

Evening in Serowe

BY GARLAND A. WITHERS

Contrapuntal lowing from a mostly black cow supports a windy continuo.

The sun is direct but washed out, the blue bowl of sky hazed over with gray, cloudless.

Fresh hilltop scent of *morula* wood greets the young men who climb from the red pickup truck.

A South African couple frowning underneath sunglasses, wrangling over the price of the root medicine.

Kraals for a thousand cows lie small under the sun, brown shoe polish drying cherrywood red.

A rowdy white *rondavel* with a red roof winks lewdly at me across the gully. I blush and look away.

Cows that had been filing across the top of the dun-colored ridge were suddenly gone at the second glance. Spirit Cows. Wind cows.

Not even the sound of the bell on the large bull reaches from down on the far side of the ravine; the air is far too dry.

Boomerang whisk of a pied crow hurtles over my rock cradle, intent on an updraft.

Sun blasts out a hydrogen lullaby through the balding helmet of earth's air, shouts comfort through cheesecloth.

We drink it in: we the woodcarvers, we the goats, we the churchgoers, we the children.

Smoky me, long man soft as cat fur and trailing bluey from a just-doused fire, shrugging a bit with the chill.

I am in the Land of Not Knowing.

All I know is where; the rest has flown apart like a shot skeet: clay bits, some powder some heat from the friction, quickly dissipated.

Tree-high dust devils are in my dreams as I sit awake.

The twisty, thorny branches of trees are strewn with blue and yellow cackling plastic bags.

The sunset hills bloom with fires as friends gather to share beers.

Down on the Mall, a *combi* horn bleats the first line of "Strangers in the Night," over and over.

Garland A. Withers is a senior majoring in Comparative History of Ideas. He studied in Botswana with the Student Project for Amity Among Nations in the summer of 1992.