

Date: March 26, 2012

Prof. Chou:

Re: *Luxurious Hearses*, part 2

In this section of the story, Akpan introduces a new character onto the bus, Colonel Usenetok, of the ECOMOG, which was a multinational West African military force known for its corruption. The Colonel is a pagan, and becomes a target for the other passengers to which to vent their anger. The passengers believe the Colonel has brought a bad spirit onto the bus and want to throw him out. He tries to defend himself by citing his record of service which further infuriates the passengers. Emeka Okonkwo tries to perform an exorcism on the Colonel, resulting in Emeka being removed from the bus. In the meantime, Jubril is still managing to conceal his Muslim identity. However, on the television are horrible scenes of rioting and carnage in both the north and south, including Khamfi, which further incites the passengers. Jubril accidentally reveals the stump where his right hand had been amputated, showing the others that he is Muslim. Jubril insists that he is Christian but his claims are rejected by the passengers, and he and the Colonel are murdered, the former because he is Muslim and latter because was with the army. As for the title of the story, that is in reference to the how the buses are used not only to transport refugees fleeing from the fighting, but also to carry corpses back to ancestral homelands, the transporting of which just exacerbates the fighting. Another principal character is Tijana, a Hansa Muslim whose family had lived in the south for as far back as his great-grandfather, and now is a target of the Christians rioting in the south.

The oil companies and the army are blamed for having caused all the problems, the former by destroying the land in the south, the latter by fronting for the oil companies and stealing billions of dollars, leaving the rest of the country poor. Chief Ukongo, however, attributes the fighting to democracy which allowed ethnic and religious divisions to surface whereas when the army was in power, there was stability.

Phillip W. Weiss

