

UC Davis

Streetnotes

Title

Rootless Cosmopolitan: Three Pieces

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/348018qh>

Journal

Streetnotes, 19(01)

Author

Gombe, Spring

Publication Date

2011

DOI

10.5070/S5191003511

Copyright Information

Copyright 2011 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

Rootless Cosmopolitan: Three Pieces

Spring Gombe

Zürich (DE/F/E/Mundart) or (E/F/DE/Mundart)

Lack

Au lac

Lack

Läck

Eid

We had been playing together, in our favourite colors, and then the others said they wanted to go and play king of the

Hill. I didn't want to play. I'm staying out of it, I said. Then they dumped their things in a heap at my feet and ran off.

Watch our things. And just ran away, laughing. I waited, then I got bored. I could hear them, they were having a time of

It, without me. So I went for a walk, then I came back, but they still weren't there. It started to get dark, so I came home. I

Had to carry all their stuff. I still have it. They'll miss it. I feel a bit bad, but they'll be sorry. It's as if they don't miss me.

I'll show them.

Rootless Cosmopolitan

Zitty, Süddeutsche, BZ, Bild, Blick, Deutschlandfunk, everywhere, black, black, "black music." "Black continent,"

"Black Africa," isn't the name isn't enough, psst. Editors, adverbs, red pens?

So I think it must be a money thing. Is it a money thing? But don't you think I hustle, what's the 411?

Surely I qualify on the try to get a visa test? It couldn't have been harder then than for me now?

You know Berlin? I'm on my way to a place I'm sure you don't know. Near the big cemetery, and the Turkish shop with

Good Indian mangoes. On my way to the best barber in the city, who takes an hour, doesn't do bitchy blather, doesn't

Care if you married white, doesn't assume you're a live import, takes an hour, asks for ten euro, and lets you sweep up

Your hair. Which matters, you know. Gives the best haircut anywhere. Wilkinson sword, fine-tooth comb, krish, krish.

They all come to him, the Kenyans, from Benin, all of them, from all the Embassies.

No, he doesn't go to them. Why?

He has his shop. Back home he has Mercedes-Benz, And BeMyWife, heh heh.

And of course is First Bank of al-Hadji to various and many.

So you've been to Mecca? Four times. Oh. Yes.

And how long have you lived here? Some 25 years. Came when he was a grown man.

He doesn't look old enough to have lived that long.

Can I ask you how old you are? Not a wrinkle, jet black hair topping peanut butter brown, doesn't look dyed...

You know you don't look...Yes, I know a secret.

So I think I'll be taking my hair with me after all. And the towel.

I feel the deadening of my pelvis, and look at the clock. Twenty more minutes, will it hold?

Oh. Should I tell him I'm now unclean? Can I plead East Africa? Will he finish? I hold my tongue.

And back to you. Don't I qualify? Aren't I a stain?

I want in. Can I join? Don't I make the mark?

About the author:

Spring Gombe was born in the USA to Kenyan parents and grew up in Kenya. She has since lived and worked in several countries in the Americas, Africa and Europe, for the better part of the last decade in Germany and her current home, Switzerland. Spring was trained in biology at Cornell University, and in public policy at New York University. Her professional life has focused on advocacy for access to medicines for marginalized people in marginalized countries. She writes primarily short, short stories, in which she likes to draw on the peculiarities of the languages she's picked up over time. She is married, with two sons. She runs a salon for the arts, Up the Rock, in Zurich.