

VERSION ANGLAISE ET COURT THÈME

I. VERSION

He had begun to wake up early again, as he used to do in Africa. The servant was about, chanting under his breath, from half-past five. Bray ate his first Sunday breakfast in the garden on a morning scented with woodsmoke. It came back to him — all, immediate, as with the scent of a woman with whom one has made love. The minute sun-birds whirred in the coarse trumpets of flowers. Delicate wild pigeons called lulling, slender in flight and soft of voice, unrecognizable as the same species as the bloated hoarse creatures who waddle in European cities. In perfect stillness, small dead leaves hung from single threads of web, winking light. A tremendous fig tree was perhaps several trees, twisted together in a multiple trunk twenty feet up and then spreading wide and down again in a radius of interlaced branches. Little knobbly figs fruited all over it, borne directly on the old, hard wood of the trunk. Skinny wasps left them and fell into the jam. He felt an irrational happiness, like faint danger. He dragged a rickety trestle table ringed with the marks of potted plants, under his tree, and wrote letters and read the papers Olivia had sent, sybaritic in the luxury of being alone.

But the afternoon was long. In the air were the echoes of other people's activity; the distant pluck of tennis, the swirl of arriving and departing cars at the other houses in the road, the sky ringing like a glass with the strike of church bells distorted aurally as the lake, from the hotel veranda, was distorted visually. There was a kind of thickening of the background silence, a vague uproar of Sunday enjoyment from the direction of the African township away over to the east. He thought he would look around there ; he hadn't, yet. [...]

Raw red roads led off through the trees. People were strolling, pushing their bicycles as they talked; women held their children against their skirts as he passed, boys laughed and threw mango pips at each other, there were little groups of religious sects holding meetings under the trees, young couples in their best clothes and old men hauling wood or charcoal on sleds, Sunday no different from any other day, for them. The bright little new houses looked stranded in the mud; the forest had been cleared for them. There were some trampled-looking patches of cassava⁽¹⁾ and taro⁽²⁾ and a beached, derelict car or two. The houses had electric light and children were playing a game that seemed to consist of hitting the telephone poles with sticks. They yelled defiantly and gaily at the white man in the car.

Nadine Gordimer, *A Guest of Honour*, 1970.

(1) cassava : manioc

(2) taro : taro (plante alimentaire)

II. THÈME

Au tournant de la petite route, Phil sauta à terre, jeta sa bicyclette d'un côté et son propre corps de l'autre, sur l'herbe crayeuse du talus.

« Oh! assez! assez! On crève! Pourquoi est-ce que je me suis proposé pour porter cette dépêche, aussi? »

De la villa à Saint-Malo, les onze kilomètres ne lui avaient pas semblé trop durs. La brise de mer le poussait, et les deux longues descentes plaquaient à sa poitrine demi-nue une fraîche écharpe d'air agité. Mais le retour le dégoûtait de l'été, de la bicyclette et de l'obligeance. Août finissait dans les flammes. Philippe rua des deux pieds dans une herbe jaune et lécha sur ses lèvres la poussière fine des routes siliceuses. Il tomba sur le dos, les bras en croix. La congestion passagère noircissait le dessous de ses yeux comme s'il sortait d'un combat de boxe, et ses deux jambes de bronze, nues hors de la petite culotte sportive, comptaient, en cicatrices blanches, en blessures noires ou rouges, ses semaines de vacances et ses journées de pêche sur la côte rocheuse.

Colette, *Le Blé en herbe*, 1922-1923.