DIALOGUE WITH POSTERITY*

By

Marvin E. Williams

Ayele, when your babbles burst their sepals and flower into words my ears can dance to, ask What does Ayele mean? and I will tell you Power Born of Conflict. Ayele, when your small appetite has been filled and you toddle away to digest that, digest that then return to the source of your hunger and ask me Where does Ayele come from? and I will tell you Ethiopia, bluesy horn of Africa: Africa land of your father's grandfathers, Africa land of your mother's grandmothers, Africa land of the Mercedes and the bends of fast resurfacing deep sea divers, Africa land where every pregnancy enwombs an enlarging dream of Ayele.

Almaz, that your coos might not crust into curses which echo your father's cracking curses, ask while your coos are mushrooming into supple questions ask What does Almaz mean? and I will grin and tell you Jewel. Almaz, when your small body vibrate with the tinges which ripple thru your veins in joy, enjoy that then return to the conduit of your tinges and ask me Where does Almaz come from? and I will grin and tell you Ethiopia, jazzy horn of Africa: Africa land of your mother's grandmothers, Africa land of your father's grandfathers, Africa land of many dry places and the oases awaiting deep well diggers beyond the boundary of mirages, Africa land where every degeneracy weens a more robust cut of Almaz.

* Author's dedication: "For Marva, happy with child."
Ayele,  
Almaz,  
when your eyes grow old enough with purpose to climb  
my library keepsake in hunger,  
read  
Shakespeare, read Paz, read Armah, read Mao, read  
Walcott, read Twain, read.... Read, ask  
What is Pan Africanism?  
and I will tell you Africa's cut rivers  
gushing above their banks and surging into one future.  
Ayele,  
Almaz,  
hurt and joy are gametes that embrace to produce  
a zygote,  
so when you hurt  
use me as alembic to distill pain  
into its gregarious brother.  
Ayele,  
use me as griot  
to sing the fermented wisdom  
luted to our tongues.  
Almaz,  
use me as troubador  
to sing sweetsour ballads  
aged as our speech, aged  
as our quest and praise for the Iwontunwonsi of a thing,  
for the symmetry of things:  
Ayele,  
beware of  
arrogant fowls who ravish our corn  
and wipe their beaks in soil;  
beware of  
the kin cockroach who invites  
the cock to our dinners.  
Almaz,  
observe and imitate  
the crab who walks in the dark  
to fatten his claws;  
observe and imitate  
deft time, the weaver and unweaver,  
who unwinds the rope's intricate knots.  
Ayele,  
climbing monkeys expose  
their hind most.  
Almaz  
dry logs cannot long escape  
bush fires.
Ayele, 
Almaz, 
idoize no man no dog no idea 
beyond the fettered ones 
clanking for wings 
to fly above their chains.