

KOVAVE



A JOURNAL OF NEW GUINEA LITERATURE

VOLUME 4 NUMBER 1 NOVEMBER 1972

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

Jerry Kavop is a first year law student at UPNG.

Raka Taviri is a science graduate of UPNG. He is now undertaking postgraduate studies.

Peni Bryning is a part-time student at UPNG.

Tony Power is a senior tutor in the History of Science and Technology at UPNG.

Ralph Wari from the East Sepik District is a second year arts student at UPNG.

K. L. Goodwin is a Professor of English at Queensland University.

Russell Soaba has previously contributed to *Kovave*. He is a third year arts student at UPNG.

Bernard G. Dalle is a student at Goroka Teachers College.

Bede Dus Mapun is a member of the Editorial Committee and a third year arts student at UPNG.

John Waiko, a graduate in arts from UPNG, is now studying in London. He is author of 'The

Unexpected Hawk' in *Five New Guinea Plays*.

Wiwa Korowi is a student at Goroka Teachers College.

Joseph Wohuinangu is a preliminary year student at UPNG.

Nganining Grinde is a first year student at UPNG. This is his first poem to be published.



Apisai Enos

Apisai Enos has assumed the position of Editor with this issue, replacing John Kasapwalova. He has taught in the Papua New Guinea school system and lectured for a time at Goroka Teachers College. The editor and translator of *Warbat: Tolai Love Songs*, and the author of *High Water*, his first collection of poetry, both in the Papua Pocket Poet series. Enos is a senior student at the university who continues to be active in writing and drama. His essay in this issue well defines his feelings about the future of Niugini literature and *Kovave*.

Kambau Namaleu Lamang

Kambau Namaleu Lamang was born in Galeg village on the Rai coast of Madang District in 1948. He went to primary school in Sidor (Madang) and to Lae High, a multi-racial school where a small group of New Guineans held their own amongst students of other races. After a year of university, he went to Goroka Teachers College where his enthusiasm for art and drama was fired. He responded eagerly to the freedom of the Goroka art room. Left free to find his own style, he turned to the artistic traditions of his own people and built on them using paint, clay, copper and other media. He proved himself to be no narrow specialist, but a versatile man of the arts: an actor of emotional depth and range, and a playwright. Two of his plays have had success in drama competitions. After graduation from Teachers College, Kambau Namaleu Lamang in 1972 was appointed to the Creative Arts Centre in Port Moresby. Here he has been able to devote himself fully to art and drama.



AWAKEN BELL FOR THE GOLDMINE LABOURERS

Oh my friends wake up!
Why don't you wake up?
Up, up and up,
The bell has wakened up.

We have no food, there is nothing for us.
We can't wash, there is no water for us.

Oh the disturber, the disturber,
The unmerciful disturber.

Who are we? The *kanaes*?
Who is a *kanae*, the bird of the seas?

Oh we shall see
The sea geese.

Nganining Grinde

APOLOGY

In the issue of our magazine published in November, 1971, an article appeared entitled 'My Life Yesterday and Today', written by Henginike Bosomu. That article contained references to a missionary, the Reverend Robert F. Hueter, which were defamatory of him. The incidents related in the article were untrue, and were not checked by this magazine prior to publication. The Editors and Publisher of *Kovave* magazine wish to apologize to the Reverend Hueter for the distress caused him and his family by publication of the article.

PRAYER TO THE FATHER PRIME MINISTER

by *Ralph F. Wari*

The blacks' father who art in Canberra, during these years of long struggle, give back to us the rights to our land which you as our true father took away from us because you thought we hadn't exploited it to the full.

Oh merciful father, we thine underdeveloped sons do not have the right technology to exploit it like your angels and saints do. But we beg you to give us absolution and send Moses to lead us to our destiny.

With thine infinite power, give our Moses the political wisdom to lead us to the promised land. We pray for you to ask your angels and saints in Canberra to open their big elephantine ears to listen to our prayers, and not to trample us underfoot with their high horses.

We implore you not to be easily manipulated by your council who want to persuade you to

send your knights against us, for we are in the mess your prophets created in the early contact times.

Father, we believe that with your understanding, you'd have realized by now that the black nations' kingdom has come. But we of limited understanding still pray to you in case you may neglect us. You know and we have realized now that thine will be thine in Konedobu by our own ministers as it was done in Canberra.

Give us this day freedom from our white brothers who gave up their time to come and help us, and who have fulfilled their mission in exploiting us also. May they not still do so after independence while we crawl under their feet like mongrel dogs.

Lead us not into civil war during independence, but save us from political chaos. AMEN.



ODE TO A NEW GUINEA MAN

My black brother
white men have hearts
and guts and blood
white men can love.
Under the white skin
magical ancestral image of the black man
lies the man
neither black nor white.

Money can buy cargo
money can buy a man
money can buy a woman
but 'money can't buy me love'.
What is it you want
my black brother
property, cargo, a slave
or the love of a woman?

Black Chief Minister
black Ministerial Members
in black ministerial cars
signs of independence
signs of freedom
gone the fight leaders
gone the *bosbois*
gone the white *kiaps*.

Afro hair and dark glasses
sideburns and scented soap
jeans, gymboots and motor bikes
signs of independence
signs of freedom
gone the carefree bird shooters
gone the pig minders
gone the teachers' *hausbois*.

Afro hair, lipstick and perfume
jeans, lace bras and mini-skirts
the pill
signs of independence
signs of freedom
gone the carefree *bilum* makers
gone the garden workers
gone the Sisters' *hausmeris*.

What frightens you
my black brother
are you too frightened to give freely
are you too proud to receive?
Strong men are gentle
fearful men use force
why must you seek to bind?

The birds of the air have the whole world
in which to meet and mate.
Man marks off the ground
builds fences and walls
with customs and contracts and colours and creeds.
In vain
the heart can't be forced
like an unbreakable lock
opened by only one key
love.

Love is free
freely given and freely received.
Does freedom frighten you
my black brother?
White man's cargo is black man's brideprice
neither guarantees love.
What is it you want
my black brother?

Tony Power

THE SOUND OF LOVE

by *Bernard G. Dalle*

From the hilltop, among some wild broad-leaf trees, it echoes. Indeed it is sweet, this sound. But no one knows exactly what it comes from. Is it from a person . . . or is it from a strange unpopular species of creature? No. The world knows utterly nothing about it.

Down the hill it echoes, and through the wood that stands still and tall, it echoes. They hear. It calls clearly and its rhythm is clearly reflected from the walls of the valleys that lie on either side of the hill. And down in the valleys too they hear it perfectly well. It rings in the ears of every living organism. It arouses the quietness of the day. Far rivers and valleys hear it too. But none too soon, though it is clear and sweet. It is just a faint distant whistle echoing from some far unknown place. Its rhythm is clear and its melody faints far away beyond the hill. It calls and calls.

Husbands and good wives; grandparents and grandchildren in their cultivation grounds pay it attention. Some immediately conclude that it is from the sunrise, while others think it is from the direction of the sunset. Someone else in his own garden says that it is from the direction of the monsoons. Still others will not give up arguing that it is from the south-east trade wind direction. Still others are puzzled: uncertain from where the sound comes. In their faces there is a question of whether to argue or not to argue about the direction of the sound. A discussable subject it is. Should they delay the work and talk it over or should they go on?

They continue their jobs. Soon it shall worry them a little. Each one of them thinks: young couples in their orchard gardens collecting fruits; men in their hunting grounds trapping, and young sons on their own, practising the skills of snaring; an old man beneath the shadow of his

shabby little hut designing spears and paddles; hands of women between the taro corns weeding; girls giggling in groups in corners of garden fences. They weed first and care best for crops in the corners. They are all busy. No one seems to be bothered about anything else, except his work. Still the sound comes.

They hear it whistle through the morning air and now they must listen to it with more care. It calls and calls. It calls to its highest tune and down to the lowest. To them it brings sorrow. A deep sorrow into their hearts. Those whose eyes can see the north sky see it straight away. Low in the sky above the Arctic Circle, it replaces itself. Straight it lies and ends mark the position of the twin graves in the sky as usual. A strip of black cloud which symbolizes sorrow. It stays still.

Indeed it is sorrow. The world has fallen into a great colour. The atmosphere is heavy. The hill from which the sound comes stands in sorrow. The sound still calls and calls.

Those in gardens on the high slopes hear its sounds level with their ears. Since there's not a thing between their ears and the hill, they hear it as clearly as anything. It comes from the next hill. So sad it sounds . . . They listen, and at last they feel that they must cry. Some stand and some sit, while widows only sit and weep for their dead ones.

They look at the blue ocean before them. They stare at it in vain. It lies vast and endless beneath the vacant blue sky. A little lower than their eyebrows, not too far off, they can view one or two canoes close to the shore. Those are for the fishermen. They've just been out from the communal beaches. Soon they will be out into the deep. Under the shadow of an over-hanging Kalabilum tree, two figures move at the tide-

mark. Those are perhaps their children washing. Maybe their wives too are nearby, placing pots over the open fire in preparation for their return. The waves break white all along the beaches and then steadily back out again. If this sound is not too loud they can also hear faint voices of the children singing away their usual sea song:

*O wave ei, O wave ei;
 Journey to Wageva,
 Guang . . . Guang . . . Guang
 Your mother's moaresa,
 Your father's Komanga,
 Guang . . . Guang . . . Guang.*

On the far horizon in the east a few fishermen and their canoes are again sighted. As small as a stick they are. These have truly been out for quite a while. That is why they are so far off from the communal and family beaches. They disappear and reappear on the sea. It is a pity that those don't realize the great sorrow swallowing the earth. It is indeed a great distress. If only they may know that there is a sorrow upon the earth, they would make for the shore, but no, this isn't the case. The canoes still remain far out on the ocean. What makes them so busy, looking down at their nets, that they don't even glance about themselves? Perhaps baiting and lowering their lines? This may be what keeps them so busy, or maybe the catch of fish keeps them occupied above anything else. Perhaps this is the reason for them not noticing the symbol in the north.

The world seems as though it is full of dead cousins, brothers, sisters and aunts. It is sorrow. A great colour, distress and a grief has descended upon the earth. 'Who is that distant relative of mine that is to die?' someone asks himself. He continues, 'When I have sorrow deep in my heart it means something more than a lesson to me. Some extraordinary events must occur and they are at hand. Maybe the death of several people is close at hand. Or perhaps one of my kinsmen is to be seriously ill. It may be a distant relative visiting me with some strange news. This sadness may come to me or perhaps to somebody else. But I hate death because all sorts of things happen during that time.

*Souls will be departing,
 Souls will be in sorrow,
 Women will be weeping,
 Children will be neglected,
 And men must care for the funeral.*

*The men must prepare their magic duties,
 They must find out who is responsible for
 these deaths,
 And they must make their magic medicine
 that will kill them.*

*Is it Gebo that kills them or is it others?
 The men's house they must investigate,
 That in which the meeting is sought,
 And sorcerers meet their chiefs for
 instructions,
 And plan revenge for those now dead.*

*And then the headmen of the clans
 Shall sit in the men's house and talk again
 in secret,
 Discuss and prepare their gang of sorcerers
 For the pay back.*

*And death must again follow,
 Must again follow,
 Again follow,
 Follow.*

'Indeed I am grieved for those whose souls must pass away. For they are ready to leave us behind and walk their feet onto the land of the spirits, where mushrooms and rotten wood will become their food.'

This noise indeed brings sorrow over the land. It calls and calls. People must listen to it more and more, although it fills many hearts with sadness. In listening to it some old and young people are even forgetting that they are at work. They all sit in silence listening to it.

Sometimes it is interrupted by the noises in the surroundings. Tame boars fall into battle for menstruated daughters; wild ones fight for fruits. Piglets behind the sow grunt for the udder. Sikata makes it his favourite music every now and then. And also birds in palm trees, fruit and wild shrubs, tune themselves into a wide range of sounds.

The two women too hear it at the water pool by the brook. It is glorious, never have they ever heard it before. So splendid that they forget what they must do, but stand there idle and listen. The water-containers which they have to fill, are left lying between their feet. They stand staring at each other in silence. They know not what to speak or do, except listen to the noise which keeps coming down from the hill above.

'Why must this noise be continuous?' They wonder. 'It is truly creating a nice music.' They hear it loud and clear. They keep all their attention to it. It is sweet.

They never know that it causes great colour in so many hearts. But yet to them it is the sound of joy; of love; the sound which breaks their hearts and the sound which they must discover soon. It rolls down the hill, it whistles through the wood, and it comes down like a thunder striking through the stormy air.

It calls and calls. 'Could this be the sound of a bird? But we don't have birds that sing so sweetly,' they keep saying.

Still they stand in silence. They hear its melody faint well and fair into the valley air. 'What could be the truth of the noise?' But no, this question is not to be answered. It is difficult. At last one of them speaks. 'I love it, sister,' says Sararumbe. 'Say no more words, dear sister, it breaks my heart,' Mararumbe replies, 'I must go up; I must search for it . . . that thing making the noise.' 'I must too, I cannot stand it,' says Sararumbe.

They talk no more; all is quiet. Only that which they must see rings in their ears like a church tower bell. They climb and climb. They look away little, nor do they look up. Only they keep their eyes at their feet, and thrust their way through the thorny bush.

The path is there, winding deviously up the hill, but to meander is a waste of time. They must go up straight to get there quickly. No fear at all in themselves while hiking through the thick undergrowth.

The sound calls clearer and louder as they approach. To help themselves up at once, they grab tree roots and leaning stems. Occasionally their feet sink into the decomposed material. The

loose soil falls away beneath their feet; they slide. But this does not matter much, they still climb.

The two most beautiful ones know that this noise is for them. For these two, men journey from far and near to meet them; ugly, fair and handsome. Some stop not for food; some stop not for storm; they must meet them as soon as possible.

But now they are going away, going away to see and investigate the noise. I don't know whether they will return or not, and the world doesn't know either. What a pity if they do not come back. Who knows, maybe the symbol of sorrow in the north marks the end of them from the world in which they have been. The ends of the cloud mark the twin graves in the sky; now these two twins also are heading to investigate the sound.

But the women know it well that it is for them. They climb and climb; they feel no exhaustion. It is now sure that the great sorrow upon the land indicates their departure. Abruptly the smell of some cordyline leaves strikes their noses. It seems as though someone has sent it. Indeed there is somebody waiting for them.

They look up; they see a building. The noise is coming from it. The building is not big; just the normal size for a mature man. It looks half new, and it stands in the sunshine on a piece of flat, cleared land. It is well-designed and decorated.

'Somebody is in there,' they say to one another. They walk faster, making no noise. They arrive at the house; the sound sweetly whistles high in one corner of the building. They keep no pace between themselves.

They advance nearer. They stop and look around, then walk slowly together, hesitate together, glance low towards the door together. It is open; they step on the steps together, and enter the floor together.

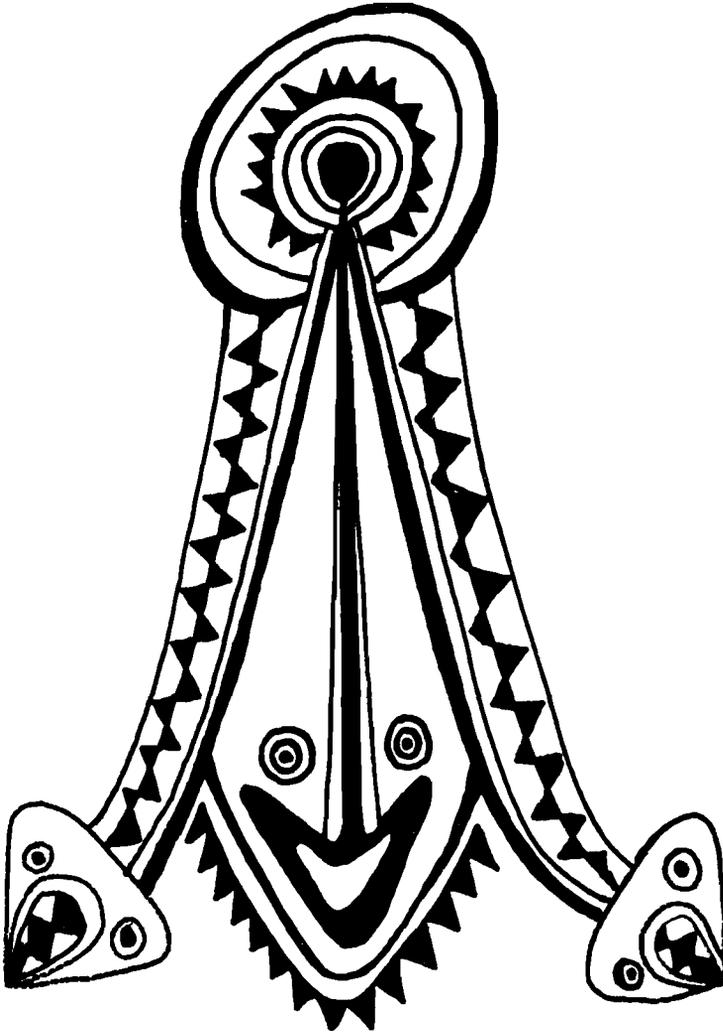
There he stands, Kariwo, the figure of a tall, handsome man. All decorated and high he stands as they enter. All as it should be for the man of his age. 'He is truly the man we want,' they say softly to one another.

He questions them no word; he lets them walk

the floor forward. In the middle of the floor they separate and go to each end of the building. At both sides of the room everything is there. Pots and baskets, plates and grass-skirts; fishing lines and spears in their right place; weapons and paddles have all been embellished and neatly put in their appropriate place.

They turn and look at him; in his mouth is a small instrument. It is a flute. They do not want him to ask them why they have come, because it is he who made the magic of love that brought

them there. They do not want to know whether he has his own wife, because it is he who composed the music of love that brought them there. They want him not to smash a pot, because it is he who made the sorrow for the others, but for them he created love. Nor do they want him to break a spear, for it is from him that the world gains its magic flute. And they need his first bright smile when he finishes, because it is for his name that the world tells the legend, *'The Initiation of the Magic Flute'*.



LUS MAN

They call him so.
His name . . . ?
What for?
He is a lus man.

Forcibly so sweet.
Sweet as vinegar and salt water.
Eh— Eh— Eh—
No worries!
I am a lus man.

Contested!! Contested!
Who must he be?
Would it not be a-a- 'Nigger'???
Why not?
Let it be — it.
Let it be — so.

He sweeps Koki.
He waters Boroko.
He shits on Konedobu.
A real lizard he is.
He is already in — custody!!

A.B.C. reporting.
'Police! Police!
Boroko Disposal Court confirms.
Yea, Yea, he must be jailed.'
Pity the Lus Man!

No shoes eh?
No long trousers eh?
Eh? Eh?
Oh King!
No gat ia!
Fuck off!
Members only.

Him sign me for.
Pen put paper.
'My Name.'
Go away!
Go on — Go on.
Melbourne Cup Shit!

Mi laikim beer.
Wait man!!
Be patient.
You . . .
Oh — no,
Actually I did not mean to.
Well.
Sore tumas
Wan Sikin.

Hamas for radio?
How much money?
Your trousers?
'Wan dollar!'
Ha! Ha!
Slip off will you?
You slimy snake like thing!

Ol man
Aia, aia, kekeni.
Picture going?
You New Guinea man ia!!
Go back to the bush.
Shame on New Guinea!
I putim my hand up eh?
Whiz! whiz!
Gtr! gtr!
Put you hand down.
Aiah! You go weh?
Mi going to airport!
Sorry Buddy!

God help him.
He swears — bustard
If only I could
Speak English
Have a car.
A car.
He only dreams.
Lus man he is.

He smiles
He becomes rigid
He troubles
He acts like a centipede
Hell—— hell! hell!
He has hell.

Election?
National Day.
Papua New Guinea
Flag.
Somare.

No Gat Wok
I Tambu.
VARIAI LASI
No 'Dogs' Allowed
Fuck Mi!
Mi lus man tasol . . .

Jerry Kavop

NIUGINI

Kantri bilong mipela Niugini
Peles bilong maunten paia
Na peles bilong si buruk.
Peles bilong diwai kokonas
Na peles bilong pisin Kumul.

Ol i tok mipela
Seven handred lain manmeri
Tasol mipela bilip
Long wanpela pati
Na wanpela gavman.

Ol i tok mipela
I got seven handred tok peles
Tasol mipela tingting wanpela
Mipela bilip long wanpela Niugini
Peles bilong kundu karai na garamut pairap.

Mipela bilip long
Wanpela president
Na wanpela kantri
EM NIUGINI.

Bede Dus Mapun



THE VICTIMS

by Russell Soaba

An ignorant animal is one which is enclosed in the dark, windowless prison of its own being. . . .

Applause! The curtains are thrown wide open. There they are! Ready to act. Each man to act his own part. For the world itself is the stage—as baldy Willy Shakespeare once said—and people, human beings, are actors on that stage. The stage is full of them. All acting different parts. There are many who like their parts given to them by time, nature, environment, and ultimately by man himself to his fellowmen . . . There are yet others who do not like their parts. And these are the victims . . . Then there is silence. The action must begin, as it did many a time before, since the beginning of humanity. It must begin!

Dialogue!

'Your name?' asks the actress firmly, from behind the table. She is the Sinabada.

'Stephen,' calmly responds an actor who is standing directly in front of the Sinabada. He is Stephen, presumably the first native martyr.

'Your native name? or rather your New Guinea name?' inquires the Sinabada.

Stephen hesitates. He does not want to answer the question. Maybe the question asked by the Sinabada is too dirty for the boy—too downcast even for him—to answer.

'I said what's your New Guinea name, child?' thunders the Sinabada. She hits the table at the same time with her right fist. Her right fist hurts.

'Oh!' returns Stephen. He is startled, 'Ah-ah-Ke-Kerina—Stephen Kerina.' He speaks rather clumsily, which is stupid of him. This is a sign which enables a privileged hunter to take advantage of the unprivileged game.

'Heaven's above! Will it take all that time and

stuttering to say just those two words . . .?' returns the Sinabada, with her eyes flying around the room, up on the ceiling and back to Stephen again. She is mumbling angrily under her breath as she writes. Stephen thinks she is one of those blind conformists—to the modern Australian methods of colonization of course; or, to be exact, imperialism, for imperialism does exist where a colonizer underestimates or fails miserably to understand the colonized and vice versa.

'And you want to go to Moresby tomorrow?' the Sinabada inquires further—with indifference. The executioner.

'That's right,' returns Stephen. He is in a mood for convalescence now. That is wise.

'You are a student?'

'That's right.'

'Your travel warrant, please.'

'Er—you got it, Miss. I gave it to you last week.'

'Oh, that's right,' says the Sinabada. There is silence. Only the rustling of papers can be heard as the Sinabada looks for the travel warrant through the piles of papers on the table. Then she finds the travel warrant lying on the floor (fortunately, before she gets bored) with a few dirty boot-marks on it. The Sinabada is reading the travel warrant now.

'Listen, Stephen,' she says, 'you could go to Alotau first you see, and then go to Moresby from there. All right?'

It is a trap, Stephen. Say 'No—I'll think about it.' Never say yes too soon. If you go to Alotau who will you know there? No wantoks. You have already spent a week here at Raba Raba trying to go over to Moresby. You might stay in Alotau for another week! With not much

money! Besides, your travel warrant says that you go from here to Port Moresby, via no other place else.

'Well, is it all right with you?' asks the Sinabada, with impatience. Say no, Steve.

'Yes, Miss,' comes the meek voice of Stephen. Good on you! You are the essential citizen of this country.

'But—but . . . ' mutters Stephen. On second thoughts.

'You can always get to Moresby without any trouble, via Alotau,' comes the voice of the Sinabada.

'But . . . '

'We've done it before, you see, with the other passengers and it worked. So you'll be quite all right.'

'It's all right with other passengers but not me,' says Stephen.

'Why?' asks the Sinabada. Stephen does not answer.

'I told you, it will be quite all right if you go to Alotau first,' comes the angry voice of the Sinabada.

'Next passenger, please.' She concludes her conversation with Stephen.

It is over.

Stephen is out-talked. Defeated. The next passenger brushes him aside.

He walks back to Uncle Joe's house. Uncle Joe's house is only a quarter of a mile away from the office where Stephen talked to the Sinabada. But on this particular time, after he, a native, has been defeated, the distance seems longer. It may take fifty years to get back to Uncle Joe's house . . .

Now and then he waves to the people, natives, who are passing—as he walks. Now and then his head is bowed down, watching the ground that is passing by beneath him. And he thinks. He thinks not only of himself but of the Sinabada also. And he wonders why he cannot understand the Sinabada. He wonders why the Sinabada cannot understand him also. Suddenly he becomes an enemy to the Sinabada. For no reason at all. The Victims . . .

'Stephen!'

No answer.

'Stephen bo!'

'Ah!' comes the harsh reply from a boy who is chopping wood not far from the house.

'Is that how you answer your old mother, now that your father's dead?' softly scolds a woman who is escaping from the smoke which is rebelliously fuming all over the place.

'Sorry, mother,' apologizes the boy. 'Yes, mother,' he then corrects himself with a smile that looks like a sign of sarcasm.

'That's better,' returns the woman, who is now furiously blowing the fire to make it light up. There is too much smoke coming from the fire and this is the cause of the woman's excessive flow of undesirable tears.

The woman comes away from the fire and wipes the unwanted tears from her eyes with the back of her hand.

'Mother!' the boy shouts. 'Why did you call me?' The woman does not answer. She stands still, gazing towards the west end of the village, towards the setting of the sun. She looks at the boy up and down and turns her head away as if with indifference. She makes no intention of answering Stephen, her only son in the Kerina family.

'Mother?' pleadingly Stephen shouts again.

There is silence.

Far down the row of houses Stephen and his mother hear some women wailing. They are wailing for the dead perhaps. Has Alfred, the son of Didymus, died after five weeks in bed, sick? Perhaps. Surely someone must have died, thinks the boy, as he gazes dumbly towards the west end of the village.

'Aigo, natugu,' wails a woman in Anuki language. 'Aigo ravidu maisena—Aigo beautiful evening,' wail others. The evening air is still and the words of the wailing women ring in every ear that listens. At the back of one house children are singing Anuki folk songs:

*'Nawaravi-ye kayena guridi—
Tauni yadi yabiyana!
Manonona tupadi debaye—
Tauni yadi yabiyana!
Aigo Sinada! Awaki i beram
Bi kuritubuyi, kubi tubuyi?'*

*Natum kata
Bi tawa waya maram!*

*(In the moonlight her long legs showed—
In town she was brought up!
Her thighs all were left bare—
In town she was brought up!
Aigo Sinada! What could have made you
Bear this child, bear this child?
Your daughter today
And a stranger tomorrow!)*

No, thinks the boy, the women are not waiting for the dead because the children are singing happy Anuki folk songs.

'Mother!' Stephen hears himself exclaim suddenly. 'Has Alfred, the son of Didymus, died?' He wants to make sure.

'No,' returns the woman. Quiet tears fall from her eyes. The boy is moved by his mother's quiet crying. 'It's Bariyawa Dion,' continues the woman, 'the son of Gadiyanu, who has come home again.'

'Bariyawa Dion!' quietly cries Stephen in excitement. He has heard about Bariyawa Dion many times before. Bariyawa Dion is a university student. Only last year, while Stephen was in high school, had Bariyawa Dion quarrelled with a kiap who later went home because of his unfair treatment of the native people in Cape Vogel. It was then that Bariyawa Dion became famous. And Tototo villagers call him Bariyawa Dion—Master John.

But something else causes the boy to ask his mother wonderingly: 'Mother! Why do you weep?'

The woman smiles as she suppresses large tears from her eyelids. 'No,' says the woman smiling, 'we weep for ourselves and for you young people.'

Stephen does not understand. In fact he did not understand until now. Only here at Raba Raba, while struggling to break that barrier between his own being and that of the Sinabada, does he realize things. He is turning the pages of the old book which his mother has written back in Tototo village. And he sees himself suddenly

being caught in the net that has been created by one group of humanity for the other . . .

'Oi, Stephen! Where are you going? The house is here. Have you forgotten after spending a week here?' That is the voice of Uncle Joe. Stephen starts. He has dreamed too much, while walking down to Uncle Joe's house from the Sinabada's office.

'Well, you going tomorrow?' anxiously asks Uncle Joe.

Stephen does not answer. There is a smell of black tobacco, wrapped in a piece of paper, coming from Uncle Joe's breath. Stephen turns his head away from Uncle Joe. Uncle Joe puts out his tobacco and places it behind his right ear. He is worried.

'Well, young man, you going tomorrow or not? Please, son, answer me.'

'I don't know,' answers Stephen.

'You don't know!' echoes Uncle Joe. 'Sinada oh! That's no good. That means you will never go to Moresby. You'll be late starting work at school. I know it. I know this Sinabada. She's always like that. Not sure what she's doing. She does not do her job properly. No! She's a . . . she's a . . .' Uncle Joe is furious. He continuously curses the Sinabada in tok ples. 'This is no good. She must understand the situation we are in. It happens all the time with her. Every time passengers come to this place they never get a chance of going back to work in towns. She helps Europeans but not us. Why? Some natives are sometimes helped because they fight for their rights like everybody else should—or because they speak better English or some bastard thing like that. Really this Sinabada is from the mountains and primitive parts of Australia, that's why she does not do her job properly . . . I suppose these Europeans humbug around here because this area of the country does not get any publicity at all as far as the whole country's concerned. These Europeans here don't even know what's happening in other parts of this country. Last year a white kiap was killed by the natives in the jungles of . . .' Uncle Joe is on his feet now. He is moving around the room, punching his left palm with his right fist as he speaks. He speaks of the things which Stephen

has never heard before in his life. It is now that Stephen recognizes lucidly those things that must be recognized if the people of Niugini are to survive. And he realizes that everything is useless if he is only a beginner. He *cannot* break the walls of misunderstanding between him (his wantoks and native brothers and sisters included) and the Sinabada and other Europeans. It is useless.

Uncle Joe *cannot* approach the Sinabada with those wild speculations because he cannot speak English.

There is only one solution to this, thinks Stephen. Violence!

*From where this wind blows
To what place it flows—
Ah, the sweetness I feel in it this day
Will be felt also by my loved ones far
away . . .*

How strange, thinks Stephen. He is thinking of the words of a folk song which Anuki children sing quite often at home. The composer of this song, ponders Stephen, must have had vivid imagination . . .

He is lying on the form outside Uncle Joe's house. There is a cool evening breeze coming in from the east. Today the cool breeze touches him and in less than twenty-four hours it will flow across the sea, to the north, to Cape Vogel, where it will touch a woman who is weeping in front of a house. It will touch a woman who is weeping because her son is leaving her to go to a school in a faraway land. It will touch the woman who is weeping and hugging a boy, her only male child in the family. Her eyes are closed for she cannot bear to see the child whose warmth she only feels for a brief moment . . .

'Stephen,' comes the voice of a young actress standing above Stephen. Stephen opens his eyes to find Betty looking down at him. Betty is from Cape Vogel too, and she comes from a village about twenty miles from Tototo, Stephen's village. She is attractive, she wears a mini, and she can easily get a pass to almost anything. She came over to Raba Raba only a few days ago.

Stephen came to know her in Uncle Joe's house because she is a distant relative to Uncle Joe's wife. Nice girl, thinks Stephen, but too sexy. She was brought up in town.

'Come on, Stephen child,' says the girl teasingly, 'stop feeling sorry for yourself. Dinner's ready.' Betty's teasing encourages Stephen to stick his own neck like a tortoise out of his own shell of simple-mindedness.

Stephen follows Betty into Uncle Joe's house.

It is night at Raba Raba. The sky is clear. The moon is high. Like a yolk in a frying pan. And the stars are shining in their magnificent grandeur. Stephen is lying on the bed in Uncle Joe's house looking out of the window and at the brightness outside. He is thinking about the Sinabada. She is a bitch. He thinks about going up to the office in the morning and cancelling that trip to Alotau. It wasn't my idea in the first place anyway, he tells himself, then swears in tok ples which no one hears.

Someone stirs in the room. Then the figure of Betty is seen clearly by the window. The dark shadows of the louvres play rhythmically along the tall body of Betty.

'Stephen?' comes the gentle voice of Betty.

'Yes?' returns Stephen quietly.

'Can I shut the louvres?'

'Why?' asks Stephen. Betty laughs in the dark.

'Evil spirits might enter and scare us,' says Betty. Stephen laughs for the first time that day.

'Do you believe in them?' inquires Stephen. They both laugh again. The louvres are left open. Moonlight flows in. It is bright. One could read a book in the moonlight. Betty returns and lies on the bed, at the other end of the room.

There is silence. Stephen watches Betty stirring on the bed and laughs.

'What's funny, Stephen?' asks Betty in English.

'No. Nothing,' returns Stephen in *Are*, Betty's language. 'I just thought of a funny song,' adds Stephen.

'Oh. Can you sing it?' asks Betty.

'It's in Anuki language.'

'I can understand some of the Anuki words.'

'O.K.' says Stephen. 'Here we go.' He clears his throat.

*'Nawaravi-ye kayena guridi—
Tami yadi yabiyana!
Manonona tupadi debayi—
Tami yadi yabiyana!
Aigo Sinada! Awaki I beram
Bi kuritubuyi, kivi tubuyi?
Natum kata
Bi tawa waya maram!'*

'Nice song,' says Betty in English. Stephen does not say anything. There is silence.

'You know, Steve,' Betty breaks the silence, 'some of these songs sound ridiculous but they have a lot of meaning—if you think about them.'

'Um,' responds Stephen who cannot think of anything to say.

There is yet another period of silence and Stephen finds himself lying next to Betty. The meeting. That strange meeting when one experiences a taste of human flesh. The warmth that is there—the unwritten laws that break up this meeting—the animation that is there when the laws are broken—the liberty that one has to enjoy this meeting—the life which is of flesh and blood in all human beings—the nearness of one warm human being to the other . . . and Stephen feels some of it this night.

'Stephen.'

'Um?'

'Come on.' There is silence. Well, you heard what she said, Stephen tells himself. Come on. Give it to her. What has she done to deserve all the privileges? She's got a pass, hasn't she? She's going over to Moresby on Thursday, isn't she? And she has been here at Raba Raba barely a week! And you waited for weeks struggling to go over to Moresby. Come on, Steve. Give it all to her! It is now or never. No! No, I won't do it. I'll spoil myself!

'Shit!' moans Stephen. 'What haven't I got that other human beings got. I'm getting out of

this, the squalor of it, the conflict there is in all this.'

'Stephen,' moans Betty, 'where are you going?'

'Honey,' Stephen hears himself say in English, 'I'm getting out of it all—and then I'll come back to destroy it completely.'

'Destroy what completely?'

'Honey, you don't understand, because you have been a dead-head almost all your life—you get free passes, privileges and all—too busy getting them in fact that you don't even recognize the conflict that exists in the society you live in. I'm going to destroy it and that's final!'

'You can't do that. This is a free world!'

'Honey, the whole world's a stage and you play your part while I play mine. O.K.?' Stephen walks out and bangs the door. He thus drowns Betty's sobs in the half-lit room.

Stephen stands on the beach and looks out into the sea—the Pacific Ocean. He watches the ripples responding sensuously to the moon up above. And there, not far from the shore, is *Zircon*. She will be sailing to Cape Vogel tomorrow and Stephen will be going too. He is running away from the Sinabada, from the traps that one human being sets for another. He is running back into the silence and ignorance from whence he came—into the darkness of his own being only to return later to do nothing but destroy. . . . He will see his mother again, tell her about the evils of the white society and that will convince her to accept her son once more as a villager. He walks towards the boat. The water rises up to his waist, to his neck, until he feels his feet lifting from the earth. Then he turns and does the back-stroke towards the boat. He watches himself leaving the mainland. There are lights still on in some of the Europeans' houses. The Sinabada's house is dark.

'Sleep well,' says Stephen. 'Sleep well, Sinabada and your friends, for one day you won't need to sleep but fight for your very lives. . . .'

MOA! MOA! YET!

Poket insait
Han insait
Angesip insait
Moa! Moa! Yet!

Garas i stret
Ai i stret
Ia i stret
Pes i stret
Moa! Moa! Yet!

Tingting i op
Ai i op
Ia i op
Maus i op
Moa! Moa! Yet!

Salim tasol
Givim tasol
Mekim tasol
Apim tasol
Paitim tasol
Tok tasol
Moa! Moa! Yet!

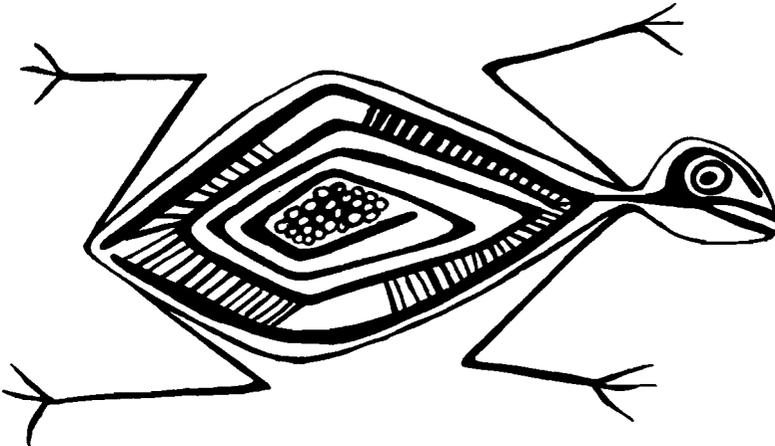
Poket i buruk
Han i kamap
Angesip doti
Moa! Moa! Yet!!

Garas i karangi
Ai i raun
Ia i pas
Pes i bagarap
Moa! Moa! Yet!!

Tingting i sot
Ai i wara
Ia i bulut
Maus i buruk
Moa! Moa! Yet!

Baim nau
Kisim bek nau
Sikin i pen nau
'You bagarap pinis'
'Sori mama!'
Mi kisim asua bilong
Moa! Moa! Yet!

Jerry Kavop



O MAN WANTOK

O man wantok mi sore long yu.
Mi sore yet long yu.
Yu lukim meri Astralia
Yu lukim meri Amerika
Yu lukim meri Inglan
Na you seksek long en.

O man wantok mi sore long yu.
You go long piksa na yu seksek
Yu lukim waitpela susu
Yu lukim beksait i stap nating
Yu lukim longpela waitpela gras
Na yu seksek nogut tru.

O man wantok yu mekim wanem long meri wantok?
Yu givim pikinini long en
Yu givim plenti wok long en
You paitim em sapos kaikai i no kamap kwiktaim
Yu larim em long haus na go drink bia—
O sore-sore long yu!

O man wantok mi sore long yu.
Yu wokabaut olsem kakaruk man
Yu putim klos olsem kauboi
Yu go long piksa, yu go spak nabaut
Long nait yu drim long meri i narakain—
O man wantok mi sore yet long yu!

Peni Bryning

THE PAINTED DREAMS OF A PAPUAN SHANTY BOAT

by Raka Taviri

T-A-U-T-A-V-A-IA-OH!!!!!! It was the cry of a cock at dawn on top of the rusty old, corrugated-iron roof of the canoe next door. Against the gloomy horizon of the dawn, the roof rises about five feet from the floor of the houseboat. How battered it looks from the recent storm. The boat itself, a doubled outrigger, is only about three feet high. It rests on stones surrounded by broken glass. As yet I cannot make it out very clearly in the departing darkness.

Now the cock crows its last call for daylight and far away his call is answered. Up rises the two-eyed sun from the east, far away over the blue mountains. Look! You can see the hairs and roots of the sun's blur spreading out to the heavens. See how the coast and the oceans beyond are lit up!

For the little coastal shanty town fringing the city in this country of ours, this Paradisia Territory of Papua, it is another day. See how the population of this little shanty town is busy preparing for it? Yes. It is the same day, repeated over and over again. The same things will go on, with the same people, with the same appearance. It never changes. Never.

Now I can hear some of the occupants of the next door canoe are already awake. Oh! It's only the three black cats and the skinny black puppy with bones almost sticking out of his flesh. They're all squatting at the front of the houseboat. They look very hungry and sick. See! They are almost falling off to sleep again. How very cold they look, shivering there in the dawn.

Listen. . . . Can you hear the noise of coconuts being scraped? Now the sounds are increasing till they come from every direction where there is

a houseboat. Look how the shore is completely filled with crowded houseboats; all supported by heaps of stones and old forty-four gallon drums. Today, one among this multitude of houseboats is unique. It is the houseboat owned by the three cats and the evil-looking dog. The boat whose humans are still asleep inside their low-built hut.

Now the sun sits regally on the mountains. There are sudden movements of people from one houseboat to another. Several men are hastily rushing away to work. One or two women are already back from the shops with bread and biscuits. Such people do not care what they buy. Though they are poor they seem to be gay and happy with the life of this shanty town. But not those in our houseboat with the three black cats and the evil-looking puppy. No, not them.

Look! If you look carefully you can see them! The humans are coming out of the hut. That's the head of the family coming out first; he is stretching his back. It is bent like a bow. His name is Perno. Isn't he a weedy-looking man? I'd say about thirty. He looks shifty too. Do you know he is known by the whole community for his rough character and how he treats his family? Next comes Einsil, his wife. See, she stoops to come out of the little door, just two feet wide and three feet high. She is going through the same actions as her husband. Slowly, they are followed by their two children. That one is their son, Paia. How ragged and dirty he is! His shorts and shirt are torn to pieces; probably by rats and cockroaches. See how he chews the end of his dirty old shirt? His smell is disgusting. And last as usual! Here comes Kreis, their daughter. Her dress is torn too. She how she cowers behind her brother. She is

only four years old, while he is about six.

Why should it be so disgusting to see a family outside their home? Look carefully around their feet. See? All over the floor of the houseboat are blow-flies, house-flies, cockroaches and other innumerable insects. There aren't so many now for the sun has chased a lot away to their homes. Now look at the area surrounding the houseboat. See how small this particular houseboat is among the others? Can you believe it is almost completely surrounded by trash? Broken bottles? Old rusty tins, pieces of wire and all the junk, rubbish and debris that is washed up by the high tide at night? It is disgustingly smelly in the sun. Even I can hardly stand the sharp smell of rotting fruits, sour bread, decaying banana skins and seaweed. But this peculiar family *lives* there! They do not notice it. They enjoy this life as much as I do or as much as all the neighbours do who seem to dislike them so much. Yes. It will go on like this till eternity.

Evening. Zzzzzzzz!!! The buzzing of disturbed flies surrounds us. Zzzzzzzz!!! They are irritated by the noise of rattling pots inside the houseboat. Perno is just returning from the industrial area of town where he has obviously visited a pub. This is clear from his staggering and falling as he nears the houseboat. He is dead drunk for today is Friday. Yes, it is a great day for him after two weeks' hard labour. Today he can spend money on whatever he likes. Mostly he spends it on beer. I don't know how the family will survive for the next two weeks. It is hard to understand. They certainly go nowhere; only he goes out, just to work and back again. Why should he care about family matters?

It is poor Einsil who runs the family's affairs. She has an almost angelic love for her children. With education *she* could be the Queen of her country, but alas she has no money. She is the only reason for the family's survival. Though they cannot change or progress, at least they can live through her.

See? The sun is sinking quickly. Now it's all over for the day. The same day. Every day. It is night now. See how all the neighbours are crawling into their crowded homes? But our

family is still awake, except Perno. He is dead to the world and doesn't even know where he is. Einsil leaves him alone when he is drunk. Look! He has fallen down into the canoe half-full of mosquito-infested water, which has irritated the sleeping cockroaches to come out of their dark cages. See them? Watch them as they crawl around the family eating their bare meal of two fish and some bananas.

Now Einsil is making some tea. The three are sitting face to face in a circle on the floor, a small hurricane lamp in the centre. It just gives them enough light to see the whole hut. They do not take any notice of their father. They cannot do anything for him anyway. Einsil is not too hard on him. She loves him, in her own way, despite his faults. After all he is a human being like anyone! Like us he also originated from the species *Homo sapiens* and he is head of the family, remember. If only for this reason he must be looked up to by them. Yet, there is another. He has done many good things in the past. Remember that. Always. The look of peace on his face shows he is dreaming of it.

'What a good student I was at the beginning. Only, when I went on to high school, I somehow became more careless. . . . All through those three years of high school I painted and dreamed! Dreamed and painted! How lucky I thought myself! I was being trained to paint and how I loved it! I remember how surprising it was for the art teacher to find I had such interest in my work. Yes. I produced many good paintings in those days! And some were sold at high prices too! I was a fool. I should never have started drinking. Was it the fourth year I was kicked out of school for drinking? I cannot remember now. It was very sad for the art teacher too.

'I remember when I went back to my village, I painted very good paintings then. Many were taken to the big town on the coast to be sold. That cheat! That dirty cheat! I knew I shouldn't have trusted him. Like a fool I gave the lovely paintings to the manager of an art shop to sell for me. That was the last I saw of them. Oh, that

manager, I could have strangled him. And now? Now I am married with two children. And where are the paintings? Where is the money for the paintings? How old am I? Now when did I send away those paintings? Yes! I am thirty now and I sent away those paintings thirteen years ago. Oh!! That is very unlucky—THIRTEEN. Oh! Oh! No!"

Einsil! Don't be so rude about his not painting, for he is drunk now; very drunk. Forgive him, Einsil, for he has a very bad memory. Have pity on him; save him for he cannot save himself. . . . Well then, leave the matter until tomorrow, Einsil, for it is night, pitch dark, when all men must sleep in peace.

Oh! Sleep, you family of the unhappy one! Sleep! I am watching over you, with your three black cats and the bony, evil-looking puppy.

Night is quite unreal. Yes!—it is. Look at Einsil. She is sleeping. But what is that expression on her face? She seems to be laughing. But she isn't really! Her face tells you something. Yes, she is dreaming. But of what? How her face reflects her thoughts! See!

She is seeing visions in her dream. Not of this world, but of the spiritual world of her God. Of heaven and of hell.

She is dreaming of the family's life after death. See! At the Gates of Heaven she is being welcomed by an army of angels. The angels are singing:

Rejoice with us, Einsil

For this is the Day

When you must be received!

Rejoice with us, Einsil,

Rejoice and pray

For your children will follow your lead!

See! The angels are receiving her. They are taking her, walking her along a narrow path towards some beautiful place. She can see two small children ahead of her. They are playing quietly on a lawn with the three black cats, gaily enjoying themselves. But, look! She is being tempted to look to the left. There! A few hundred years away she hears someone calling her. It is Perno! She sees her husband amidst the burning fires. How lean and hungry he looks! How his bones stick out! He is whining

desperately for mercy and forgiveness. But he cannot reach her because of the great gap between them. Look! She is running towards him but staggers back from the burning pit! It is black and hot and she can see nothing except smoke and darkness. Such darkness can never be seen through for it is too thick. See how Perno groans when he is unanswered? Look! Einsil is crying! She cannot help herself, for she is being torn by separate forces within her. It is too late! Too late to change. See how she stirs in her sleep? See the expression on her face change? . . . KERRBOOM! The sudden terrifying flash of thunder and storm outside wakes everybody up. Yes. Einsil wakes up. See? She is obviously surprised to find herself stiff and aching, on a hard floor, inside a dirty room, on an old, old houseboat.

The thunder and storm have ceased. Look, it is dawn again. Another day—Saturday—A different name but the same old day repeated again, and again, endlessly. But! It is a special day for our peculiar neighbours. Somebody must find out the meaning of Einsil's dream. What's going to happen? What will happen to the family? The answer soon comes. Look! A rich relative is coming to spread the good news. He jumps up on the houseboat and bangs the roof and wall. Hear him? He is calling out Perno's name. The family was already awake so they come out quickly to see what's going on. Watch Perno's face. He is telling them that Perno has made a fortune out of his paintings. Can you see any change? No? I thought not. 'But are you going to waste this good fortune, my cousin? Steps must be taken to help the family! They will now be able to lead a new life if you change your ways and move to a new house!'

But see, Perno cannot believe it! He is shaking his head, slowly, stupidly. Perhaps he doesn't want to believe it. Perhaps . . . perhaps Perno does not want to change!

The Saturday sun is sinking behind the horizon. It casts the shadow of a staggering and falling man. The man is approaching the small houseboat. See! He staggers and falls! He has lost all control of what he is doing. Look, a friend is coming along and helping him over to

the houseboat. He leaves him there. Perno manages a canine grin of thanks. . . .

Dusk has already fallen. Look how the sky is filled with black smoke. Some of it is very thick and hangs suspended over the little houseboat. Paia has spotted this frightening thing and calls his mother. Einsil lights the small hurricane lamp and comes out to investigate. As she stumbles out, she is surprised to find Perno lying against the houseboat, obviously dead drunk. He is smelling of alcohol and bleeding from the nose. Now is the time when Einsil must help him. He needs it very badly. Can you hear her moving about? She is staying awake keeping him comfortable through the night. Nobody knows what has caused the bleeding. Perno cannot tell because he is drunk and so she attends to him all through the night, unaware. The two children are crying very softly beside their mother. They are very hungry. Let them sleep away their hunger tonight. But what will happen tomorrow? There will be no food cooked this night because Einsil is busy trying to stop the bleeding. This helpless and poor woman has no way of contacting the doctors at the hospital. Above all, don't let the little ones starve, Einsil, for they are helpless too. What will happen when they cry softly in their hearts again? Oh, pity them, Einsil! I trust in you, Einsil, not to let them starve. It is all up to you. . . .

They have fought through the night, this poor family. They have won their fight the hard way. Now, Sunday morning calls them to wake up. Perno is all right and Einsil will feed the hungry children. Soon everything will be all right again.

But look! There is a surprise outside their little home. This will puzzle them! At dawn this Sunday morning, their houseboat is surrounded by armed policemen. See! Perno is coming out of the hut and there is no way of escape for him. He is being arrested and taken to the headquarters in town. The police inspector waiting outside the houseboat is going inside to investigate. Look! He notices the blood on the floor and calls together the three remaining residents. The black cats and the little, bony puppy have already escaped before the raid. The inspector interviews the family on

the spot. Poor Einsil! She tells him about the family life and her husband's history. After the interview, the inspector and the armed police leave the houseboat. Look how the neighbours gather in groups to gossip and stare. . . .

Einsil's ordeal is almost over. It has been all so mysterious and unexpected. She is filled with fear. It is deepened with the coming of important looking white people for these are men of high standards of living! The group consists of a spectacled doctor, a detective and a psychologist. They're all coming to interview her. She makes an effort to answer their questions through the interpreter. The interviewers do not stay very long. See the looks on their faces? Pity? Disgust? Clearly they cannot stand the pungent smell of their surroundings. One nurse faints because of it and is being taken back to the waiting car. The rest of the white interviewers go away soon after her departure. Einsil is left feeling faint, with the two children crying quietly inside the hut.

What of Perno? Soon he is being interviewed by the same police inspector who interviewed Einsil. He is put in a cell for the rest of the day. How gloomy and evil it looks. It is very dark and wet inside. All is lost for him in this dark, ugly cell. He stands on cold stone. He cannot sleep, or sit down, or climb out. His mind has almost gone. There is no way he can prevent his torture. Look! All life is being squeezed out of him by this punishment. His face is twisted with pain—like the pain from broken ribs. He passes away the chilly night in his prison of prisons, his evil and dark and mysterious prison.

Now the family is separated. 'There are rumours that Perno is mentally diseased. I heard he has been taken to the mental hospital—probably for life! Poor Einsil! The family will never be able to reunite again!' Yes, Perno is a long way away and the gap between him and his family is now unbridgeable. No more will he paint. No more will he dream. . . . Einsil and the two children are not even able to see him. They are not allowed in behind the barred doors where he lives with many others like him. Soon the family is leaving next door. They are going

back to the village because nobody is left to help them in this shanty town. The neighbours have lost all interest . . . new gossips engage them. . .

Where are they now? Mother is dying and Father has gone, finished.

'Listen, my children—you must always try to be good, for you get from life only what you give to it. Please remember that. Always. For life to me is painted that way; I see it that way.

And it shall be that way forever, my children: I see now that my dream was not wrong. . . .

'Just listen to the voices, my children! Those are the voices of angels in Heaven! Listen! They are calling you too, and it shall be that way . . . forever. . . .'

See, the little girl is crying but the boy is numb. They are being led away . . . hopefully, to a better life. . . .



LAMENT FOR A DEAD HUSBAND

Favoured and skilful hunter what shall I do?

I am tearing my new string-bag in which I intended to carry potatoes for you the first time.

I am in pain and grief as I take off what my father decorated me with,
My brother, my brother, to show you that I love you even in death, I am pulling out my hair.

My Polupiri brother, I am hurt all the more for it is not a dream that you are going away with the love that I have come to experience.

My Polupiri brother, the father of white eyes,

I did not know the magic with which to trap you;

Now, you are going with your brothers as company,

But I am one, accompanied only by sorrow, heartaches, grief and loneliness.

These are my partners as long as I live on in this cold world,

My brother, good-bye, good-bye.

Brother, love is divided, home is divided and our future is divided for eternity.

My brother, I will rather die and bury everything with me for I am overburdened.

Translated by Wiwa Mokoi Korowi

Note:

This 75-80 years old traditional song of sorrow which is well known for its popularity in the Imbogu speaking area of Lalibu, in the Southern Highlands District, was originally composed by a young woman whose name is unknown today. She was married to a young man in another village. They were married for only a couple of weeks, but during that time all the men were actively involved in tribal fighting with another tribe. The young man was fighting with his men and spent all his time away from his village.

One day all the warriors returned sadly mourning and told the relatives of the young man that he had been killed by the enemy. The grief was far too much for the young woman and as she shaved off her hair, cut off her finger joints and tore away her necklaces, armlets, string-bags and other decorative items with which her father had beautified her, she sang the song, describing her sorrow for her husband.

The second stanza is seldom sung and the words are very difficult to recall. Some of the original words could have been left out as there is no written record of actual wording of each stanza.

CHANT TO APPEASE AN ANGRY SPIRIT

Good Klilomo my mighty spirit,
Yesterday my wife and children, stupid creatures,
Dropped scraps of food, and left their footprints,
Round your habitat.
Because you were annoyed and worried,
You said, 'Am I a pig or dog,
And they throw rubbish at me
And walk over my habitat.'
Thus you have made sorcery on my wife and caused her sickness.

If you do this, our family will not generate,
The fire will die, the bamboo torch will break,
Our village, our gardens and our hunting grounds will be empty
Then people will call us a bad spirit
Which you and I don't want.

Hence I beg you my good spirit,
Come, bring new blood and breath into my wife.
Lift her up, nurse her so she may live and work,
Her children may feed and flourish
Then our clan will be the height of tree tops
And your name will be heard in Saure.*

* Saure (Rouli): a coastal village some distance away.

Translated by Joseph S. Wohuinangu

Note:

Translation of a chant from the East Sepik District. Original in Tuo language.

This chant is used to cure illness caused by spirits. When women leave scraps near the sacred places which women in my areas are forbidden to enter, illness may result. The illness may affect the woman's menstrual cycle or may cause deformity in her children. In this case it is the young wife of the unfortunate man who is at fault.

SCATTERED BY THE WIND

A Play by Russell Soaba

CHARACTERS

FATHER RONALD KEDA *Pem village priest*
ANNA *his wife*
BEN }
JAMES } *their sons*
EULALIA *their daughter*
IJAYA *village girl*
ARUASINA *her brother*
VILLAGERS and CHORUS

SCENE 1

In the KEDA house. Light is dim. There is a table in the background, on which a few books are seen. Also a mat spread on the floor and a log nearby would be enough for the setting. JAMES is seen sitting on the log, playing the guitar. ANNA is sitting on the mat sewing. As JAMES plays, ANNA looks up and smiles at her son dearly. JAMES returns a smile too. The VILLAGERS or CHORUS are heard offstage singing to the tune that JAMES is playing.

VILLAGERS or CHORUS: Alas! alas! From where this wind blows?
Who knows? Who knows? Who knows?
And to what destination it flows?
Who knows? Who knows? Who knows?
But the way it blows this day.
We'll be scattered by it far away—
It's blowing sans our consent anyway,
It's blowing sans our consent anyway.

(As the song dies away the stage is brightened. Ben enters carrying the Bible. He places the book carefully on the table and as he tries to sit down, near Anna, James strikes the guitar wildly, throws the instrument carelessly on the floor and laughing wildly, exits. Ben and Anna, both alarmed by James's act, watch him go off.)

ANNA: Ben, what has become of you and your brother? You have been bad friends almost all your lives—since you were little children. What has become of you two? Oh, I remember the times when your brother used to come home crying, 'Mamma, Ben hit me! Mamma, Ben hit me!'. I thought that would die out as you grew older, but . . .

BEN: *(taps his brain)* This one, Mamma, this one. James thinks he has more brains than we have. *(Points to the Bible on the table.)* And that book too. It angers him.

ANNA: Why?

BEN: Ah, Mamma, who knows? But I'm sure what Papa says is right—James reads too many books, bad books, about us. Man, I don't know. I feel like—I feel like grabbing him by the neck and banging his head hard against a post sometimes. He really angers me.

ANNA: Oh, Ben, don't talk like that. What are you? A Christian or what?

BEN: I know I'm a Christian. But he makes me angry sometimes. He thinks he is better than all of us. He doesn't listen to Papa's preachings, to my arguments, to yours or anybody else's. He's mad, that's all. Mad!

ANNA: Ben, stop shouting. James is not mad. He does listen to you, to Papa and to me. It's just that he disagrees with what we do—everything that we do.

BEN: Disagree my foot! How better off is he than all of us to even disagree with—with Him up there? He won't live long with that skull of his, the stupid . . . *(Ben holds his tongue. He moves around the stage, punching his own palms angrily. Enter James who is only seen by Anna who innocently continues with her sewing. Ben keeps on punching his own palm, cursing quietly and unaware of James's presence.)*

JAMES: *(coughs lightly, thus startling Ben)* Ben, isn't your palm sore yet?

BEN: Why, yes. I mean no. *(Pretends not to be angry, and laughs a little.)*

JAMES: How about punching something else, like a big post, or a piece of wood, or something, because you might end up having a sore palm. *(James laughs uncontrollably.)*

BEN: Oh, funny ha! ha! Emarai lasi, nereva kamonai lasi tauna, you bloody bastard!

ANNA: *(rising suddenly)* Ben! Stop swearing in here! You know what house this is? This is a priest's house and the house of God! Who do you think you are to quarrel and swear in here? What are you? Christians or what? You wait till your Papa comes back, the two of you. *(Enter Fr. Ronald Keda and Eulalia. Fr. Ronald carries only a prayer book.)*

FR. RONALD: Anna, what's going on here?

ANNA: It's this same old two who keep on fighting without stopping, swearing, trying to punch each other.

BEN: I did not swear, Mamma!

ANNA: *(confused, wildly)* You did, Ben! I heard you with my own two eyes, and saw you with my own two ears.

BEN: Saw you with my own two ears, and heard you with my own two eyes, aha! ha! ha!

(Ben and James and Eulalia laugh.)

FR. RONALD: Stop it, the three of you—immediately!

ANNA: You did swear, Ben! Is that right, James?

(James does not answer. His arms folded on his chest.)

FR. RONALD: Did he swear, James?

JAMES: *(shrugs)* Could be, could be not.

FR. RONALD: What do you mean, 'Could be, could be not'? You must have heard him say something.

JAMES: *(not interested)* Papa, who cares? Am I my brother's keeper? How big a sin is it, anyway, if he did swear or not? Can't we just live and do anything that is neither good nor bad—can't we just have pulses, breath, blood, body, soul, eat and live and die? Can't we just do that instead of worrying about petty things like whether Ben did swear or not? Can't we just . . . ?

ANNA: What are you talking about?

JAMES: Shut up! Just let me speak.

FR. RONALD: James, don't say 'shut up' to your mother.

EULALIA: *(She rises suddenly from the log on which she was sitting.)* Ah! Stop fighting, all of you! It's getting late now, and I'm hungry, and I want to eat.

(All stand in a ring, silent, then:)

FR. RONALD: I'm going to change. I'll see the two of you after dinner. (*Exits.*)

ANNA: I'm going to get the food ready.

EULALIA: All right, Mamma, I'll help you. I'm very hungry. (*Both exit. Ben tries to move out but stops and turns around when James taps him gently on the shoulder. James coughs lightly, then:*)

JAMES: Why don't you go to Papa and confess that you have done those things which ought not be done and you have left undone those things which ought to be done?

BEN: Shuddup! You want me to twist your neck?
 (*Ben exits, angrily. James remains, laughs carelessly, then sitting down on the log, starts playing the guitar.*)
 Scattered by the wind we are, we are,
 We'll be blown anywhere forever,
 Scattered by the wind we are, we are—
 Look for your own wantoks in this world
 For you are no more a friend in any household,
 When you go away
 To work in towns far away;
 Why, we are scattered by the wind,
 We are scattered by the wind.

EULALIA: (*enters*) James, James, come and eat. (*James rises, stretches.*)

JAMES: All right, little one.
 (*They both exit as lights fade.*)

SCENE II

In the KEDA house. Same setting as in Scene I except that a tilley lamp is placed on the table, with the books removed. ANNA is sewing. EULALIA is lying on the mat, resting on the pillow, and reading a book.

EULALIA: Mamma, Mamma, what means 'wrinkles'? W-R-I-N-K-L-E-S.

ANNA: I don't know, little one. (*Taps Eulalia lightly on the head.*) Just remember that your Mamma did not get enough education like your Papa. Ask Papa or Ben when they come back.

EULALIA: What about James?

ANNA: Yes, ask James too.
 (*Enter Fr. Ronald with a serious expression on his face.*)

EULALIA: Papa! Papa! What means 'wrinkles'? W-R-I-N-K-L-E-S.

FR. RONALD: (*sits down on the log; beckons Eulalia*) Come here. There. Now, try to look up without tilting your head backwards. That's right. Now, see those little folds on your forehead? They are your wrinkles. Understand?

EULALIA: Yes, Papa. Wrinkles—old people have them. (*excited*) Papa! You have wrinkles already!

FR. RONALD: Yes. Now go and bring in your brothers. They might be still arguing outside.
 (*Exit Eulalia.*)

ANNA: How are the two of them? Are they any better now?

FR. RONALD: The older one is all right. But it's the younger one, James. I don't know what has become of him. He talked about nothing but having the right to live and

die—just to live and die—and not to be told how to live and die, as if we were bossing him around too much . . . I tell you he wasn't like that ten years ago, running meekly at his father's side when going to church; covering his face with his little fingers and praying to his dear Lord, singing and behaving well at church. O my little James—what has become of him since he went down south?

ANNA: Yes, I remember how it used to be ten years ago. He used to carry your books which were bigger than he was, and used to run beside you with a face that resembled his own father. Remember?

FR. RONALD: Yes, I remember. And remember the time when he fell into the drain with a huge pile of books on top of him?

ANNA: Yes! (*Both excited, they laugh joyously.*) And all the village people shouted, 'Oh, help the future bishop of Papua', and some said, 'One day he will beat his father. He will be Bishop James Keda instead of Father James Keda'. And still others said, 'Look at that little one carrying books, just like his father, Father Ronald Keda'.

FR. RONALD: O what happiness! (*Pause.*) It's all gone now . . . Sometimes I find it hard to believe that time changes—people change—knowledge changes—everything changes, keeps on changing, changing, changing . . . I find it hard to believe this because—because (*he laughs softly*) why else but I love my children.

ANNA: Ah, husband, you see things clearly because you are a man of God, and you are educated. I just heard you say that everything changes, so why worry? James changes too. Why do we have to say, 'What has become of him?' every now and then?

FR. RONALD: Yes, yes. But the question is: what will he become? (*Silence. Enter James, Eulalia and Ben. Eulalia walks to the mat and the pillow where she stops. Ben walks on to Fr. Ronald while James stops where he is. Eulalia rushes back to James, still reading her book.*)

EULALIA: James, James, what means 'liberty'? L-I-B-E-R-T-Y.

JAMES: It's pronounced 'li-ba-tee' not 'li-bear-i-tee'. Anyway, it means that Mamma and Papa will let you go to the village and collect some mangoes anytime you want to. It also means that you have every right in the whole world to go to bed now because it's five past your bed-time and you might get up late tomorrow. All right?

ANNA: James, that's not the right way to teach your sister. She wants to learn.

JAMES: Yes, Mamma—I mean no, Mamma. Hey, Eulalia, where did you get that book? It's mine. You should not read it now.

EULALIA: Why not? When do I read it then?

JAMES: When you reach high school. Plenty of time, don't worry. Right now, you go to bed, ah? (*Eulalia throws the book and angrily walks out.*) Ooh temper! Sulky, sulky, ha! ha!
(*James sits down under the tilley lamp, his head tilted back, and leaning against the wall, shuts his eyes. Silence for a long moment, then:*)

ANNA: Were there many people at evensong this evening?

FR. RONALD: Only a few. The villagers are losing interest in the church now.

BEN: They are lazy, Papa. All they want to do is work in their gardens and never come to church. Really the laziest Christians I have ever come across are our own people here.

JAMES: I can't see anything wrong with them.

BEN: *(snaps suddenly)* There he goes again, Papa! Always talking contradictory views! Always!

JAMES: All right, don't get angry with me because I disagree with you. *(Rises.)* Trouble with you is that you want everybody to be just what you want them to be. You want to shape them, mould them, form them, as if they are nothing but clay, flesh and blood—as if you are the one and only creator upon this blessed earth. Why don't you listen to other people's views? Why do you brush them aside as if they don't matter?—as if they are scraps of old rags, or nothings. Surely the village people do matter. Surely they must be worthy of something before they are scattered by the wind forever. They are people, human beings, whose past is a long story of this very land which we own more than we know about. And their future, nothing but dead silence . . . Besides, they have every right in the whole world to stay away from the church and you have no right to force them to come to church! Understand?

FR. RONALD: James, that's enough. *(He rises.)* Son, there is still a lot you need to know yet. If you think that you are right in what you say and we are wrong in what we do—oh no, son, I wouldn't be too sure about that. James, just remember that you are approaching manhood—your brother Ben here, was once like that—although you are worse than he was—and this happens to everybody, not only to you. You just remember that what you take now to be right, will be proved wrong many years later by your very self. You'll be sorry then. Just remember that, son—before dedicating yourself to something which you are not sure about. Besides, you are just a boy, that's all.

JAMES: I'm not a boy, Papa! I am nearly twenty and I think like a man. And I am sure about what I'm thinking, Papa, because I think about what I'm thinking. I live in my thoughts. I'll die in them. *(He shouts these lines to the rhythm of his stamping feet.)*

I am neither good nor bad, Papa,
I am neither right nor wrong, Papa—
I just simply am.
It's my mind, my life,
My soul, my all—
I just simply am.
I live in my mind.
I think in my life.
And I'll die in my thoughts. *(He shrugs.)*

Get the idea, Papa?

FR. RONALD: O what kind of an argument is that? You are making a fool of yourself.

BEN: He's forgetting God altogether, Papa.

ANNA: He's forgetting that everything we do is the work of God.

BEN: *(to James)* What are you? A Christian or what?

ANNA: Son, don't forget that you have been baptized and confirmed! You belong to God!

BEN: How many times have you asked God for guidance, James? Never! So far.

ANNA: Son, try and think again. Make confession to God that you have turned against him.

BEN: Repent, James. That's the only way you can come back to God. Remember the Prodigal Son, James?

ANNA: Please, son, do as your brother says. He has years of experience behind him. Please listen to him, James. Oh please, don't make us think that you are too proud to think about God.

BEN: Remember Satan, James? Satan was once a good person, but because he became too proud God has ——

FR. RONALD: Yes, he knows that—God has transferred him to hell. Now keep quiet, the two of you, at once!

BEN: Don't tell us you are possessed too, Papa?

FR. RONALD: I am not possessed, Ben! And neither is James. Now just keep quiet. I am going to the chapel now with your mother to think things over.
(Fr. Ronald and Anna exit, looking tired and old. Ben glares at James, who turns his head and then Ben exits.)
(Eulalia re-enters.)

EULALIA: James, I'm sorry I threw your book. I'm sorry I was angry. Come and give me some water to drink, please. *(James stands still for a while, then picking up the tilley lamp, exits with his sister.)*

SCENE III

Just after dawn—soft morning light. An explosion of drumbeats. Enter VILLAGERS singing and dancing in a ring—Biriko, a lively ring dance from Cape Vogel, Milne Bay District. Some men and women hold hands and dance while a few men beat drums. JAMES is seen holding hands and dancing with IJAYA. The dance finishes and the VILLAGERS exit leaving JAMES and IJAYA. There is silence for a long while, then JAMES speaks.

JAMES: Ijaya, do you know that in exactly a hundred years' time our people won't dance like that anymore?

IJAYA: Yes. We will all die then. And we'll be somewhere: in heaven, paradise, hell maybe. Why did you ask me that?

JAMES: *(a long pause)* In exactly a hundred years' time we will all die. There will be no more dances like this. Everything will be dead in this place. Everything will be gone, gone. There will be nothing left. Nothing, but silence.

IJAYA: In all my life, I have never come across a boy who could speak like this, true.

JAMES: I know they wouldn't. No boy would waste his time telling you about those things. *(Enter Aruasina.)* Who's that? Your husband, oh?

IJAYA: *(laughing)* No, that's my brother, Aruasina. Remember him?

JAMES: Yes, I remember him still. I used to play with him in the mud when we were children, ten years ago, when I was nine and he must have been—oh, I don't know. Hey, Aruasina. Come. Do you remember me?

ARUASINA: What are you talking about? Of course I do. You are James, Fr. Ronald's second son, and you were the first one from our part here to go down south for education—that was about . . . *(he counts his fingers)* ten years ago—and what else? Oh yes, remember the time when I threw you into the mud among a mob of pigs?

JAMES: *(laughing)* Yes. I'll get my revenge sometime.

ARUASINA: You're getting it now. *(Aruasina winks at Ijaya.)*

JAMES: *(realizing the little act, laughs)* Ah! no! *(He jokingly punches Aruasina who falls down. Aruasina lies flat on his back resting his head on his palms, on the ground. From that position he laughs carelessly.)*

ARUASINA: James, I think you educated people are all mad. Especially your family becoming missionaries. That's why you become strangers and you seem to forget where you come from.

JAMES: *(holding Ijaya's hand)* Yes, talk some more.

ARUASINA: One moment you tell us that God is good, God is love, we should all go to church, and another moment you hate us because we worry too much about our stomachs instead of something we don't know about, or something we have no desire to know about. *(He laughs carelessly.)* You are funny and mad.

JAMES: *(puts his arms around Ijaya)* Yes, come on, tell me what you think, Aruasina!

ARUASINA: You come back home for school holidays, like now, and you never visit your relatives at the village. Instead, you accuse them of being bad Christians. 'Hereva kamonai lasi taudia', you always say, and all those things.

JAMES: Come on, Aruasina, is that really true? *(He tries to kiss Ijaya.)*

ARUASINA: Yes! Then you tell us that our dancing is bad. We should not dance all night. You say we should go to bed early as if we were school children, and you look down on us and hate us because we never do what you want us to do. *(When Aruasina sees the two of them, he coughs lightly.)* Then you come back and take our girls in your arms and kiss them like Europeans, in front of everybody. And you ignore our old ways when we were not allowed to have physical contact with our future wives before marriage. Eh, James, you listening to what I say?

JAMES: Yes, yes, come on, talk some more.

ARUASINA: And another very important thing is that you always listen to us with your ears closed—like right now. *(Rises from the ground.)* All right, what you want me to say now? Just say, 'excuse me', and go away quietly and politely?

JAMES: Oh come on! I did not tell you to leave. Don't get angry, Aruasina, just talk some more, will you?

IJAYA: Oh, please don't fight!

ARUASINA: *(takes Ijaya's arm)* I'm taking my sister home now, James. You missionaries are mad, really mad. *(They exit right.)*

JAMES: Yes. Lau diba. *(Lights start to fade.)* Maybe, maybe we are! *(He exits left.) (Lights out.)*

SCENE IV

Morning. On the wayside. A few trees will indicate that the setting is out on the bush road. Enter IJAYA carrying a bucket on her head. BEN jumps from behind a tree and holds IJAYA. They struggle and IJAYA screams.

IJAYA: What you want?

BEN: Put the bucket down. *(He tries to tear Ijaya's clothes.)* Come on! You know what I want!

IJAYA: Stop it! Is this what the priest's children are for? Spoiling girls and women on the road?
(Enter James. Ben lets Ijaya go and tries to move away from the scene. James holds up his hand.)

JAMES: What is going on, Ben? I just wanted to check if someone was in trouble.

BEN: So you've come to the rescue, ah?
(James does not answer. He folds his arms on his chest and looks at both of them hard.)

JAMES: *(to Ijaya)* Go home. Tell Aruasina.

BEN: Don't tell him! Unless you want trouble.

JAMES: All right, don't.

IJAYA: What you think you are, Ben? A Christian or what? I hate you! Understand? I hate you!—you dirty, lowbreed, acting-like-a-pig-and-dog animal! *(Exits. James and Ben watch her go off. They exchange stares and then James sits on a log. Ben looks around, tries to leave, but on second thoughts he returns, looking down at James.)*

BEN: You don't seem to care, ah?

JAMES: Care about what?

BEN: About what I tried to do. I mean, if you did care, you would start hitting me, or cursing me, or reporting the scene to Papa, or you would do anything to get revenge.

JAMES: I have no right upon this blessed earth to tell you about your mistakes, just as you have no right to tell me about your Jesus Christ and your God.

BEN: James! Don't talk like that! Don't mention Our Lord's name like that!

JAMES: He's your Lord, not mine.

BEN: James! Don't say that! I must tell Papa what you have just said. *(He tries to exit, but returns on second thoughts.)* James, I think you are mad. You read too many bad books about Christianity anywhere, especially in Papua. You read books written by atheists, non-believers, non-conformists and those kinds of people, who think that our religion is bad; people who think that we indoctrinate other people too much and that we are not doing the right things when we seem to refuse to listen to other people's views. We refuse, or disagree because we know we are right, James. We know we are right because the Bible says so. Understand? And all you people do is use Our Lord's name as a swear-word, like—come on, say it . . .

JAMES: Jesus bloody Christ!

BEN: . . . yes, just to hurt us. Do you hear? You say that just to hurt us! Ever since you came up from the south and ever since you started going to uni. you changed from a good Christian to someone whom you called a non-conformist, or something like that. You even formed a clique there at the uni. with people who could go around doing nothing but using Our Lord's name as a swear-word. What have you become, James? A devil's angel? Well, say something!

JAMES: *(looking up slowly)* I have suddenly become a true dedicated human being—just that, nothing else.

BEN: *(shakes his head)* I tell you, James. You will never go to heaven with that kind of statement.

JAMES: No. I will never, because there is no heaven. There ain't no hell either!

BEN: Oh, James! What are you, anyway?

JAMES: I told you already: a human being. I am neither good nor bad, neither right nor wrong—I just simply am.

BEN: I think you are dirty inside. Really dirty, because you have never been to church once during these Christmas holidays. Your soul is really dirty.

JAMES: I don't have a soul. I mean, I do have a soul but it's different. It's not what

Papa preaches—no, not that kind of soul. I have this ‘inside’ or soul, to use your word, that is quite different to what Papa preaches.

BEN: You can’t have a different soul, James. All people, human beings, have the same soul given by God and nobody else—they get it when they are baptized and confirmed.

JAMES: Is that what soul is?

BEN: Yes! It’s from God!

JAMES: How dumb and stupid you are! You already had a soul ever since you stepped out of your mother’s womb. Your body developed as well as your soul. How you can have a soul from God I just do not understand. Are you an Adam or a Papuan? God Almighty! Can’t you just think?
(a long pause, then:)

BEN: James. You have been brain-washed. All I know is that I have been baptized and confirmed—I do have a soul!

JAMES: No. You don’t know what you are talking about. You have a soul when you feel you have ‘insides’; not what you learn from Papa, or the Bible.
(silence for a long while, then:)

BEN: Ben?

BEN: Ah?

JAMES: The next time you argue with me, please don’t tell me to go to Church, will you?

BEN: Why? *(No answer from James.)* I think you need to go to church because you don’t know where you are going. You need God to guide you.

JAMES: I have my own mind—my conscience—to guide me. I don’t need outside forces to control me like a dumb, puny and weak, blind conformist.

BEN: I tell you, James. You are mad!

JAMES: That’s what everybody says. *(Pause.)*

BEN: James?

JAMES: What now?

BEN: Why didn’t you get angry with me when I tried to rape your girl?

JAMES: Oh! Because I thought you were funny—just funny. *(He laughs uncontrollably. Ben pulls out a pocket knife.)*

BEN: Funny, ah? Come now, sweet brother. Now, tell me if you won’t tell Papa what happened here. Will you or will you not? *(James keeps on laughing uncontrollably.)* All right, no answer. But I don’t trust you anyway, so I must make sure.
(seeing the pocket knife, and still laughing) Don’t tell me you mean that, Ben?

BEN: Just see if I don’t!

JAMES: Come on, a Christian wouldn’t do that!

BEN: Many did.

JAMES: But not you, with your own brother.

BEN: Not, ah? *(James raises his hands defending himself blindly with his palms, still giggling. They struggle, but Ben’s knife finds its destination in James’s right chest. Ben, struck with fear, runs out. James stops laughing, falls, then raises himself and sits on the ground preventing the blood coming out. Enter Eulalia carrying a book.)*

EULALIA: James, James, I was looking for you. What means ‘minstrel’?

JAMES: *(tries to look normal)* Minstrel is a singer. A minstrel is someone like your best

friend, and when you die, that friend goes around the place, singing sad songs about you. Understand?

EULALIA: Yes. *(Pause.)* I just remembered. I argued with some boys at school last year and they said that those pictures we see about Indians are real Indians. And I said that they are not real Indians; they are Europeans who paint themselves red and act like Indians. They did not agree with me. They said that they were right and I was wrong. True, James? Am I right?

JAMES: *(not showing the pain)* Yes—yes. Everybody wants to be right. Anybody wants to be right. Take that piece of wood there; if you talk about it too much you'll make it right. Cut a bit of wood out of that big tree there, carve it and put it in your bedroom—you will soon make it right and you will start worshipping it. Anything is nothing, but if you talk about it too much you will make it right. Understand?

EULALIA: *(shakes her head)* No. How can you make that piece of wood right? *(James smiles and places his hand on her head, but the expression on his face changes. Eulalia is alarmed.)* James! You look as if—as if you want to die!

JAMES: *(struggles to regain his strength)* No. Hey, Eulalia, is that my book? *(Eulalia tries to hide the book.)* You make sure you read the right books when you grow up, ah? Now, come on, I'll race you to the house.

EULALIA: I'll beat you this time! *(Runs off.) (offstage)* I'll beat you! I'll beat you!

(OFFSTAGE:)

ARUASINA: Eulalia, where are you going?

EULALIA: I'm racing James back to the house. He's still back there on the road. *(James rises but falls down on his hands and knees. Then flat on the ground, he lies in a heap. Enter Aruasina.)*

ARUASINA: James! I saw you! You know something, James? You missionaries love playing tricks on your friends, like now. Come on. Arise again if you are dead; this is the third day you know. *(He laughs carelessly and sits on the ground.)* Hey, James, my sister's coming. Ah! Almost tricked you that time. *(Pause.)* James, I forgot to tell you yesterday. Ijaya and I are going to Port Moresby next week. Well, aren't you sorry we are leaving? Anyway, we are going to look for jobs. I'll go; grab that hammer, with nails, and bang the nails hard into the wood and I hope I get good pay for it. Good job, isn't it? Carpenter. As for Ijaya, I'll look after her for you—that's a promise, ah? She'll work in a shop or go and look after Europeans' babies. Very good, ah, James? Better than old Pem here with you missionaries around. *(He laughs carelessly.)* When we go, that's it. And remember the saying: Look for your own wantoks anywhere, for we are scattered by the wind. *(Nothing happens. Aruasina laughs carelessly.)* You know, James, you missionaries love to pretend. You sleep on the roadside as if you have no houses or wantoks. You suddenly become different from us and you want us to be exactly what you want us to be. And when we disagree with what you do, you say, 'All ye men and women of Pem and Tototo villages, thy doings are bad', or 'Thou art sinners', or something like that. And when we want to raise our voices, you lie down there, listening to us with no interest, as if we were only children crying for milk from our mothers' breasts. Ah, James? Is that right? *(He goes and inspects.)* Hey! What's the matter with you?

(Lights start to fade.)

(Stands and rushes to left and right calling:) Here lies he, a lone, lorn image.
A stranger he is! he is!

(Villagers enter, see James's body, rush forward to the body. Drums beat, the Villagers lift James's body singing softly as they bear the body of James out.)

VILLAGERS:

Bogae, bogae,
Da' kakovi tam aiyabo?
Me' kukovi tam awaki?
Bogae, bogae.
Aiya! Kokuyovedi
Sina yawa bi sina rabobo,
Aiya! Awaki tondi
Sa raborabobo
Naboni naki?

(Lights fade to darkness over drum beats.)

TRANSLATION:

Stranger, stranger,
How do we know who you are?
When do we know what you are?
Stranger, stranger.
Aiya! Leave them be
To live and die—e,
Aiya! What are they
To die away
Like that anyway?

SCENE V

In the KEDA house. BEN is standing with his hands in his pockets, looking out to the other end of the stage. FR. RONALD KEDA just finishes reading the Bible, marks the page where he stops with a piece of paper before closing it. He places the book carefully on the table, stands up, stretches and yawns. He is being watched constantly by ANNA who is sitting on the mat holding a needle and a piece of cloth.

FR. RONALD KEDA: Where could James be at this time of the day, I wonder? Ben, do you know?

BEN: Am I my brother's keeper? *(He says this without looking at Fr. Ronald.)*

ANNA: Ben, don't say that. Every time you and your brother say that about each other my skin gets cold. *(Enter Eulalia.)*

FR. RONALD: Eulalia, have you seen your brother?

EULALIA: Yes, sitting on the roadside, there.

BEN: That was in the morning. He must have gone to Tototo village to see Aruasina.

EULALIA: No, he's still there, because I asked him what means minstrel and he said that minstrel is someone, like when you die, he sings sad songs and he comes to your house and reminds you of your dead friends—

BEN: *(a bit scared)* What are you talking about?

FR. RONALD: Ben, quiet. She's trying to explain what a minstrel is. Eulalia, that's good. But what I want to know is where James is.

EULALIA: There, out on the road, sitting. He looked as if—as if he wanted to die. But he told me, come on, I'll race you to the house, and I ran and I beat him. *(excited)* I beat him, Mamma! First time!

FR. RONALD: What do you mean 'he wanted to die'? (*Eulalia who is still excited and hugging Anna repeatedly, does not answer. Fr. Ronald gives up questioning, shrugs, then sits down on the mat with his knees drawn in.*)

ANNA: That's enough, Eulalia. Leave me be. Husband, can I get the food ready now? It's a long time now since we had our meal this morning.

FR. RONALD: Strange. I have never felt like this before. I don't feel like eating or doing anything.
(*Forlorn birds are heard offstage.*)

EULALIA: Hear those birds, Papa? James told me that when those birds sing it means people die, or sorcerers are coming, or kiap is coming, or sickness is going to spread, and I asked him how do you know, and he said that our uncle at Tototo village told me so.

ANNA: Eulalia, stop that talk! Really, your brother spoiled your brain! (*Eulalia is hurt. Anna stares at her and she, with a screwed up face, rises to exit, but stops and sees Aruasina enter.*)

ARUASINA (sings): I saw a tree standing there
All on its own,
With its branches spread everywhere
Ah! Look how it's grown!
But its roots aren't deeper,
Hear me tell you this, hear!
This wind brought a strong wind
Which has a strong, strong mind
That could blow and uproot
Many an innocent tree.
Whose roots have gone deeper, deeper—
Whose roots have gone deeper, deeper.

EULALIA: Aruasina, Aruasina, do you know what you are?

ARUASINA: Yes, my little one, I am a human being.

EULALIA: No, you are not a human being. You are a minstrel. Understand?

ARUASINA: Oh! And what is a minstrel, little one?

EULALIA: You know, you.

ARUASINA: Is that my new name, little one?

EULALIA: Yes. (*She sits down, gazing at Aruasina.*)

ARUASINA: Eulalia?

EULALIA: Yes?

ARUASINA: Did you know who James really was?

EULALIA: Yes. He is my brother.

ARUASINA: No. What I mean is, did you know his 'insides', what he thought about, what was in his mind, and all that? Did you know him, or did you like the way he lived?

EULALIA: Yes. He is my very good brother.

ARUASINA: (*shakes his head*) One day, Eulalia, you will become a woman. Then you will see things. You will either be a good person or a bad person. But if you knew who James really was, you would be neither.

FR. RONALD: Aruasina, what does this mean? All I want to know is where James is.

ARUASINA: Need you know, Father? Only a few people know what happened, and they will remember. Right now, the people, the villagers, are hungry, and they can't

tell you what happened to James. (*Villagers bear in James's body; they are singing 'Bogae, bogae, etc.'*.) James is dead, Father, on our own land.

FR. RONALD:

O my God, what have we done? (*Pause. Then he gradually turns and faces Ben who is now shaking with fright. Fr. Ronald stares at Ben, then whispers:*) How could such a thing happen?

BEN:

(*shuts his eyes and moans loudly*) I did not do it, Papa!

ANNA:

(*she breaks down to sobs*) O James, oh! James, my son! My son!

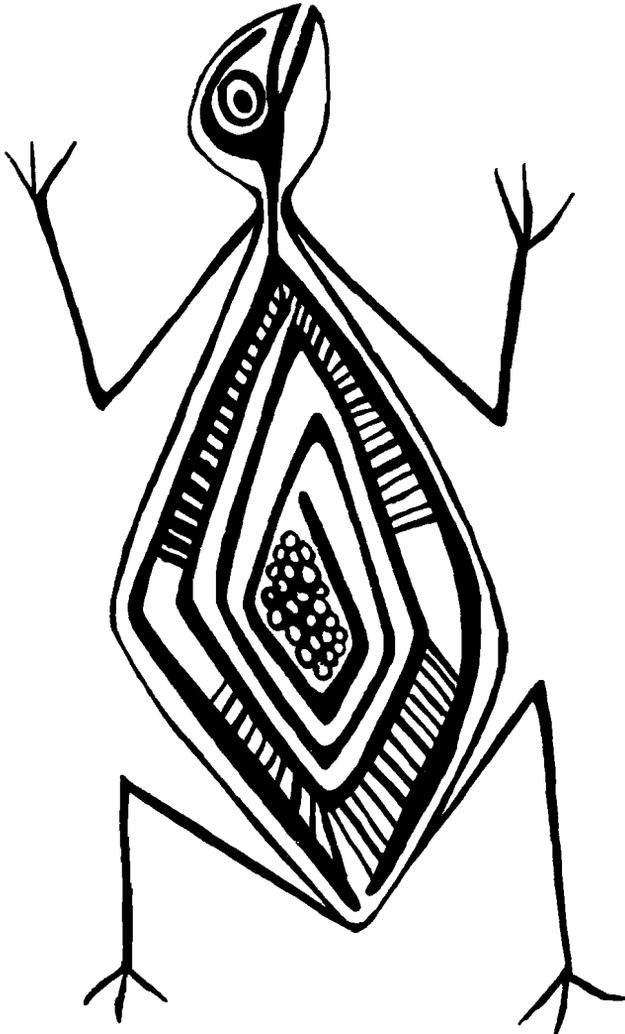
BEN:

(*eyes still shut*) I did not do it, Mamma!

ANNA:

O James, my son, why didn't we understand?

(*Lights out. Curtain.*)



THE PLACE OF LITERATURE IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA EDUCATION

by John Waiko

Ladies and gentlemen:

I address you as a confused member of the élite of this country, to share with you some of my confused ideas and aspirations.

There is no need for me to remind us that the whole education system is not geared towards encouraging literature that is based on the culture of the people of this country. The present system of education is inevitably leading to a stage where:

- (1) We will have a class structure with a neo-colonialist élite running this country while the half-literate school leavers create incurable problems and the bulk of our population remains confused about the outside world.
- (2) Our people will lose the value of their own culture based on a strong tie to their land.
- (3) We will be dependent on Western or Westernized powers such as Australia and Japan because in the present system, we have learnt only the ways of the colonialists which are *designed* to make the people of this country economically dependent.

I can only look with any hope at the role of literature in a totally different education system. I believe that the present system of education is leading this country into creating chaos and confusion among the people in the villages. The literature we have begun to produce is typically colonial—concerned, that is, with the issues of colonial contact. Villagers are alienated from their own cultural traditions. Even the books, plays and articles we do produce seldom reach the villages. This is because the content and the

form of our literature and drama are designed for a different audience.

Cults develop and the colonial régime suppresses them. The government takes an anti-cult attitude because of the volumes of literature produced by some foreign experts such as anthropologists, administrators and missionaries who have misguided views about cults. With rapid urbanization, the 'wantok system' is abused without regard for the traditional values of the system. The traditional 'payback system' is widespread and we don't take positive interest in it. Bride price and polygamy are abused because they do not fit into the Christian way of life. But above all, our people are losing their ties to the land because of the colonial system of economy, which if the colonialists left today, the neocolonialist élite would take over to protect the interests of the profit-oriented organizations based in Australia, Japan and other countries, and thereby their own interests which are opposed to the interests of the people of this country.

In this country I feel that the role of literature should be to destroy the present basis of the education system. The problem is how can we do it, because many of our people have become part of the system, including myself. One way may be to produce a kind of literature which would undermine the basis of the élite and bring a cultural revolution. To start the revolution, I would like to see the government of this country, or any interested people, encourage and help to establish vernacular schools in the rural areas. The study of subsistence agriculture with a view to improving it must be the primary aim

of such schools. Moreover it is through such media that the elders can best transmit and inculcate the traditions of the people. Attitudes towards the value of the land, cults, principles of reciprocity, bride price, and other traditional values, the history, myths and legends of the people, ought to be the subjects of the vernacular schools. The elders of the community who are feeling rejected by the younger generation must be involved in the teaching of all the traditional knowledge of the people.

Village vernacular schools may be another way of introducing adult literacy. By involving the elders in the schools they could learn to read and write in their own languages. In this way the adults and the children are involved in producing their own literature in the local language, or Pidgin or Motu.

I am not in any way suggesting that no knowledge from outside should be incorporated into the vernacular schools. But I believe that once a solid foundation of traditional education is laid down, it is possible to add outside knowledge and use it without losing one's own values or becoming puppets.

If you think that I am dreaming about the traditional cultures which no longer exist, you are mistaken. Land problems, cult activities and payback killings do still exist in the country. The government could not afford to ignore traditional systems without alienating itself completely from the people. We must understand the situation before we can change it. You cannot really hope to form a government that meets the needs and aspirations of the people unless you analyse the beliefs and practices of the people and face the realities. You have to learn to understand the values of the people as they really are. I feel that while we have governments—and I mean independent and black-controlled governments—which try to ignore these realities, we will have continual internal strife, if not civil wars, as in some emerging states in the third world.

Corruption occurs in the emerging countries because some people, particularly the élite, are not clear on the issues of their cultural values and the colonial systems. The great majority of the

people in this country do believe that the 'pay-back' and 'wantok' systems are valuable parts of their culture. But those of us who are products of the present system of education think that such systems are wrong. And we are trained to think only of economic development in Western terms, with Western criteria of what makes for a 'good life', so we do not look at the real aspirations of the people or of ourselves. This situation calls for the people of this country to decide what is good and what is bad among the traditions. This must happen before we can develop a government which is going to work.

I cannot see any way of going ahead without analysing the present situation through the understanding of the values of the people. This means that vernacular schools are required to record some of the values and systems in the languages for analysis, and to keep the traditions alive.

However, before the traditional educational basis is established, there must be a nation-wide campaign. Among other things, there is a need to emphasize to the people that the present education system, even at its most efficient in form and content, produces an élite fit for continuing and taking over from the whites, who will ignore the traditional values. The neo-colonialists are only competent in the white man's ways of doing things and understanding things, even if it means oppressing their own people; that is, the élite has few roots embedded in the knowledge and the culture of the people.

Moreover, the campaign will help to influence the elders who deny their own experience and their upbringing, and blindly push their children into the race to become the élite. The people in the villages should be made aware that their children who fail to fit into the present education system will join the discontented school leavers, who not only have lost their identity with the land and the people, but are unable to overcome their self-image of failure.

The present government has nothing to lose in committing itself in the nation-wide campaign. The people will not achieve national identity unless we make some attempts to encourage it. I believe that the first move is to help the people to establish vernacular schools through which

we can understand the 700 pockets of thinking of the people in this country. Volumes of literature in the different languages need to be produced before we can hope to find a common tradition in this country. The steps in this direction must be taken now. If we fail to do so, the élite, like myself, will have no alternative except to continue the colonial pattern which does nothing except create a class society.

I believe that the present literature takes negative attitudes or shows a lack of real under-

standing of the traditional way of life and the traditional dramatic forms. A new literature should come out from the dance drama and the way in which the elders tell their stories, which both should be incorporated into the vernacular schools. Such a literature must be produced with the help of the people. The literature would, I think, play an important role in educating the people to understand their traditions and teach their children.



NIUGINI LITERATURE

A View from the Editor

by *Apisai Enos*

It is not my intention in this paper to speak to you on how to teach literature or how to assess expressive arts, but rather to discuss briefly traditional literature, and to look at some of the present and immediate problems facing the creation of contemporary literature.

Traditional Literature

Traditional literature is of the oral form, in the same way as traditional cultures are much more of the spoken word than of the written word. This does not necessarily mean that they are less complex and sophisticated than written cultures. It all depends on what you mean. However, what is characteristic of them is that they are all the product of pre-literate, pre-scientific and pre-technological societies, which again does not necessarily mean that the concept of cause and effect was missing, or that the need for tool making is a new phenomenon. Furthermore, being primitive does not necessarily imply inferiority or lack of civilization: I often think it is sometimes the other way around. It again all depends on what we mean by being educated, civilized and superior. Anyway, one must continue to struggle to find his way, his life-space in the merry-go-round—the great wheel of life progressing and regressing in the wind of time.

Talking about traditional literature, I can only generalize and rely on my limited knowledge of the various cultures of Niugini. Although I am a Niuginian, I am at the same time a stranger, an outsider in cultures other than my own, no matter how hard I try. I can never be at home in the diversity of Niuginian cultures and languages which makes Niugini both a land of bewildering complexities and mysteries like hidden valleys yet to be explored, and one of

contrast and variety perpetuated in her own unique way. Such cultural, linguistic and geographical spectra make it hard for me to reduce Niugini to a uniform scale.

Nevertheless, we need systematic studies and research which will give a more realistic picture of the Niugini man and his soul than the often rush-produced films and books, many of which in themselves are superficial and misleading. Niuginians are better able to reveal themselves and the way they see things than expert anthropologists who, despite their highly specialized profession, usually present empty masks. Unfortunately our education system is one that alienates Niuginians from their cultures, so that at the end of the assembly line they turn out to be hollow men of the western ranges, strangers in their own land. I think it is now high time to socialize Niuginians to live in *Niugini*—rather than in Africa, Europe or Australia.

Oral literature in Niugini is interwoven into the culture so that one cannot avoid the idea of talking about culture when speaking about literature. Oral literature is not a refined adjunct, but an integral part of our culture, a functional part of our whole way of life, with an active role in the process of upbringing and preparation for adult living, stability and social cohesiveness at family, clan and kinship levels.

Oral literature is a popular form closely connected with the culture and social organization which regulates the behaviour of the people. Everyone shares in the performance and creation of lullabies, nonsense rhymes, love songs, laments, play chants, songs, praise poems, magic incantations, charms, rituals, children's rhymes, complex ceremonies, dances, myths, ghost stories, animal fables, abuses and aetiological tales. In

cultures where there are men's secret societies, only the men—the initiates—are involved in the creation and performance of rituals. Another aspect of traditional literature is that a performance may not necessarily have an audience; the actors are performing purely for their own pleasure and social involvement. They are at the same time performers and audience. In other cases where magic rituals are performed to fulfil a specific purpose (gardening magic, fertility ceremonies and chants for controlling natural phenomena), they are performed not for entertainment but to achieve a specific purpose.

Another aspect of traditional literature is that it relates experience to the immediate environment; time sequence is not really important. What is important is the experience and sensation at a certain point of time. This non-sequential perception creates a distorted reality so that the poems, stories, songs and play chants are like flashbacks which present sensational moments not necessarily related to one another or forming a logical picture. What is, I think, characteristic of this sort of literature is the experience and what it brings to the mind at a certain moment. This gives us the idea of the composer jumping here and there and everywhere according to what comes to his mind.

In traditional literature, one important factor is that the dream world or supernatural world is mixed up with the real world. I think this is one reason why it is often hard to translate oral literature in a logical and sequential way, because once we do, we destroy the form and in a lot of ways the content. As well as this, symbols representing the dream world can easily be misinterpreted or distorted. Without a good background understanding, it is hard to see the real significance of, say, a love song and what it really means. One does not really get the full meaning in a translated song, because it is related to a broader experience not usually presented in the translation. Therefore, accompanying notes and explanations of, say, a six-line poem would bring out more meaning than otherwise. Anyway, such perceptual consciousness is our heritage and something for the Niuginian writers to think about in their search for identity and point

of development.

Traditional literature was and still is a functional part of the popular culture in the villages.

Contemporary Literature

The beginning of colonialism in Niugini meant the introduction of another culture which is closely associated with that of the colonial powers. As a result we have now, in the process of urbanization and development, two cultures. On the one hand we have the traditional or local cultures; on the other hand is the alien culture closely associated with the class-oriented and aristocratic societies in which literature and art is a refined adjunct rather than a functional part of life. Creative writing, in Western societies, has been absorbed by the élite circle where it is a gambling game for the intellectuals; even now in this country it is in danger of becoming a narrow field for a minority of educated people. What should we create in Niugini? Do we want to create an élitist literature? or literature as a popular culture spread by the mass media? or both? or one that serves only the writer?

Transitional literature is usually a political weapon, a natural response to colonialism. Literature in this context is used as a polemic exercise to rebel against alienation, changing values and social conventions. It is usually characterized by its revolutionary nature and frustrated attempts to recapture traditions as well as creating identity and consciousness. Political literature is not literature as an art form. What it does is reaffirm people's views rather than create new ideas, new perceptions and realities for them.

Literature as an art form, I think, changes and influences people's views if whatever it is bringing is accepted by the people or suits their particular way of thinking and perception. Niuginian contemporary literature is yet to hatch out of its political shell to become an artistic form as well.

Creating Niuginian contemporary literature is a difficult task for various reasons.

Firstly, what we are creating is unpopular because of its language form, which means that it is mainly for the educated élite, and because there has not been enough time for the people to

develop the art of reading and appreciating a written form of literature which is a new form for Niuginians. Why do we write, if what we write has no market? Is writing the only medium we can use to communicate? Why don't we use tapes, which would be more encouraging and appropriate for the people, at least while the masses are still illiterate?

Recorded stories, poems and songs, for instance, would certainly not be very foreign to any oral Niuginian culture. There is certainly a need for both written and oral literature if we want to popularize what we are creating.

Secondly, what we are creating is mostly in English, a language of the administration and academic institutions, which does not really reflect our cultures. Only a very small amount is being written in Pidgin, very little in Motu and hardly any in any other local language. This boils down to the fact that we are creating an 'unpopular' literature, for an élitist culture. Although it may not be our intention, it is what we are doing at the present time.

Thirdly, in recognizing and preserving our traditions, we come up with the same dilemma—that of moving in the direction of an élitist culture. What we are creating is neither traditional nor popular in the way that oral literature was and still is in the villages. We are in fact replacing the more elaborate and ritualistic literature and art with a kind of literature which is idealistic and artificial. This is to me not traditional or new. Occasionally, it has been painfully imitative of European traditions as this university is, and the creation of such literature is taking place in an environment which is very different from that of the village.

Poetry, drama and prose, in their written forms, have become adjuncts of Niuginian cultures rather than integral parts. But should Niuginian writers only concentrate on writing for the new time man, or the old time man, or should we write for both, or neither? Furthermore, should we write for a bigger audience outside Niugini as well? The decision has to be made by each individual artist according to the audience he likes to write for.

At the same time, it has also been a task for

Niuginian writers to write in a popular language. This means they have to create their own language which will accommodate their local experiences and images. Unfortunately the diversity of languages forces them to use English (a language that does not really reflect their cultures) as the alternative form which gives them a wider audience than their own linguistic group. English being the universal language has the advantage over Pidgin and Motu: if Niuginian writers want to write for a bigger audience outside and inside Niugini, and want to participate in international literature, it is the language they have to use. However, there is a need for creating an acceptable Niuginian English, just as there is an American English and an Australian English, for instance. One way of doing this—and I know this is going to be a difficult task—is by incorporating local metaphors, expressions and images, to give the language its place and identity. Despite tribal or regional differences, a national type of English has to be created which will be understood and which is flexible for national communication. On the other hand, Pidgin and Motu must not be disregarded; nor must local languages. I envisage Niuginian contemporary literature to be in English, Pidgin, Motu and local languages, for this will certainly remove the élitist stamp and make the literature more popular and available to more people.

Of course, many of you will be asking whether we can really preserve our traditions. To suggest that we could would brand me as static and conservative. What is important to me is that we are not creating our contemporary literature in a vacuum. We have a very rich, proud tradition. It is there for development and we certainly do not lack the resources for creating the kind of literature we want, and which will be a functional part of our contemporary life. The past, to me, gives us our bearing, identity, place and consciousness. On the other hand, the creation of any present literature does not depend completely on the past, but on our present consciousness and our present life-space.

It is also a task for Niuginian writers to create national unity through literature. I do not think we can really unite people to create uniformity.

What we need is a sense of responsibility and tolerance between the society and the individual. Of course conflicts and disputes are generated by this interaction. This is the way we go around in the cog-wheel. It makes us live to find our way, be it for good or bad; the fact that we are progressing and regressing is a phenomenon of life. I personally like the diversity of Niugini and prefer variety to uniformity. Unity, like freedom and equality, is an intellectual illusion that doesn't really exist in the sort of world we live in. Unity is simply a politico-economic necessity for what we normally call political and economic development.

Going back to the point I mentioned earlier on, many of you will be quarrelling with me about the quality of popular literature. Isn't this what is happening all over the world, to take literature and art back to the people again and make it a popular function in their lives? There is room for every kind of literature at all levels and we should not concentrate on just one level.

Another problem facing Niuginian writers is that after having learnt to write, we must find the market for our literature. I suspect there are stacks of written material around the place which do not have any outlet. Why write, if nobody is going to read what you write? An urgent demand exists in schools. It is now time for Niuginian writers to start writing materials for schools. It is sad to see our children being fed with foreign literature. We cannot really blame this situation on anyone because the materials just have not been available. On the other hand, I can't see why teachers can't start collecting and recording local oral literature which they can use and include in a Niugini literature section of the library. It is now time

to balance the diet of the children. I am sure enough materials could be collected around each school. A bit of effort won't harm anybody, I am sure. If we don't do something now, I am sure the wheel is turning so fast that before we know where we are, we will be just hollow men.

In Niugini we are experiencing the initial impact of technology upon our literature and culture. It is only the beginning and the end is not in sight. Technology is simply a fact of contemporary life. Technology will bring new outlets for our literature and art and we shouldn't be frightened of it.

To sum up, I would like to say that we are in a critical stage of transition and development. The task of creating our contemporary literature is a difficult one, not because it will require the creation of a national consciousness or the emergence of a new truly national literature, but because it will require the mastery of a new technology. And at the same time numerous demands will be made of writers by a public and by a governing élite, each eager to be served. I believe that the writer, whatever the medium by which he reaches his public, must serve first his integrity and second his public. But he must come to terms with that public.

Finally, I believe the chances are good that a Niuginian writer may find his own integrity in the end: his concept of his art and its function will be one with the interest of his public. And when that happens, we will have a true and functional Niuginian literature such as we lack today. In the past it has been the outsider writing about Niuginians. Now it is time for Niuginians to present an inside perception. In other words, we must now create a two-way perception.

NO STAGNANT NEUTRALITY

John Kasaipwalova's poems.

Reluctant Flame. Port Moresby, Papua Pocket Poets No. 29, 1971.

Hanuabada: Poems. Port Moresby, Papua Pocket Poets No. 31, 1972.

In Chinua Achebe's novel, *Things Fall Apart*, a tribal elder characterizes the disruption introduced into South-eastern Nigeria by European notions of religion and justice by saying that the white man 'has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart'. In John Kasaipwalova's longish poem, *Reluctant Flame*, the same comment is made, not only in terms of 'the unseen enemy (who) has the poisoned knife to my throat' but, more centrally, in terms of a cold and cold-engendering bloodless wooden mask that stares, commands, and stifles Niu-ginian culture and values, suppressing the flame that the poet tries to cultivate. Under the influence of the chilling mask the poet 'drop(s) the bush knife for the pen', has his soul captured by Christianity, lusts after white women, and has his whole mode of vision altered. 'I accept pain for pleasure,' he says, 'and call my vomit my "good character".'

In rhetorical invective of this kind it is perhaps easier to characterize the oppressive alien culture than to characterize the indigenous one. The first two lines of the poem

Cold bloodless masks stare me, not for my colour
But for my empty wealth house and passion logic

offer a highly elliptical account of the contrast between the two cultures. Later, Kasaipwalova refers to 'the spirits of my grounds and waters' as offering help to tend the flame, for 'inside each mountain lies a tiny flame cradled and weighted by above'.

The flame is not, however, a nationalistic belief in the value of being rooted in the soil of one's native land. Kasaipwalova is no Whitman, or Frost, or William Carlos Williams. His flame is one with the flame of revolt by blacks everywhere against white domination:

Look how the flame came from the ghettos
The flame kept down by chain and hunger
Once reluctant now creeps obviously into the pale
coldness
Chubby Checker gave Elvis the twisting flame to
throw
Ray Charles gave the Beatles the explosive pulse to
shake the total stiffness
That children tempered by this flame will scorch and
burn their elders
Listen carefully, this is but one arm of the reluctant
flame
Burning and melting the icy bloodless body

My flame take your fuel from these brother flames
Let not the oceans drown your linking pipe
You will grow, you will grow, you will grow like a
boil on pale skins
Maybe your vibrant lava will flow to burn anew the
world
When Johannesburg and New York is in flames and
the black vomit will fertilize this barren soil

'The spirits of my grounds and waters', then, do not constitute the flame; they will merely help the poet to cultivate the flame in himself. The flame is one of revolt against an alien culture, not one of pride in the soil. Indeed, Kasaipwalova even uses the same word, 'chilly', of the green mountain that is said to contain the flame as he has previously used of the white man's mask. The usage is perhaps unintentional, but it serves to scotch once and for all the possibility raised by some of the earlier ambiguities in the poem that the land itself might form one of the author's positive values. The land is, in fact, at present a barren land, needing to be fertilized by revolution.

In another ambiguity, this time unresolved, the author asserts that the revolutionary flame comes not . . .

. . . from heaven nor from the green mountain
It IS the unseen vibrant rhythm from my pulse deep
down down inside
Crying violently for me to open my eyes and the
time.

The source, then, is not only not the spirits and not the land; it is also not a black-world revolution or a national uprising. It is a personal rhythm of revolt, to which the poet must surrender himself in frenzied love.

The last two and a half pages of the poem bring together three emotions: resentment and shame at those—typified by the police—who have sold out to white values; a sense of tender affection for black love, black music, black gaiety, and black community; and an impassioned vision of destroying the oppressors' culture when the reluctant flame is able to 'burn into my heart a dancing flame'.

The quotations I have made give some indication of Kasaipwalova's use of language. One part of speech is freely used as another; phrases and clauses often exist absolutely, without syntactical connexion to other parts of the sentence; the remnants of genitive and dative case forms existing in standard British English tend to be replaced by adjectives before the noun; and a few dialectal or nonce words such as 'slithe', 'dimdimed', and 'sensual(l)ess' are used.

The turbulence of the verse produces a riot of vivid imagery, almost all of it conveying the author's sincerity and passion. The one continuing image is, of course, that of the reluctant flame. Not everything said in terms of this image is self-consistent, but the image nevertheless builds up in meaning and intensity to the savage declamation of the ending:

RELUCTANT FLAME OPEN YOUR VOLCANO
 TAKE YOUR PULSE AND YOUR FUEL
 BURN BURN BURN BURN BURN
 LET YOUR FLAMES VIBRATE THEIR DRUMS
 BURN BURN BURN BURN BURN
 BURN AWAY MY WEIGHTY ICE
 BURN INTO MY HEART A DANCING FLAME

The sequence of poems, *Hanuabada*, contains some of the same revolutionary fervour and a good deal more of the delighted or embarrassed or angry presentation of black Niugini society, both in the village and in the ugly, crowded Hanuabada section of Port Moresby. The most contented society presented is that of the poet's family in the island village, where the deep emotions of love, loyalty, and pride are not

overlaid by fear, resentment, and anger of Hanuabada. Some of the finest description in the volume is devoted to the sea-dominated life of the village; to, for instance, 'The dancing wavetops (that) poke their tongues' or 'The cockatoo plumes of the sliding wavy crests'. But the village is dirty and noisome, preyed on by swarms of mosquitoes and flies, and the civilization of Hanuabada exercises its fascination:

O Hanuabada! Wan Pis Tru!
 Hanuabada, I saw and dreamt you long before my
 eyes felt you
 They told me you were civilized; your iron roofs,
 timber floors, electricity and all
 Where the laugh of your girls in their flowing straight
 pinned hair
 Will make my penis water in desperate stiffness
 And my eyes turn red from wishful envy
 To see your men boasting their lightness
 So smartly dressed in trousers, long socks and shoes
 So clean, so educated, so rich, so civilized, so new
 and white
 Yes, I saw you and them in my dreams.

The reality is, however, vastly different from the dream. The dream did not encompass the harsh cold mastery of white men, so much more obvious in Port Moresby than the dream-village of Hanuabada.

When my awkward feet first walked the streets of
 Moresby
 My eyes did not see you in your tight corner
 My eyes, my mind and my body counted and
 followed every car instead
 Like a sea gull capsizing up and down in the
 whirlwind.

Beguiling as this sight is, the author still seeks Hanuabada; he finds that by comparison with the riches of the invaders it is dirty and grey and sad.

Now I must turn my head in shame and fear
 To see you tucked away beyond the sight of your
 invaders.
 You stand there bulky and imprisoned on that
 cornered shore
 Your houses on their tree posts line up from that
 tiny beach
 Like crowding scavenger sand crabs poised in fear
 and silence
 Lacing their tiny crawling legs for an irate comfort
 and dignity.
 Hanuabada what have they done to you!
 Who are these white devils that trample you and use
 you like a prostitute

Then curse you and forget you as another slummy,
dirty native village?
Hanuabada what have they done to you!

The degradation of the town-village leads to misery, subjugation, and importunacy among the villagers. Kasaipwalova is moved by sympathy for the melancholy and passivity that prevail, but as in *Reluctant Flame* he finds within himself an active, creative spirit that rejects 'stagnant neutrality'. At the end of the title-poem he says:

Pretentious Death
Is more paralysing than the wounds of honest pains
I have ripped apart the house of my soul
To drag before my mirror my naked self
Bloody and shining
Leaping and flowing like a spring
From the depths of misery to the ecstatic heights
There is no stagnant neutrality
To take the unknown jump across the dividing
barbed fences
No jeering faces to please
But the pure creation of our naked selves
Beyond the immediate sorrows of good pretences.

In other poems, Kasaipwalova expresses the temptations that deflect him away from the vision: the prospect of promotion in the public service; drinking in Kone Tavern to the neglect of wife and children; the possibility of giving up the struggle in 'pretentious death'; the vanity of preening oneself when

Town Sunday is my show day
New trousers, new shoes . . .

Kasaipwalova's strengths are in description, in invective, and in irony. He has a flowing rhetorical line that can encompass any of the emotions, tender or fierce, that he wants to present. Though smoothly flowing, it is not an especially musical line, and indeed there are frequent unexpected and unwanted assonances that draw attention to the wrong words. This degree of insensitivity to sound patterns also vitiates the experimental poem 'My Soul Music', an attempt to capture the rhythm and mood of music and dancing.

In these two volumes John Kasaipwalova shows a wider and more precise command of language than even most poets his age writing in English as their first language. He draws on standard English (both erudite and demotic), Pidgin, dialect and local terms, and American 'hip' and 'soul' terms. The effect is not of conglomeration: it is of a supple language, basically of standard English diction with dialectally influenced syntax, capable of assimilating and highlighting words from almost any source.

His hate-filled invective is a highly personal expression of black anger, remarkable in its avoidance of the clichés of black America ('whitey' is not once used), of *negritude*, and of Caribbean creole.

K. L. GOODWIN



OVERLAND

Temper democratic, bias Australian

is the Australian literary and cultural magazine that has shown the most active interest in Papua New Guinea and its writers.

And the only one to have a Papua New Guinea editor — Donald Maynard, of P.O. Box 3384, Port Moresby.

Our issues No. 47 and 48, last year, featured a lot of new writing from Papua New Guinea. We have frequently published other P.N.G. material — and have always been on the side of the people of the islands.

We offer a special subscription rate to Niuginians: \$1 a year (four issues) for as long as we can afford to do so. Mention KOVAVE when you write.

This is ridiculous — we are selling to you at under half the price it costs us to print — but we want to have you reading us and writing for us.

Write to: Editor, *Overland*, GPO Box 98a, Melbourne, 3001, Australia.

**IN THE INTEREST OF LITERATURE
IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA.**

MAGAZINE ART PTY LTD 
ADVERTISING REPRESENTATIVES AND PUBLISHERS

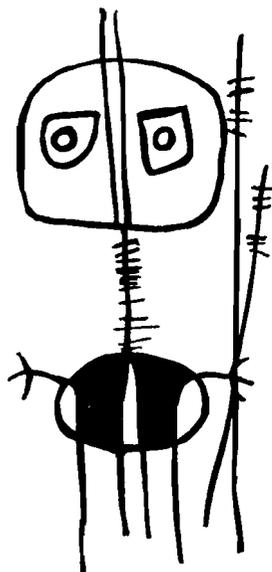
1st FLOOR
178 WICKHAM STREET
FORTITUDE VALLEY, QLD.4006
TELEPHONE 52 7967/52 7767

176 CHETWYND STREET
NTH. MELBOURNE, VIC. 3051
TELEPHONE 329 8937/329 8929

PUBLISHERS OF "LASITEWA" AND "NILAIDAT"

another in the Pacific Writers Series

**THE
NIGHT
WARRIOR**
ed. Ulli Beier



The Night Warrior — thirteen stories grouped in five wide-ranging themes — stories which can be seen as a collection of snapshot views of individual lives in various circumstances in Papua New Guinea.

They range from the social backgrounds of the traditional vengeance raids to the racial friction in an emerging nation, the carefree activities of school life and the soul-searching of the younger generation in a changing society.

Ten talented young writers are represented: Waruce Degoba, Lazarus Hwekmarin, Arthur Jawodimbari, John Kadiba, Kumalau Tawali, John Saunana, Maurice Thompson, Russell Soaba, Meakoro Opa and John Kasaipwalova.

The Night Warrior is an important book in the development of literature in Papua New Guinea.

\$1.50

The price set out or referred to herein is a recommended price only and there is no obligation to comply with the recommendation.

THE JACARANDA PRESS

ENVIRONMENTAL BOOMERANG

Dr Leonard J. Webb

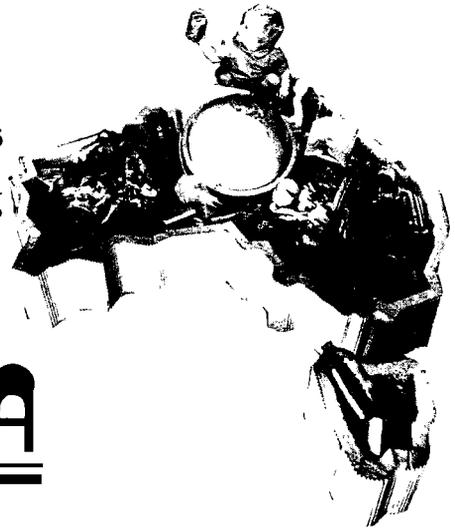
Environmental Boomerang—an Australian view of the ecological backlash and the criteria for conservation, written by one of the world's foremost rainforest ecologists.

He provides the basic principles and detailed information required for an understanding of a situation from which there is no possibility of escape for any human being.

Illustrated with stark, uncompromising black and white photographs, this book is essential for everyone interested in his own well-being and the well-being of his world.

\$3.85

The price set out or referred to herein is a recommended price only and there is no obligation to comply with the recommendation.



JACARANDA
PRESS