

To My Mother

Black woman, woman of Africa, O my mother, I am thinking of you...

O Daman, O my mother, you who bore me upon your back, you who gave me suck, you who watched over my first faltering steps, you who were the first to open my eyes to the wonders of the earth, I am thinking of you...

Woman of the fields, woman of the rivers, woman of the great river-banks, O you my mother, I am thinking of you...

O you, Daman, O my mother, you who dried my tears, you who filled my heart with laughter, you who patiently bore with all my many moods, how I should love to be beside you once again, to be a little child beside you!

Woman of great simplicity, woman of great resignation, O my mother, I am thinking of ...

O Daman, Daman, you of the great family of black-smiths and goldsmiths, my thoughts are always turning towards you, and your own thoughts accompany me at every step. O, Daman, my mother, how I should love to be surrounded by your loving warmth again, to be a little child beside you...

Black woman, woman of Africa, O my mother, let me Thank you; thank you for all that you have done for me, your son, who, though so far away, is still so close to you!

Camara Laye, 'The Dark Child', Translated from the French by James Kirkup, Collins, London, 1955