



*Kente: Cape Coast Journal of Literature and the Arts*

Online ISSN: 2579-0285

<https://doi.org/10.47963/jla.v2i2.438>

Azags Gandaah

POETRY



**Rwanda (sunset)**

We heard you moan in a hundred  
Lamentations  
writhing in furnace,  
and merely watched with mute mouths  
like the world  
nodding with pleased hearts.  
Yes, we saw you flutter like a broken-wing bird  
in the cussed flames stoked by colonialists' white winds,  
flamed by our own.

O Rwanda!  
a hundred days of laughter and pain  
drowned in a flood of fire and rain  
cast your kindred love into a mystery of bloodbath,  
turned the schoolchildren's playfields into churchyard  
and skull museums.

Ah! a machete raised never touched the earth  
but lost in the temple of a boy  
whose dying father's pleadings  
could not avert his son's bleedings,  
and the little girl must make her choice quick  
between the gun and phallus,  
and mama must witness the scene  
before her turn.

The tormented green hills of Imana mourned  
the disappearing thatched huts  
and the men with all will of ceasefire,  
but for whom it was not their business,  
stared you churn and swirl  
in a sea of molten flames.

The cathedrals too glowed in red clouds  
not of the holy incense in priestly thuribles  
but of figures of congregants, who, mistaking  
the sacristy for a haven, ran  
into the furnace of a nation turned maniac  
in heart and mind at once.  
And the men in uniform?  
They were the masters of the game  
Who closed all borders for the sacrifice.

**Rwanda (sunrise)**

We must admit to infirmity of a kind  
That engulfed us all,  
Not to fate,  
And make a public confession  
That we were the true murderers of  
Our souls,  
Sold us to Holocaust.  
So busy on the art, we could not listen to the voice  
Of conscience,  
the ambulance  
Was no match for the body count.  
Today, we must sit, sober and silent, to question yesterday-  
Sober and silent to admit the guilt we all wear:  
We were the men we murdered  
The massacrers and the massacred  
The buried and the buriers  
Acting as on the spell of sorcery  
Slashing all those familiar faces we knew too well  
Laughing cleverly over melting corpses falling on our feet  
Burning in a world that no longer knew them.

Today, the sun has burst upon the land again  
And the thousand hills of Imana rising all over in green  
To a new birth of salaam;  
Never more should the sleeping ground moan

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Never more should the dead ashes glow  
Never more should the calming dust rise  
Never more should the April rains return.

## Crossroads

Our fathers,  
now the river has done us apart  
and we, like lepers, unable to wipe off our own sweats,  
hold still on to this ancient Baobab roots but with doubts.  
When the firmament turns scarlet-red without a rainbow  
and the last trumpet bellows, so they say,  
where do we turn?

Many have sung on this sweating playground,  
motley tones, differing voices of a one-song  
each pointing to a true god  
the one path with many narrow tracks  
but like smokes all snaking to one unknown heaven  
some tell tales with promises far sweeter than nectar,  
some threatening louder than thunder

The muezzin is calling five  
the presbytery stretches her tentacles to global traction  
while the ancient grove, o! the forgotten orphan, sat  
there a sad lonely naked priest  
staring at the few frail feathers—  
offer of the day.

We're caught upstream in the middle of a big river  
like a lost boatsman finding his way in a whirlpool of seas  
where they say all rivers meet,

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tell us, fathers, the path you followed beyond,  
have you found the God?

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