper a whitecoat gave

a nod.

Her hands cross her chest and the message unsaid crushing granite
and concrete in gushing tears of pain and a lonely sorrow.

david rubadiri Paraa Lodge - to J. H. S.

I have walked

in the still dark hours of day and seen elephants graze and hippos
snuggle shitting in the Nile;

An American party noisy and childish cited shitting in cisterns at
Paraa Lodge -Animal seeing Animal each asking questions, and nature
rolling around like sea-sick billows to the shore

in the darkness of space, and us

standing on tidal waves of engulfing life embracing not for comfort -
watched and prayed for an answer.

david rubadiri The Prostitute

I desired her

truly, like all men

in the dark cascades

of the Suzana desire beautiful

and seductive women;

the Congo beat

rippled through her

shimmering

along a bottom

down to her feet.

The morning of the night burst through my thighs in a longing of fire -
She

almost a goddess Lit

in clever cascades of light.

But in the light of another morning, after the jingle of pennies how
could I move to stir the glue-pot?

David Rubadiri Two Epitaphs

Major Christopher Okigbo was shot dead in Biafra. Tatuta Chisiza was
shot dead in Malawi .

Died that Africa may live with integrity.

CHRISTOPHER OKIGBO

HEAVENSGATE And LIMITS Who can reach them?

Lead and barrels of heat Do so easily.

Youth and love

Joy and faith

Have gone through them,

And now our Limits

Because the lights at Heavens Gate

Have departed

YATUTA CHISIZA

'Old soldiers never die'

The saying goes -So too to Yatuta So too to the cause He lived for.

For us

The rank and file Only the agony And the pity For a piece of lead.

[140]

There is much to remember and little to forget When greatness Dies a simple death For souls of men.

DAVID rubadiri The Witch Tree at Mubende

The Witch Tree old and knobbly stood with years scratched by a cross

- abused

as cameras clicked and learned tongues

- discoursed.

Naked it stood

in its age of mysteries;

Beauty and innocence stood there too side by side; two witches as I saw them prismatic lenses prying the old and the new; to me she was then the Mubende Witch Tree.

john ruganda Barricades of Paper Houses

At dusk, mother Village crickets chirp The bruised fortunes Of the wrinkled At dawn

The dew will glitter Yet another hope For those born By mothers of

tatters.

At dusk, wrinkled one Slum noses twitch At tiny anthills Of faeces
Of the children of kwashiakor And our scorched throats itch When
dogs with deflated tummies Hurry to lick shrivelled buttocks Of the
children of kwashiakor.

Yet the tax-man Will come, as usual Will come with his chain And
hand-cuffs And police officers;

Our doglets will bark at them Will bark at their clean clothes And their
indifference And we'll go on dodging Dodging the hand-cuffs And the
police officers And pailfuls of human dung

[143]

In cold prison cells We'll go on dodging And leaping

From dust-bins to paper houses Dilapidated.

What cause have they

These guardians of indifferent laws

What cause have they,

To leave us alone With our paper houses And doglets and babylets?

I now hear the rude clang Of the town clock tower I hear it scattering
the twilight Behind barricades of paper huts The rude clang Scorns my
uncertainty And strips my desolation.

While the shroud of darkness Lasted

There're no eyes to see No eyes to see Decrepit humans Who're afraid
To look at themselves In the light and the mirror.

But now the new day

Will bring those who've auctioned

Their tongues

To buy kinship

Of the disciplines of money

Will bring those who've mortgaged

Their honesty

To buy a right

To lurk in the shadows

Of prisoners of power.

They'll soon file past me To thumb through files And morning papers
They'll file past me Putting on party faces And party shirts

Counting their shuffles indifferently And I'll go on huddled here
Behind barricades of dust-bins Till the guardians of hand-cuffs And
pailfuls of human dung Consume themselves in liquor I'll go on
feeding On the communal stench Around this place The place that's
unmindful Of beatings of a soul Beaten.

john ruganda The Image of God

It is the sweet death Of the God who dies In Man's birth,

That is the spring of Kato's freedom, Alike in vanity and divinity;

And it is the victory Of the God who is When man dies That impels
Kato,

Not to want heaven,

But the eternal form of pleasure:

For God is Because man lives.

proscovia rwakyaka The Beard,

In the pulpit he swayed and turned. Leant forward, backward,

To the right: to the left.

His solemn voice echoed;

Lowly the congregation followed, 'Do you love your neighbour?'
Meekly they bow at his keen eye Now examining a grey head Heaving
under her sobs.

His heart leapt assured - 'Her sins weigh on her!'

So with her he chats outside;

'Weep not child you are pardoned.' 'But, sir, your beard conjured up
The spirit of my dear goat!'

[147]

proscovia rwakyaka The Inmates

Nov/ when into the far past I pry With a sharp but puzzled mind I
remember vaguely:

A young girl among towering maize; Her short uncertain fingers
Pressing one: another And then another . . .

But where was this field so large?

I remember a large large building Youngsters resounding,

Twinkles, giggles and tears:

Lost playmates

Now wavering like a dying flame. Will I ever retrace?

Still far in the past Faded images will linger.

I remember calm evenings:

A band tamed and captured By rumbling wonders Of mighty elephant,
witty hare, Dashing lads and pretty maids.

These readily return:

Not the faces and the voices Creeping farther and farther.

[.48]

nuwa sentongo Old Granny

There she was on the Nile, puffing The old granny She puffed

And watched the spirals of smoke Disappear into the full ethereal
emptiness Counted pebbles as she puffed Nalangajja, nabalabala,
nadding'ana Arranged them in numerous circles The honey of the fish
flowed It flowed indifferently, granny or no granny Then she spat and
pondered Puzzled

Where does the honey come from?

Where does the honey go?

The white egrets drank and bathed

The fish played their innocent games

As the honey of the fish flowed

It flowed indifferently, egrets or no egrets

She threw a pebble into the Nile

And dipped her foot into the Nile
To disturb and provoke its calmness
Ripples formed then disappeared
As the honey of the fish flowed
It flowed indifferently, granny or no granny.

nuwa sentongo The Pedestrian

Is this the junction he meant?

Did he say a T-junction or a cross-junction?

Did he mention any traffic lights?

Is that the grocery he mentioned?

Wait a minute, did he say grocery or glossary ?

Do you remember?

Did he say a tall building or a bungalow?

Is that the red car he spoke about, which parks there always, carrying
no soul?

And why is that bus empty?

I wonder how many souls it is capable of carrying . . . Who is that man
going to the petrol station?

Doesn't he know there's no petrol there?

All those empty tanks glaring at him, don't they scare him? . . .

Did he say there was a zebra crossing?

Can I cross here?

But where will that lane lead me?

Shall I wait? . . . For what?

Is that the cage he mentioned?

What is in there?

Is it a parrot or a dove?

Yes I remember ... do I really?

Wait a minute, did he say there are more parrots than doves in the world?

Did he really say that, did he?

Why should there be more parrots? . . .

Is that the hill he mentioned?

Did he say there was a shrine on the top?

But isn't that a gigantic thorn?

How can I go up there?

What is the thorn doing there?

[150]

Who is it waiting for?

Me? . . .

Suppose I sit here and rest for a few minutes Is this broken glass?

Can I sit on these pieces?

Where is the broom?

How can I clean this place?

jagjit SINGH Death, etc., etc.

Unthinking of kids she could be carrying,

I stabbed the cockroach under my heels. Then I stabbed it again,

A tiny beast -

Stabbed microscopic network of nerves Until, crushed, belly upwards
it lay,

Yellow fluids oozing outwards,

Perhaps ova, perhaps sperm,

Perhaps fluids that sustained life,

Propelling six legs To detestful destiny now dead.

Grim, with a tense load of murder over me Yet gloating still in my
manhood,

I swept it out of sight;

Unthinking of kids she could be carrying, For nobody ever thinks of
fertility That gunpowder and napalm Blows out of a female.

And so, sprinkling water over hands, Instead of heels that were dirty,

I thought of guilt -

That blunt-edged sword

That is tired of biting conscience.

And I thought I'd write a poem About death, etc., etc.,

The long lost goodness of man And the weeping blisters of war.

Then as I sipped in water from the tap, Unthinking still of kids she might be carrying, I thought only of war slapping afresh Unformed flesh hiding in a woman's womb.

[* 53]

jagjit singh No Roots, No Leaves, No Buds

Frisk me out, dear,

stand me on border lands of death,

jeer me there,

taunt me, cruel eyes,

freeze blood in my veins,

indifference lurking,

in the greenness of those studs

that hang so gleefully

in the hollow of your eyes.

Forget,

with the inevitable shudder

that speeds down the spine,

that ever I wished to intrude

into tall hedge you built around your beauty.

Forget also,

hard edges of my masculine touch that crept into softnesses you offered.

Slowly,

as age shall sprinkle

on your face a handful of wrinkles,

shed a few tears of sorrow

over mistakes of youthful years,

as each morrow you shall hear,

from across banished hills

echo of my frenzied laughter.

For I, too, shall have forgiven myself for madness the likeness of you must breed in me,

and know that you too were a bed-time attraction . .

no roots, no leaves, no buds shall blossom between us.

jagjit sinoh Portrait of an Asian as an East African

I

the past has boiled itself over

and we are the steam that must flee . . .

i shall summon you therefore, ancestral spirits of my race, on this great issue of citizenship, and you must plead before the minister for being born so brown.

smile away the hurt of their unfriendly frown
for the sweat is dry
that built the railways,
and black blood must forget
swamp sleeping savagery of greenness
that burst into an indian bazaar,
because the time and tide
and the valour of your business mind
condemned the brown jew
to comb his days in commerce and trade.
black blood of freedom
will soon break your bent shadow,
for you were the criminals of commerce
that daily sucked their coins across the counter.
now they shall look back in anger
the mercedes-benz politicians,
black suited, whisky voiced, swiss bank accounted,
searching in vain
for brown liberals behind the counter and taunt us about commitment

[156J

for the blood is dry
that roused green savagery
from the slumber of the swamps.
and you will see it always
in back alleys and government offices,
my subordinate asian smile of friendship
that proclaims the jew also is a citizen
and the stare of past hostility replying:
citizen? . . . perhaps so,
but of asian extraction!

i must condemn you therefore, ancestral spirits of my race, for
wrongful extraction too.

II

but my eyes shall burn again, a resurrection of brown pride for i see
you now, my father, fling the victoria cross into dung-heap of the
british empire.

not for your valour
was this false honour on your chest,
but for blood discarded
and bodies dismembered
in white wars of yesterday.

why, then, must i,

your latter-day blood,

bow to live content

with vouchers and quotas?

farewell my dear beloved illusions, for i, too, would have liked to think
only the toes of Africa were infected but the cancer of colour has
gathered fresh victims now.

black surgeons, too, have prescribed new drugs and we,

malignant cells, must fade away soon.

let me not see you now,

ancestral spirits of my race,

in the posture of lawino

lamenting sweetness that has turned sour,

for it shall be my western mind alone

that must summon up an excuse

for the brownness of our sins.

and soon we shall be flying, unwelcome vultures all over the world,
only to unsheathe fresh wrath each time we land.

we are the green leaves that must sprout no more, for the roots have
thrived on black silence

and false kindness of the white race.

[• 58]

waste no ceremony
for the unintentionally corrupted;
lead the ram to altar
and wash away the sins of history.

jagjit singh Public Butchery

Some people fear death, others must face it before a crowd specially
invited

to witness the ceremony of their last breath.

Coups have succeeded elsewhere, and heads have rolled, and blood
has flown quite indiscriminately.

But oh! condemned conspirators, your fate is martyred while you
watch, heads and hearts held high, dead defiance lurking still in
eyeballs bathed in sweat,

as the judge performs the abortion

for your baby hatched in haste, before the mother was fully pregnant.

Once you were greeted and treated as VIPs.

now there is blank silence as a crowd watches four hooded ministers
hanging in the air.

[160]

john ssemuwanga The Blind

What formless forms do you sense

As you grope after gifts beyond your reach;

What dark beauties do you stare at
As you smile the smile of caged
captives;

What longing thoughts lie behind those diseased sockets
As you brood
over what might have been;

What sigh do you sigh as we, the fortunate,
Rush past you in search of sun-lit beauties;

What struggle do you stage
As you try to tear apart the blinding shroud;

What pill do you swallow
As you try to live the life of the eyed ones;

What thanks do you give to the Maker who gave us light
And cast you
into a dark dark world ?

[161]

john ssemuwanga Dual Piety

Somewhere in the distance church bells are chiming,
Chiming and beckoning me to the abode of sacred mysteries,

Mysteries reverently guarded by cold holy walls;

And my servile soul harks to the angelic melody
And murmurs the words of the third commandment.

It is Sunday morning - and the bells seem to toll
The ebb of ancestral piety,

Piety dimmed by Christian chime

And tarnished by rituals ministered by infallible arrivals,
Yet defying

latinized devotion

And yearning to woo wayward generations back to time's old rituals.

Thus my confused self floats between the two temples

And reveres the God of gods

And communes with the god of yore.

I pose before the candled God

And scent the blessing of the blessed incense

And listen to the words of holy stories,

Stories read from sacred scribes;

And surfeited with heavenly faith I swoon And crumble down in
prostrate adoration.

Yet my sceptical self stealthily wanders

And sits with recusant worshippers

And sings songs of awe

And throbs to the rhythm of reverend music

And bathes in the blood of the white goat

And seems to sigh:

Oh gods, gods, we are lost.

And in dual piety I cry out to God To water the plains And the gods
whisper:

It will rain.

John ssemuwanga Strange Breed

A stranger's smile captures my untutored heart,

I return the smile with an assuring wink And tighten the ravelling
knot;

Victory pounces on Defeat and eats up a victim,

Victim long trapped in the mystic grip of seeming men.

A painful spasm runs down my spine And I groan like a sceptic seeing
truth:

I, too, have been webbed into the false confidence of strange mortals,

Mortals decked in the baffling apparel of stage actors.

We are a strange breed!

Live robots blind to the myriad blends of blood-kins; Innumerable
sons under the self-same roof resembling step-fathers;

Cultured numbers living in a world of confused values; Insane sages
devaluating treasures we cherish.

Light is night and darkness day,

Secrecy oozes out on market days,

Truth disintegrates like bubbles on a seasonal pond,

Love dissolves into coined value and betrayal,

And boyhood dreams of worldly holiness Fade out at the breaking of
dawn!

Out this life we slip, slip to a man-made world,

Existing like instruments with atomic nerves;

We walk on grains of sinking sand,

Living on the security of brittle promises,

Tarnishing truth and lauding vice,

Disgracing the world - our home.

everett standa 1 Speak for the Bush

When my friend sees me He swells and pants like a frog
Because I talk the wisdom of the bush!
He says we from the bush Do not understand
civilized ways For we tell our women
To keep the hem of their dresses
Below the knee.

We from the bush, my friend insists,

Do not know how to 'enjoy':

When we come to the civilized city,

Like nuns, we stay away from nightclubs
Where women belong to no men
And men belong to no women
And these civilized people Quarrel
and fight like hungry lions!

But, my friend, why do men
With crippled legs, lifeless eyes,

Wooden legs, empty stomachs
Wander about the streets
Of this civilized world?

Teach me, my friend, the trick,

So that my eyes may not

See those whose houses have no walls

But emptiness all around;

Show me the wax you use To seal your ears

To stop hearing the cry of the hungry;

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Teach me the new wisdom Which tells men

To talk about money and not love, When they meet women;

Tell your God to convert

Me to the faith of the indifferent,

The faith of those

Who will never listen until

They are shaken with blows.

I speak for the bush:

You speak for the civilized -Will you hear me?

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parvin syal The Pot

I should not have been here, for I am alien;

They chatter, in a language that is not my own, and as I, poor bloke,
try to listen, they laugh, in a tone that is alien.

I should not have been here, for I am alien;

Paw-paw, still in the compound, the grass, dry as of the sun, dust on
the pavement, on my shoes, and my white pants,

I sit, but am alien.

I should not have been here, for I am alien;

Teeth being picked, hair brushed, lips ochred, doom spelt in many
such an application;

I should not have allowed, the alien arms to circle me.

I should not have been here, for I am alien;

Head crowned in green, attired in nothingness, except ochre, my
hands clasped, feet sore, nettles, sharp, led to the pot.

I should not have been here, for I am alien.

parvin syal Defeat

They all pass, they feel and pass, they stare at me, and poke, as though
I were in a stall, a stallion, a foal, a mare.

Tribal sheikhs, turbaned, glorious, their beards reeking with scent,
plumes glistening in the sun, shekels jingling the rhythm of bidding.
Matrons, spitting tobacco and foul words, chins pressed against their
throats, bodies bent to the weights of heavy consciences and sagging
breasts. Horses neighing, riders whipping,

Don Juans bursting into fits of laughter, Master beseeching, begging,
creeping, to get a fat amount for me.

I stand, erect, a market-piece, as the Sheikh pats me on my bottom,

I cannot flinch an eye-lid, or squeak or squeal, but bear.

I feel the stare, am ashamed, but as my cloth is pulled off, can only
despise the rubied hands, that feel and press my budding breasts.
Fingers slide across my arms, and I feel the lust as they crawl on my
naked limbs, attesting me fit, to draw waters from a well.

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They jingle their shekels, they bid and raise their prices, flash their rubies, and take part in my auctioning.

I know what it is to be defeated and captured in war.

[169]

parvin syal When I Came Here

When I came here

it was an intention of mine

to stay, to live and linger.

When I stayed here, and when my mind accustomed itself to your sight,

I was asked to leave.

When I packed to leave, and when in your presence I bowed for leave-taking, your eyes shone, a tear trickled. You wanted me.

Barriers crept up,

thorns lined my paths,

and, as I bled, I

remembered that time,

and urged my movement further.

Tell me, did I surge forward in vain?

I know not the answer -just a glint as my guide; is it futile?

Answer, before I stretch my arms, as I hate being rejected.

mohamed talib The Corpse

I dreamt about a corpse

Who had come back

To fulfil his hopes

And he said

I've come to gather

The harvest of my deeds and seeds

That I sowed

On my last visit.

I shook hands with a man Who died the next day And had never
dreamt Of a Nobel prize Which to everyone's surprise Was actually
bestowed Four thousand miles away Ten minutes before.

I kissed a face in tears That had mourned the years,

Fed on hopes,

Now hanged dead on ropes;

And daily she postponed her happiness By crying on purpose So that
she always had Something to live for.

The corpse fulfils the hopes The corpse fulfils the hopes.

mohamed talib Inanimate Sympathy

The window shutters shuddering Saying we told you so The clouds
crouching past Saying we are truly sorry

The mantel adamant and mute Tacitly apologizing Faithfully like a

yellow newspaper Awkwardly.

Don't!

I don't want any bland sympathy From effeminate candlesticks Or
obsequious chairs.

The titanic trees Unshakeable and towering:

We are safe and happy;

You should have asked us

Window panes glibly reflecting Shining like sorry eyes Compassionate
yet quite flat, Saying we all know

Out!

Get out of my mind Stop talking to me Don't sympathize

Burn it . . . kill it . . . slaughter it And then come and water it

barry taylor Dual Nationality

Myself am shared by countries two,

A fever brought by both;

The hot, the cold, the blaze, the brine. Are temperatures of truth.

The one's concerned with supple stream, With windings like an
alphabet,

An eddy's lip, a phrase, a fish,

Sentences of liquid;

The other has in roaring water Ramifying falls,

A trip of rock, a clap of shine,

Crocodile and caterwaul.

The one is made of winter's war,

Snowy siege and dash of flake,

And, inch by inch, in retreat,

The bugle of bird brakes;

i The other seems for summer told A fable out of flame,

Trees and spicy fronds and buds Forever game.

It is, for such a man as I,

Chosen not to choose;

I live to love;

A double muse.

BARRY TAYLOR /, Too

I, too, have lain amongst roses and danced with the daughter of ghosts
I, too, have followed a story and sung upon a reed

I, too, have dared my cups in goblet and in grape and rocked unready
homewards leaning as a lord

I, too, have played with fountains in asphodel and plain and wandered
to where a ruby blooded a breeze

I, too, have known how to shiver in the midnight's darling river and
taken the tree of blossoming dark to celebrate my heart

I, too, have done my damndest to kiss and touch and bless and now I,

too, am through with it all and am simply like the rest

B. tejani In the Orthopaedic Ward

There in the corner he sits naked to the waist the shrunk haunches flattened against earth.

A hand stretches, his fingers ambling along the twisted back-bone, gingerly tasting the raw-flesh.

Dark face of ape-man carved from an anthropoid race scraggy hair of grass-ashen the liquid eyes sickled of all intelligence.

He too a man of my race, my ward,

very much the first in the queue the recognition of which gleams in his eye.

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b. tejani On Top of Africa

Nothing but the stillness

of the snow

and an ageless majesty

matched

by those enduring horizons that bridge the heights of you and me.

The phosphorescent sun gliding from the dark cloud under us

shone a brief once while we lay

retching in the rarefied air.

No great triumph in the soul of those

twenty thousand agonied steps upwards, always onward.

Only anguish of an ending -the vacuumed intestines shivering at another onslaught of mountain sickness.

An ice-axe prod in the back and with it the terrible thought of the awful retreat down the cold slopes of possible deaths; dumb eyes and feet

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lit by a single tireless search for slumber

which is as far away from us as we from the plains.

Only when the nightmare is over I shall remember the dogged voice of conscience

self-pity warring with will

of the brown body

to keep up

with the black flesh

forging ahead

on the way

to Kilimanjaro.

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b. tejani Wild Horse of Serengeti

With savannas on our left and on our right the white-ribbed road stretching to the sky we felt the master of those alluvial plains untrod by man.

The car's boom
was our lonely space-flight
its forward thrusting power
our stream line
its dust-storm
our rocket-fuel.

When suddenly with a jolt we came back to earth as he stood
translucent, sun-muscle coated with arched neck and thick nostrils
quicksilver quivering, that wild horse of Serengeti.

This was his kingdom, the arid peace of the plains his, the merged
mountain and sky and the white-ribbed road where he stood square
with gun-powder feet.

At howl of the machine toot, lonely as a walk in space he exploded
convulsively feet limbs and body boosting each other and rose rose.

And my God!

came straight at us

his dark hooves

kniving the air,

the haunches and belly

fighting a fierce wild Medea.

And sailed clean over the manned machine grazing raucously with a
black claw the top

that dented to his supremacy.

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Hubert temba The Death of God

The great thumbs stirred Shivered and pressed a button, Giant bells
rang In a long thunderous boom,

The tiny death words became Stronger and more evil,

The great immortality ended in And echoless endless mortality; where
the night is still A soft moonlight ivory,

There lies the grave of God with An epitaph inscribed in Priceless
wood.

[•So]

The woman I married Is an out-right bone-shaker.

For a full decade

She had banged a typewriter

And now in substitution

Bangs the crockery

Until my house sounds like a factory.

The noise keeps her sane,

They say.

timothy wangusa Kilembe Mines

Bruised face,

Hacked ribs,

Intestines frantically harrowed out By machine-dislocated men
Sweating in subterranean cells Deep as the grave of mankind -The
projected havoc Of the frenzy in human blood.

timothy wangusa A Strange Wind

A strange wind is blowing, dust fills our eyes:

We turn and walk the unintended way.

We press our sore eyes and reopen them To expanded horizons, to a
new day!

The narrow circle of our cherished experience breaks, Our trusted
gods dissolve and ghosts vanish, Disembodied voices announce world
news,

We see the hidden side of the moon,

The dead man's eye transfers to the living,

The atom splits and the songbird croaks,

Economics opposes Charity,

Law protects wizards and forbids justice,

The small nation shouts, and the big one brags,

Futile raids cease and global wars commence,

And the rude son strikes the father - a sword!

TIMOTHY wangusa A Psalm of Lot

By the ashes of Sodom And of Gomorrah, Lord,

Behold me weeping, by

The ashes of men

Once nimbler than he-goat.

Not a breath Not a trace

Where at threshold hands itched Beyond sacrifice to touch the Origin
of flame.

Then at God-time

The terror-pelt

And I

Suddenly

On legs of feather

Running and running and

Beating the air

Gaze fixed on

Demented shadow

Running and

Beating the air

While at my back

The noise of doom

Hissing and wailing.

And amid the tumult, O God, The costly halt of inquiring feet.

And this, Lord, the outline This the beloved face that [i8 4]
Thenceforth I have dreaded and Encountered in all my dreams;
The pained look forever piercing,
Forever probing and doubting the
Obedience and love -
This the God-planted pillar
In this singed valley to proclaim
The eternity
Of the backward glance.
God the Terror God the Favour
At whose voice what earth-melting!
By whose hand what mountain safety!
God the Moulder God the Remover
What wonder will not spring at thy bidding What stones not happily
turn to flesh?
Dresses and trousers On God-like rock.
timothy wangusa A Taxi Driver on his Death
When with prophetic eye I peer into the future I see that I shall perish
upon this road Driving men that I do not know.
This metallic monster that now I dictate,
This docile elaborate horse,

That in silence seems to simmer and strain,
Shall surely revolt some tempting day.
Thus I shall die; not that I care For any man's journey,
Nor for proprietor's gain,
Nor yet for love of my own.
Not for these do I attempt the forbidden limits,
For these defy the traffic-man and the cold cell, Risking everything for
the little little more.
They shall say, I know, who pick up my bones,
'Poor chap, another victim to the ruthless machine' -Concealing my
blood under the metal.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Jared Angira is Editor of Busara. He has published *Juices* (EAPH 1970), and a forthcoming book of poems, *Silent Voices*, is to be published by Heinemann. He is at present studying for a B. Com. at the University of East Africa and hopes to graduate in 1971. He says: 'Karl Max is my teacher; Pablo Neruda my class prefect (when I am in a class-room) and my captain (when I am on the battlefield). Although I am no longer at ease here, I have been cautioned to contain my malady without bitterness. I have to confront the world without end and see how to endure all in the spirit of forgetting all past and present bad things. 5

Peter Anyang'nyong was educated at Ndiru Primary School, Alliance High School and Makerere, where he graduates in 1971. His active interest in drama resulted in leading parts in several productions at Alliance High School and participation in the 1969 Makerere Travelling Theatre. He has had occasional poems published in the press; was Schools Drama Critic for *The Daily Nation* 1967-69;

and has been a script writer and broadcaster in programmes in history and English for the Schools Broadcasting Division of the Voice of Kenya since 1965.

Henry Barlow is 42 years old, married, with five children. He was educated at King's College, Budo (1936-48); Makerere University, Kampala (1949-53); and he spent one academic year at Oxford in 1959-60. Immediately after leaving Makerere he joined the Civil Service as a Co-operative Officer, and went through the ranks until 1964 when he was appointed Permanent Secretary. He has now been seconded from the Civil Service and is Chairman of Lint Marketing Board. He has published two poems in a collection called Drum Beat under the name of Y. S. Chemba and a further two poems in Euka.

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He is not a regular writer and he says that he writes either to relieve himself of some strong feeling or to explore the feeling.

A. S. Bukonya was born in Masaka, Uganda in February 1944. After secondary school in Kampala, he joined the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, where he read Literature, Linguistics, and French. He was a founder co-editor of Darlite, the University's literary journal, and was the first student in the University's history to graduate with a First Class Honours degree, in March 1968. He took an M.A. degree in Traditional African Literature at Makerere University, Kampala, where he now lectures in Literature. He has published a one-act play in Short East African Plays in English, poems in Just A Moment, God, and a handbook on public speech in Luganda, his mother tongue. His first novel, The People's Bachelor, was published in Nairobi in February 1971.*

John Butler studied for his degree in English while teaching full-time in England. He came to Uganda in 1959 as Headmaster of Lubiri Secondary School in Kampala, one of the very first day secondary schools in Uganda to carry students through to school certificate. Later he was founder Headmaster of the first secondary school in Karamoja. He is currently tutor in English at the National Teachers' College. He

has published a number of poems and prose writings in Transition and elsewhere.

Murray carlin was born in Johannesburg, South Africa. He was educated at St John's College, Johannesburg, Rhodes University, and Emmanuel College, Cambridge. He

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fought as a rifleman in the Libyan Campaign of the Second World War; was taken prisoner after the fall of Tobruk, and suffered, while under the power of Hitler, various dangers and deprivations. He is a widower; the father of three daughters and one son; a teacher by profession, a poet in aspiration.

jim chaplin was Director of Monuments in Uganda when he was knocked down and killed in Kampala in March 1967. He was well known to many young writers in East Africa and put much of his own enthusiasm and interest into writing and discussing poetry.

a. r. CLiFF-LUBWA was born in Gulu, Northern Uganda, and did his primary education in Kitgum, East Acholi, where his father was a Medical Assistant. He then went to Sir Samuel Baker School, Gulu, before going on to do a Diploma in Education. He is now teaching English at St. Charles Lwanga College, Koboko Senior Secondary School. His short collection, *The Beloved and Other Poems*, is being published by the East African Publishing House, Nairobi, and he is preparing another collection at the moment. Some of his poems, including *The Beloved*, have been broadcast on B.B.C. London.

saroj datta was born in Kampala, Uganda. She spent her childhood in East Africa, except for several long visits to India, the land of her parents. In December 1968 her family settled in Britain; she is at the time of going to press reading English and Philosophy at the University of Glasgow.

sheikha a. el-miskery, daughter of the Sheikha of

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Al-Alaya, Oman, was born 10th October, 1944, in Ibra the capital city. Her childhood years were spent in the Middle East and East Africa, and she graduated with honours in English Literature from Makerere University in 1967. She began writing early on, but did not publish anything until her college days. Since that time her poetry has appeared in various publications and has been broadcast in several countries. She is currently pursuing graduate studies in America.

laban ERAPuisa Makerere graduate taking an M.Litt. course in Afro-Caribbean Literature in Edinburgh University when this publication went to press. While at Makerere he also wrote one-act plays and his first novel, Restless Feet. His plays were performed in Makerere (where he was a member of the Travelling Theatre) and they have been broadcast over Radio Uganda. He has also featured on the B.B. C. African Service where his writing has been read and discussed on the 'Writers Club*' programmes. As an undergraduate he was chief editor of the Makererean, the university paper, for a year, and he has also worked on a national newspaper.

david gill was born in Chislehurst, Kent, in 1934. He attended the local grammar school and later read German at University College, London. Eighteen months of making Dunlop tyres convinced him that he did not wish to be a deck-hand, let alone a Captain of Industry: he turned, therefore, to teaching. He went with his family to Uganda in 1962 to teach at Nyakasura School, just in time to see the advent of Independence. Apart from teaching English he learnt something about Ugandan music, wrote poems, and dug a fish-pond in the nearby swamp with his long-suffering students. Still in touch with Uganda, he now lives with his wife and three

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

children in Oxford. Men Without Evenings, his first volume of verse, was followed in 1969 by The Pagoda and Other Poems.

Crispin hauli was born in 1945 at Ilela Manda. He is the second son of a missionary teacher. He graduated from the University of East Africa at Dar es Salaam in 1970 with a degree in Education, Economics, and Literature. He is a keen athlete and writer. A number of his short plays, stories, and poems have appeared in Darlite. Some of his poems written in Swahili, Mashiri Tasa , have attracted attention. He is now a tutor at Dar es Salaam College of National Education, where he has worked since his graduation.

sabiti kabusiienga was born to Justin Faith and George William Kabusiienga in the year 1942 on a Sunday, hence the name Sabiti. His childhood was neither colourful nor undistinguished and he is the eldest of eleven sisters and brothers. He was educated at Nyamiyaga Church School, Rwere Church School, Kigezi High School, Nyakatale Boys Primary School, Kinyasano Junior Secondary School, Kigezi High School again, Kigezi College Butokene, Glastonbury High School, Connecticut, U.S.A., Makerere College School, and Makerere University College, then the University of East Africa. There was nothing throughout his education to indicate that he would be a writer; indeed one of his weakest points in English was his inability to appreciate poetry. When he started writing poetry in 1967 he realized that instead of using the most natural way of writing, that is in verse, people laboured to produce chapters of boring prose. He thinks that the ability to speculate or penetrate into things or even the ability to express oneself in verse does not entitle one to tell human beings what they ought not to do and what they ought to see.

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For the present, therefore, he has settled down to doing what other human beings do. He has a job and earns his daily bread.

william kamera was born at Mwika Moshi, Kilimanjaro, Tanzania, on 18th April, 1942. He entered Ilboru Secondary School in Arusha where he studied for his Cambridge School Certificates. In 1965 he entered the University of East Africa at Dar es Salaam and graduated in 1969 with an upper second class Honours Degree in Literature, Linguistics, and Education. While at college, he was a member of the Literature

Panel of the Ministry of Education, and after obtaining his degree he was appointed Tutorial Assistant in the Department of Literature at Dar es Salaam. He started graduate studies in English at Cornell in the fall of 1969. He is married and has two children. In 1964 he won the First Prize in a Poetry Competition organized by the East African Literature Bureau and sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation. He has also been editor of Darlite, the student magazine at the University College, and a member of the University Theatre Group. Some of his poems have appeared in Transition.

Jonathan kariaria is an editor with Oxford University Press in Nairobi. He has published many short stories and poems, in particular in Euka.

Joseph kariuki was born in 1931. He attended the Kenya Institute of Administration, and then spent a year with the Economic Commission for Africa as the chief of their Training Unit, before being appointed Director-General of CAFRAD towards the end of 1969. He confesses that his literary activities have subsided considerably since he went into

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

public administration for the simple reason that his position as an administrative head has absorbed all his energies and left him too tired to be creative in a literary sense.

aminkassam was born in Mombasa on 19th November, 1948. He began writing poetry at the age of eighteen and since then he has had his work published in several East African magazines. He has also been anthologized in Drum Beat. In addition, his poetry has been broadcast over Radio Uganda, Voice of Kenya, and the B.B. C. Amin also writes short stories which have appeared in Busara (of which he was once assistant editor), and the Journal of the New African Literature and the Arts.

yusuf o. k ass am is a Tanzanian, born in Tanzania in 1943. He obtained his B.A. in English and History from Maker-ere University College, Kampala, in 1966. In 1967 he obtained a post-graduate

Diploma in Education from the same University. From 1967 to 1969 he taught at Mzumbe Government Boys' Secondary School, Morogoro. In January 1970 he joined the Institute of Adult Education, University of Dar es Salaam, where he works as an Assistant Resident Tutor.

Wordsworth's philosophy on poetry, and poetry itself, which he had to study for his H.S.C., began his interest in poetry, and it was in 1964 that he first began to write his own. His poems have been published in different anthologies such as *Young Commonwealth Poets 3 65* (Heinemann) and *New Voices of the Commonwealth* (Evans Brothers). They have also been published in various journals, magazines, and newspapers, such as *East Africa Journal*, *Penpoint*, *The People*, etc. Some of his poems have also been broadcast and discussed over the B.B. C. African Service. In 1965 he won a poetry prize in a competition organized by the Cardiff Commonwealth Arts Festival.

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taban lo liyonGj one of the most stimulating figures in East African writing, was born in Uganda in 1938. He was the first African to receive a Master of Fine Arts degree from the famous Writers Workshop of the University of Iowa. He has already published two highly individual books in the African Writers Series, *Fixions* (AWS 69), a collection of stories, and *Eating Chiefs* (AWS 74), a personal transmutation of Lwo poetry. In 1971 a new collection entitled *Frantz Fanon's Uneven Ribs: Poems } More & More* (AWS 90) was published. He has also published a collection of literary criticism, *The Last Word* (EAPH). After his return to East Africa in 1968 he was in the Cultural Division of the Institute for Development Studies at the University of Nairobi, working on research into Lwo and Masai literature. He is now a lecturer in English in the Literature Department.

Stephen lubega is a first year student of Literature at Makerere University, Kampala. He was born in 1945 in Masaka District, Uganda, and received his secondary education at Bukalasa Seminary and later joined the National Teachers' College, Kyambogo, where he obtained a Diploma in teaching in 1967. Since then he has been teaching English in secondary schools. He was the first editor of *Student Lines*, a literary magazine of the National Teachers' College. Some of his writings have appeared in East African magazines like *Z v ^ a* and *Flamingo*, and a number of his poems have been heard over the B. B. C. African Service.

johns. mbiti was educated at Makerere, in the United States, and in Britain. His academic interests are in religion and philosophy, and African oral literature and he writes on these subjects. Published books and articles are innumerable, including *Akamba Stories* (1966), *African Religions and Philosophy* (1969),

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Poems of Nature and Faith (1969), *Concepts of God in Africa* (1970),

New Testament Eschatology in an African Background (1970), etc. He is Professor of Religious Studies and Head of the Department of Religious Studies and Philosophy, Makerere University Kampala. He is married, with two children.

rose mbowa. Educated at Kibuye Primary School, Buloba Primary School, Gayaza High School, Makerere University College and Leeds University; was born at Kabale in Uganda in 1943; has worked as a broadcaster for Radio Uganda and is at the moment working as a tutor in drama at Makerere University, Kampala.

Alexander muigai attended Dr. Aggrey Primary School, then Pumwani Secondary School, where in his fourth year he was head boy. He then proceeded to Nairobi School where he sat for A levels in 1969. His hobbies include motor cycling, mountaineering, swimming, photography and drawing. He writes poetry as a means of recording feelings, experiences, and observations. He is now at Rugby School, England, where he went in January 1970, and he hopes to study Zoology at College.

Paul mukasa-ssali was born in 1946. He attended Busoga College, Mwiri, Makerere College School, and Makerere University where he graduated in English Honours in 1970. He won the Taylor Essay Prize (1964), the Brooke Bond Tea Essay Prize (1964), and the Makerere University Exhibition Prize (1970). He edited one issue of Penpoint during 1970.

magemeso namungalu was born on 19th January,

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1948. He was educated at Iganga, Kiyunga Junior School, and the Senior Secondary School, Jinja. He did his Cambridge School Certificate in eleven years instead of the usual twelve. His interest in writing dates from when he first knew of writing. He met Professor D. J. Cook in 1968, to whom he is wholeheartedly indebted for his generous help. His poems have been read on Radio Uganda and his favourite poets are Okot, Shakespeare, D. H. Lawrence, and

Houseman.

stella ngatho is doing A levels in Geography, Art, and Literature at Kenya High School.

victor ngwabe, son of Yoronimu Ngwabe, comes from Eastern Uganda, Bukedi District. He was born in 1941 in a small village in southern Bukedi where his parents still live. Victor had his initial primary school education in Mission schools, and was forced to stop schooling for some years due to lack of school fees. Later he studied at St. Peter's College, Tororo; Teso College, Aloet; and Makerere University, Kampala, where he graduated in March 1970 with B.A. honours in Literature.

richard ntiru was born in 1946, near Kisoro, South West Uganda. He attended Secondary School at Ntare School, Mbarara where he became interested in play acting and verse sketching. In 1968 he entered Makerere University's Department of Literature where he edited the Campus Newspaper, Makererean , organized the 1969 Makerere Arts Festival, participated in the renowned Makerere Travelling Theatre, and edited the Campus Journal of Creative Writing, Penpoint. Besides a radio play and a few stories, he has contributed

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poems to East African magazines, a selection of which will soon be brought out by the East African Publishing House.

benedict onyango ogutu was educated at St Mary's School, Yala, north of Kisumu. He works for the East African Publishing House, for whom he tours East Africa 'talking books' to the people. His book of Luo heritage, Keep My Words , will appear soon. He has published poetry in various East African magazines.

okello oculi was born in 1942 and comes from Lang'o, Uganda. He has published a novel, Prostitute , and also Orphan , a long poem. He is widely recognized as one of the most explosive figures on the contemporary literary scene in East Africa.

Okot p'bitek is working in the Extra-Mural Department of Nairobi University. He was born in Gulu, Northern Uganda, in 1931, and was educated at Gulu High School and King's College, Budo. Okot has played football for Uganda. He read Education at Bristol, Law at Aberystwyth, and Social Anthropology at Oxford. He has lectured at Makerere and in the U.S.A., and has been Director of the National Theatre, Kampala. He founded the Gulu Festival. In 1953 he published a Lwo novel; and has had poems and articles in several of the journals which appear in East Africa. Okot p'Bitek is best known for his two long poems, Song of Lawino and Song of Ocol, published by the East African Publishing House.

opinyah.w.okoth-ocendo, ll.b.(e.a.), formerly

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of the University College, Dar es Salaam; and Special Assistant Lecturer in the Department of Law and Jurisprudence, Faculty of Law, University of Nairobi. He is at present Winter Williams Student at Wadham College, Oxford. Author of *The Dancing Maniac in Just a Moment*, *God* (E. A. L. B. 1970), and regular contributor in *Ghala*, *Busara* and *DarLite*. Also author of several legal essays in *Journal of Denning Law Society* (University of Dar es Salaam publication).

Marjorie Oludhe-Maogoye was born in England in 1928 and went to Kenya in 1954 with C. M. S. Bookshop. She has a London M.A. in English and has edited some Lwo Historical Texts. Married to a Lwo medical man, she has four children.

Charles Owour is 23. He did his A levels in 1968 at Strathmore College, Nairobi and has since been travelling* and studying with the Friends World Institute.

David Rubadiri. Born in 1930 in Malawi. Went to school at King's College, Budo; then to the Universities of Makerere, Bristol, and Cambridge. His main interest has always been in literature and writing. He is now teaching literature at Makerere University, Kampala.

John Rugandwa was born in 1941 in Fort Portal, Uganda. He was educated at St. Leo's College and Ntare School before going to read English Honours at Makerere University. He now works with Oxford University Press as Editorial and Sales Representative in Uganda.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Prosperine A. Rukundo has recently spent a year in New York on an M.A. programme at Teachers College, Columbia University. She has returned to Tororo Girls' School and continues teaching English. She started teaching at Tororo in May 1967 immediately after she left Makerere University, Kampala. In her early years she went to Kyebambe Girls School and Gayaza High School. Her home and her parents are in Fort Portal but she has spent little time there.

Nuwanda Sentongo born 3rd November, 1942, went to Kungu Primary School, Makerere College School, Makerere University College and Indiana University. He is currently a lecturer at Makerere University, Kampala.

Jagjit Singh. A Ugandan, born in 1949, went to Senior Secondary School, Kololo, where he was awarded a Gold Medal for obtaining four distinctions in A levels in 1969: he is now reading Literature at the School of African and Asian Studies at the University of Sussex, and hopes eventually to be a film scriptwriter or a University Lecturer but above all to write the agony and the ecstasy of being alive. First felt an awareness of the creative spirit at the age of twelve after reading a simplified version of R. L. Stevenson's *Kidnapped*. He published his first poem at 16, worked for *The People and Flamingo* at 18, and has had stories and poems published in the *East Africa Journal*.

John Ssemuwanga was born near Kampala, and he received his primary and secondary education in missionary schools. His interest in poetry originated from the fascinating and captivating charm he found in nursery rhymes. Partly

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because of his background, and partly because of the missionary influence at school, he acquired a religious attitude in his outlook on life which never diminished. It is perhaps because of this ingrained fervour that most of his poems, while not strictly religious, tend to invoke some kind of soul-searching plea. His greatest literary ambition is to write a novel some day.

everett standa was born and educated in Mahanga village of Western Province, Kenya. Writing is a hobby he finds most satisfying and recreative. It is also a way in which he effects the living dialogue between society, people, and himself. He now works in the National Christian Council's Communications Office, Nairobi.

parvinsyal, born in December 1947, was launched into poetry by his father's encouragement at the age of ten. He wrote poetry for many competitions and was awarded prizes on numerous occasions. Apart from being a poet, writing both in English and Hindi, he has always been a debating enthusiast, and was responsible for initiating and organizing the 'Upper Hill Schools', Nairobi Inter-schools* Debating Tournament. Recently, his hitherto unpublished play, Through a Hand-cuff\ attained third position in the play competition organized by the Department of English, University of Nairobi. Although he is at present a medical student at Nairobi University, he finds time to read a lot.

mohamed talib was born in Mombasa on 4th February, 1947. Prior to his university education, he was more interested in biology than literature. However, his family background led him to more religious and literary pursuits, and he eventually ended up more interested in the arts. In 1969 he obtained his

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B.A. Honours Degree in Literature. He has been doing freelance writing since then, and his main preoccupation has been the futility of man's existence enclosed by space and time. He has immense faith in the concept of life after death, but considers it important for man to identify himself culturally and spiritually before dying.

barry taylor has been teaching in Uganda for some years. His most recent publication is a verse novel, *The Rhyme of Francis Fall*, *Outposts*, 1970.

b. tejani was born on the slopes of Kilimanjaro. He read Literature at Makerere and Philosophy at Cambridge. He has published a book of protest on India called *The Rape of Literature*, and also written for most of the East African magazines and newspapers. He lectures at the University of Nairobi. His novel *Day After Tomorrow* will be published by the Literature Bureau in 1971.

Hubert temba was born in Moshi, Tanzania in November 1951. He received some of his education at Mawenzi Secondary School, Moshi from 1966 to 1969, and is now studying for his H.S.C. which he hopes to sit in 1971. For some time now he has been concentrating on poetry writing but he also devotes time to writing prose and he is a keen music lover.

edwin waiyaki was born in 1939 and is the thirteenth child of a family of sixteen. After senior schooling at Thika High School he continued his studies in Paris.

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T i m o t h y w a n g u s a was born in Bugisu District, Uganda, in 1942. Read English at Makerere University College and at the University of Leeds before returning to Makerere in 1969 as a Tutorial Fellow. Some of his poetry has appeared in *East Africa Journal*, and in *New Voices of the Commonwealth*, edited by Howard Sergent.

david cook was a schoolteacher in England for many years and took two internal part-time degrees from the University of London. He taught for five years in the University of Southampton before moving permanently to Makerere in 1962 where he became Head of the Department of Literature in 1967. Has published major editions of seventeenth century plays, and a volume on the background to

Elizabethan/Jacobean drama, as well as numerous articles - in particular on drama and education. He launched the Makerere Travelling Theatre in 1965. He edited the first published volume of East African prose, and co-edited a book of East African plays.

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