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General Theme:

DESTINY IN THREES AND FIVES

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by
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This Newsletter is written for friends, relatives and colleagues. My home address is as follows:

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Appendix : AFRICAN EXILES AND THE BRAIN DRAIN

According to a friend of mine, I have three things in common with Minister Louis Farrakhan - a shared race (Blackness), a shared religion (Islam) and a shared belief in numerology (faith in the sacred symbolism of numbers)! I have heard Louis Farrakhan of the Nation of Islam discourse extensively on the hidden meaning of such phenomena as the Washington monument in the capital of the United States.

My belief in numbers and numerology is less exalted and more modest. Much of my life has consisted of triads and pentads, in threes and fives. It began with my being the fifth - born of my mother's children, and my becoming a product of three civilizations (Africanity, Islam and Western culture). This is what I later called "Africa's triple heritage."

FROM THE CRADLE TO THE CARIBBEAN

How did this interplay between triads and pentads play out in the course of 1998 for me? I have five sons in all - three were born in Africa, and are now adults in the United States, and two are small children living with us. Never before had all my five sons, and their three parents (two mothers and one father) been brought together for the same occasion. It happened in 1998. The occasion was the wedding of my second son, Al'Amin to Jill Perry. We all assembled at the home of my third son, Kim, for the grand occasion. The mother of my children born in Africa, Molly (Muna), and the mother of my children born in the United States, Pauline (Maryam) met for the first time. More about the wedding later.

Jamal, Al'Amin and Kim are the children who were born in Uganda in the 1960s. Farid and Harith are the children born in Binghamton, New York, in the 1990s. Although the children born in Africa have now become Americans, it is conceivable that the children who were born in America will one day become more African. The age of globalization has its paradoxes.

Another area of interplay between triads and pentads in 1998 concerned my professorships. I was privileged to have professorial affiliations to five different universities scattered in three different continents. Most of you are already aware of my older appointments with Binghamton University, Cornell University, the School of Islamic and Social Sciences in Virginia, and the University of Jos in Nigeria. What was really new in 1998 was my appointment to the Walter Rodney Chair of History and Governance at the University of Guyana in Georgetown, Guyana. This appointment took me to my third professorial continent!

Guyana is the only English-speaking country in South America. Guyana is also the only country in the Western hemisphere with a woman President. She is Mrs. Janet Jagan. In my capacity as Walter Rodney Professor she received me twice in her offices, and graced one of the receptions in my honour. The Walter Rodney Chair was created by her husband, the late Dr. Cheddi Jagan, when he was President of Guyana.

My main hosts in Guyana were the Department of History at the University under the Chair Cecilia McAlmont and the Minister of Education of Guyana, Dr. Dale Bisnauth.

Leaders of all political parties of Guyana attended my inaugural lecture as Walter Rodney Professor, but the main reception in my honour was boycotted by most opposition parties aparently because President Jagan was going to be there!! I tried my best not to be embroiled in Guyanese politics, but occasionally those politics were impossible to avoid.

In my inaugural lecture I described Guyanese society as a "dual society" rather than a "plural society". The duality in Guyana was of course between Indo-Guyanese and Afro-Guyanese. My concept of "the dual society" became a major topic of discussion on the radio, in newspapers and on television. My Rodney Inaugural Lecture was on the following topic:

"GLOBAL AFRICA AND COMPARATIVE LEADERSHIP:
WALTER RODNEY, JULIUS K. NYERERE AND MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR"

I subsequently gave a copy of the lecture to Mwalimu Julius Nyerere when we met in the United States. Nyerere read it overnight. The next morning he said he was going to put me right on one or two points when he had time to drop me a line upon his return to Dar es Salaam! I am still waiting!!

Independently of me, students at Binghamton University thought up the idea of holding a Walter Rodney conference to mark the 200th anniversary of the Haitian revolution. When the students told me about it, I and the Institute of Global Cultural Studies decided to give the conference full support with resources and any advice they needed. The students did us proud. The conference was truly a spectacular success, with many participants from Guyana, the West Indies, Africa, Europe and of course North America. It was the most comprehensive salute to Walter Rodney since his death in 1980.

In 1998 the Institute of Global Cultural Studies also helped the Department of Africana Studies at Binghamton University in hosting the annual meeting of the New York African Studies Association (NYASA) with its theme of Africa in the face of globalization. Immanuel Wallerstein and myself were happily drafted as among the keynote speakers from Binghamton. Darryl Thomas and Parviz Morewedge of Binghamton and Locksley Edmondson of Cornell were among the key organizers. Do those names add up to <u>five</u>? This choice may be more arbitrary in the unfolding saga of triads and pentads.

What is not arbitrary is that the Institute of Global Cultural Studies (of which I am Director) did indeed sponsor <u>three</u> conferences with African themes in 1998. I have mentioned two - the Walter Rodney and the NYASA conferences. The Third one was even earlier. It was our annual mini-conference for Black History Month in February. As a result of bitter experience

with the weather in February, we have scaled down our February conferences in size. We have stopped inviting people from afar out of fear of their flights being cancelled because of snow or ice. Once frost-bitten, twice shy! But occasionally we do risk inviting an old friend like Ebere Onwudiwe from Central State University in Ohio - just in case!

One more point about Guyana. Did you know that all Guyanese are now symbolically my in-laws? My son Al'Amin is now married to a Guyanese - American, the daughter of Mr. I. Barrington Perry of Afro-Guyanese descent. My nephew Mohamed Yusuf Tamim - my sister's son - is married to Khyrul, a Muslim of Indo-Guyanese descent. And I have been Walter Rodney Professor, honoured to have served all Guyanese in 1998.

BRITAIN AND THE UNITED "PENTA-DOM"

I have lived in five countries in all. Kenya is of course where I was born and where I grew up. Great Britain is where I received most of my university education. Uganda is where my professional academic career as professor was launched and focussed. And the United States is where I have professionally matured. The fifth country is Nigeria to which I will return later in this Newsletter. I touched base in all those five countries in 1998.

I have already touched on some of my life in the United States in 1998, ranging from my son's wedding to my role of Director of the Institute of Global Cultural Studies. I will return to some of those themes later.

What is the triad of my relationship with the United Kingdom? The triad has taken a surprising form. One element is the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) which is primarily interested in me as an Africanist. Secondly, there is Oxford University which in recent times has been increasingly interested in me as an Islamicist. Thirdly, there is the wider British academic community which seems to be interested in me as an international comparativist.

In the course of 1998 the BBC continued to seek my views on African events for both its English language and its Swahili services. My main 1998 address to an Oxford audience, on the other hand, was on "ISLAM AND THE EMERGENCE OF WORLD CULTURE", designed to launch a series of eight lectures sponsored by the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies on the theme of "Islam and Global Change in History". Also in 1998 I was unanimously elected to the Board of Trustees of the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies.

With regard to the wider comparativist constituency in the United Kingdom, in 1998 I started negotiations with the University of Bristol about my possible participation in their 1999 conference on "Nationalism, Identity and Minority Rights." I conducted other negotiations for 1999 about a conference in London on "Nationalism and Internationalism in a World of Globalization." I will have more to say about these conferences in my next Newsletter if I do participate.

In 1998 I visited the Oxford offices of my publisher, James Currey, for the first time. This was followed by a splendid social evening with James and his wife, Clare. James has worked on my books long before he was an independent publisher in his own right. We first met when he was an editor of Heinemann Educational Books in London. He helped me publish my first novel, The Trial of Christopher Okigbo (London: Heinemann, 1971). More about that novel later.

In 1998 I also had discussions with the Commonwealth Secretariat, at Marlborough House in London, concerning their projected symposium on "CONSTRUCTIVE PLURALISM", to be jointly sponsored with UNESCO, and held in Paris in January 1999. The Commonwealth Secretariat invited me to write the keynote paper from their side of the planning. I am not sure whether the paper I have written, "TOWARDS A CONSTRUCTIVE PLURAL ORDER", is too political for either the Commonwealth Secretariat, or UNESCO, or both. I will keep you informed. I hope all will be well.

NIGERIA: PASSION, POWER AND PARENTAGE

1998 was one of my special Nigerian years – full of both despair and good cheer. Among the most cheerful aspects of the year was our reunion with Pauline's mother, Mama Alice, in Binghamton, New York. My wife (a Nigerian) had not seen her mother for almost a decade – and certainly not since Pauline and I got married in 1991. This meant that Mama Alice had never seen her Mazrui grandchildren, Farid and Harith, who were born in the United States. At last we got Mama Alice a visa to come to the United States. It was not easy. To satisfy Uncle Sam I had to submit my tax returns for the previous three years. What that had to do with a visitor's visa, God knows! But Mama Alice got her visa at long last!

The grandsons are beginning to learn Mama Alice's Nigerian English. She often bathes them either in the morning, or in the evening, or both. Meanwhile, Pauline and I are still debating whether the children should learn Hausa through her or Kiswahili through me! While mother and father are debating the issue, the children are growing up mono-lingual (English only)! I am afraid the adult children of my first marriage (especially Jamal and Al'Amin) are already blaming me for the fact that they grew up monolingual. I plead the Fifth Amendment!

1998 continued to be one of my special Nigerian years. And Nigeria is one of my five countries of residential experience. When President Niara Sudarkasa of Lincoln University in Pennsylvania in the United States asked me to help in organizing the First Nnamdi Azikiwe International Conference at her university, I was stimulated by the challenge. Nnamdi Azikiwe had been the first Head of State of Nigeria (1960-1966), and had once been a student at Lincoln. Azikiwe had died in 1996, and Lincoln University wanted to immortalize his memory with these annual conferences.

Godfrey Uzoigwe and I were supposed to be the Co-chairs of the

conference. But Niara Sudarkasa felt so special about this conference that the two co-chairs were effectively marginalized, and the organization of the conference was planned more directly by the President herself. There were gains and losses in this approach. Many of my ideas and sub-themes for the conference, hammered out jointly with co-chair Godfrey Uzoigwe, were discarded by the President of the University on the grounds that they were too academic. So were some of our ideas about who was to be invited. President Sudarkasa wanted the conference to be more firmly policy-oriented. But in the Nigerian context, there was a risk that such an approach would make the conference more highly politicized and even partisan. Unfortunately that is precisely what happened. The conference sometimes exploded into passionate pro and anti-Abacha rhetoric and even abuse.

To President Sudarkasa's credit, she succeeded in attracting to the conference major luminaries of recent African discourse, including Shehu Shagari, former President of Nigeria, Julius K. Nyerere, former President of Tanzania and Adebayo Adedeji, former Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. During the conference I gave Mwalimu Nyerere that Guyana-based paper I had written about him and others. He read it almost right away. He promised to let me know where I went wrong!! Yes, let me repeat. I am still waiting!

The following month I arrived in Nigeria to receive a special Fellowship award from the Institute of Governance and Social Research, in Jos. Also being honoured by the same Institute on the same occasion was General Ibrahim Babangida, former Head of State of Nigeria. This was General Babangida's first public address since he stepped down as Head of State. The most startling pronouncement in his speech was his description of military rule as essentially "outmoded, out of fashion and out of step" as the century was coming to a close. To hear such words from a former military ruler, at a time when Nigeria was in an even tighter grip of military rule than ever, was a truly novel experience. General Babangida and I later chatted about this and related matters. Professor Jonah Isawa Elaigwu, a close mutual friend, played host to both Babangida and myself.

Ironically, my own address to the Joint Session of the University of Jos and the Institute of Governance and Social Research discussed Nigeria as Africa's closest replica of the United States. I posed the question of whether Nigeria was a future U.S.A. in the making – in both its good points and its bad! That thesis of mine about Nigeria received much more publicity in Kenya than it did in Nigeria itself! However, the month of May was a great reunion between me and the University of Jos, especially with my own Department of Political Science at Jos.

In June 1998 General Sani Abacha, the iron military ruler of Nigeria, died suddenly. When Azikiwe died a few years earlier, it had taken about six months before he was buried. But when Abacha died he was in his grave in less than

three days. One difference was religious. Abacha was a Muslim and therefore expected to be buried hurriedly – although Muslim Heads of States have sometimes been exceptions. But was there another reason for the haste with which General Abacha was buried? Had he been poisoned or killed in another way? So far there has been no evidence of foul play. There is an African proverb which asserts: "No big man dies of natural causes!" Is it more than a proverb? Is it history?

The most painful Nigerian event for me personally, and for millions of Nigerians politically, was the death of Chief Moshood Abiola on the eve of his being released from prison. He was the man who had, by all accounts, won the Nigerian presidential elections of June 1993. The military regime in Nigeria refused to acknowledge or announce Abiola's victory. When – after some hesitation – he personally announced himself president before a rally of thousands, he ended up in prison on charges of treason. When General Sani Abacha died, and was succeeded by the more conciliatory General Abdulsalami Abubakar, we all expected to celebrate Abiola's release and potentially a special role in government. It was not to be. Abiola fell ill when he was being visited by a high-powered American delegation; he died soon after.

I shall always treasure the varied private conversations I had with Moshood Abiola long before he entered the presidential race. He honoured me both at his offices and in his home, (I was introduced to two of his wives in two different wings of a large home.).

On one occasion in Lagos he insisted on dressing me up in a specially made regal attire – an elaborate Nigerian traditional suit of black and gold. I still wear this attire on special occasions. I wore the complete suit when I was the official orator to honour Bryant Gumbel, the NBC television anchorman, who was being honoured by the African-American Institute in New York, along with Boutros Boutros-Ghali, then Secretary-General of the United Nations.

I once persuaded Chief Moshood Abiola to contribute $50,000 to the African Studies Association of the United States. The Association named its annual lecture after him, and then invited me to be the first Basherun M.K.O. Abiola Lecturer in 1993. The Abiola Lecture has now become a regular feature of the annual convention of the association.

1998 also marked the thirtieth anniversary of another death which had Nigerian consequences for me, although the man who died was not himself a Nigerian. We used to call him "Giraffe" even when we were children because he was so much taller than the rest of us. His real name was Mohamed Salim Said, a childhood friend to whom I remained close until the day he was killed in a road accident between Mombasa and Nairobi in January 1968.

His death precipitated in me a period of deep anguish which, in mysterious ways, interacted with my depression over the Nigerian civil war. I passed through a mental crisis, close to a nervous breakdown. The Nigerian civil war was a form of public agony which I had inexplicably privatized; the

death of my friend, Giraffe was a case of private anguish which was for a while unutterable.

To the present day I have not understood why those two very different shocks had reinforced each other in my psyche – and brought me literally to the brink of a breakdown. In 1968, for the first time in my life, I needed the help of a psychotherapist. I was at the time based at Makerere University in Uganda.

One could understand why I was grieving for the death of my childhood friend. But what exactly were the elements of the Nigerian side of my anguish? This question would take us into the interplay between personal pain, political history, and literary experience.

PAIN AS A WOMB OF LITERATURE

Thomas Jefferson, the author of the U.S. Declaration of Independence (a poetic document), firmly believed that pain was often the mother of poetry; anguish a stimulant to music. In Jefferson's words,

"Misery is often the parent of the most affecting touches of poetry."

The question arises whether pain was also the parent of one of my own modest ventures into creative literature. Did I undergo the equivalent of the birthpangs of creation? Let us examine the story step-by-step.

Christopher Okigbo, an Igbo poet in real life, was killed in the Nigerian Civil War near Nsuka in 1967. Okigbo came to symbolize part of the Nigerian side of my anguish in 1968. I wrote a novel in sheer desperation.

The Trial of Christopher Okigbo (1971) was at once the shortest book I had ever written and by far the most emotionally charged in the process of being written. I wrote the novel as therapy. I was passing through that mental crisis which was partly caused by the Nigerian civil war and partly by the death of my old friend in Kenya in a road accident. Was the novel a Jeffersonian creation of pain?

Intellectually I was on the Federal side of the Nigerian civil war, but at the same time in sympathy with the reasons which had resulted in the Igbo's decision to secede. I loved the Igbo but was appalled by the concept of separatist Biafra.

I suppose that was one reason why I invited Chinua Achebe (Biafra's Ambassador Plenipotentiary) to Makerere in 1969. I knew that this great novelist was a spokesman for Biafra (a mission I hated) – but I gave him a platform to reach another audience. His address to that Makerere audience was a major blow against Nigeria's federal propaganda in East Africa – and yet I was the sponsor and the presiding officer for his talk. You can imagine how schizophrenic I had become over the Biafran issue!

And then I decided to write a novel in tribute to a martyr who had died for a cause I shrank from. I decided to write The Trial of Christopher Okigbo – putting the martyred Igbo poet on trial in the Hereafter. He faced a dual charge. Christopher Okigbo had decided he was an Igbo first and a poet

second. And Okigbo had also subordinated the vision of unity (one Nigeria) to the dream of freedom (a separate Biafra).

Exhausted by the Jeffersonian pain of creation, I offered the novel to Heinemann Educational Books in London for their African writers' series. This was my first novel ever. And the general editor of the African Writers Series was Chinua Achebe. Would he recognize my hostility to Biafra without acknowledging my love for the Igbo?

In the final verdict of the novel I do try to make my feelings clear. I declare all those who were opposed to Biafra (like my Ghanaian character Apolo-Gyanfi) as truly not guilty. I declare all those who supported Biafra (represented in the novel by Hamisi) as guilty. But the charge against the Igbo themselves in their bid for Biafra is declared as not proven. It was as if the novel forgave the Igbo for attempting secession – but could not forgive those who had aided and abetted them in their suicidal bid.

Would Chinua Achebe as general editor of Heinemann's African Writers' series find it possible to associate himself with my first novel? Would he reject my draft completely? The moment of truth coincided with the final defeat of Biafra. Would Chinua Achebe's emotions be so bitter as to reject my psychic ambivalence?

At that time Chinua did not know that when I declared supporters of Biafra as "guilty", I had included my friend who had been killed in the road accident in Kenya – Giraffe! Hamisi in my novel was a character who was based on my real-life friend, Giraffe. My friend's death, when combined with the Nigerian civil war, had brought me to the brink of a nervous breakdown.

How would Chinua Achebe react to a novel which was anti-Biafra – even if ultimately pro-Igbo? I anxiously awaited his verdict. The novel was a salute to Okigo, but was it judgmental on Ojukwu?

When Achebe's answer came, it was worthy of a great literary mind. Chinua was simply worried about whether the novel was effective. He thought the novel was too slow in taking off. The earlier chapters (written when I had not yet declared my political argument) were precisely the ones which bothered editor Achebe. He was not asking for censorship of the anti-Biafra portions. He was asking the author to shorten the preliminaries and get on to the crux of the matter, anti-Biafra or not.

I am not sure if Chinua realized that when I wrote the earlier preliminaries, I was in fact in the grip of my deepest psychological and emotional stress. When the author was at his most emotional, the chapters were the least effective in engaging the reader. I subsequently remembered William Wordsworth's definition of poetry as "powerful emotions recollected in tranquility."

When I began writing The Trial of Christopher Okigbo, I was in the grip of powerful emotions. But the emotions were not yet "recollected in tranquility." Chinua probably recognized that the slow dullness of my earlier

chapters was because my emotions were not as yet tamed into tranquility. The words were boring mainly because the real feelings were not yet disciplined.

As a result of Chinua Achebe's critique I bravely knocked out two or three chapters from my draft of The Trial of Christopher Okigbo. Without being explicitly asked to do so by the publisher, I embarked on literary surgery. I shortened the preliminaries – so that I could plunge more directly into the ethics of Biafra and of Christopher Okigbo's ultimate choice.

Must a writer wait until his or her emotions can be "recollected in tranquility"? Chinua Achebe taught me to follow William Wordsworth's advice. I later discovered that Chinua too was following Wordsworth's advice. Why did Achebe take two decades before producing Anthills of the Savannah? I suspect partly because the Jeffersonian emotions of Biafra and the Nigerian civil war had been too strong. I believe that had Chinua Achebe written Anthills any earlier, his earlier chapters might have been almost as weak as my own when I was on the brink of a nervous breakdown. Some distance is needed between tension and creativity , between madness and the Muse.

But why did I choose to focus my novel on Christopher Okigbo? Partly because I came from a culture in which great moments of anguish and pain are often dealt with by writing poetry. When two of my children went blind in the late 1970s, I received poems of sympathy from friends and relatives in Kenya. It remains part of Kenya's Coastal Swahili culture to mark great experiences with poetry. This had nothing to do with Thomas Jefferson.

Upon receiving the poems of sympathy about the blindness of my children, it was expected that I would try to reciprocate poetically. I did respond with an "Ode to the Optic Nerve".

It is against this background that one should examine my decision to write The Trial of Christopher Okigbo. I had decided to deal with my own depression in the late 1960s with the therapy of writing a novel about a poet. Without realizing it at the time, I was manifesting Swahili ways of dealing with personal anguish. By writing a novel about a poet I was taking the Swahili cultural trait one stage further than its usual domain.

A second major reason why I chose to focus my little novel on Christopher Okigbo was that he seemed to be a martyr to his cause, whether or not he shared my ideals.

And the third reason was the fact that his death raised wider questions about justice, rights and genius. Did a very gifted human being have a right to sacrifice his or her life for such issues as ethnic separatism? Did Christopher Okigbo as a genius have a right to decide that he was an Igbo first and a poet second? My novel asserts "All life is sacred, but some lives are more sacred than others".

Christopher Okigbo's life was well above average in sacredness. Did he have a right to expose it to a sniper's bullet in conditions of warfare? The debate will continue to the end of time – until Christopher Okigbo meets

Thomas Jefferson along the bridge of creative anguish.

THE WEDDING AND THE VISION

One of the great family events of the decade was the marriage of my second-born son, Al'Amin, to his beloved Jill Perry. They met in California. The wedding ceremony was hosted by Al'Amin's brother, Kim, and sister-in-law, Kay in Charlottesville, Virginia, where Kim is a professor of Law at the University of Virginia (established by Thomas Jefferson, by the way). Almost the entire Mazrui clan in the United States turned up in strength at the wedding, coming from different parts of the country. Professor Aziz Sachedina of the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Virginia officiated at the Muslim wedding ceremony in the home of Kim and Kay Forde Mazrui. The bride – who has a wonderful voice – preceded by singing a beautiful song of affirmation and commitment.

For Molly Mazrui and myself (the divorced parents of the groom), the wedding of our son was an occasion for reconciliation and good will after a period of social distance between the parents. We hugged and danced together, and gave speeches in honour of the wedding. My present wife, Pauline, and Molly's present significant other, Jim, were not in the least insecure!!

Al'Amin and Jill subsequently drove to join us in Binghamton, New York, for a few days as part of their honeymoon. Wasn't that unusual? It was particularly great for Mama Alice and Goretti Mugambwa who had not attended the wedding.

On New Year's Eve we invited a few friends to come to our home to welcome both the New Year and the newly wed. We must have entertained some fifty people on New Year's Eve, including the Dean of Arts and Sciences at Binghamton University, Dean Solomon Polachek and his wife, Professor Dora Polachek. Our last guest left at about 3 o'clock in the morning.

The bride, Jill Perry (now Jill Mazrui by choice) is a school teacher by profession and owns some property in California. What about Al'Amin? Is he still a "permanent graduate student"? He has now become a teacher – joining his father, mother, brother, cousin and others – in a Mazrui legacy of teaching spanning generations. He has also found a separate calling for himself – entrepreneurship. His own new business called, Electronic Commerce International, links consumers to thousands of products electronically, (by phone, fax, or computer modem on the Internet).

Al'Amin may indeed be onto something. According to Fortune Magazine December 7, 1998: "The Internet will change the relationship between consumers and producers in ways more profound than you can yet imagine. The Internet is not just another marketing channel; it's not just another advertising medium; it's not just a way to speed up transactions. It will fundamentally change customers' expectation about convenience, speed, comparability, price and service. The Internet is the foundation for a new

industrial order."

Al'Amin is convinced that buying and selling through the Internet is the wave of the future. He talks enthusiastically about the participation of so many nations already in electronic commerce. I am not electronically literate enough to judge, but Al'Amin Mazrui is eager to discuss his new business with all comers. I cannot speak for him in any way, but his business e-mail address if you are interested is *ecomint@hotmail.com.* This is not a commercial for my son! It is not even an infomercial! It is merely news in a family newsletter!

Jill Mazrui's father, Mr. Perry, was born in Guyana. This makes Jill my second in-law with Guyanese blood in her. As I said before, my first Guyanese in-law was Khyrul, the wife of my sister's son, Mohamed Yusuf Tamim. Mohamed and Khyrul now live in Toronto, Canada. They have promised to visit us again in Binghamton in 1999, Insha Allah. We look forward to that.

THE MIGHTY AMONG THE MOUNTAINS

The town of Davos is approximately on the Swiss Alps. The World Economic Forum is a pinnacle of a different kind. Such a large proportion of those who attend the conference every year are people at the pinnacle of power and influence. I was among the lesser figures who attended the 1998 Forum, chaired one of the sessions and participated in a few of the others.

Four categories of people attend the World Economic Forum. A thousand are Chief Executives of corporations, including the movers and shakers of the world economy. Those who attended the 1998 Forum included Bill Gates of Microsoft and George Soros. Here indeed were the mighty among the mountains.

The second category of attendees are major policy makers in the political process. In 1998 these included Chanceller Helmot Kohl of the Federal Republic of Germany, Newt Gingrich who was then Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, and a number of Presidents and Prime Ministers from Asia and Africa, including Prime Minister Nawaz Shariff of Pakistan, President Jerry Rawlings of Ghana, and President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda. U.S. First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton also addressed the 1998 World Economic Forum. The Alps were playing host to global pinnacles.

The third category of attendees at the Forum consists of people connected with the media. These ranged from reporters representing such newspapers as the Wall Street Journal and the Financial Times to film-makers and computer wizards of various kinds.

The fourth category of attendees are scholars and cultural participant-observers. I fell into this fourth category. So did Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Lord Manuen who were very successful as speakers at the 1998 Forum.

At one session I had a short but heated exchange with Speaker Newt Gingrich on the issue of Iraq. He had taken a militantly hawkish position about bombing Iraq into compliance over its alleged weapons of mass destruction. I

argued that no Middle Eastern system would succeed in eliminating such weapons on a long-term basis if Israel was allowed to have them while its Arab neighbours were bombed into renouncing them. My verbal exchange with Speaker Gingrich was later shown on U.S. television.

I had a more amicable exchange with President Jerry Rawlings of Ghana at another session. President Rawlings complained angrily about the brain-drain from Africa, especially after such expensive training in Africa as that of a doctor. Why should an African trained by the taxpayer in his country be allowed to pack his bag and go for bigger incomes in Europe or the United States as soon as he or she qualifies?

In my response I expressed sympathy for President Rawlings' concern about the brain drain. But I reminded the President that the brain drain was caused not only by the attraction of better life and more freedom in exile (the pull-in factors in the host countries); the brain-drain was also often caused by deteriorating conditions and diminishing freedom at home (the push-out factors in the countries of origin). The policies of African governments were among the factors contributing to the brain drain from Africa.

President Jerry Rawlings gave me some kind of counter-response, and then graciously invited me to resume debate at his home when I next visited Ghana. I was flattered to learn that he had been anxious to meet with me ever since he saw my BBC/PBS television series, The Africans: A Triple Heritage (1986).

A number of sessions at the World Economic Forum are conducted over dinner or a luncheon. Officially I was in charge of the dinner-discussion on "Africa in a World of Globalization". I was both Chairman and keynote speaker. Another official dinner role I had was at a session on "Moral Judgements across Cultural Differences" at which I was one of the speakers in the programme.

STATESMEN, SNAKES, SCHOLARS AND LOVERS

At least as memorable was a more informal dinner with President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda at his table at the Forum one evening. It was the first time I had actually dined with him since he and his wife graciously entertained me to a private dinner at State House in Entebbe, Uganda, a few years earlier. It was at the dinner in Entebbe that the President said to me : "Professor, I hear you have moved to the left ideologically." I smiled and replied "Mr. President, I have heard a different rumour - that you had moved to the right!" At the 1998 dinner in Davos I got more evidence that Yoweri Museveni is a more pro-market ideologue than almost any European head of government currently in power. Museveni shows all the enthusiasm of a recent convert to the market. If capitalism is the Empire of Sharks, Yoweri Museveni is not afraid to enter its gates.

But in many respects his policies have paid off. When I visited Uganda in May 1998 I was more impressed than ever by the changes in the city of

Kampala as compared with conditions on my previous visit some four years earlier. The city seemed brighter, more prosperous, better stocked with goods, and to all appearances, much safer. I was in Kampala as a keynote speaker at an international conference of insurance companies doing business in Africa or with Africa. My speech was sensationalized by the local press when I called upon African insurance companies to make themselves more relevant by issuing insurance policies against such African hazards as snake-bites and conceivably even witchcraft! Local cartoonists went to town depicting me in the role of encouraging Africans to use insurance policies rather than sticks when confronted with a poisonous snake!

I also used my stay in Uganda go to and extend my condolences to Omari H. Kokole's family. As you know Omari died suddenly here at Binghamton in 1996 at the age of 44. He was then Associate Director of the Institute of Global Cultural Studies at Binghamton University and one of my own closest friends.

In May 1998 I went to see his mother in Jinja at long last, accompanied by Omari's younger brother, Yusuf, who came to fetch me from my hotel in Kampala. I also extended our sympathies to Omari's sister Maryam and to his two daughters in Uganda, Apaya and Amori. The family served me lunch and invited an interesting additional guest - Idi Amin's older brother, locally known as Mzee Ramadhan Amin. Although we all discussed Omari Kokole during lunch, we carefully avoided discussing Idi Amin. Was I too cautious and too polite? Should I have asked Mzee Ramadhan some questions about his notorious brother, Idi Amin? (I started writing a book provisionally entitled HEROISM AND HORROR some years ago. It was supposed to be about Idi Amin, whom I knew when we both lived in Uganda. I never finished the book.)

My visit to Kampala included an informal presentation in my own old department of political science at Makerere University. Some of my old colleagues are still there, and it was a great pleasure engaging them intellectually once again. Professor Akiiki Mujaju and Professor Anthony Gingyera-Pinycwa were definite bridges between the past and the present in the department. More surprising in 1998 was the presence of Professor Marion Doro from the United States - she was a colleague when I was there in the 1960s and she had returned briefly in 1998. Can you imagine?

I was flattered by the interest which the Faculty of Commerce (Business School) at Makerere took in me during my visit. I was invited to have a special brainstorming session with their faculty. And upon my return to the United States the Makerere Business School wrote to invite me back in November 1998 at their expense for one of their conferences. Unfortunately their dates clashed with my commitments in Cyprus. It was my loss that I was unable to accept.

There is a sense in which I will always be married to Uganda as a country. Those ten formative years of mine at Makerere (1963 - 1973) helped to shape the rest of my career. But if I am married to Uganda as a country, why am I not married to a Ugandan woman in my private life? In reality three African

countries have had a special claim on me - Kenya (where I was born), Uganda (where my academic career was born) and Nigeria (which has hypnotized me long before my novel The Trial of Christopher Okigbo of 1971).

In the 1980s I nearly did get married to a Ugandan. If I had, my mother-in-law would have been the woman whom we all know as Nalongo (mother of twins). I was once very close to two of her daughters. One died in her twenties and the other is now married to somebody else. But whenever I go to Uganda I try to contact Nalongo. The flicker might have died out between me and her daughters. But a closeness survives between me and the woman who might have become my mother in law - inspite of the fact that I am now happily married to a Nigerian woman. But that is another love-story altogether.

A final word about my 1998 Uganda visit. One Ugandan who was for a while a link between me and Nigeria was Samuel Max Sebina. He was a ward of mine when I lived in Uganda as I contributed to his education. Later on, when I was in the United States, he came to visit me. More important is when he came to stay with me in Jos, Nigeria, and to look after me. The University of Jos gave me a house and Sam lived in it the whole year through, whereas I came only in fits and starts. Sam's significant other in our Jos house was Tonia, a very beautiful Tanzanian woman. I thought they would get married one day. But Tonia returned to Tanzania and Sam returned to Uganda and got married to a fellow Ugandan! Can you imagine?

In 1998 I re-discovered Sam!! He now works as a security officer in a major hotel in Kampala. He has several children, one of whom is old enough to be at Makerere University! Sam has asked me to let him know every time I go to East Africa so that he can try to spend time with me. At my age these voices from the past are of course always welcome.

TOWARDS AN AFRICAN RENAISSANCE

My most significant Makerere event of 1998 occurred outside the boundaries of the country of Uganda. I was keynote speaker for the Platinum Jubilee (75th Anniversary) of Makerere University being hosted by the Kenyan alumni of Makerere in Nairobi, Kenya. The organizer was Professor Peter Anyang Nyong'o, a Member of Parliament in Kenya and a former student of mine at Makerere. My topic at the evening celebratory event (dinner and dance) was on the following quite serious topic:

"HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE ORIGINS OF GLOBALIZATION:
THE IMPACT OF MAKERERE"

The Press in Kenya took a good deal of interest in my presence in the country for some reason. This does not always happen, but this time my presence seemed to generate considerable journalistic interest, including a wide-ranging interview about my life and career for a Sunday newspaper.

There were some distinguished Ugandans, as well as Kenyans, at the Platinum Jubilee. From Nairobi I could also proceed to my hometown of Mombasa where I was, as usual, received so graciously by the children of my sister Salma A. Mazrui and the children of my other sister, Nafisa A. Mazrui. Each household prepared a stupendous meal, God bless them. My brother Harith A. Mazrui came to the city from his rural home to be with me.

In Zimbabwe, I was keynote speaker at the Indaba (traditional town-meeting) in preparation for the launching of the annual Zimbabwe International Book Fair. My topic was as follows

"FEWER HEROES AND MORE MARTYRS IN AFRICA'S POLITICAL EXPERIENCE: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE AFRICAN CHILD"

I also helped to launch the first bibliography of my works - "THE MAZRUIANA COLLECTION: ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE WORKS OF ALI A. MAZRUI, 1962 - 1997". The Indian High Commissioner to Zimbabwe launched the book compiled and annotated by Abdul S. Bemath of South Africa. My own presentation at the book-launch was under the following title:

"MAZRUIANA: BETWEEN THE RENAISSANCE AFRICAN AND THE AFRICAN RENAISSANCE"

Among my recommendations was that Zimbabwe International Book Fair of the year 2000 should announce a carefully selected list of 100 best African books of the twentieth century. I sub-divided those 100 books into categories - novels, plays, poetry, non-fiction etc. To my delight some organizers of the Book Fair took me up almost immediately after I finished speaking. They came to discuss the concept with me, and later followed it up with an exchange of letters. I do hope they raise the money to follow through.

Never since 1967 had there been three books in a single year all about me or by me - until 1998!! In addition to Bemath's bibliographical book MAZRUIANA (New Delhi: Sterling and New Jersey: Africa World Press) there was in 1998 also a new edition of Omari H. Kokole's edited volume THE GLOBAL AFRICAN: A PORTRAIT OF ALI A . MAZRUI (Africa World Press). The third 1998 book was co-authored by Alamin M. Mazrui and myself and entitled THE POWER OF BABEL: LANGUAGE AND GOVERNANCE IN THE AFRICAN EXPERIENCE (Oxford: James Currey and University of Chicago Press).

Thirty one years earlier all three books of 1967 were by me - TOWARDS A PAX AFRICANA (also University of Chicago Press), ON HEROES AND UHURU-WORSHIP (London: Longman) and THE ANGLO-AFRICAN COMMONWEALTH (Oxford: Pergamon Press). These three volumes of 1967 were the first book-length publications of my career.

For THE POWER OF BABEL there was a book-signing ceremony at the

University of Chicago book stall at the 1998 African Studies Association meeting in Chicago. Because the book-signing ceremony had neither been announced nor advertised, I do not think it was a success. Colleagues stopped when they saw me signing books, and some bought copies. But I do not think the University of Chicago did me proud on this one.

A more successful book-signing ceremony was of the book THE GLOBAL AFRICAN: A PORTRAIT OF ALI A. MAZRUI . The publishers had the book ready as part of a Pan-African event which I was going to address - the launching of the UBUNTU 2000 Cultural Movement in the same hotel as the African Studies Association in Chicago. Here again was a search for an African Renaissance. My speech was not of course about the book, but the publishers wisely banked on my speech helping to sell the book about me. The cultural event of UBUNTU 2000 was well-attended - and the book signing was much more vigorous. The cultural event as a whole took off very well.

BETWEEN CYPRUS AND CAPE TOWN

In what sense is Cyprus a triadic country in my sense? In the sense that Cyprus is one country in the shadow of two other countries - Greece and Turkey. I never realized how deep the divide between the Greek-Cypriots and the Turkish-Cypriots had become until I was invited to a conference at Eastern Mediterranean University in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. If I had arrived in the Greek part of the island first, I would not have been allowed to cross to the Turkish part. The only way of flying into the Turkish part of the island was by flying into Turkey itself first and, then, flying to Ercan in Turkish Northern Cyprus. So I flew to Istanbul first. Can you imagine?

The conference at the Eastern Mediterranean University was on "Globalization: Social, Economic and Political Dimensions." It was co-sponsored by the International Association of Middle Eastern Studies, the International Society for Competitiveness, and the University of Calgary in Canada. Professor Tareq Ismael was a member of them all - and the soul of the party!

I was invited to be the opening keynote speaker. Ceremonially the conference was opened by President Rauf R. Denktas of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, and formerly Vice-President of Cyprus as a whole. In his speech to our conference he lost no time in calling upon us to help the Turkish Republic get international recognition. At the moment, his Republic is recognized only by Turkey and bitterly opposed by both the Greek-Cypriots and Greece itself.

During my short stay in Cyprus President Denktas invited me and a few others to lunch in his presidential home. When I turned up in my resplendant African shirt he was so impressed that he dashed back inside to get his camera. This was my first experience being photographed by a State President. By the time I was leaving his palace after lunch, a copy of the photograph was ready

for me. What a souvenir! As it turned out, President Denktas is an accomplished amateur photographer, who has even published a book of some of his pictures.

When I first visited Cyprus a quarter of a century earlier, Archbishop Makarios was President of the country as a whole. I was photographed with Makarios shaking hands, but the Archbishop was definitely not the photographer! (Incidentally, the picture with Makarios and Mazrui shaking hands appeared in at least one East African newspaper at the time. I hope I have saved the picture somewhere in my albums, but that is a sentiment I would not have expressed to my Turkish-Cypriot hosts in 1998. The sentiment might have been regarded as offensive and partisan). Cyprus, the triadic country, continued to be in the shadow of two other countries, with all the tensions of divisiveness.

In 1998 I visited five African countries in all. I have already told you about my experiences in Nigeria, Uganda, Kenya and Zimbabwe. My fifth African country in 1998 was the Republic of South Africa.

Ever since Nelson Mandela was released from prison in 1990, I have visited South Africa about once every year. My hosts have varied. They have included a university (like Witswaterand), a newspaper (like The Weekly Mail), a chamber of commerce (like the African chambers of commerce), a distinguished lecture series (the Desmond Tutu Annual Lecture) , etc. In 1998, I was once again invited by the Foundation for Global Dialougue in Johannesburg. But the conference took place in Cape Town, and the theme was "Changing African Identities". My paper included the hotly debated theme of "African Renaissance" - which is the rage in South Africa right now, but which I had raised several years earlier. Unfortunately the only published version of my earlier remarks is available in German, published in the German-language journal Internationale Politik ,"Afro-Renaissance: Hoffnung im postkolonialen Africa" (1996).

Southern Africa has a more vigorous and politically conscious Muslim community than many people assume, as the British Prime Minister Tony Blair discovered when he visited South Africa in January 1999. South African Muslims demonstrated against British policies on, and bombing of, Iraq.

South African Muslims have in the past played host to me and entertained me. But in 1998 it was more the Muslims of Zimbabwe who managed to mobilize a large audience for my lecture on "ISLAM AND THE INTERNATIONAL AGENDA: FROM HUMAN RIGHTS TO NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION." I believe it was my largest audience in Zimbabwe in 1998.

In the middle of my presentation a member of the audience was afflicted by epilepsy. The proceedings came to a halt. By a strange coincidence, his personal physician was also in the audience. The doctor took charge, and I was able to resume my presentation.

In Zimbabwe I also met Professor Terence Ranger. In my Newsletter No.

22 of last year I had included a report about the tension between Professor Ranger as Rhodes Professor of Race Relations at Oxford University and his predecessor, Professor Kenneth Kirkwood, who died in 1997. I have since learnt Dr. Ranger's side of the case. Professor Ranger says it was never his intention to offend Professor Kirkwood. On the contrary, Ranger had repeatedly invited Kirwood to social and academic events, and Kirkwood had not responded. Whatever tension existed between the two Rhodes Professors had never been by design. Readers of this newsletter have now heard both sides of the case. Perhaps an unintended misunderstanding had indeed occurred between these two scholars. They both served Africa well during their tenure at Oxford University.

Ranger and Kirkwood were also concerned with the well-being of African students. A fund has been established in honour of the memory of Kenneth Kirkwood, designed to help students from Southern Africa especially. If you would like to make a contribution to that Fund, the following is the address:

The Kenneth Kirkwood Memorial Fund
African Education Trust
38 King Street
London WC2E8JS
United Kingdom

Another word about Zimbabwe in 1998. It was a great evening at Yash and Mary Tandon's home! Minister Nathan Shamuyarira and his wife graciously joined us. We debated varied issues about Africa and the world.

Yash Tandon used to be a colleague in the Department of Political Science at Makerere when we both lived in Uganda. Nathan Shamuyarira - now senior member of President Mugabe's government - used to be on the faculty of the University of Dar es Salaam and was later a freedom fighter for Zimbabwe's independence in the bushes of his country.

Obi Jackson Njovu, a Zambian, came specially to Harare from Lusaka to visit me. He used to be in the Zambian armed forces, but he is now in the private sector in Zambia. He seemed to be as fit and slim as he was when he was in the army. I was delighted to see him again.

My trip back from Zimbabwe is memorable because of the shocking news in transit between Harare and the United States. When we stopped in Paris for the second leg of my journey I learnt in the Business Class lounge at Charles de Gaulle Airport about the terrible terrorist bombings of the U.S. Embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, and the huge number of casualties especially in Nairobi. I was stunned. I was briefly tempted to reverse direction and to go to Nairobi instead of the United States from Paris. But it was not realistic. I was dazed the rest of the trip to Binghamton, New York.

BETWEEN FAMILY AND FANTASY

In 1998 a cold wind from the north (i.e. Canada) brought into our household Goretti Mugambwa and her gifted daughter, Maria (12 years old) to live with us. The hot wind from the South (i.e. Nigeria) brought into our household Mama Alice Uti, my wife Pauline's mother. Once again we had a triad - three very valued new members of our Binghamton family (two Canadians and a Nigerian).

Pauline and I knew Goretti when all three of us lived in Jos in Nigeria in the 1980s. Goretti worked as a secretary at the Registrar's Office at the University. Goretti was my friend, on one side, and Pauline's friend on the other side, long before Pauline and I became friends. Pauline and I completed the triangle rather late!

Goretti was born and brought up in Uganda. She then moved to Nigeria. From Jos she migrated to Canada. In due course Pauline migrated to the United States to join me. In 1998 all three of us were together once again - joined delightfully by Pauline's mother - under the same roof. But the new home was in Vestal-Binghamton, New York.

We had an artist at home for much of 1998. That was Azuka, teen-age daughter of our family-friend, Nkiru Nzegwu. Nkiru is a professor of art-history and African philosophy at Binghamton University. For much of 1998 Nkiru was on sabbatical leave at the University of California, Los Angeles. That was the reason why her daughter, Azuka, moved in with us, since Azuka was an undergraduate here at Binghamton and could not join her mother in California. Where does the art come in? Azuka, like her mother, is an artist in more than one genre. While living with us Azuka did some painting, sculpture and composed some poetry.

One thing curious about Azuka. When I was in Paris, France, I bought her a beautiful T-shirt with the Mona Lisa, the most famous painting in the history of art. I have never seen Azuka wear the shirt!! I also bought the Mona Lisa T-shirt for one of my sons. My son has worn it even on special occasions. (The shirt is unisex.) Why has Azuka, the artist, refused to wear Leonardo da Vinci's popular masterpiece?

Earlier in the year another wind from Canada had brought my nephew Mohammed Yusuf Tamim, and his wife, Khyrul, to visit us in Binghamton. Believe it or not, I have exactly three nephews in all in North America - of whom Mohammed was the second to visit our new house in the Vestal-Binghamton area. The first was Alamin M. Mazrui from the Ohio State University in Columbus, who came with his friend Dr. Ousseina Alidou from the Republic of Niger.

The three nephews in North America are children of three different siblings of mine. Mohammed Yusuf and Alamin Mazrui are children of my sisters Aisha and Salma respectively. The third nephew is Zeid Mazrui in Canada. He is the son of my brother Harith. Here we are confronted with a

triad within a triad in family relationships. We are still waiting for Zeid to visit us in Vestal-Binghamton.

As for my three adult sons (Jamal, Al'Amin and Kim), they reflected different aspects of me during 1998. At least so I would like to believe. The most obvious reflection of his Dad is Kim Abubakar in Charlottesville, Virginia. Afterall, like his Dad, Kim is a professor - though Kim had the good sense to be a professor of law, rather than of political science or history. Sharing a professional career made it easier for Kim and Dad to consult each other about professional matters - from methods of teaching to techniques of publication.

Will Jamal be the most international and most travelled of my sons? It is too early to be sure, but 1998 indicated that he was already in demand both nationally and internationally. In 1998 he was invited to the Slovak Republic (part of the former Czechoslovakia) to make a presentation on the role of the computer in the world of the disabled. I visited Prague before Czechoslovakia split in two. Now, of course, Prague is part of the Czech Republic.

If Kim represents my academic torch being passed to the next generation, and Jamal represents my torch of national and international mobility, what does Al'Amin (my second-born child) represent?

Al'Amin represents his father's fascination with language and with skills of verbal persuasion. (The father is less articulate in his NEWSLETTERS!) But is Al'Amin in the right profession for such verbal skills? Would he have more of an impact if he tried to get into journalism? Does he stand a chance in local or state politics? Verbal skills are relevant for teaching and entrepreneurship (his present occupational interests) but are they even more relevant in journalism and politics? These are just thoughts of a parent about his children.

Finally, a triad of names carried by my children. My adult children's names have increasingly been shared by African Heads of State!! We knew from the start that Jamal - the name of my first-born - was also the first name of the man whom many regard as the greatest Egyptian ruler of the 20th century, Gamal Abdul Nasser (Nasser's spelling of his first name was different.)

Al'Amin, the name of my second son, is basically the same as that of Idi Amin - but Idi has it as a family name. Idi Amin was a terrible dictator of Uganda. Normally my son would be sad to have to share a name with such a brutal dictator. But Idi Amin is the main reason why our family moved to the United States, and my son Al'Amin is glad that we did move to America. From Al'Amin's point of view, an evil factor (Idi Amin) caused a happy consequence (education in the United States).

Kim's other first name is Abubakar. (He has two first names, quite apart from any middle name.) In 1998 his other first name found state-status in Africa when General Abdulsalami Abubakar became the Head of State of Nigeria after the death of President Sani Abacha in June. So Kim too briefly had a namesake in the State House of an African country. Unlike Idi Amin, Abubakar was a positive figure, dedicated to returning Nigeria from military rule to

civilian democracy in 1999.

But remember I have five sons in all! I have a seven year old son called Farid Chinedu and a five year old son called Harith Ekene. Within the next twenty to thirty years we are waiting for two African Heads of State to be called Farid, Harith, Chinedu or Ekene. Better still, it would be nice if those Heads of State at some stage were indeed my sons themselves - Farid as President of one African country and Ekene as President of another.

In 1998 two sons of Former President George Bush became governors of two different states in the United States. Maybe in the year 2048 two Mazrui sons would each become the head of state of an African country!! To paraphrase the English poet, Robert Browning (1812-1889):

Ah, but a father's reach should exceed his grasp,
Or what's a heaven for?

AMEN!

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Mazrui: Why 'exiles' won't come home soon

'Idi Amin's tyranny forced me to quit my job at Makerere'

By CIUGU MWAGIRU

During the World Economic Forum held in Switzerland this year, Kenyan eminent scholar Prof Ali Mazrui had a heated exchange with Ghanaian President Jerry Rawlings over the brain-drain from Africa to the West.

"Jerry Rawlings was giving a lecture in Davos, Switzerland, and we had a public exchange during which he was getting worked up about the brain-drain issue," Mazrui recalled during a lengthy interview with *Lifestyle* in Nairobi last week. "He feels — quite understandably — very strongly about the brain-drain from Africa. During his speech, he used the illustration of training doctors in Ghana, after which those who qualify just disappear to practise, say, in the United States.

"According to Rawlings, we could not just simply ask the departing doctors to refund the cost of their training, since the problem was that others had to be trained in their place." Mazrui recalls.

"He got more and more angry as he spoke, emphasising that the five to seven years it would take to train one doctor was a long time, during which people would be dying for lack of medical attention."

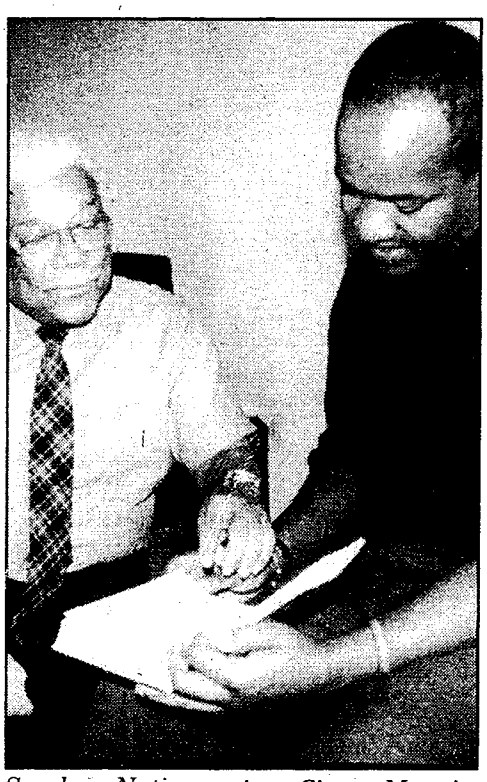
But Mazrui was not moved by the Ghanaian Head of State's emotional plea for well-educated Africans to stay and work in their countries, and the academic luminary interjected and gave the President "some home truths" about the more complex aspects of the brain-drain.

Mazrui recalls exactly what he told Rawlings. "I told him: 'Mr President, I totally sympathise with your concern about this matter, but there are two forces at work as far as the brain-drain is concerned. One is the pull-in force of the host countries welcoming migrating professionals, and this involves better facilities, better pay, nicer working conditions and also greater freedom . . .

"What, Mr President, you didn't allow for are the push-out forces in our countries, such as lack of recognition, lack of adequate facilities and — very often — governments that are intolerant and so on. People who work very hard in our countries often feel that nobody gives a damn, which is what makes them want to go and work elsewhere, if only to feel that what they do is at least recognised."

Mazrui explained that it is easy for critics of those who have chosen to work outside their countries — or have been forced to do so — to accuse them of being driven by greed and the desire to earn more money.

"But such accusations are unfair, as it would be illogical for someone to leave his own country and go and work elsewhere for peanuts." However, the eminent academic was quick to point out that the allure of big money is not the only reason African intellectuals and professionals leave.



Sunday Nation writer Ciugu Mwagiru interviews Prof Mazrui in Nairobi.

Citing his own case, Mazrui recalls that after working in Uganda — where for about a decade he taught at Makerere University — he had come to regard the country as his own, and was very happy there, with no intention of ever going to work elsewhere.

"Even before I resigned from Makerere, I had asked the Vice-Chancellor, Prof Kyesimira, to let me take indefinite leave without pay so that I could go back after Idi Amin had left the scene. I had received very good offers from the United States years earlier, but had decided that I wanted to teach at Makerere. You see, at first most of us thought that Idi Amin would disappear after a year or two, which is why I told the Vice-Chancellor that he could even take away my professorship and the chairmanship of my department, so that when Amin left the scene I could resume teaching again."

But the Vice-Chancellor pointed out that Idi Amin was likely to become suspicious about Mazrui's continued presence at Makerere, with potentially disastrous results, and so he politely advised Mazrui the best thing to do in the circumstances was to leave the institution.

"So in my case, my original departure had nothing to do with money, but was under duress," Mazrui recalls. "But now the question is, after staying out for a quarter of a century, how easy is it to come back? The answer is that there are many other factors to consider, including the fact that my kids are virtually Americans, and are probably never going to come back to live and work in Africa. Obviously, I would have to consider the effects of leaving them thousands of kilometres away and coming to work here; the issue is that you have to ask yourself if you want to be near them or not, since it is not fair to expect them to abandon their careers and come back with you."

In his own case, moving into exile also put strains on his marriage to first wife Molly, an English woman he had met when they were both students at Manchester University, and after 20 years together the marriage collapsed.

While conceding it is unfortunate that some of Africa's best brains have to pursue their careers and professions outside the continent, Mazrui personally feels there are many things he would not have been able to do, professionally, if he had remained in Kenya.

Recalling a conversation he once had with the former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Nairobi, the late Dr Josephat Karanja (who later rose to become Kenya's Vice-President before ignominously falling from grace), Mazrui is emphatic that there was never any chance for his professional development in Kenya, and Dr Karanja candidly told him as much.

Even today, Mazrui feels that he, like many of his compatriots in exile, has been grossly neglected by the land of his birth. According to him, it was unfortunate that Kenyan broadcasting stations firmly refused to air his television documentary: *The Africans: A Tripple Heritage*, which was produced by the BBC.

"The series is the only one on Africa made by an African, and can only be compared to Basil Davidson's series called *Africa,"* Mazrui told me. "I sometimes feel a little bitter about the fact that my own country has refused to televise the series, despite its fairly innocuous and barely radical political content, and I am convinced that ignoring it in Kenya was a case of the authorities having a grudge with the singer rather than with the song."

But if Kenyans have ignored the talents of sons of the land like Ali Mazrui, the rest of the world has certainly been prepared to gobble them up with relish. Mazrui has held eminent positions at the United Nations, the OAU and in numerous universities around the globe, as well as in multifaceted academic and other organisations.

Kenyans reading a new annotated bibliography of his publications, dubbed *The Mazruiana Collection*, will find his academic and intellectual achievements simply stupendous.

Certainly, the son of Muslim Kadhi Al-Amin Ali Mazrui who had wanted his son to pursue Islamic studies at the famed Al Azar University in Egypt (but who died when the boy was only 14), has come a long way since a tottering academic performance at his A-levels in the 1940s for which he was denied entrance to Makerere University. Ironically, Mazrui was in Nairobi a couple of weeks ago to celebrate Makerere's 75th Anniversary, receiving many a kudos as one of the most illustrious dons of East Africa's oldest university.

Mazrui feels that his departure from Makerere for a teaching job in the United States probably caused the breakup of his marriage to Molly.

That marriage produced three children, sons now in their thirties who have excelled in their academic and professional careers in the US. This despite the fact that two of them were born with serious visual disabilities.

"My first son, Jamal, is completely blind, while my third son, Kim Abubakar, is partially blind, but my second son, Al Amin, was born with normal vision." Mazrui explained his two sons' blindness was the result of a genetic condition passed on through his wife's family.

Mazrui is evidently very proud that his two blind sons have proved that their disabilities were certainly not inabilities.

First son Jamal — although totally blind — has over the years acquired an unusual mastery of computers, and today is a civil servant employed by the United States Federal Government.

The partially blind third son, Kim Abubakar, is a top-notch professor of law, teaching at the University of Virginia. Normally sighted Al'Amin is pursuing graduate studies at the University of California, Berkeley. His father quipped that he "seems to have become a permanent graduate student!"

Now Mazrui, who was born in 1933 and turned 65 this year, is married to a woman whom he refers to as "a 1990s phenomenon." He met Elimah Pauline while visiting Nigeria, where she was born more than 20 years after him, in 1957.

A trained teacher, Pauline, from Nigeria's Rivers State, has in recent times decided to become a full-time mother, and spends a lot of time at the couple's home in Binghamton, Washington State, looking after their two young sons, Farid Chinadu and Harith Ekenechukwu, aged six and five.

Describing his new wife as relatively patient, Mazrui says she has attuned herself well to his busy schedules, which involve much travelling and keep him away from home over long periods. As for his little boys, he keeps them happy by bringing home little presents every time he returns from his travels around the world.

Such travels have found him rubbing shoulders with the high and mighty, such as Jerry Rawlings, the late Zairean dictator Mobutu Sese Seko, India's Sonia Gandhi, as well as Newt Gingrich and Robert S. McNamara.

Among African intellectuals, Mazrui is held in high esteem, ranked with luminaries Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Nigerian Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka. Other African writers Mazrui has interacted with include Ghana's Ayi Kwei Armah, the author of *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born, Why Are we so Blest?* and *Two Thousand Seasons*.

Mazrui bumps into Ngugi quite often in New York, as well as in the course of their international travel, giving lectures and attending academic conferences.

According to Mazrui, Ngugi's position about his own exile status is that he will not return to Kenya while the present Kanu regime is still in power.

"Ngugi is more revolutionary than I am, but I find that position rather extreme and I hope he will change his mind one of these days. I also don't mind the fact that Ngugi has in the past said some very nasty things about me because, after all, he was a student when I was a professor at Makerere, and as an older man I am quite prepared to tolerate his negative opinion about me!"

Mazrui takes issue with Ngugi's insistence that African writers should express themselves in their vernacular "instead of what he refers to as colonial Western ones." Mazrui recalls that just before Ngugi launched his Kikuyu language journal, *Mutiiri*, in the US, he had asked the famous writer to consider making it bilingual, "using both Kikuyu and Kiswahili, so as to reach wider audiences, but Ngugi would not hear of it."

Mazrui has also tussled ideologically with Wole Soyinka, who accused Mazrui of fronting for Islamic fundamentalism, which Mazrui vigorously denied in the pages of *Transition*, today edited by American Henry Louis Gates, who took over from Wole Soyinka himself.

"The only reason we as Africans are not unified is that we have miserably failed to recognise diversity in a way that does not militate against an over-

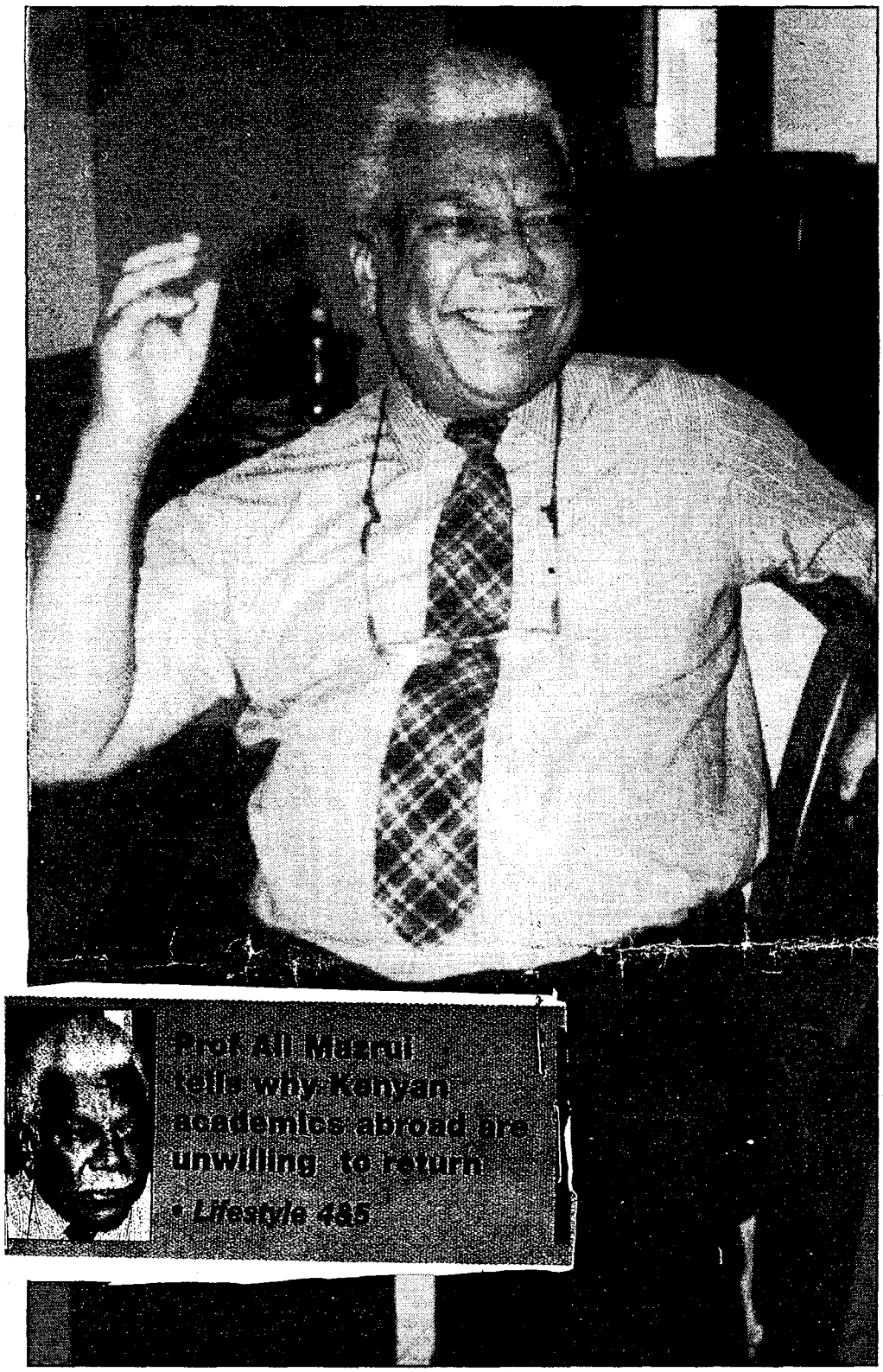
> *"So in my case, my original departure had nothing to do with money, but was under duress. Now the question is, after staying out for a quarter of a century, how easy is it to come back? The answer is that there are many other factors to consider, including the fact that my children are virtually Americans, and are probably never going to come back to live and work in Africa"*

riding sense of nationhood in our respective countries,'' Mazrui states in reaction to those who have criticised his crusade for greater cultural and social awareness among different ethnic and religious entities in Africa.

As a Kenyan Muslim married from both England and Nigeria and now living with his family in the US, Mazrui considers himself the ambodiment of the triple heritage he talked about in his series, *The Africans: A Triple Heritage*, which explored the implications of Western, African and Islamic influences on African civilisation.

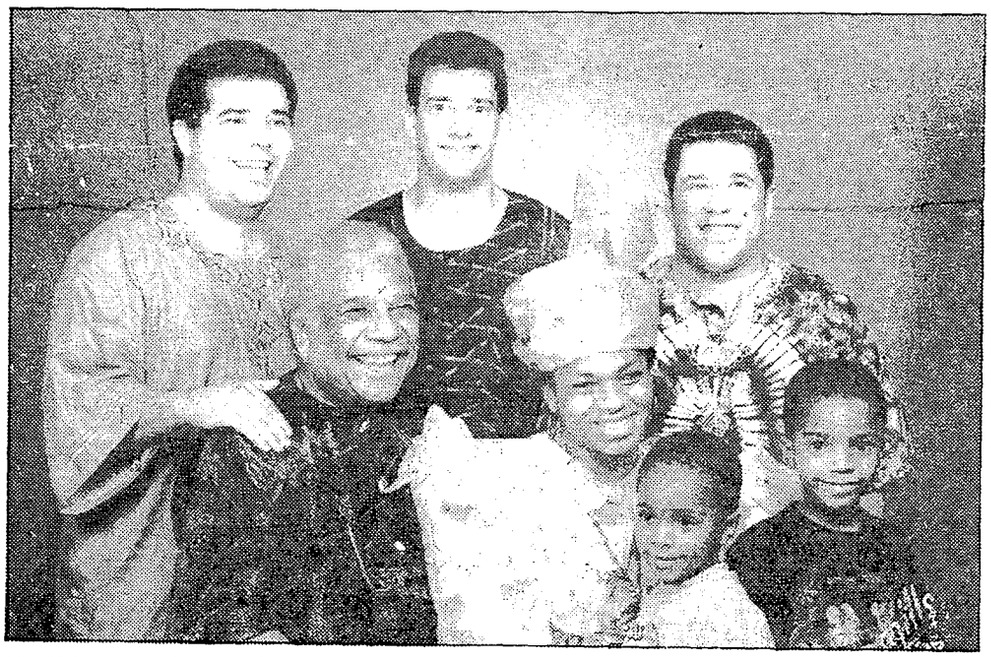
It is perhaps telling that of Mazrui's five sons, only one is a Kenyan while the others hold American citizenship. The fact that today he himself teaches in five universities in three different continents — in addition to attending conferences, workshops and seminars around the world — makes Mazrui more or less the epitome of the world citizen. He has been referred to as ''the walking triple heritage — burdened by Africanity, Islam and the West!''

Kenyan pro-democracy campaigner and human rights activist, Prof Alamin Mazrui, is his nephew. Together they wrote the book on the importance of Kiswahili, *Swahili State and Society: The Political Economy of an African Language*. Alamin has edited numerous publications on human right abuses, especially after political violence that jolted the Coast Province in the run-up to the General Election last December.



Prof Ali Mazrui: "I told the Ghanaian Head of State some home truths about the more complex aspects of the brain-drain. We had a public exchange during which he was getting worked up about the issue. He got more and more angry as he spoke."

Prof Mazrui (second right) attends the African Leadership Forum conference at the Hotel Inter-Continental in Nairobi in the early 1990s. He presented a paper on good governance in a multi-party democracy. The prolific writer is a frequent visitor to Nairobi and Mombasa, where he was born.



Prof Mazrui with his wife, Nigerian Elimah Pauline, and his sons (back row, from left) Kim, Al-Amin and Jamal — from his first marriage to Englishwoman Molly — and (in front) Hanith and Farid, in a 1996 family photograph.

Prof Ngugi wa Thiong'o: Mazrui often urges him to visit Kenya but he won't budge

Screen star who's Kenyan by role

By MARGARETTA wa GACHERU

South African actress Connie Chiume has never been to Kenya. And yet Connie has already starred in two international feature films where she's played Kenyan women.

Connie played Kikuyu rural women although she confessed when we met in Pretoria recently, during the M-Net All Africa Film Awards, that she didn't know a word in Kikuyu, let alone Kiswahili.

But Columbia Pictures didn't care whether the lovely former secondary school teacher from Soweto spoke a Kenyan language or not.

"They were more concerned about my acting ability than where I came from," recalled Connie whose CV includes playing leading roles in upmarket stage musicals *Ipi Tombe* and *Porgy and Bess*.

Once Columbia decided to make into a film Kuki Gallman's 1980s bestseller autobiography, *I Dreamed of Africa* — and to shoot the bulk of it in South Africa rather than in Kenya where the story was actually set — Connie was practically a shoe-in for the lead African role.

"Having just finished shooting another film about Kenyans called *The Air Up There*, in which I played the mother of Charles Maina (a tall lad with a towering basketball talent), I was well known to the local casting agent who auditioned local actors for *I Dreamed of Africa*," said the actress.

Actress Connie Chiume with Fats Bookholane who co-starred in M-Net award-winning film *Chikin Biznis*

"As far as I know, the producers had never planned to film Kuki's story in Kenya," said Connie. The Gallman film was made by the same people that produced another Kenyan film, *The Ghost and the Darkness*, which starred Val Kilmer and Michael Douglas and was also made in South Africa "due to the ease of making movies in my country as opposed to the complicated process that most producers claim exists in Kenya."

"In fact, they were quite adamant about not shooting the film in Kenya," said Connie, who noted the film crew had spent a little bit of time shooting in Kenya and Italy where Kuki originally comes from. "But most of the film was shot right here in KwaZulu Natal," added the actress who played Wanjiku opposite Kim Basinger, the Hollywood film star who just won an Academy Award for Best Actress in 1998 for her role in *LA Confidential*.

Nonetheless, Connie hopes to one day come to Kenya. "If Lake Naivasha looks anything like the 'ranch' constructed for Kuki's film at the Nyala Game Lodge beside the Umkhusi Falls, then the farm and the Kenya lake region must truly be beautiful," added the actress, who co-starred with Fats Bookholane in the South African film, *Chikin Biznis*, which won the Best Anglophone Film for 1998 at the M-Net awards.