Ngafi Nyeh, "Entry on: An Orphan’s Tears by Kemonde Wangmonde ", peer-reviewed by Daniel A. Nkemleke and Elizabeth Hale. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/221. Entry version as of October 30, 2026.

Kemonde Wangmonde

An Orphan’s Tears

Cameroon (2005)

TAGS: African Traditions



We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.

General information	
Title of the work	An Orphan’s Tears
Country of the First Edition	Cameroon
Country/countries of popularity	Cameroon
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2005
First Edition Details	Kemonde Wangmonde, *An Orphan’s Tears*. Limbe: The Cure Series Publishers, 2005, 101 pp. (paperback)
ISBN	9956402613
Genre	Novels
Target Audience	Crossover
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Creators



Kemonde Wangmonde , b. 1950
(Author)

Kemonde Wangmonde was born in Nsei in the North-West Region of Cameroon. After primary school education in Bamessing, Binju and Moquo, he attended St Paul's Teachers Training College Bojongo (1968-1973). He began his career as a reporter for Victoria (now Limbe) based newspapers while a teacher with the Catholic Mission Garden. When he graduated from the London School of Journalism in 1981, he worked for the *Cameroon Times* and *Cameroon Outlook* newspapers as a political analyst and columnist. In 1985, he left his teaching job and in 1992 was the Assistant Director of the Cameroon Institute of Journalism (CIJ). He founded Standard Educational Primary School in 1995. Kemonde Wangmonde is a prolific writer. His other works include the following novels: *Papa's choice* (1983), *My Temptations* (2005), *The last sacrifice*, *The Beloved Son*, *The Animal Kingdom*, *Only at Night*, and *Going to School*. Overall, the subject matter of his fiction includes stories about animals and man, individuals' rise from poverty to riches, traditional rites, children's adventures etc. He has also written poems and other assorted textbooks for primary schools. He writes fulltime and contributes to BBC Network Africa.

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Additional information

Summary

The novel opens when Ngeh* is walking along the road in Bay City and stubs his toe. An old man, almost the age of his father, appears from nowhere and tells him that in the African traditional belief, hitting one's toe is a sign of bad luck. Ngeh gives a deaf ear to this old man because he takes him for a swindler, but the old man tells him he will understand someday. Later in a taxi, Ngeh contemplates about their low standard of living and his father's incapability to pay his school fee. He is in his final year in college and the thought of not taking his exams churns his stomach. He is an ambitious student, who, if the opportunity is given, will obtain a degree with no difficulty. He arrives home as his father stands waiting for him. They mount on his father's C.D. 200 motorcycle and head to the village meeting where his father intends to borrow money to pay his school fees. On their way, his father advises him to take his studies seriously and not to lose focus, because one day he (his father) will be gone and only his words will remain in his son's heart.

They arrive at the meeting and things do not go the way they expected. They leave the meeting more disappointed. Ngeh is in tears and his father is bitter. Ex-warder, Bomeh, a very rough driver cruises his Volkswagen car out of a certain compound, splashing water on both sides of the road, driving at top speed. The speedometer of the car registered 85 km/h. It is raining heavily and this careless driver clears off Ngeh and his father from the road, landing them in a gutter. They are badly injured and the unnoticed driver escapes. The victims are rescued and taken to the hospital. The police are alerted but it is too late because the Bomeh has taken a different road and headed straight home.

Bomeh warns the little boy with whom he was in the car to say nothing concerning the accident as they approach home. Yaah, Bomeh's wife, who understands her husband very well can nevertheless sense trouble. She walks up to Bomeh and asks if everything is alright and he accepts. They exchange some nasty words before going to bed that night. As Bomeh lays in bed, his mind drifts to the accident he has caused that evening and for once in his life, he prays that God should protect the victims and nothing bad should happen to them.

In the meantime, Ngeh has recovered and is standing with worried

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family members by his father's sickbed. He is still unconscious but after some time, he opens his eyes and tells Ngeh to take care of the family and remain focused. He also urges his son to look for the one who has done this job (i.e. caused the accident) and he passes away. People are shocked and in confusion. Ngeh is buried in thoughts. He thinks of his life and what will become of him now. His father has left him midway and he has siblings to look after.

The police begin a search for the person who caused the accident. Kwame, a Peugeot 505 driver, an innocent person, is apprehended and put in jail. Ngeh is not in support of this because he knows deep within him that it was not a Peugeot 505 that hit them, but a Volkswagen. He decides to embark on a secret mission in search of the real victim, so as to save the innocent guy who has been jailed. Yaah, Bomeh's wife, hears of Kwame's imprisonment and immediately briefs her husband about it on his return from Abarkwa. She says "a warning note to careless drivers. Kwame has been imprisoned for killing someone with his car". Bomeh feels tense and begins to fear. But he doesn't care and moves on with his life.

For some time now Ngeh has been carrying out his investigations, recording the plate codes of any Volkswagen he sees. He moves around in bars and garages, looking for Volkswagens. His mother and uncle are becoming worried about his constant movements. He believes everyone will understand him when he has completed his mission. He receives a letter from the principal of their college concerning registration for his final exams. He is a member of an executive Ambassador Drama Club in school and the club has financially assisted him. Ngeh becomes a schoolboy once more and he receives messages of condolence from both staff and classmates. Kwame is still in jail and he meditates over the accident he was purported to have caused and he prays the real perpetrator be caught so that he can be released. Back home, Kwame's wife is having sleepless nights. She keeps remembering all their good times together and weeps profusely.

Ngeh keeps searching for the killer of his father. He meets Inspector Safah, who has come to repair his radio at his late father's workshop. They discuss Volkswagen cars. He almost gets into trouble when he sees a Volkswagen car and follows it. As he stands writing down the number, the owner catches him and the police intervene. Fortunately, Ngeh is able to come out of this situation with reasonable lies. Back home a good friend visits Ngeh and he takes him out for a drink where

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they discuss and make fun.

Problems are becoming too much for Bomeh, the real perpetrator of the accident, and Yaah decides to visit a traditional doctor**. She wants to know the cause of Bomeh's problems but the traditional doctor demands to see Bomeh before he can do anything to remedy the situation. Yaah leaves very disappointed. When she arrives home, she sits with Bomeh for a talk which almost ends in a physical altercation.

Meanwhile, in one of Ngeh's outings, he meets Yeweh, a beautiful young lady he had met a long time ago. They sit down to discuss and she tells Ngeh that she is pregnant. Her parents have decided to withdraw her from her present school and she wants Ngeh to own up as the father of her baby. The real author of the pregnancy is a useless guy without a bright future and since the father of this young girl (Yeweh) has decided to settle the person who is responsible for her pregnancy with a huge sum of money, Yeweh decides to bring Ngeh into the picture. Her father wants her to get married to the person who is responsible for her pregnancy, so as to avoid shame and disgrace. Unfortunately for Yeweh, Ngeh does not accept this.

Fenkwen and Sembong, two other boys who have heard about the incident, visit a Gulf cinema to watch an Indian love movie, and sitting by them, are two guys, smoking and making a hell of a noise. In the course of the boy's conversation, they mention a Volkswagen car which immediately captures Fenkwen's attention. Fenkwen is a good friend of Ngeh and she knows Ngeh's secret mission. One of the boys is Bomeh's brother-in-law and he is telling his friend about the accident that occurred some time ago. Fenkwen listens attentively, without showing any interest. Immediately she leaves the cinema, she heads to Ngeh's workshop and discloses the information to him. They work out a plan and decide that Fenkwen should invite the storyteller to her house, where she will use a tape recorder to record every detail. Everything works out as planned and they begin setting traps for Bomeh.

Bomeh is degenerating and finally decides to visit the traditional doctor his wife had earlier visited. Bomeh has done many evil things which now haunt him. He killed his brother-in-law because of a trivial family dispute. The traditional doctor tells him that the only solution to his problems is for him to look for the grave of the man he knocked down with his car some time ago; he must then light a candle on the

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gravestone and ask for forgiveness. The task is difficult but he has to do it. He gets to the graveyard and begins to do what the traditional doctor has recommended, but unfortunately for him, he is caught and in trying to escape he is shot on the leg and he falls bleeding. The police are alerted and he is taken to the hospital. In the hospital, he confesses all his evil deeds to the hearing of everyone and immediately swallows poison. Bomeh has met his end. Ngeh is now fulfilled and he strengthens his relationship with his family and Fenkwen.

* Although his age is not specified, we can guess that this is a young boy of about 17 because the reference is made in the text of the possibility of him getting a university degree if given the opportunity.

** In Cameroon traditional doctors are soothsayers, magicians and healers who claimed to solve people's material and spiritual problems.

Analysis

The novel is a lesson in morality, honesty and the need to do what is right. It illustrates that there is always divine punishment for an evil action, as witnessed through Bomeh. In many African traditional societies, orphans and widows are believed to benefit from the care of the gods, and when they are honest and hardworking, these gods always assure their success.

The *Bible* makes it clear in *Exodus* 22:22 that orphans and widows should not be abused. Also, there is a number of non-mythical figures, especially in children's cartoons originating from fairy tales, who are orphans. These figures undergo challenges, due to their statuses, but end up overcoming these challenges with the help of other good-willed people brought their way by the gods. Orphans are also known to be brave, kind, decisive and persistent. These are the qualities that help Ngeh, in the above story, to succeed.

The story also highlights the punishment that results from evil as witnessed with Bomeh. What befalls him at the end is a kind of nemesis.

African Traditions

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Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Family Friendship Justice Morality Orphans Religious beliefs Society Values
Further Reading	Kimbal, Melanie A., "From Folktales to Fiction: Orphan Characters in Children's Literature", *Library Trends* (1999): 558– 578, pdf available at pdfs.semanticscholar.org (accessed: July 3, 2019).
Addenda	"The Curse Series publisher" is situated in Limbe, Cameroon BP 694 Limbe. They publish books on all aspects including children and young adult literature.

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