

BOOK REVIEW

Massocki Ma Massocki. *The Pride of an African Migrant*. Yaoundé: Pierced Rock Press, 2020. xxii + 177 pp. \$9.00. Paper. ISBN: 9789956465057.

Equal parts memoir and pamphlet, Massocki Ma Massocki's *The Pride of an African Migrant* details the ordeals of African asylum seekers in the UK. It is written in remembrance of Jimmy Mubenga, an Angolan who died at Heathrow Airport while being restrained by the G4S security guards. This 2014 incident, which eerily parallels the murder of Eric Garner, George Floyd, and many other Black men by security agents in the USA, sparked no international outcry—a point Massocki is at pains to underline throughout this book. While the incident itself bears another credence to the precarity of Black life, it also especially emphasizes the utter precarity of dark-skinned African asylum seekers. Thus, *The Pride of an African Migrant* raises an old but cogent question about the situation of African refugees in Europe and the conditions that necessitate their fleeing their original countries. Massocki Ma Massocki vouchsafes a few answers in this book. Divided into ten sections, the book can be read in three broad parts. The first is a series of prefatory chapters that set up the author's personal tale of migration. This tale makes up the book's second part. Massocki addresses the final part of the book to his fellow Africans, arguing that the African could as well succeed in their homeland without having to travel abroad.

The book opens with a series of essays on familiar topics: refugee temporalities, the burden of colonialism on African countries, and the complicity of Africa's elites in the impoverishment of the continent by neocolonial forces. Massocki notes that the African asylum seeker in Europe does not experience time as others do. Because the legality of their inhabiting a foreign land depends on government approvals, which are often delayed, the asylum seeker experiences time as a stretched-out continuum of illegal occupation. Massocki draws attention to the living conditions that necessitate Africans' emigration. These exordial notes trouble received definitions of terrorism and human rights.

Massocki's account of his ordeal as a refugee in the UK forms the nucleus of this book. The account is told in the three acts of asylum seekers' stories. First is the hopeful arrival of the emigrant in a foreign land. Massocki arrives in England for graduate education, armed only with his imagination of the UK as the land of abundant freedom. He sustains his dream of a better life, as new entrants to metropolises such as London do, by visiting "beautiful places such as the London Eye, Buckingham Palace, Tower Bridge, Oxford Circus and Trafalgar Square." The narrative quickly moves into its second act. Unable to pay tuition and rent, he depends on the goodwill of strangers to get by. This condition dispels his initial naïve view of the UK as a site of abundant opportunities. In the final act of

Massocki's narrative, he joins the horde of asylum seekers waiting for papers that confer on them the right to live in the foreign land in which they seek refuge. This is the longest section of the narrative. It renders Massocki's ordeal on the streets of London and Liverpool in painstaking detail. This account raises several questions that may be of interest to scholars of literatures of migration: How do migrants experience contact zones? How are contact zones along the migrant's path experienced differently? What do narratives like Massocki's teach us about how migrants experience temporality? In short, Massocki's narrative raises cogent questions concerning cosmopolitan hospitality.

Massocki's pamphleteer style of writing raises questions about that genre choice for presenting this important narrative. For readers who have come to expect carefully researched work, this book will be of little use. For those who might want to include a personal narrative on a course syllabus about migration, however, this book offers an opportunity for some stimulating class conversations.

Tolulope Akinwale 

University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada

tolulope.akinwale@ubc.ca

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