

**UCLA**

**Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies**

**Title**

Two Poems

**Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9qk0v515>

**Journal**

Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies, 21(3)

**ISSN**

0041-5715

**Author**

Khonje, Kapwepwe

**Publication Date**

1993

**DOI**

10.5070/F7213016737

**Copyright Information**

Copyright 1993 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 Kapwepwe Khonje

## FRAGMENTS

- a) I'm the trumpeted history  
that has obliterated heroes and  
erected a deity on crimson scribblings  
since the September crisis made us  
sing praise-songs without repose  
at this altar of power monopoly;
- b) I'm the laudable geography  
that photographs highways and belching locomotives  
traversing valleys and rocky mountains  
that perpetually prays for more rains—  
not to sweep away bridges and rails  
but to avert last year's drought;
- c) I'm the vital statistic that matters only  
during self-help projects  
during electoral campaigns  
during charity contributions  
for drugs in govt. hospitals  
and famine relief distributions;
- d) I'm the political haven where  
few erect mansions on soft loans &  
import limousines duty-free  
slum-dwellers' protests drown  
in wanton bullets and crowded jails  
a fragile Reich sucks like a tick;
- e) I'm the flawed socio-economic development  
that counts industrialists on fingertips  
that plans and executes on foreign debts  
that rewards tobacco/tea rather than food growers  
& workers flirt with violence to effect payraises  
that merits district quotas in schools & colleges;

- f) I'm the enterprising developer  
 grazing known pastures to the ground  
 laying tombstones bare to the glaring sun  
 discarding broken bones in gaping graves  
 laughing at desecrated ancestral homesteads  
 clutching frothy glasses: not to pour libations  
 but to negotiate contracts with associates.

### CHOICES

Why are we still haunted by crocodiles  
 after decades of developments  
 when we fought that beasts of prey  
 should go with the dreaded colonialists?

Why has the drought made us reel  
 with fits of devaluations and cat-call strikes  
 when silos were full and reserves piling  
 and piling overseas?

Why these perpetual witch-hunts  
 and paralysis at frozen packages;  
 chanting these doomsday messages  
 of civil strife in variegated voices?

Haven't we moved thirty years  
 in a full circle?

Haven't we been taught classics  
 at this transplant of Eton  
 where our skins don't qualify us  
 and local graduates snubbed?

Haven't we argued in borrowed tongues,  
 dissecting the legends and ideals of  
 Napoleon, shaka, Lincoln, Marx, Cicero  
 in the tradition of Whitehall?

Haven't we?

Now, when coming to choices  
 why shrink from foreign ideologies like vomit;  
 aren't we reversing wheels of the history  
 we have been shaping all along?