**I told him: "Mzee, do you want me to prove to you? Just because you see new clothes . . .these were bought for me so that I could come to see you. I have come from the forest where I have beery since 1952. If you want to believe . . ."**

**TRYST WITH. PERIL + 323**

**I removed my headdress and my hair came down. He extended his hand and touched my hair and asked: "How did you do it?"**

**I told him: "If you look carefully you will find lice eggs in the hair."**

**Kenyatta said: "I can see, and I believe. Now how many are you?" I told him: "We were many but now I know of only one who is with me. Some died and others surrendered."**

**He said: "And now with all that rain and sunshine you have lived there?" I told him, yes, and that the weather could get worse.**

**He told me: "I will say nothing. And when you go say that Uhuru (freedom) is on December 12, and say it was Kenyatta who has told you. Go and announce to the others who might be there."**

**After asking him how we shall know that Uhuru was there truly without seeing the flag, Kenyatta told me that I would be picked from my 'forest hideout on the Uhuru day by his own vehicle. He also said that if there were more fight­ers in Mount Kenya forest they would be sent for, to meet at Ruringu on December 16, 1963. But for me I would be picked from Nyeri on December 12 for night ceremonies in Nairobi.**

**When I came out of the forest I could not look at the sun because the light was burning my eyes. At Ruringu is where I met people like Dr. Munyua Waiyaki [then Minister of Defence], who did a good job calming us.**

**I had thought that all those people who had left the forest first, those who had been in detention and other places, would have come to celebrate with us. But I was wrong because after one week I was brought some poisoned soda. That soda was intercepted by a young man called Nderitu.**

**That was when I found out that I was wrong when I thbught I had lived with animals in the forest. It was now that I had come to animals.**

**Even when the ceremonies were over and we were told to go home I had to go to an uncle of my husband and build my own house. That was traditionally wrong. . . .**

***Elieshi Lema*TRYST WITH PERIL**

**Tanzania 1994 English**

**Elieshi Lema was born in 1948 in the Kilimanjaro region of Tanzania, and now lives in Dar es Salaam, where • she works as a writer, publisher, and political activist. She has been an associate member of the Tanzania Gender Networking Program, a board member of the National Kiswahili Council, the educational**

**reform organization Haki Elimu, and the African Publishers Network, and was one of the founding members and later chairperson of the Tanzania Culture Trust Fund. During the late 1980s and early 1990s she was the manager of the Tanza­nia Publishing House and in 1997 she and Demere Kitunga established E & D Publishing Company, the first and only publishing house in Tanzania awned and run by women.**

**324 + LATE TvvEsn'TETH CENTURY (1970-1995)**

**Elieshi Lema nurtured her interest in literature and writing while pursuing a degree in English literature at the University of Dar es Salaam, and later at San Francisco State University, where she majored in creative writing. She also spent a year at Makerere University studying librarianship. Her first literary works were two poems published in 1980 in the anthology *Summons.* Books and short stories for children and young people followed, including *A Tear for Anna, A Stone for Mambo's House* (1986), *Safari ya Prosper* (Prosper's Journey, 1996) and *Mwendo* (1998).**

**In 2001, Lema published a novel in English, *Parched Earth,* which reflects her views on contemporary culture and politics as they affect the lives of Tanzanian women. Written from a woman's perspective, the novel portrays a woman's vigor­ous struggle against social and economic constraints, her obsessions, her joys, and her sensuality.**

**In "Tryst with Peril," Lema writes again about relationships between women and men—this time, about the common practice of older married men keeping younger women. The story references the prevalent belief in Africa that the younger the woman, the safer a man is from HIV/AIDS, and further, that a woman's willingness to forgo the use of condoms proves her concern for a man's pleasure. While the relationship in the story, between a young woman and a man old enough to be her father, appears in its own way to be mutually satisfying, Lema probes the grounds of that satisfaction. She questions not only the inequity inherent in a relationship based on sex *for* payment, but also the immanent dan­gers for young women exposed to unprotected sex and thus HIV/AIDS.**

***Amandina Lihamba***

**The atmosphere in the room was comfortably warm. A single candle burned on the table furthest from the bed. The late afternoon sun through the drawn curtains into the room offered an extra gift of light. This was the fifth floor, away from the noise and eavesdroppers. Their short stay in the room had already made it seem familiar. No longer did they smell the room's cigarette smoke blended within a bouquet of older odors.. Now the air was fragrant with the perfume of satiation. Their naked bodies beneath the sheets felt friendly as they descended gently from the wings of fantasy, feeling their weight on the bed. The man sighed, breathing out the used air, in his lungs to make room for more play.**

**Everything was good: the sex, the young woman's body, the hard mattress, the crisp, clean sheets, and the light wind blowing through the window which they had opened, avoiding the air conditioner. Cold air tensed his muscles and made him irritable—experience had taught him that. He came here to relax,**

**body and mind, so everything had to be perfect. And the high-class hotel was meant to make this possible.**

**TRYST WITH PERIL + 325**

**After several bouts of hard breathing, which he did deliberately, he settled down to even more relaxation. The young woman lay quietly beside him, breathing easily, seemingly enjoying his satisfaction. That too relaxed him so that he could laugh and joke and tell her stories. It was possible to forget the pressure of work, the tension of competition that met his every move. Every time he earned money, big money, he pegged the next earning higher. He loved challenging himself like that. In the Party, he was constantly challenged to retain his position among the inner club, among men of substance who moved things, those who were themselves the law. Among his friends, rich and affluent, the struggle was to be best in the group by being one step ahead every time.**

**The disagreements with his wife inflicted different tensions. He resented this most of all because the problems with his wife never could be resolved without breaking the marriage, for they were grounded in the absence of free­dom from each other's demands within an institution that had no space to spare for a** *woman.* **What he** *sometimes* **could not bear** *was* **the way** *she* **fought for that space, the way she demanded it from him so strongly that she broke the walls of his patience. On those occasions, he felt like leaving, to avoid the ten­sion, to release the poison inside him that, he noticed, had aged so many of his colleagues. Often, the atmosphere of their home was rank with the foul breath of her unreleased anger.**

**Now, he toyed with expectations about the young woman. His thoughts moved in liquid time, recklessly forward into imagined possibilities. I could keep her somewhere in some nice house, he thought, where I could have her whenever I wanted. I could offer her a job, which would ease some of her money problems. I would like to be sure she'd be faithful. He had been captured by the mature body of the young woman, still carrying the delicacy of early youth. He did not•want to guess her age, for this was no time for guilt, should she turn out to be too young. He suppressed that thought with comfort: She wasn't a virgin. He looked at her with gentle keenness, wanting to store a reel of images for retrieval later. He knew that these were dangerous times, with HIV creeping** in **on people just like that, with no particular rule, no formula to deal with this riotous, untamable virus. It irked him. He had been thinking lately of investing a bit more in relationships in order to keep himself free of the scourge. He imagined possibilities in full color, in landscapes full of magic and daredevil courage. I could even keep her as second wife, he thought, and there find care for her legitimately. Who will care about a constantly nagging Janice, who won't even notice that I've been away?**

**He laughed wryly at this thought, knowing well that Janice will notice his escapade immediately, and that on his return will pounce, asking those terrible questions as** if **he were an accused man she was cross-examining in court! It did not make any difference even, should she use the soft language. She was still the**

cat who had caught her prey and could take any number of days to kill it, her claws sharp as knives every time. He smiled at the metaphor and pulled the young woman to him as if to use her as shield.

326 **LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY (1970-1995)**

She asked throatily, "What are you thinking about?"

"You and me," he lied, "how we seem to be perfect for each other." "Perfect? How?" the young woman probed.

He did not want to get into that conversation, he did not want to be queried, so he pulled her closer to him and closed her mouth with kisses, touching her in those places which had earlier on aroused her to acceptance. The young woman responded by extricating herself from his embrace, still pressing, "Seriously, what makes us perfect for each other?"

He laughed. She sat up. She was serious, she wanted to place herself in his life, to know the weight of his desire for her body. He also sat and started to tickle her and her question was turned into a game where each explored the other's reservoirs of laughter.

Laughter brought other stories from him, nostalgic with the loss of his naivete. These stories moved backwards, to a childhood full of play and free­dom. He had been a spoiled child, for sisters did the work while he cried croc­odile tears to avoid beatings from a strict father, a teacher who believed in dis­cipline by the rod as a way of life and particularly for his children, girls and boys. The man loved talking of those times, affirming his father's belief in suc­cess as a product of pain. That was an anecdote which explained his wealth and affluence but also justified his refusal to give to social causes because, as he usu­ally put it, "people are too lazy to work hard."

The stories of the man's youth were laughter itself, punctuated with adven­ture and recklessness. His youth was a drunken spree that had made him dizzy with enjoyment. The enviable life he narrated touched a nerve in the young woman's feelings, since she was twenty-two and had never been as lucky as he. She had even forgotten that she had ever been young. Where she came from, children were aged by a life of abandonment to chance, a life that kept parents in the fields to earn a frugal meal at the end of the day.

She had completed primary schooling without expectations. Her life had no map of alternatives, no track to follow. Through a leap of courage, rebellion, and faith, she had come to the city to be a house maid. She was energetic and hard­working. The first job was not hard to get, since many working women were looking for her kind. It took no time for her to realize that to be a house maid was another dead end. She had left the village looking for a better life, a hope with a name. But what exactly was a better life? What was it exactly that she wanted, or needed?

On her way to the market every weekend, she had risked on a better life with a bus driver. He liked her. He told her that she was pretty, a woman as solid as steel, one to be made a wife. He indulged her with praises, and afforded her a new look. He enabled her to dress well in second hand clothes, and in them no one could tell she was a house maid! Then she became pregnant, after which

she was summarily relieved of her job. "Get out! Get out of my house. Quickly before you bring AIDS into my house. Go."

**'TRYST WITH PERIL +** 327

She was young, a woman as solid as steel, one to be made a wife, so she went to live with the bus driver who had made her pregnant and the better life dis­solved into a dark hole she could not define.

"Your times must have been better than ours," she commented without envy, knowing little of the forces that mark out people's lives without their knowledge. He did not care for those forces either, memory affording him memorable young adventures into blind experimentation, crimes without penalty or penance. He enjoyed narrating, and read appreciation in her comment, and was moved to brag a bit, unwittingly admitting his age: "The abundance of girlfriends made me popular, a young man to be envied. I always told my friends that I could never bite my nails at social evenings figuring out how to win a girl for a dance."

The young woman sighed. This time he read bitterness verging on sadness in her sigh and could not quite put his finger on its cause. He held her closer to his chest, for he did not want her to be sad. He wanted to please her. A fatherly feeling swept over him, but what he felt was not deep enough to question the girl about her sadness. Things had to be kept that way: no indulgences, no guilt, no commitment.

The man was forty-eight now with two children in secondary school and a wife who was a corporate lawyer for an international business firm. She was too strong for his liking, but the right wife for his status. What man could claim any social weight and place among other men of substance without the right woman? He knew that, and he pegged the value of his marriage accordingly high. His wife was a busy woman who did her work well. It was difficult for her sometimes, having to care for the children, who were grown, and supervise house maids, when she was at work all day. But after more than fifteen years of marriage, he had learned that, with Janice, he could not escape being a father. She simply bartered fatherhood for any demand he made. That too irked him, that loss of total power over a wife.

He sighed. He did not want to talk about her to this young woman. This was their time, his and the girl's. Still he said, almost involuntarily, "Janice, my wife, was part of my growing up. I met her, fell in love, married her, and that was it."

She accepted his story in silence. She had acquired an instinct for sticking to dry ground by not competing with powerful foes. She did not know her, did not want to know her. Her silence was a weapon of the inarticulate, not chosen, but a survival instinct, since she could not articulate her own road to womanhood. Adeptly, she pushed the wife from her mind, she did not want her as guest in this room, neither in the man's mind or in hers. And he took her silence as his space unprobed. He talked to keep her interested in him. It was not his inten­tion to brag about his success or sound arrogant or even patronizing. It was his way of being, with her, and so the stories he told pulled thin threads from the past to sew around their presence in candlelight.

The young woman listened. She chose to be taken in by the warmth of the

**moment. For once, she did not have to worry about caring for her little girl, whom she had left with a neighbor for this day. She did not have to think about what she would eat. The man had fed her well. She did not have to worry about whether she would earn enough for her other needs, the clothing and jewelry that she had come to consider necessary for success in securing love. She knew, with this man, she would earn. And for today, for him, she had the special imi­tation gold chain around her thin torso.**

**328 + LATE TwErrnETH CENTURY (1970-1995)**

**The room was soft with candlelight. This was his private pleasure, unspoiled by worry. Janice would never know. Who could tell her? She never entertained cheap gossip. She focused only on her man because she knew that that was where the truth of his life lay, in the man himself:**

**He concentrated on the woman with pleasure, his eye seeing only beauty. She smiled indulgently to contain the attention she was getting. Both trod softly on feelings too delicate to touch. Hours blended into hours and day into night as their bodies sought a language of union, building on each consonant and vowel to achieve the word.**

**They could open up and swallow each other were their bodies to obey the dic­tates of their minds dazed with fantasy. They could drink each other up, every drop of liquid, as a very thirsty person drinks water in gulps, seeking hasty relief, yet not finding it, and so drinking again and again.**

**They could partake of each other, cutting through tender skin to find things more tender further in. They could savor each other, like the fruit they ate, the apples and grapes which the man had bought from the supermarket. They chewed the fruit slowly, turning it around their tongues as though to discover new tastes: sugar, fresh natural juices, flesh texture different each time.**

**They did not hurry. The world of the hotel room, the time, thin as air, was theirs. They floated. Danger had no form, no smell, no texture. Danger lay only in their thirst, their desires, the illusions they sought to tame. So they found magic in simple things—in the words they uttered, ideas they tried to articu­late, signs they shaped. And they looked for more magic in the curves of feet and toes, the fi.hger tips, hair, eyes, ears, lips. They saw into their eyes„clear and bright, like reflections of stars in clear water under moonlight. They got drunk on brandy and the fruits providence had offered.**

**He wanted her to believe in the illusion he had desired to shape and so in the market he had also bought two roses to speak for him. The roses whispered into her ear the thoughts that had peopled his mind for days after she had agreed to meet him. The girl was impressed that this man cared for flowers and that he remembered to bring them for her. She inhaled the sweet smell deeply and said, "Thank you dear," with a voice untrained in the art of romance. He did not mind her inexperience. She would learn to rise to his tastes. For him, trysting** *was* **a hobby he enjoyed, his way of uncapping the pressure when his head felt heavy with fatigue. Trysting offered him another kind of power, the emotional**

**catharsis that not even alcohol could achieve. He made his trysts private and perfect to serve his indulgences. For them, he entertained neither questions nor caution. He was tired of being cautious, of doing things right, of being safe. He used a condom with his wife because she forced him to and he was tired of it. He felt good that the girl did not object strongly. She did not say a condom was a non-negotiable condition for the tryst. Ah, this was like surfacing for air, and the harvest of her small body shook him, the elation settling gently into the pacified gut like pollen.**

**TRYST WITH PERIL + 329**

**Yes, roses could say that which could not be said. She will hear the plea. She will take it without judgment. How simple the harvest of thorns!**

**The young woman was pleased; she had taken her chances and she had won. He loved her, she sensed, and was satisfied by her acquiescence. He was gentle; there were no unnecessary gymnastics that some young men demanded. And she was good. Was it not her aunt who had told her, with all seriousness, that she will keep her man only if she does it well? At that time, her aunt's piece of wisdom had settled into her brain as a shameful stain, but now she had come to appreciate it. She was surviving by it. Her little girl's father had called her a slut, especially after she had begun looking nice after odd jobs that led her to meet­ing people like her present lover. He had left her, the child's father. He had abandoned her in anger, without a cent to feed herself and her little girl, with no money even to pay rent, his hot jealousy fueled by second hand clothing. He left saying, "I will get others like I got you. There are plenty of girls I can get." He was bitter and resentful, and she became afraid and lonely. And now look, she has met a gentle, educated, and rich lover. She has won.**

**The day passed and the night came upon them like an intruder they could not ignore. This was the moment the man hated, the fall of illusion. But he also had, through experience, acquired the skills of escape. He knew how to defy this last possible slide into chaos. It was instinctual. He became suddenly intro­spective and quiet. Silence walked in the room.**

**"Let us sleep here," the young woman suggested tentatively, feeling the new tension. She could not let him take her home; she could not show him where she lived. She did not want him to see her little girl. She was a sickly child, not bouncy like most little girls. She did not giggle when she played with other children. She whiMpered all the time, wanting mother to carry her. She had never been without sickness since she was born. She sucked her thumb when she saw visitors.**

**The man remained introspective, looking at her. She left the bed and went to pour a drink. They shared it. He said, finally, "I will offer you a job somewhere, not in my office. I will ask my friends."**

**Her eyes filled with tears.**

**The man went to shower, urgency marking his actions. He dressed quickly, absent-mindedly. He said, when he was almost fully dressed, "Go and shower. It is getting late."**

**"I will stay here till morning. Please. I cannot go home now," she pleaded. It**

**was early yet. The man looked at her. He seemed to be fighting something in himself, but that was brief because he said, "Okay," and kissed her on the lips. He poured more brandy and drank it in one gulp. "I will tell them to bring you dinner. Come to the office tomorrow."**

**330 + LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY (1970-1995)**

**She agreed with a shake of her head.**

**He opened the door and closed it gently behind him.**

***Grace Awath*LET Us PRAISE PHOEBE, OUR MP**

**Kenya 1994 Dholuo**

Grace Awach was born in 1942 in Nyanza Province, Kenya, an area inhabited primarily by the Luo, the ethnic community to which she belongs and in whose Dholuo language she sings. Awach is a leader of the Ramogi Singers, a women's singing group renowned in Kanjira Location for their rich repertoire. She sings mainly praise songs and poetry. She composed this song to herald the election of the first woman member of parliament for Karachuonyo constituency and the second female member of parliament in Kenya.

Phoebe Asiyo, in whose praise the song is composed, was born in 1936. She served as Kenya's National Girl Guide Commissioner and as an employee of Kenya Prisons, rising to be in charge of Langata Women's prison in 1963. In 1964, together with others, she founded ,the National Council of Women of Kenya (NCWK), and later became its chairperson. She ventured into politics in 1979, when she won elective office, only to see the results nullified following a successful court petition by her opponent. She recaptured.the seat in the subse­quent by-election in 1980, and went on to win the national parliamentary *elec­tions* in 1984 and 1992. In 1997 she presented in parliament the affirmative action motion seeking to correct political discrimination against women. The motion was defeated, with nearly all the men voting against it. The same treasure would again be introduced in parliament in 2000 by another female member, and this time it was approved. Phoebe Asiyo retired from politics in 1997 and founded the Kenya Women Political Caucus. In 2001 she was appointed a com­missioner of the Constitutiod of Kenya RevieW Commission, which was charged by pirliament to make recommendations for a new national constitution.

The song reflects the changing power relations in the political landscape of Kenya. The artist at first affects surprise and confusion at the fact that she is singing in praise of a woman rather than a man. (She compares herself to a fol­lower of Legio Maria, the Christian-based Luo religious sect that reveres the Vir­gin Mary) She nonetheless takes up the task with gusto, praising Phoebe lavishly. In doing so, she breaks taboos, describing Phoebe as waving of the flywhisk, a symbol of traditional authority for men. The artist concludes by reminding her listeners, "I have sung properly," fulfilling an artist's responsibility to tell the truth and reflect social change.

*Milton Obote*

**I cannot understand this world; I cannot understand it.**

**LET US PRAISE PHOEBE, OUR MP + 331**

**I am like a Legio Maria convert. Alas, Okal, father of Mboya,**

**It is this world I cannot understand.**

**And my song, too:**

**Do I sing about our Land?**

**Do I praise Rabala, nephew of Magonya?**

**Do I praise the nephew of Mboya?**

**Son of Man from Rusinga,**

**Do I praise our auditor nephew of Mboya?**

**I hear something, that our people are determined; People of Karachuonyo are determined.**

**We must praise Obisa, daughter of Opande**

**We must praise the daughter'of the Nyamware people, Daughter of Agoro, daughter of Gendia,**

**Daughter of the mother of Oho,**

**Phoebe the brown one.**

**Her teeth resemble the diviner's shells.**

**Send the message everywhere;**

**Send the message across the water:**

**Phoebe has arrived,**

**Mother of Agoro.**

**Alas, daughter of Obisa,**

**You have opened a school for disabled; You have opened a school for orphans; Maize flour is being distributed.**

**Oh, Phoebe the brown one,**

**I cannot understand this world.**

**Alas, daughter of Opande,**

**Now there is no more empty politics. The land is determined;**

**People of Ndolo are saying that the land is determined.**

**I will sing my best once and for all;**

**I praise Phoebe, daughter of Opande.**

**The land is waiting.**

**A message goes to Seka; let us go to Seka. We are going to see the daughter of Opande. The daughter of Opande waved the flywhisk;**

**The daughter of Agoro waved the flywhisk; We heard the message in the first meeting.**

**Our People of Karachuonyo,**

**Don't you remember the daughter of Gendia,**

**Her heart is as smooth as the pebble in the Ajua game. Daughter of Karachuonyo, Phoebe is best;**

**Her heart is as white as cattle egrets.**

**Karachuonyo is determined;**

**The land is waiting to see.**

**I have sung properly.**

**I have praised Phoebe, daughter of Opande.**

***Translated by Milton Obote and Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye***

***Margaret A. Ogola*LIFE AND DEATH**

**Kenya 1994 English**

**Margaret Atieno Ogola was born in Asembo Bay, Kenya, on the shores of Lake Victoria, in 1958, the year *Penpoint,* the creative writing journal of East Africa was established and five years before Kenya gained independence from Britain. Invigorated by the new challenges of the postcolonial world she had entered, she went on a search for African cultural renewal that has led her on a successful two-career path as a pediatrician and a writer. An award-winning author, she is cur­rently medical director of the Cottolenga Hospice for orphaned children with AIDS and the executive director of the Life Counseling Association in Kenya. Her Christian activism on issues related to women, health, family, and children has won her recognition at home and abroad.**

**Ogola's literary development began with the publication of *The River and the Source* (1994), a novel that chronicles the lives of four generations of women over a century of political and social upheaval in Kenya. A historical drama of suffer­ing, courage, and heroism, it reenacts the evolution of Kenyan society from the perspective of a matriarchal Luo family swept up in an epic struggle for survival that culminates in a reaffirmatioh of the past and the spiritual bonds connecting individual characters to one another and to the nation. Akoko Obanda, matriarch and protagonist, is the locus of familial and social interactions, "the source" or fountainhead that nourishes an ancestral line, "the river," through the ebb and flow of events in Kenya, which range from precolonial times through independence and beyond. Her daughter, Nyabera, opens up new areas of ex5erience with her con­version to Christianity, while she continues' to build character and ensure the con­tinuity of the family through her owri daughter Elizabeth, a teacher and mother of seven children, who in turn forge various career paths in the modern world.**

**332 + LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY (1970-1995)**

This narrative of irrepressible womanhood, recounted as oral history', is also a Christian tale of redemption told without a hint of anticolonial sentiment. In a significant departure from the \_conflict-shaped paradigm of African nationhood advanced by writers like Ngugi wa Thiong'o, M\_arjorie Oludhe Macgoye, and Chinua Achebe, Ogola reframes the nation-idea in terms of h9memaking, draw­ing on women's enabling attributes to counteract social forces of disruption. The novel's view that "a home without a daughter is like a spring without a source" has appealed to many readers, and literary appreciation for the author came in 1995 when she won both the Commonwealth Writers Prize for Best First Book and the Jomo Kenyatta Prize for Literature. In addition, the book was adopted for four years as a required literature text in secondary school, selling 120,000 copies in one year alone. It has been translated into several languages. Ogola, married and mother of five children, has also written *I Swear by Apollo* (2002), a sequel to *The River and the Source,* focusing on the AIDS crisis; *Cardinal Otunga,A Gift of Grace* (1999), a biography of Maurice Michael Cardinal Otunga, Catholic arch­bishop of Nairobi from 1971 to 1997; and *Place ofDestiny* (2005), her latest novel advancing her favorite theme about Kenya's future.

**LIFE AND DEAm + 333**

Chapters 5 and 6 of *The River and the Source* are included in this volume. They provide a snapshot of Elizabeth's family life and a representative sample of the interlocking relationships across generations.

*Tuzyline fita Allan*

Mark had the devoted love of his wife and the affection of all his children. He

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was not a hard man to love for he was fair and just; was firm but understanding and evidently loved them all; but between him and his youngest child grew the tenderest of attachments. This last one had come unexpectedly and had threat­ened miscarriage after miscarriage, needing frequent hospitalization of the mother and constant worry of the part of the father. The doctors said that she had high blood pressure and that the pregnancy might have to be terminated before time to prevent severe damage or death of the mailer. Terminated! He was after all a man who valued human life; yet he loved his wife.

"We will try to hold back for as long as possible to give the biby a fighting chance; but you must realize this is a very serious condition and we might lose both mother and child." Mark just stared dumbly at the man.

"I suggest that you take her to the National Hospital where there are better facilities than we have here." The man waited for a while and getting no response, decided to go and write a referral note. At the time, the pregnancy was only six and a half months and the baby would have died if he had been born then—aborted the doctors called it; because according to them, it was only considered a miscarriage if the pregnancy was seven months or more with the possibility of a viable baby being salvaged. Viable meant that the chance of survival, in those days, was about twenty-five percent. Three out of four such babies died and the ones who survived had a high proportion of brain damage, mental retardation and blindness. Mark's head reeled under the onslaught. His

wife would die for a baby who had practically no chances at all.

**334 + LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY (1970-1995)**

Elizabeth insisted on being told what was wrong. When she was sure that she had fully grasped what was being said, she took matters in her own hands. She was not the grand-daughter of Akoko for nothing.

"Of course we will go to that hospital. If they do admit me, Mark, you can go back to the children and only come to visit me over the weekends or whenever you can. Don't worry—my grandmother promised me that I would live a long life. And the baby will be quite all right. I will call her Nyabera—the good one—after my mother. You just wait and see."

"How do you know it is a girl?" asked the mystified Mark. Women were strange, but his wife was the strangest of them all.

"You think I have carried six children without learning a thing or two?" she asked smiling. He himself was only too glad to have the decision taken off his hands.

Elizabeth stayed in the hospital for another one and a half months, then it became imperative to induce labour to save both mother and child.

"If we leave it there any longer, the stress might kill it. We will give you an injection to start labour tombrrow."

"Would you call my husband please?" was all she said. Courage by any other name smells just as sweet. Anyone who has had induction of labor will tell you that natural labour is much easier. The pain is insistent and unremitting, build­ing up to a crescendo of continuous agony; but Elizabeth survived it and so did the baby who was such a skinny, wizened little thing, that its mother took one look at it and asked for water. The puzzled nurses brought her a cupful in which she dipped her fingers, touched the baby's forehead and whispered:

"I baptise you, Mary, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit." Though there are other worlds, Mary, however, had no intention of leaving this one just yet. Once she was out of the stressful environment of the womb, she never looked back. After two weeks, she had gained a pound and a half and looked more like a human baby than a monkey. Her mother's blood pressure remained rock steady and Mark took his wife and his little daughter, held firmly in his arms, back home.

He could therefore not be blamed if he had a weak spot for this little one grabbed out of the jaws of death. He would come into the house and ask, "Where is Baby?" until the day his wife reminded him that there were six other children in the house as well as little Mary.

All his children had gone to public schools, but when it was Mary's turn, only a private school could do; and now that he had a car, and her little legs could not carry her to school, she had to be driven there. Only the fact that her mother kept her head prevented the young lady from being completely spoilt. Still she had to smile sometimes just watching father and daughter. However the other children grumbled a little.

"What does she have to do to be punished—commit murder?" asked Becky scathingly. She liked to be the centre of attention—and Mary threatened this.

"Go easy on her," said Vera who had an in-built sense of security that noth­ing could ruffle.

**LIFE AND DEATH + 335**

"But you know that he does anything she asks him to do. It's not fair."

"Grow up," replied Vera shortly. She was seventeen and so tired had she become of her sister's poutings and preenings and extreme selfishness that she made a promise to herself to go very far away from her as soon as she could. This would be very soon because the two were going to sit for their Ordinary Level examinations in a matter of two months. Vera had already applied for a place at the school she had missed out on four years ago when love for her sis­ter had clouded her judgement.

That year, 1972, would also see young Tony sitting for his Certificate of Pri­mary Education to try for a place at the school where Aoro *was.* He had worked incessantly hard and had his head buried in a book most of the time. He was short and stocky; with a driving determination that would take him far at what­ever he chose to do. There was nothing errant or flighty about him. At thirteen he already knew what he wanted out of life and had accepted that hard work was the price.

Anyone who has had to live with someone faced with a major examination knows that the atmosphere is constantly charged and can be sparked off by lit­erally anything. In 1972, the Sigus had three such candidates—Vera, Becky and Tony: it was lucky that Tony was a self-possessed fellow; but Vera, realizing by the minute the magnitude of the sacrifice she had made for her uncaring sister, was tense in her determination to recapture that lost chance. Becky; who was now well aware of the importance of doing well at school, not for her parents' sake, but for her own, was close to a nervous breakdown as she drove herself to work at a pace she was unaccustomed to; again, Vera had ceased to take her side automatically and now tended to bite her head off at the slightest provocation.

So it was that as Becky tried to take out her frustrations on her little sister Mary, Vera became more and more scathing until one night the whole thing blew up and the two started screaming accusations and counter-accusations.

"You hate me! You never liked me! You only came to my *school to spy on* me because you are jealous of me you ugly witch, you pretender!" This was too much for Vera.

**"I** sacrificed a golden chance to be with you, stupid girl, and you return it with nothing but insults!" Tears welled in her eyes and she dashed them away angrily with her fist; then she grabbed her sister just as their mother burst into the room. Elizabeth managed to cool down tempers somewhat and took Vera aside as the more reasonable one.

"Leave your sister alone! I expected better of you Vera, **I** really did." Vera sniffed angrily, madder now at the uncontrollable dams that were in her eyes. When would she ever learn not to take everything so to heart? A semblance of normality was restored, but the relationship between the twins had received a blow from which it would never fully recover.

Eventually the exam results were published. Vera got a first division pass with distinction in Mathematics, Biology, Physics, Geography and English and credits in Chemistry and Literature. She also managed a pass in Needlework, which pleased her immensely because she had feared that she would fail the confounded subject. She hated to fail and had therefore suffered the needle pricks gladly.

336 + **LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY (1970-1995)**

Becky managed a second division pass with which she was well pleased as were her parents. Tony whose calm assurance had began to show signs of crack­ing surpassed his wildest dreams by obtaining a perfect score of thirty-six points. He held himself tightly and then let out a lusty yell.

"Watch out guys, here I come!" he shouted. Elizabeth, who had a particu­larly soft spot for this son, smiled at him.

"-You worked for it. I'm sure Aoro is dying to know. You must write and tell him."

"That's a great idea!" he ran on ahead. His joy simply could not be contained by a sedate pace.

Becky wanted to look for a job immediately. It would mean freedom and she craved freedom. Mark would not hear of it. His breathtaking eighteen-year-old daughter? Out in the streets full of predatory men, by herself? Never.

"That cannot be, young lady. You are going right back to your old school to study for your Advanced Level Certificate in History, Literature and Geogra­phy just like they have told you to."

"But Father! All I want to be is an air-hostess. Why should I go back to school? That's for Vera, who wants to be a professor."

'An air-hostess?" Mark could not believe his ears. "Over my dead body!"

Becky looked at his face and retreated to her room. She remembered the story of Aoro and his near starvation. She would bide her time; no use in antag­onising the old geezer.

Vera enthusiastically took on Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry. This time she said good-bye to her sister and left without a backward glance. Tony left to join Aoro and his mother's heart went with him. Soon the house echoed with emptiness for even little Mary was away at school throughout the day. The children were growing up and the going away movement was becoming an exo­dus. Elizabeth wished that the twin boys were with her to fill the house with noise and good cheer.

One day a telegram arrived from Aluor. Now letters from that place were few and far between. They mainly consisted of notes from the twins asking for this, that or the other. A telegram rarely ever carried good news and Mark's hands shook a little as he tore it open.

"COME" it declared. "YOUR MOTHER IS VERY. ILL." It must be Maria! He rushed out of his office and went to get his wife. She was in the mid­dle of a lesson and one of the teachers had to call her out. One look at Mark's face was enough. He had never been much good at hiding things behind a blank mask and Elizabeth could read him like a book.

**"What is wrong?" He said nothing, just quietly handed her the telegram. "Mother ill! But she was so well when we went to see her last month! Oh my God! We must go at once!"**

**LIFE AND DEATH + 337**

**"Yes dear. I've already spoken to the headmaster—so just get into the car and we'll go right home." Firm, decisive Elizabeth was standing there looking con­fused and unsure of her next action. When they got home, she walked into the sitting room and again just stood there. She had the most oppressive premoni­tion of doom pressing in on her from all sides and she simply could not make any sensible move. So Mark took over, packed a few things for her, made arrangements with the neighbours to collect little Mary, put his wife in the car and drove off.**

**Most children have a father and a mother and Elizabeth had been no excep­tion apart from the fact that her father had been a woman—her grandmother Akoko. Now her mother was ill, probably dying, and she experienced a com­pletely different pain from the one she had experienced at her grandmother's death. There is a bond that exists between mother and child that is completely primeval in nature and only comes to the surface of the conscious mind in all its primitive force when either mother or child is in some sort of peril—not sur­prising considering that as a child lies in its mother's womb, the first sound it hears is her heartbeat and the first human voice it recognises is hers. For the next many months, the child's most satisfying experience will be to lie next to her heart, nursing at the breast—so that the powerful connection is not severed vvith the cutting of the cord.**

**Maria Nyabera had been a good mother to Elizabeth and her cousin Peter and, in her own generous way, had given unstintingly of herself to them and to her own mother. Elizabeth remembered how tenderly she had looked after Akoko when she became old and ailing and she hoped with a sick despairing dread that she would get the same chance to show her mother how much she cared in spite of the distance between them.**

**"I have failed her." These were the first words she had spoken since their departure from Nakuru and now they were approaching the outskirts of Kai­cho town. Mark cautioned himself to tread carefully for he remembered only too clearly how she had almost broken off their engagement at her grand­mother's death, blaming him for God alone knew what.**

**"How have you failed, dear?" he asked cautiously.**

**"Don't keep on calling me dear! You know very well I should visited her more frequently—instead of just staying with you, who are young and healthy and don't need me!"**

**Mark knew better than to point out that not more than two months had ever passed without Elizabeth dashing west to see her mother; or the great sacrifice that they had both made in giving up two of their children to her. He knew her well enough to know that she would only bite off his head and he liked it well enough where it was—firmly attached to his body. He was lucky for he had many brothers staying at home with his own mother so he didn't have to con-**

**stantly worry on that score. He really understood her predicament.**

**338 + LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY (1970-1995)**

**"You don't understand anything at all!" the lady declared as if reading his mind. "You don't know how torn I've often felt, how I long to divide myself in two, so that I can be in both places at once!"**

**Mark said nothing but thought to himself that marriage was a very useful thing: there was always someone to vent one's fury on however and especially unjustifiably. Elizabeth kept on alternating between long silences and irrational self-accusatory statements until they were a few miles from Aluor. She then kept completely quiet. It was dark by then but when they approached the but they found a crowd of people gathered there and both their hearts sank. She must be dead!**

**The twins rushed out into their parents arms, and the people surrounded them; but Elizabeth had no eyes for anyone—she just walked into the hut. She had to see that beloved face one last time.**

**"She is not here. Father Thomas took her to the hospital at Maseno." So she was not dead yet, thank God. It must have been eight o'clock, but she simply turned on her heels and went out to the car again despite the protests of the vil­lagers. This night would not pass without her seeing her mother. Mark and the twins followed her out. They knew that argument was of no use.**

**When they finally reached Maseno at about nine o'clock, they had to plead to be allowed in. They found Maria, who had suffered a massive stroke, still in a coma. The clinical officer on duty held out no hope but suggested they return in the morning to confirm with the doctor. It was then decided that Elizabeth stay with her mother and Mark take the children home. He would return in the morning.**

**Elizabeth pulled up a stool and sat by her mother all that night listening to the changing patterns of her breathing; first it was stentorous but steady; then she went into periodic breathing with lapses so long that her daughter, afraid that she had stopped altogether, would squeeze her hand at which she would start breathing again. Once she actually opened her eyes and Elizabeth tried to talk to her but got no response. She would have bombarded the nurses with her questions but she was afraid they would throw her out.**

**At seven o'clock, just before the doctor came for his rounds, Maria Nyabera, daughter of Chief Owuor Kembo and Akoko Obanda, and wife to Okumu Angolo, breathed her last with her only daughter at her bed-side; but death is such a lonely and private matter that all others however loving, can only be observers. Elizabeth stood by that bed-side for a lonoime. It was a strange feeling to realize that one is an orphan even if one is forty-three and that the one person who has always loved one without question is no more.**

**Father Thomas, who had had a soft spot for this ever-smiling parishioner of his, was very helpful. He helped transport the body, and assisted His Lordship Bishop Peter Kembo with the requiem Mass, then the funeral procession, with altar boys leading, proceeded to the burial ground where Maria was laid to rest beside her mother. It was the end of an era. The year was nineteen hundred and**

**seventy-three, almost a hundred seasons after the girl-child, Akoko Obanda had arrived wailing into the world—the first daughter of the great Chief Odero Gogni, by his second wife Akech. She it was who had been the source of this river which at one point had trickled to a mere rivulet in danger of petering out, but which once again in her grand-daughter Elizabeth, and in her seven chil­dren, was gathering momentum.**

**NAKAY1MA AND THE WONDER TREE + 339**

**The dead have no use for the living who have eventually to tear themselves away so that the business of life might somehow continue. Elizabeth gathered her children and they left the fresh mound of red soil by itself in the hot after­noon sun. There were things to do—the but had to be closed, a few cherished things taken, but most given away. The children had to go back to their various schools and she herself back to her house. There was nothing but memories to hold her to this place—her adoptive home to which she had come as a very lit­tle girl.**

***Ester Nakate*NAKAYIMA AND THE WONDER TREE**

**Uganda 1995 Luganda**

**The legend of Nakayima tells of a great medicine woman who once lived on Mubende Hill, in present-day Western Uganda. She is still widely thought to have had powers to disappear, and reappear, and to have eventually transformed herself into a tree that still grows on the hill today. The tree is quite gigantic, and continues to receive attention from worshipers, researchers, and tourists.**

**The practice of people-worshiping, or of assigning spiritual significance to unique natural phenomena, is not unusual in Uganda or elsewhere in Africa. In Uganda, several other sites, including caves, rivers, and rock formations, have also attracted attention, but few of them feature as forcefully as the Nakayima phe­nomenon in the lives of individuals in its area of origin, and of great interest as well beyond their localities.**

**The legend of Nakayima dominates the cultural, political, and religious lives of the people of Mubende. They take Nakayima as their guardian deity, and do many things in her name. A road and a hotel in Mubende town bear her name. Administrators freshly posted to the district are instructed in the particularities of the Nakayima cult, so that they can avoid offending the local people's sensibili­ties, and these same administrators learn to use Nakayiina's name to admonish their citizens against doing things that "Nakayima would not approve of."**

**While a person called Nakayima lived in the remote past, the facts of her life are not clear, although they have been the subject of historical speculation and social myth-making. Her story has been told from several angles, and it has grown and adapted to the contemporary changes in the society around it.**

**While many versions of the story have been produced by male researchers, the**

**version that follows is by a woman, Ester Nakate, the current custodian of**

**the Nakayima shrine and tree. Nakate introduces herself as a close relative of Nakayima, and one who receives and interprets her will.**

**340 + LATE TWENTIETH CENTUR16(1970-1995)**

**Nakate's version of the legend of Nakayima reveals aspects of the story that have not been emphasized by previous recorders of the legend. In particular, she depicts Nakayima as a woman who spent a substantial part of her time making peace between the warring kings of Bunyoro and Buganda, both of whom reside in Mubende.**

***Abasi Kiyimba***

**My name is Ester Nakate. I belong to the Nte clan. My forefathers originated from the area now known as Fortportal, in Tooro, which was then part of Bun­yoro. Our great great grandfather was a brother to Nakayima. We are the custo­dians of this site, and we inherit it from paternal aunt to niece. My ancestors came to this place years after Nakayima had disappeared, because they were called upon to take care of the site. I know the story of Nakayima very well because it has been told to me by my aunt, whom I replaced as custodian of this site.**

**Nakayima had a sister called Nyinamwiru, who was a great Munyoro princess. They came together from Bunyoro. Nyinamwiru settled at the bottom of Mubende Hill, and eventually tamed into the river that passes near the army barracks. Her sister, Nakayima, settled on top of Mubende Hill, and became a great medicine woman who helped many people. However, she never gave medicine that was intended to hurt anyone, and did not entertain anyone with evil intentions at her shrine.**

**During her lifetime, Nakayima was a very important person, and was con­stantly consulted by great people like the kings of Buganda and Bunyoro. When they quarreled and fought, she made peace between them. It is because of her efforts at peace that the Banyoro and the Baganda did not kill themselves as much as they would have done. Also, in the area around Mubende, she was the ruler, and both the kings of Bunyoro and Buganda left her alone. In this area, the Banyoro and the Baganda lived in peace, and they still do so today.**

**Nakayima did not die. She simply disappeared because her time to disappear had come. When she disappeared, her people were so heartbroken that she decided to reappear to them again in form of a tree. So this tree that you see here is actually not a tree. It is the real Nakayima, and it always assures us that she is watching over us. The chambers in the tree are her shrine, and anyone can kneel there and pray for luck to get riches, women, and children. Also, when your marriage is not very stable or when you have failed to get a man, or when the man you have is very miserly, you can pray to Nakayima, and she gives you luck that will change the unhappy state of affairs. Students also come here to pray for luck to pass their examinations. People• come from all over Buganda, Bunyoro, and even beyond to pray for Nakayima's protection, and they bring all kinds of gifts, especially chicken and goats.**

**When the white men came, they tried to cut down this tree, and to desecrate Nakayima in other ways, such as trying to drill a borehole on her sacred sites. But she resisted all these attempts. The tree refused to be cut; whenever they cut part of it and rested for the day, they would find it whole the next morning, until eventually they gave up. As for the borehole, the machinery that they were using simply got swallowed up in the ground by Nakayima's power.**

**EVERYWOMAN A CHILD OF GOD + 341**

**Nakayima is always very close to her people and protects them from evil people. She communicates to me through dreams, and I tell the people what she wants. Also, some lucky people have seen her in her human form, because she sometimes appears to people she chooses. She has, for example, appeared to me twice, and on one of those occasions, she has given me local brew in a very beautiful *endeku* [small gourd]. Through dreams, Nakayima has told me that she is tired of being photographed, and that everyone who wants to photograph her must pay a fee.**

***Translated by Abasi Kiyimba***

***Janet Karim*EVERY WOMAN A CHILD OF GOD**

**Malawi 1995 English**

**Janet Karim was born Janet Mbekeani in 1954. She graduated from the Univer­sity of Malawi, Chancellor College, in 1979 and has held a number of profes­sional positions in teaching and journalism. Her writing on women's issues dates back to 1982, when she joined the *Daily Times* of Malawi; she was responsible for the "Women's Column," highlighting issues of women's rights, empowerment, and equity. In 1989 she began to publish a magazine, *Woman Now,* and from 1993 to 1999 she ran a newspaper, *The Independent.* Currently she is a regular contrib­utor to a column entitled "These Freedoms," in which she discusses women's issues from a Christian perspective, which appears in the weekly *Malawi News.* She is currently working with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in development communications in Lilongwe, Malawi.**

**The inspiration for the following text dates back to December 1988, when the General Synod of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) held a seminar called "Women in the** 1990? **at Chilema, in Machinga District in south­ern Malawi. The seminar was the first of its kind, and the women who attended it offered strong resolutions concerning the participation and empowerment of women in the church, including a call for the ordination of women. These resolu­tions formed the basis for a women's protest that coincided with the World Council of Churches' declaration of 1988-1998 as the *Decade* of Churches in Solidarity with Women. The CCAP's General. Synod empowered all synods to debate the issue of women's ordination within four years. But seven years later, in 1995, no policy had been made, and it was clear that the church was not willing**

**to ordain its women and allow them to preach. A qualified female theologian, Gertrude Kapuma, had been denied ordination and instead assigned the running of a female training center at Chigodi in Blantyre.**

**342 + LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY (1970-1995)**

**Janet Karim's protest letter to Reverend Chitsulo, who was then the General Secretary of Blantyre Synod, supported an earlier petition presented by the Chigodi women. Published in her newspaper, *The Independent,* Karim's letter, which provides theological justification for women's ordination, served to draw wider attention to the longstanding issue. The Blantyre Synod of the CCAP ordained its first female clergy in 1999. In a conversation in August 2002, Karim again emphasized the need for the church to recognize women as full partners in evangelism.**

***Edrinnie Lora-Kayanahazinthu***

**Open Letter To Rev. Chitsulo**

**My Dear /Reverend Chitsulo**

**Every Woman A Child Of God; Saved By The Blood**

**I greet you in the precious name of our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ, in whose name I come to you today.. .. And it is my prayer that ... this letter ... does not become a dry theoretical or argumentative discourse, but one that is filled with the warm love of Jesus.**

**I refer you to the above subject in view of the women whose aborted march has, I am to understand led to the suspension of 11 of them who are in the employment of the Synod. . . .**

**I understand that one of the reasons given why women cannot take on posi­tions of authority in your church hierarchy is because women are sinners. Their sins derive from the sin of Eve in the garden, so the reasoning goes. Subjecting women to the sin and burden of Eve, suggests that it is only men whom Jesus saved on the cross. But my Bible tells me in 1 Peter 1:18-19 that I have been purchased from my empty and sinful way of life with the precious and incor­ruptible blood of the lamb of God—there is no differentiation between male and female in the salvation program for God's people, because God is not a respecter of persons, male and female. In 1 Peter 2:9-10 I am told that I am among the chosen people, a member of royal priesthood, a holy nation belong­ing to God, and that I, a wothan, may declare the praises of Him who called me out of darkness into His wonderful light. . . .**

**Because I am a Christian, the curse bestowed on Eve in the Garden of Eden are no longer in my Record Book of Life—the blood of Jesus Christ wiped them out and my record is as white as snow. Therefore, I am no longer under any condemnation. God does not condemn me for Eve's sins.**

**What is the mind of Christ in relation to women, sin and the church? The good Lord himself demonstrated t9 the world on numerous occasions in the New Testament and they provide good reference for qur everyday living.**

**On the human level, Jesus set an example on the gender equation. In the story of a woman caught in adultery, Jesus shows the Pharisees that it takes two**

**to tangle! When she was brought to Jesus to be judged by Him, on the surface, the Lord questions whether there is any person in this world who can claim to be without sin, on the deeper level, He is telling the Pharisees that adultery cannot be committed by one person!—where is the woman's accomplice, Jesus quizzes the old guard of Judaism as he says, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her."**

**MEMORIES OF A ZANZIBAR WEDDING + 343**

**To the Christian men and the few women who support that women carry the Eve burden and therefore should not be given positions of authority; I ask are you not guilty of throwing that stone? And if the stone you level at women is cast, are you therefore not saying that you are without sin?.. .**

**As noted earlier, Jesus—God made flesh—came to this world through a woman. God's perfect plan to use women in spreading His word completes the cycle when the resurrected Messiah appears first to a woman, and not a so­very-pure-and-holy woman—Mary Magdalene. To this woman, Jesus commis­sions to go and spread the Good News that Jesus Christ is risen! Jesus Himself gave women the authority to be His disciples. On the day of Pentecost, as the disciples (which we know also included women, among them Mary the mother of Jesus) were waiting in the upper room, the women also received the power from the Holy Spirit. Throughout history since the resurrection of Jesus there have been many examples of women, filled with the spirit of God, who have displayed this power and authority in their furtherance of spreading the Good News. And if women have both the authority and power from God to be His servants, does any mortal being possess any other greater authority and power to strip women of these God-given talents?**

**I think not, I pray not!**

**My good Reverend Sir, it is my prayer that you seek the Lord in this situation regarding women in the church. Choose to have the display of the mind of Christ in your future acts on the situation on hand and on any other situation where man-made dogma may appear to over-ride God given principles and commands.**

**May God bless you**

**Yours in His Service**

**Janet Karim (Mrs.)**

***Zebra Peera*MEMORIES OF A ZANZIBAR WEDDING**

**Tanzania 1995 English**

**Traditionally, weddings in Zanzibar were communal affairs, carried out with the full participation of neighbors and friends and a rich element of street perform­ance, both in the issuing of invitations and in the actual ceremony. Modern wed­dings are more clinically organized, with invitations issued by phone or through**

the mail, and celebrations themselves held in sequestered public halls and hotel restaurants. While many who live in Zanzibar are proud to take part in modern Western practices, Zanzibaris in diaspora, like the author, tend to dream of and yearn for what they left behind.

**344 + LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY (1970-1995)**

Zebra Peera is a second-generation Zanzibari who attended both Indian and Catholic-run schools before training to be a teacher. She then taught in primary and secondary schools, as well as in institutions of higher education in Zanzibar. Her first opportunity to travel outside Zanzibar came with a scholarship to Durham University in England, then another to Makerere University in Uganda. She left Zanzibar following her marriage in Dar es Salaam, and from 1980 for­ward she lived with her family in Australia, where she worked as an interpreter for immigrants and refugees. Sadly, she passed away in May 2006, as this volume was nearing completion.

Peera describes in detail the wedding rituals of the Khoja Shi'as, Zanzibari Muslims of Indian descent. She represents these rituals primarily as Indian, but aspects resemble the weddings of middle-class Africans and Arabs in Zanzibar at that time. The *nikah,* or marriage agreement, is an essential feature of any Muslim wedding. The seven days of ceremony, the bride's movement to and from her new home and her parents' home, her decorations with henna, the exchange of gifts, the astrologer picking an auspicious day all these would have been common features in other weddings as well. Differences would have emerged in the cos­tumes and the fare served at the wedding, although halwa and coffee are standard refreshments at the *nikah.* The expression of the developing relationship between the bride and her in-laws through the games and the exchange of gifts is particu­larly Indian.

*Saida Yabya-Otbman*

Nostalgia overwhelms me as I look back upon my recollections of the weddings of the Khoja Shi'as, or Muslims of Indian origin in Zanzibar. The wedding rites which I remember as a child were authentically Indian in that they conformed to those practiced by the Indians in India. Over the years Western influence led to changes in the costumes worn by the bride and bridegroom, and other cus­toms have been adopted, such as having a wedding cake and wedding rings. The ceremony is now a mixture of Eastern and Western traditions.

Because of our ethnic origin the wedding rites were an amalgam of ancient Hindu customs and Islamic requirements. In fact, the Islamic component con­sisted of only one, very practical, requirement: the *nikah,* meaning marriage or marrying. Islamic marriage is the product of an agreement between man and woman to take each other as husband and wife. To seal the agreement the man gives, or promises to give, *mahar* to the woman. This is a modest amount of money fixed by *sharia* or religious law, well within the capacity of any individ­ual. In practice no money actually changes hands: the promise is given and accepted in order to satisfy the requirements. Though it is not necessary for a priest to officiate, a priest or a "Qa.di" [judge] will represent the man or woman, and another male of repute will represent the other party. The two representa-

tives read out the ritual words, in Arabic, that pronounce the agreement, and act as witnesses to the marriage.

**MEMORIES OF A ZANZIBAR WEDDING + 345**

On the other hand, the Hindu customs inherited from our forebears pro­vided the romance and excitement of an authentic, classical Zanzibari wedding. These practices were observed without a true understanding of their origins in local Indian beliefs and superstitions. There were also influences arising from the association with the Swahilis, or native Africans of the coast, among whom the Khoja Shi'a had settled.

A wedding was preceded by an engagement ceremony. To seal the engage­ment a nose stud of seven diamonds was given to the girl by the boy's family, which she was then expected to wear in public. Changing times led to the replacement of the nose stud with a ring. On the engagement day the boy was invited to the girl's house, accompanied by his friends. On arrival the party was served with a specially prepared milk drink, enriched with Indian spices, nuts, and sugar and boiled until it condensed. Indian sweets were served with milk, followed *by paan,* a mixture of betel nuts, shredded coconut, fennel seeds and other spices, wrapped in a leaf to assist chewing. The girl's brother or near male relative then stepped forward and presented the boy- with a ring and a suit. Other relatives of the girl presented gifts in the form of cash and handker­chiefs. After this the boy's party departed. Then there arrived a party of the young female members of the boy's family or friends. The boy's sister, or near female relative, placed the engagement ring upon the girl's finger, a sari on her lap, and a sweet in•her mouth for good luck. After taking refreshments they left. Throughout the ceremony the girl sat in one place surrounded by her female friends—she did not see her prospective husband, nor was he allowed to see her.

The day of the wedding had to be propitious. It was therefore determined in advance by an astrologer. Once the date was fixed for the start of the ceremony, the ladies of the wedding party personally went to the homes of their friends and relatives to extend invitations. This emphasized the sincerity of the invita­tion, and was vital to ensure a person's attendance at the wedding—offence would be taken if the invitation arrived in any form other than a personal visit. Additionally, a town crier travelled through the streets calling everyone in the community to attend the wedding.

The entire ceremony spanned seven days, during which both the bride's and groom's households would be buzzing with activity. While the groom went out and about as usual, the bride began to receive special treatment. She was iso­lated from her family, confined to an exclusive position behind a curtain where she sat on a mattress spread on the floor. For the first three days she was visited by her bridesmaids who gave her home-made beauty treatments to soften and brighten her skin. She was also given a special diet. Lest she be visited and dis­turbed by some evil spirits, she wore a rosary, with a tiny golden penknife attached, on her wrist. The holy Qu'ran was kept beside her to provide addi­tional protection from unfriendly spirits.

On the evening of the fourth day the colourful henna ceremony took place. The henna paste is made from the ground leaves of the henna tree, and is a colouring agent for the hair or body. Young girls from the groom's family arrived at the bride's house in procession, led by Swahili women bearing the henna on plates fringed with jasmine, the scent of which permeated the sur­rounding air. Candles, placed in the centre of the plates, cast light about the dark, narrow streets. The henna-bearers sang wedding songs accompanied by ululations and cries of merriment. The bride's friends, who had gathered at her house, then proceeded to use the henna to decorate the bride's feet and hands in intricate designs. They then applied henna designs to each other's hands. The same evening, the groom had henna applied to his own palms by his mother at their house, as did his female relatives.

**346 + LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY (1970-1995)**

The morning of the fifth day was the wedding day, and the community sent a representative to the bride's house. He took a position on the other side of the curtain behind which the bride sat, and enquired as to whether she was gen­uinely agreeable to the union. Having gained her verbal assent he then took her signature on the marriage certificate. He also informed her of the amount of *mahar* the groom had promised to give her for her hand in marriage. Later that day, the male members of both families accompanied the groom to the house of the priest where the recitation of *nikah* took place. The groom then signed the marriage certificate, with his guardian witnessing the signature. The bride's guardian attested to the bride's signature that had been obtained earlier. The elders of the community also put their signatures on the certificate. The cere­mony ended with the sweet and sticky halwa, prepared by the Omani Arabs, served with strong Turkish coffee.

Later in the afternoon ladies from the groom's family called at the bride's house to deliver the jewellery and sari for the bride to wear that night. The bridal costume was then hung on a chair, above a small earthen pot. Sandal­wood, cooked in sugar and the rich oriental perfumes of *cod* [a fragrant dried sap] were sprinkled over the burning charcoal in the pot, and had scented the fabric. The traditional color of bridal attire was aquamarine, now replaced by white saris. *Bahndri,* a drape rich in color and heavily embroidered with gold thread, formed part of the traditional costume, but is optional today.

The bridegroom's traditional attire consisted of white pants and shirt, over which he wore a knee-length coat, heavily embroidered with gold thread. A golden turban was placed upon his, head, his face hidden by flowers dangling from the turban. A garland hung around his neck, and an ornamental sword in a golden sheath hung from his waist. Later, the Western suit and tie replaced the picturesque costume. As the groom grew ready to leave for the bride's house, his mother approached, holding money in her hand. She moved her hand in a circle over the groom's head and put the money in a tray in front of the groom, customarily held by the groom's barber. Other ladies, in order of seniority, followed suit. The groom then left the house for the bride's house, sometimes mounted on a horse. He was led in procession by a teacher of the

**Qu'ran, reciting aloud the Arabic verses praising the Prophet Muhammed as the party wound its way through narrow streets.**

**MEMORIES OF A ZANZIBAR WEDDING + 347**

**At the bride's house, the groom and his party were entertained with soft drinks, sherbet, ice-cream, and *pawn.* The groom was then presented with a suit and a watch. The best man then removed the groom's garland and sent it over on a tray to the bride. The bride donned this garland, and her family sent another garland over to the groom for him to wear. Finally, the groom circled the room, shaking and kissing the hands of the elders of the bride's family and the community. He then departed to await the bride's arrival at his home.**

**The women of the groom's family, and relatives and friends of the bridal party, arrived at the bride's house in their own procession, led again by singing Swahili women. While they were being entertained, the bridesmaids were mak­ing final touches to the bride's appearance. Wedding gifts, and the bride's dowry, were entrusted to the groom's mother, and the groom's mother and female relatives were given gifts by the bride's parents. Customarily these were `shawls, ceremoniously draped over the recipient's heads, rather than handed to them as an ordinary gift.**

**An astrologer had previously determined the hour that it was most propi­tious for the bride to leave her parents' house. At the approach of this hour the groom's family were invited to the bride's room, the ladies bearing plates of sweets. There the bride sat, her head bowed, the top of her sari drawn down to cover her face. Her mother-in-law lifted her veil and placed a small piece of sweet in the bride's mouth, followed by the other ladies of the groom's family. It was regarded as auspicious for at least seven married women to take part in this ritual. The bride was now ready to leave. By way of farewell the bride's mother held to her daughter's lips a cup of milk from which she took a sip. In her hands the bride carried a small Qu'ran and a bundle of coconut and sugar, symbolising fertility. Then her father, brothers and uncles each placed their hand on her hand to bless her. It was customary to slaughter a sacrificial chicken at the threshold of the house, the bride stepping in the blood as she departed in a pro­cession to the groom's house.**

**On reaching the groom's house another chicken was sacrificed at the entrance. Crossing the threshold, the bride stepped onto a low stool to stand beside the groom. The ladies of the groom's family showered the couple with flowers and rice. The groom's mother held up a cup of milk from which the couple drank in turn. Two earthenware bowls were placed on the floor in front of the stool, and were broken by the couple as they stepped off the stool. While the groom went to join his friends, the bride was taken into another room full of ladies sitting on the carpet. The bride sat on a mattress in their midst. Then her father-in-law entered the room carrying a bag full of silver coins. He emptied the coins into a tray placed in front of the bride. With the help of her bridesmaid the bride scooped up a quantity of coins which were counted. By the amount she was able to scoop, she was judged to be miserly or generous—all done in good humour! Her father-in-law then presented her with a gift of jewellery. After**

refreshments were served, bridesmaids escorted the bride to her bedroom, and the guests began to leave. Nowadays, a wedding cake ds cut and distributed before the guests depart. After all the ceremonies were complete, it was well past midnight and the couple were finally alone together for the first time. Before dawn the couple were expected to pray for harmony and happiness.

**348 + LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY (1970-1995)**

Early in the morning, the bride was left alone in the room. Soon afterwards the bridesmaids arrived, to take the bride back to her parents' house to spend the day there. This day was known as *shinda,* meaning to spend the day at home. The bride would take leave of her mother-in-law by kissing her hand as a sign of respect. In the afternoon the groom, with his friends, went to the bride's house for lunch. On arrival they were seated in the lunch room after removing their shoes to sit on the carpet. It was customary, and part of the fun, for the bride's younger sister or brother to hide the groom's shoe—and ,to retrieve it he had to part with some money. The ladies of the groom's family were also invited. After lunch a game was engaged in between the bride and her mother-in-law, followed by other family members. A tray of grain was placed between the two participants. First the mother-in-law scooped up a quantity of grains, which she then poured into the cupped hands of the bride: The bride was supposed to hold the grains firmly and pour them back into her mother-in-law's hands. The exchange would continue, stop, and restart, with the bride ini­tiating the process. At the end the bride was given a present in cash or jewellery by each participant. After lunch, the guests left and• the bride was able to get some sleep before she was fetched by the groom to return to her matrimonial home in the evening.

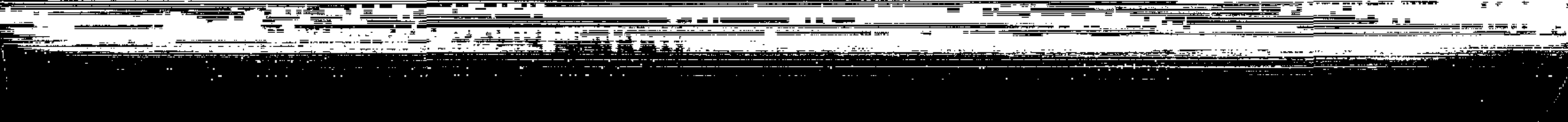
*Sattaro* is the name given to the seventh and last day of the ceremony. On this day the groom invited his in-laws, relatives and friends to lunch. At this event the bride wore the clothing and jewellery she had been given as part of her dowry. After lunch the bride, accompanied by her friends and relatives, returned to her parents' home for the rest of the day. To commemorate the wed­ding a group photograph was• taken in a public park, with the groom wearing his traditional wedding costume, sitting in the centre, flanked by the young male members of both family and friends. At night the groom called at his in-laws' house to take his bride back home. The bride would continue to visit her parents every Friday to spend the day with them, with her husband calling at night to bring her home.

A few weeks later there would be photographs taken at the studio of the *couple, as well* as group photographs *of* the *female* members *of* the *groom's* family with the bride. These were the only,mementos of the occasion. Nowa­days the entire wedding night ceremony is extensively photographed and videped. As Indians in Zanzibar began to imitate their compatriots in the Westernized cities of India, foimer exotic and colorful ceremonies, mingling Indian, Islamic and Swahili traditions, have receded from the social landscape, leaving only memories deeply etched in my mind.

**INTO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY**

**(1996-2004)**





***Communal*ONE BLANKET**

**ONE BLANKET + 351**

**Uganda 1996 Lango**

**The song "One Blanket" was performed in the Lango language by eight women from Odokomit village in Lira, a province in northern Uganda. For decades, the region has been a site of violent conflict. In addition to brutal fighting between government forces and the rebel paramilitary forces, most notably the Lord's Resistance Army, people living in the eastern part of Lira had to contend with armed cattle raids by the neighboring Karimojong. Life in the area became so dangerous that most residents fled their homes. In 1996, when this song was recorded, five of the women singing had resettled in Odokomit, in the center of Lira.**

**The song dates back to an earlier period of turmoil in the 1970s, when Idi Amin was president of Uganda. Amin forced Asians, who had run Ugandan sugar factories and import-export businesses, to flee the country. He replaced them with his own people, whose inexperience led to shortages and then to rationing and then to still more serious shortages. It was common for families to lack such basic necessities as sugar, salt, and soap because of Amin's policies.**

**Among the Langi, communal songs are owned by everyone in the community, and anyone can revise songs to suit a particular situation. "One Blanket" is the kind of communal song sung at Langi beer parties and other social occasions that call for dancing. In Lango society, wealth is measured not only in cash but also in the number of children fathered by a single man. This is also a humorous song, in which the women ask—in response to their husbands' unspoken complaints—how they can possibly have more children when they have no privacy with their husbands.**

***Florence Ebila***

**One blanket!**

**The children also included! How can you say**

**That I have refused to deliver?**

**One blanket!**

**And for the children also included! My husband,**

**How can you say**

**That I have refused to conceive?**

**Mr. The-Owner-of-Riches,**

**Curled inside his sack, really,**

**He quarreled till dawn.**

**How can you say that I refused to—That I refused to conceive?**

***Mr.* This-Man curled inside his sack, Really,**

**He quarreled till dawn.**

**How can you say**

**That I refused to conceive?**

**My Boss!**

**One blanket!**

**The children also included! The visitor is also around! Now, how can you say**

**That I refused to conceive?**

**My Boss!**

**One blanket!**

**The children also included! The visitor is also around! Now, how do you say**

**That I refused to conceive?**

***Translated by Florence Ebila***

**SONGS COMPLAINING ABOUT
  
HUSBANDS AND LOVERS**

**Complaints about husbands and lovers form the subject matter for many songs sung by women in East Africa. Often, women sing these on specific occasions, as is the case for the first five songs collected here. Other songs *may be sun& var­ious* contexts, as is the case with the final two songs in this section.**

**"The Impotent One Climbed a Tree" is typical of the Langi songs sung by women at beer parties, where they may also feign drunkenness in order to express themselves without inhibition. The group of women of Odokomit village, in northern Uganda, who sang this song do not know the name of the original com­poser. The crested crane, an icon of honor and beauty, appears on the flag of Uganda; here it is used sarcastically in describing the husband. The repeated word *iya in* the song serves to give rhythmic emphasis to the singer's words.**

**"The Greedy Husband" was sung by S.C. Hara of Ekwendeni village in Mzimba, Malawi.This song is a *hlombe* song, sung during a dance performed by both men and women. Again, no one knows the name of the original composer. The repeated phrase in this song, *Siyayo hoyo mbelebele,* is a rhythmical repetition of syllables without specific meaning.**

**The three songs from women in the Rumphi District of Malawi were sung at**

**352 ♦ INTo TwEtsrry-FiRsT CENTuRY (1996-2004)**

**a women's dance called *visekese.* The dance is part of a competition among various women's associations, called *Boma,* held in the villages during September and October. As accompaniment, they use a *chisekese,* a square rattle made from straw. The first and second of these songs complain about a man who has migrated to Johannesburg for work, while the third is about the jealousy a woman feels when her husband is adulterous.**

**"Make Love and Not Babies" was sung in Kikaniba by Louise 1Calondu wa Maseki of Kitui, Kenya. The song is of a type sung by groups of Akamba women‘ In this song, the phase "this child" refers literally to a recently born child and metaphorically, especially in line five, to the man's penis. "The big machete" in the last line also refers to the man's circumcised penis.**

**"The Irresponsible Husband," sung by Njira Chenga, is a work song of Wadu­rurna women, who create a common rhythm for their work. Women have typi­cally sung such songs while cultivating and harvesting, as well as while doing household chores.**

***Ann Biersteker, Florence Ebila, Edrinnie Lora-Kayambazinthu,***

***and Sheila Ali Ryanga***

***Langi Women of Odokomit***

**THE IMPOTENT ONE CLIMBED A TREE**



**Uganda 1996 Lango**

**The impotent one climbed up the tree.**

**When you see him, he appears like the crested crane.**

**The impotent one climbed up the tree, as if to shepherd *me.***

***Iya,* even if I am going to the well,**

***Iya,* you follow me.**

***Iya,* even on my way to pick vegetables**

**Lya, you follow me.**

***Iya,* even on the way to collect firewood,**

***Iya, you* follow me.**

**The impotent one, really, when one is useless!**

***Translated by Florence Ebila***

***S.C. Hara,* THE GREEDY HUSBAND**

**Malawi 1997 Chingoni**

***Siyayo hoyo mbelebele. Siyayo hoyo mbelebele. Here* is a *gluttonous* chief.**

**He eats anything.**

**He is a gluttonous chief**

**SONGS COMPLAINING ABOUT HUSBANDS AND LOVERS t 353**

**She cooked okra.**

**354 + INTO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY (1996-2004)**

***Siyayo be yo mbelebele. Siyayo hoyo mbelebele.* Here is a gluttonous chief.**

**He eats anything.**

**He is a gluttonous chief. He is a gluttonous chief.**

**She has cooked okra. *Siyayo hoyo mbelebele. Siyayo hoyo rnbelebele.* He is a gluttonous chief.**

***Translated by Boston J. Soko and Edrinnie Lora-Kayambazinthu***

***Women of Rumphi District,* THREE *VISEKESE* SONGS**

**Malawi 2000 Chitumbuka**

***We Who Do Not Have Men* We who do not have men, They have bought for us colorless clothes.**

**We who do not have men,**

**They have bought for us colorless clothes.**

**I cannot tolerate this.**

**Let's love each other, my relatives.**

**Let's love each other, my husband.**

**I cannot tolerate this.**

***You Who Go to Johannesburg* You who go to Johannesburg, Please please tell him,**

**I am naked and so is his mother. *Leader I* am naked.**

***Albl* am naked and so is his mother. *Leader:* I am naked.**

***All:* I am naked and so is his mother. I am naked and so is his mother.**

***That Woman at Chombe***

**That woman at Chombe, She has legs like a hedgehog.**

**That *woman* at Chombe,**

**She has legs like a hedgehog.**

**She is in agony; she is in agony.**

**Ah hi yo! Ah hi yo! She is in agony; she is in agony**

**She has been in agony all night; she is in agony.**

***Translated by Edrinnie Lora-Kayambazinthu***

***Loise Kalondu wa Maseki,* MAKE LOVE AND NOT BABIES**

**Kenya 2000 Kikamba**

**Oh my, oh my, I have problems: why did you make me pregnant with this**

**child?**

**Oh me, oh me, many problems: why did you make me give birth to this**

**child?**

**I told you to take care of your child when you sleep because I was coming**

**to visit.**

**Why did you make me give birth to this child?**

**Oh my, oh my, I have problems: why did you make me pregnant with this**

**child?**

**Oh me, oh me, many problems: why did you make me give birth to this**

**child?**

**I told you we must not touch the child with the big machete.**

**Why did you make me give birth to this child?**

***Translated by Sheila flli Ryanga and Mirenda Mutuvi***

***Njira Chenga,* THE IRRESPONSIBLE HUSBAND**

**Kenya 2001 Kiduruma**

**Pound, my daughter, pound, and let the maize be clean. The child is crying because she is sick.**

**When my husband goes for a drink, he does not come back home. He says he is not yet through.**

**But when it is time for dowry negotiations, oh, my, He dresses smartly in trousers and**

**He goes to count the cows and the money in hundreds. When it is time to feast, he has no problems.**

**When I point this out,**

**SONGS COMPLAINING ABOUT HUSBANDS AND -LOVERS + 355**

**I am accused of talking too much. I do not talk too much, my friend, I speak the truth about my old man.**

**356 + INTO THE TWENTY-FIRST CEI■ITURY (1996-2004)**

***Translated by Sheila Au Ryanga***

***Communal***

***VIMB UZI* SONGS**

**Malawi 1997 Chitumbuka**

***Vimbuza is* a curative dance, danced primarily by women in the northern region of Malawi. Men sometimes dance *vimbuza,* but mainly for commercial purposes. For women, the dance is part of traditional treatment for illnesses of the mind and spirit, which are also called *vimbuza.* Women who seek cures through *vim­buza* may exhibit such syriiptoms as continuous headaches, fever, sensitivity to smells, belching, and trances, especially during the full moon or half moon. Vim­*buza* dancing, along with traditional medicines administered by a healer, are believed to either appease or exorcise the spirits and help to produce a cure.**

**The dance is performed at night near an afflicted woman's home. Both men and women form a circle, inside which an afflicted woman dances, accompanied by drumbeats and clapping. The dancer wears colorful beads and amulets, rattles on her arms and legs, and a short skirt made of animal skin. She smears her body with either ashes or flour paste. She is in total control of the proceedings, choos­ing the songs and drumbeats, since the spirits speak through her, and they must be obeyed and appeased. If the spirits have to be exorcised, exorcism specialists prepare herbs and sometimes a concoction of porridge made from uncooked maize flour and blood, which the woman drinks. The dance can last for one night or several nights, depending on the problem.**

**Legend has it that the *vimbuza* dance was brought to the Ngoni people of the Mzimba. District by a Bisa woman from northeastern Zambia called Nyamvula, who had been taken captive. She danced, sang, and made utterances always in her Bisa language. The legend is supported by the fact that, up to the late 1940s, *all vimbuza* dancers in Mzimba, when in trance, made utterances in the Bisa lan­guage, in imitation of Nyamvula. In social and psychological terms, the *vimbuza dance is* an indirect way for a woman to inform the community that she is suffer­ing. Songs often critique the patrilineal system followed' by all northerners in Malawi. In the first song collected here, "Mr. Nyirongo with Syphillis" *(Anyirongo Gozols), a wife* accuses her *husband of* infidelity, but *also says she is* glad that he has been punished—with syphilis—for his promiscuity. Although we assume that the song was first composed long before the coming of the HIV/AIDS scourge, it seems especially relevant today. The second song, "Mr. Nyirongo" *(Anyirongo),* complains about a man who has gone to work in the mines and no longer takes care of his wife and mother. The third song, "Mother-in-Law' *(Nyokovyara),***

**expresses the theme of a daughter-in-law's bad treatment by a mother-in-law and father-in-law. .**

***Edrinnie Lora-Kayambazinthu, Boston J. Soko, and Desmond D. Phiri***

4.

**MR. NYIRONGO I**

**You don't know what has happened to Mr. Nyirongo. Guess what has happened to Mr. Nyirongo.**

**He has caught syphilis.**

**The syphilis has made him sterile.**

**MR. NYIRONGO II**

**Mr. Nyirongo, I am suffering. Please appeal to your son.**

**Your son has been gone so long That I will have to remarry.**

**It is my father who gave me the basket.**

**It is my father who gave me the ladle.**

**It is my father who gave me the towel.**

**It is my father who gave me the cloth.**

**Everything in my house was given to me by my father, So I am going to have to remarry.**

***Translated .by Boston J. Soko***

**MOTHER-IN-LAW**

**When your mother-in-law abuses you,**

**You too must abuse her.**

**She has begun it;**

**Oh yes, oh yes, she has begun it;**

**She has begun it.**

**When your father-in-law abuses you,**

**You too must abuse him.**

**Oh yes, oh yes, He has begun it; He has begun it.**

***Translated by Desmond D. Phiri***

***VIMRUZeISONGS +* 357**

***Monde Sifuniso***
  
**BEIJING, BEIJING**

**358 + INTO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY (1996-2004)**

**Zambia 1997 English**

***For many* Zambian *women,* the *months* leading up to the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in September 1995, contained eye-opening experiences. Feminist activities in preparation for the conference raised some opposition from men, who viewed a call for equal opportunity and equal representation in both government and household decision-making as a threat. Some men fought an undeclared war against women during this period, trying to undermine women's preconference activities, deriding their goals, and proclaiming that women were lost without men to guide them. Feminists, on the other hand, viewed men as lost without women. To support this idea, women noted that while many divorced women never remarry, men marry within the first year of a divorce. Further, in Zambia there are more widows than widowers, since women, capable of lifelong emotional connections, mourn their partners for a longer time than men.**

**Monde Sifuniso was born in Barotseland in 1944, into a culture in which boys and girls were reared as equals. When Zambia attained independence in 1964, Barotseland was designated the Western Province of Zambia, and had to con­form to the nation's dominant attitudes and practices, which relegated women to subservient status. When Sifuniso left Barotseland tp attend secondary school and then college and university, she encountered both gender and race discrimi­nation for the first time. She believes that this fact explains the high divorce rate among women of her generation in Zambia: because they were taught, in Barot­seland, to expect equality; they could not easily conform to male domination.**

**Monde Sifuniso has had broad experience in educational broadcasting, scriptwriting, radio producing, and public relations She studied editing, book publishing, and marketing at Oxford Brookes University in Great Britain, return­ing to set up the University of Zambia Press. She served as publisher until 1997, when she retired to edit manuscripts and write fiction. Sifuniso has written sev­eral books, including one on the history of the women's movement in Zambia. In the story "Beijing, Beijing," she describes one conventionally sexist man moving through a world that is, momentarily, without women. The story su: ests that once women realize their own power, they will be able to interact with men wisely enough to *gain the respect normally denied them* in a patriarchal society. .**

***Nalishebo Meebelo***

**Jack Zulu and his wife, Yvonne, had only one child, sixteen-year-old Richard: Richard was closer to his mother than he was to his father. Jack had used all sorts of tricks to lure Richard from his mother, but he had failed. Later, he tried to join them so that they could become a close-knit threesome but he soon found out that they would often be laughing at him, not with him. He gave up and help­lessly watched his heir, product of his groin, being moulded by a woman.**

**Tonight Jack and Richard had just seen Yvonne off on the first leg of her trip to Beijing to attend the fourth Women's Conference. Jack looked at his son, sit­ting next to him in the car. As he drove up to their house he told himself that he was going to be alone with his son for two whole weeks and he was going to use that time constructively. He was going to talk to him about the Oedipus com­plex, about men being men and sticking together, about the evil influence women can have on men.**

**Richard jumped out of the car at the gate. While his father parked the car, he locked the gate and raced into the house. He felt uneasy in his father's presence. Jack followed his son into the house. He closed the front door gently, the way Yvonne wanted doors closed. He remembered then that Yvonne was away. Smiling, he opened the door again and banged it shut. He turned the key nois­ily in the lock then walked to his bedroom. He surveyed the room with dissat­isfaction. He had felt more at home in hotel rooms than in this, his bedroom. Yvonne's presence was too strong. He had two weeks in which to stamp his own mark on the room.**

**He threw his jacket on his bed and decided to start working on his son that very night. When he knocked on Richard's door, he was met by silence. He turned the door handle but Richard had locked himself in. Did he always lock his door? Jack didn't know. Well, two weeks was a long time. He could start the following day which, after all, was Day One of his fourteen days of freedom.**

**Lying back in his bed later, Jack laid out plans for the coming fortnight. His relationship with his mistress, Milly, had soured. He had not been in touch with her for slightly over a month. This was partly because he had been under pres­sure for money from Yvonne. He had been in such a bad temper that he would have risked breaking up with Milly altogether had he attempted to contact her during that time. Now he had two weeks in which to use all his wiles to win her back. Released from all worry, he drifted off and slept the dreamless sleep of the contented.**

**When Jack woke up the following morning, there was total silence—no sound from the bathroom, no sound from the kitchen. He got up and had a shower. Normally, at this stage Yvonne would ask him what he was going to do that day. As he outlined his activities, she would decide what clothes would be suitable for the day and lay them out on his bed. He never argued; he simply went along with her choice. What was he going to wear today? He gave a short laugh. Surely he could choose his own clothes! What was wrong with him?**

**Dressed, he went to his son's bedroom, but found it empty. He walked to the kitchen and found a note from his son stuck on the fridge door with a strawberry-shaped magnet—his wife's favourite notice board. It read:**

***Dad, I had to go to school early.***

***Hope you can make your own breakfast. See you later.***

**BEIJING, BEIJING + 359**

**Jack looked at his watch-07:20. What time did Richard leave the house? Why did he have to go early? Jack was annoyed. Richard always knocked on their bedroom door and announced his departure, if they were still in their bed­room when he left. Why was he treating him differently? The boy certainly needed sorting out.**

**360 + INTO THE TVVENTY-FIRST CENTURY (1996-2004)**

**He couldn't face the prospect of making himself breakfast. He was tempted to drive to Milly's flat but he decided against it. He wanted to go there after work and spend a good part of the night with her. During the day he was tempted to ring her twice, but he fought down his desire again, choosing sur­prise as the best weapon to disarm her.**

**As the clock ticked towards the close of the working day, Jack's body came alive with anticipation. He stayed on for another thirty minutes after closing time to give Milly time to get back home. At 17:30 he left the office and drove to Milly's flat. Although the curtains were drawn, there was a light on in the sit­ting room. He was discomfited when a young man opened the door to his knock. He had allowed his expectations to play havoc with his feelings.**

**"Is Milly home?" Jack asked gruffly.**

**"No, she is not," the young man answered, blocking the doorway and offer­ing no further explanation.**

**"I'd like to come in for a moment, if you don't mind."**

**Jack pushed past the young man who remained standing at the door. Dis­playing familiarity that he would never have dared show had Milly been around, Jack stopped the cassette player. He took out the cassette that was in the machine and inserted one of his choice. He walked to Milly's bedroom but found it locked. As he turned away from the door he saw the young man a dis­tance away, watching him.**

**"Who are you?" Jack barked at the young man.**

**"I'm Milly's brother. Are you Mr. Zulu?"**

**"Yes. How do you know my name?"**

**"Milly said you might come. She left a note for you. I'm going to stay in her flat while she is away."**

**Jack walked back to the sitting room with the young man. The young man took a white envelope from a shelf and gave it to Jack. Jack ripped the envelope open and took out a small piece of paper.**

***Well, Jdck, Yvonne is in Beijihg and now you come running to me. Sorry, mate, I've gone to Beijing, too.***

**What a sick joke! He felt tense as he walked out of Milly's flat. He suspected that Milly was hiding somewhere. He was going to catch her at her office the following day, or the day after. Two weeks was a long time. . . .**

**Jack drove aimlessly. He was drawn to a roadside bar that was belting out one of his favourite Tshala Muana songs. He parked his car but debated whether to join the revelling crowd or turn round and go home to his son. He decided to go**

**in. Time enough for Richard. Tonight was his, no Yvonne, no Richard, no Milly.**

**BEIJING, BEIJING + 361**

**As he walked into the bar he was met by bawdy laughter. Two men were dancing, with one gyrating suggestively. The rest of the group were leering and clapping their hands in time to the music. The barman shook his head and clacked his tongue as he handed Jack his beer. Jack found an empty seat and patronizingly looked at the pathetic scene before him. How could adult men behave like that?**

**Simon, one of his closest friends, walked in and joined Jack.**

**"I saw your car outside and decided to come in. What's going on here?" "Just came in myself, Simon. I still haven't figured out what is going on." "Two weeks without women. How is it all going to end?"**

**Jack noticed then that there wasn't a single woman in the bar.**

**"They couldn't have all gone to Beijing," he laughed.**

**"Well, Jack, my wife, your wife, Sally and Milly ... those have certainly gone."**

**"How do you know Milly has gone too?"**

**"I gave her a lift to the airport because she couldn't dare ask you. She knew I was sneaking Sally to the airport before seeing Her Royal Highness off."**

**Sally was Simon's mistress. Jack looked around and wondered how many of the men there were truly monogamous. By now the tune had changed. There was a slow, romantic tune on. The men paired off and were dancing cheek to cheek with each other.**

**"This is sick," Jack said.**

**"You're right, Jack. Let's go home to our children and play fathers."**

**Outside they said their goodnights, each disgusted with the homoeroticism that the men in the bar were exhibiting. As Jack drove up to his house, he was startled to see a police car parked outside. He was convinced that his son had got on the wrong side of the law. He fumbled in his pocket for his key but the door opened before his hand came out of his pocket. The policeman holding the door open looked at him sternly.**

**Are you Mr. Zulu?"**

**That question again. *Yes, l am. Who are you?* Jack silently replied. Aloud, he said,**

**"A policeman spells trouble. What has gone wrong here?"**

**Jack saw his son seated between two boys; one looked familiar but the other he had never seen before. Directly ahead of him sat Kennedy, Simon's son, and, next to Kennedy, stood another policeman. Richard kept his eyes down.**

**"Do you know these boys, Mr. Zulu?"**

**"Richard," he pointed at him, "is my son. Kennedy over there, I know. I don't know the other two."**

**"The two you don't know are Thomas and Stephen. We found them smok­ing dagga and causing a disturbance at Stephen's father's house. Your son jumped out of a window and thought he had escaped. We followed him here. A search in his room yielded no dagga. We'd like to search your bedroom."**

**"Do you have a search warrant?" Jack asked irrelevantly.**

**362 + INTO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY (1996-2004)**

**The policeman handed Jack the search warrant. He glanced at it briefly then led him to his bedroom. The other policeman remained behind, a fisherman gloating over his catch. Jack was unconcerned as the policeman rummaged around. Not even the mess the policeman was making seemed to affect him. He was quite relieved that the policeman had found nothing on his son or in his room. They could not arrest his son. Jack had escaped his wife's wrath.**

**"Well, Mr. Zulu, does your son get his dagga from you or does he have his own supplier?"**

**Jack looked at the dirty rag that the policeman was opening out on his bed. "Where did you find that?"**

**"In your drawer, Mr. Zulu, the one holding your underclothes and your ties." "It doesn't belong to me. Let me talk to my son."**

**"I would advise you to talk to your lawyer, Mr. Zulu, not your son."**

**Jack remembered. The boy who looked familiar was his lawyer's son. He hurried to the living room and stood before the boy.**

**"Stephen, is your father at home?"**

**"No, sir," the boy said, his head bowed. "My mother and father left for Bei­jing yesterday."**

**"Your father, too?" Jack asked incredulously.**

**"My father is the chairperson of the Zambia Equal Rights Committee," Stephen explained.**

**Jack turned to the policeman.**

**"Officer, my lawyer is very smart. He is the smartest lawyer in the world. He went to Beijing with the women."**

**The policeman was glad that his wife had no idea what *Beijing was.* He himself had only come to know about the Beijing Conference the week before. He sighed and watched as the tenth man he was arresting that day broke down like the nine before him. They had committed different crimes, but they all had one thing in common: their wives had gone to Beijing. And this was only Day One!**

***Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye*THE WASTING DISEASE**

**Kenya 1997 English**

**Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye has used fiction to explore and illuminate social issues throughout her long literary career. (See the introduction to "Learning the Sex Trade" earlier in this volume.) Many of her readers, therefore, viewed the 1997 publication of her novel** *Chira* **as a deeply logical—almost an inevitable—occur­rence. A writer of Macgoye's stature and social commitment could not have**

**avoided addressing the plague that had cut a path of suffering and death through the core of her adopted country—HIV/AIDS.**

**In *Chira,* Macgoye provides a disturbingly vivid rendition of the HIV/AIDS scourge in Kenyan society. Ignorant of the facts about *chira* (the Luo term for a "wasting disease," which is today applied to AIDS), people in this society—young and old, men and women, urban and rural—offer little resistance to the spread of the disease that threatens to wipe out huge portions of their population. This ignorance is compounded by dangerous customary beliefs and practices, social shame, women's disempowerment, misguided and inadequate public health pro­grams, and lack of access to the antiretroviral drugs that were, even at the time of the novel's publication in 1997, rapidly becoming available in the West.**

**Focusing on two women—one of them fighting for her life against AIDS, the other fighting to find the courage to admit that she is HIV-positive—Macgoye shows how these various forces work together, with devastating results. But she also offers tenuous hope that her country may learn how to resist *chira.* This hope *lies* in the character of Theodore, the enlightened evangelist, who works with the afflicted and advocates both honesty and virtue as means to combating the disease.**

**The word *chira,* in the novel, dearly refers both to the physical illness and the moral, ethical, and social diseases that threaten to annihilate Kenyan society. In the two passages that follow, the realistic and metaphorical levels of narration coexist, culminating in the haunting and terrifying image of the intangible but lethal "carrier" of disease and death.**

***Emilia Ilieva and Lennox Oditmo-Munara***

**"I brought Njoki," said Esther at last. "She used to come and see me in the office sometimes. We happened to meet at the bus stop and she said she was very ill and unhappy. So I brought her."**

**"We will pray for you, Njoki," said Theodore. "What is the nature of your sickness? You look well." He truly thought so. But Elizabeth could see the dry skin, the passive hair, the blouse hanging loose, the desperation in the eyes.**

**"I am not feeling very ill," whispered Njoki, "but the doctor has warned me and I am getting thin. You see I had, I had ..." The kindest did not strain them­selves to hear her. "I had a sugar daddy. She knows—Esther knows. She did not reproach me. I thought I was well off. I left the boyfriend I had been intending to marry. The man was generous and usually polite as well. I thought it would last a bit longer. Then when he went overseas I met my old friend again. And then the doctor told me, told me . . ."**

**Esther caught her arm. She had not heard this before.**

**"How long ago was this?" asked Theodore.**

**"Six months ago—a bit more than six."**

**"So it was not a baby. And he did not send you to the Special Clinic?" "No, not the Special Clinic."**

**"And you are not so very thin. You can eat well, sleep?"**

**THE WASTING DISEASE + 363**

**"Yes, I can eat when I remember to. I do not sleep well. But you see, I cannot be cleansed. I carry the sickness within me . . ."**

**364 + INTO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY (1996-2004)**

**You might have thought Theodore was the sick one. Shadows lurked under his cheekbones. It was more the passion of redemption than its joy that burned through him. He was gaunt not from deliberate fasting but from preoccupation with other needs. His voice might be worn down not with rhetoric but by argu­ing cases with petty officials.**

**In contrast, many of the young men he tried to counsel did not look like AIDS victims at all. Jeans clad, strikingly barbered, some of them, indeed, went in for long, loose jackets, concealing the thin ribs within. You did not always notice as their cheeks grew more impressively hollow, their refusal of food apparently an economy measure, not escape from the dreadful diarrhoea that followed eating. A time would come when they were too weary to scrub the jackets or tuck lifeless hair back into the crochet caps. They would fade from memory and others crowd to take their places. Theodore prayed, grieved, bul­lied, and pleaded. But if you are sleeping mixed, eight to a room, the air is dank with human smells, mats are rustling, old people are muttering and someone's sister is trying to dig money out of you to photocopy her certificates and get a new second hand blouse for the interview—what other joy is there? The future does not, in any case, bear thinking about.**

**Some of them are carriers: this you will never know for sure. They remain the same when others vanish from sight around them. Or if they get thinner it is because funerals of mates and school-friends drain them, because the pop group or the *jua kali* team is decimated by death and no longer brings in a living, because the house where they sewed or cobbled is avoided as being of ill omen. Some even grow fat as a greater share of the business falls to them. Also they procreate abundantly. But the children, somehow, wither and often die. It is because the mother is too sickly to look after them, or because the father has faded away and does not support them, or because the neighbour has put the evil eye on them, or because the little girl *ayah* has pricked them with a pin and. . . .**

**And in society at large the carriers flourish too. Close to them funds drain away into privy channels or trickle into malodorous corners. Schemes that looked smooth and tender erupt in blotches and blackheads, drawing offensive matter tight and throbbing just below the surface. Organisations that were pregnant with promise abort, leaving smears of blood and frustrated waters behind them. And still the facilitator smiles and deprecates, planning great things, fluent in excuses, golden-tongued, wide open to ecstatic embrace, fertile in ideas, fatal in execution. . . .**

***Susan N. Kiguli*I AM TIRED OF TALKING IN METAPHORS**

**I ANI TIRED OF TALKING IN METAPHORS + 365**

**Uganda 1998 English**

**Susan Kiguli was born on 24 June 1969 in the Luweero District of central Uganda. Her childhood was made particularly difficult by two sad developments: She lost her father at a very early age, and her mother, Joyce, was left to raise her on her own. Then, when she was eleven, a brutal five-year civil war broke out, with Luweero its epicenter. These events significantly affected Kiguli, and they are reflected in her verse.**

**Young Susan Kiguli distinguished herself early as a scholar and was admitted to the famous Gayaza High School for her secondary education. She earned bachelor's and master's degrees from Makerere University, as well as a master's of literature from Strathclyde University in Glasgow, Scotland, and a doctorate in literature from the University of Leeds in England. She is currently a tenured lec­turer in literature at Makerere University.**

**A respected poet in her own right, Susan Kiguli has also written and published extensively on Ugandan poetry and oral performance. Several of her short stories have appeared in local journals and anthologies. She was nominated for the Keith Memorial Poetry award at Strathclyde University in 1996, and her first volume of poetry, *The African Saga,* won the National Book Trust of Uganda (NABOTU) Poetry Award in 1999. She writes poetry in both English and Luganda, her mother tongue, and often performs her verse live at various functions.**

**Susan Kiguli's poetry is characterized by a combination of reflective and assertive responses to the social and political experiences of her Ugandan commu­nity. Her style is strongly influenced by Ugandan orature. In the poem included here, Kigali focuses on the rampant cases of violence against women frequently reported in the Ugandan media, including some particularly brutal cases of wife battering over political differences during the 1996 presidential elections. Allu­sions to Baganda customs and beliefs in the poem include the hooting of an owl as an omen of impending bereavement, the negotiation of a bride-price by suitors and the male relatives of the bride, and the slaughtering of roosters to feed impor­tant guests.**

***Austin Bukenya***

**I will talk plainly**

**Because I am moved to abandon riddles. I will tell you of how we held our heads In our hands**

**Because the owl hooted all night**

**And the dogs howled as Win mourning: We awaited bad news.**

**We received it.**

**Our mother blinded in one eye,**

**Crippled in the right leg,
  
Because she did not vote
  
Her husband's candidate.**

**I will remind you**

**Of the time the peeled plantains**

**Stood upright in the cooking pot.**

**We slaughtered a cock**

**Anticipating an important visitor.**

**We got her:**

**Our daughter—pieces of flesh in a sack—Our present from her husband.**

**No, I will not use images.**

**I will just talk to you:**

**I do not fight to take your place**

**Or constantly wave my fist in your face.**

**I refuse to argue about**

**Your "manly pact"**

**With my father--**

**Buyingme for a bag of potatoes and pepper.**

**All I want**

**Is,to stop denying Me.**

**My presence needs no metaphors.**

**I am here**

**Just as you are.**

**I am not a machine**

**For you to dismantle whenever you wish. I demand my human dignity.**

***Winnie Munyarugerero*INDEPENDENCE, 1962**

**Uganda 1998 English**

**Winnie Munyarugerero was born Winfred Gashumba in the Kisoro region of southwestern Uganda. She attended the prestigious Gayaza Girls High School just outside Kampala before taking an honors degree in English and French at Makerere University. She also studied at the University of Madagascar in Tana­narive, and she worked for several years as an educator before turning to non­governmental organization activities. She is a member of Action for Develop­ment (ACFODE), an advocacy and action organization for the improvement of**

**366 + INTO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY (1996-2404)**

education and the alleviation of poverty among Ugandan women. She was also
  
for many years the vice-chair of the Uganda Women Writers Association (FEM-
  
RITE). She contributes to several of their publications as both writer and editor.

**INDEPENDI.NCE, 1962 + 367**

"Independence, 1962" is an impressionistic narrative of Uganda's first Inde­pendence Day, on 9 October 1962. Looking back on the experience across a dis­tance of thirty-six years, the author ponders, rather gloomily, the meanings of that important event for Ugandans, both then and in 1998. Her pessimism stems from what she concludes is the dismal performance of Uganda, since independence, as a viable nation state. Despite the optimism of 1962, Uganda became an arena for mismanagement, misrule, and dictatorships, as well as civil wars. The author seems to suggest that the "independence baby" was stillborn, probably because the original participants in the event, both the Ugandans and their British colonizers, failed to define and understand properly the meaning of independence.

It was widely believed at the time of independence that, of the three East African countries of Kenya, Tanganyika (later Tanzania), and Uganda, Uganda was the best-favored both by nature and history. Endowed with extremely fertile land and a mild climate, it was easily the most productive of the three, in agricul­tural output at least. Politically, the "protectorate" form of colonialism obtaining there *was* more benevolent than the settler colonialism of Kenya. Uganda was given its independence without much of a fight, avoiding the kind of bitter and violent struggle that took place in Kenya. Many of the best development projects targeting Africans were set up in Uganda, and many East Africans who wanted a good education, for example, went to Uganda to attend high school and univer­sity. Yet, nearly four decades down the road, Uganda seems still to lag far behind its regional counterparts.

The author ends her piece with a simple but devastating question: "What went wrong?" One of many answers is clearly found in the very terms of its cre­ation as an independent country. While all colonial states were artificial creations, Uganda was even more tragically so. The label *Uganda* itself referred only to one region of the new nation, and it was precisely with the natives of this region that the British had negotiated alFthe terms of their colonial enterprise, which were then imposed on the rest of the people in the "country Even the much-vaunted developments were largely confined to the "Uganda" area, while the other regions were used as sources of cheap labor and low-ranking security personnel. To make matters worse, the British had trained no viable cadres to take over their respon­sibilities when they left. Gayaza High School, where the staff at independence was 99 percent British, was symptomatic of the nation. In brief, independence was granted, in 1962, to a country that lacked unity or equity among its many peoples, and was ill-prepared, after years of colonialism, to bear the burdens of nationhood—an obvious prelude to the tragedies that were to befall the country.

Kampala, the commercial capital of Uganda, became at independence the political capital as well, replacing Entebbe, on the shores of Lake Victoria. The airstrip where the independence ceremonies were held is on the southeastern slopes of Kololo, one of the legendary "seven hills" on which Kampala is built. The airstrip has since become a prominent venue for all kinds of national celebra­tions, and a corner of it has been turned into a "Heroes' Acre," where eminent nationalists are buried.

*Austin Bukenya and Ayeta Anne Wangusa*

I was one in that mass of humanity at Kololo Airstrip on that historical day of 9th October 1962. To be more precise, it was from 8th October to 9th October, for it was at midnight of 8th October that the crowd held its breath as the Union Jack came down. Then the unison shout of joy as the new Ugandan flag went up for the first time.

**368 + INTO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY (1996-2004)**

It may have been my young and impressionable mind, perhaps, but I don't remember any other occasion when there was excitement to equal the rock solid excitement of that occasion. Everyone in that crowd breathed excitement. (I hesitate to call that gathering of people "a crowd." For that word "crowd" sug­gests some lack of order or organization.) In actual fact, the huge gathering of people at the airstrip that night were very orderly and well organized. Each group or category of people had its section to sit. The schoolchildren had their section, and if I remember correctly, schoolchildren were allocated the Nyonyi Gardens or Wampewo Avenue side. We sat facing the Acacia Avenue direction, slightly to the right as the rostrum and main VIP shed was erected, not where the present one is, but closer to the Upper Kololo Avenue embankment. I remember we sat on the ground—I suppose there was more grass than dust then—so, the neatly cut grass was adequate for the sitting arrangement.

What characterized the occasion, however, was the excitement that perme­ated the atmosphere. The excitement was so heavy and real that you could almost touch it, you felt it in your bloodstream, right through your entire body. The person sitting next to you, on your right and on your left, the one behind you and in front of you, felt the same. The total sum of the excitement from the thousands of people, was something I have never felt since. It was not an indi­vidual excitement; it was a collective excitement, a national excitement.

I was a young adolescent at Gayaza High School. The staff at the school those days, was more than 99% white—British, to be more accurate. A few porters on the kitchen and the farm were the only African staff. Even the cateress and the farm manager were British. Our British teachers did not do much to prepare us for Independence. They may have discussed it with the older students, but those in senior one and two were not told much. The teachers themselves may have been a little bewildered and may not have understood the issues well. But young as we were, we were vaguely aware of the significance of the Independence event. In spite of the lack of much political awareness, the excitement about Indepen­dence swept across the school, and, I have no doubt, across the whole population. Everybody, young and old, illiterate and literate, felt that Independence was sig­nificant for Uganda, the infant nation, but also for every Ugandan individual.

The excitement for us at school was a combination of several excitements. The idea of getting out of school, of an outing, was a big thing in itself. The idea of an outing at night was poetic and romantic. Then later at the airstrip, the fireworks, the large mass of people—all these added to a huge excitement for us schoolchildren.

The evening of 8th October, we got ready to leave for Kampala. I am sure there were no classes that day, and if there were, everyone would have been too excited to be attentive. Those girls who could be picked [up] to go home had left, but the majority of the student body, which by the present standard was very small, probably not more than 250 in all, prepared for the night out. We were dashing here and there, propelled by the hurricane of excitement in the air. That day, as there was to be no supper, we were served high tea; that term alone, "high tea," added to our feeling of, and it increased, our anticipation. The high tea comprised of bread, eggs, cheese, even possibly tinned beef, accompanied by tea. It was a rich meal that was intended to carry us through the evening and night. **I** can't remember well but I have this feeling that we must have packed something to eat later, for our teachers were very mindful of our health and young appetites. We then got into the fleet of waiting UTC buses and, feeling as important and special as brides to their grooms, we were driven to Kampala. The city—I don't think it was called a city then for it was a much smaller out­fit—was ablaze with excitement. **I** think we were driven around to see the dec­orated city before we headed for Kololo airstrip. The weather those days knew how to behave; it was respectful of the great event because it did not rain. As we sat under the clear night sky, it was difficult not to feel or imagine the divine presence of God to bless the occasion.

**INDEPENDENCE, 1962 + 369**

I can't remember much of what was said in the speeches by the dignitaries. What I remember is the trim looking, youthful Prime Minister Obote. He seemed to have and to inspire confidence. The older people may have had their doubts but for the fourteen- and fifteen-year-olds present, Obote appeared capable of steering the new-born state.

After the function at Kololo that night—rather morning—we boarded the buses and returned to school, tired and sleepy but filled with a sense of being part of history in the making, of being actors, however small the role, in the making of the history of our country.

The next morning, the 9th October, we were taken to Kampala for more cel­ebrations. What I remembered most vividly were the floats—moving vehicles displaying the products and services, in the most imaginative impressions, of each industry and most department. To a young girl from a rural back­ground this was most captivating.

As we took in the full importance of the Independence event, we saw stretched before us development and prosperity. We saw a future offering new opportunities, a nation rising to the heights. Perhaps in our young minds we understood freedom naively, as young people do. We did not understand `the responsibility that accompanies freedom. It would appear that even the adults did not know better; otherwise why did things go wrong!

As it turned out later, my generation of Ugandans—those in secondary school at the time—became the most disillusioned and the hardest hit. We expected so much as we witnessed and participated in the birth of a nation. And what did we get? The harsh realities of Amin's rule in the economic war period.

**The older people may have been cushioned from the full impact by the cyni­cism that comes with age and experience.**

**370 + INTO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY (19962004)**

**Those who came later—in secondary schools in the late sixties and early sev­enties—had not witnessed the birth. They had not drunk in the mouthfuls of excitement and expectations that heralded Independence. I suppose it is not by accident that people who led the fight to restore Uganda's dignity are essentially those of my generation.**

**Kololo airstrip hosts many celebrations each year. Independence Day, 9th October, attracts the smallest crowds. It is an event that few Ugandans seem to understand the significance of.**

**Independence Day means very little to many Ugandans. This is very sad indeed for those of us who were at Kololo on 9th October 1962. What went wrong?**

***Vuyo Ophelia Wagi*Two POEMS**

**Tanzania 1999 English**

**Vuyo Wagi was born in Johannesburg, South Africa, to a South African mother and a Tanzanian father. The family lived in Britain in the 1950s before settling *permanently* in Dar *es* Salaam in the 1960s. Vuyo Wagi attended secondary school in Tanzania before leaving to study at Indiana University in Bloomington, where she earned a bachelor's degree in social psychology, cultural anthropology, and microbiology in 1986. Upon her return to Tanzania, she worked as a free­lance writer and consultant, and as an editor for the Dar es Salaam University Press. A collection of her poetry, *Safe Crossing,* was published in 1999, and before her untimely death in 2001, she was in the process of compiling another collec­tion, entitled *Conversations.***

**Vuyo Wagi was one of the very few Tanzanians who wrote in English. She wrote sad and contemplative poetry, often grappling with *life's* intangibles—the meaning of life, death, time, the hereafter—as well as the social predicament of the destitute, the powerless, and women in general in Africa.**

**A tragic streak runs through her poems—a realization of the presence, neces­sity, and indeed, imminence, of death. This is in part explained by the poet's own tragic experience: Her Ugandan husband died in Yoweri Museveni's "bush war" in Uganda, and her only sister died at an early age as well, leaving her alone and unemployed to take care of her aging mother and her two small children.**

**Underlying the two poems that follow are the harsh realities of HIV/AIDS and economic underdevelopment. Since 1983, when AIDS was first discovered, Tanzania has suffered devastatingly from the pandemic. It is believed that more than 10 percent of Tanzania's 33 million people are infected with HIV. Thou­sands have already died from the disease, leaving behind numerous orphans in need of assistance. But assistance is not always forthcoming, even from near rela-**

**fives, let alone the government and the public at large. "AIDS Orphan" mourns the young left motherless and fatherless, and derided and shunned by everybody, including those who pretend to be religious.**

**The economic problems of Tanzania and other developing countries have led to an increase in the numbers of jobless and homeless youths. This has in turn encouraged child labor, with young girls from the countryside being the greatest victims of this system. "Slave Girl 2000" looks at the plight of the housemaid, who comes to town from the** *rural areas in search of life and success, only to* **end up as a virtual slave—despised, discarded, forced to do backbreaking menial labor, and often physically and sexually abused. When such girls become pregnant, they are thrown onto these streets. In these circumstances, some end up abandoning their babies because they are unable to care for them,**

*MM. Mulokozi*

**AIDS ORPHAN**

**Shockquake has passed.**

**The dust has settled on life's ruins. Man, woman, child, home,**

**From school *to* a cold hearth And stove and no lighting**

**Mama's voice, calling, badgering, Yes, it is true,**

**Oh, to hear even the sound**

**of her nagging.**

**No light shining and lost**

**In the dim of grieving.**

**How do men, women like these, cry? They become adult**

**Between the passings,**

**Another rite of passage,**

**To where?**

**Child to child, child to adult.**

**Uniform politely tattered,**

**No more money for food, fees, One more year to go**

**And how to get there?**

**No more, never any more, "Love thy neighbor as thyself." Standing down is out as the Sun shines on the hazy trail . . .**

**Two Po [s + 371**

**SLAVE GIRL 2000**

**372 + INTO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY (1996-2004)**

**Village fetched, wide eyed, Clinging wood smoke smell, Nil knowledge of city life,**

**Lured by promises of "education,"**

**A "better life," still a child, Childlike in her belief,**

**Intimidation invocation by "civilized" people.**

**Strong enough to taste, Swift casualness of life, Shining lights blinding, not street wise,**

**She found the city has its wisdom.**

**The work!**

**Buy me for free an ox or plough horse, Cook, clean, wash, babysit, and the boss Wants more besides.**

**More, sir?**

**Skincrawl groping hard breathing And furtive looks, suggestions, plans:**

**"I will be at the chicken shed at dawn." He gathers eggs too?**

**Unwillingly taken, unwillingly giving. *Ete noire!!* No protests here!**

**Depending on the silence**

**Of the powerless.**

**Discovered! By madam no less.**

**Shrieks of protest, profanities, accusations: "You w ungrateful, sneaking . .
  
Words water falling too fluent for words.**

**"But Madam I..."**

**"Shut up!**

**You encouraged him, you will pay!" With my dignity, self respect?**

**They forget, she's somebody's daughter. Now the belly is swelling,**

**Glances askance, whispers,**

**She cheapened herself,**

**Be careful of them, they are sly**

**And conniving.**

**Family meetings:**