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With tongues
Which
Kick
The truth
TONGUES
RISING
UP
AND
KICKING DOWN
PERVERSITIES (pp.241/242)

With the above graphological permutation, the author centres the action of the tongue which kicks against lies and roots for truth rather than that which privileges lies over truth. The consequence of the preference of lies is often grave: a free and fair election on June 12 1993 in Nigeria won by businessman politician Moshood Abiola was truncated, she says, by lying tongues kicking against truth.

From the outset of the novel in 'the journey to Abuja', the tongues have begun to kick, broaching diverse issues of importance to both Nigeria and humanity in general. Significantly also, the novel ends with the kicking tongue, a factor which underscores the text's constitutive unity.

Kicking Tongues basically thematises the necessity for peace and unity in the world. In this regard, the author debunks all war-inducing cleavages, preoccupied as she is with integrating opposites. This is a recurring theme in the novel which is underscored by the pastor through the black lady who says, 'Race is just another barrier in life to prevent us from doing good, and which people use to separate us from the love of God.' (p.221). This is the point at which *Kicking Tongues* intersects with Roy's *The God of Small Things*, a pointer to the fact that artists, in keeping with the postulate of Carl Jung, draw on the same primordial pool called the 'Collective Unconscious' in their creative activity.

However, it bears underlining that King-Aribisala is averse to polarities that are capable of unsettling society and sowing discord among people. This motif becomes evident with an admirable tour de force in phase three (The Postgraduate English Major: This literature life). Here, the postgraduate student who is easily the persona of the author is preoccupied with synthesising opposites and thus, is not averse to simultaneously reading Milton and eating Stilton, discussing European and African literature without making short shrift of either. This calls back memories from William Blake who enthused in his poem 'The Marriage of Heaven and Hell' that opposition is true friendship.

Yet, one looking for a well-developed plot and characterisation in the conventional

sense would be disappointed with this work, for the novel lacks a chronologically developed theme. Each of the seven phases of the novel tells varied stories which nonetheless are linked by a resonant motif, albeit subtly delineated. Some of the stories are replete with scathing criticism and others mild. But in all of them, Nigeria is the big bus (comprising both the macro/central bus conveying seekers of truth to Abuja and the micro/sub one in phase four 'Bus Play', (p. 159) which re-enacts the typical hilarious experience on a ride in a Lagos 'Molue' or 'Kombi' bus. It is against this backdrop that the author unfolds the kaleidoscopic episode of the stories.

Roy and King-Aribisala have beefed up the scaffolding of story-telling by re-inventing them differently. They (both) have built on the unpredictable and subtle vein of pristine tale by telling tales characterised by seemingly digressive and unwieldy plots.

This is part of the staple features of stories told in the former colonies. Meaning was never deduced by word-for-word correspondence but the accretion of the tales. The meaning of a tale was often unraveled through song, puns and in fact, the techniques of the story within a story. Arundhati Roy and Karen King-Aribisala have simply exhumed this rich medley to enrich the contemporary novel.

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A cultural economy of the book in Africa

BY ODIA OFEIMUN

James Gibbs, Jack Mapanje (eds)
THE AFRICAN WRITERS
HANDBOOK, African Books
Collective (with the Dag
Hammarshjold Foundation) Oxford
& Uppsala, 1999, 432pp

AFRICAN literature and publishing, especially in the last quarter of the 20th Century, appeared to be governed by a vicious circle: the more the writers' conferences, bookfairs, publishers' get-togethers and book foundations organised, the more the problems of the

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<< Book in Africa deepened and broadened. The more these occurred, the greater was the need to have more conferences and bookfairs and book councils covering the same old problems and postulating the same answers or variations of some old ones. The whole century - the only one in the outgone millennium in which Africans themselves seized the day to write and re-write their own continent into history - was littered with a toing and froing, a coming and going that seemed in Christopher Okigbo's phrase, to go on forever. It made the *abiku*-syndrome, so much celebrated in Nigerian literature, such a fair depiction of publishing and book trade in Africa.

After an initial flush in the Sixties and early Seventies, as the triumphalism of the independence decade gave way to murky politics and murkier economics, the loop of the vicious circle dived into doldrums. Premature decay overtook the publishing business and book trade in general. It forced multinational publishing companies that started the publishing revolution to embark on a scramble out of Africa. Writers, who burst upon the scene with a vengeance, determined to roll back the denigrating image of Africa and Africans that has been painted by the West, found they could go so far and no further. Local publishers, untrusting by finance houses, and with a tenuous access to an audience that was hardly weaned from illiteracy, faced a 'no-market' situation that narrowed their perspectives to the captive audiences in schools: but thanks to the politics of debt-stricture and the confounding capitulation of African political economies to the undertaker logic of the World Bank administered structural adjustment programmes, the schools collapsed or became mere shadows of the form; libraries, became moribund while the culture of bookshopping floundered, as it were, irremediably. International do-gooders, led by the same World Bank envisioned book hunger or book famine but mainly preferred to send book charities into the field to side-track markets rather than help markets to grow. Publishers, local and international, cadged upon the lucrative book-donation schemes which predictably by-passed the development of local publishing. As it happened therefore, a literature that set out to save society found that it needed itself to be saved in the face of the sapping logic that turned works of the imagination into dispensable ornaments.

One redeeming feature, however, lay in the unrelenting faith of book people who believed that 'a thriving autonomous publishing industry in Africa is an indispensable part

of cultural development and renaissance of the continent' and that 'cultural development is an integral part of development in its true sense'. Their abiding commitment expressed in conferences and get-togethers did not always impinge on forms of governance in Africa to put cultural development strategically on the agenda; but it yielded a wealth of information, about book production, and distribution, book people and their formal and informal dispositions within the book trade, which could serve the purpose of whoever wished to advance the course of salvaging the Book in Africa. The proof of this, if any was needed, is the publication of THE AFRICAN WRITERS HANDBOOK edited by James Gibbs and Jack Mapanje and published by African Books Collective. It may be described as the harvest of two decades of matching diverse views and impressions, ambitions and tactics, from across Africa in the light of global trends. The Handbook as such represents the labour of an intrepid crew, an international cast of book people - writers, publishers, book-sellers, publicists and donor organisations whose aim has been the sustenance of the Book and the promotion of book trade in Africa. In this sense, the Handbook is also a record of the activities of dedicated pioneers, at the front row centre of whose hypothetical family album sits rather unobtrusively a man called Hans Zell. From management of the Ife University Bookshop, Hans Zell played a prime mover's role in convening the Ife Bookfair, and later the Zimbabwe Bookfair in Harare. Since 1975, he has edited the *O* which in October 1985 conjointly with Africa Centre in London hosted the *Bookweek Africa Exhibition* where eleven African publishers met to take the first step that led to the formation of the *African Books Collective* (ABC). As reported by the here-today gone-tomorrow *West Africa* magazine in its 4th November 1985 edition, the publishers' meeting was chaired by Walter Bgoya of Tanzania Publishing House. The aim of the ABC as proposed, was 'promoting and disseminating African published material in Europe and America'. Headquartered outside Africa, in Oxford to be precise, the ABC, established in 1989 solicited membership beyond the founding eleven and, with supportive funding from donor organisations, especially the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation in Uppsala, embarked on a book promotion agenda for Africa which has yielded the publication under review.

Incidentally, the AFRICAN WRITERS' HANDBOOK is a follow-up to another, A Handbook for African Writers, edited by James Gibbs and published by Hans Zell Pub-

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<< lishers in 1986. As Mary Jay, Senior Consultant at ABC and Olle Nordberg of the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation have noted in their publishers' preface, the 1986 Handbook for Writers 'arose out of a conference in London in 1984 on "New Writing in Africa." It admonished new writers to make local publishers the first stop for their manuscripts.' Interestingly, what followed was a broader-based organisation of African publishers and donor organisations, the Bellagio Publishing Network in 1991. It led in 1992 to the formation of the African Publishers' Network (APNET), the pan-African umbrella of National Publishers' Associations.

Valuable intelligence and groundwork anticipating APNET had, in fact, materialised with the conference held in Arusha, Tanzania in 1986 on *The Development of Autonomous Publishing in Africa* sponsored by the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation. It was the first of three conferences - the others following in 1996 and 1998 at Arusha which provided the core content of this 1999/2000 edition of THE AFRICAN WRITERS HANDBOOK. It may well be noted that after the first conference which 'called for autonomous indigenous publishing houses... owned and controlled by Africans themselves' and the second conference at Arusha on *The Future of indigenous Publishing in Africa*, a clear yawn became apparent between the evidently over-unionised publishers and the writers whose works they are supposed to publish. The third conference, Arusha 111, strove therefore for a New Deal between writers and Publishers. Although the conferences did not begin with THE AFRICAN WRITERS HANDBOOK as a goal, each of the conferences became a way station in the garnering of strategic information, individual and group experiences for its coming to fruition. By the time of Arusha 111 in 1998, enough had crystallised for more materials from outside the conferences to be considered necessary to round out the burgeoning concept of the Handbook. The outcome is a marvelous harvest, worthy of the waiting.

Quintessentially, the Handbook is made up of two parts: a two-section Part One and a ten-section Part Two preceded by a well-honed introduction by Niyi Osundare, the Nigerian poet and scholar, Writer Director to Arusha 111, who also contributed two other interventions on *The Publisher and the Poet* to Part One and *Writing Against Repression* an interview with the Nigerian novelist, Omowumi Segun, to Part Two. Osundare's formal and informal interventions add up nicely to the theme of the first section on *Perspectives on Publishing in Africa*. The overall theme for both sections, *A Social Con-*

tract for Books is competently addressed by Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, a historian and like Niyi Osundare, a winner of the Noma Award for publishing who locates Africa within 'the international political economy of knowledge production dissemination and consumption' with a view to ensuring that Africa is not condemned to external information dependency, always importing their knowledge of the world and sometimes of themselves and others.

Africa's defence of the Book, 'the crucial repositories of social memories and imagination, containing the accumulated cultural capital of society, of its accomplishments, agonies and aspirations,' is presented as an onerous task that must not to be shirked. Zeleza identifies the stakeholders upon whom the task devolves: the state publishers, writers, educational institutions, libraries and reading public amongst whom a contract must be forged to create and sustain a cultural economy around the book. He concedes that the stakeholders have been hostages of a state system that mangles the cultural economies through silence-inducing authoritarianism, unimaginative economic policies, largely induced or imposed by the World Bank and IMF pressure and forms of public culture turned into... celebrations of undemocratic power. 'Faced by such a social background, he cautions against currency devaluation, monopolies in publishing, while favouring increased state investments in education, re-investment of profits by multinational publishing companies in the host countries, use of new technologies, aggressive promotion of books, taking language seriously, setting up African sponsored literary prizes, producing national, regional and continental data bases and forging inter-regional and international library linkages.

On the surface, Zeleza's *A Social Contract for Books* appear to remove the sting from the impassioned testimonies of the writers by objectivising the issues. But the issues, not being one-dimensional, are pleasantly muddled by access to the experiences of individual writers: MM Mulokozi from Tanzania, Yvonne Vera (Zimbabwe), Femi Osofisan, Osonye Tess Onwueme, Kole Omotosho, Cyprian Ekwensi (Nigeria) and Taban Lo Liyong (Sudan). The common thread running through their testimonies is not so much the more sensational griping about constricting publishing outlets, publishers who do not pay royalties and do not promote their authors but a social climate in which creativity has little alternative space outside the perceived insensitivity of publishers. Attempted self-publishers among

Senate Complex of the University of Lagos



them Femi Osofisan reveal through differing forms of failure the problems of an industry that needs multinationals to meet the challenge to which puny resources are being applied. Osofisan's movement from a patriotic commitment to local publishers, then a philandering with multinationals and a half-hearted regress to the previously abandoned turf of self-publishing is a common experience. Ken Saro Wiwa, his compatriot and immediate successor as President of the Association of Nigerian Authors, valorises self-publishing for taking him out of undeserved obscurity but does not defend it as a matter of principle. Cyprian Ekwensi's elegiac *Random Thoughts on Clocking Sixty-five* and Kole Omotoso's rounding up of the issues in the form of a letter to his daughter, Yewande, indicates that the defence of the Book in Africa must be the defence of a total social fact, beyond the relationship between writer and publisher.

The lesson from the various contributions is that a writer is hardly ever more successful than the society that constitutes the market, as Taban Lo Liyong, the 'most remaindered writer' attests. It is in this light that one must

appreciate Tess Quwume's admonition to aspiring female writers: '...you are (literally) a "bride without a groom." And therefore you must learn to jealously hug and husband yourself, and your craft, with love, care and passion by not allowing either the rejection slips (they will come and many too) or the closed doors by the gatekeepers of the marketplace to cripple you.' Many young writers who can afford to reach this Handbook will benefit from this and other tips that are to be found in writers' testimonies and in various sections dealing with what Onwueme itemises under links with publishers, entering for prizes, collecting royalties, payments for personal appearance and book launches.

The case that writers often make against publishers is not so much refuted as situated in context. Walter Bgoya addresses the issue in his four models of African publishing - state publishing, parastatals, multinational publishing and private indigenous publishing without the usual emotional dredge. He does not include self-publishing as a category obviously because the category is not worthwhile in countries like Kenya, Zimbabwe and South Africa which operate at adequate capacity unlike Nigeria whose capacity though adequate technically is unable to meet book needs due to political 'raw material' constraint. And not that the experience is much better in the low capacity countries like Tanzania, Zambia, Ghana, Ethiopia, Sudan, Mozambique and Angola which have tended to adopt the centralised state model of publishing after independence as has been the case with francophone countries. The crucial point is that in none of the cases is publishing really at home and well. The dominant model just happens to be multinational publishing which has creamed off the lucrative textbook markets. What's worse, it turns out that indigenous publishing, whatever its ambitions, has not managed to justify its expected distance from the multinational model in its poor attitude to publishing of African creative writing. Zimbabwe is mentioned as an exception to the rule. Particularly glaring is the case of West Africa, which has dived from boom to decline in the area of creative writing. Bgoya envisions the problem as basically one of constrained, small segmented markets that are unable to propel investment. He foresees a publishing culture that would benefit from a school curricula that will be expanded to cover wide regions of Africa, and will thus allow for inter-Africa cooperation and hence wider markets.

The creation of that wider market, breaking the logjam across African book trade is, of course, the project of the inter-Africa Book

Cheats.' Conceding this is one thing. As Hans Zell emphasises, the improper grasp of the nature of publishing which leads to such scathing depiction of publishers by writers need also to be met by studied openness on the part of publishers in relation to their writers about print-runs, rendering royalty statements and promoting writers and their books. Arguably, the relationship between authors and publishers need not always result in a fracas as happened in a 1996 seminar at the Zimbabwe Bookfair. As the Editor of Glendora, Dapo Adeniyi points out in *Before your text enters into a state of permanence*, the confrontations and recriminations between publishers and authors lie in too narrow an appreciation of the difficulties that the other must contend with. Knowing that publishers all over the world, and writers and editors in better-heeled economic cultures experience the kind of problems that rankle in the African situation may be some way indeed to build mutual tolerance. Of course, at the end of the day, the point made by Ken Saro Wiwa in *Notes of a Reluctant Publisher* may still be taken to heart by the author who knows that 'publishing is largely a marketing operation which a lover of books and culture with trading skills, money and bravo could undertake.'

No question about it: bravado and skills most writers can boast; money and the permanence that turns one-off market forays into a lasting culture is quite another thing.

It is the imperative of sustaining publishing as a culture that Part Two of THE AFRICAN WRITERS HANDBOOK addresses. Taking off from *A New Deal* between African Writers and Publishers, a statement issued by ten resource persons and twenty African writers and publishers at the Tarangire Sopa Lodge Seminar in Arusha 23-26 February 1998, the Handbook offers a checklist of the 'new deal' issues - the role of the writer and the publisher's expectations, the role of the publisher and the writer's expectations, contractual issues and writer-publisher relations and African values and African writing. It is a conscientising checklist, based on a sound moral persuasion covering the need to encourage fair business practices, commitments to efficiency codes, support for writers' associations and publishers' networks, use of indigenous language, and ensuring the affordability of published texts.

The New Deal statement is followed by the Arusha Report written by James Gibbs, one of the Editors of the Handbook. It is published with interpolating interventions made by Malawian writer Steve Chimombo - editor of *Writers and Artists International* who,

<< Support Scheme which aims at least to relieve the ABC of the 'irony' of books from one African country going first to Oxford before finding the way to another African country. Clearly, the scheme is still testing the waters, but it raises hopes that arose with ABC's strategy of market-widening into Euro-American markets. Mary Jay notes in her entry on *African Books Collective and Creative Writing and Publishing in Africa* that 'the rapid rise in sales in the earlier years (of the ABC) reflected the fact that an obvious captive market was waiting to be tapped, despite not especially favourable market conditions'... 'as time has gone on, general marketing conditions have deteriorated, notably cutbacks in library budgets.' Obviously this indicates how truly hard it is to mainstream African literature outside a bold strike at the open global market. The point is not just that publishing literature is risky anywhere or that, as the increasingly visible Nigerian publisher Dafe Ootobo says 'to publish a novel, you must start with the knowledge that you won't make money on it' but that it does call for a whole social movement that can engage the six stakeholders that Bgoya has identified. Even as he suggests local publishers must make a decisive inroad into textbook publishing to find a means of stability. A bold strike at social circumstances in Africa is what the situation demands beyond the necessity of the kitchen economics to which the same AFRICAN WRITERS HANDBOOK devotes much space. Or better to say that concept for the internal economics of the publishing business is pursued as a means of striking at the social circumstance. Henry Chakava, Managing Director of East African Educational Publishers, formerly of Heinemann Kenya and former Chairman of Kenya Publishers Association and member of the Council of ABC and APNET, present a useful format in An Autonomous African Publishing House: A Model which posits the basis for viability entailing 'longevity and permanence in publishing.' Covering some kind of optimum superstructure and infrastructure conducive to viability in a supportive environment, Chakava outlines principles covering choice of office accommodation, staffing, publishing programme, priority subject areas, market relations and the nitty-gritty of readers' fees, authors' advances, contracts, print-runs, pricing, credit term to booksellers and the management of corporate image at all levels - government, public and international agencies. A comprehensive survival kit, as it were, is provided for publishers and intending publishers which enables the readers to appreciate how we may arrive where we can concede to Hans Zell that it is not always the case 'African Publishers are mostly Liars and

in tackles, bouncing offs and complements engages such questions as which publisher for a writer, how to approach a publisher, and negotiating a contract. The concerned reader with a knowledge of the African writers' situation may well agree with James Gibbs that the writers have it within their power to improve the situation of publishing and yet give it to Chimombo that the 'publishing culture' in which discussions may take place is not conducive to the search for solutions. The functional triumph of the AFRICAN WRITERS HANDBOOK is that the contentious issues between James Gibbs and Chimombo on whether a publishing culture exists are the very ones that it addresses through Part Two. The short of this is that the Handbook is pre-eminently a contribution to the nurturing and defending of the book culture.

Considering that the Handbook is about a segment of the knowledge industry for communities that have related virtually across deaf walls for decades, it would have been surprising if every piece of information in the Handbook was correct. On page 318 *The Houseboy* by Ferdinand Oyono is credited to fellow Camerounian writer Mongo Beti. The Congolese poet Tati Loutard is correctly described as the first recipient of the Okigbo Prize in 1987 but on the same page Olu Oguibe who won the prize in 1992 is described as the first winner. This reviewer being the General Secretary of the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA) when the prize took off must plead a special response to the error. As it happened, the second winner of the prize was Tanure Ojaide. After him, in 1989, for two years, no entrant was adjudged qualified to win it before Olu Oguibe in 1992. After Oguibe, a strong prose lobby within the Association of Nigerian Authors successfully caused the prize to become an all-genre prize rather than, as originally intended, a prize for poets. Meanwhile, the endowment for the prize suffered a dislocation when Wole Soyinka who originally provided the annual prize cheque fled exile pursued by General Sani Abacha's goon squad. Efforts are being made by friends and admirers of Wole Soyinka and Christopher Okigbo to revive the prize with a full endowment rather than the old pattern of funding which required two cheques: a naira cheque of N30,000 to ANA for the administration of the prize and a dollar cheque of one thousand dollars for the prize winner. No question: the editor of THE AFRICAN WRITERS HANDBOOK cannot be held responsible for the footloose nature of the information that was needed for the ANA-administered Christopher Okigbo Prize.

A general survey of cultures is offered which allows appreciation of writers who get

windfalls and those like Dambudzo Marechera who wrote lovably sassy begging letters for advances; we are offered a fare of hazards of the trade, which can serve as index of growth of the culture. Even the kind of information that can be had as in this Handbook is part of it. There is for instance so much mileage to go to get reliable statistics on royalties and advances as in Britain where about 300 British born novelists, (as gathered from literary agent George Greenfield) earn more than 50,000 pounds sterling a year before tax, it is a matter of culture when members of the British Society of Authors are accountable enough to have allowed for a poll showing that of 1,186 writers polled 47 received no advance at all; 272 received between 1 and 999 pounds sterling, 449 received between 1,000 and 4,999 pounds sterling, 144 between 5,000 and 9,999 pounds, 128 between 10,000 and 24,999 pounds and 73 over 25,000 pounds. For the African writer, the absence of accountability by the publisher cries to be countered by the accountability of the writer.

In *Coda: The death of the Author* which provides an otherwise very useful reminder of the need for authors to protect their manuscripts and to trust no academic and to take appropriate measures to ensure that 'their heirs inherit all that is due to them', it is snidely stated that 'when Amos Tutuola passed away on 7 June 1997, the Nigerian Press... editors, journalists and creative writers indulged in a prolonged period of breast-beating, mourning the death of a man who had rarely been honoured by his fellow countrymen in life.' The Handbook's concern for social statistics may have benefited from noting that the 'chest-beating' was not in vein. In response to a report in PM News, an evening newspaper in Lagos with which this reviewer was associated, a funeral company in Lagos offered to, and ANA facilitated the takeover of funeral arrangements, covering the casket, hearse and lying in state. True, associational activities such as ANA's role in preparing and printing the brochure for the funeral service, ensuring delivery of advert space for obituaries in major national newspapers and providing light entertainment at the funeral, cannot make up for the absence of well-appointed executors to mind a writer's estate. Any writer who takes the pain to go through the Handbook would know what to do and how.

The culture is taken a notch higher by Hans Zell's *The Author's Bookshelf* which offers a directory of Africa-specific or Africa-published texts as well as general international Book aids which complements and is complemented by his *Internet Resources for*

<< *African Writers*. Many African writers are evidently being helped from the bush-path to the Super Highway of the computer age. Those who wish to or have received the print version of the *Electronic African Bookworm* offered free by the *African Books Collective Ltd.* in Oxford may well feel that an age is dawning in which literary culture and the culture of publishing in general would climb out of the bind of ill-informed conditions and debates.

As both appear to agree, the bottom-line for most publishers is profit such that, as Gibbs writes, unless a subsidy is involved or unless strategic considerations encourage the promotion of a 'loss leader' - in this case a title that will lose the company money in the short term but contribute to profit in the long run -

acceptance (of manuscripts) will be based on business-like expectations that the business will make a profit. Whatever publishers decide to do, the Arusha Report alerts writers to the danger of feckless handling of manuscripts.

Clearly from the standpoint of career positioning, the initial shunning of the multinationals proved that nationalism needed to be made of sterner stuff. Rather than being merely a choice between homebred capitalism and offshore rip-offs, it called for a tougher-minded conception of the social matrix in which publishing is embedded.

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Presidential rallies in colour

BY DAPO ADENIYI

Sunday Tumo-Ojelabi, OBASANJO: JOURNEY TO THE FOURTH REPUBLIC (Presidential Campaign images in colour), Touchstone Books, Lagos, 1999, 70pp

IT is not usual, least of all fashionable, for photographers to work towards exhibitions in colour - monochrome, particularly black and white, is still thought to hold more possibilities, and in fact curiously, more colour, than the multichromatic; what with its solid contrast of black against white, and between, endless possibilities for tones and shades.

But the images in this collection are those of an electioneering campaign whose burst of energy, and pomp and pageantry, demand nothing less than the very elaborate - prop, costume and banners - which are impossible to recapture in any other way than in their own unrestrained flamboyance. The nature of the assignment therefore puts stress on the function of documentation from the outset, placed contradistinctively to the function of image as art, by which pictures speak, not with any strange or sophisticated tongue, but in the direct, and the plainly decipherable.

A photographer on the campaign staff is in the immediate, concerned about moments, re-enacts moments, recreates scenes of note for public speculation or inspection almost with sworn objectivity. Even so, it takes thousands of such moments to complete or relive the experience of campaign-

ing through Nigeria - a few in some African countries. What to leave out or include presents the greatest difficulty, the very task of choosing, returning yet again the whole question of the photographer's leaning in the middle of disparate and conflicting roles, each vying for prominence: the photographer as a diarist or as an artist. Duty at once takes the side of the former but intuition, his own authentic self, sides with the latter. This nature of difficult blending is evident in the ultimate selections.

Bland images that offer little meaning beyond the obvious, sharply contrast those coded with several, perhaps endless, layers of meaning. Some of the more obvious types represent the photographer's own private reminiscences, or side glimpses, on subjects which others would ordinarily spare no thought. *Private Guards* and *Ota farm* I are representative of this. The use of ostriches as home guards has not yet become widespread in Nigeria. Their effectiveness as nightwatch is known to only a few; the Private Guards of the title were taken in a millionaire politician's homestead, while the spiked oil palm of the latter symbolises the presidential campaign base, the principal's

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