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Poems

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Poems

Abstract

QUESTIONS - for us: 'Today' s African Leadership', MODERN AFRICAN STORIES 11, NEW IN AFRICA 1

Ama Ata Aidoo

THREE POEMS FOR CHINUA ACHEBE

I

QUESTIONS

— for us: *'Today's African Leadership'*

They say
all beings
fight to live:

the mole
the lion and
the crow.

They say
all creatures
must fight to be

in the air
on land
in water.

And as for
human
you and me,

we shoot
like wild mushrooms
— in the dark —
sneak up like snakes
claw like cats
pounce

and
trample,

conquer
kill
consume.

Then we go limp:
like wild mushrooms
– at high noon.

So
where do We
come in
Who
feel bad
just to be
firm?
damn all else?
do our own nice or nasty thing?

Surely, My Brother,
500 hundred years is
too long to take
the kicks
without a murmur?

And for what
do we still come with cup in hand,
begging,
pleading and
endlessly shifting?

Who would have us
be human in a world
of cruel beasts
and even more cruel men?

How dare we trust,
when
Trust took a vacation – several million years ago – and
never bothered to come back?

Put quite simply,
in whose name do we ever act?

Whose tomorrow do we sell?

II

MODERN AFRICAN STORIES 11

Yes,
strange as it may sound,
it is true.

I got deported this morning from
my home, my village, my country and the land which
my forefathers and foremothers bled for,
and tilled
from the beginning of time.

My crime?

I look like My Cousin from across the border, and
His President and My Prime Minister
do not see
eye to eye.

Mind you,
My Brother the Professor protests that
theoretically and linguistically,
'it simply doesn't make sense!

No one can ever be deported from
their native country.'

I was packing as he was talking.

I had no time to stop and tell him to look
around:

in a land where
former freedom fighters
are vagrants, or buy respectability only
by guarding the property for those they mortgaged
their youths to fight against,
the factories and the homes they crawled
at night - in the good old days - to burn...

one can be deported from one's birthplace.

And
I
was.

This morning.

III

NEW IN AFRICA 1

Was Pliny serious
when he said:
'out of Africa always comes something new.?'

Shamwari, since he couldn't have foreseen,
he couldn't have meant the last 500 years:

when
Time closed in on itself and
Europe closed in on us, and
the only new things
we served ourselves and
our enemies dished to us
were very old potions:

- nearly always violent -
just warmed over
every one hundred years or so.

As for Africa herself,
conquered
raped
re-conquered
re-raped,

She wriggles still: just like Snake
before Ananse finished him.

So we also struggle on
– clear eyed or blind –
sometimes with song,
often with dance,

and always,
with a prayer on our lips.