

UCLA

Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies

Title

Two Poems

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2x53s8q5>

Journal

Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies, 17(3)

ISSN

0041-5715

Author

Mekenye, Reuben Omweri

Publication Date

1989

DOI

10.5070/F7173016870

Copyright Information

Copyright 1989 by the author(s). All rights reserved unless otherwise indicated. Contact the author(s) for any necessary permissions. Learn more at <https://escholarship.org/terms>

Peer reviewed

Two poems by Reuben Omweri Mekenye

My Friend Across the Fence

So the PS had ulcers too!
My ulcers I think are equally painful
Only they are caused by hunger,
Not sumptuous lunches!

Henry Barlow, "Building the Nation."

Across the fence
Lives a friend;
He has no neck nor head
For both neck and head
Seem to have merged
Into a common whole
Or entered a conspiracy.

Across the fence
Is my friend
With a protruding stomach
Like a pregnant woman;
Held just above
The tiny sweating legs.
At the Birthday Anniversary
Of every member of
His family is goat-roasting;
Attended only by the members
Of his 'tribe'.

I ask him, friend
Throw me a piece
Only for the starving children
And he rewards me with insults,
My stomach is warm-invested
My children living ghosts
And we breed jiggers.
He threatens to call
The Police...

Only the other day
My friend and I
Met in hospital

Him, suffering from
 Too much fats
 I, eaten up by ulcers
 A result of generously sharing
 The national cake
 Of our handworn Uhuru.

My friend, beware!
 Beware! My friend.

Mother

Mother! Mother!

Mother
 Raped and exhausted,
 The brutality of children
 Suckled and nursed
 By you,

The combined forces of
 Those who raped you
 Only yesterday and
 Left but did not leave,
 Continually violating your modesty
 Cheered by the monkey laugh
 Of your children, who partake
 Of the loot.

Oh! Mother!
 Your agonized cry
 Tears of blood
 On your face,
 That shall not go unattended.
 Sister! Brother!
 Listen! Listen!
 To the untiring expectant
 Love of our mother.
 Mother! Mother!
 We've come!
 Yes, to avenge you
 Dearest Mother.