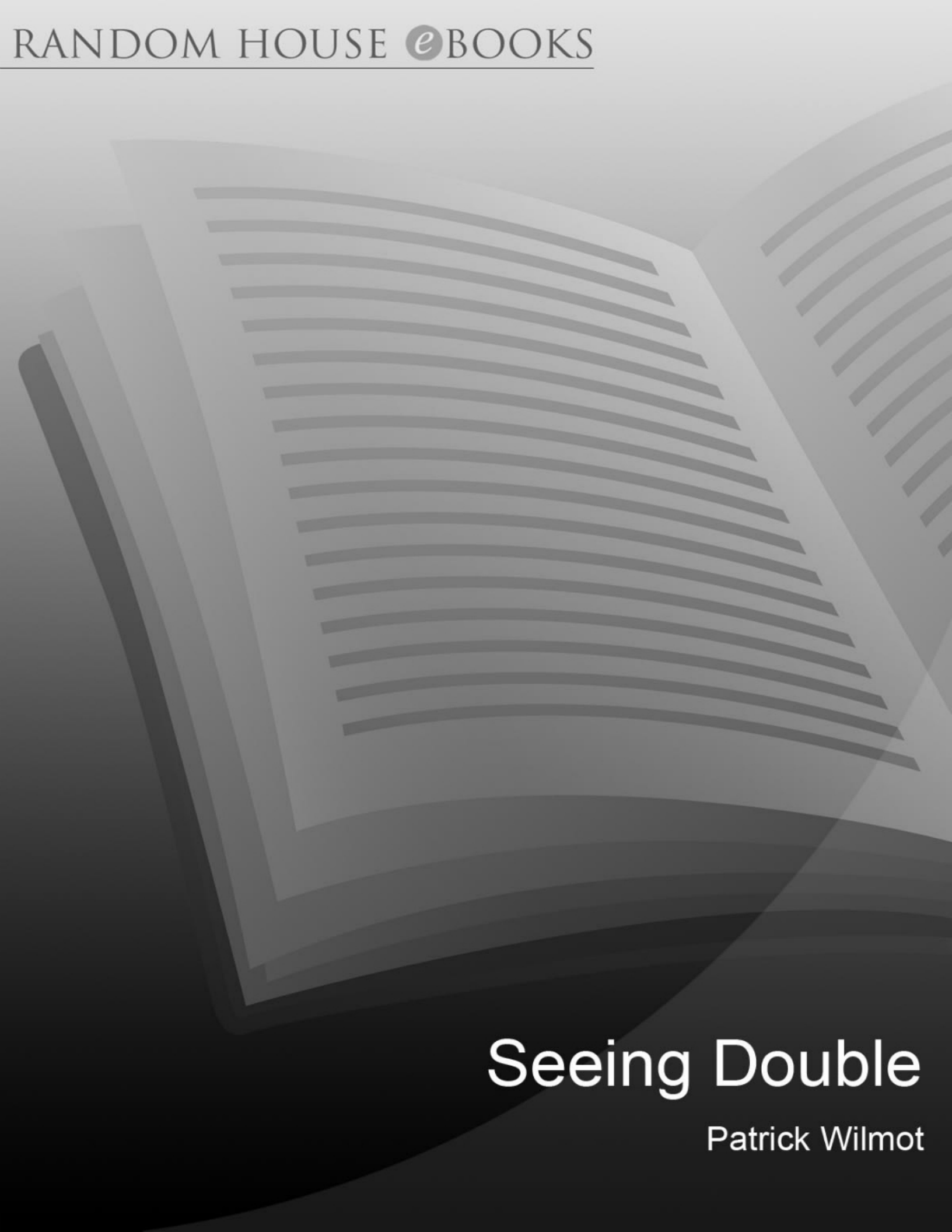


RANDOM HOUSE *e*BOOKS



Seeing Double

Patrick Wilmot

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‘The Mother of All Victories’

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About the Book

All is not well in the state of Niagra, the America of the African continent. The General – the Unique Miracle of the Century – has banned all but country and western music; a giant statue of Elvis desecrates the sacred Amuz Rock, street children are terrorised by the General's Disposal Units and someone is conducting experiments on unwitting Evangelical Christians. In Xanadu, Bob Marley, the sign painter, draws portraits that are more real than the real, more human than human and longs for the mother stolen from him by Idi Amin Ogwu. And in the oil-rich province of Lidiziam, villagers who refuse the attentions of the Burton Holly corporation, and its promises of US dollars in exchange for their oil, are massacred. The nation rejoices when idealistic young army officers stage a bloodless coup, but the revolution and dreams of utopian democracy are short-lived. A US-led 'coalition of the willing' sponsors a counter-coup and reinstates the General. The young idealists are rounded up, tortured and murdered. Forced to flee to the secret caves of Lidiziam, the girlfriends, wives and sisters of the revolutionaries gather together a guerrilla army of women and children and prepare to wage a very unorthodox war against the General and his powerful allies. *Seeing Double* is a provocative contemporary tale of dictatorship, kleptocracy, globalization and greed. It is a story of idealism, love, ganja, Sade, country & western music, Elvis, the art of sign painting, the war against terror and the politics of haute couture. With caustic humour and keen observation, Patrick Wilmot has written a satire that is as unforgiving in its analysis of world events as it is entertaining.

About the Author

Born in Kingston, Jamaica, Patrick Wilmot is a graduate of Yale and Vanderbilt universities. He taught sociology at Ahmadu Bello University, Nigeria, for eighteen years. An outspoken critic of the military government of Ibrahim Babangida, he was kidnapped by security police in 1988 and deported to England. He is the author of several books of poetry and academic and non-fiction works including *In Search of Nationhood* and *Apartheid and African Liberation*. He lives in London and is a member of Transparency International. This is his first novel.



Illustration: Elliot Thoburn

To my wife, Makki, and my son, Nicolai,
and
to the memory of my friend
Ken Saro-Wiwa

Seeing Double

Patrick Wilmot



JONATHAN CAPE
LONDON

POLITICAL FOREPLAY: THE HOT NIAGRAN NIGHTS

HEALTH WARNING

THE VENUE OF this story, Niagra, attracted a lawsuit from the manufacturers of Viagra™, dragging the publisher to the World Trade Organization in accordance with provisions of the Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) for copyright infringement. Argument that Niagra had historical antecedents, a fictional country named by the bimbo girlfriend of a colonial governor who got the spelling wrong after a dirty weekend at Niagara Falls, was dismissed by the company's lawyer echoing Henry Ford with: 'history ain't got as much material relevance to this here case as the hairs on a frog's back'. In case the WTO rules in favour of the manufacturers, readers are strongly advised to demand a coloured pencil from the publisher to blot out the offending word. *Or prepare to be fucked by the Pfizer Drug Company.*

The Attorney General has also ruled that smoking this book *is* hazardous to your health and that *not inhaling* will not count as mitigating circumstances in an American court of law. Readers are reminded that *all* characters are fictional, including Karl Rove who had hoped to be played by Charlie Bronson in the sequel to *All the President's Men* but will now have to settle for Tom Cruise. Nasser Waddadda, the Niagran Karl Rove, is definitely fictional, as shown by his success in proving the democratic credentials of his country's Dictator, the modestly named General Abdu-Salaam bin-Sallah-ud-Deen bin Sani-Ibrahim al-Daudu, The Life President of Niagra and Unique Miracle of the Twentieth Century.

Under pressure from the Western Democracies, Nasser advised the General to set up six political parties after the number of fingers on his right hand, write their manifestos and fund each with fifty million dollars to avoid their capture by unprincipled and corrupt money men. Then, in a stroke of genius worthy of his mentor in the White House, he advised all six to exercise their democratic right by nominating the General as sole candidate to avoid the unseemly spectacle of violent and greedy men fighting to the death in a game of winner-takes-all. With this dignified and peaceful process of the Great Helmsman competing against himself the outcome could only be the recognition of Niagra as the Greatest Democracy in Black Africa, if not the world.

But Nasser had forgotten that in addition to six fingers on his right hand the General suffered multipolar personality disorder and, depending on the political climate and the phase of the moon, believed he was Margaret Thatcher, Idi Amin, Elvis Presley, the Emperor Bokassa, Dame Edna Everage and Paul Wolfowitz. Besides, not even God, who was suspected of creating Niagrans first then spending eternity trying to correct His mistakes, could remove ballot rigging and political violence from the national character.

The result was the most violent election in the nation's history as each political party took on the personality of its leading character, promising to make each Niagran a Thatcherite king of Scotland, Australia or rock and roll, or to make their country achieve the Full Frontal Dominance now enjoyed uniquely by the United States of America which allowed that country to fuck any country which dared to say 'No!'. Dame Edna, who finished marginally ahead, was disqualified by the Electoral Commission for complaining that three of her rivals were dead, one was a partially-real woman though *gaga* and the other a member of the Bush cabinet. So the General was advised to cancel the elections, declare a state of Emergency and elect himself Life President by Decree.

Which was alright then, because just before the letters of denunciation and threats of sanctions were despatched from Western capitals, Nasser Waddadda announced the discovery of huge quantities of oil off the coast of Lidiziam which made his country a more valuable piece of real estate than Iraq. The result was invitations from the White House, Buckingham Palace, the Elysée and Chancellor's office, with promises of the Congressional Medal, Honorary Knighthood, Iron Cross, and Legion of Honour. His portrait appeared under the heading of 'New Democracy' on the covers of *Time*, the *National Review* and *New Republic*, and editorials in the *Washington Times*, *London Times* and *Sunday Telegraph* praised his 'brilliant statesmanship' and 'profound courage'. And George Bush declared him the George 'Dubya' Washington of his country while Tony Blair went one better, dubbing him the Peter Mandelson of our times.

Literary critics such as Harold Bloom, who argue that if this character did not exist it would be necessary to invent him, are reminded that according to the First Protocol of the Abuja Convention the only *necessary* being in the universe is the General himself. If after all these warnings, readers persist in mistaking this fiction for reality, they hereby deprive themselves of the protections of the Geneva Convention and Kyoto Protocol and are liable to be detained indefinitely in the appropriately named Camp Climax in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, where fat Castroite mosquitoes will bite their naked asses.

This book is best read hot, to the accompaniment of Bob Marley's 'Get Up, Stand Up', played at such volume that the neighbours bang the ceiling with baseball bats, shouting 'turn that foreign shit off, you fucking scuzbag foreign-loving faggot'.

Do not pretend you have not been warned.

PROLOGUE

THE TRAGIC FLAW OF A MAN IN BLACK

A FINE DUST rose through the mist which in the early morning sun separated into gold and silver. But the man in the Police sunglasses and purple Thierry Mugler shirt with brass studs saw nothing of this transformation because his castor-bean eyes were focused on the hunched, dirty old man approaching the border fence about fifty metres away. His inability to appreciate the beauty of the rising dawn was not helped by his proximity to his American 'partner' from Special Operations whose idea of sartorial elegance was a t-shirt of such spectacularly offensive floral design it attracted disoriented bees and jeans so old no self-respecting cart pusher would be caught dead in them. Did his commanders honestly believe that a man whose ponytail was kept in shape with a conditioner suggesting air-freshener in a lower class brothel was the best instrument for capturing Al-Qaeda operatives trying to cross the Nigeria/Niagra border? Fortunately there was minimum opportunity for conversation because one ear was plugged with his radio connection, the other with one arm of a Walkman. Unfortunately the other arm was left hanging so innocent bystanders suffered the collateral damage of '*Shove your hand down my blouse again, / These ain't no plum tomatoes*'.

While this may have well served a bunch of rednecks near a fictional town called Crawford in Texas, it was out of tune with a stretch of border between two 'failed states', described by their own Secretary of Defence as 'a clear and present danger to the security interests of the United States of America'. On this the Secretary need not have worried

because Nigel 'Doc' Holliday's cover was completed by a medium sized box of Wrigley's chewing gum, an M16 rifle adorned with a 'Homer Simpson for President' sticker, an Uzi sub-machine gun, a Ruger Blackhawk .357 pistol on his right hip, a Rambo hunting knife on his left, a ring of grenades like green star apples round his waist and a bunch of urine yellow RPGs hanging louchely about his torso like dinosaur eggs painted for a Jurassic Easter.

Mustapha would not even have noticed the grey bastard struggling across the stretch of no-man's land in slow motion if he hadn't reminded him of the central character in his adolescent novel, *Magic Fountain*, which Heinemann had rejected on the grounds that the 'narrative was too disjointed, the characters not credible enough, the setting too futuristic, the plot too apocalyptic, the dialogue too scatological, and generally unsuitable for Heinemann's major audience in schools and colleges'. While severely pissed at Heinemann at the time, he was now happy at the rejection, not even recognizing then that the title was stolen from Thomas Mann's *Magic Mountain* and Ayn Rand's *The Fountainhead*. Even at seventeen he should not have been so naïve as to mix the decadent conformism of Old Europe with the raw individualism of a hyper-power destined to achieve Full Frontal Dominance over a world of sheep-like nations. What kind of sick shit had led him to imagine a loser like the grey bundle of rags slinking toward him existing in the same Nietzsche/Ayn Rand world of American tycoons and Darwinian generals who rubbed the noses of no-hopers like the grimy jackass in the shit bucket? How could the slimy turd co-exist with the golden, crew-cut nuclear warriors who left fire in their wake?

Because of the dire state of the continent, every educated African had a book in him to show that a new, better world was possible. And Mustapha was no exception, bursting with a real swashbuckling, literary semtex-charged rollercoasting

cauldron of a book, peopled by gigantic egos capable of parading the same stage as the heroes of *Atlas Shrugged* and *The Fountainhead* who would do for Niagra what Ayn Rand had done for a vigorous, thrusting America which rolled over lesser nations on its way to glory, without apology or excuse. He looked at the old loser and felt the power swell up inside him, beyond the narrow confines of morality and feeling, beyond good and evil, to that rarefied, austere pinnacle of creation where World Historical Individuals like General Daudu, Richard 'Mr Dick' Burton and Lord Conrad Black did as they willed, while the undifferentiated mass suffered as they must.

But he was brought back to earth by the memory of the new man at Heinemann – called the 'Exchequer', or 'Chancellor', because of his resemblance to a former Chancellor, so striking they could be told apart only by his goddess daughter with her 20/20 vision for spotting trends in expensive *nouvelle cuisine*. When Mustapha had presented an outline with characters representing the ideas of Friedrich Nietzsche and Ayn Rand, 'Exchequer' had asked what he thought of Al-Qaeda and the coming clash between Western and Islamic civilizations on the battlefields of Africa. But even this was not considered a suitable topic for his novel as the man still thought the African writer had an obligation to present mythical peasants and workers living in communal bliss, a bunch of angelic faggots wishing the best of all possible worlds for other brainless wonders, rather than animals engaged in a brutal struggle for survival, willing to rip off each other's heads and stuffing them down their throats. Africans were no different, and probably a whole lot worse, than other races which triumphed. Even Earl Grey, moping like a tuft of silk cotton without its own means of motion toward him, probably beat the shit out of his wife, bugged his sons and squeezed his daughters' plum-sized tits till they screamed bloody murder

while reciting verses from the scriptures and thinking of defecation.

His poor parents had always pressed on him the importance of making money so they could make the neighbours look like shit and his father, who had a primary school education, smashed his head with his belt buckle when he caught him writing shit he could not understand, which confirmed his suspicion that he had given life to an abomination against the Most High, a fucking man-woman. They wanted him to join the customs or immigration, the runners-up for the national sweepstake to the military because they didn't think he had the balls to become a soldier and commit grand larceny on a national scale. But Mustapha had his personal ambition which was not for money but power, the root of all one could desire, including wealth, sex and fame. So he opted for the Security Service, in whose shadow he could hold feet to the fire, forcing the arms to rise in surrender, study the psychology of terror and measure the extent to which an enemy gave in to his fear.

But he was no psychopath and took no pleasure in inflicting pain. His limited experience with enemies of the state was that they yielded far more easily to the fear of injury than the defiance or at least the numbness which derived from its actual infliction. He remembered his Ulster Protestant tutor in Political Philosophy at St Anthony's who, in alcohol induced hallucinations, railed at his Republican 'enemies' and Loyalist 'friends' alike for killing, maiming and torturing each other, rather than using the threat of such horrors to gain advantage in cynical compromises and tawdry accommodations of interest because *the power to hurt was more effective when held in reserve*. And his slim muscles, toned to perfection by their own internal tensions, shivered with self-satisfaction in his black Ginochietti linen jacket, Ungaro jeans and £1,500 Hermes belt, its hand-made silver buckle with an image of Tantalus splayed, at the consciousness of his own rightness. His Lobb boots shone so

brightly he could see his face in them if he did not already keep, fixed permanently in his mind, an image of Patrick Vieira, the Arsenal football captain, ruthless and machine-like in a million-dollar suit straight out of *Reservoir Dogs* and with the will and resolve to slice the fucking ears off Manchester United and Chelsea football clubs. Whenever he indulged in his favourite sport of shopping he was driven by the image of those muscles toned in the hot sun of the Senegalese *niaye*, the incredibly long legs bursting through the Chelsea lines, the indomitable brow.

Shopping, not terror, was integral to the philosophy of the security service and Idi Amin's reign in Uganda demonstrated that shopping was superior to terror, in fact a continuation of terror by other means. During his stay at Buckingham Palace – a gentle giant balancing two royal corgis on those enormous platforms of hands – Amin lacked the intellectual sophistication to realize that the same Agency which supplied the *Chateau Margot*, artichoke hearts and lobster bisque to the Royal Table also garnered the silk shirts, single malt scotch whiskies and expensive *eau de cologne* for his boys in the State Research Bureau who did the business on opponents in the dimly lit 'chicken coops' below his own Presidential Palace. But neither did his Royal Hostess understand the psychology of shopping and the role it played in the political stability of African military dictatorships which made such sterling contributions to her civil list.

Every Friday evening at nine without fail a DC9 left Stansted airport for Kampala stuffed with orders from the Field Marshal's Men in Black which they needed to maintain their sense of purpose and restore their equilibrium after inhuman exertions spent teaching sense to the Enemies of the State. Before their spectacular break over the issue of Weapons of Mass Destruction, Israel and Uganda maintained such intimate relations that the academic Professor Jana

Herzovogina, inventor of the Wonder-Bra, was allowed to study these specialists in the State Research Bureau at close quarters. The Professor, using an admittedly self-selected sample, found that 'optimists' looked forward with anticipation to the arrival of their 'gifts' and were generally more pleasantly inclined toward their charges while the 'pessimists', anticipating disappointment, acted in a truculent and insensitive manner by beating the shit out of them. But the most shocking finding was the charges' vicarious identification with their specialists and the feelings of envy over who got the brightest silk shirt or most stylish designer shades, as men about to die competed with each other to see who could have the deepest, most satisfying, final lungful of Givenchy's heady *Eau Sauvage*.

On trips to London to liaise with his English counterparts, Mustapha took his bosses' lists to collect Brioni suits and matching shirts, belts, socks, shoes, ties, boxer shorts and hankies from Rossini's. At first he had wondered why they paid the huge mark-ups when they could send him to Rome and still save money at the source. Why did they refuse to buy a simple safari suit for less than £3,000 when they probably had a closetful they never wore? Then he realized that paying more was the whole point, you did it because you *could*. Marshal Mobutu paid ten thousand dollars to a Lebanese contractor for a six hundred dollar bottle of *Chateau Petrus* because the inflation made it taste a thousand times richer, to make him worthy of his name Mobutu Sese Seko Kuku Ngbendu Wasa Banga which meant *the warrior who leaves fire in his wake, who emerges triumphant from a thousand battles, the cockerel who fucks the hens till they bleed*. This was *power*, to do what you wanted without considering the cost, not battering the head of some poor bastard who had no 'information' worth knowing. Three thousand pounds could probably buy a bigger mud house for the grey wonder over there, his four wives, twenty kids and countless hangers-on, if he rose

above the instincts of his type to marry more wives and breed even more children. The money could prevent his wives dying from cerebral malaria, vesico-vaginal fistula or malnutrition and provide a future for their children through better education and healthcare. But the point was he couldn't stop you spending the dough on useless safari suits or £10,000 alligator skin attaché cases, from screwing his wives and daughters, or even his young sons if you were that way inclined. Naïve liberals thought people whose noses you rubbed in shit would rise up and try to fuck you but the truth was they dunked their heads even deeper in it to hide from the source of their pain before lining up to kiss your dick or crawling away to die. They knew nothing of the power of shopping, the true aphrodisiac, the Viagra of Niagra, for which the Generals and Field Marshals had the formula, not the WTO or the Pfizer Drug Company. A whole industry of servile Europeans had sprung up to massage the egos of the new African Big Swinging Dicks and Masters of the Universe, suitable reparations for slavery and colonialism despite the objections of the British PM who argued that slavery, like nazism, was legal in its day. So Mustapha had no qualms of conscience when he crossed the road from Rossini's to buy from the Hermes flagship store two £1,000 belts, some £250 ties and a bunch of £200 silk scarves for the undergraduates he maintained as informers at the General Daudu University of Niagra. Already he had a Zero Halliburton suitcase stuffed with underwear from Janet Reger, La Senza, Myla, La Perla and Agent Provocateur for the women he would fuck when he returned, including the widows and daughters of enemies of the state held in the rat holes under the Presidential Palace, before he set the dogs on them. He recalled his first marriage when he suffered bouts of nausea and self-doubt after his boss gave him a Pathek Phillipe watch and he thought it signalled the end of his career, a vote of no confidence in his ability to create fear. There was no sign of gold, the strap was leather

and the dial was plain as the eyes of the dull fool he was watching as they waited for Justice Saleh's son. It was only when he found the £15,000 price tag in the bottom of the case that he realized 'Pathek Phillipe' *meant* something – that he was valued as a human being by his superior. It did not even phase him when he got to know that his C-in-C wore a million dollar watch with a platinum band and more diamonds, rubies, sapphires and pearls than on his C-in-C's mother's coffin, made by Gaddafi's personal watchmaker in Lucerne, a fucking irony in a nation hosting the worst timekeepers in the world. He was not bothered, because he recalled as a boy reading a self-help pamphlet titled *Men are led by Baubles* about using such coveted symbols to focus one's ambition to get to the top. And on this score Niagra was way ahead of America despite their disparity in military and economic power. On his course to study Al-Qaeda operations at CIA Headquarters with thirty-one other Africans, he had mastered the techniques of gratuitous swearing, putting 'fuck' before every 'p---' and 's---' but learnt nothing about *shopping*. And it amazed him that a country boasting its 'Full Frontal Dominance' had no equivalent of Rossini's in Washington and he doubted if Laura Bush had the ability to blow \$100,000 in a Paris boutique in the time it took to say 'War, Motherhood and Apple Pie', a talent bequeathed to any harlot who hit the jackpot and married some fucking leader of an African basket case.

Mustapha's exultant mood was lowered, however, when he recalled the sudden tragedy of the man he had once considered making the hero of his own updated version of *Atlas Shrugged*. Hamidu Baggadudu was marked out as a future Nobel Laureate in economics when, only a senior at Yale, he wrote an article for the *American Banker* titled 'The Need for New Thinking in the World Bank and IMF', described by Joe Stiglitz as 'without precedent in the annals of economic thinking'. By changing the International

Financial Institutions' mission statement from 'austerity' to 'poverty alleviation', Baggadudu argued that they would fuck left-wing assholes like Samir Amin, Walden Bello and Iain Duncan Smith who could not be seen to oppose programmes designed to improve the lives of the world's poorest losers. Stiglitz marked him out as World Bank material and followed his progress at Harvard where he enlisted for both the Ph.D. in Economics and MBA after graduating *summa cum laude* from Yale. At the Bank he was an instant success, designing programmes of such complexity Third World rulers could not fuck them up because they had not a fucking clue what they meant. But his stay was short-lived. Huge deposits of oil were discovered in Niagra and the Bank and Fund decided they needed their own man in place to prevent the megalomaniac General from blowing the whole fucking windfall on himself and his bunch of lame cocksuckers and their retinue of whores.

Baggadudu arrived on the scene shortly after the British Prime Minister had come for the state opening of the Afro-Disney Theme Park at the beginning of Africa's Development Decade. The entourage included the CEO of Equitable Life to teach Niagrans how to save, and of British Aerospace to show them how to screw their Nigerian rivals with Hawk aircraft and be recognized once and for all as the Greatest Black Power on Earth. The General had been so impressed with the Premier that he consulted with Nasser Waddadda on how he could establish his own pension fund so he would not be a burden on the state after he retired. He felt humiliated about depending on birthday presents of twenty million Euros from German Construction companies, Belgian chateaus from French oil companies, twenty-five million pounds from British arms companies, and fifty million dollar 'consultancy fees' from the Burton Holly Corporation on each Thanksgiving Day. As a proud African General he felt diminished by these episodic contributions to his

'pension fund' and it was his talent spotter Waddadda who pointed to Baggadudu as the man to design a coherent strategy to assure his long-term financial independence by converting his country into a cash machine.

The young economic magician did not disappoint. First he negotiated an agreement at the IMF for the release of a loan of ten billion dollars on the condition that Niagra take steps to reduce its thirty-five billion dollar debt. Ten billion of this was owed to the Russians who were so desperate for cash they had created bonds to sell the debt at almost any price. When Baggadudu arrived, the asking price was thirty cents to the dollar and his first move was to plant stories in the *Financial Times*, *Wall Street Journal* and *American Banker* that the Niagran economy was on the verge of collapse which had the desired effect of halving the price of the bonds on the first day. He advised the General to buy when they reached their floor of five cents to the dollar, through a bewildering array of Special Purpose Vehicles and International Business Corporations his City of London lawyer, Mr Rodmill Thompson, had set up in Nauru, the Cayman Islands, Grenada and the British Virgin Islands. Then Baggadudu began the process of ramping up the prices by planting stories in the financial press that a truly tough programme was on the way to restore macro-economic equilibrium. The currency was devalued, interest rates doubled, exchange controls relaxed, privatization accelerated, subsidies on gasoline and fertilizer removed, and cost recovery programmes introduced for previously free services in health, education, welfare and pipe-borne water supplies. The predictable riots erupted, sixty-seven people were shot, the *Washington Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Jerusalem Post* and the London *Telegraph* praised the Niagran financial authorities for their will and resolution and the IMF released the ten billion dollars as promised to reward the regime for its courage in reducing the debt burden and liberalizing the economy. The bonds rose to 55

per cent of their par value but a secret Financial Decree allowed the government to repurchase them at par and, at a stroke, the General Daudu Pension Fund was richer by \$9.5 billion.

Then the London media began a feeding frenzy about the 'Steal of the Century' after the newsletter *Africa Confidential* revealed the financial architecture of a scam so elegant it would later be used by Enron, Global Crossing and Parmalat. Again Baggadudu was called upon to protect the good name of his General and rose superbly to the occasion, taking on the leader of the baying pack from the BBC World Service, called 'Florence' after the royal bull terrier which shared its mistress' talent for savaging anything that smelt common. As a special treat, the Men in Black in State Security played sped-up versions of her voice to secure confessions from men who had survived extreme measures such as 'crucifixion' and Florence lunged as Baggadudu stepped into Bush House looking like a laid-back, more athletic version of Tubbs from *Miami Vice*. But she was thrown on the defensive when he accused her of racism for not condemning the same methods used by Burton Holly, Hollinger International, News Corporation and twenty-four corporations on which members of the BBC's own Board of Governors sat as directors. He showed her the organograms, read out some figures and resisted when she tried to cut him off as he mentioned the name of the General's lawyer who played tennis with the Prime Minister and was his adviser on the Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering. By the time they were finished Florence had been so neutered she looked more like a tabby than a bull terrier and the economist felt exalted having fulfilled his duty to his General. But in such great moral battles there could be no victors or vanquished because as soon as the Fat Controller saw that Florence had lost it, allowing the 'arrogant Black Prick' to mention the name of companies owned by the Chairman of the BBC, he pulled the interview and replaced it

with a recorded programme about drunken Niagran soldiers wiping out an entire village, with the odd name of Lidiziam, after drugged-up youths had killed seven American missionaries who had only come to help their poor people.

But then at the height of his glory tragedy struck the young man as hubris led him to think that because he was an economic genius he knew more about the sociology, psychology and politics of *shopping* than his General. Niagra was chosen to host the Summit of the African Union and the General hoped to win the coveted Order of the African Spear, awarded to Heads of States who blew more than \$500 million during the week of discussions/celebrations. Baggadudu's job was to convince the IMF and World Bank that this expenditure, greater than the combined budgets for education, health, housing and social welfare, would have no impact on monetary aggregates. So high was the young man's prestige that the General, in all innocence, asked him to pick up 'something simple' that he could wear to impress his colleagues with the necessity to lead lives of such exemplary humility that the suffering masses would appreciate the need for self-sacrifice in making the continent great again. And this misplaced faith was to lead to what became known in Niagran folklore as *The Parable of the Fifteen Hundred Pound Suit*.

Boosted by this mandate our young hero went about the task of procuring the *simple* suit with the same panache that he approached negotiations with his former employers, or on first dates at his *alma mater* where he had acquired the title of 'Barracuda Mark II' after the legendary Jamaican who could do the limbo dance between the spread legs of six drunken female undergraduates with one can of Schlitz balanced on his forehead and another down below. The original Barracuda was alleged to have introduced industrial strength marijuana to the campus which some blame for the obsession of more famous undergraduates with Weapons of Mass Destruction in other people's countries, especially

those found to possess enormous quantities of oil. Like Dick Cheney, Barracuda dropped out of Yale but, being of a Rastafarian rather than Episcopalian persuasion, he could not become Presidential Chief of Staff, Secretary of Defence, CEO of Halliburton, Vice President or a royal pain in the ass to every other world leader but the Great Helmsman, General Daudu, his very favourite after the General pulled his country out of OPEC which Cheney said distorted free markets with narrow, self-serving, politically motivated decisions. Mustapha recalled the legend of Barracuda after reading in the Nigerian *Spicy Girls* about a Niagran superstar singer and her Rasta boyfriend who lived in a shack in the late Bob Marley's village, vowing to burn down the American Embassy in Kingston after the Defence Secretary threatened to invade the 'country with two hundred and fifty thousand troops and a coalition of the willing, and install Ahmed Chalabi as Minister of Petroleum, if your Parliament has the temerity to legalize the evil weed'.

Baggadudu first checked out Brioni suits at Rossini's and other expensive boutiques on New Bond Street, trying to visualize a *simple* General Daudu in the extraordinary selections of styles, fabrics, colours and shades. Noting the prices he then flew to Brioni's HQ in Rome where he hoped to make them an offer they could not possibly refuse. He had settled on a casual style evocative of the African savannah, part safari, part English blazer, with a touch of Texan cowboy and Argentinian polo player which would not be out of place in a Las Vegas brothel. The simplest fabric was a 50 per cent silk, 40 per cent cashmere and 10 per cent wool mix whose soft texture would soothe the General's piles, especially when highlighted by twenty-two carat gold buttons embossed with his image imposed on the map of Africa to highlight his boast to *dominate his environment*. Knowing his master's superstitions about primary colours, he chose shades ranging from *eau-de-nil* to

a rich forest green, then proceeded to bargain with Brioni's finest using techniques learnt from the campaigns of Genghis Khan, Atilla the Hun and Donald Rumsfeld.

First he used the race card, pointing out that the illustrious Italian tailors could not afford to keep ignoring the 130 million black people who made Niagra the Greatest Black Power on earth. Then he appealed to their competitive spirit by pointing to the glories of their ancient city, recounting that fine Romans such as Quintus Fabianus Maximus, Cunctator and Scipio the Younger had once kicked ass in Africa, defeating the preposterous Hannibal and destroying his second rate capital, Carthage. Now the even finer Romans at Brioni could again achieve glory in Africa by out-styling the pimping Francesco Smalto who built suits for lesser African leaders in Congo, Gabon, Gambia, Togo, Malawi and the Central African Empire. Dressing the General, the Great Bull Elephant and Lion of Africa, the continent's undisputed Leader, would add feathers in their caps superior to the plumes of the Republican Guards who poned around important public places like carnival masquerades. His proposal was that Brioni build ten suits in the shades he chose for fifteen thousand pounds in cash and the Head Tailor, proud of his schoolboy exploits in translating the ablative absolute of Virgil's *Carthago delenda est*, was thrilled to comply.

Returning to Xanadu after completing his mission, Baggadudu awaited his master's judgement with the same anticipation he had experienced when confronted with Catholic virgins at Albertus Magnus College in New Haven and was not disappointed as the General looked enraptured, viewing the shades of green he had seen in a dream after his marabout from Nwadibou predicted he would be the queen of the ball and great shining star of his own African show. This young man would go far as he understood how to obey orders, capturing his demand for *simplicity* to a 'T'. But then Baggadudu took the first step on a lethal descent of

ten thousand miles, violating the first rule of Niagran protocol that *no one volunteers information to the General*. When he volunteered that the 'suits cost only fifteen thousand pounds' he mistook the General's alarm and his strangled cry of '*Each?*' as a signal that they were simply too expensive and *volunteered* further that it was for the whole fucking lot.

A man of General Daudu's coloration turning blue was a mystery to all but the experienced courtier Nasser Waddadda, who was summoned to evacuate his master to a private clinic in Bonn after the portable blood pressure monitor he kept with him showed a catastrophic rise and he could feel without looking that his haemorrhoids were inflamed. Weakly pointing out the suits to his own Karl Rove he whispered '£15,000' to which Waddadda queried '*Each?*', his master barely managed '*No, all!*'. The master strategist showed commendable restraint because he recognized the necessity not to look *more* shocked and disgusted than his master who was trying to come to terms with his disappointment that this young man in whom he had shown such confidence had repaid his generosity by trying to kill him. *A fifteen hundred pound suit!* How could he face his colleagues who flew in tailors on chartered Concordes or Presidential 747s to build suits which captured the spirit of a poor, devastated continent, destroyed by natural calamities and the rapacity of white slave masters and colonialists? He would have nightmares, from which he would probably never wake, about Presidents Bongo, Eyadema and Sani Abacha of the hated Nigeria, dressed in million dollar suits built by Francesco Smalto from gold and diamond thread, pointing to him and laughing - 'this is the man who said he wouldn't be caught dead in a £1,500 suit!'. Thanks to the false economy of the foolish boy he would probably have to spend an extra hundred million to be sure of the Order of the African Spear.

Because of the sterling contribution Baggadudu had made to the General's pension fund, and to rubbishing his critics at the BBC World Service and other Western media, Waddadda took the extraordinary step of not having him arrested and shot for attempting to overthrow the General, and even allowed him to collect his pre-signed letter of resignation and apology which acknowledged his failure to live up to the expectations of his Leader, and to request Jerry 'Lewis' Gotchakka, the Minister of Information, to announce his regret at accepting the resignation of one who had showed such promise. And the young fool, not wishing to play the starring role in the General's next 'coup plot' drama, left the country in disgrace the same day to become the lone dark star at the Yale School of Management where he spent his time in abject melancholy dreaming of the Glory that might have been.

Liberals who feel sympathy for his tragic fate should reflect that this was not his first failure to understand the General's sense of values. On his return from a trip to the City of London, General Daudu had admired Baggadudu's collection of Ted Baker safari shirts that he picked up in the circular fronted little shop with its pastel blue ambience on the High Street as he drove to fuck a young American analyst at Goldman Sachs who lived next door to a decrepit rock star on Richmond Hill. He had *volunteered* then that they 'cost only £89.99 each' and obviously misinterpreted the General turning completely white as a personality switch in his alleged multipolar disorder syndrome. As a renowned international scholar he had an obligation to do the research which had already been written up in volume three of the magisterial *The African Leader's Transcendent Dress Sense* by Professor Sterling Payden of Harvard University, the foremost Africanist in the West:

The African leader has not caught the Western disease of believing that he should descend to the level of his subjects.