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## Poems

Ama Ata Aidoo

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## Poems

### **Abstract**

AN ANGRY LETTER IN JANUARY, HOMESICKNESS - for Anna Rutherford, AN INSIDER'S VIEW - for Kinna VI

# Ama Ata Aidoo

## AN ANGRY LETTER IN JANUARY

Dear Bank Manager,

I have received your letter.  
Thank you very much:  
threats,  
intimidations, and all.

So what,  
if you wont give me a loan  
of two thousand?  
Or only conditioned by  
special rules  
and regulations?

Because I am *not*

white  
male *or*  
a 'commercial farmer'?

(And in relation to the latter,  
whose land is this anyway?)

I know that but for what I am not,  
you could have signed  
away

two solid millions, and  
not many questions asked.

Of course I am angry.

Wouldn't you be if you were me?

Reading what you had written  
was enough  
to spoil for me

all remaining eleven months of the year,  
plus a half.

But I wont let it.

I had even thought  
of asking God  
that the next time round,  
He makes me  
white, male, and a 'commercial' farmer.

But I wont.

Since apart from  
the great poverty  
and  
the petty discriminations,

I have been happy  
being me:

an African  
a woman  
and a writer.

Just take your racism  
your sexism  
your pragmatism  
off me;

overt  
covert or  
internalised.

And  
damn you!

## HOMESICKNESS

- for Anna Rutherford

This afternoon,

I bolted from  
the fishmarket:

my eyes smarting with  
shame  
at how too willingly and sheepishly  
my memory had slipped up  
after the loss of my taste buds.

- Just like an insecure politician creaming up  
to his boss.

Familiarly in an unfamiliar land,  
so strong and so sweetly strong,  
the smells of the fish of  
my childhood hit hard and soft,  
wickedly musky.

All else fall into focus  
except the names of the fish.

While from distant places in my head  
The Atlantic booms and roars or  
calmly creeps swishing foam on the hot sand.

But I could not remember their *Fantse* names.

They were labelled clearly enough  
- in English -

which  
tragically  
brought no echoes...

One terrifying truth  
unveiled in one short afternoon:

that  
exile brings losses like

forgetting to remember  
ordinary things.

Mother,  
when next we meet,  
I shall first bring you  
your truthspeaker's stone:

the names and tastes of fish are also  
simple keys to unlock  
secret sacred doors.

And I wail to foreign far away winds:

Daughter of my Mother and my Father's Orphan,  
what is to become of me?

And Those like me?

### AN INSIDER'S VIEW – for Kinna VI

Even a self-imposed exile is  
another prison.

I opened the gate,  
banged it shut on myself, and  
threw the key away.  
Or just misplaced it.

I thought I could get  
that key again and easily  
if only I could find some time, and  
carefully look.

But in this nightmare world of:

Aliens Compliance Orders  
Temporary Work Permits

regular applications for regular visas  
permanent residence requirements  
Green Cards,  
    Red Cards and  
    Blue...

...And not to mention:

just learning to cope  
in places where  
I cannot take anything at all for granted,

we know that  
other doors out of this prison are open  
    all the time.

But they only lead to *suminado*:  
the backyard  
the outhouses  
the fields beyond.

So of course  
I can run all I want. To  
other lands other exiles.

Going home is another story.