

"Popp and Mingel," "The Fat Girl"). Some of her other central themes are also present in this collection, such as overcoming loss and despair ("Circe's Mountain," "One Day in the Middle of June"), war and peace ("The Red Net," "Street Lights," "The Deserter"), married life and other human relationships ("The Piece of Straw," "Christine," "Spring Thaw").

Donald MacRae, the translator of this collection, provides an excellent summary of Kaschnitz's life and work, whose style he describes as "a highly personal blend of the classicism of antiquity with the impressions of stream of consciousness writing" (7). He also explains some of the stylistic hurdles which he had to overcome in order to make her stories "more palatable to an English-speaking audience" (7). However, MacRae deals with Kaschnitz's peculiar system of punctuation (or lack thereof) in rather a cavalier fashion, by inserting quotation marks where there are none in the original. Excessive interference also serves to anchor these translated stories firmly in reality, whereas the originals were quite ambiguous and surreal. This is especially noticeable in the story "The Fat Girl" ("Das dicke Kind"). Although there is no doubt that Kaschnitz's style is not easy to translate, several of MacRae's translations are sometimes questionable. "Anmaßend" (129) should be translated as "arrogant" or "presumptuous" and not "at once measured"; "mit hellen wässrigen Augen" (135) should be "with light watery eyes" and not "bright eyes as clear as water," whose negative connotation in the original is changed to one more positive in the translation. On the same page the word "white" is missing before "woollen dress." The translation of the nickname "Dicke" (129) as "Fatso" seems too modern and masculine when applied to little girls at the beginning of the twentieth century. Regarding the title "Das dicke Kind" (128), the translation is given as "The Fat Girl" rather than "The Fat Child," and throughout the story, "Kind" is sometimes translated as "child" and sometimes as "girl." This inconsistency destroys the gradual revelation that this child is the author meeting with her younger self, a fantasy triggered by an old photograph.

In spite of these shortcomings the book is an excellent introduction to the work of M.L. Kaschnitz, who is highly respected in her native Germany and who received many awards and prizes during her lifetime.

Kofi Awoonor

Comes the Voyager at Last

Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1992. Pp. 139. \$24.95; \$7.95

Reviewed by Derek Wright

Awoonor's long-awaited second novel, from which a long extract appeared in the journal *Okike* in 1975, contains three parallel narratives. The first narrator is a poor black American whose experiences during the 1950s fall into the familiar pattern of social deprivation, wrongful arrest, and imprisonment, followed by conversion to Black Islam and a return to Africa. The second narrator is a garrulous and facetious Ghanaian intellectual and poet-broadcaster cloned from Awoonor's own public career. The two men meet in an Accra nightclub, where the

American, now called Brother Lumumba, gets into a fight with two white expatriates and ends up knifing their African friend. The unnamed Ghanaian manages to spirit the fugitive away to his native village in Eweland where, in a sentimental ending, he is adopted back into the ancestral African fold. At the novel's climax its twin narratives of return—the American negro's to Africa and the Westernized African intellectual's to his native roots—converge in the black American's dream-consciousness and link up with a third narrative, that of a mythic southward journey of a slave caravan from desert to coast, which is interspersed with the primary narratives throughout the book in a series of bardic interludes.

After the haunting, elegiac beauty of Awoonor's earlier novel, *This Earth, My Brother . . .* (1971), the new novel is a major disappointment. Awoonor's attempt to transfer the first book's black historical consciousness to the American context, but without the aid of the earlier novel's enriching poetic mythology, is largely unsuccessful and is not helped by a rather unconvincing rendition of 1950s black American experience through a racy vernacular jive-argot which lacks the ring of authentic, first-hand knowledge. Awoonor has more success with his swish, shallow Ghanaian, and in the nightclub scene he handles well the tensions between the latter's flippant, sophisticated cynicism and the raw racial polemics of the naive American visitor. The very distance between the two men, however, makes their sudden assertion of racial solidarity and blood-brotherhood in the murder scene hard to accept. Finally, when Brother Lumumba, during his initiation into village life, discovers in his race-memory a mystic rapport with African ritual behavior and, remembering the words of songs he has never learned, instinctively embraces his lost heritage, the novel lapses into the kind of sentimental fantasy indulged by books like Alex Haley's *Roots*. In the book's conclusion, the personal and mythic narratives, and the nuclear and racial family reunions, coincide too contrivedly, and the poetic writing of the interludes which sustain the race narrative is not of a very high order. The book is also spoiled by crude caricatures of a contemporary literary personality (evidently Ayi Kwei Armah) to which Awoonor hardly bothers to give the cover of fiction, and this sour satiric material, first published in the 1975 extract, fails to gel with the Afro-American narrative of the first half of the book, which was clearly added much latter.

Come the Voyager at Last is an unengaging novel, a rather artificial, patchwork affair which contains some of Awoonor's most flat and tired writing. The abandonment, by one of Ghana's major poets, of the rich, visionary lyricism of his early writing for a shallow and simplistic negritude, is a saddening spectacle. After a twenty-one-year hiatus between novels, Awoonor's weary voyager has come at last, but his journey turns out to be a stale and trite affair, hardly worth the wait. "The next time I digress," advises the rambling Ghanaian narrator, "throw away this book . . ." (70). There were times when I felt like doing exactly that.