

## Matembezi ya jioni

*... kwa kuwa kunakuchwa . . .*

Mfalme jua, mashavu yaloiva, sarafu huria ya siku,  
wanigusa, na ngozi yangu kugeuka konea,  
uti wangu wa mgongo huwa neva za macho, na mwili wangu  
hutetemeka na kuzubaishwa na nuru unayoiangaza  
kwenye bahari na mji huu, na hatimaye mimi hupofushwa.  
Hapa, zamani palisimama safu- na nafahamu bado zipo-  
za nyumba na barabara, za mji mwingine,  
wala sio huu ulioubadilisha kabisa.

Tunatembea kando ya ufuo, Mashua za wavuvi wa usiku zi  
tayari, mota zikititima, vibatari vifundoni,  
Na mji mzima huhuishwa na waendao matembezi,  
wapenzi wakishikana mikono, maghulamu kwa miondoko ya  
mikogo, kina mama na kina baba, watoto wakibugia aisikrimu,  
mashaibu nao wakitazama kutoka kwa meza za mikahawa ya  
vibambani, na vilima vinavyozidi kukolea weusi hukaribia,  
kama wanyama waso mbuai.

Mng'aro mtamu wa anga, wajitandaza vilimani na kwenye ghuba,  
Sasa mkono wako waugusa wangu, utadhani kibahati mbaya,  
Kama mguso wa huyu kidosho, atembeaye kando yangu,  
Mwenye nyonga zilizojaa, hatua fupi fupi na mwendo wa  
kubembea, shungi kalitimua nyuma, koo laini na mabega  
rangi ya shaba mbivu, na macho yake ya kikahawia yakicheka.  
Ninakufaidi, ewe nuru umeremetaye, kama mvinyo, kama muziki,  
kama mababu zake walivyokufaidi wewe kwa maelfu ya miaka.

Jiji livujalo, jina lake ni *Eleftheria*,  
na ingawa makovu yako ni kama vipaku vya kijivu machoni  
mwake, bado, wakati huu, ambapo nuru na mapindo ya nuru  
hucheza usoni mwake kama hotuba au wimbo, kwa njia  
isiyoelezeka, lake ni haki ya kale ya kupitia upande huu wa  
gati kama chombo na mlinzi wa mwangaza wako, akiuzoa  
kwenye visima vya mboni zake zenye kina, na lake, uhuru  
uvutiao, ni kukuvyoga kama mnenguaji kiuno.

Jioni aula, mwangaza wa maelfu ya miaka,  
mwimbaji wa sauti ya ninga, mrembo kama mwanamke huyu,  
vyereje mimi nisihusudu utukufu uangaziao  
mji huu na wakazi wake, kwa njia inayofinyanga  
chochote ikigusacho, ulimwenguni kote?  
Kwako mie mtumwa, kama sio raia wako.  
Natamani kukufaidi wewe mzima mzima, ili nijaze  
kila kinyweleo na nururisho lako, ambalo ni uhuru wake.

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Richard Berengarten

Limetafsiriwa na / translated by Hezekiel Gikambi

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### **A NOTE ON KISWAHILI**

Kiswahili (or Swahili) is a Bantu language with an Afro-Arabic history: it originated on the Kenyan Coast and spread all over East Africa. It is now the national language of Kenya and Tanzania, the official language of the East African Community (EAC) and the African Union (AU), and is awaiting approval as the first African language to enter the league of UN working languages. A *lingua franca* in Africa, Kiswahili is spoken by around 120 million people, not only in Kenya, Tanzania and the Congo but also in Uganda and the Comoros, as well as by smaller numbers of people in Burundi, Rwanda, northern Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique. Historically, about 35% of Swahili vocabulary derives from Arabic through more than twelve centuries of contact with Arabic-speaking traders. The language also incorporates many Persian, German, Portuguese, English and French words, from contact over the last five centuries. Kiswahili is now a compulsory subject in the Kenyan and Tanzanian educational system in both primary and secondary schools, and it is studied to PhD level in universities in East Africa and abroad. In

the USA alone, more than 120 universities teach Kiswahili. Other countries teaching Kiswahili at university level include Germany, Japan, China, France and the UK, where it has a long history of study at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London.

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