

6 Ama Ata Aidoo

Anowa

Ghana

Introduction

Ama Ata Aidoo is one of Africa's most prolific and versatile writers. Not only has she written plays, short stories, novels, poetry, essays, letters and criticism, but also, by drawing upon the Ghanaian oral tradition's fusing of narrative techniques, she is able to synthesise these different forms, which are generally split among different genres in Western literary traditions. Aidoo's considerable creative and academic accomplishments have been matched by a strong political activism that has seen her at the forefront of the development of contemporary African feminism.

Born in 1942 in Abeadzi Kyiakor in south central Ghana, Aidoo grew up in the Fanti Royal Household, but her father, an advocate of Western education, sent her to Wesley Girls' High School in Cape Coast. Afterwards, she studied at the University of Ghana in Legon, where she received a bachelor's degree in English, and worked with playwright Efua Sutherland, the influential founder of Ghana Drama Studio. During that time Aidoo put on her first play, *The Dilemma of a Ghost* (1964), which incorporated many of the issues that would come to characterise her work: the legacy of the slave trade, the position of women in African societies, and the dynamics of African diasporic identity. The play, about tensions between a Ghanaian man who returns home from the United States and the African-American wife he brings with him, derived impetus from Aidoo's research into traditional forms of West African storytelling. This marked the beginning of a career-long process of employing the narrative and dramatic traditions of Ghana to articulate issues of contemporary importance. Since that time, Aidoo's stature has grown internationally with the publication of such highly acclaimed

prose works as *No Sweetness Here* (1970) and *Our Sister Killjoy* (1979) as well as a number of verse collections, including *An Angry Letter in January and Other Poems* (1992). She has been Professor of English at the University of Ghana, a consulting professor to the Washington branch of the Phelps Stokes Fund's Ethnic Studies Program, and a Minister of Education in Ghana under the Jerry Rawlings government. Since settling in Harare in 1983, she has become involved in the Curriculum Development Unit of the Ministry of Education, and been active in the Zimbabwe Women Writers' Group.

Aidoo's second play, *Anowa* (1970), is set in an earlier historical period than *Dilemma of a Ghost*, but focuses on similar themes and also draws upon Ghanaian forms of storytelling, which Aidoo reveals as the direct inspirational source for her narrative:

I come from a people who told stories . . .
And my mother 'talks' stories and sings
songs. *Anowa*, for instance, grew directly
out of a story she told me although as the
play has come out, she cannot even
recognize the story she told.

(quoted in James 1990: 19)

This statement suggests the complex nature of Aidoo's literary project. Although *Anowa* is based on a traditional Ghanaian folktale – the archetypal story of the disobedient daughter who rejects all suitors proposed by her parents, only to marry an attractive stranger who turns out to be the devil in disguise – Aidoo's version infuses it with new meanings. In *Anowa*, the generality of the folktale and its message is adapted to a specific time in history and given contemporary relevance for a postcolonial African society attempting to contemplate its complicity in an execrable past.

Although written in English, *Anowa* has the structure of a traditional tale. Its narrative is

comprised of verse, prose, song and mime and incorporates many storytelling elements, including the use of proverbs, laments, colloquialisms, oral idioms and the rhythms and phraseology of oral recitation. This quality of orature is, in Aidoo's conception, a powerful modality for world literature: 'I still believe that one day, when Africa comes into her own, the dynamism of orality might be something that Africa can give to the world' (quoted in James 1990: 23). The fused choral figure of The-Mouth-That-Eats-Salt-And-Pepper, comprised of an old man and old woman of the village, reflects such dynamism. Their role is integral to the play, introducing the audience to the society of Abura and to the characters and themes to be presented, as well as commenting on the narrative action at crucial points.

Anowa is set on the Gold Coast about thirty years after the Bond Treaty, an agreement granting the British trading priority over the Fanti area of what is now Ghana. The bond of 1844 not only bound Fanti slave-traders to the white imperialists but also positioned them at a historical juncture where the narratives of colonialism and capitalism intersected. From the very beginning of the play, the question of Africans' complicity in the slave trade is suggested in the powerful image of British slave forts 'standing at the door/ Of the great ocean'. The figure of the capitalist is embodied in Anowa's husband, Kofi Ako, the Fanti trader who enslaves his fellow men for the accumulation of wealth. While Kofi Ako embodies the emergence of a class of Africans whose interests are aligned with British imperialism, Anowa resists his desire to live off the labour of others, claiming that the limit of one's wealth should be set by what one's own personal labour can provide. The play suggests that Anowa's eventual disintegration is partly caused by the fact that not working deprives her life of meaning, a void portrayed through the dual figure of Panyin-Na-Kakra, a pair of twins whose job it is to fan an empty chair.

In *Anowa*, capitalist and colonialist exploitation is explicitly linked to patriarchal dominance and gender oppression, and the play draws parallels between wives and slaves. In this way, Aidoo establishes the relationship between the personal and the political so that the public and historical story of slave-trading is mirrored in Kofi Ako's treatment of Anowa, who had given so much

of her own labour to establish his enterprises. This parallel revolves around the question of sexual desire, and it is significant that the effects of Kofi Ako's endeavours manifest in his impotence: political power is a compensation for sexual inadequacy and, conversely, sexual inadequacy is an effect of political power. The motif of impotence also points indirectly to imperialism's damaging effects on African social organisation, particularly in terms of gender roles. The first part of the narrative establishes Abura as a matrilineal society, stressing that it is Badua and her family's responsibility to arrange Anowa's future, while Osam, her father, plays a lesser role. As the story progresses, the sequence of events suggests that contact with capitalism disrupts traditional matrilineal societies and alters women's roles, while colonial regimes, by bringing their patriarchal systems to Africa, bring advantages for African men, who are provided with the means of subjugating women. As a result, although Anowa and Kofi's relationship is not traditional, it is nonetheless destroyed by the effects of trade and the repositioning of women under capitalist economics.

Anowa's emphasis on matrilineality reflects Aidoo's idea, prevalent in both her creative and critical work, that African women have a feminist precedent in their own culture and need not look to Western feminism to provide them with remedies to their oppression, especially as women in the West have benefited from colonialist expansionism. The abstracted figure of the African mother, expressed most forcefully in Anowa's monologue recalling her childhood nightmare, provides a cultural anchor for the play's critique of patriarchal systems. In her dream, Anowa becomes a symbol of Africa, 'out of which poured men, women and children' who are seized by giant lobsters from the sea, a reference to her grandmother's earlier description of white men as being like lobsters. This haunting image provides a way of reading Anowa's barrenness as an effect of the slave trade, which has robbed her of her fertility. For Anowa, there is no point in producing children if they will be taken away and turned into slaves. Once again, her personal story is linked to the wider political sphere: she becomes the mother of all her people, and, as mother Africa, is betrayed by the

male slave trader. Significantly, this dream is triggered by a conversation in which Anowa asks her grandmother, 'Where did the white men get slaves?' Her grandmother replies, 'You must be a witch, child', closing the conversation with the claim that good men and women have forgotten such things. Yet Anowa cannot forget, nor can she keep silent about the injustices she sees around her; she must ask questions, just as the play itself asks questions, making explicit the connection between questioning, crafting narratives and the necessity of remembering. Through this connection, the relationship between speech and witchcraft becomes evident: Anowa is accused of being a witch precisely because of her capacity to bring the ghosts of the dead back to haunt the living. What both Aidoo and Anowa reveal is the cost of silence.

Anowa's raising of complex and uncomfortable questions as a young girl is essential to the play's structure in so far as it conforms to the oral narrative genre of the dilemma tale, with all its accompanying ambiguity. In the world of the dilemma play, there are no easy answers, but the questions need to be raised anyway. The dilemma tale allows for different interpretations that collectively act as a challenge to the logic of singular truths, which are a hallmark of patriarchy. Fashioned in this traditional genre, *Anowa* also enables the portrayal of untenable oppositions for its eponymous hero, who is caught between individual and community tensions. Although turning her back on the small-mindedness of the traditional community, Anowa cannot accept the injustice and corruption at the heart of the new capitalist economy that is replacing it, and particularly its betrayal of fellow Africans in the form of slavery. In the dilemma tale, a range of viewpoints is given, expressed most clearly in the play through the dialogue of competing opinions delivered by The-Mouth-That-Eats-Salt-And-Pepper. This compound 'character' also avoids simple appeals to female solidarity, for it is the old man, described in the stage directions as serene and orderly, who is the voice of tolerance and understanding, and who, interestingly, speaks predominantly in verse. The old woman, by contrast, is the voice of communal prejudices, and she believes a woman's role as both daughter and wife should be one of obedience.

Aidoo's use of the dilemma tale, which does not provide answers but instead initiates thought and discussion, demands an audience response; demands, in fact, remembering. For Aidoo, part of this remembering lies in structure as well as narrative, hence her use of traditional forms to tell her story: 'Everybody needs a backbone. If we do not refer to the old traditions, it is almost like operating with amnesia' (Aidoo 1976: 124). Traditional material, usually considered a conservative force, thus becomes a mode of questioning that has radical potential for social change. In this sense, the play is also about the nature of tales and how they have a life of their own, independent of the teller. It quite self-consciously points to the complex relationship stories have with reality, simultaneously reflecting and producing it. As the old woman says: 'This is the type of happening out of which we get stories and legends'.

Anowa ends with the suicides of both Kofi Ako and Anowa, foreshadowed by the African funeral march that imbues the final phase with impending doom. In the closing commentary by The-Mouth-That-Eats-Salt-And-Pepper, the old woman lays the blame for the tragedy squarely at the feet of Anowa. By contrast, the old man does not individualise blame; rather he assigns it to the society as a whole. Just as his opening assessment of Kofi Ako implicates the wider community in the action to follow by claiming that this pariah 'was, is and shall always be, one of us', the old man's final lines invite audiences to question their own complicity in the horror that the play has explored: 'It is men who make men mad. Who knows if Anowa would have been a better woman, a better person, if we had not been what we are?'

Production history

Anowa was first published in 1970 and had a successful production in London in 1991.

Select bibliography

- Adelugba, D. (1976) 'Language and drama: Ama Ata Aidoo', *African Literature Today* 8: 72-84.
- Agyemang, K.O. (1996) 'A crisis of balance:

- the (mis)representation of colonial history and the slave experience as themes in modern African literature', in W. Zach and K. Goodwin (eds) *Nationalism and Internationalism: (Inter)National Dimensions of Literature in English*, Tübingen: Stauffenberg, 219-28.
- Aidoo, A.A. (1976) 'Roundtable discussion', *Issue: A Quarterly Journal of Africanist Opinion* 6, 1: 124-7.
- (1995) Interview with A.D. Needham, *Massachusetts Review* 36, 1: 123-33.
- (1999) 'Unwelcome pals and decorative slaves – or glimpses of women as writers and characters in contemporary African literature', in A.U. Azodo and G. Wilentz (eds), *Emerging Perspectives on Ama Ata Aidoo*, Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 11-24.
- Azodo, A.U. and Wilentz, G. (eds) (1999) *Emerging Perspectives on Ama Ata Aidoo*, Trenton, NJ: African World Press.
- Brown, L.W. (1981) 'Ama Ata Aidoo', *Women Writers in Black Africa*, Westport, CT: Greenwood, 84-121.
- Eke, M. (1999) 'Diasporic ruptures and remembering history: Africa as home and exile in *Anowa* and *Dilemma of a Ghost*', in A.U. Azodo and G. Wilentz (eds), *Emerging Perspectives on Ama Ata Aidoo*, Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 61-78.
- Ekpong, M.O. (1994) 'Feminist tendencies in West African drama: an analysis of Ama Ata Aidoo's *Anowa*', in E.N. Emenyonu and C.E. Nnolim (eds), *Current Trends in Literature and Language Studies in West Africa*, Ibadan: Kraft Books, 20-33.
- Elder, A. (1987) 'Ama Ata Aidoo and the oral tradition: a paradox of form and substance', *African Literature Today* 15: 109-18.
- Hill-Lubin, M. (1989) 'The storyteller and the audience in the works of Ama Ata Aidoo', *Neohelicon* 16, 2: 221-45.
- James, A. (1990) 'Ama Ata Aidoo', in A. James (ed.) *In their Own Voices: African Women Writers Talk*, Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 8-27.
- Jones, E.D. (1976) Review of *Anowa*, by Ama Ata Aidoo, *African Literature Today* 8: 142-4.
- McGregor, M. (1972) 'Ama Ata Aidoo', in C. Pieterse and D. Duerden (eds) *African Writers Talking*, London: Heinemann, 19-27.
- Odamtten, V.O. (1994) *The Art of Ama Ata Aidoo*, Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida.

Anowa

Ama Ata Aidoo

Characters

OLD MAN } Being THE-MOUTH-THAT-
OLD WOMAN } EATS-SALT-AND-PEPPER
A MAN and A WOMAN who don't say a word
ANOWA a young woman who grows up
KOFI AKO her man who expands
OSAM her father who smokes his pipe
BADUA her mother who complains at the
beginning and cries at the end
BOY a young slave, about twenty years old
GIRL a young slave girl
PANYIN-NA-KAKRA a pair of boy twins whose
duty it is to fan an empty chair
HORNBLOWER
OTHER MEN and WOMEN slaves, carriers,
hailing women, drummers, messengers,
townspeople

Setting

The stage is divided into two parts, each with two exits. The upper area is the main stage; the lower stage could be narrower (smaller) than the first and any space between the audience and the real stage can serve this purpose.

Music

The Ghanaian forms may be replaced by other African or any other folk music. The Atentenben, which is here intended as a symbol for ANOWA, is a single, delicate but wild wind instrument. The horn (bull's) is usually old and turned dark brown by sacrificial blood. It is an appendage of the stool and symbol of state, village or group power. An individual acquired a horn (but never a stool) if he felt he was rich and powerful enough. In fact, the acquisition of such a horn was a declaration of power. The horn sang the praises of its owner(s), its language codes being very similar to those of drums. The Fontonfrom is an essentially

dignified, low-rumbling drum in a big man's ensemble.

Prologue

Enter THE-MOUTH-THAT-EATS-SALT-AND-PEPPER. OLD MAN always enters first from the left side of the auditorium. OLD WOMAN from the right. Each leaves in the same direction. She is wizened, leans on a stick and her voice is raspy with asthma and a life-time of putting her mouth into other people's affairs. She begins her speeches when she is half-way in and ends them half-way out. Her entries are announced by the thumping of her stick, and whenever she is the last of the two to leave the stage, her exit is marked by a prolonged coughing. She is never still and very often speaks with agitation, waving her stick and walking up and down the lower stage. He is serene and everything about him is more orderly. He enters quietly and leaves after his last statements have been made. The two should never appear or move onto the upper stage. There is a block of wood lying around on which the OLD WOMAN sometimes sits.

OLD MAN

Here in the state of Abura,
Which must surely be one of the best
pieces of land
Odomankoma, our creator, has given to
man,
Everything happens in moderation:
The sun comes out each day,
But its heat seldom burns our crops;
Rains are good when they fall
And Asaase Efua the earth-goddess gives
of herself
To them that know the seasons;
Streams abound, which like all gods
Must have their angry moments and
swell,
But floods are hardly known to living
memory.

Behind us to the north, Aburabura
 Our beautiful lonely mountain sits with
 her neck to the skies,
 Reminding us that all of the earth is not
 flat.
 In the south, Nana Bosompo, the ocean
 roars on. Lord of Tuesdays,
 His day must be sacred. We know him
 well and even
 The most unadventurous can reap his
 fish, just sitting on his pretty sands,
 While for the brave who read the
 constellations,
 His billows are easier to ride than the
 currents of a ditch.
 And you, Mighty God, and your hosts our
 forefathers,
 We do not say this in boastfulness . . .
*(He bends in the fingers of his right hand
 as though he were holding a cup, raises
 it up and acts out the motions of pouring
 a libation)* . . . but only in true
 thankfulness,
 Praying to you all that things may
 continue to be good
 And even get better.
 But bring your ears nearer, my friends, so
 I can whisper you a secret.
 Our armies, well-organised though they
 be,
 Are more skilled in quenching fires than
 in the art of war!
 So please,
 Let not posterity judge it too bitterly
 That in a dangerous moment, the lords of
 our Houses
 Sought the protection of those
 that-came-from-beyond-the-horizon
 Against our more active kinsmen from
 the north;
 We only wanted a little peace
 For which our fathers had broken away
 From the larger homestead and come to
 these parts,
 Led by the embalmed bodies of the Three
 Elders.
 And yet, there is a bigger crime
 We have inherited from the clans
 incorporate
 Of which, lest we forget when the time
 does come,
 Those forts standing at the door
 Of the great ocean shall remind our
 children
 And the sea bear witness.
 And now, listen o . . . o listen, listen,

If there be some among us that have
 found a common sauce-bowl
 In which they play a game of dipping
 with the stranger,
 Who shall complain?
 Out of one womb can always come a
 disparate breed;
 And men will always go
 Where the rumbling hunger in their
 bowels shall be stilled,
 And that is where they will stay.
 O my beloveds, let it not surprise us
 then
 That This-One and That-One
 Depend for their well-being on the
 presence of
 The pale stranger in our midst:
 Kofi was, is, and shall always be
 One of us.

(First sign of OLD WOMAN.)

But what shall we say of our child,
 The unfortunate Anowa? Let us just say
 that

Anowa is not a girl to meet every day.

OLD WOMAN That Anowa is something else!
 Like all the beautiful maidens in the tales,
 she has refused to marry any of the sturdy
 men who have asked for her hand in
 marriage. No one knows what is wrong
 with her!

OLD MAN

A child of several incarnations,
 She listens to her own tales,
 Laughs at her own jokes and
 Follows her own advice.

OLD WOMAN Some of us think she has just
 allowed her unusual beauty to cloud her
 vision of the world.

OLD MAN

Beautiful as Korado Ahima,
 Someone's-Thin-Thread.
 A dainty little pot
 Well-baked,
 And polished smooth
 To set in a nobleman's corner.

*(BADUA enters from a door at upper right
 and moves down but stops a few steps before
 the lower stage and stands looking at OLD
 MAN and OLD WOMAN.)*

OLD WOMAN Others think that her mother
 Badua has spoilt her shamefully. But let us
 ask: why should Anowa carry herself so
 stiffly? Where is she taking her 'I won't, I
 won't' to? Badua should tell her daughter

that the sapling breaks with bending that will not grow straight.

BADUA (*bursting out suddenly and pointing her fingers clearly at OLD MAN and OLD WOMAN but speaking to herself*) Perhaps it was my fault too, but how could she come to any good when her name was always on the lips of every mouth that ate pepper and salt?

(*She turns round angrily and exits where she had come from. OLD MAN and OLD WOMAN do not show they had been aware of her.*)

OLD MAN

But here is Anowa,
And also Kofi Ako.
It is now a little less than thirty years
When the lords of our Houses
Signed that piece of paper –
The Bond of 1844 they call it –
Binding us to the white men
Who came from beyond the horizon.
(*Exits.*)

OLD WOMAN And the gods will surely
punish Abenda Badua for refusing to let a
born priestess dance!

Phase One: In Yebi

Lower stage. Early evening village noises, for example, the pounding of fufu or millet, a goat bleats loudly, a woman calls her child, etc.

ANOWA enters from lower right, carrying an empty water-pot. She walks to the centre of the lower stage, stops and looks behind her. Then she overturns the water-pot and sits on it facing the audience. She is wearing her cloth wrapped around her. The upper part of her breasts are visible, and also all of her legs. She is slim and slight of build. She turns her face momentarily towards lower left. During a moment when she is looking at her feet, KOFI AKO enters from the lower right. He is a tall, broad, young man, and very good-looking. The village noises die down.

He is in work clothes and carrying a fish trap and a bundle of baits. He steals quietly up to her and cries, 'Hei!' She is startled but regains her composure immediately. They smile at each other. Just then, a WOMAN comes in from the lower left, carrying a wooden tray which is filled with farm produce – cassava, yam, plantain, pepper, tomatoes, etc. Close behind her is a MAN, presumably her husband also in work-clothes, with a gun on his shoulder and a machet under his arm. They pass by ANOWA

and KOFI AKO and walk on towards lower right. The woman turns round at every step to stare at the boy and girl who continue looking shyly at each other. Finally, the WOMAN misses a step or kicks against the block of wood. She falls, her tray crashing down.

ANOWA and KOFI AKO burst into loud uncontrollable laughter. Assisted by her man, the WOMAN begins to collect her things together. Having got her load back on her head, she disappears, followed by her MAN. Meanwhile, ANOWA and KOFI AKO continue laughing and go on doing so a little while after the lights have been removed from them.

Upper stage. The courtyard of MAAMI BADUA and PAPA OSAM's cottage. Village noises as in previous scene. Standing in the centre is an earthen hearth with tripod cooking pot. There are a couple of small household stools standing around. By the right wall is a lie-in chair which belongs exclusively to PAPA OSAM. Whenever he sits down, he sits in this. By the chair is a small table. The lower stage here represents a section of a village side street from which there is an open entrance into the courtyard. In the background, upper left and upper right are doors connecting the courtyard to the inner rooms of the house.

In the pot something is cooking which throughout the scene MAAMI BADUA will go and stir. By the hearth is a small vessel into which she puts the ladle after each stirring.

BADUA enters from upper right, goes to the hearth, picks up the ladle and stirs the soup. She is talking loudly to herself.

BADUA Any mother would be concerned if her daughter refused to get married six years after her puberty. If I do not worry about this, what shall I worry about? (OSAM enters from upper left smoking his pipe.) Besides, a woman is not a stone but a human being; she grows.

OSAM Woman, (BADUA turns to look at him) that does not mean you should break my ears with your complaints. (He looks very composed.)

BADUA What did you say, Osam?

OSAM I say you complain too much. (He goes to occupy the lie-in chair, and exclaims, 'Ah!' with satisfaction.)

BADUA (*seriously*) Are you trying to send me insane?

OSAM Will that shut you up?

BADUA Kofi Sam! (Now she really is angry.)

OSAM Yes, my wife.

(BADUA *breathes audibly with exasperation. She begins pacing up and down the courtyard, with the ladle in her hand.*)

BADUA (*moving quickly up to OSAM*) So it is nothing at a-a-l-l (*stretching the utterance of the last word*) to you that your child is not married and goes round wild, making everyone talk about her?

OSAM Which is your headache, that she is not yet married, or that she is wild?

BADUA Hmm!

OSAM You know that I am a man and getting daughters married is not one of my duties. Getting them born, aha! But not finding them husbands.

BADUA Hmm! (*Paces up and down.*)

OSAM And may the ancestral spirits help me, but what man would I order from the heavens to please the difficult eye of my daughter Anowa?

BADUA Hmm! (*She goes and stirs the soup and this time remembers to put the ladle down. She stands musing by the hearth.*)

OSAM As for her wildness, what do you want me to say again about that? I have always asked you to apprentice her to a priestess to quieten her down. But . . .

(*Roused again, BADUA moves quickly back to where he is and, meanwhile, corks both her ears with two fingers and shakes her head to make sure he notices what she is doing.*)

OSAM (*chuckles*) Hmm, play children's games with me, my wife. One day you will click your fingers with regret that you did not listen to me.

BADUA (*She removes her fingers from her ears.*) I have said it and I will say it again and again and again! I am not going to turn my only daughter into a dancer priestess.

OSAM What is wrong with priestesses?

BADUA I don't say there is anything wrong with them.

OSAM Did you not consult them over and over again when you could not get a single child from your womb to live beyond one day?

BADUA (*reflectively*) O yes. I respect them, I honour them . . . I fear them. Yes, my husband, I fear them. But my only daughter shall not be a priestess.

OSAM They have so much glory and dignity . . .

BADUA But in the end, they are not people. They become too much like the gods they

interpret. (*As she enumerates the attributes of priesthood, her voice grows hysterical and her face terror-stricken. OSAM removes his pipe, and stares at her, his mouth open with amazement.*)

They counsel with spirits;
They read into other men's souls;
They swallow dogs' eyes
Jump fires
Drink goats' blood
Sheep milk
Without flinching
Or vomiting
They do not feel
As you or I,
They have no shame.

(*She relaxes, and OSAM does too, the latter sighing audibly. BADUA continues, her face slightly turned away from both her husband and the audience.*)

I want my child
To be a human woman
Marry a man,
Tend a farm
And be happy to see her
Peppers and her onions grow.
A woman like her
Should bear children
Many children,
So she can afford to have
One or two die.
Should she not take
Her place at meetings
Among the men and women of the clan?
And sit on my chair when
I am gone? And a captainship in the
army,
Should not be beyond her
When the time is ripe!

(*OSAM nods his head and exclaims, 'Oh . . . oh!'*)

BADUA But a priestess lives too much in her own and other people's minds, my husband.

OSAM (*sighing again*) My wife, people with better vision than yours or mine have seen that Anowa is not like you or me. And a prophet with a locked mouth is neither a prophet nor a man. Besides, the yam that will burn, shall burn, boiled or roasted.

BADUA (*She picks up the ladle but does not stir the pot. She throws her arms about.*) Since you want to see Nkomfo and Nsofo, seers and dancers . . .

ANOWA *(from the distance)* Mother!

BADUA That is her coming.

ANOWA Father!

OSAM O yes. Well let us keep quiet about her affairs then. You know what heart lies in her chest.

ANOWA Mother, Father . . . Father, Mother . . . Mother . . .

(OSAM jumps up and, confused, he and BADUA keep bumping into each other as each moves without knowing why or where he or she is moving. BADUA still has the ladle in her hands.)

BADUA Why do you keep hitting at me?

ANOWA Mother!

OSAM Sorry, I did not mean to. But you watch your step too.

ANOWA Father!

OSAM And where is she?

(ANOWA runs in, lower right, with her empty water-pot.)

BADUA Hei. Why do you frighten me so? And where is the water?

ANOWA O Mother. *(She stops running and stays on the lower stage.)*

OSAM What is it?

ANOWA *(her eyes swerving from the face of one to the other)* O Father!

OSAM Say whatever you have got to say and stop behaving like a child.

BADUA Calling us from the street!

OSAM What have you got to tell us that couldn't wait until you reached here?

ANOWA O Father.

BADUA And look at her. See here, it is time you realised you have grown up.

ANOWA *(moving a step or two forward)* Mother . . .

BADUA And now what is it! Besides, where is the water? I am sure this household will go to bed to count the beams tonight since there is no water to cook with.

ANOWA Mother, Father, I have met the man I want to marry.

BADUA What is she saying?

ANOWA I say I have found the man I would like to marry.

OSAM and BADUA Eh?

(Long pause during which BADUA stares at ANOWA with her head tilted to one side.)

ANOWA Kofi Ako asked me to marry him and I said I will, too.

BADUA Eh?

OSAM Eh?

BADUA Eh?

OSAM Eh?

BADUA Eh?

OSAM and BADUA Eh-eh!

(Light dies on all three and comes on again almost immediately. OSAM is sitting in his chair. ANOWA hovers around and she has a chewing-stick in her mouth with which she scrapes her teeth when she is not speaking. BADUA is sitting by the hearth doing nothing.)

ANOWA Mother, you have been at me for a long time to get married. And now that I have found someone I like very much . . .

BADUA Anowa, shut up. Shut up! Push your tongue into your mouth and close it. Shut up because I never counted Kofi Ako among my sons-in-law. Anowa, why Kofi Ako? Of all the mothers that are here in Yebe, should I be the one whose daughter would want to marry this fool, this good-for-nothing cassava-man, this watery male of all watery males? This-I-am-the-handsome-one-with-a-stick-between-my-teeth-in-the-market-place . . . This . . . this . . .

ANOWA O Mother . . .

BADUA *(quietly)* I say Anowa, why did you not wait for a day when I was cooking banku and your father was drinking palm-wine in the market place with his friends? When you could have snatched the ladle from my hands and hit me with it and taken your father's wine from his hands and thrown it in his face? Anowa, why did you not wait for a day like that, since you want to behave like the girl in the folk tale?

ANOWA But what are you talking about, Mother?

BADUA And you Kobina Sam, will you not say anything?

OSAM Abena Badua, leave me out of this. You know that if I so much as whisper anything to do with Anowa, you and your brothers and uncles will tell me to go and straighten out the lives of my nieces. This is your family drum; beat it, my wife.

BADUA I did not ask for any riddles.

OSAM Mm . . . just remember I was smoking my pipe.

BADUA If you had been any other father, you would have known what to do and what not to do.

OSAM Perhaps; but that does not mean I

would have *done* anything. The way you used to talk, I thought if Anowa came to tell you she was going to get married to Kweku Ananse, or indeed the devil himself, you would spread rich cloth before her to walk on. And probably sacrifice an elephant.

BADUA And you do not know what this Kofi Ako is like?

ANOWA What is he like?

BADUA My lady, I have not asked you a question. (ANOWA *retires into sullenness. She scrapes her teeth noisily.*)

OSAM How could I know what he is like? Does he not come from Nsona House? And is not that one of the best houses that is here in Yebe? Has he an ancestor who unclothed himself to nakedness, had the Unmentionable, killed himself or another man?

BADUA And if all that there is to a young man is that his family has an unspoiled name, then what kind of man is he? Are he and his wife going to feed on stones when he will not put a blow into a thicket or at least learn a trade?

OSAM Anyway, I said long ago that I was removing my mouth from my daughter Anowa's marriage. Did I not say that? She would not allow herself to be married to any man who came to ask for her hand from us and of whom we approved. Did you not know then that when she chose a man, it might be one of whom we would disapprove?

BADUA But why should she want to do a thing like that?

OSAM My wife, do remember I am a man, son of a woman who also had five sisters. It is a long time since I gave up trying to understand the human female. Besides, if you think well of it, I am not the one to decide finally whom Anowa is to marry. Her uncle, your brother is there, is he not? You'd better consult him. Because I know your family: they will say I deliberately married Anowa to a fool to spite them.

ANOWA Father, Kofi Ako is not a fool.

OSAM My daughter, please forgive me, I am sure you know him very well. And it is only by way of speaking. Kwame! Kwame! I thought the boy was around somewhere. (*Moves towards lower stage and looks around.*)

BADUA What are you calling him here for?

OSAM To go and call us her uncle and your brother.

BADUA Could we have not waited until evening or dawn tomorrow?

OSAM For what *shall* we wait for the dawn?

BADUA To settle the case.

OSAM What case? Who says I want to settle cases? If there is a case to settle, that is between you and your people. It is not everything one chooses to forget, Badua. Certainly, I remember what happened in connection with Anowa's dancing. That is, if you don't. Did they not say in the end that it was I who had prevented her from going into apprenticeship with a priestess?

(*Light dies on them and comes on a little later.*)

ANOWA *is seen dressed in a two-pieced cloth. She darts in and out of upper right, with very quick movements. She is packing her belongings into a little basket. Every now and then, she pauses, looks at her mother and sucks her teeth. BADUA complains as before, but this time tearfully. OSAM is lying in his chair smoking.*)

BADUA I am in disgrace so suck your teeth at me. (*Silence.*) Other women certainly have happier tales to tell about motherhood. (*Silence.*) I think I am just an unlucky woman.

ANOWA Mother, I do not know what is wrong with you.

BADUA And how would you know what is wrong with me? Look here Anowa, marriage is like a piece of cloth . . .

ANOWA I like mine and it is none of your business.

BADUA And like cloth, its beauty passes with wear and tear.

ANOWA I do not care, Mother. Have I not told you that this is to be my marriage and not yours?

BADUA My marriage! Why should it be my daughter who would want to marry that good-for-nothing cassava-man?

ANOWA He is mine and I like him.

BADUA If you like him, do like him. The men of his house do not make good husbands; ask older women who are married to Nsona men.

OSAM You know what you are saying is not true. Indeed from the beginning of time Nsona men make the best of husbands. (*BADUA glares at him.*)

ANOWA This does not even worry me and it should not worry you, Mother.

BADUA It's up to you, my mistress who knows everything. But remember, my lady

- when I am too old to move, I shall still be sitting by these walls waiting for you to come back with your rags and nakedness.

ANOWA You do not have to wait because we shall not be coming back here to Yebi. Not for a long long time, Mother, not for a long long time.

BADUA Of course, if I were you I wouldn't want to come back with my shame either.

ANOWA You will be surprised to know that I am going to help him do something with his life.

BADUA A-a-h, I wish I could turn into a bird and come and stand on your roof-top watching you make something of that husband of yours. What was he able to make of the plantation of palm-trees his grandfather gave him? And the virgin land his uncles gave him, what did he do with that?

ANOWA Please, Mother, remove your witch's mouth from our marriage.

(OSAM jumps up and from now on hovers between the two, trying to make peace.)

OSAM Hei Anowa, what is wrong with you? Are you mad? How can you speak like that to your mother?

ANOWA But Father, Mother does not treat me like her daughter.

BADUA And so you call me a witch? The thing is, I wish I were a witch so that I could protect you from your folly.

ANOWA I do not need you for protection, Mother.

OSAM The spirit of my fathers! Anowa, what daughter talks like this to her mother?

ANOWA But Father, what mother talks to her daughter the way Mother talks to me? And now, Mother, I am going, so take your witchery to eat in the sea.

OSAM Ei Anowa?

BADUA Thank you my daughter. (BADUA and ANOWA try to jump on each other.

BADUA attempts to hit ANOWA but OSAM quickly intervenes.)

OSAM What has come over this household? Tell me what has come over this household? And you too Badua. What has come over you?

BADUA You leave me alone, Osam. Why don't you speak to Anowa? She is your daughter, I am not.

OSAM Well, she is not mature.

BADUA That one makes me laugh. Who is not mature? Has she not been mature

enough to divine me out and discover I am a witch? Did she not choose her husband single handed? And isn't she leaving home to make a better success of her marriage?

OSAM Anowa, have you made up your mind to leave?

ANOWA But Father, Mother is driving me away.

BADUA Who is driving you away?

ANOWA You! Who does not know here in Yebi that from the day I came to tell you that Kofi and I were getting married you have been drumming into my ears what a disgrace this marriage is going to be for you? Didn't you say that your friends are laughing at you? And they were saying very soon I would be sharing your clothes because my husband will never buy me any? Father, I am leaving this place.

(She picks up her basket, puts it on her head and moves down towards the lower left.)

BADUA Yes, go.

ANOWA I am on my way, Mother.

OSAM And where is your husband?

ANOWA I am going to look for him.

OSAM Anowa, stop! *(But ANOWA behaves as if she had not heard him.)* Anowa you must not leave in this manner.

BADUA Let her go, and may she walk well.

ANOWA Mother, I shall walk so well that I will not find my feet back here again.

(She exits lower left. OSAM spits with disdain, then stares at BADUA for a long time. She slowly bows her head in the folds of her cloth and begins to weep quietly as the lights die on them. Enter THE-MOUTH-THAT-EATS-SALT-AND-PEPPER.)

OLD WOMAN Hei, hei, hei! And what do the children of today want? Eh, what would the children of today have us do? Parenthood was always a very expensive affair. But it seems now there is no man or woman created in nature who is endowed with enough powers to be a mother or father. *(OLD MAN enters and walks up to the middle of the lower stage passing OLD WOMAN on the way.)* Listen, listen. The days when children obey their elders have run out. If you tell a child to go forward, he will surely step backwards. And if you ask him to move back a pace, he would run ten leagues.

OLD MAN But what makes your heart race itself in anger so? What disturbs you? Some of us feel the best way to sharpen a knife is

not to whet one side only. And neither can you solve a riddle by considering only one end of it. We know too well how difficult children of today are. But who begot them? Is a man a father for sleeping with a woman and making her pregnant? And does bearing a child after nine months make her a mother? Or is she the best potter who knows her clay and how it breathes?

OLD WOMAN Are you saying that a good parent would not tell his child what should and should not be done?

OLD MAN How can I say a thing like that?

OLD WOMAN And must we lie down and have our children play jumping games on our bellies if this is what they want? (*She spits.*)

OLD MAN Oh no. No one in his rightful mind would say that babies should be free to do what they please. But Abena Badua should have known that Anowa wanted to be something else which she herself had not been . . . They say from a very small age, she had the hot eyes and nimble feet of one born to dance for the gods.

OLD WOMAN Hmm. Our ears are breaking with that one. Who heard the Creator tell Anowa what she was coming to do with her life here? And is that why, after all her 'I don't like this' and 'I don't like that', she has gone and married Kofi Ako?

OLD MAN Tell me what is wrong in that?

OLD WOMAN Certainly. Some of us thought she had ordered a completely new man from the heavens.

OLD MAN Are people angry because she chose her own husband; or is there something wrong with the boy?

OLD WOMAN As for that Kofi Ako, they say he combs his hair too often and stays too long at the Nteh games.

OLD MAN Who judges a man of name by his humble beginnings?

OLD WOMAN Don't ask me. They say Badua does not want him for a son-in-law.

OLD MAN She should thank her god that Anowa has decided to settle down at all. But then, we all talk too much about those two. And yet this is not the first time since the world began that a man and a woman have decided to be together against the advice of grey-haired crows.

OLD WOMAN What foolish words! Some people babble as though they borrowed their grey hairs and did not grow them on

their own heads! Badua should have told her daughter that the infant which tries its milk teeth on every bone and stone, grows up with nothing to eat dried meat with. (*She exits noisily.*)

OLD MAN I'm certainly a foolish old man. But I think there is no need to behave as though Kofi Ako and Anowa have brought an evil concoction here. Perhaps it is good for them that they have left Yebe to go and try to make their lives somewhere else.

(*As lights go out, a blending of the Atentenben with any ordinary drum.*)

Phase Two: On the highway

The road is represented by the lower stage. A dark night. Wind, thunder and lightning. KOFI AKO enters from lower left. He is carrying a huge load of monkey skins and other hides. He looks exhausted and he is extremely wet from the rain.

KOFI AKO (*softly and without turning round*) Anowa (*Silence.*) Anowa, are you coming? (*There is no response from anywhere. Then, frenziedly*) Anowa, ei, Anowa!

ANOWA (*also entering from lower left and carrying basket*) O, and what is wrong with you? Why are you so afraid? (*KOFI AKO turns round to look at her.*)

KOFI AKO (*breathing loudly with relief*) It is a fearful night.

ANOWA But you do not have to fear so much for me. Why Kofi, see how your great chest heaves up and down even through the folds of your cloth! (*Laughs.*)

KOFI AKO You just let it be then. (*She giggles more.*) And I can't see that there is anything to laugh at . . . Look at the lightning! Shall we sit here in this thicket?

ANOWA Yes.

(*They move to upper stage, and stay in the central area. KOFI AKO puts his own load down with difficulty. He then helps ANOWA to unload hers and sits down immediately.*)

ANOWA Hei, you should not have sat down in the mud just like that.

KOFI AKO As if it matters. Now sit here and move nearer. (*He pulls ANOWA, shivering, down by him.*) Anowa, see how you shiver! And yet my tongue cannot match yours. (*Mocking her*) 'I am strong . . . O . . . O . . . It is not heavy. My body is small but I am strong!' Ei, Anowa!

ANOWA But I am strong.

KOFI AKO We can see that. You know what?

Shivering like this, with all your clothes wet, you look like a chick in a puddle.

ANOWA And how about you? (*Beginning to rummage through her basket as though looking for something.*)

KOFI AKO Do you compare yourself to me? See how big I am. (*He bares his chest and spreads out his arms.*)

ANOWA (*pretending to be shocked*) Ahhhh! And this is why we should fear more of you. You are so tall and so broad. You really look like a huge something. There is too much of you. (*Touching different parts of him*) Anything can get any part of you . . . a branch from a falling tree . . . a broken splinter, and ow, my mouth is at the dung heap, even lightning . . . But I am so little, I can escape things.

KOFI AKO I was not born to die in any of these ways you mention.

ANOWA O seasoned Priest, and how was I born to die, that you are so afraid of me?

KOFI AKO I have no idea about that one.

What I know is that if you stay out longer in this weather, you are going to be ill. And I cannot afford to lose you.

ANOWA You will never lose me.

KOFI AKO I thank your mouth.

(ANOWA fishes out a miserable looking packet of food from the basket.)

ANOWA Are you hungry? Here is what is left of the food. Oh, but it is so wet. (*She giggles but gives it to him.*)

KOFI AKO (*He clutches hungrily at the bundle.*) They are good. How about you?

ANOWA No, I am not hungry.

KOFI AKO Perhaps you are ill already.

(*Begins to wolf the stuff down.*) Mm . . . This life is not good for a woman. No, not even a woman like you. It is too difficult. It is over two hundred miles to the coast and I wonder how much we have done . . .

ANOWA We are near Atandasu. This means we have only about thirty miles or more to do . . .

KOFI AKO Is that it? Do you know how many days we have been walking?

ANOWA No, I have not been counting the days. All I know is that we have been on the highway for about two weeks now.

(*Fights sleep.*)

KOFI AKO The ghost of my fathers!

ANOWA But think of it, if we are not too

tired to go a little further, we shall be there tomorrow.

KOFI AKO Ei, Anowa. You ought to have been born a man.

ANOWA Kofi.

KOFI AKO Hmm . . . hmm?

ANOWA Why don't you marry another woman? (KOFI AKO registers alarm.) At least she could help us. I could find a good one too. (*Throws up her head to think.*) Let me see. There is a girl in one of the villages we go to e . . . h . . . what is the name?

KOFI AKO Anowa, please don't go on. You know you are annoying me.

ANOWA Ah my master, but I don't understand you. You are the only man in this world who has just one wife and swears to keep only her! (*Silence.*) Perhaps it is your medicine's taboo?

KOFI AKO What medicine are you talking about? What taboo?

ANOWA Ah Kofi, why has your voice gone fearfully down and so quickly?

KOFI AKO But you are saying something about medicines and taboos which I don't understand. Were you not the same person who said we didn't need anything of that kind?

ANOWA And if I said that, then it means from now on I must not mention medicines and taboos, not even in jest? Kofi (*pause*) . . . what use do you think they will be to us? Who is interested in harming you or me? Two lonely people who are only trying something just because the bowels are not as wise as the mind; but like baby orphans, will shriek for food even while their mother's body is cold with death . . .

KOFI AKO Anowa, the man who hates you does not care if you wait in the sun for your clothes to dry before you can go and join the dance.

ANOWA But who hates us?

KOFI AKO My wife, you speak as if we left Yebe with the town singing and dancing our praises. Was not everyone saying something unkind about us? Led by your mother? Anowa, we did not run away from home to go mushroom-hunting or fish-trapping.

ANOWA I heard you, my husband. But I do not want us to be caught up in medicines or any of those things.

KOFI AKO I too have heard you, my wife. Meanwhile, I am eating all the food . . .

ANOWA Set your mouth free. Mine feels as

though it could not stand the smell of anything.

KOFI AKO (*putting his hand on her forehead*) Anowa, please, don't be ill.

ANOWA My mother has often told me that except for the normal gripes and fevers, my body has never known real illness.

KOFI AKO Ah, but my wife seems to be extraordinary in more things than one. Anowa...

ANOWA Yes?

KOFI AKO We do need something to protect us. Even though no one dislikes us enough now to want to destroy us, how about when we begin to do well? Shall we not get hosts of enemies then?

ANOWA (*trying to keep her voice light*) But my husband, why should we begin to take to our sick-beds now with illnesses that may affect us in our old age? Kofi, I just don't like the idea of using medicines.

KOFI AKO But there are many things we do in life which we do not like – which we even hate... and we only need a bead or two.

ANOWA But a shrine has to be worshipped however small its size. And a kind god angered is a thousand times more evil than a mean god unknown. To have a little something to eat and a rag on our back is not a matter to approach a god about.

KOFI AKO Maybe you feel confident enough to trust yourself in dealing with all the problems of life. I think I am different, my wife.

(*For some time ANOWA quietly looks down while he eats.*)

ANOWA Kofi, that was unkindly said. Because you know that I am already worried about not seeing signs of a baby yet.

KOFI AKO It is quite clear that neither of us knows too much about these things. (*Pause.*) Perhaps it is too early to worry about such a problem. We can consult a more grown-up person, but I know you would not like us to do anything like that.

ANOWA (*very loudly*) Listen to what he is saying! Is it the same thing to ask an older person about a woman's womb as it is to contract medicines in pots and potions which would attract good fortune and ward off evil?

KOFI AKO I swear by everything that it is the same. And Anowa, it is too fearful a night to go screaming into the woods.

ANOWA That is true.

(*More thunder and lightning. ANOWA begins to nod sleepily. Having finished eating, KOFI AKO throws the food wrappers into the woods behind him. Then he notices ANOWA nodding.*)

KOFI AKO Anowa, you are very tired.

(*Jumping up*) Let me prepare somewhere for you to sleep. (*He goes off stage by upper right. ANOWA goes on nodding. Meanwhile the storm continues convulsively.*)

ANOWA (*startled awake by a peal of thunder*) What I am worried about are these things. (*She gropes towards the baskets and begins to feel the skins.*) See how wet they are. Tomorrow, they will be heavier than sheets of rock. And if it continues like this, they will all rot. Creator, (*she looks up*) do as you like but please, let your sun shine tomorrow so we can dry out these skins. We must stop in the next village to dry them out. Yes, we must stop if the sun comes out.

KOFI AKO (*entering with a couple of plantain or banana leaves which he spreads out to form some kind of mat in the centre of lower stage*) To do what?

ANOWA To dry out the skins. They are so wet.

(*KOFI AKO concentrates on preparing the mat. ANOWA starts nodding again.*)

KOFI AKO Eh? (*He turns round and sees her.*)

ANOWA (*mumbling*) The storm has ruined the whole corn field, every stalk is down.

KOFI AKO (*Moving with urgency, he picks her up in his arms.*) Come Anowa, you are dreaming. Come to sleep. (*Carries her to the leafy bed.*) Yes, Anowa, sleep well. Sleep well, and let every corn stalk go down. We shall not return to see the ruin. (*Pacing up and down the length of lower stage.*)

Sometimes, I do not understand. Wherever we go, people take you for my sister at first. They say they have never heard of a woman who helped her husband so. 'Your wife is good', they say, 'for your sisters are the only women you can force to toil like this for you'. They say that however good for licking the back of your hand is, it would never be like your palms. (*Pause.*) Perhaps if they knew what I am beginning

to know, they would not say so much. And proverbs do not always describe the truth of reality. (*His face acquires new determination.*) Anowa truly has a few strong ideas. But I know she will settle down. (*Addressing the sleeping woman*) Anowa, I shall be the new husband and you the new wife.

(*Now the storm is raging harder, thunder roars and lightning occurs more frequently. He stares at her for some time and then as lights begin to dim, he spreads out his big figure by her. Lights off. Pause. When lights come on again, same scene without the leafy bed. The sun is shining and ANOWA is spreading out skins from the baskets while KOFI AKO stands looking on. Then ANOWA holds her nose elaborately. Both of them burst out laughing. He moves in to help her.*)

KOFI AKO Our noses are certainly suffering.

ANOWA And yet what can we do? Without them, where would we stand?

KOFI AKO Nowhere indeed.

ANOWA (*looking into one of the baskets and picking it up*) About two of them in here are too rotten to do anything with. (*She makes a movement of wiping sweat off her face, then yawns.*)

KOFI AKO Come out of the sun. (*He takes the basket from her and places it away from them.*) Come, let's sit down in the shade. (*They go and sit near one end of the lower stage.*)

ANOWA (*breathing audibly*) Did your friend the doctor tell you what is wrong with me?

KOFI AKO Yes.

ANOWA What did he say?

KOFI AKO I should have asked him whether I'm to let you know or not.

ANOWA Ho! I think you can tell me, because he would not have forgotten to warn you, if he thought I should not know.

KOFI AKO (*quietly and with a frown*) He says there is nothing wrong with you.

ANOWA Then why . . . ?

KOFI AKO Let me finish. He says there is nothing wrong with your womb. But your soul is too restless. You always seem to be looking for things; and that prevents your blood from settling.

ANOWA Oh!

KOFI AKO Anowa, are you unhappy? Do

I make you unhappy?

ANOWA (*with surprise*) No.

KOFI AKO Perhaps this work is too much for you.

ANOWA No. I think I have always been like that.

KOFI AKO (*alarmed*) Like what?

ANOWA I don't know. I can't describe it.

KOFI AKO Maybe you should stop coming on the roads.

ANOWA (*alarmed*) No. Why?

KOFI AKO Why not?

ANOWA I like this work. I like being on the roads.

KOFI AKO My wife, sometimes you talk strangely. I don't see what is so pleasing on these highways. The storms? The wild animals or bad men that we often meet?

ANOWA There are worse things in villages and towns.

KOFI AKO Listen to her! Something tells me (*he stands up*) it might be better if you stayed at home. Indeed I have been thinking that maybe I should eh . . . eh . . .

ANOWA My husband, I am listening to you.

KOFI AKO You remember, you were telling me to marry another woman to help us?

ANOWA Yes.

KOFI AKO Hmm, I don't want to marry again. Not yet. But I think . . . I think . . . that perhaps . . .

ANOWA Eheh!

KOFI AKO I think the time has come for us to think of looking for one or two men to help us.

ANOWA What men?

KOFI AKO I hear they are not expensive . . . and if . . .

ANOWA (*getting up so slowly that every movement of her body corresponds to syllables or words in her next speech*) MY husband! Am I hear-ing you right? Have we risen so high? (*Corking her ears*) Kofi Ako, do not let me hear these words again.

KOFI AKO (*mimicking her*) 'Do not let me hear these words again'. Anowa, do you think I am your son?

ANOWA I do not care. We shall not buy men.

KOFI AKO Anowa, look here. You are not always going to have it your way. Who are you to tell me what I must do or not do?

ANOWA Kofi, I am not telling what you must do or not do . . . We were two when we left Yebi. We have been together all this time and at the end of these two years, we may not be able to say yet that we are the

richest people in the world but we certainly are not starving.

KOFI AKO And so?

ANOWA Ah, is there any need then to go behaving as though we are richer than we are?

KOFI AKO What do you want to say? I am not buying these men to come and carry me. They are coming to help us in our work.

ANOWA We do not need them.

KOFI AKO If you don't, I do. Besides you are only talking like a woman.

ANOWA And please, how does a woman talk? I had as much a mouth in the idea of beginning this trade as you had. And as much head!

KOFI AKO And I am getting tired now. 'You shall not consult a priest . . . you shall marry again . . . we do not need medicines . . . ' Anowa, listen. Now here is something I am going to do whether you like it or not. I do not even understand why you want to make so much noise about something like this. What is wrong with buying one or two people to help us? They are cheap . . .
(Pause. ANOWA walks around in great agitation. KOFI AKO continues in a strangely loud voice.) Everyone does it . . . does not everyone do it? And things would be easier for us. We shall not be alone . . . Now you have decided to say nothing, eh? Anowa, who told you that buying men is wrong? You know what? I like you and the way you are different. But Anowa, sometimes, you are too different. (ANOWA walks away from him.) I know I could not have started without you, but after all, we all know you are a woman and I am the man.

ANOWA And tell me, when did I enter into a discussion with you about that? I shall not feel happy with slaves around . . . Kofi, no man made a slave of his friend and came to much himself. It is wrong. It is evil.

KOFI AKO (showing alarm) Hei, where did you get these ideas from? Who told you all this?

ANOWA Are there never things which one can think out for oneself?

KOFI AKO Yes, so now you are saying I am a fool?

ANOWA (collapsing) O the gods of my fathers!

KOFI AKO What shall the gods of your fathers do for you? I know you think you are the wise one of the two of us.

ANOWA Kofi, are you saying all this just so I will take a knife and go cut my throat?

KOFI AKO Am I lying?

ANOWA When and where and what did I do to give you this idea?

KOFI AKO This is the way you have always behaved.

ANOWA (her voice going falsetto) Kofi! Kofi! (He sits down by her.) Hmm! Kofi, we shouldn't quarrel.

KOFI AKO No, we should not.

(The lights die on them and come up in a little while, on the upper stage. It is the courtyard of BADUA and OSAM's cottage. It is early evening. Village noises. OSAM and BADUA are having their evening meal. OSAM is sitting in the lie-in chair, his food before him. He swallows a morsel. BADUA's food is on her lap. She is not eating. Presently she puts it down and gets up noisily. She turns right, she turns left. She begins to move around aimlessly, speaking at the same time.)

BADUA I haven't heard the like of this before. A human being, and a woman too, preferring to remain a stranger in other people's lands?

OSAM (looking up from his meal) Sit down, sit down. Sit down, and eat your food. (Shamefaced, BADUA sits down.) Hmmmm, I was telling you. This child of yours . . . hm . . . She was never even a child in the way a child must be a child.

BADUA (turning round to face him) And how must a child be a child?

OSAM Ei, are you now asking me? I thought this is what you too have known all along. Ah, Nana, I beg you. Maybe that was not well said. (Pause.) But I must say it has happened before us all. Has it not? Walked out of that door, she did, how long ago is that?

BADUA Hmmmm!

OSAM . . . and has never been back since. I have always feared her.

BADUA (shocked) You have always feared her? And is that a good thing to say about your own bowel-begotten child? If you fear her, then what do other people do? And if other people fear her then since a crab never fathers a bird, in their eyes, who are you yourself? After all, what has she done? She only went away with her husband and has not been back since.

OSAM And that, you will agree with me, is very strange.

(*Guessing he might want a helping of the soup, BADUA gets up and goes for his bowl.*)

BADUA Yes, it is strange, but that does not make me say I fear her. (*She takes the bowl to the hearth, and returns it to him after she has filled it.*)

OSAM But don't other women leave their homes to go and marry? And do they stay away forever? Do they not return with their children to the old homestead to attend funerals, pay death debts, return for the feeding of their family stools? And Badua, listen here, if they did not do that, what would homes-and-homes do? Would not the clans break up for lack of people at home? The children of women like Anowa and their children-after-them never find their ways back. They get lost. For they often do not know the names of the founders of their houses . . . No, they do not know what to tell you if you asked them for just the names of their clans.

BADUA Anowa has not yet had children.

OSAM There you are. And is not that too strange? She has not had children. And barrenness is not such a common affliction in your family, is it?

BADUA No, they have been saying it for a long time around here that she and her husband sold her birth-seeds to acquire their wealth.

OSAM Of course, women have mouths to talk with. And indeed they open them anyhow and much of the time what comes out is nothing any real man can take seriously. Still, something tells me that this time she has given them cause.

BADUA O Kofi Sam! (*She returns to her seat and places her bowl on her knee again.*)

OSAM What have I done? I am not saying that they are right. But it certainly looks as if she and her husband are too busy making money and have no time to find out and cure what is wrong with her womb.

BADUA Perhaps I should go and look for her.

OSAM Go and look for her? How? Where? And anyway, who told you she is lost?

BADUA But she is my child.

OSAM And so what? Do you think Anowa will forgive you anymore for that? Please, leave her to live her life!

BADUA Why are you always against me where Anowa is concerned?

OSAM You have been against me too. Did I not tell you to -

BADUA - make her a priestess . . . make her a priestess . . . Always. Why? Why did everyone want me to put my only child on the dancing ground? Since you want to see possessed women so much, why didn't you ask your sisters to apprentice their daughters to oracles?

OSAM (*very angry*) Don't shout at me, woman! Who comes complaining to me about Anowa? . . . They say that that would have been to the good of us all. But now - there she is, as they said she might be, wandering . . . her soul hovering on the outer fringes of life and always searching for something . . . and I do not know what!

BADUA (*quietly*) I don't know what you mean by all this. Who is not searching in life?

OSAM I know you have just made up your mind never to understand me.

BADUA (*bitterly*) Besides, that daughter of ours is doing well, I hear. Yes, for someone whose soul is wandering, our daughter is prospering. Have you heard from the blowing winds how their trade with the white men is growing? And how they are buying men and women?

OSAM Yes, and also how unhappy she is about those slaves, and how they quarrel from morning till night.

BADUA So! I didn't know she was a fool too. She thought it is enough just to be headstrong. (*Laughing dryly*) Before she walked out that noon-day, she should have waited for me to tell her how to marry a man . . .

OSAM Hmm.

BADUA A good woman does not have a brain or mouth.

OSAM Hmm. (*He coughs.*)

BADUA And if there is something wrong with their slaves, why don't they sell them?

OSAM That is not the problem. They say she just does not like the idea of buying men and women.

BADUA What foolishness. People like her are not content to have life cheap, they always want it cheaper. Which woman in the land would not wish to be in her place?

OSAM Anowa is not every woman.

BADUA Tchial! And who does she think she is? A goddess? Let me eat my food. (*She goes to sit down and places the food back on her lap.*)

OSAM And can I have some soup?

BADUA Yes. (*As she gets up again, the lights die on the courtyard.*)

(*Eight men in a single file carrying skins enter by lower right, move silently up and across the main stage and away lower left. KOFI AKO follows closely behind them but stops in the centre of the lower stage. He is better dressed than before. He is carrying what seems to be a ridiculously light load. From off stage, ANOWA's voice is heard calling 'Kofi, Kofi'. He stops, she enters from the same direction, dressed as in the last scene although the lapse in time represents years. She is still barefooted. She is carrying nothing but a small stick which she plays with as she talks.*)

KOFI AKO What is the matter?

ANOWA Oh I just want you to wait for me.

KOFI AKO Anowa, you walked faster when you carried loads which were heavier than mine.

ANOWA Well, you took the load off my head. But don't you complain about my steps. I cannot keep up with you. These days you are always with your men.

KOFI AKO (*smiles.*) Is that it? You know what? Let us sit down. (*They move to their position of the previous scene. Then as if he has remembered something, he moves some steps up towards the left and calls*) Boy!

BOY (*running in*) Father!

KOFI AKO Tell the others that you are to sit down and rest a little.

BOY Is our Mother coming to give us the food?

KOFI AKO You can share it among yourselves, can you not?

BOY We can, Father.

KOFI AKO Then go and tell Yaako to share it up for you.

BOY Yes, Father. (*He leaves.*)

KOFI AKO (*Goes back to sit by ANOWA.*)

I think we should not come again with them. Yaako is very good and honest and he can manage everything.

ANOWA (*quietly*) Is that so?

KOFI AKO I feel so.

ANOWA (*quietly*) Yes.

KOFI AKO Why do you say that so sadly?

ANOWA Did I say that sadly? Maybe I am sad. And how not? I cannot be happy if I am going to stop working.

KOFI AKO But why, Anowa?

ANOWA Men whom Odomankoma creates do not stop working . . . yes, they do but

only when they are hit by illness or some misfortune. When their bodies have grown impotent with age.

KOFI AKO Anowa, the farmer goes home from the farm . . .

ANOWA (*Gets up and starts walking before KOFI AKO.*) And the fisherman brings his boat and nets to the shore . . .

KOFI AKO And if you know this already, then why?

ANOWA They return in the morning.

KOFI AKO But we have finished doing all that needs to be done by us.

ANOWA Kofi, one stops wearing a hat only when the head has fallen off.

KOFI AKO (*irritably*) Anowa, can one not rest a tired neck?

ANOWA Are we coming back after some time?

KOFI AKO No.

ANOWA What shall we be doing?

KOFI AKO Nothing. We shall be resting.

ANOWA How can a human being rest all the time? I cannot.

KOFI AKO I can.

ANOWA I shall not know what to do with myself as each day breaks.

KOFI AKO You will look after the house.

ANOWA No. I am going to marry you to a woman who shall do that.

KOFI AKO You will not marry me to any woman. I am not sending you on that errand.

ANOWA See if I don't. One of these plump Oguaa mulatto women. With a skin as smooth as shea-butter and golden like fresh palm-oil on yam . . .

KOFI AKO (*jumping up and showing undue irritation*) Anowa, stop that!

ANOWA Stop what?

KOFI AKO What are you doing!

ANOWA What am I doing? (*Pause.*) Ei, master, let your heart lie cool in your chest.

KOFI AKO Haven't I told you several times not to talk to me about marrying other women?

ANOWA Hmm, I am quiet. (*Pause.*)

KOFI AKO (*cooling down*) And if I marry again what will become of you?

ANOWA Nothing that is unheard of. Ask your friends. What becomes of other women whose husbands have one, two, or more other wives besides themselves?

KOFI AKO So what you want to be is my mother-wife?

ANOWA Yes, or your friend or your sister. Have we not enough memories to talk about from our working days until we get tired of them and each other, when we shall sit and wait for our skins to fall off our bones?

KOFI AKO Your mood is on. (*He stretches his left arm forward and looks at it intently.*)

ANOWA (*giggling*) What mood? You are always funny. My nothing is on. It is just that when I throw my eyes into the future, I do not see myself there.

KOFI AKO This is because you have no children. Women who have children can always see themselves in the future.

ANOWA Mm . . . children. It would be good to have them. But it seems I'm not woman enough. And this is another reason why you ought to marry another woman. So she can bear your children. (*Pause.*) Mm, I am only a wayfarer, with no belongings either here or there.

KOFI AKO What? What are you saying? Wayfarer, you? But are you talking about . . . about slaves . . . and you . . . ? But, a wayfarer belongs to other people!

ANOWA Oh no, not always. One can belong to oneself without belonging to a place. What is the difference between any of your men and me? Except that they are men and I'm a woman? None of us belongs.

KOFI AKO You are a strange woman, Anowa. Too strange. You never even show much interest in what the oracles say. But you are not at fault; they all say the same thing. Anowa, what makes you so restless? What occupies you?

ANOWA Nothing. Nothing at all.

KOFI AKO (*walking away from her*) Anowa, is it true that you should have been a priestess?

ANOWA O yes? But how would I know. And where did you hear that from? (*Looks genuinely lost.*)

KOFI AKO Don't think about that one then. It doesn't matter. Still, there is too much restlessness in you which is frightening. I think maybe you are too lonely with only us men around. (*Pause.*) I have decided to procure one or two women, not many. Just one or two, so that you will have companionship of your kind.

ANOWA (*almost hysterical*) No, no, no! I don't want them. I don't need them.

KOFI AKO But why not?

ANOWA No! I just do not need them. (*Long pause.*) People can be very unkind. A wayfarer is a traveller. Therefore, to call someone a wayfarer is a painless way of saying he does not belong. That he has no home, no family, no village, no stool of his own; has no feast days, no holidays, no state, no territory.

KOFI AKO (*jumping up, furious*) Shut up, woman, shut up!

ANOWA Why, what have I done wrong?

KOFI AKO Do you ask me? Yes, what is wrong with you? If you want to go and get possessed by a god, I beg you, go. So that at least I shall know that a supernatural being speaks with your lips . . . (*ANOWA's eyes widen with surprise.*) I say Anowa, why must you always bring in this . . .

ANOWA What?

KOFI AKO About slaves and all such unpleasant affairs?

ANOWA They are part of our lives now.

KOFI AKO (*shaking his head*) But is it necessary to eat your insides out because of them? (*Then with extreme intensity*) Why are you like this? What evil lies in having bonded men? Perhaps, yes (*getting expansive*) in other lands. Among other less kindly people. A meaner race of men. Men who by other men are worse treated than dogs. But here, have you looked around? Yes. The wayfarer here belongs where he is. Consorts freely with free-born nephews and nieces. Eats out of the same vessel, and drinks so as well. And those who have the brains are more listened to than are babbling nobility. They fight in armies. Where the valiant and well-proven can become a captain just as quickly as anyone. How many wayfarers do we know who have become patriarchs of houses where they used only to serve?

ANOWA But in all this, they are of account only when there are no free-born people around. And if they fare well among us, it is not so among all peoples. And even here, who knows what strange happenings go on behind doors?

KOFI AKO (*Irritated beyond words, he seizes and shakes her.*) Anowa, Anowa, where else have you been but here? Why can't you live by what you know, what you see? What do you gain by dreaming up miseries that do not touch you? Just so you can have nightmares?

ANOWA (*Still cool, she stares at him.*) It seems this is how they created me.

KOFI AKO (*letting go of her*) Hmm. How sad . . . And yet if I gave you two good blows on your cheeks which flashed lightning across your face, all this foolishness would go out of your head. (*To himself*) And what is wrong with me? Any man married to her would have by now beaten her to a pulp, a dough. But I can never lay hands on her . . . I cannot even think of marrying another woman. O it is difficult to think through anything. All these strange words! (*ANOWA continues to stare at him.*) Anowa, what is the difference? How is it you can't feel like everybody else does? What is the meaning of this strangeness? Who were you in the spirit world? (*Laughing mirthlessly*) I used to like you very much. I wish I could rid you of what ails you, so I could give you peace. And give myself some. (*ANOWA still only stares at him.*) It is an illness, Anowa. An illness that turns to bile all the good things of here-under-the-sun. Shamelessly, you rake up the dirt of life. You bare our wounds. You are too fond of looking for the common pain and the general wrong. (*ANOWA manages to look sad. She sighs audibly, then hangs down her head as if ashamed. He looks down at her.*) Anowa, you are among women my one and only treasure. Beside you, all others look pale and shadowless. I have neither the desire nor wish to marry any other, though we all know I can afford dozens more. But please, bring your mind home. Have joy in our overflowing wealth. Enhance this beauty nature gave you with the best craftsmanship in cloth and stone. Be happy with that which countless women would give their lives to enjoy for a day. Be happy in being my wife and maybe we shall have our own children. Be my glorious wife, Anowa, and the contented mother of my children.

(*ANOWA's answer is a hard grating laugh that goes on and on even after the lights have gone out on them. The lights reappear after a little while. Enter THE-MOUTH-THAT-EATS-SALT-AND-PEPPER. First, OLD MAN. He walks up to the centre of the lower stage, and for a short while, stands still with his head down. Then he raises his head and speaks.*)

OLD MAN My fellow townsmen. Have you heard what Kofi and Anowa are doing now?

They say he is buying men and women as though they were only worth each a handful of the sands on the shore. Ei, Anowa and Kofi. Were those not the same who left Yebe like a pair of unwanted strangers? But peace creates forgetfulness and money-making is like a god possessing a priest. He never will leave you, until he has occupied you, wholly changed the order of your being, and seared you through and up and down. Then only would he eventually leave you, but nothing of you except an exhausted wreck, lying prone and wondering who you are. (*Enter OLD WOMAN.*) Besides, there must be something unwholesome about making slaves of other men, something that is against the natural state of man and the purity of his worship of the gods. Those who have observed have remarked that every house is ruined where they take in slaves.

As you sit,
They grow
And before you know
Where you are,
They are there,
And you are not.
One or two homes in Abura already show
this;
They are spilling over
With gold and silver
And no one knows the uttermost hedges
of their lands.
But where are the people
Who are going to sit on these things?
Yes,
It is frightening.
But all at once,
Girl-babies die
And the breasts of women in new
motherhood
Run dry.

(*OLD WOMAN tries to get in a word, thumping her stick and coughing.*)

OLD WOMAN

She is a witch,
She is a devil,
She is everything that is evil.

OLD MAN (*raising his head and showing interest*) Who?

OLD WOMAN Who else but that child of Abena Badua?

OLD MAN And what has she done now?

OLD WOMAN Have you not heard? (*She is*

even more excited than ever. And for the rest of the scene makes an exhibition of herself, jumping, raising her stick in the air, coughing etc.) She thinks the world has not seen the likes of her before. (*Now with feigned concern*) I wonder what a woman eats to produce a child like Anowa. I am sure that such children are not begotten by normal natural processes.

OLD MAN (*with amused contempt*) But what?

OLD WOMAN Ah! They issue from cancerous growths, tumours that grow from evil dreams. Yes, and from hard and bony material that the tender organs of ordinary human women are too weak to digest.

OLD MAN Are you not sure that you are seeing too much in too little?

OLD WOMAN What are you saying? Am I wrong? What woman is she who thinks she knows better than her husband in all things?

OLD MAN A good husband would himself want advice from his wife, as the head of a family, a chief, a king, any nobleman has need of an adviser.

OLD WOMAN But Anowa is too much. She is now against the very man who she selected from so many. She would rather he was poor than prospering. They say she raves hourly against our revered ancestors and sanctions their deeds in high tones. She thinks our forefathers should have waited for her to be born so she could have upbraided them for their misdeeds and shown them what actions of men are virtuous.

OLD MAN I do not know if I can believe all this you say of the pitiful child. But certainly, it is not too much to think that the heavens might show something to children of a latter day which was hidden from them of old?

(OLD WOMAN is so flabbergasted at this she opens her mouth wide and turns in the OLD MAN's direction while he walks slowly away.)

OLD WOMAN (*closing her mouth in a heavy sigh*)

But, people of Yebe, rejoice,
For Kofi Ako has prospered
And he is your son.
Women of Nsona house,
They say Kofi Ako can stand
On his two feet to dress up fifty brides
And without moving a step,

Dress up fifty more.

And where and when did this last happen
But in fables and the days of dim
antiquity?

They say Kofi sits fat like a bullfrog in a
swamp,

While *that* Anowa daily grows thin,
Her eyes popping out of her head like
those of

A hungry toad in a parched grassland.

But she is the one

Who must not be allowed to step on any
threshold here!

When was this infant born,

That would teach us all what to do?

Who is she to bring us new rules to live
by?

It is good she said she was not coming
back to Yebe,

But if she so much as crosses the stream
That lies at the mouth of the road,

We shall show her that

Little babies only cry for food

When hungry,

But do not instruct their elders how to
tend a farm:

Besides

As the sourest yam

Is better than the sweetest guava,

The dumbest man is

Always better than a woman.

Or *he* thinks he is!

And so Kofi shall teach Anowa

He is a man!

(OLD WOMAN exits coughing and her throat wheezing.)

Phase Three: The big house at Oguaa

The upper stage is a big central hall. The furniture here is either consciously foreign or else opulent. There are beautiful skins lying on the richly carpeted floor. Other articles include a giant sideboard on which are standing huge decanters, with or without spirits, and big decorative plates. In the central wall is a fireplace and above it, a picture of Queen Victoria unamused. To the left of the Queen is a picture of KOFI AKO himself, and to the right, a large painting of the crow, the totem bird of the Nsona clan. In the centre of the room is a gilded chair with rich-looking cushions, and in front of it, a leopard skin. The lower stage represents here a path leading from the house into the town and outside generally.

The lights blaze on both lower and upper stages to a tumult which at first is distant but draws nearer and nearer to lower right. First a group of women, any number from four, enter from the right dancing to no distinct form and with great abandon. Meanwhile they sing, or rather recite.

He is coming!
Nana is coming
He is coming,
The master of the earth is coming.
Give way,
O - o - give way!
For the Master of all you see around is coming
Turn your face, the jealous!
Close your eyes, the envious!
For he is coming,
Nana is coming!

(They pass on and away lower left, and after them, a lone man comes blowing KOFI AKO's horn to the rhythm of just two lines.)

Turn your face, the jealous!
Close your eyes, the envious!

(The HORNBLOWER stops on the stage while multitudes enter from the same direction and move away lower left. They are men and women carrying raw materials, skins, copra, crude rubber and kegs of palm oil. Controlling the exportation of the last product has made KOFI AKO the richest man, probably, of the whole Guinea Coast. Other men and women are carrying cheap silks and madras cloth, muskets, hurricane lamps, knives and enamel ware.

KOFI AKO enters, borne by four brawny men in some kind of a carrier chair, basket or sedan. He is resplendent in brilliant kente or velvet cloth and he is overflowing with gold jewelry, from the crown on his head to the rings on his toes. He is surrounded by more hailing women and an orchestra of horns and drums. As he passes, he makes the gestures of lordship over the area. The procession goes off, lower left; the HORNBLOWER is the last man to leave.

When the tumult has died down, ANOWA enters from upper left and sits on one side of the chairs in the central hall. She looks aged and forlorn in her old clothes. She is still bare-footed. She sits quietly for a while, as though waiting for somebody, then she stands up and begins to pace around, speaking to herself.)

ANOWA *(As she speaks, she makes childish gestures, especially with her hands, to express all the ideas behind each sentence.)* I remember once. I think I was very young then. Quite young certainly. Perhaps I was eight, or ten. Perhaps I was twelve. My grandmother told me of her travels. She told of the great places she had been to and the wonderful things she had seen. Of the sea that is bigger than any river and boils without being hot. Of huge houses rising to touch the skies, houses whose foundations are wider than the biggest roads I had ever seen. They contained more rooms than were in all the homes I knew put together. Of these houses, I asked:

Tell me Nana, who built the houses?

She said:

Why do you want to know?

The pale men.

Who are the pale men?

I asked.

You ask too many questions.

They are the white men.

Who are the white men?

I asked.

A child like you should not ask questions.

They come from far away.

Far away from beyond the horizon.

Nana, what do they look like?

I asked.

Shut up child.

Not like you or me,

She said.

But what do they look like, Nana?

I asked.

Shut up child or your mouth will twist up one day with questions.

Not like you or me?

Yes like you or me,

But different.

What do they look like, Nana?

What devil has entered into you, child?

As if you or I

Were peeled of our skins,

Like a lobster that is boiled or roasted,

Like . . . like . . . but it is not good

That a child should ask questions.

Nana, why did they build the big houses?

I asked.

I must escape from you, child.

They say . . . they say they built the big houses to keep the slaves.

What is a slave, Nana?

Shut up! It is not good that a child should ask big questions.

A slave is one who is bought and sold.
Where did the white men get the slaves?
I asked.

You frighten me, child.

You must be a witch, child.

They got them from the land.

Did the men of the land sell other men
of the land, and women and children
to pale men from beyond the horizon
who looked like you or me peeled, like
lobsters boiled or roasted?

I do not know, child.

You are frightening me, child.

I was not there!

It is too long ago!

No one talks of these things anymore!

All good men and women try to forget;

They have forgotten!

What happened to those who were taken
away?

Do people hear from them?

How are they?

Shut up child.

It is too late child.

Sleep well, child.

All good men and women try to forget;

They have forgotten! *(Pause.)*

That night, I woke up screaming hot; my
body burning and sweating from a horrible
dream. I dreamt that I was a big, big
woman. And from my insides were huge
holes out of which poured men, women
and children. And the sea was boiling hot
and steaming. And as it boiled, it threw
out many, many giant lobsters, boiled
lobsters, each of whom as it fell turned
into a man or woman, but keeping its
lobster head and claws. And they rushed
to where I sat and seized the men and
women as they poured out of me, and they
tore them apart, and dashed them to the
ground and stamped upon them. And
from their huge courtyards, the women
ground my men and women and children
on mountains of stone. But there was
never a cry or a murmur; only a bursting,
as of a ripe tomato or a swollen pod.
And everything went on and on and on.
(Pause.)

I was very ill and did not recover for
weeks. When I told my dream, the women
of the house were very frightened. They
cried and cried and told me not to mention
the dream again. For some time, there was
talk of apprenticing me to a priestess. I
don't know what came of it. But since then,

any time there is mention of a slave, I see a
woman who is me and a bursting of a ripe
tomato or a swollen pod.

*(Now she stares straight and sharply at the
audience for a long time, and then slowly
leaves the stage by upper right. Then
suddenly, the voices of an unseen wearied
multitude begin to sing 'Swing Low, Sweet
Chariot'. The song goes on for a while and
stops. Long pause while lights remain on.
Then the lights go off on the lower stage only.
GIRL enters from the upper right. She
resembles ANOWA of a long time ago. She is
dressed in a one-piece cloth wrapped around
her. She too, looks like a wild one, and she is
carrying a broom and a duster with which
she immediately begins to dust and sweep.
Then suddenly she stops and just stands
dreamily. Meanwhile, BOY enters from upper
right and quietly steals behind her and cries
'Hei!' She is startled.)*

GIRL *(turning round to face BOY)* How you
frightened me.

BOY Have you just started working in here?
And why were you standing there like
that?

GIRL That is none of your business.

BOY I don't know what is happening in this
house. I am sure there are more people
here than in Oguaa town. Yet nothing gets
done.

GIRL But you!

BOY I what? Is this the hour you were
instructed to come and clean the place up?

GIRL Well, that is not my fault.

BOY What is not your fault? Look at
those arms. I wonder what they could
do even if you were not so lazy. Listen,
today is Friday and Father is going to
come in here. And don't stand there
staring at me.

GIRL And anyway, are you the new
overseer? Why don't you leave me alone?

BOY *(playfully pulling her nose)* I won't!

GIRL You! *(She raises her arm to hit him, and
causes one of the decorative plates to fall. It
breaks. BOY is furious.)*

BOY God, what is wrong with you? Look at
what you've done!

GIRL Well, it's broken, isn't it? I wouldn't
fuss so much if I were you.

BOY Doesn't anything bother you?

GIRL Not much. Certainly not this plate.

*(She bends down to pick up the pieces. Then
she stands up again.)* This mistress will not

miss it. After all, she has no time these days for things like plates.

BOY You are mad, that's all. I thought she said we should always call her 'Mother' and the master 'Father'.

GIRL (*giggling*) Some Mother and Father, heh!

BOY I don't think I have said anything for you to laugh at.

GIRL You are being very unfair. You know I like both of them very much. (*Earnestly*) I wish I really was their child . . . born to them. (*She pouts.*) As for her too.

BOY What has happened now?

GIRL Nothing. Now she flits about like a ghost, talking to herself. (*They stop and listen. The BOY moves up to upper left and peeps.*) Is she coming?

BOY (*not turning round*) No. (*Then he moves back towards GIRL.*)

GIRL Listen, they were saying at the fish-kilns that she went and stared at Takoa's baby so hard that the baby is having convulsions . . .

BOY (*shocked*) Ow!

GIRL Takoa is certainly telling everyone that Mistress, I mean Mother, is swallowing the baby because she is a witch.

BOY Hei! (*The GIRL is startled. The BOY moves closer to face her and begins hitting her lips with the fourth finger of his right hand.*) Don't let me catch you repeating any of the things those awful women say about Mother.

GIRL Yes, grandfather.

BOY And you, where did you hear all these things from?

GIRL (*petulantly*) I said at the kilns. (*Throwing her mouth at him*) Or are you deaf?

BOY I am not deaf but people in this house talk too much.

GIRL It is because of this new affair. And the truth is, she herself talks more about it than anyone else. Whenever she thinks she is alone anywhere, she begins 'O my husband, what have I done, what have I done?' (*She imitates someone puzzled and asks the questions with her hands. Then she giggles.*)

BOY Don't laugh. Have you seen how you yourself will end? (*He picks her duster up and begins to dust around.*)

GIRL Ei, don't turn wise on me. (*Noticing him working*) Good. You should dust since you're keeping me from doing my work . . .

BOY Huh! . . . And are you not a woman too?

GIRL (*promptly and loudly*) And if I am? (*She looks up for some time without saying anything.*)

BOY I did not say you can now rest.

GIRL (*quietly and to herself*) If I had more money than I knew what to do with, but not a single child, I should be unhappy. If my man refused to talk to me, I should soon start talking to myself; if he would not come to my room or allow me in his, I should pace around in the night. (*She now turns to look at the boy.*) And after killing myself for him, he said to me one day, go away, and would not tell me why, I should then die of surprise!

BOY People do not die of surprise.

GIRL See if I do not.

BOY (*whispering*) What do you think is going to happen now?

GIRL Do I know? All I know is that if she goes away, I shall run away too.

BOY I shall come with you.

GIRL (*coolly*) Not if you would be scolding me all the time . . .

BOY (*drawing near her and trying to touch her breasts*) No, I shall not.

(*The GIRL hits his hand away. They stand still for a moment. Then they resume working with vigour. The BOY begins to whistle some tune.*)

GIRL And the way she carries on with everyone here . . .

BOY Playing with us as though we were her kinsmen?

GIRL Yes; perhaps that is why the master wants to send her away.

BOY Maybe; and she certainly is more poorly dressed than some of us.

GIRL Yes, that is another thing. Can't she do something about herself?

BOY What, for instance?

GIRL Ho, does she not see her friends, how they go around? All those new and fashionable nkabasroto and bubas? The sleeves blowing out in the wind, the full pointed shoes and the stockings . . .

BOY Of course, that is what you would like . . .

GIRL

Why, if I were her, what would I not do, what would I not have?
As much as my eye will fancy
and the best my heart desires?

(She forgets she should be working and lets fall the broom. Her eyes light up with joyful expectation and she acts out her dream to the amazed fascination of BOY.)

Nkente to sit in for all my work days.
Velvets for visiting. Silks for Sundays.

(ANOWA enters unnoticed and stands at the door. She looks as she did in the last scene, but wizened now and shabby. She is wearing her old cloth and is barefooted. Her hair is cropped close.)

GIRL

O if I were her, and she were me
Jewels on my hair, my finger and my
knee
In my ears the dangles, on my wrists the
bangles
My sandals will be jeweled, my hair will
be dressed;
My perfumes will be milled, my talcums
of the best.
On my soups I will be keen
No fish-heads to be seen
O for her to be me
So that I could be free!

(ANOWA glides out unseen. The BOY and the GIRL stand looking at each other. The GIRL's eyes glisten with unshed tears while the BOY breathes deeply and loudly a couple of times.)

BOY Being a woman, of course, that's all you would think about. Though if I were you and so beautiful, I would not worry.
Perhaps Father will take you for wife.

GIRL Chiaa, aa, that man who is afraid of women?

BOY Listen, it is dangerous talking to you.
How can you say a fearful thing like that?

GIRL But I am not lying . . . they say . . . they say . . .

BOY Shut up. (He hits her on the buttocks, runs down lower right and away with the GIRL pursuing him, her broom raised. From upper left, ANOWA re-enters the hall.)

ANOWA (to the now disappeared GIRL and BOY) You said it right, my child. But the elders gave the ruling before you and even I came: 'The string of orphan beads might look better on the wrist of the leopard but it is the antelope who has lost his mother'.

(She wanders round aimlessly humming to herself. Presently, PANYIN-NA-KAKRA enter. They are about eight years old. They run in from upper right with ostrich feather fans,

stand on either side of the gilded chair and automatically begin fanning the chair. This goes on for some time without ANOWA noticing it. When she does, she laughs out dryly.)

ANOWA Poor children, I feel like picking them up and carrying them on my back.
PANYIN-NA-KAKRA (still fanning) Mother please, we did not hear you.

ANOWA It is all right, my children, I was not speaking to you. (Aside) They are fanning that chair now so that by the time their lord enters, the space around it will be cool. I suppose this is one of the nice things Yaako is teaching them to do. Hmm . . . woe the childless woman, they warn. Let someone go and see their mother, who is she? Where is she sitting while they stand here fanning an empty chair? Let someone go and see how she suffered bearing them. The nine months dizziness, when food tasted like dung and water like urine. Nine months of unwholesome desires and evil dreams. Then the hour of the breaking of the amnion, when the space between her life and her death wore thin like a needy woman's hair thread. O the stench of old blood gone hot . . . Did she go through all that and with her rest at the end postponed so they (pointing at the boys) will come and fan an empty chair? To fan an empty chair? (She gets up and listlessly goes to the picture of Queen Victoria and addresses it.) Hei, sister, I hear you are a queen. Maybe in spite of the strange look of you, you are a human woman, too, eh? How is it with you over there? Do you sometimes feel like I feel, that you should not have been born? Nana . . . won't you answer? If you won't answer (making gesture of riddance) take your headache . . . and I say, you don't have to look at me like that because I have seen your likes before. (To herself) But I shall not cry. I shall not let him see the tears from my eyes. Someone should have taught me how to grow up to be a woman. I hear in other lands a woman is nothing. And they let her know this from the day of her birth. But here, O my spirit mother, they let a girl grow up as she pleases until she is married. And then she is like any woman anywhere: in order for her man to be a man, she must not think, she must not talk. O - o, why didn't someone teach me how to grow up to be a woman? (Then she

remembers the children.) Hei, Kakra, Panyin! Stop fanning that chair.
 PANYIN-NA-KAKRA (*startled*) But please, Mother, Yaako said . . .
 ANOWA I say. Stop fanning that chair Panyin, go and tell Yaako that I have asked you to stop fanning the chair. (*They put their fans on one of the stools and PANYIN goes out. ANOWA puts her arms around KAKRA and moves down with him. When she sits down he sits on a rug by her.*) Kakra.
 KAKRA Mother.
 ANOWA Where do you and Panyin come from?
 KAKRA The house in Tantri, Mother.
 ANOWA No, I mean before that.
 KAKRA Mother, I don't know.
 ANOWA Kakra, am I growing old?
 KAKRA (*He turns to look at her and then looks away bewildered.*) Mother, I don't know.
 ANOWA No, you don't know. Go and play with your friends, child.

(KAKRA rises up and leaves. ANOWA bows down her head. KOFI AKO enters on the arm of BOY. He is bedecked as in the last scene. ANOWA stares contemptuously at the two of them. BOY leads him to the chair and places him in it. Now and any other time in the rest of the scene, when KOFI AKO silently examines his limbs, 'Asem yi se nea mokobo tuo' or any African funeral march or drums should be played.)

BOY Father, shall I go and fetch Nana the priest?
 KOFI AKO (*hurriedly*) Not yet. I shall call you and send you with a message for him.
 BOY Yes, Father. (*He retires.*)
(Awkward silence.)

ANOWA I was told that you wanted to speak to me.
 KOFI AKO All I want to say Anowa, is that I do not like seeing you walking around the house like this.
 ANOWA You don't like seeing me walk around the house like what?
 KOFI AKO Please, stop asking me annoying questions.
 ANOWA Don't shout. After all, it is you who are anxious that the slaves should not hear us. What I don't understand, Kofi, is why you want to have so many things your own way.
 KOFI AKO (*very angrily*) And I don't think there is a single woman in the land who

speaks to her husband the way you do to me. (*Sighs and relaxes.*) Why are you like this, Anowa? Why? (ANOWA *laughs.*) Can't you be like other normal women? Other normal people? (ANOWA *continues laughing, then stops abruptly.*)
 ANOWA I still don't know what you mean by normal. Is it abnormal to want to continue working?

KOFI AKO Yes, if there is no need to.
 ANOWA But my husband, is there a time when there is no need for a human being to work? After all, our elders said that one never stops wearing hats on a head which still stands on its shoulders.

KOFI AKO I do not see the reason why I should go walking through forests, climbing mountains and crossing rivers to buy skins when I have bought slaves to do just that for me.

ANOWA And so we come back to where we have been for a long time now. My husband, we did not have to put the strength of our bodies into others. We should not have bought the slaves . . .

KOFI AKO But we needed them to do the work for us.

(ANOWA begins to pace up and down and from side to side and never stops for too long any time during the rest of the scene.)

ANOWA As though other people are horses! And now look at us. We do nothing from the crowing of the cock to the setting of the sun. I wander around like a ghost and you sit, washed and oiled like a . . . bride on show or a god being celebrated. Is this what we left Yebi for? Ah, my husband, where did our young lives go?

KOFI AKO (*angrily*) Stop it, Anowa, stop it. And what is the meaning of all this strange talk? If you feel old, that is your own affair. I feel perfectly young.

ANOWA Do you?

KOFI AKO (*fiercely*) Yes, I do. And you stop creeping around the house the way you do. Like some beggar. Making yourself a laughing stock. Can't you do anything to yourself? After all, you are my wife.

ANOWA Am I your wife? What is there to prove it?

KOFI AKO I don't understand you.

ANOWA Don't you? I am asking you what I do or what there is about me that shows I am your wife. I do not think putting on fine clothes is enough.

KOFI AKO Are you referring to the fact that we have not had children?

ANOWA An adopted child is always an adopted child and a slave child, a slave . . . Perhaps I am the barren one. But you deserve a son; so Kofi, I shall get you a wife. One of these plump mulatto women of Oguaa . . .

KOFI AKO Anowa, Stop that!

ANOWA Besides, such women are more civilised than I, who only come from Yebe. They, like you, have learned the ways of the white people. And a woman like that may be attractive enough to be allowed into your bed . . .

KOFI AKO Anowa stop that! Stop it, stop it!

ANOWA (*laughing*) Stop what? Stop what?

(KOFI AKO *sighs again and relaxes. He begins to examine his limbs as the funeral music or drums rise and fall, and ANOWA plays at digging her toes into the skins or re-arranging the plates on the sideboard.*)

And what did the priest say the last time he was here?

KOFI AKO What do you mean? What has that to do with you?

ANOWA Too much. I know all this has something to do with what he has been telling you.

KOFI AKO You are speaking as if your head is not there.

ANOWA (*screaming*) What did his divination say about me?

KOFI AKO I don't know. And anyway, listen. I thought you were just as good at this sort of thing as he is. You should know, should you not? Why don't you go and wash your mouth so you can be a priestess at last. I can't stand any more of your strange ways.

ANOWA (*voice betraying nervousness*) What are you talking about?

KOFI AKO (*laughing bitterly*) What am I talking about! (*Another awkward pause.*)

ANOWA Yes, what are you talking about?

KOFI AKO (*with an almost feigned fatigue*) Please, just leave me alone. O God, Anowa did you have to destroy me too? What does someone like you want from life? Anowa, did you . . . I mean did you make me just to destroy me?

ANOWA Kofi, what are you saying?

KOFI AKO Anowa, Anowa, O, Anowa.

ANOWA So what did the priest say the last time he was here?

KOFI AKO That has nothing to do with you.

ANOWA I think it has. Too much, I feel deep

inside me that all this business about me leaving you has something to do with what he told you last week.

KOFI AKO What mad talk!

ANOWA (*hysterically*) What did the priest's divination say about me?

KOFI AKO Please stop walking up and down. It irritates me.

ANOWA Why are you sending me away from you?

KOFI AKO Just leave me alone.

ANOWA What have I done wrong?

KOFI AKO Nothing.

ANOWA Is it because I did not give you children? (*Silence. She moves up to him and changes her attitude to one of supplication.*) Do you want to take a new wife who would not like to see me around?

KOFI AKO Anowa, why do you want to go on asking foolish questions to which you know I cannot give you answers?

ANOWA But they are not foolish questions.

KOFI AKO (*unconcerned*) In fact, I thought you would be glad to get away. I don't know what you want, and even if I knew, I am not sure it would have been in my power to give it. And you can't give me the only thing I want from you, a child. Let us part, Anowa.

ANOWA But going away is one thing. Being sent away is another.

KOFI AKO And by that you mean, as always, that you have a right to do what you like and as always I am to sit by and watch?

ANOWA (*She throws up her hands in despair.*) O the god of our fathers! Is there nothing I can say which cannot be twisted around my own neck to choke me?

(*Music or drums as KOFI AKO examines his limbs. ANOWA paces up and down. Then she speaks, almost to herself.*)

ANOWA Did the priest say . . . what is there about me which he thinks will not bring you blessings now? I must have done something wrong. I must have done something. I'm not a child. Kofi, I know they say a man whose wife is constantly sleeping with other men does not prosper. Did the priest say I am doing something like that? Or anything as evil as that?

KOFI AKO (*a bitter smile on his lips*) Just go away and leave me alone, woman.

ANOWA (*sadly*) I cannot, my husband. Because I have nowhere to go. I swore I would not go back to Yebe. And I can still

live here, can I not? I would not disturb you. I can stay in my part of the house. Just don't send me away, we have not seen each other's beds for far too long for it to matter if we don't any more . . . *(She stares at him and utters her next words as though she has just made a discovery.)* A-h-h or is it a death you are dying? We are dying.

Listen, my husband, did the priest say you are dying, I am dying, we are dying?

KOFI AKO You are mad, I am very alive.

ANOWA *(She gets up and raises her voice.)*

Boy!

KOFI AKO Why are you calling him?

ANOWA It has nothing to do with you.

BOY *(running in)* Mother, I am here.

ANOWA Boy, I am going to ask you a question. *(She resumes pacing up and down.)*

Boy, you know your master says I must go away from here and never come back.

(BOY hangs his head down with embarrassment.) My feet are on the road already and if it were not that he has not yet told me what he has found wrong with me or what I have done wrong, I would already be gone. Boy, do you know why?

BOY No, Mother.

ANOWA Boy, have you heard of a man who seeks to divorce his wife and will not say why?

BOY Mother, I have never known the customs of this land well.

ANOWA What about where you came from? Did you hear of such a case before you were taken away?

BOY I do not remember that I did.

ANOWA Boy, I thank you. Go call for me as many of the older men and women as are around . . . Bring everybody on whom your eyes fall.

BOY Yes, Mother. *(He leaves.)*

KOFI AKO *(furiously)* Anowa, what are you doing? Why must they know about this? You have never behaved like a child before - why are you behaving like one now?

ANOWA I do not know why we must not bring them in. I need their help and they also came from places where men live, eat and die. Perhaps one is among them who can help me. And I am behaving like a child now because I have gained nothing from behaving like a grown-up all my life.

KOFI AKO *(surprised)* You are mad Anowa.

ANOWA Not yet!

BOY *(from doorway)* Are they to come?

ANOWA Let them come.

(BOY re-enters followed by as many men and women as possible. The last pair is the twins. They all shuffle around looking wide-eyed.)

ALL Mother, we are here.

ANOWA I see you. Listen. Has any of you heard of a woman whose husband wanted to divorce her but would not tell her why? *(They look bewildered and answer 'No' as if it were a line in a musical round, sung softly: No, no, no, no, no, no . . . They all whisper aloud to each other.)* Then please you may go . . . *(They all turn round at once.)* No wait . . . Eh - eh . . . I would like to send some of you. I am sending you to the oldest and wisest people on this land; go ask them if they have ever heard of a man who sought to divorce his wife and would not tell her why. *(Points at random to different people.)* You go to the bearded woman of Kwaakrom and you to the old priests of Nanaam Mpow. You over there to Bekoe, he whom dwarfs abducted and taught the mysteries of the woods. Go quickly and come back today and walk as you have never walked before. Come quickly, for already I hear too many noises in my head and you must come back before my mind flies and gets lost. *(The crowd disperses through all available exits. Exhausted but still excited, ANOWA paces around KOFI AKO who is now very silent.)* I have known this was coming for weeks and I have feared. An old man said, 'Fear "it-is-coming" but not "It-has-come"'. But for me 'It-has-come' has brought me no peace. Perhaps . . . Boy!

BOY *(running)* Mother, I am here.

ANOWA I hear Nana Abakframpahene Kokroko is here. He and the other chiefs are meeting with the Governor. Go. Whisper in his ears that he is to come to me. Tell him it is urgent and he is to pardon us for not going to him ourselves. All shall be explained in time. He is to come but without his retinue.

KOFI AKO *(raising himself up)* Anowa, what are you doing all this for?

ANOWA The times are past when our individual actions had to be explained to each other.

(BOY looks away with embarrassment.)

KOFI AKO Perhaps you are going out of your senses.

ANOWA That should not mean anything to you.

KOFI AKO That is not what concerns me,
but you shall not let this out before Nana.
(*He stamps his feet.*)

ANOWA Just sit there and look at me.

KOFI AKO (*shouts*) You may go away, Boy.
Forget what your Mother told you.

BOY Yes, Father. (*He retires.*)

ANOWA Who are you to say what you shall
allow and what you shall not allow me?

KOFI AKO (*loud with anger*) Nana is my
friend and not yours.

ANOWA That is why I am asking him to
come.

KOFI AKO Anowa, you shall not disgrace me
before him.

ANOWA Darkness has overtaken us already,
and does it matter if we hit each against
the other? Are you not disgracing me
before the whole world?

KOFI AKO Your strange speeches will not
persuade me . . .

ANOWA I am not trying to. It is a long time
since my most ordinary words ceased to
have any meaning for me.

KOFI AKO I say once more that Nana is the
only man in this world I respect and
honour.

ANOWA My good husband, in the old days
how well I knew you. That is why I want
to consult him too.

KOFI AKO I should have known that you
were always that clever.

ANOWA And certain things have shown that
cleverness is not a bad thing.

KOFI AKO Everyone said you were a witch.
I should have believed them.

ANOWA (*derisively*) Why, have I choked you
with the bone of an infant?

KOFI AKO Stop all this show and just leave
me alone, I say.

ANOWA Then I shall ask advice of whom
I please.

KOFI AKO Anowa, if you do not leave me
quietly, but go consulting anybody about
this affair, I shall brand you a witch.

ANOWA (*shocked*) No!

KOFI AKO (*brought suddenly to life by her
exclamation*) And if I do, you know there is
more than one person in the world who
would believe me.

ANOWA (*screams*) No, no, no!

KOFI AKO And there will be those who
would be prepared to furnish proof.

ANOWA Kofi, I am not hearing you right.

KOFI AKO And then you know what could
happen. But, that should not make much

difference to you. Since you do not care to
live or behave like everybody else . . .

ANOWA But what have I done?

KOFI AKO I just want you to leave me, that's
all.

ANOWA O the Gods of my fathers, what is
it? What is it?

KOFI AKO I shall have the little house built
for you, as I promised, but in Yebi . . .

ANOWA But I cannot go and live there.

KOFI AKO I will give you half of the trade
and half of the slaves, if you want them.

ANOWA I don't want anything from you.

KOFI AKO Take away with you all the
jewelry.

ANOWA I say I want nothing . . .

KOFI AKO And you must leave immediately.
I myself shall come to Yebi, or send people
you can respect to come and explain
everything to your family . . .

ANOWA No, no, no!

KOFI AKO . . . I shall ask a few men and
women to go with you now, and carry your
personal belongings.

ANOWA But . . .

KOFI AKO Boy!

ANOWA Stop!

KOFI AKO What? (*Unknown to the two, not
only BOY but several of the slaves, men and
women, appear.*)

ANOWA You cannot send me away like this.
Not to Yebi, or anywhere. Not before you
have told me why. I swore to Mother I was
not returning. Not ever. (*Not shedding a
tear but her eyes shining dangerously*) No,
I am not in rags. But . . . but I do not have
children from this marriage. Ah! Yes, Kofi,
(*she moves to him and whispers hoarsely and
audibly*) we do not have children, Kofi, we
have not got children! And for years now,
I have not seen your bed. And Kofi, (*getting
hysterical*) now that I think back on it, you
have never been interested in any other
woman . . .

KOFI AKO What are you saying, Anowa?

ANOWA Kofi, are you dead? (*Pause.*) Kofi, is
your manhood gone? I mean, you are like a
woman. (*Pause.*) Kofi, there is not hope any
more, is there? (*Pause.*) Kofi . . . tell me, is
that why I must leave you? That you have
exhausted your masculinity acquiring
slaves and wealth? (*Silence.*) Why didn't
you want me to know? You could have told
me. Because we were friends. Like brother
and sister. You just did not want me to
know? And the priest said it was my fault.

That I ate your manhood up? Why did he say I did it? Out of envy? Did he not tell you that perhaps you had consumed it up yourself acquiring wealth and slaves?

(KOFI AKO looks around and sees the peeping eyes. He is horrified. He gestures to ANOWA who doesn't know what is happening and goes on talking. He makes an attempt to go away and then sits down again. The slaves disappear.)

ANOWA Now I know. So that is it. My husband is a woman now. (She giggles.) He is a corpse. He is dead wood. But less than dead wood because at least that sometimes grows mushrooms . . . Why didn't you want me to know? (Long pause while they look at each other strangely. Then he gets up to leave.) Where are you going? Kofi, don't leave. Let us start from the beginning. (Long pause.) No, I shall leave you in peace. (Pause.) I am leaving, Kofi. I am leaving. I shall leave you in peace.

(He exits upper left. She watches his receding back until he disappears. She then shifts her gaze to the gilded chair. She stares at that for some time, after which her eyes just wander in general round the room. Then at some point she begins to address the furniture.)

ANOWA

Ah, very soon the messengers will be coming back,
Rugs, pictures, you, chair and you, Queen,
Should they ask of me from you, tell them
I am gone,
Tell them it matters not what the wise
ones say,
For now, I am wiser than they.

(She fixes her eyes on the gilded chair again. Suddenly she jumps a step or two and sits in it and begins to dangle her legs like a child, with a delighted grin on her face. She breaks into a giggle. There is a sudden gun-shot off stage, followed by a stillness. As pandemonium breaks out off stage with women and men shrieking, ANOWA begins to giggle again. The light dies slowly on her.

Lights come on both parts of the stage. Upper is still the great hall. In the centre is the gilded chair unoccupied. In the background can be heard funeral drums and wailing. A few women, led by BADUA, who is weeping, troop in from upper right and sit down, BADUA in the right hand corner nearest the

lower stage. The women sit around the gilded chair as though it is the funeral bed. A little later, OSAM enters from upper left to sit in the left-hand corner facing BADUA. All are in deep red mourning. The drum and wailing stops, but only to give way to KOFI AKO's HORNBLOWER who enters immediately after OSAM, stands directly behind the chair, blows a sequence of the exhortation and stops. The lights go dim on the upper stage.

THE-MOUTH-THAT-EATS-SALT-AND-PEPPER enters. OLD WOMAN first and almost shrieking.)

OLD WOMAN Puei, puei, puei! This is the type of happening out of which we get stories and legends. Yebi, I wish you dué, dué, dué. May all the powers that be condole with you. Kofi Ako shoots himself and Anowa drowns herself! This is too much. Other villages produce great men, men of wealth, men of name. Why should this befall us? What tabooed food have we eaten? What unholy ground have we trodden? (OLD MAN enters, stands in the centre of the stage with his head down.) O Kofi Ako! Some say he lost his manhood because he was not born with much to begin with; that he had been a sickly infant and there always was only a hollow in him where a man's strength should be. Others say he had consumed it acquiring wealth, or exchanged it for prosperity. But I say that all should be laid at Anowa's doorstep. What man prospers, married to a woman like Anowa? Eh, would even Amanfi the giant have retained his strength faced with that witch? They say she always worked as though she could eat a thousand cows. Let the gods forgive me for speaking ill of the dead, but Anowa ate Kofi Ako up!

OLD MAN (looking at her keenly, he chuckles) There is surely one thing we know how to do very well. And that is assigning blame when things go wrong.

OLD WOMAN What do you mean by that! I did not shoot Kofi Ako, did I?

OLD MAN I never said you did.

OLD WOMAN Was it not that Anowa who made him shoot himself?

OLD MAN (quietly and not looking at OLD WOMAN) Perhaps, perhaps, perhaps. And yet no one goes mad in emptiness, unless he has the disease already in his head from the womb. No. It is men who make men mad. Who knows if Anowa would have

been a better woman, a better person if we had not been what we are? (OLD WOMAN glares at him, spits and wobbles out coughing harder than ever before.) They used to say here that Anowa behaved as though she were a heroine in a story. Some of us wish she had been happier and that her life had not had so much of the familiar human scent in it. She is true to herself. She refused to come back here to Yebe, to our gossiping and our judgments. Osam and Badua have gone with the others to bring the two bodies home to Yebe. Ow, if there is life after death, Anowa's spirit will certainly have something to say about that!

(He begins to walk away, while all the lights begin to die. In the approaching darkness, we hear the single Atentenben wailing in loneliness.)¹

Note

- 1 It is quite possible to end the play with the final exit of ANOWA. Or one could follow the script and permit THE-MOUTH-THAT-EATS-SALT-AND-PEPPER to appear for the last scene. The choice is open.