

Purple and Orange

A one-act play: part three of the Citrus Trilogy

Natty Mark Samuels

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Dedication

to the staff of the
Agnes Smith Advice Centre
Blackbird Leys
East Oxford

for the blessings of support

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a one-act play: part three of the Citrus Trilogy

We see two figures facing each other, sitting in soft, easy leather chairs: one, purple skinned, of indeterminate age; the other, black, is middle-aged. The latter speaks with a slight Jamaican accent; the participants have what might be termed, stronger Jamaican accents The audience is live – small and intimate – in this television setting. There are spotlights on the two seated figures, while the audience area is darkened. This weekly interview show, called 'Emmanuel' - after its legendary presenter - is very popular, partly because it allows short interjections from the audience

Emmanuel. *Turning to the audience.* Good evening audience.

Audience: Good evening Emmanuel.

Emmanuel: As you can see, we have a very special treat for you this evening: the first ever televised interview, with a citizen from Zamba. Since he touched down this morning, you've seen his face everywhere. But here he is now; not just an image on the varied media, but coming to you live and direct! ***There is a spirited round of applause, then turning to his guest.*** Its a great pleasure to welcome you Eleya: I am honoured. Your appearance in this studio, is breaking all our viewing records: believe it my friend! ***There is a little ululation and laughter from the audience.***

Eleya. *Turning to the interviewer:* Bless you Emmanuel. I extend the greetings of the people of Zamba to you. And I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to the people of this country – ***turning to the audience*** - who have given me such a warm welcome. May our God Kunga, watch over you all, always. ***We hear replies such as "Bless you," "Give thanks," and "You're welcome me bredda."***

There is so much I want to ask you, so much. But for the time being, I must stick to my remit, because I am here for a reason. We of purple, need to know more of your orange, green and yellow: that is why I am here in Jamaica.

It was so good to walk through the parish of Manchester earlier, to see the fruit you call ortanique, hanging from the trees. Never seen orange before, was so excited to see it! As the people stood open-mouthed, gazing at me, I was equally transfixed, by the beauty of orange interspersed with green, which we also don't have: our grass-like vegetation is blue.

Emmanuel: My parents knew of the "open-mouthed, gazing" also, when they first left here, to go and live in England in the 1950s: people wanted to feel their hair and touch their skin! But before we go on, what is the meaning of your name?

Eleya: In our language, Eleya means "purple." Purple is the colour of our soil and so it is our national colour. What is the meaning of your name?

Emmanuel: God is with us.

Eleya: Perfect, I am in good hands then! *They both smile.*

Emmanuel: Purple soil: amazing! So if your soil is purple, your grass is blue - what colour are your bodies of water? Your seas, lakes and rivers?

Eleya: They are shades of turquoise. *A murmuring of wonder is heard.*

Emmanuel: Wow! That must look stunning, incredible.

Eleya: Truly stunning!... But going back to the staring and gazing; your compatriots wanted to touch me also, but the security wouldn't let them get too close to me! I hope to have more interactive encounters with the general public – such as this - before I leave here to return. But earlier, when I walked through those groves, it was like entering a sacred place, like walking through the dreamland, in total consciousness. I sent a video of it back home and it went viral instantly, as we don't have orange and green! Its broken all our internet records and someone dubbed it 'Mandeville Magic.'

Emmanuel: After Mandeville, the capital of our parish. *Exclamations of "Big up Mandeville," and "Mandeville deh pon tap," interspersed with pockets of laughter.*

Eleya: Yes, because as well as the citrus grove, I sent a video of Noisy River. I saw green, so much green; green on the leaves as sunlight touched them against a blue sky of warm invitation; red and white flowers were interspersed among the dominant colour. At one point, two boys had put planking connecting the two sides of the bank and were diving and somersaulting off their makeshift bridge of play and laughter. In the picnic area, families and friends were enjoying food and each other; three girls were swimming from one little rock island to another, pausing to sunbathe whenever they wished.

Emmanuel: Yes, that's a lovely place to spend time; used to jump from planking the same as the children you saw. If you grew up around there, you spent countless time there as a child. Done a fair amount of courting there also! *Whistles from the audience.* It's a place of baptism also and of family photographs: it is a river of life.

Eleya: Yes, I can see that: a place of simple celebration, where the river is the eternal host.

One of the people with me remarked that one group of picnickers had just put out a citrus salad. As I walked by, I saw segments of grapefruit and orange, radiating like a star coloured yellow and orange, emblazoning a large white plate, with little bits of mint here and there. It looked to good to eat, like something that should be displayed forever. I had to take a photograph! This is what we hope to be eating on Zamba: that is an example of why I'm here.

Emmanuel: Please, tell us more of your intentions, your reason for being here.

Eleya: Yes, especially to allay any fears your fellow citizens may have.

The botanists, doctors and nutritionists of Zamba believe that via interaction with citrus – medicinally as well as culinary – there'll be a marked improvement in general health amongst the citizenry. They have followed the clinical trials, in the various universities and hospitals around the globe and have recognised the potential of citrus for Zamba. For example, they await the results from a Nigerian university, which is looking into the use of the African Cherry Orange, in the treatment of diabetes. I have come here to learn and maybe Earth can learn from Zamba. **Someone says "Yeh man, must learn someting from de alien dem, coming from somewhere up dere:" a few others vocally concur.**

Emmanuel: Give us an example, of what we can learn from Zamba.

Eleya: Well, just before this interview, "shadism" (***There is a murmur of acknowledgement***) was mentioned, which is totally alien to us. On Zamba, whether you're dark or light purple, or shades of mauve or lilac, there is no discrimination between the bearers of the tones. We are not perfect, but we endeavour to live by the national motto "When you cannot be respectful, let tolerance radiate." Respect and tolerance are cultivated and intolerance is frowned upon; to be called intolerant is a term of serious criticism which no one wants to carry. Workshops of Positive Interaction are held for those deemed disrespectful or intolerant; habitual offenders are placed on the Grey List of Community Support, where they receive help from their peers and elders. And the healing that we learn from you, will be available to all, regardless of cash flow and skin colouring: more vitamins and minerals for one and all.

Emmanuel: Yes, it's a blight on Mother Earth my friend. An Indian-Jamaican peer of mine, was telling me that in India and Pakistan, the darker skinned individuals often get a rougher deal: so it has been here. I remember my father telling me that in the 50s, no dark-skinned Jamaican could get a job as bank teller or hotel receptionist. Yes Eleya, we could do with a look at your respect and tolerance ethos. But tell me, how did you get to learn English so well?

Eleya: We have linguists too! And language schools of popular attendance. I was talking to a man this afternoon, who had long hair and a big beard, who said he was a Rastaman. He said that he'd met a Spanish man in Negril, who said he'd learnt English through listening to reggae songs! I identified with that immediately, as I learnt English through my research into citrus. Online, I read all the papers, essays, articles and book excerpts that I could; picked up a little Latin along the way, as well as Spanish. It is my knowledge of English as well as of citrus, why I was asked to represent Zamba on Earth. I love the way Latin associates citrus with precious things, as in the lime, which is *citrus aurantifolia*: golden leaved.

Emmanuel: Many Jamaicans could identify with that, as lime leaf, alongside sour sop leaf and lemon grass, are used to make a "bush tea," which is used as a health tonic, a source of physical enrichment. ***We hear exclamations such as "Good for ya structure," and "It a clean you out good!"***

Eleya: That's just the kind of information, that I am here to gather: the ways of intake, via food or through beverage. For example, on a sunny, warm day like today, which would you prefer to drink, after your walk along Noisy River? Limeade or an Ugli smoothie? ***Two voices are heard; "Must be the smoothie Emmanuel" and "Come wi' de lime waata, Rasta."***

Emmanuel: Although I'm not really a smoothie fan, I know that it will have pineapple and banana in it, as well as the citrus, so on this occasion, I'm in the smoothie corner!

Someone shouts "But wait! Me did tink you was a lime man Emmanuel: Traitor! Laughter bounces off everyone, with some random clapping of hands and stomping of feet.

Eleya: So good to have this interaction with you all. I'm grateful for the security, for though the crowds mean well in their curiosity, they can be a little overwhelming! So this is perfect: the participation, the humour, the laughter. The people on Zamba will see this interview through the Purple Picture House network, giving them a further insight into Jamaican culture.

Many on Zamba are awakening to the benefits of citrus - such as lime - for the list is almost endless; for digestion, asthma, blood pressure, constipation, nausea, ulcers, colds and so on: treasure in a little green ball.

Emmanuel: Yes! And as you've mentioned the ugli, as well as the ortanique, you've mentioned two members of the citrus family, endemic to my country. And I know someone who makes Ugli and Grapefruit Marmalade: I'll get you a jar.

Eleya: Thankyou very much Emmanuel. I'll take it home as a gift for my wife. Out of all the citrus fruits she'd like to try, it's grapefruit, because of its scientific name: *Citrus paradisi*.

Emmanuel: Yes dear visitor, it does sound inviting! But while I remember, let me tell you something, in connection with ortanique and the Rastaman you spoke of. Those who follow the Rasta faith, believe in the divinity of an Ethiopian emperor: they carry his first name, Ras Tafari. The reason I mention him, is that he founded the first agricultural colleges in Ethiopia as well as the first university. Being a farm owner (he grew citrus as well as other plants), during his historic visit to this country in 1966, the Government presented him with an ortanique and some seeds of the fruit, as a national gift. ***We hear "Ras Tafari" and Ever Living"***

Eleya: Sounds like a perfect gift for a citriculturist! I'd be happy to receive one! ***We hear "No worry yaself bredrin, me gwaan get one fi you" followed by laughter.*** Thank you, thank you....One of the Zamba herbalists told me that ortanique is anti-oxidant, anti-septic, anti-inflammatory and anti-viral. And I've heard that there's a Jamaican company that makes ortanique candles, bringing out its blend of orange and tangerine.

Emmanuel: Yes. Most of you will know, but for those who have forgotten, the word ortanique comes from the words orange, tangerine and unique.

Eleya: Lovely etymology! Now, as adults, we can reason things through, once we have the information and evidence, but for the little ones, we need other ways to bring a sense of enlightenment: so what about taste? Introduce them to the goodness of citrus through their taste buds! So could I ask again of your personal preference?

Emmanuel: Yes, please go ahead.

Eleya: Do you prefer 'Lemon and Lime Ginger Crunch' or 'Lime and Banana Bread?' ***We hear "Lime and Banana Bread - it 'ave a lickle rum in it." More laughter, clapping and foot stomping.***

Emmanuel: The crunch, as it has more citrus in it. Lemon, lime and ginger together are unbeatable. ***We hear "Yeah man, a true ting dat" and "De tree a dem a conquera!"*** Now, I know that on this particular mission mission, you're visiting just the Caribbean Sea region, going to Puerto Rico and Mexico after Jamaica. But where would you like to go on a subsequent visit?

Eleya: If Kunga wills it, to Brazil, Italy and parts of Africa. ***We hear "Yeh man, Africa" "Right behind you general" and "Wait for me Eleya!"***

Emmanuel : As you can hear, we are proud of our African ancestry.

Eleya: We too are proud of our ancestors: we call them Zimbi. We take the turquoise water from a sacred pool and mix it with the purple soil of our sustenance, mould them into small balls, which we leave on the shrines to our ancestors, after offering a prayer to Kunga.

Emmanuel: Beautiful.

Eleya: We always feel energised after time at the shrines, as if the ancestors have embraced us, passing on another portion of life force.

Emmanuel: I hope one day to be able to witness that ceremony.

Eleya: Zunga willing, you will Emmanuel: and I shall be there to greet you when you land. ***We hear an almost communal "Ahhh" from the audience.***

Emmanuel: And I shall be the one to be gawped at!

Eleya: Yes, you will! ***They both laugh.***

Emmanuel: Now going back to the countries you'd like to visit next time, why Brazil?

Eleya: Firstly, to see at first hand their lime production and secondly, because my wife and daughter are lovers of fish, I'd like to teleport back a Moqueca – a fish stew – which has lime, coconut milk, peppers, tomatoes, onions, garlic and cloves. ***We hear "Bring the snapper!" followed by exclamations and sounds of approval.***

Emmanuel: Yes, you can have it with white fish, shrimps or crabs: they say it's big in Bahia, which has the largest population of those of African descent.

Eleya: Good! I shall go to Bahia, after time in Africa.

Emmanuel: That makes sense my friend... So why Italy?

Eleya: Lemons, Emmanuel, lemons. Would like to go to Amalfi, Calabria, Sicily; to Lake Garda and to Ivrea.

Emmanuel: I know of the other lemon-producing areas, buy why Ivrea – and where is it?

Eleya: Its in north-east Italy. They have an orange festival there – commemorating the people's victory over a medieval tyrant – whose main content is a three day fight using oranges. Tonnes of oranges are thrown; between the 'tyrant and his associates' in mobile carts, who launch their oranges at the 'feudal' citizenry below. The enemy in the carts are helmeted, the people are not: many receive black eyes and busted lips. **We hear "Beat down Babylon" and "Mash up de tyrant dem" mingled with laughter.**

Emmanuel: Sounds hardcore! Right, moving on, which parts of Africa would you visit?

Eleya: We've just mentioned Italy, so I'd have to go to the Ivory Coast first, which is one of the few places outside of Calabria, where bergamot is grown, which as you know, is used in perfumes and in Earl Grey Tea: to Sassandra, in the south of that West African country.

Emmanuel: There are Akan people in Ivory Coast too, as well as Ghana, Many of us who ended up here from Africa, are from the Akan people. **We hear "Yes, I an I hail from Ghana," "We are Ashanti" and "Africa we come from."**

Eleya: Lovely to hear you talking of your roots: I've learnt so much in this short space of time.

Emmanuel: As we are learning from you Eleya... so after the Ivory Coast, where next?

Eleya: South to South Africa, to Citrusdal, where they grow citrus such as kumquat and oranges. They say the oldest orange tree in South Africa, is there in the Western Cape. Then on to Limpopo Province, to look at the farming co-operatives and the benefits they bring.

Emmanuel: Ok, so from South Africa, where would you go?

Eleya: My final destination would be Ethiopia. **We immediately hear "Selassie I country," "We a go Zion" and "Blessed land."** To go to Haramaya University, which was founded in the fifties by the Emperor, as one of the first agricultural colleges. It has supported the citrus farmers, trailblazing the necessary research for enhancement of their product. And to be there at Timkat, where they celebrate the baptism of your Jesus. My interest there, would be to see the throwing of lemons, between youthful prospective partners: the fusion of spiritual and romantic love. If the young woman feels attracted to the thrower, she throws the lemon back at him.

Emmanuel: I'll come with you Eleya – and fling a few myself! **We hear "Me too" and "You betta not trow one at the woman me want, Emmanuel" and Line up de lemons."**

Eleya: Then from Ethiopia, back to Zamba!

Emmanuel: Where your wife and daughter will be waiting and the planet no awaits the information and results from your mission. I know that during subsequent interviews – newspaper, radio and tv - you'll talk more about life on Zamba; this one was to introduce your citrus mission, for enhanced life on your planet.

Eleya: Thank you very, very much, for giving me the opportunity to share my reason for being here. Thank you for the jokes and the laughter, although I didn't understand all that was said! Thank you for the laughter: that is one of the things that I'll take back to Zamba. As well as the magnificence of the green and orange which I carry in my video camera, I'll ferry the laughter of Earth to Zamba, in my heart. ***We hear "Bless you" and here and there "Ahhh."***

Emmanuel: I hope the rest of your time here is just as interactive, informative and enjoyable and that you will visit the 'Land of Wood and Water Again.' ***We hear "Yes, Eleya, step in again," "When you come again, gwaan tek you to a Chronnix concert, seen?" "Come back soon, Jah Purple" and "May God watch over you."***

Emmanuel and Eleya stand and embrace each other; then they bow to each other. As they finish that respectful gesture to each other, the audience rises and begins clapping and ululating, while Eleya comes forward, bows to them, blows a few kisses and then exits.

The End

Sources

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Empress Roots

Starfish Oils Jamaica

The Word On Cheese Culture

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