



Little Boys Come from the Stars

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Sardonic, subtle, and sweetly scathing, **Little Boys Come from the Stars** is satire at its best.

Set in an unnamed country in equatorial Africa, it tells the story of Michel, a precocious teen dubbed Matapari (“trouble”) because of his extraordinary birth. Though his father is a reclusive scholar, his mother a pious though confused Catholic, and his uncle a shameless opportunist determined to gain power in the shifting politics of their post-colonial nation, Matapari remains an unsullied child who wears Reeboks, drinks Coke, reads Japanese comics, and watches *Rambo*. But when his family becomes the nucleus of the revolution for democracy, Matapari proves to be the ideal narrator for this story of violent upheaval and bloody corruption—a voice whose ironic innocence makes bearable and even humorous the awful realities of the world it describes.

Little Boys Come from the Stars Details

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From Reader Review Little Boys Come from the Stars for online ebook

Val says

This is set in the Republic of the Congo (former French Congo), not the Democratic Republic of the Congo (former Belgian Congo and formerly Zaire). Dongala does not help the confusion by mentioning Patrice Lumumba and Mobutu, but none of his own leaders by name.

It is the story of a corrupt and repressive regime as seen through the eyes of a young boy. He starts off believing everything he is told, but starts to question things more as he gets older.

It is also the story of his family and village. Most of the characters are not shown in great depth, but they are realistic and human.

This is a confused country, animism mixes with Christianity and neither mix with science, folk tales mix with manga comics and television series, modern medicine (such as IVs) mixes with herbal infusions and chants. The book is also funny in places.

It ends with the coming of democracy to the country, but is not optimistic.

This book is a good read and very enjoyable. I would recommend it to anyone wanting to visit the country in fiction. It is not either great or amazing, so does not get five stars.

LindaMoctez says

A great story but not really well told. Interesting to learn the history of the Congo and extremely disturbing. Some terrifically drawn characters but the hero who writes is a bit full of himself so the story loses credibility.

Allison says

This was really good. I'd never heard of it before, but had to read it for class and was very pleasantly surprised at how much I liked it. The book's narrator, Matapari, is very endearing and innocent amidst the political turmoil of his "small, no-name African village". There is a really beautiful quote from the book: "Don't you cry, Matapari. You know life is lots of little gray clouds in a great blue sky."

Carolyn Dorstek says

I really enjoyed reading Little Boys Come From The Stars by an author from the Congo Republic, Emmanuel Dongola. He captivates his reader with an innocent account of growing up in Africa, then gives his interpretation of the turmoil that spreads through the government. I think he captures, in a very personal way, the impact of oppression such as Apartheid. Another more disturbing first hand account account, although not of Apartheid but of similar oppression in Sierra Leone, West Africa is by Ishmael Beah, A Long Time Gone.

Natalie Petchnikow says

Matapari le dit, il n'aurait même pas dû naître. C'est que, dernier né de triplés, il ne quitta le ventre de sa mère que deux jours après ses frères, peut-être par discrétion, ou par prudence. De cette naissance, il conçut un don de curiosité insatiable pour le monde. Et ce qu'il voyait autour de lui, avec les yeux de l'innocence, était parfois étrange, comme ces menées de tonton Boula Boula avec la femme du vieux Bidié ou - autre flirt du même - avec les hautes sphères politiques du pays. Par cet oncle donc, cet enfant faux naïf pointe les vicissitudes d'une Afrique otage de ses dirigeants post-coloniaux reclus dans la citadelle de leur Parti Unique. Un roman grinçant et plein d'humour, sur une réalité africaine encore largement actuelle, sorte de "Candide au Congo".

Mary says

<https://maryokekereviews.blogspot.com...>

Nikkira says

I think I am too stupid to read books like this! I had to look up a word, every 5 sentences. Why do smart African writers, feel the need to show off their high-end vocab skills.?? Anyway, plot was great, just wished I knew more.

Colleen says

This was a gem of a book! The narrator is a 15-year-old boy living in Africa. He is one of triplets but because he was unexpectedly born a day after his other two brothers, his mother thinks of him as a curse on the family and treats him as such. Fortunately, the boy has a supportive, intellectual father who treats him as a kindred spirit, sharing his knowledge and theories with him. The best part of the book is its sense of humor. The author pokes continual fun at the political system in Africa. Those in charge, including the boy's uncle, are such buffoons, constantly changing laws to fit their whims. I really enjoyed this different slice of African life, without violence and starvation.

Cheryl says

Emmanuel Dongala created such an interesting read. His storytelling is endearing and clever. He uses humor as he presents some very serious insight into the political struggles of the Congo (Brazaville) as it moves from a Communist dictatorship to a more democratic nation. Again, for most Americans, this is a situation most of us are totally unaware. Also interesting is the exposure that Dongala gives to the tribal religious and cultural traditions.

Lanier says

11-20-09

I just started this short funny read about the third triplet in a modernized Congo. Dongala has juxtaposed Colonialist pre-developed rule with current technologies in a way that is sad and satirical. The first two chapters are full of satire poking fun at some of our favorite victims, religion, medicine, the power of NAMING as a means to *Other* or control, law and order, and parenting.

Alliyah finished it in a day or two and recommended it for perhaps a handful of other scholars, though don't be surprised if you see chapters for intros to Satire which go perfectly with my favorite, "The Gods Must Be Crazy"!!

Little Boys Come From the Stars has been less satirical, though shining lights upon the evils done to African countries from within. Uncle Boula Boula's sudden rise to political fame through fabricated resumes, attainments and experiences is reminiscent of politics around the globe.

I'm loving the way Dongala juxtaposes some of the modern 28-9 while our young triplet protagonist, Michel, Matapari or the Cursed Left-Handed One, is reveling in the forces of his tribal ways that his grandfather showed both him and his teacher father on their mountain trek. "Grandfather made me drink fresh water collected from ravenala leaves, and we ate fresh wild fruits. We were now in the forest bordering the little village; Papa and I followed grandfather, who showed no signs of fatigue despite his advanced age, on the narrow path that led all the way to the source of the river where the village drew its drinkable water. Squatting, I drank this pure water that came from the earth's insides, that sprang up through the rock fissures to pour down on the white sand that carpeted the riverbed. Grandfather explained a few things to Papa at length, and then, with me still trotting behind, we left the forest for the savanna..."

"An aunt forced me to wash with water (full of strange herbs)" heated over a wood fire on three rock. He explains how this ritualistic washing was done by the aunt, even though "I was big enough to wash myself". "Rubbing my body with a plantlike sponge and my feet with a pumice stone, then dabbing me with some lotion in a flask to protect me, she said. From what? I asked. From the snakes along the path and from life's accidents."

This is immediately followed with, "I was really worn out, and since there wasn't a television, I couldn't watch the music videos from the last Top Africa or better yet X-OR, the new Japanese cartoon series that had replaced Goldorak...laser gun."

Dongala has this way of fast-forwarding to modernization juxtaposed again a backdrop of tribal, ritual and cultural norms. I also love the way only Matapari, the youngest of the triplets gets all this extra special education because men relatives take a special sympathy or shine to him.

25-29—NAMING—the In his name, with the maps, as well, Dongala addresses the NAMING through Ouagadougou and other names lost once colonization began.

30, revises this NAMING of the third trip!

39-40 Satire of Religion and great dreams for Father Boniface

42-45

Uncle Boula Boula's Office of Free Ideas scam

49—juxtaposition

Jack-in-the-Box with a gazelle in the wild.

“I bolted from under their bed like a Jack-in-the-Box and took off like a savanna gazelle, scattering their clothes all the way to the outside door of the living room..”

56—Satire and Religion

“Boniface, what is this bullshit about some God’s tear up my kid’s nose?” Continued on 58—“It’s nothing,” said my father, “merely irritation and a lot of tears. Christ’s tears, are they not?”

Not a miracle, simply a natural reaction to an itch = sneezing.

62—bottom “Doctor of Agitation and Propaganda” & 65—top PhD of Agitation and Propaganda = Scam-Artist

63—bottom & 64—top a hooker for official staying at Boula Boula’s shack.

74—Comrade FARCE

77—“Have you heard of nepotism?”

“Uh, no. What kind of business is that?”

Papa didn’t answer and kept silent for a good while. My uncle stared at him, patient. “Well?” he pressed.

On one hand the uncle is incredibly intelligent, referring to his brother-in-law as Candide and able to come up with crazy schemes to get into the Big House, while he thought nepotism was a name of a restaurant. Can you say Bush.

79-81 The Destruction of the Rain Forests

This is great that not too long after explaining to my kids how the forest floor is mineral depleted, here Dongala explains why deserts appear after idiots tear down the forests. Their plans to replenish the trees with other viable life fails because there is NOT enough nutrients to sustain these new plants, trees or crops.

83—mid through 85 Matt Henson and Racism

I found this section particularly interesting because it’s about “the first man” to arrive at the North Pole, however, in the accounts Eskimos had been going there, or been there long before any “civilized” explorer. Yet, you’ll be hard pressed to locate names of these tribes of people who, for generations, would have been well away of it. Similar to the Indigenous around Machu Picchu, BEFORE Hiram Bingham.

Still, this duality of Racism against giving Henson his props, echoes with Africans and the entire continent and Imperialism and NAMING shit.

90—Not Imperialism but Nepotism, Greed, Propaganda from WITHIN has been equally culpable for the destruction of cultural, national norms. Again, this brings to mind the Tribal leaders who were complicit in Slave Trade that we never truly hear about, since it’s always a finger-pointing blame game against those of the lighter pigments. True, the larger transgressors with Europeans, Blacks in many areas profited greatly from selling off their “enemies”.

115—First Cigarette, hilarious contrasts of the “real men” don’t gag when they smoke contrasted immediately with the “black soot” on his young lungs from one puff.

116-17 — Violence is not an answer.

118-19 — The Power of Books

120 —Uncorrupted Music and the TFA Connections to Unoka's sad yet celebratory flute

"I no loner felt sad; on the contrary, a smile slowly welled up from my heart to brighten my face, and I was so happy, so light that I thought for a moment my body was aflame. I felt an urge for music. For once, I want neither rap nor ragamuffin. I chose kora harp music, without lyrics, because I noticed that the words of men often had the ability to obscure the essence of things and sometimes even corrupt them. I closed my eyes, and I began vibrating with these bright and melancholy notes."

Matapari goes on to explain how without the corruptions of words, the notes took him to to the very beginnings of time, itself. In his existential experience, he was able to "Arab caravan coming from the North, Koran in one hand, saber in the other," and understand the messages within the rhythms of the balaphones woven into that of the kora helping him to achieve peace and power all at once. Unoka, in Achebe's Nigerian Classic, is seen as a weak man, yet through his upbeat playing, even he had power in traversing to other places, uplifting others while bringing the player to a sad place, all at once. (TFA pg 7)

121 — "Glory has a ballistic trajectory: there comes a point where it reaches its peak, and then, the descent is unstoppable," Mata referring to a conversation with his father, the village teacher and Scientist

143 — The General and Viagra

153 — "I knew about and realized that there were more ways to kill a man than to save them," Matapari in the juxtaposition of modern Weapons of Mass Destruction of the nuclear family, human morale and the community: Schwarzenegger, Gibson, and Stalone metallic killing machines against the simplistic torturing methods one can just as easily use against another person's body, mind and soul.

This relates to that 116-19 setting up books and education as a better savior than violence and as one of the book's motif's SCIENCE as this also connects with that science quote — 211 — morals and science having responsibilities to humanity first.

189-90 — Garden of Eden

190 last ¶ — Environmental Concerns

203-05 — Fickle public quickly forgetting past atrocities = Uncle Boula Boula's crimes.

211—"As you all know, science without morals ruins the soul," one of the politicians, Tata Tollah, speaking at pre-Election Democratic Conference.

Lara says

I think I would have liked this more had I not read Cutting for Stone before it. I think it's a pertinent book to read, and an interesting read, just not not well presented. Part of this could be due to translation

Elaine says

It's been a while since I read this book, and I've been meaning to write a few folks about it for some time now -- so please forgive any omission of detail. I really enjoyed reading this piece. I rarely read fiction, so it's possible this book was a draw to me because of the political, cultural, and interpersonal depth it offered (plus, it was a gift). It is basically a story of an unnamed African country's experience of political upheaval, told from the perspective of a young boy. It's fascinating to read about another culture (or, more likely, melding of cultures) so far from my own -- not to mention narration based on a very different maturity level and consciousness. In thinking back on this novel, I am reminded a little of images from the film *The Last King of Scotland*.

I definitely think this is worth the read if you want something semi-light (insofar as probably being distant from your own daily life and about a little boy's experience of life) but very rich with an important dose of political reality that we must never forget exists in all too many places.

Beth says

Underlying themes of the first-ever born set of triplets in village, familial ties and traditions, and "democracy" as seen through different lenses, made for a story that was witty, enlightening, and educational.

LDB says

I loved seeing the farce of African politics through the eyes of a young boy in all his innocence. His take on everything kept me smiling as did the political antics that went on. I greatly enjoyed Dongala's writing - I will definitely be reading more by him.

Pat Jennings says

This poignant story of a young man who thought he might should not have been born is a revealing novel of an unnamed country in Africa. This country is the epitome of the colonization of most African countries that have been robbed and raped of their resources. Crooked politics reign while speakers and seers of truth are persecuted. Powerful story.
