

DIALOGUE WITH POSTERITY*

By

Marvin E. Williams

Ayele, when your babbles burst their sepals
and flower into words my ears can dance to,
ask

What does Ayele mean?

and I will tell you Power Born of Conflict.

Ayele, when your small appetite has been filled
and you toddle away to digest that,
digest that

then return to the source of your hunger
and ask me

Where does Ayele come from?

and I will tell you Ethiopia, bluesy horn of Africa:

Africa land of your father's grandfathers,

Africa land of your mother's grandmothers,

Africa land of the Mercedes and the bends

of fast resurfacing deep sea divers,

Africa land where every pregnancy enwombs

an enlarging dream of Ayele.

Almaz, that your coos might not crust into curses
which echo your father's cracking curses,

ask

while your coos are mushrooming into supple questions
ask

What does Almaz mean?

and I will grin and tell you Jewel.

Almaz, when your small body vibrate with the tingles

which ripple thru your veins in joy,

enjoy that

then return to the conduit of your tingles

and ask me

Where does Almaz come from?

and I will grin and tell you Ethiopia, jazzy horn of Africa:

Africa land of your mother's grandmothers,

Africa land of your father's grandfathers,

Africa land of many dry places and the oases

awaiting deep well diggers beyond the boundary of mirages,

Africa land where every degeneracy weens

a more robust cut of Almaz.

* Author's dedication: "For Marva, happy with child."

Ayele,
Almaz,
when your eyes grow old enough with purpose to climb
my library keepsake in hunger,
read
Shakespeare, read Paz, read Armah, read Mao, read
Walcott, read Twain, read.... Read, ask
What is Pan Africanism?
and I will tell you Africa's cut rivers
gushing above their banks and surging into one future.
Ayele,
Almaz,
hurt and joy are gametes that embrace to produce
a zygote,
so when you hurt
use me as alembic to distill pain
into its gregarious brother.

Ayele,
use me as griot
to sing the fermented wisdom
luted to our tongues.
Almaz,
use me as troubador
to sing sweetsour ballads
aged as our speech, aged
as our quest and praise for the Iwontunwonsi of a thing,
for the symmetry of things:

Ayele,
beware of
arrogant fowls who ravish our corn
and wipe their beaks in soil;
beware of
the kin cockroach who invites
the cock to our dinners.

Almaz,
observe and imitate
the crab who walks in the dark
to fatten his claws;
observe and imitate
deft time, the weaver and unweaver,
who unwinds the rope's intricate knots.

Ayele,
climbing monkeys expose
their hind most.

Almaz
dry logs cannot long escape
bush fires.

Ayele,
Almaz,
idolize no man no dog no idea
beyond the fettered ones
clanking for wings
to fly above their chains.



"LIFE FORCE"