

K Liberian Literary Magazine WEE

Dec Issue

JAMES V. DWALU

Author of the Month

Unscripted
Diaspora Poet

Liberian Classics
Gifts of the Masters
Short Stories

Book
Reviews

Right Better
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Matanneh Dunbar
Renee Brown

KWE

Liberian Literary Magazine



Liberian

Literary

Magazine

Overview:

New Look

Hurray! You noticed the new design as well right. Well thanks to you all, we are here today. We are most grateful to start our print issue. This would not have happened without your dedicated patronage, encouragement and of course, the belief you placed in our establishment. We look forward to your continual support as we strive to improve on the content we provide you.

Our Commitment

We at Liberian Literature Review believe that change is good, especially, the planned ones. We take seriously the chance to improve, adopt and grow with time. That said we still endeavor to maintain the highest standard and quality despite any changes we make. We can comfortably make this

Liberian Literature Review

commitment; *the quality of our content will not be sacrificed in the name of change.* In short, we are a fast growing publisher determined to keep the tradition of providing you, our readers, subscribers and clients with the best literature possible.

What to Expect

You can continue to expect the highest quality of Liberian literary materials from us. The services that we provided that endeared us to you and made you select us as the foremost Liberian literary magazine will only improve. Each issue, we will diversify our publication to ensure that there is something for everyone; as a nation with diverse culture, this is the least we can do. We thank you for your continual support.

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Segment Contents

Editorial

In our editorial, one should expect topics that are controversial in the least. We will shy away from nothing that is deemed important enough. The catch theme here is addressing the tough issues

Liberia Classic

This segment features classic Liberian poetry and prose by our greatest creative minds.

Contemporary Liberian Literature

As the name suggests, deals with *issues* in modern local or *diasporan* literature as seen by Liberian creative artists.

Publisher of the Month

Publishers get so little recognition for the tremendous work they do. They hold all the pieces together. They finalize the puzzle. So why don't they share a piece in the pie? They do the grungy grunty work. This is one of our newest segments that will surprise you.

Editor of the Month

Each month, we feature editors from Africa and around the world. We give this space to get insights into the people that do the grungiest of grungy work that we all end up enjoying. Watch out for this segment. It is new and promises to be exciting.

Diaspora Poet

The internationally acclaimed poet, Althea Romeo Mark hosts this segment.

Authors of the Month Profile

This is one of our oldest segments. In fact, we started off with showcasing authors. It is dear to us. Each month, we highlight two authors. In here we do a brief profile of our selected authors.

Authors of the Month Interview

This is the complimentary segment to the Authors of the Month Profile one of our oldest segments. In here, we interview our showcased authors. We let them tell us about their books, characters and how they came to life. Most importantly, we try to know their story; how they make our lives easier with their words. In short, we find out what makes them thick.

Articles

Our articles are just that, a series of major articles addressing critical issues. A staffer or a contributor often writes it.

Book Review

One of our senior or junior reviewers picks a book and take us on a tour. They tell us the good, not-so-good and why they believe we would be better of grabbing a copy for ourselves or not. Additionally, we'd print reviews by freelancers or other publications that grab our interests.

Gifts of the Masters

Our world have a way of shattering when we encounter masters of the trade. We bring some of the works of the greatest creative minds that ever graced the earth.

Short Stories

Well what can we say? They are short, engaging and we easily fall in love with them

Artist of the Month

We highlight some of the brilliant artists, photographers, designers etc. We go out of the box here. Don't mistake us to have limits on what we consider arty. If it is creative, flashy, mind-blowing or simply different, we may just showcase it.

We do not neglect our artist as has been traditional. We support them, we promote them and we believe it is time more people did the same. Arts have always form part of our culture. We have to change the story. We bring notice to our best and let the world know what they are capable of doing. We are 100% in favor of Liberian Arts and Artists; you should get on board.

Poetry Section

This is the marrow of the bone; the juicy parts we keep sucking on. We feature established and emerging poets in the array of their diversities. If you can imagine difference, chances are, this is where you will find.

FRANCOPHONE LIT SCENE



Nyuydini Lyne

Yesterday was the D-day, the Young English Cameroonian Writers' Award ceremony

Guess what?

Your girl brought the prize home. Isn't that amazing?

I'm so elated to have been the winner of the Young English Cameroonian Writers' Award 2023.

In 2022, I took part in the competition, I did not win but my poem received a special mention. This year, I did not give up, I competed again with other young writers, and behold I won.

To all aspiring young writers out there, there are lots of organizations like **Access Point Africa_APA**, **WSA Cameroon** with top-notch and established writers who are ready to nurture your art.

There are lots of writing competitions out there waiting for you, don't be scared to compete.

Start Afraid.

Start imperfect.

There's no harm in trying.

A big shout-out to **WSA-C**, **Access Point Africa-APA**, **Mboa Hub**, **Nnane Ntube**, **Eric Ngalle Charles, MD**, **Mbutoh**, **Franklin Agogho**, **Wogu Richardson Eyong**, **Ray Ndébi**, **Tatah Allen Laika** etc for this great initiative.



Courtesy of
Ray Ndébi



Hier 30 novembre, l'université de Lomé accueillait Isis-Antigone ou la tragédie des corps dispersés la scène Bella Bellow.

Merci au FLLA, à Patron Henekou.

Aujourd'hui 1er décembre à 19h, nous serons au Foyer des jeunes d'Assahoun.

Beaucoup d'émotions de retrouver cette salle où se tenait le FESTHEF.

Yesterday November 30th, Lomé University hosted Isis-Antigone

or the tragedy of the scattered bodies the Bella Bellow stage.

Thanks to FLLA, to Patron Henekou.

Today December 1st at 7pm, we will be at the Assahoun Youth Home.

Many emotions to find this room where the FESTHEF was held.



Editor's Desk

The Year Ahead



2023 is winding down thus far, things are adding up. This is our last but one issue and I am excited for many reasons. We have an improved line up, some segments have changed and others shifted, whilst yet others are, well, NEW.

It appears that we might outdo ourselves this time around. Each issue, we see a better KWEE and for that we remain thank to you. Yes you. All of you that have stayed with us, that take time off to read and support us in the different ways you do. Thank you once again.

I will try to let nothing out of the bag too early, although I can't promise. The excitement is too much to contain.

Oh here is a teaser, but I'd deny it if quoted ☺! Oops, did I just type that? There goes my plausible deniability.

Anyways, I'm one that likes my bad and not so good news first, that way, I can enjoy the good ones. So here it goes. Our hot corner

Kulubah's Korner by our sharp-wit KLM will not be with us for a while. Sad right? Don't worry, she's not gone yet, trust me, she is on a refresher and will be back with more of her insightful, but truthful opinion bites. Quite frankly, am I the only one who thinks that at times she's just meddling ☺ [-I'm whispering here-]? We will miss you KLM, please hurry back.

We'd also be shifting some of the segments to the blog exclusively. Yeah, we know, but we wish to keep the magazine closely aligned to its conception- *a literary mag*. You will not lose your segments, they will only be shifted. The blog is also attached to the new website so you don't have to go anywhere else to access it. It is the last page of the site- KWEE.

We have new segments hosted by poets and authors from all over the world. "I ain't sayin nothin' more" as my grandmamma used to say. You'd have to read these yourself; I won't say naught' more.

The Poetry section is our major hotspot. It is a fine example of how KWEE manages to be true to her desire of giving you the best form of creative diversity.

We have new poets still finding their voices placed alongside much more experienced poets who have long ago established themselves and found their

voice. They in a way mentor the newer ones and boost their confidence.

In *Unscripted*, as the name suggests, Cher gives it raw. The artist, the poet, the writer-anyone of her talented side can show up and mix the science geek. You never know really what will come up until it does.

Richard Moss goes about his randomness with purpose in his poetry corner, '*Twas Brillig*'. He can assume the mind or body of any of his million personifications, ideas or characters or just be himself and write good poetry. I am sure you know what to expect there.

Well, I knew I said only tips I was giving but it is just hard to contain myself considering all the things that are in store.

If there is one message you want to take from here, let it be this-prepare for a roller-coaster this 2016.

We are bringing you a better KWEE every single issue. We will break the boxes, go on the fringes to find what it is we know you would love.... Creative Difference- the best of its kind.

From the entire team here at KWEE, we say enjoy the year, sit back, lay back, relax or do whatever it is you do when you hold a copy of our mag and feast along.

Read! Read! Read!
KWEE TEAM

RANDOM THOUGHTS

The year is ending and we got mad men and madder men. We have retard, oops, we aint s'posed to say that word right?

Heck R.E.T.A.R.D.S. strangely, htat feels good. Anyways, that bunch of people are determined to blow shid up for everyone else. Apocalyptic style boomerang!

B.A.N.G!

B.A.N.G.

B.A.N.G.

THEY SHOOT US ALL DOWN.

The world is crazy! A'int no used sweetening this. Folks need to understand that looneys out there are seeking to grab them. They need to be prepared. The double standard in Gaza right now is just... both sides need to own up to the BS into which they have engrossed themselves.

This 'right and wrong' entitled feeling hasn't helped before, why would it now?

Crap is crap. Children are now shields and the cost of some old dudes over bloated egos being stroked. Oops, I mean stoked. In a race of who has the largest size D, I shudder to imagine any outcome that benefits these children. Perhaps, we should just cut the Ds off?

There are many things to be thankful for... life, jobs, education, career, etc. for some, the near death experience of COVID-19... so, just get the heck out there and LIVE!!! Looneys or not.

THE #POWER OF #NO

2023, one of my favorite words was a simple, two letter word, #No.

No for me is me #defining me, or a part thereof. I've never been afraid of it. I've grown to understand that whenever I use NO, I'm freeing myself from #discomfort and #unease.

Our bodies and minds aren't designed for chaos or displeasure though we can withstand those. We are more attuned to comfort and ease, hence civilization. A concept we use to justify our ease and comfort. Some would say LIFE.

No sets boundaries. It determines limits. Though an often negative concept, NO is one's way of protecting one's peace. No is good. No is #positive for our #mental and #physical health. No is telling you what is okay and what isn't. No tells others what their rights are NOT. To say no, is to demand respect from those who would otherwise not #know, nor #care to give it.

NO is a most #powerful form of #expression. It #frees us from obligations we would rather not share, be burdened by, or crumble under.

Make it a habit of saying NO more often. See how free or happy youd be. How much #simpler your life would be; how #comfortable it would be.

The notion that a NO person is mean, may hold water, but not necessarily.

I'm not advocating for folks to be #mean. But at times, we all need to be mean to live or survive those that drive us to our graves because we find it difficult or are unable to Say NO. No as a #refusal, is supposed to #save your life. No as a #dissent, is meant to give #mental peace. And NO as a rejection, is taking charge of the Respect you deserve.

Try saying it more. Come back and thank me. Be comfortable using it. Dont shy away from it. We do NOT HAVE TO DO MANY OF THE THINGS WE FEEL FORCED TO DO. DAH TRUE.

Sadly, our society is gravely wanting in this regard. Plenty of the BS and complications in our lives are solve by using NO efficiently.

I nah judging you on how mean or not mean you should be. I'm giving you a chance to be happier. People wont die. They'd be upset, but they'd live. They might even wish you dead because you refused to be used any longer. They'd be aight. You try being aight. Enjoy your NO life.

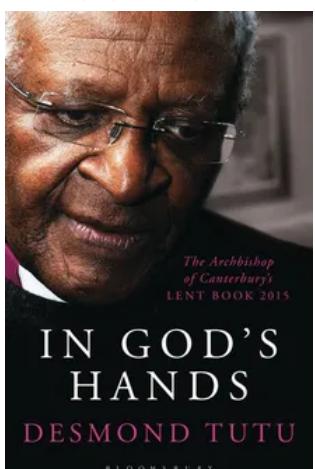
D. Othniel Forte



<https://www.facebook.com/othnielforte/>

BORED? LOOKIN'? WELL...

CHECK THESE BABIES OUT!!!!



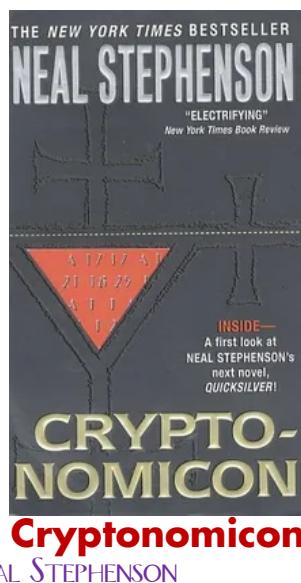
In God's Hands

DESMOND TUTU

In God's Hands is the 2015 Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent Book. In this little gem of a book, Archbishop Desmond Tutu distils the wisdom forged through a childhood of poverty and apartheid, an adulthood lived in the glare of the world's media, and the long and agonising struggle for truth and reconciliation in South Africa, into the childlike simplicity which Jesus tells us characterises the Kingdom of God.

Archbishop Tutu has produced a meditation on the infinite love of God and the infinite value of the human individual. Not only are we in God's hands, he says, our names are engraved on the palms of God's hands. Throughout an often turbulent life, Archbishop Tutu has fought for justice and against oppression and prejudice. As we learn in this book, what has driven him forward is an unshakeable

belief that human beings are created in the image of God and are infinitely valuable. Each one of us is a God-carrier, a tabernacle, a sanctuary of the Divine Trinity. God loves us not because we are loveable but because he first loved us. And this turns our values upside down. In this sense the Gospel is the most radical thing imaginable. It is extremely moving that in this book Archbishop Tutu returns to something so simple and so profound after a life in which he has been involved in political, social and ethical issues that have seemed to be so very complex.

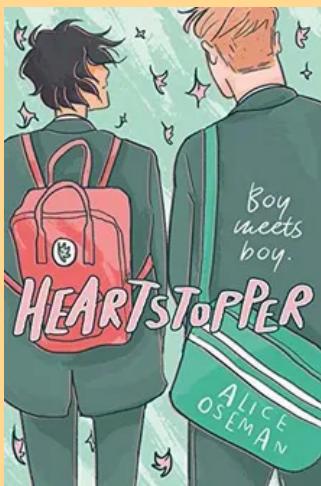


Neal Stephenson

With this extraordinary first volume in what promises to be an epoch-making masterpiece, Neal Stephenson hacks into the secret histories of nations and the private obsessions of men, decrypting with dazzling virtuosity the forces that shaped this century. In 1942, Lawrence Pritchard Waterhouse - mathematical genius and young Captain in

the U.S. Navy - is assigned to detachment 2702. It is an outfit so secret that only a handful of people know it exists, and some of those people have names like Churchill and Roosevelt. The mission of Waterhouse and Detachment 2702-commanded by Marine Raider Bobby Shaftoe-is to keep the Nazis ignorant of the fact that Allied Intelligence has cracked the enemy's fabled Enigma code. It is a game, a cryptographic chess match between Waterhouse and his German counterpart, translated into action by the gung-ho Shaftoe and his forces. Fast-forward to the present, where Waterhouse's crypto-hacker grandson, Randy, is attempting to create a "data haven" in Southeast Asia - a place where encrypted data can be stored and exchanged free of repression and scrutiny. As governments and multinationals attack the endeavor, Randy joins forces with Shaftoe's tough-as-nails granddaughter, Amy, to secretly salvage a sunken Nazi submarine that holds the key to keeping the dream of a data haven afloat. But soon their scheme brings to light a massive conspiracy with its roots in Detachment 2702 linked to an unbreakable Nazi code called Arethusa. And it will represent the path to unimaginable riches and a future of personal and digital liberty...or to universal totalitarianism reborn. A breathtaking tour de force, and Neal Stephenson's most accomplished and affecting work to date,

CRYPTONOMICON is profound and prophetic, hypnotic and hyper-driven, as it leaps forward and back between World War II and the World Wide Web, hinting all the while at a dark day-after-tomorrow. It is a work of great art, thought, and creative daring; the product of a truly icon



Heartstopper, Volume One

Alice Oseman

Charlie, a highly-strung, openly gay over-thinker, and Nick, a cheerful, soft-hearted rugby player, meet at a British all-boys grammar school. Friendship blooms quickly, but could there be something more...?

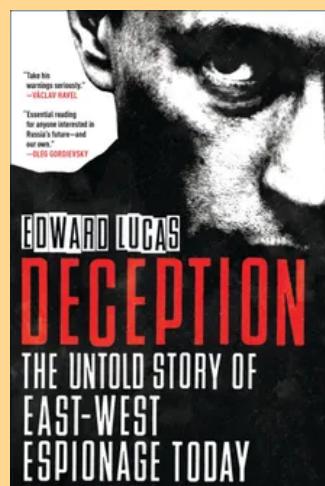
Charlie Spring is in Year 10 at Truham Grammar School for Boys. The past year hasn't been too great, but at least he's not being bullied anymore, and he's sort of got a boyfriend, even if he's kind of mean and only wants to meet up in secret.

Nick Nelson is in Year 11 and on the school rugby team. He's heard a little about Charlie - the kid who was ousted last year and bullied for a few months - but he's never had the opportunity to talk to him.

That is, until the start of January, in which Nick and Charlie are placed in the same form group and made to sit together.

They quickly become friends, and soon Charlie is falling hard for Nick, even though he doesn't think he has a chance. But love works in surprising ways, and sometimes good things are waiting just around the corner...

From the author of *Solitaire and Radio Silence* comes a bind up of the first two chapters of *Heartstopper*, an [ongoing webcomic](#).



Deception: The Untold Story of East-West Espionage Today

EDWARD LUCAS

From the capture of Sidney Reilly, the 'Ace of Spies', by Lenin's Bolsheviks in 1925, to the deportation from the USA of Anna Chapman, the 'Redhead under the Bed', in 2010, Kremlin and Western spymasters have battled for supremacy for nearly a century.

In *Deception* Edward Lucas uncovers the real story of Chapman and her colleagues in Britain and America, unveiling their clandestine missions and the spy-hunt that led to their downfall.

It reveals unknown triumphs and disasters of Western intelligence in the Cold War, providing the background to the new world of industrial and political espionage.

To tell the story of post-Soviet espionage, Lucas draws on exclusive interviews with Russia's top NATO spy, Herman Simm, and unveils the horrific treatment of a Moscow lawyer who dared to challenge the ruling criminal syndicate there. Once the threat from Moscow was international communism; now it comes from the siloviki, Russia's ruthless 'men of power'.

ORDER THE BOOK:

Liberian Classic

Liberia: Glory Days

Liberia: Glory Days
wandered in the moonlit
night
to view the glory of the past
The ruins of those pioneer
days
were silhouetted against the
light
where once stood mansions
decked with pride
now ruled by vipers and the
bats
are 'nough to make one
stop and sigh
The broken frames can
hardly stand
the beating of the constant
rain
And on the landscape high
above
the ruins of the parish too
can tell the ghostly story
plain
beneath the grass stand
epitaphs
a remnant of some burial
ground
A lordly cricket once in a
while

will break the silence with a
sound

Or in some distant woods
a drum
a native feast in feverish
swing
I wonder after all these
years
these ancient ruins can rise
again
and brighten up a dismal
scene?



Bai T. Moore was born on October 12, 1910 in the town of Dimeh, a Gola village between Monrovia and Tubmanburg in Liberia, and died in Monrovia on Jan. 10, 1988. He studied at Virginia Union University and returned to Liberia in 1941, where he served the Liberian government in various posts while writing, promoting the Gola, Dey culture and the general cultures of Liberia. Bai T. Moore became Minister of Cultural Affairs and Tourism under the government of Samuel K. Doe, a post that he served in diligently until



he died in 1988 at the age of 79.

The Day of the Cobra

Once upon a time, Caterpillar and Cobra were intimate friends. Their relationship became strong when they discovered that both shared a similar plight—humans hated and feared them. Caterpillar and Cobra were jealous of Dog and Cat who were gladly welcomed by humans. One day, the two friends decided to resolve their conflict with the human community. Caterpillar was the first to attempt his new strategy. After much self-reflection, Caterpillar discovered that he needed to transform himself to win the admiration of humans.

At sunset, on the first day of harvest festival, Caterpillar transformed into a beautiful, colourful Butterfly. He flew gracefully to the place where the children were playing. Suddenly, every child wanted to befriend Butterfly. Until dark, Butterfly played with the children and was invited to the homes of others. Dog and Cat

became envious of Butterfly whose colour and beauty captured the attention of everyone at the festival and became the centre of discussion in every home. In the evening, Butterfly happily returned to Cobra with the good news. “I was the friend to everybody when I returned to the big town with my new personality. It was the greatest day of my life,” Butterfly exclaimed.

Cobra decided to try the new strategy of his friend. When the sun was directly overhead, at mid-day, Cobra took off his old skin and wore a beautiful, sparkling dark skin. He went to his good friend to get his opinion on his new look before setting off on the adventure. “You are beautiful in your new skin,” Caterpillar (now Butterfly) told his friend. At sunset, Cobra set off for his adventure. It was the third day of the festival. The women and children wore their best clothes. The joy of that day cannot be described. Cobra was carried away by the

jubilation. Little by little, he approached the town. Like Butterfly, Cobra decided to start with the children. Suddenly, screams, sticks, cutlasses, and a great pandemonium greeted Cobra as he appeared on the children’s playground. The festivity came to a standstill. Humans used weapons to chase Cobra out of their community.

Cobra ran frantically out of the community, to his friend. He was outraged and accused Butterfly of betraying him. Despite his new skin, humans still hated him. Exhausted and out of breath, he could barely talk. When everything was quiet and Butterfly had reflected over the complaint of his friend, he looked in the eyes of his long time friend and said, “Cobra, I agree you have changed your skin to a beautiful, sparkling skin, but you are still Cobra, a snake.”

AUTHORS OF THE MONTH PROFILES

PATRON HENEKOU

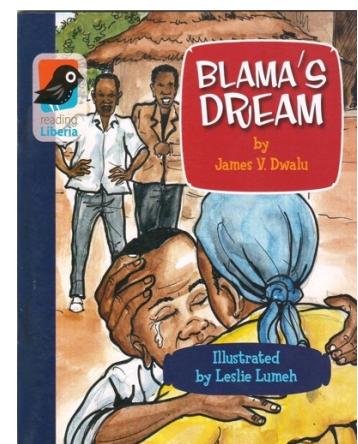
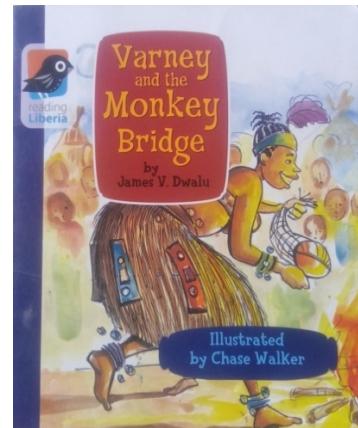
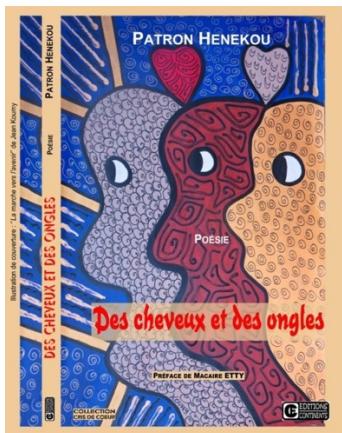


Patron Henekou is Senior Lecturer at the University of Lomé, where he teaches literature, creative writing and English for Specific Purposes (ESP). He was Director of the UL Libraries and Archives from 2019 to 2023, Fulbright Scholar 2017-2018 in Creative Writing Pedagogy at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

Patron is a poet and co-founder of the Festival International des Lettres et des Arts (www.nimblefeathers.com) held annually since 2017 at the University of Lomé, Togo.

His poems are published in anthologies such as *Palms pour le Togo*, *Arbolarium*, *Antología Poética de Los Cinco Continentes*, etc. and in poetry magazines such as *Raisonance*, *Aquifer: The Florida Review Online*, *Asymptote*, *Zycalo*, etc. His publications include *Dovlo* (2015), *Souffles d'outre-cœur* (2017), *Souffles & Faces I and II* (2018, 2022), *Des cheveux et des ongles* (2021) and *Vendredi soir sur la 13* (2021).

Patron won second prize in the International Poetry Prize "Sur les traces de Léopold Sédar Senghor 2020" in Milan, Italy. He is a 2018 African-American Fellow at the Palm Beach Poetry Festival in Delray, Florida.



JAMES V. DWALU



James V. Dwalu has more than thirty years of creative writing experience. He was born in his maternal town of Bandor in Grand Cape Mount County, Liberia in 1966. James went to school in Mano River, an iron ore mining community in Grand Cape Mount County and Monrovia.

James first Self-published two (2) books in 2004 and 2009. He has since published three (3) books and co-authored two (2) anthologies published by Canadian Organization for Development through Education CODE/WE-CARE Foundation, Inc., Liberia-Reading Liberia program, nine (9) stories for USAID'S CORE EDUCATION SKILLS FOR LIBERIAN YOUTH PROJECT, eight (8) books and co-authored Liberian Social Studies for grades 4, published by Star-Longman Liberia, Inc. Co-authored Liberian Social Studies for grades 5, 6, and 9, published by WINMAT Publishers, Ghana, developed several stories for Liberia Teachers' Training Program, Ministry of Education

He has published more than 15 culturally relevant reading books for children and co-author four social studies books for the Ministry of Education; Liberia. He has published a poem "Talking Dogs" and a short story "Desert in the Forest" in the 2010 edition of Nuori Voima-Afrikka, Finland. In 2013, James published a poem, "The Careless Cook" in an anthology, A Thousand Voices Rising in Uganda and "Monrovia Lures" in Capitals an anthology of poems edited by Indian Diplomat Abhay Kumar and published by Bloomsbury, India in 2017.

James is passionate about writing for children and has great interest in intellectual property protection.

James loves to visit the interior of Grand Cape Mount, particularly Robertsport City to view the natural scenes. He has great interest in the preservation of Liberian culture that is why he writes culturally relevant reading materials for children.

His recent work is *Rainy Season Rhymes*, collection of poems for Children-Cotton Tree Press- Kigali, Rwanda/Washington DC, Work in progress is Blama on the Run and more than ten stories for children.

OUR SPOTLIGHT AUTHOR OF THIS ISSUE IS AN EDUCATOR, A SCHOLAR AND A MATER OF TWO LANGUAGES.

Author Interview



Liberian Literary Mag conducted an interview with

Patron Henekou

Thank you for accepting our interview. The questions are different. They are jumbled all over the place by design. We don't want the same old boring questions often asked to writers.

Let's talk about you? The person behind the pen...

1. Do you mentor? What do you look for in a mentee?

Yes! I mentor, and I promote mentorship as well through workshops organized during the Festival International des Lettres et des Arts which I direct. This is because I believe mentorship is one of the surest ways to foster excellence in the younger generations. Currently, I have three

mentees with two very active. One of them is short-listed for the 2023 Prix de la Renaissance de la Nouvelle in Belgium.

I am quite liberal in the way I work with my mentees. Though I want them to be available and responsive, I generally work with them according to their schedules and preoccupations. Once I detect the creative flair in an aspiring writer, I put myself to good use by them.

2. How active are you on social media (links)? And how do you think it affects the way you write?

Let me say I am quite active on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/patron.kokou?mibextid=ZbWKwL>) and WhatsApp, and less so on Twitter (<https://twitter.com/PatronHenekou>). These platforms provide opportunities for communication and accessibility. The latter is particularly effective with poems published in online journals, reaching a wider and more diverse audience in the same way Google makes

information and arts readily available and accessible.

The Craft

3. Describe your writing process. Are you a 'plotter' (outline, plot, and plan), or a 'floater' (more like go-with-the-flow)?

I navigate between both, with a penchant for "floating" more than "plotting". I hope I do not sound like "floating" is easy. Not at all. This is more demanding as a process, and involves a lot load on the brain and also a great deal of discarding. In fact, there are two main parts in my writing process:

- From the inception of the idea to the first draft, and
- From the first draft to the published work.

While the second part comprising the revisions to the first draft, consolidation of the provisional final draft, submissions to journals or publishing houses, etc., may appear relatively short, the first part remains the longest and more

emotionally challenging and energy consuming because of the stages it contains.

The observation, the inception, the mental workshop which is the fundamental stage in the entire process including brainstorming, ideas mapping and selection, pre-draft, review, draft.

4. How do you incorporate the noise around you into the what you are writing?

It all depends on which noise it is and its provenance. At the beach for example the sea provides rhythm and punch to my poems. Otherwise, I don't perceive noises the moment I am concentrated.

The Author

5. How do your friends describe you? How would you describe yourself using five words? I know it is not much but...

My friends think I am meticulous, resolute, humble, and debonair. I will add love and common sense.

6. What do you do for fun in your spare time? What do you like to read in your free time? Reading anything currently that you care to share?

I play soccer, I spend some time with my friends, or I sleep. Reading is not a free time activity for me, but I would mechanically pick a poetry book, before maybe changing my mind. Generally, I read one book at a time, but what's going on now with my reading is quite unusual in that I am currently on four books:

- *La Vie que nous menons ici* (poetry) by Anas Atakora
- *Amour Gamado* (novel) by Togoata Apedo-Amah
- *Le baobab fou* (novel) by Ken Bugul
- *Sargasso Sea Scrolls* (poetry) by Dannabang Kuwabong



7. Tell our readers two things about you not really known (SECRETS- not deep).

Come closer and let me whisper into your ears: I love chocolate. And I love beauty.

8. There's no right or wrong answer, but if you could be anywhere in the world right now, where would you be? What would you be doing? With whom?

In Egypt visiting the pyramids. Or in the Caribbean, The Bahamas or Jamaica or somewhere else around there. I may be involved in a calm conversation with the sea, and observing and admiring the movements around.

9. Do you consider yourself a full-time or part-time writer? Does that affect your writing? How or how not?

Part-time. Because I lecture and research. Literature and creative writing. The connection with my writing is direct, as you can see.

The Mix

10. SPREAD THE LOVE: Who are some authors (established/emerging) and what books (new/old) would you recommend to our readers? At least five each!

Kofi Awoonor, *The Promise of Hope*

Kofi Anyidoho, *Ghananya*

Kossi Efoui, *Une magie ordinaire*

Kangni Alem, *Les enfants du Brésil*, but watch out for his forthcoming book Olympio Anas Atakora, *La Vie que nous menons ici*, but I can add *Ceux qui m'accompagnent au large*.

PS: I am discovering the beautiful poetry of Kuwabong and he is a must-mention at this time.

11. Tell us about an interesting or memorable encounter you had with a fan?

A friend introduced me to a journalist. As soon as she heard my name, she announced to us: "I have read your book, *Souffles & Faces* with Essenam." And almost whispering, she asked, "have your wife read it?" I said I guess so.

"What did she do to you?" May be both of you had the same feeling after reading it, but that book is not an autobiography! "You poets are terrible!" she concluded, as we continued enjoying our beers.

12. Your writer/industry friends, which of them do you discuss your projects with? How does that play out?

Kokouvi Dzifa Galley and Anas Atakora, mainly. They can be surgical in their observations, and unceremonious critics, in fact. Exactly what I highly appreciate.

13. Share some advice for aspiring/emerging authors.

Two things: read. Read. And read again. Don't allow negative remarks on your writing affect your energy to write.

14. How often do you attend literary festivals? Which festivals can we expect to see you at this year?

I have had three rendezvous this year: **The Festilarts**

(www.nimblefeathers.com) at the University of Lomé, Togo which I direct, Martin Egblewogbe's **Pa Gya** in Accra, Ghana, and the celebration of the **International African Writers Day** in Dakar, Senegal. In March 2024 **Kangni Alem's Filbleues** will be back on track in Lomé. Expect me there!

15. GEES; LET'S HEAR THE SCOOP. What projects are you working on presently? What are some of your future projects?

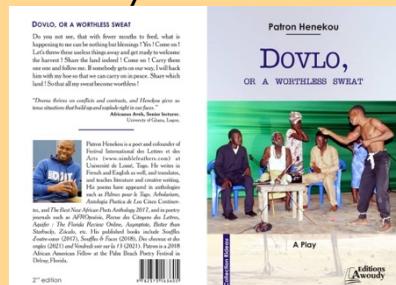
There is a "Top Secret" translation project I am working on! It's "Top Secret"! Hahahah!

Watch out for *Jazz and other Prayers*, my poetry book originally written in French and whose translation I am working on with Connie Voisine, poet and Professor at New Mexico State University, US.

This is a critical, MUST ANSWER, no fencing question.

THE JOLLOF RICE QUESTION. Liberia has the best Jollof. This ain't no argument, it is a fact. The others now have to fight for a distant second place. Who has the next best Jollof? Don't be modest. Just a caution, what you say might be used as armo for the current Jollof War.

Hahahahah! For "the others" do you mean Ghana and Nigeria? I guess so! This Jollof contention is funny because this is the first time I hear Liberia is also concerned with the question. This is how I see the picture: The Eagles and the Giant Stars are fighting a Jollof War. Liberia feeling lonely dreams of stealing the crown, while Senegal is calmly enjoying her supremacy over the bruhaha, as her Jollof, Ceebu Jen is listed among the intangible cultural heritage of humanity.



Essay/Prose 1

“WAKE UP! WAKE UP!”
HARRIET MONROE ON THE
ARTIST’S AUDIENCE

by MARK POHLAD

George Bellows, “New York,” 1911, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Harriet Monroe’s own words below are italicized and taken from her reviews in the Chicago Daily Tribune. Read from Monroe’s review, *“Sermon for Good Americans Found in the Art of the Art Galleries.”*

In her art reviews, Harriet Monroe addressed not only individual artists and artworks, but also the creative process generally. She spoke about the inspiration and challenges of creativity, the duties of the audience, and the role of the critic. Many of her pronouncements and arguments relate to her editorial decisions at *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, which she founded in 1912; indeed, she continued writing art columns for a year and a half afterward.

In this period of her career, Monroe was thinking about creativity in all its expressions, including through artists and poets. She chronicled the Chicago art scene in her *Chicago Daily Tribune* reviews while considering submissions of verse for publication in her own magazine.

Wake up! Wake up! use your eyes! Know a good thing when you see it; and, knowing it, recognize that it is your sacred duty, and ought to be your pleasure, to encourage the creator of that good thing ... to show you the beauty of your own life and environment.

Monroe was an accomplished poet and still composed verse of her own. She primarily considered herself an artist, rather than solely an editor or critic, and so her beliefs about creativity and art were that of a practitioner. Her penchant for lyrical language fills her *Tribune* columns, and many of her descriptions of artworks and observations are uniquely poetic, making them not only critically thoughtful but metaphorically illustrative.

Monroe was clear about the importance of art and the reasons art, poetry, and those who produce them must persist. The trials of founding *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, including the financial struggle of establishing a magazine business, forced Monroe to reflect on the nature of creative success, and reviewing the radical paintings in the Armory Show provided her with an outlet to address it.

She wrote vividly about the nature of creative inspiration and employed the traditional feminine trope of the muse, saying how *[H]e must follow his particular goddess [of inspiration].* She described the rigors of the creative life in Biblical terms: *Sackcloth and ashes, fasting and prayer, long years in the wilderness—these are a necessary discipline for certain souls. But few are strong enough to accept it.* And there are dire consequences for falling short: *If he does less than this, he is faithless and she [inspiration] will not remember him.* Even commercial success had its own challenges: *If he hands her over to the money mad, speed mad chauffeur she will ironically make a salesman of him, perhaps insult him with orders and dollars, with flattery and popularity.*

For Monroe, creativity was work, and artists of all disciplines needed to court and be true to their inspirational sources before and after they produced genuine and enduring creations. The result for painters might be works so moving that they could be likened to poetry.

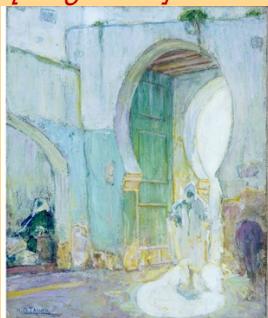
Art Reflecting the “Deep Poetry of Life”

Monroe often used the word *poetic* to describe visual artists’ works to suggest something ineffable or transcendent. She lauded one painting by the American artist, George Fuller (1822–84), as *a great picture, ... and one of the most poetic ever painted in America.* Less grandly, but just as flatteringly, Monroe described a crouching figure sculpture by Enid Yandell (1869–1934), as *a dreamy, poetic little thing.* In Monroe’s mind, an artist’s work could not be successful without this quality.

Life, too, was suffused by a sense of poetry, and artworks that captured it had the capacity to encourage viewers toward an ennobled existence. About the paintings of the Chicago artist Karl Anderson (1874–1956), Monroe wrote that he *has ... something high and true to say about the deep poetry of life, and he says it with full rhythmic emphasis and with beautiful and brilliant clarity of color.*

The sense of poetry in an artist’s work transcended the subject itself, even if it were sacred. Speaking of the works of the African American painter Henry Ossawa Tanner (1859–1937), Monroe observed how, *If certain of [his] paintings are religious it is because they are infused with a quality of spiritual poetry and mystery, not because of the titles affixed*

to them. ... The special excellences which distinguish Mr. Tanner's best work are its humane and poetic feeling.... About one of Tanner's Moroccan cityscapes Monroe gushed, I would rather have it and would get more religious inspiration from it than from any [image of a] saint.



Henry Ossawa Tanner, *Gateway, Tangier*, c. 1912, St. Louis Art Museum.

An even higher order of praise for Monroe was likening a painter to an author. Monroe once described the American artist Albert Pinkham Ryder (1847–1917), whom she knew personally, as a poet-painter. On the New York Ashcan School realist George Bellows (1882–1925), whose work was being shown in Chicago, she speculated, If he is a poet, his muse is epic rather than lyric, which she describes in terms of journalism: Of [his] city pictures "New York" tries to tell the whole story, and even though not quite free from reportorial slam-bang, it is a poetic telling of it, something beyond mere illustration to speak for us to a quieter age.



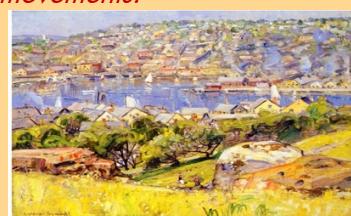
George Bellows, *New York*, 1911, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

For Monroe, some artists, like the French realist-impressionist Jean-François Raffaelli (1850–1924), surpassed even poets in the lyrical beauty of their locale-specific imagery: No painter, no writer of prose or verse, ever felt more keenly the charm of Paris, she said, or ever gave in his art with such spirit and humor and sympathy the flavor and poetry of the place.



Jean-François Raffaelli, *Notre Dame et la Pont de l'Archevêché*, c. 1910.

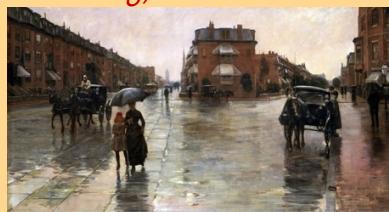
Monroe sometimes even compared painters to the most canonical authors. In a review from April 1910, she called the United States landscape painter, Chicagoan George Gardner Symons (1861–1930) a descriptive poet. He might be likened to *Wordsworth* because of his sense of nature's sternness, of a certain heroic bigness and simplicity in [nature's] movements.



George Gardner Symons, *Fishing Village—St. Ives [Cornwall, UK]*, c. 1910.

About another artist, Monroe claimed that the former School of the Art Institute of Chicago student Lawrence Mazzanovich (ca. 1872–1959) was a lyric poet, a kinsman of Keats singing to the nightingale under the moon, or of Shelley running

with the west wind over the hills, following with one of her poetry-inspired descriptions: His pictures are songs, expressions of lyric rapture; songs sometimes of pure joy, again of wistful tenderness, but always inspired by the haunting and elusive beauty of the world. Monroe sometimes cited actual lines of verse to praise a painter. About the American Childe Hassam's impressionist art at Chicago's Thurber Gallery, for instance, she quoted evocatively from *Shakespeare* that his best art [could] carry us further than our hopes. Now he has mastered his style, made it as obedient as Ariel was to Prospero, as swift "To fly, to dive into the fire, to ride/On the curled clouds." He has become a worker of miracles, and to be a worker of miracles is to be a great artist. For Monroe, Hassam's was not just a magical success; it was a national achievement on the level of *The Tempest*. [T]hese pictures are so American; their beauty is ours, is expressive of our landscapes and cities, our feeling, our life.



Childe Hassam, *Rainy Day, Boston*, 1885, Toledo Museum of Art.

"We Must Be Citizens of the World"

In many of Monroe's art reviews, she pleaded with readers to appreciate the work of American artists. She was writing at a time when the nouveau-riche of the United States were conspicuously absorbing and displaying their appreciation for European culture at the expense of more proximate artists. Monroe insisted that

United States patrons consider the work of their compatriots and challenged the notion that artists had to accrue European accolades to "prove" their worth.

Time was when public opinion in this country underestimated American artists who did their work at home, when it demanded foreign honors as a kind of diploma or certificate before being convinced that an artist had really grown up. For a decade or more after the Columbian exposition the superstition lingered that any American artist must show proofs why he should be permitted to stand on the same plane with a real Frenchman, German, Englishman, or other scion of more favored races; nothing but foreign medals and other honors would convince his fellow countrymen of his success.

But neither did she discount those United States artists working abroad, for to do so would be equally unjust.

Now there is some danger of the pendulum swinging too far in the other direction, Monroe warned, of our being unjust to those American artists who live abroad. ... Such an attitude is as provincial as the other, and quite unworthy of American artists, critics, commissioners, art juries, hanging committees and exhibition officers.

Perhaps reflecting her own avid travels, Monroe felt that art and inspiration inherently involved and required worldliness. Art is a wanderer, she stated, a cosmopolite. She has work for her favored sons to do here and there and everywhere, and it is no sin for them to live and labor wherever they feel the highest inspiration. Not doing so would show up in their art, she said. If all of our artists

who have remained past the student period in Paris should suddenly pack up and come home ... American art in general would lose ... that intelligent and wholehearted cosmopolitanism which modern art, like modern politics, must feel and express.

In this review, Monroe's plea switches to an internationalist perspective, where creative achievements will be judged by future generations.

We must be citizens of the world. None of us can shut himself up at home and pretend that his village or town or nation is all. What will come out of it in art or literature no one can tell until the twenty-third or the twenty-fifth century rounds up its predecessors. But it may be a bigger art and a bigger literature than our long subdivided and distracted world has ever known before.

This worldly consciousness and the importance of art's responsiveness to more than the local was compounded by Monroe's belief in the transformative expressiveness of art.

Monroe's appreciation for more socially conscious works indicates a more engaged worldview. For instance, she deeply admired the worker sculptures by the Belgian realist Constantin Meunier (1831–1905), which were shown in 1914 at the Art Institute of Chicago. They depicted, she said, *the modern democratic message of human brotherhood and the dignity of labor.* Artistic subjects such as these were favored in the Progressive Era for their sympathy with the common man. In one review, Monroe quoted two contemporary poets—Meunier's countrymen Maurice Maeterlinck and Émile Verhaeren—who also

enthusiastically commended Meunier's art.



Constantin Meunier, *Le Marteleur [The Hammerman]*, 1886, cast bronze, a version in the Art Institute of Chicago.

In a review the following week, Monroe again expressed her appreciation for Meunier, this time quoting William Butler Yeats. *The Meunier exhibition [at the Art Institute] reminds me of the advice given to poets by William Butler Yeats during his recent visit to Chicago, she mused, referring to a Cliff Dwellers banquet sponsored by Monroe and Poetry magazine.* Monroe dramatically changed Yeats's words to address visual artists:

If we may substitute the word "artist" for "poet," [Yeats] said: "Real enjoyment of a beautiful thing is not achieved when an artist tries to teach. It is not the business of an artist to instruct his age. ... His business is merely to express himself, whatever that self may be. The artist must put the fervor of his life into his work, giving you his emotions before the world."

Clearly, for Monroe, expression, emotions, and the depiction of a passionately lived and politically aware existence were the aims of both visual artists and poets. However, expressing her own appreciation and practices of art was not her goal; she hoped to spark her readers' interest in the creative products of their fellow citizens.

"No Poet Can Sing On and On If No One Listens"

An early review from December 1909 represents Monroe's most intense *cri de cœur* for an appreciation of American creativity. In what the headline described as a "sermon," she chided American (and specifically Chicagoan) audiences who preferred the art and poetry produced in foreign centers. Gone was her patience with audiences who looked abroad for a cheap, cosmopolitan, or borrowed status. She called her readers to action:

It is time to protest against all this, to cry aloud, to shout a warning, to ring the bells of clamor in every steeple. Because this colonialism of taste is not only stupid, it is disastrous. It condemns our poets to silence—since no poet can sing on and on if no one listens; our painters to starvation or to compromise with commercialism, or else to foreign residence so that they can win reputation at home by securing honors abroad.

In this period, Monroe was also thinking about the plight of unsupported poets and was scandalized by those conditions that would lead her to found *Poetry* three short years later. Once she did, she was then faced with deciding to publish American, European, and/or expatriate poets and vowed to showcase and pay those poets for their labor and cultural contributions.

After she became the founder-editor of *Poetry* in 1912, Monroe's art reviews show an increasing sensitivity to the politics of recognition for all artists. In several, she discusses juries, the process

by which artworks were selected for exhibition.

Art societies, academies, juries, officials, tend, as everybody knows, to harden and fossilize. Men in control like to keep control, and naturally prefer to honor those in sympathy with their views. Moreover, Monroe observed, the entire process was tainted. It is an open secret, confirmed by details in the talk of the studios, that art politics, rather than merit, has governed most of the highest awards in our various cities during the last few years.



Wayman Adams, *The Art Jury*, 1921, oil on canvas, Indianapolis Museum of Art.

Juries were not only self-serving, Monroe believed them often wrong in their choices altogether. She reviewed an exhibition in France and lamented, *In sifting out the good, one is filled with pitying wonder for the bad. Where did all these banal pictures and statues come from, and where will they go to? What hours of enthusiasm, what months and years of ingenious labor have been wasted in achieving them, what disappointment and despair will follow them into oblivion! And by what perversity of indulgence could any jury have admitted to this annual gathering place of the world's art so many works of misdirected effort which neither Pittsburg, New York, nor Chicago would give space to?*

Monroe questioned the institutional authority of juries altogether. She recounted a conversation with the Spanish painter Joaquín Sorolla, saying, *But why have juries? Instead, Let everything in, everything; otherwise, you may miss the best of all.* This sentiment looks forward to her famous "open door" policy for submissions to *Poetry*.

Despite this barbed (and, I feel, deadly accurate) criticism of juries, jurists were also "editors" of a sort who chose which pieces to show. Painters who serve upon juries do so at a considerable cost to themselves, she reflected, for the benefit of institutions or societies holding exhibitions, and, indirectly, for the benefit of the public. Her criticism of juries notwithstanding, Monroe urged patience when judging artworks and poems. She mistrusted the first impression and the impulsive choice. *It is a pity that prizes cannot be given at the end of an exhibition instead of the beginning*, she imagined. This sentiment rhymes with some of her editorial decisions, including poems like "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," which she and her team might have rejected after the first reading.

After publishing several issues of *Poetry*, Monroe had learned the difficulties of editing and curation, which humbled her and made her sympathetic to institutional gatekeepers including critics. She realized that *the mere printing of one's opinion increases its carrying power but never its value. The writer of criticisms, the professional opinionater, may always be wrong.* Still, she never lost sight of the critic's attempted impartiality and claimed that *a critic's business is with the artist's ideas, not with his*

own. Whether she fully succeeded or not, Monroe applied this ethos to her stewardship of authors' verse in *Poetry*, where she had to make difficult, even canon-shaping decisions.

"Freer and Vaster Dreams"



Harriet Monroe, c. 1905–10.
As early as 1909, Monroe was consolidating her convictions about the intensely reciprocal relationship between audience and the artist. *The beautiful expression of our own life, our own thought, feeling, imagining, aspiration—that is the art which belongs to us, which should appeal most strongly to us. And it is only by responding enthusiastically to this appeal that any people can get the best of which its artists are capable. In art, science, invention, philosophy, the great epochs come when a strong creative impulse meets an equally strong impulse of sympathy.* We might read in this an early version of *Poetry's* motto, borrowed from Walt Whitman: "To have great poets, there must be great audiences too."

Monroe, who wrote in the age of Thomas Edison when new technologies were changing everything and quickly, bravely foresaw how artists and poets might be relevant heroes if they were responsive and better appreciated:

Today in America the Inventor is thus stimulated by universal appreciation, and what miracles we get from

him—turbine power plants, wireless telephones, aeroplanes! Tomorrow we may be as potently interested in art, even in poetry, which is now the poor neglected Cinderella of the arts. And then also we may be granted miracles!

Like her hero in architecture, Daniel Burnham, Monroe imagined for American artists and their audiences a bold, inspired future:

[Society is] entering perhaps upon a new period of thought, a kind of mysticism founded upon larger knowledge and deeper science. Who can tell whether this new period of closer human fellowship, of freer and vaster dreams, will not prove the inspiration of a greater, more universal art? To realize it, however, required avid cooperation between artist and audience. By praising the achievements of Americans, including women artists and artists of color, in her reviews and in the pages of *Poetry*, Monroe skewered prevailing biases in taste along with its controlling patriarchy. Altogether, her achievement in the *Tribune* reviews and in *Poetry* helped define the culture of Progressive Era Chicago and the broader literary and artistic world. Monroe's vision of creativity—both its production and its reception—is as relevant to our own historical moment as it was at the turn of the 20th century.

Editor's Note:

All of the quotes above (in italics) are by Harriet Monroe from her art reviews published in the Chicago Daily Tribune.

*"Sermon for Good Americans" [sic "Good for Americans"?] Found in the Art of the Art Galleries" December 19, 1909.
"Home Interest in American Art Growing" [Sunday] June 20, 1909.*

"Long Ago Prophecy of a French Critic is Fulfilled in Hassam's Works" January 23, 1910.

"Vitable Tonic for the Blues is the Current Exhibition of Sculpture" February 20, 1910.

"Promise of Great Painter in Mazzanovich" April 17, 1910.

"Mrs. Potter Palmer Loans Several Famous Paintings to the Current Exhibit in the Art Institute" May 15, 1910.

"Art Supremacy of France Threatened" September 18, 1910.

"Chicago Artists' Exhibition" February 5, 1911.

"Sorolla Admits America's Supremacy in Art" April 16, 1911.

"Do We Really Underestimate the American Artists?" May 28, 1911.

"Chance for City Beautiful Offered by Parked Lake Front" December 24, 1911.

"Calls Winslow Homer Greatest U. S. Artist" November 24, 1912.

"H. G. Dearth Says Renaissance Was a Blight on Art" December 22, 1912.

"An Exhibit of American Pictures" January 26, 1913.

"International Art Show to Open at the Institute on March 24" March 16, 1913.

"Art Institute Portrait Charms Rembrandt Authority" January 4, 1914.

"Karl Anderson Takes High Place Among Figure Painters" February 15, 1914.

"Meunier, Interpreter of the Lowly, on Exhibit at the Art Institute This Week" March 22, 1914.

"Meunier Full of Love for Fellowmen" March 29, 1914.

"Art" May 3, 1914.

"Art." May 24, 1914.



Mark B. Pohlad

Courtesy of Poetry Foundation /Poetry Magazine

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/mark-pohlad>

The Lilty Poem

The Prayer Tree

You asked for a metaphor –
here is one.

I am the Prayer Tree with dry
hands.
I raised them till my leaves
fell one by one.

I am the Prayer Tree that has lost
its leaves,
that is dry to its roots, that is
waiting
for a million miracles.

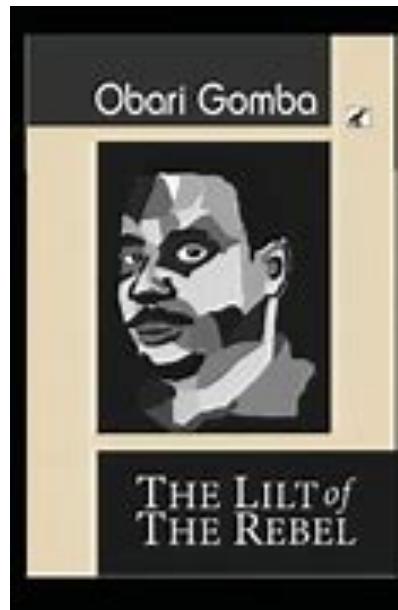
I am humankind. I have lost my
head
in search of the Gods,
in search of Godheads.

You asked for a story –
Here is one.

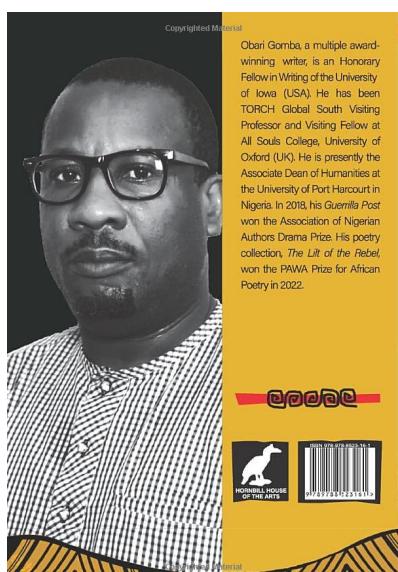
I am humankind. I have lost the
truth
in search of the many Gods
that can never be known.

from:

© Obari Gomba, 2021
The Lilt of the Rebel



Obari Gomba is a Nigerian writer and academic. In 2023, he won the Nigeria Prize for Literature for his work *Grit*.



Obari Gomba, a multiple award-winning writer, is an Honorary Fellow in Writing of the University of Iowa (USA).

He has been TORCH Global South Visiting Professor and Visiting Fellow at All Souls College, University of Oxford (UK). He is presently the Associate Dean of Humanities at the University of Port Harcourt in Nigeria. In 2018, his Guerilla Post won the Association of Nigerian Authors Drama Prize. His poetry collection, *The Lilt of the Rebel*, won the PAWA Prize for African Poetry in 2022.

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“DEMANE AND DEMAZANA

Short Story 2

Once upon a time, a brother and sister who were twins and orphans, being poorly treated at home, were obliged to run away from their relatives. The boy's name was Demane, the girl's Demazana.

They went to live in a cave that had two holes to let in air and light, the entrance to which was protected by a very strong door with a fastening inside. Demane went out hunting by day, and told his sister that she was not to roast any meat while he was absent, lest the cannibals should discover their retreat by the smell. Whenever he returned, he would sing this song and his sister would let him in:

“Demazana,
Demazana,
Child of my mother,
Open this cave to me.
The swallows can enter it.

It has two openings.
But then it happened that a cannibal overheard it.

The girl would have been quite safe if she had done as her brother commanded. But she was strongheaded, and one day she took some buffalo meat and put it on a fire to roast. The cannibal smelled the flesh cooking, and went to the cave, but found the door fastened. So he tried to imitate Demane's voice, and asked to be let in by singing the song:



Demazana, Demazana,
Child of my mother,
Open this cave to me.

The swallows can enter it.

It has two openings.
Demazana said: "No. You are not my brother, for your voice is not like his at all."

"The cannibal went away, but after a little

time came back again and spoke in another tone of voice: "Do let me in, my sister."

Demazana, Demazana,
Child of my mother,
Open this cave to me.
The swallows can enter it.

It has two openings.
The girl answered: "Go away, you cannibal; your voice is hoarse, you are not my brother."

So he went away and consulted with another cannibal. He said: "What must I do to obtain what I desire?" He was afraid to tell what his desire was, lest the other cannibal should want a share of the girl. His friend said: "You must burn your throat with a hot iron."

He did so, and then no longer spoke hoarsely. Again he presented himself before the door of the cave, and sang:

Demazana, Demazana,
Child of my mother,
Open this cave to me."

"The swallows can enter it.

It has two openings.

The girl was deceived, and believing her



brother had come back from hunting, she opened the door. The cannibal went in and seized her, but as she was being carried away, she dropped some ashes here and there along the path. Soon after this, Demane, who had found nothing to eat that day but a swarm of bees and their honey, returned and found his sister gone.

He guessed what had happened, and by means of the ashes followed the path until he came to where the cannibal, Zim, lived. The cannibal's family was out gathering firewood, but he was at home and had just put Demazana in a big bag, where he intended to keep her till the fire was made.

Entering the room, Demane said: "Give me water to drink, father." Zim replied: "I will if you

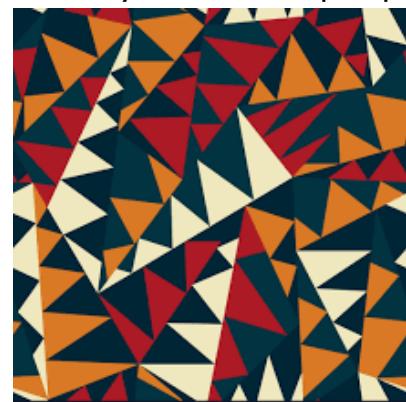
will promise not to touch my bag." Demane promised. Then Zim went to get some water, and while he was away, Demane took his sister out of the bag and put the bees in it, after which they both hid.

When Zim came with the water, his wife and son and daughter came also with firewood. He said to his daughter: ""There is something nice in the bag; go bring it." She went and put her hand in the bag, but the bees stung her hand, and she called out: "It is biting." He sent his son, and afterwards, his wife, but always the same thing happened. He got angry at them and kicked them out of his house. He put a block of wood in the doorway so Damazana couldn't run away. Then he opened the bag himself. The bees swarmed out and stung his head; his eyes swelled up so that he couldn't see.

There was a little hole in the thatch and through this he forced his way. He jumped about

howling with pain. Then he ran and fell headlong into a pond, where his head stuck fast in the mud and he became a block of wood, like the stump of a tree. The bees made their home in the stump, but no one could get their honey because when any one tried, his hand stuck fast.

Demane and Demazana then took all Zim's possessions, which were numerous and great, and they became wealthy people



—Kaffir*

Excerpt From: Abrahams, Roger. "African Folktales."

Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group

Author Interview 2

Spotlight Author



Liberian Literary Magazine conducted an interview with
James Varney Dwalu

LLM: First, we would like to thank you for granting this interview. Let us kick off this interview with you telling us a little about yourself....

My name is James Varney Dwalu. I was born in my maternal town of Bandor in Tewor District, Grand Cape Mount County. I went to school in Mano River, Grand Cape Mount Count and Monrovia. I have skills in intellectual property, qualitative and quantitative studies.

I mainly write children's stories. I began writing in 1985 in Mano River. I discovered that I had the talent to write through my reading teachers, the late Mrs. Maude Jones Dennis in Monrovia, the late Mrs. Irene Johns Bah and Julie Kennedy; a Peace Corp Volunteer in Mano River. All these women highly encouraged reading in the schools they taught.

1. Do you mentor? What do you look for in a mentee?

Yes. I do mentor children's book writers and those aspiring to write in general. I look for commitment in the mentee based on their willingness to have me look at their work from a professional point, how they accept professional views, and the willingness to continuously read what they have written. I advise them to be original in their writing. Lastly, to read published works in the genre they are writing. We learn by examples.

2. How active are you on social media (links)? And how do you think it affects the way you write?

I am on Facebook and LinkedIn every day. I join whatever forum or group of writers or publishers. I learn a lot about what's going on in their world. I get to know which books are out and which publishing what. If I meet an author that has done a very remarkable work, I get inspired and challenged to want to write like them.

3. How did you celebrate the publishing of your first book?

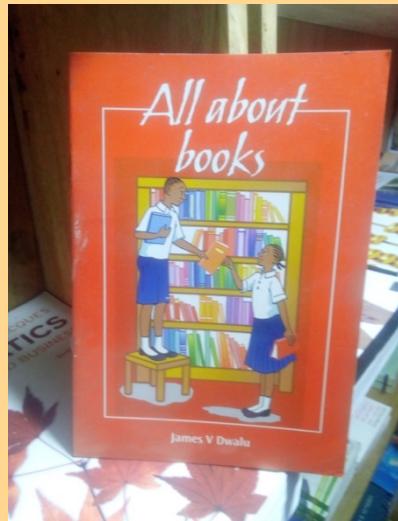
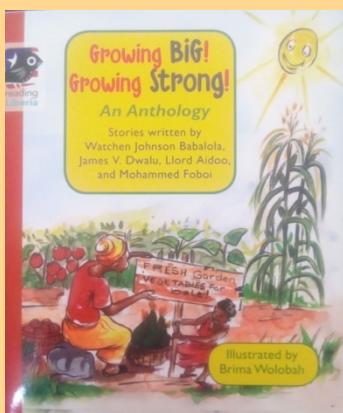
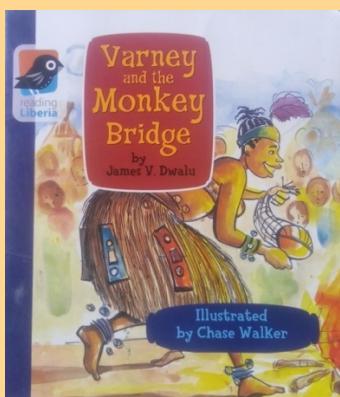
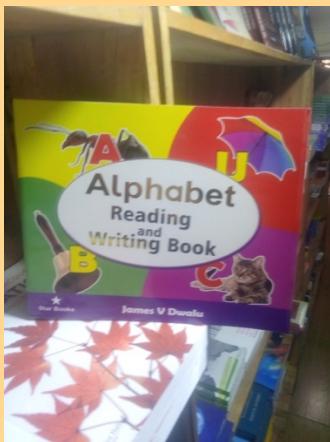
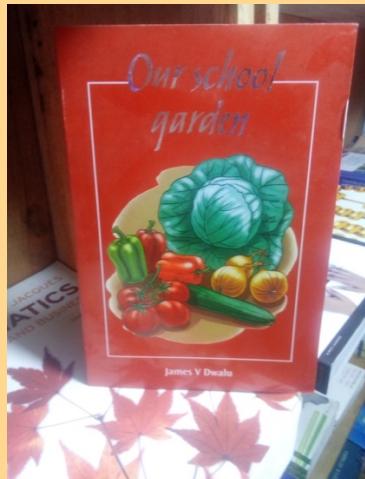
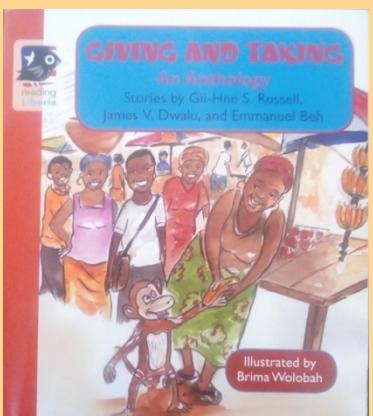
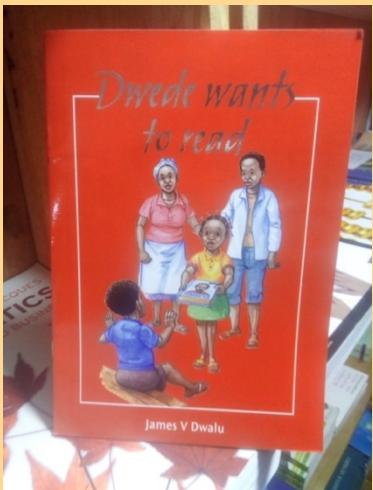
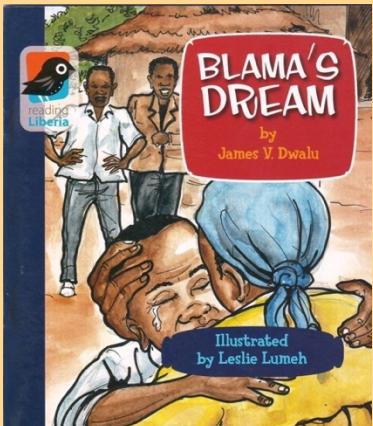
Hm! I had always waited for the day I would be referred to as an author by my peers. Nineteen years of writing before first publication wasn't easy. By 2004, there were no mainstream publishers in Liberia. The challenges were many; firstly, finding a printer that wouldn't charge exorbitantly, finding a children's book illustrator, and marketing the book. My first book was a

self-published reader for age 6 and 7. It was Prof. Dr. K. Moses Nagbe who provided all the funds to have the book printed. I gave copies and talk to whoever I knew. It was like coming to a creek on a hot dry season day after a long walk. Of course it was actually my second book, Fun in the Interior, which I was highly impressed with. That was published in 2009. I like to set my stories in rural places. Our children in the urban areas need to know that people live in other parts of the country.

4. How often do you attend literary festivals? Which festivals can we expect to see you at this year?

Interestingly, there are no literary festivals yet in Liberia. I had the opportunity to attend the **Ugandan International African Writers Conference** in Uganda in 2013 on the invitation of the **African Writers Trust (AWT)**. I haven't attended any since. Literary festivals are cost intensive. Some writers foot their own bills. Books are not selling in Liberia because of the extremely high level of piracy. Sourcing funding is the fundamental problem faced by organizations that opt to host festivals. So, getting as many writers from around the world to attend is difficult. I missed the **FemiArts in Malawi** in 2019 because of the lack of funding. I hope that I can attend this year. There are many writers in Liberia. I also think organizers of Book Festivals are not looking any further than address books for writers. I have also known

that children's literature hasn't taken top spot in many countries in Africa. Some children's book writers and I have established a not-for-profit called, Children's Book Liberia, Inc., CBOOK LR for short. We hope to, in couple of years, initiate a literary festival in Liberia.

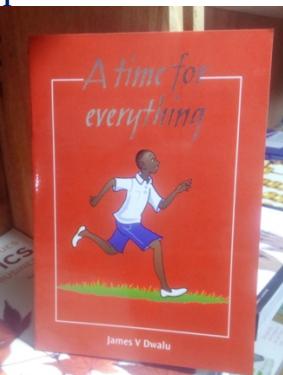


5. If you were given the opportunity to form a book club with your favorite authors of all time, which legends or contemporary writers would you want to become a part of the club? No less than FIVE!

First on my list is Watchen Johnson Babalola (Shoes That Fit), Gii-Hne S. Russell (Time to Bath), Augustus Voahn (Under the Bridge), Dr. K. Moses Nagbe (Road to Romeo, Clipping the Claws), Hawa-Jande Golakai (Lazarus Effect), Kpana Nnadia Gaygay (Daunting Years), Bai Tamia Moore (Ebony Dust, Murder in the Cassava Patch, The Money Doubler), and Joseph Jeffrey Walters (Guaya Pau: Story of an African Princess). Out of Liberia, Prof. Jack Mapanje (Chameleons and Gods) and Shadreck Chikoti (The Beggar Girl, Free Africa Fee!) of Malawi, Mohamed Sheriff (Mariama Must Go) of Sierra Leone, O. Henry (Ransom of the Red Chief) of USA, and Federico Garcia Lorca (At Five in the Afternoon) of Spain.

6. Tell us about an interesting or memorable encounter you had with a fan?

My encounter was with a girl about 13 who had read “Blama’s Dream”; a story about child abuse and child trafficking in Liberia. She didn’t like it that I didn’t let the villains; Big Boss Lady and Blama’s uncle in the story get caught. That inspired me. The child has developed the ability to think critically. I have since written, Blama on the Run, a sequel to Blama’s Dream. I am sure she will love it when it is published.



7. *Your writer friends, which of them do you discuss your projects with? How does that play out?*

I discuss my projects with Dr. K. Moses Nagbe, Llord Aidoo and Watchen Johnson Babalola. They are forever receptive and give good counsel. Hm! They can be tough on me at times. Dr. K. Moses Nagbe has been encouraging me since 1987 when I joined the Liberia Association of Writers.

8. *What is your view on co-authoring books; have you done any?*

Co-authoring works well in the sciences and mathematics textbook writing because what we write are not based on our inspirations. It is based on principles and hypothesis.

People can co-author an anthology. If writing fiction, it is better to do it alone. This is so because each of us gets inspired at different levels and times. Our character development styles are naturally different. People can co-author works of non-fiction if they share the same or similar experience. Examples: soldiers that served the same squad during a mission or on the battlefield, a married couple can co-author a book about their lives together.

9. *Which is hardest for you – the writing, the publication, and the sales?*

The hardest for me is “sales.” The extremely high level of piracy impedes writing. If sales are good, writers will be encouraged to write, publishers will publish because there is a market.

10. *What does ‘retirement’ mean to you? Do writers ever retire?*

Retirement to me means leaving a noisy and polluted city to a clean rural town to continue writing during my senior age. No. writers do not retire. Once they get inspired, they pick up the pen and jot. Inspiration stays with a writer till death.

11. *How do you incorporate the noise around you into the story you are writing at the moment? Can you tell us about your current projects?*

Hm! I live in a very noisy neighborhood. There are about three bars all competing with each other with their speakers and collectively against churches

that have huge megaphones. Finally, kekeh and motor bike riders honk indiscriminately as unruly young and middle age people walk up and down the streets like water beetles on the surface of creeks. Presently I have completed the sequel to Blama’s Dream as mentioned in response to question number 6, have more than ten finished works for children, as the Executive Director of Children’s Book Liberia, I am looking for funding to conduct at least three workshops this year for children’s book writers.

Plus Two

1. *Is today’s generation more aware of the literary art or less?*

Today’s generation is less aware of the literary art. This is largely due to the huge influence of other forms of art such as dance and music. Literary art is being left long way behind. Another is the lack of emphasis on the importance of reading in schools.

2. *You don’t have to be a writer in order to be an author – what is your take?*

What! This can only be if someone is ghostwriting or if a person plagiarizes.



JAMES @ a program
Joseph-Fredericks

To Speak with Many Tongues at Once Prose/Essay 2

The poetry of place—and placelessness.

Courtesy of
Poetry Foundation Poetry Magazine

by OMAR KHOLEIF

I have always been an immigrant, wherever it is I have lived in the world. I left Egypt, where I was born, at three months of age. I lived in the West as an Arab infant whose family had imposed exile. When I returned home as a teenager, I was a stranger to my own extended family who scoffed and giggled at my polyglot Arabic accent. Now that I am living in the United States again, I realize that I have been code-switching my whole life: not only speaking, but also writing in a foreign language, a tongue and vernacular that is not my own, constantly attempting to assimilate. Being a millennial diasporic Arab, I have watched the world devour the image of my people and their collective

identities on many stages. I've been privy to everyone from presidents to school kids spewing bigoted rhetoric, seeing the Arabic-speaking world conflated with the violence of religious extremism, a condition created and spoon-fed to the public by political commentators who have perhaps withdrawn themselves from their own complicity in making history.

I've always longed to find a native polyglot like me, someone who could discuss the mutilation of the Arab image in the Western consciousness, with whom I could talk about Putin and Paris, Netanyahu and Nagasaki, Tehran and Tel Aviv. But increasingly, the freedom of expression is stripped and buried in the Arab world—the critical young Egyptian author Ahmed Naji, for example, was this year sentenced to prison for writing novels that speak of sex and hashish. Egypt, the largest of Arab countries, is becoming akin to the violently oppressive and homophobic Cuba that Reinaldo Arenas protested. With the November 2015 terrorist

attacks in Paris, the image of the Muslim as well as the Arab became hollowed of any poetry: an apocalypse engulfing image and text.

As we seek resurrection and resuscitation from these ashes, there is one figure that I keep returning to, one who eloquently captures the essence of this collective trauma, and that is the poet, essayist, and painter Etel Adnan. She was born in Beirut to a Syrian father and a Greek mother from Smyrna in 1925. Adnan grew up in a household where multiple languages were exchanged: Greek, Arabic, Turkish, and French, to name the ones that I am certain of. However, in her meditation on growing up, "To Write in a Foreign Language," Adnan explains how writing in English (as opposed to the many languages spoken in her familial home) became a form of resistance; she then proceeds to untangle the concept of home and the diasporic tongue's potential to roam across multiple territories. Hers was a life lived in multiple self-imposed and

forced exiles from the Arab world (specifically her native Beirut); she spent much of her life between the urban metropole of Paris and amidst the mountain ranges of Sausalito, California. In these places, Adnan worked between prose, poetry and painting, merging these worlds into a tapestry of her imagination. Her elucidations evoked a hybrid being—a creolized subject, persistently developing a sense of home in foreign lands.

In her collection *In the Heart of the Heart of Another Country*, Adnan negotiates these memories of her native Lebanon. She begins:

place

So I have sailed the seas and come ... to B ... a city by the sea, in Lebanon. It is seventeen years later. My absence has been an exile from an exile.
As she continues, she meditates:

The most interesting things in Beirut are the absent ones. The absence of an opera house, of a football field, of a bridge, of a subway, and, I was going to

say, of the people and the government. And, of course, the absence of absence of garbage. Absence is a theme that recurs in her landmark text *The Arab Apocalypse*, a book where hieroglyphic painted forms sit and breathe next to evocative passages of text. Here, Adnan reflects on the violently mediated image of the Arab, who has become a violently contested and loathed public enemy:

A Hopi filled with bitter whiskey a solar bar in the midst of America.

.....

.....

The night of the non-event. War in the vacant sky. The Phantom's absence.

Funerals. Coffin not covered with roses. Unarmed population. Long.

The yellow sun's procession from the mosque to the vacant Place. Mute taxis.

.....

.....

The much awaited enemy has not come. He ate his yellow sun and vomited.

.....

.....

A green sun on the Meadow of Tears sun in my pocket wretched pocket sun.

The sun in these words is an embittered and pulsing device that evokes, absorbs, and contains the trauma of Beirut after the Lebanese Civil War. The specificity of this context, however, can be used as an allegory for the collective trauma that has ensnared the nations of the Arab world since the collapse of the Pan Arab ideal in 1967. Yet within Adnan's words are coping mechanisms, ways out of the alienation induced by diasporic Arab status. This is often most clearly evoked by her renderings of landscapes—in poetry, accompanied by her thick broad brushstroke paintings. In *Journey to Mount Tamalpais*, Adnan retreats from the burden of the past, seeking solace in the hills before her: "open wide the earth, shake trees from their roots," she submits, as she makes her way through numerous returns and crossings.

In *Journey to Mount Tamalpais*, we begin to sense a kind of liberated renewal taking place. Adnan is emancipating herself from the burden of being placeless (or indeed, of many nonplaces), claiming art as the site of her escape and shelter. By the time we reach forth to 2012, a new form of critical resolve is conjured in her treatise on love, which was first printed as a notebook for the renowned art event Documenta 13, *The Cost for Love We Are Not Willing to Pay*.

Love begins ... becomes a desire to repeat the experience. It becomes an itinerary. A voyage. The imagination takes over that reality and starts building fantasies, dreams, projects ... It creates its own necessity, and in some people encompasses the whole of life....

How can one bear such an intensity?...

But what is love? And what are we giving up when we relinquish it?

Love is not to be described, it is to be lived. We may deny it, but we know it when it takes hold of us. When something in ourselves submits the self to itself.

Submitting the self to itself, to acknowledge one's own polyphony within the world as a conditioned code-switcher is the ultimate resolve of these poetics. Etel Adnan dances through language, speaking not only of many tongues but also of many places. Through her writing, the condition of exile becomes one of possible resistance.



Omar Kholeif is a writer, curator, editor, and broadcaster.

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/articles/88728/to-speak-with-many-tongues-at-once>

Unscripted

CHER ANTOINETTE



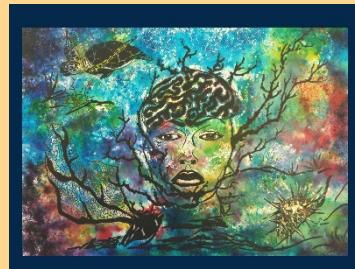
December 2023

Hi guys, it's been a while since I have shared with you on this segment. So much has happened in the world over the past three years, so much has happened in my life over the past three years; the earth



ART CONCEPT EXPLAINED

My art speaks to my life....the various stages of my life.....and so



UNMASKED:

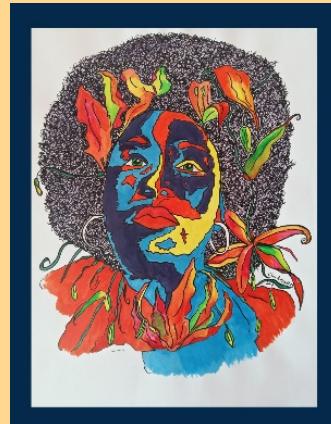
Acrylic Ink on Bristol Board... matted to 16x20"

"All will soon be revealed; change is coming..."

ENDANGERED:

Watercolour and Acrylic Ink on WC Paper... matted to 22x24"

"I know not where I am, I am searching, I am confused, I am losing myself..."



ARCHITECTS OF DESTINY:



Watercolour and Acrylic Ink on WC Paper ... matted to 16x20"

"I choose to be the architect of my destiny..."

COLOURS OF MY FREEDOM:



Watercolour Wax Resist on WC Paper.. matted to 16x20"

"At last..."

*@ Cher-Antoinette
October 2016*

*Cher-Antoinette
March 2021*



Forensic Scientist, Visual Artist & Writer,

Cher-Antoinette Forensic Scientist, is multi-faceted and commenced her artistic journey in 2014 where she decided to let her work speak to her life.

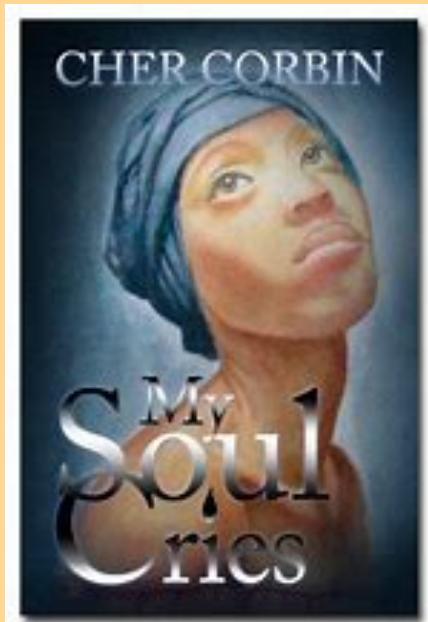
A self-taught emerging artist from Barbados her artwork is diverse and quite different to that on the local scene.

Cher-Antoinette's Studio was opened in August 2017 and showcases the artist's belief in "***The Synergy of Life & Art!***".

Her media and style of choice are Watercolour, Acrylics, Acrylic Fluid Art and Mixed Media expressions.

Recently she has ventured into Modern Pointillism and Hard-Edge Abstract Art.

The love of science drew the artist to acrylic fluid art which is based in chemical and physical interactions of the paint; this resulted in the creation of *FlowArtistryByCher* and *C-Toi Wearable Art*.



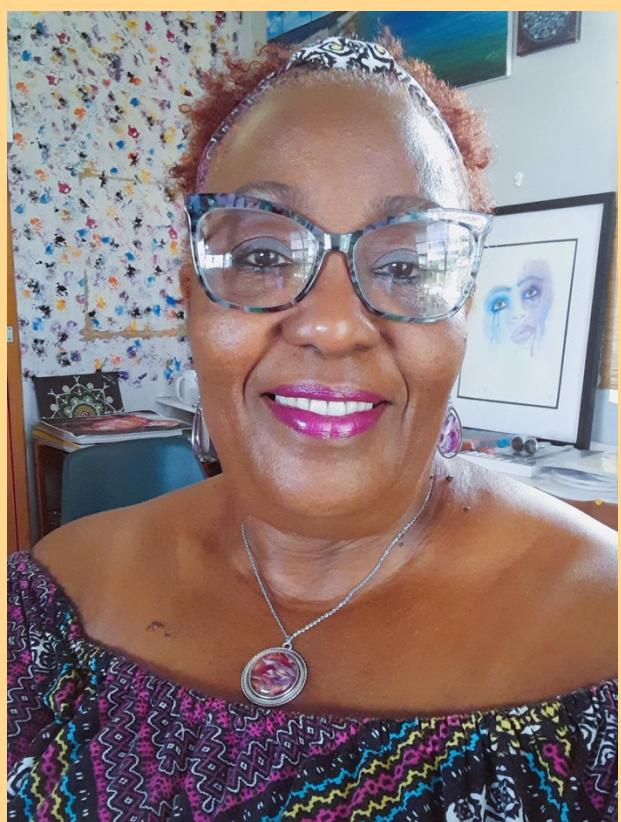
Email: cherantoinettestudio@gmail.com

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TINSEL THE CHRISTMAS ELF

"All of Santa's elves love Christmas, but there is no elf who loves Christmas quite as much as Tinsel does.

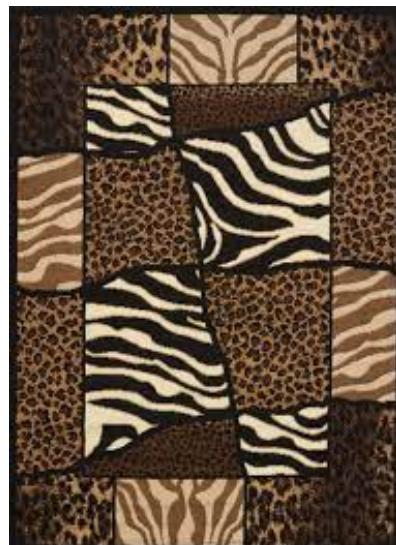
Tinsel the elf has lived with Santa ever since Santa came to the North Pole, years and years ago. He is always filled to the brim with holiday cheer, no matter what time of the year it is.

Tinsel knows all the words to every Christmas carol ever written. He knows all the best ways to decorate a

Christmas tree, bake the most delicious Christmas cookies, and bring Christmas cheer to the other elves and reindeer. Even when Santa and Mrs. Claus are feeling sick or sad, Tinsel, with his joyful Christmas spirit, is sure to cheer them up every time.

Many years ago, Santa noticed Tinsel's remarkable Christmas spirit, and so he appointed him Chief Christmas Spirit Elf."

"What an honor!" gasped Tinsel. "Only...what does a Chief Christmas Spirit Elf do?"



Santa chuckled merrily. "Your job, Tinsel, will be to bring Christmas cheer to the children of the world. Each year, I will assign you to a different boy or girl who needs some holiday spirit, and it will be your job to cheer him or her up and to show them the true spirit of the season."

Tinsel was very excited to begin his job! His very first assignment involved a little boy named Timothy, who was too sad to enjoy Christmas because his father had died earlier that year.

Tinsel spent the whole Christmas season with Timothy. The two of them became great friends, and soon Timothy learned to laugh and have fun again. Because of this,

he made even more new friends. Tinsel also helped Timothy learn to work in the woodcarver's shop that Timothy's father had owned and operated.

Working in the shop made Timothy feel close to his father.

Just before Christmas, Tinsel found a carved wooden horse that Timothy's father had never had a chance to give Timothy. Late on Christmas Eve, Tinsel wrapped the horse in paper, tied it with a ribbon, and placed it beneath Timothy's Christmas tree. You can only imagine how touched and overjoyed Timothy was on Christmas morning when he discovered one last gift from his beloved father!

"Well done, Tinsel!" Santa exclaimed when Tinsel reported back to the North Pole that Christmas afternoon.

"You brought Christmas cheer to Timothy when he needed it the most!"

Tinsel blushed and ducked his head, but Santa's praise made him feel wonderful.



As the years went by, Tinsel brought the Christmas Spirit to boys and girls in every country of the world.

Because of his caring smile, warm heart, the spring in his step, and his incredible love for Christmas, the lives of children all around the globe were transformed. Tinsel couldn't think of any job he would like more than this one. For a Christmas-loving elf like him, what was better than spreading the true joy of Christmas all around the world?"

2

"Christmas in Peru

"Tinsel!" bellowed Santa. "I have your

special assignment for this year!"

Excitedly, Tinsel the Chief Christmas Spirit Elf danced toward Santa's office, humming a Christmas carol. Each year, Santa assigned Tinsel to a different boy or girl who was in need of some holiday cheer. It was Tinsel's job to cheer the child up and help him or her realize the true joy of the holidays.

"This year, I'm assigning you to a little girl named Maria Luisa," Santa told Tinsel. "She lives in Peru, and she's very unhappy because this year, her family in the United States won't be coming to visit like they usually do for the holidays."

"Poor Maria Luisa," said Tinsel.

Santa nodded. "She believes she won't be able to have a good Christmas without her relatives. It is your job to show her differently."

With a click of his magical elf heels, Tinsel transported himself to the city of Lima, Peru. Even though it was summer in Peru and the air was warm, the sights and sounds of Christmas

were everywhere. Christmas decorations filled the city.

Spanish Christmas carols blared from radios. Families decorated Christmas trees and enjoyed Christmas sweet bread and cups of spicy South-American hot chocolate.

It seemed to Tinsel that Maria Luisa must be the only child in the city who wasn't happy.

"Who are you?" she asked Tinsel in Spanish when he appeared in her bedroom. She had been crying, but now she dried her eyes.

"I'm Tinsel the Christmas Spirit Elf," Tinsel replied, also in Spanish. "I'm here to cheer you up, to get you back into the spirit of the holidays."

Maria Luisa sighed. "Don't bother," she said.

"The holidays won't be any fun this year."

"She told Tinsel all about how her family in the United States wouldn't be coming to visit. "Christmas won't be the same without them!" she complained.

"But what about the rest of your family, the ones who already live

here in Peru?" Tinsel asked. "Aren't you grateful that they'll be here for Christmas? Don't you think it will make them feel bad to see you so unhappy?"

Maria Luisa looked as if she had never thought about that.

"I have an idea," Tinsel told her. "Why don't we work on making the Christmas season extra special this year, both for your family in Peru and for your family in the States?"

Maria Luisa wrinkled her nose in confusion.

"How could we do that?"

"What if we made them all homemade gifts?"

Tinsel suggested. "You can send a box full of special homemade gifts to your family in the United States, and you can put the rest under the tree for your family here!"

Immediately, Maria Luisa brightened. She loved crafts of every kind! With Tinsel's help, she went shopping for everything she would need. Then, she and Tinsel spent days making the perfect

presents for all of Maria Luisa's relatives.

They made scarves and bracelets and sock puppets and Christmas candy and homemade books and so much more. Tinsel helped Maria Luisa ship some of her presents out of the country. He helped her arrange the rest under her tree.

At midnight on Christmas Eve, they stood together, along with Maria Luisa's Peruvian family, and watched Christmas fireworks light up the night sky.

"Muchas gracias Tinsel!" Maria Luisa told him. "You brought me back my Christmas cheer!"

Tinsel the elf smiled very happily."

3

The Gift of Christmas

Each year, Santa gave Tinsel the elf the very important task of cheering up one little boy or girl who was especially in need of the



Christmas spirit. Years ago, Santa had named Tinsel his Chief Christmas Spirit Elf, and Tinsel took his job very seriously. He loved Christmas more than anyone else, and nothing brought him greater joy than helping the children of the world learn to love Christmas just as much!

This year, Tinsel's assignment was to go to Chicago and help a little boy named Eddie. Eddie was a sad, lonely little kid who had been brought up in a family that treated Christmas just like any other day of the year. Because he didn't know any differently, Eddie pretended not to care about this. But deep down inside, he was envious of his friends and classmates, who talked nonstop about Christmas trees and Christmas presents



and Santa and his reindeer."

"You can imagine Eddie's surprise when Tinsel suddenly appeared in front of him one cold afternoon in early December. Eddie had been swinging on the swing set at a park near his house, but he almost fell off his swing when he saw Tinsel!"

"Merry Christmas, Eddie!" Tinsel cried joyfully. He danced a happy jig, and the bells on the toes of his shoes jingled.

"I don't celebrate Christmas," Eddie said stubbornly.

"Why not?" Tinsel cried.

"Christmas is just another day of the year," Eddie mumbled.

"What if I told you I was a genuine Christmas Spirit elf, sent to you by

none other than Santa himself?" Tinsel asked.

That got Eddie's attention. "Santa?" he couldn't help but gasp. "Why does Santa care about me?"

"Why shouldn't he?" Tinsel said. "You're one of the children of the world, and Santa loves you. He wants you to be happy, and so do I!" Tinsel jumped up, gabbing Eddie's hand.

"Come on, Eddie! Let's go!"

Eddie's brown eyes brightened behind his glasses. "Go where?"

Tinsel didn't answer. He took Eddie straight to the nearest shopping mall, which was brimming with Christmas decorations, holiday music, and holiday sales. The candy store offered seasonal treats, and Eddie couldn't believe his eyes.

Everything was so pretty and Christmassy!

Tinsel bought Eddie a peppermint hot chocolate and stood in line with him to sit on the mall Santa's lap. Eddie even had his picture taken with the mall Santa, something

he had never done before!

The next afternoon, Tinsel met up with Eddie after he was done with school, and the two of them brought home a pretty Christmas wreath to hang on Eddie's front door. Tinsel could tell Eddie was really getting into the holiday spirit, and that made him very happy!"

"At first, Eddie's parents weren't sure how they felt about the wreath, but after a while, they decided it was pretty. Then, Eddie's mom even went so far as to suggest getting a Christmas tree! Tinsel went with her and Eddie and helped them pick the perfect one.

By the time Christmas came around, little Eddie and his whole family were finally enjoying the true happiness that Christmastime can bring.

Eddie gave Tinsel a big hug and thanked him for helping them all learn to love the holidays at last!"



Tinsel the Chief Christmas Spirit Elf had been given the very important job of bringing Christmas cheer to boys and girls who especially needed some holiday spirit. This year, Santa assigned Tinsel to a little girl named Meghan, who was feeling particularly low during this happy season.

Over the past summer, Meghan’s parents had gotten a divorce. Now, even though Meghan would be

spending Christmas Eve with her mom and Christmas Day with her dad, things weren’t going to be the same. This would be the first Christmas she’d spend without both of her parents together.

When Tinsel arrived at Meghan’s house, he found her sitting gloomily on the floor in her bedroom, trying to play with her stuffed animals. But she wasn’t in the mood, and she kept staring sadly through the frosted windows.

Tinsel’s arrival was the only thing that made her blink. Meghan was surprised to see a genuine Christmas elf standing right there in front of her! “Who are you?” she

cried, jumping to her feet.

Tinsel said, “My name is Tinsel, and I’m here to help you have a happy holiday season.”

“Not possible!” moaned Meghan, flopping onto her bed. “I’ll never be happy ever again! Now that my parents are divorced, what’s the point of even having Christmas in the first place?”

Tinsel patted her on the arm. “I know it’s hard, Meghan,” he said. “It will take a while for you to get used to things having changed, but you can do it. I believe in you, and Santa does, too.”

**Excerpt From:
Lightning, Arnie.
“Christmas Elf.”**

Author Interview ♀

Spotlight Author



Liberian Literary Magazine conducted an interview with

GABRIEL GBADAMOSI

Let's start at the beginning: TELL US A BIT ABOUT YOU. How did you begin writing?

1. Who are some of your favorite authors that were influential in your work? What impact have they had on your writing?

GG: I am Irish Catholic and Nigerian Muslim (Oyo Yoruba) and educated in London as an English Protestant, which means I'm secular, god-fearing and versatile, able to operate in many cultures and situations –

I am always in more than two minds.

I began writing in primary school and knew myself to be a poet by 13 and confessed to being a writer to my parents by 18, which is when they gifted me with a yellow portable typewriter.

My favourite author is 'anonymous' and then Shakespeare. I learned from the English and American poets and novelists, and then broadened out into European and African writers, and finally discovered voices can come from anywhere, in any language, and from any moment in history – from Ancient Greek, Aztec and Hindu to the Ifa Yoruba poetry of divination.

The impact these voices had on my writing was to realise that my contemporaries can be up to several thousand years old and may be voices in the wind, inscribed on the rocks, or written on water.

The Craft

2. Describe your writing process. Are you a 'plotter' (outline, plot, and plan), or a 'floater' (more like go-with-the-flow)?

GG: My writing process is difficult to describe, I find, but I am both analytical and intuitive in my watching and thinking; outline, plot and plan are provisional tools which I hold in my mind as a flexible, changing structure which remains open to the impact of feeling and thinking as I write. I don't mind how things change; I discover what I'm writing in the process. The writing is a process, not an end product. I don't so much

'float' as allow the writing to change me.

3. What have you found to be most challenging about writing? What is easy or comes naturally?

GG: To start writing is the challenge, always. Once started, nothing is either easy or natural, nothing is automatic or inspired by some god or inner genius; what has started follows its own logic and often fights me, and I will always lose.

But I am a tough opponent, so it better come with its own knife, because mine is sharp.

4. What did you find most useful in learning to write? What was least useful or most destructive?

GG: I found that what I experience when I write is a way to live many lives, which is very useful, and that because I have lived as other people I have no enemies, only opportunities to understand myself as human.

But also, I know how to curse, which is always self-destructive.

5. How do you find or make time to write?

GG: Be at your desk. You won't live forever.

The Author

6. How do your friends describe you?

GG: Ask them.

7. How would you describe yourself using five words? I know it is not much but...

GG: Still lucky to be alive.

8. What do you do for fun in your spare time? What do you like to read in your free time?

GG: I play with my family and my friends. I read people, sometimes in books.

9. Tell our readers two things about you not really known (SECRETS).

GG: I am still 17, the age I was when I became who I am. I speak with the dead.

10. There's no right or wrong answer, but

GG: I do like an unasked question, because then I know it comes from the heart.

11. If you could be anywhere in the world right now, where would you be? What would you be doing?

GG: I would be rich and idle and happy in or near the sea.

12. Who are some of your favorite authors that you feel were influential in your work? What impact have they had on your writing?

GG: The animals leaving tracks in the sand, in the earth, and the birds leaving flight paths in the sky, and the stars wheeling overhead on hot August nights. They told me to keep my writing light, to let it fade and disappear, to subject it to the criticism of time.

13. Do you consider yourself a full-time or part-time writer? Does that affect your writing?

GG I am a full-time writer who forgets to be at my desk. My writing is affected by other ways of being alive.

The Mix

14. SPREAD THE LOVE: What are some books/authors that you would recommend to our readers?

GG: I recommend, from the last year, *Em* by Kim Thÿ, and *Unsettled* by Rosaleen McDonagh, and the short story *A Soul of Small Places* by Mame Bougouma Diene and Woppa Diallo in the Caine Prize 2023 anthology.

15. Share some advice for aspiring/emerging authors.

GG: Be at your desk.

16. GEES; LET'S HEAR THE SCOOP. What projects are you working on present? What are some of your future projects?

GG: I am unsure what I'm writing until it's written. But the forms are poetry, essays and a novella.

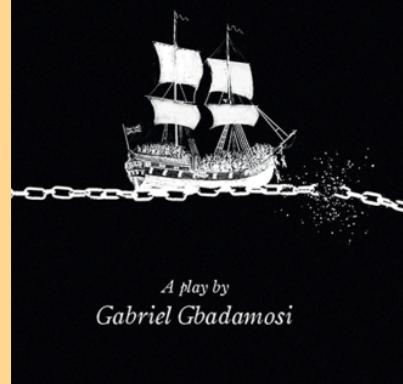
17. What question[s] do you wish would be asked about your book[s], but isn't/aren't asked? Write it/them out here, then answer.

GG: Q. Do you wish you could start all over again?
A. Yes.

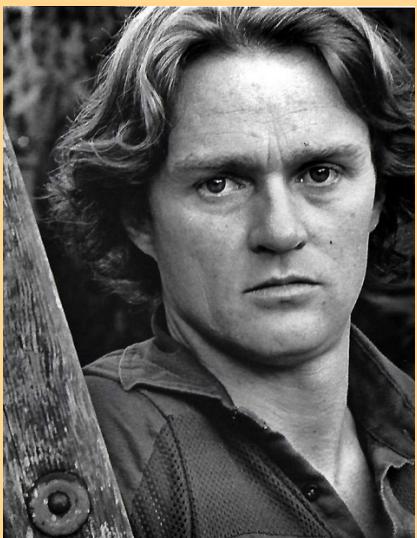
"A voyage of the damned,
burning with fiery poetry."
JACK SHEPHERD

"Haunting, poetic and
brilliantly researched."
S. L MARTIN

Abolition



*A play by
Gabriel Gbadamosi*



Jack Kolkmeyer studied English Literature/ Creative Writing at Ohio University in the 1960's where he developed a special interest in the Romantic, Imagist and Beat poets. He was the Editor of *Sphere*, the Ohio University literary magazine, from 1967-68.

His writings have appeared in numerous publications including *The Writers Place* and *The Liberian Literary Magazine* and have been broadcast on his popular Santa Fe radio programs, *The International House of Wax* and *Brave New World*, and presented with his performance group, The Word Quartet.

He was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Liberia, West Africa from 1969-72 and was greatly influenced then by the emerging African writers of that time, especially Leopold Senghor, Chinua Achebe and Amos Tutuola.

He is also profoundly influenced by the writings of Mary Oliver.

Jack received an MPA in Public Policy/Urban and Regional Planning from Indiana University in 1974.

Jack moved to Santa Fe, New Mexico in 1975 to study

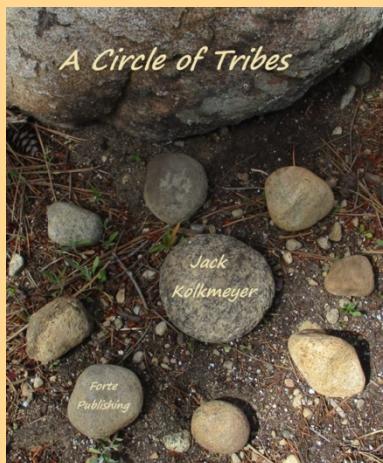
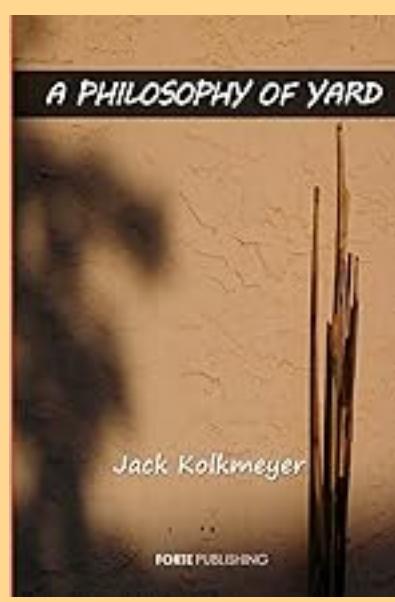
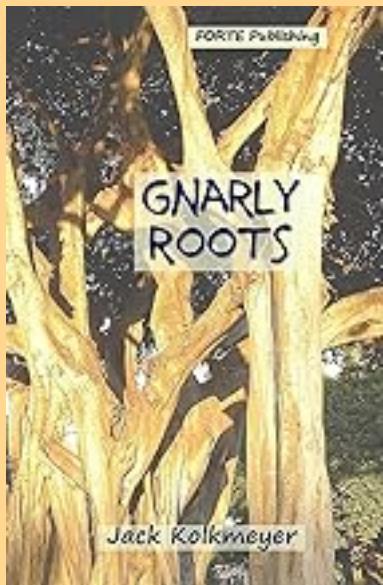
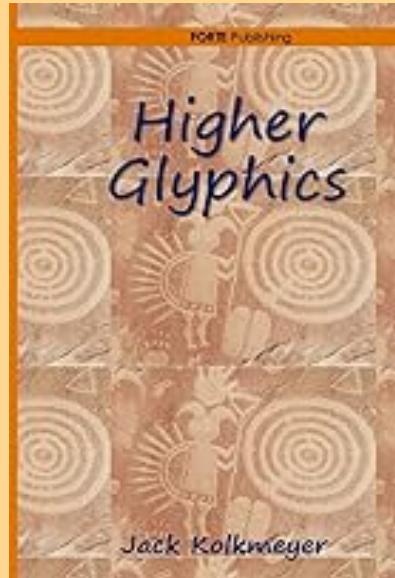
filmmaking at The Anthropology Film Center and worked there professionally in city planning, education, broadcasting and the performing arts, and journalism.

Jack currently resides and writes in Delray Beach, Florida where his current writing projects include poetry, music, city planning topics, and screenplays.

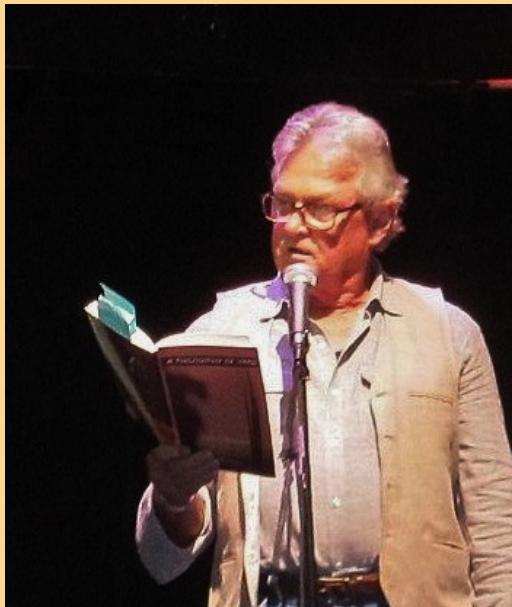
His favorite pastime, though, is gardening.

A Circle of Tribes is his fifth book of poetry.

BOOKS



ECCENTRIC POET



only a comma
to pause
and reflect

on the sentence we have been given
and proceed with our karmic tools
and our book of rules
to guide us from here through
eternity

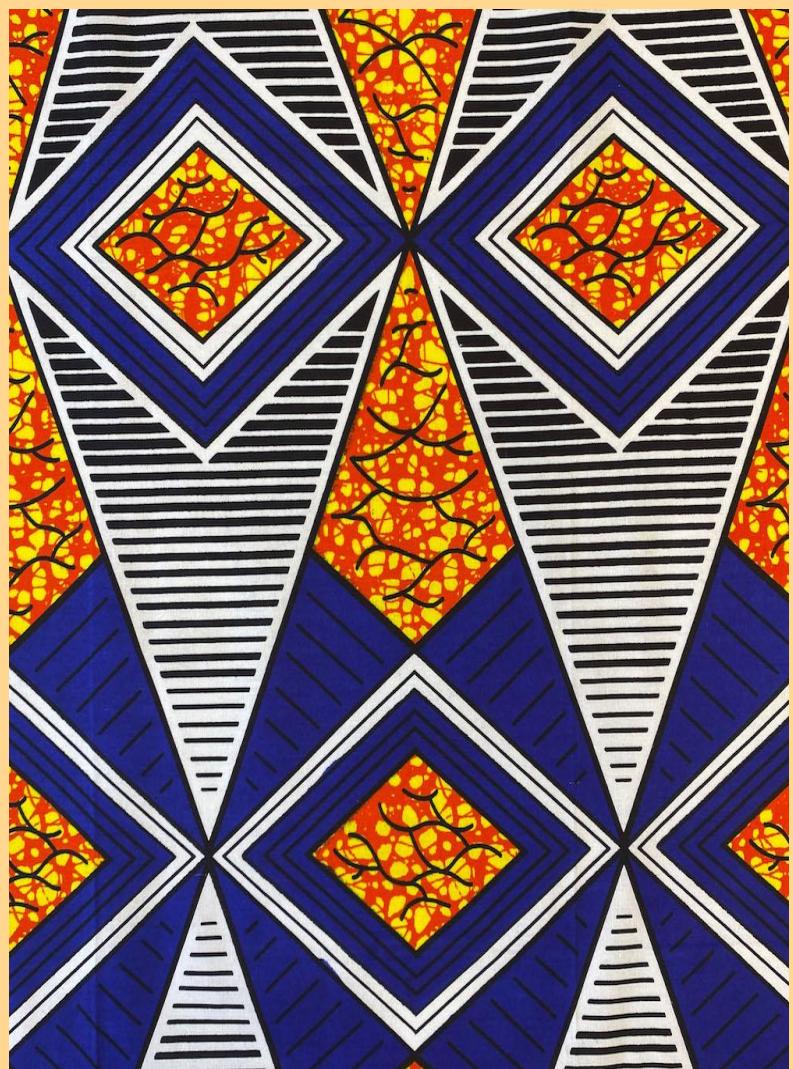
jk

From here to eternity

from now on
we will craft a new design in the
form of revelation
drawn in the hand of flowing script
and precise intention

from now on
a period will collapse from an era
into a single point of conclusion
from which a kernel of truth can be
clipped

a question will not mark
any inquiry into anything
whether real or delusion
because there will never be any
answers



ACCORDING TO ELIOT

A Whole Lotta Love Christmas Shopping!



Well, certainly in countries like Great Britain Christmas shopping is in full swing. It has been since June of this year. When I was a kid, Christmas shopping was the week before the great day right up to Christmas Eve. My Dad worked in a factory as a labourer. His Christmas holiday began lunchtime on Christmas Eve and he returned to work on the 27th of December; two and a half days holiday. Christmas Eve was when he bought a present for his wife. My brother, Haydn, whom I thought to be very grown up, he was 18! I was 13! Haydn had spent his first term at university. Something he'd discovered that term was the group Led Zeppelin and stereo records. Just coming onto the market was the stereo record player where the listener could hear music from two speakers instead of one. Haydn persuaded our Dad that a stereo record player was just the thing for our mother. It meant he could listen to Led Zeppelin in stereo as well. Here is a prose poem about that shopping trip.

Whole Lotta Love*

Dad, without fail, every Christmas

Bought Mum

A memorable gift.

Something, that well,

Would have her friends
and neighbours

Envyng. Wishing their
husbands were the same

Beyond tacky jewellery,
marketplace perfume at

Saturday lunchtime before
Filbert Street.

Mum told me, after Dad
had died, Christmas

Was his favourite time of
the year. Kids and presents.

Pork pie for breakfast. A
beer or three. Turkey,
crackers, pudding.

Snore in front of the fire
before mice pies.

1969 it was.

I know it was. Whole Lotta
Love.

Don, my brother, had
discovered at

University, stereo. I think
he discovered

Other things as well. Said
to Dad,

Get Mum a new record
player.

Loved the vinyl, my
mother.

Had stacks of it. Like me
now. Writing Sunday
morning, I'm hearing

Bruckner's Second Mass
Deutsche Grammophon.

Dad, Don and Me went
along to Curry's

Electrical store. Sold
everything.

Could have bought Mum,
a mixer, fridge, radiator.

But Don was for the
stereo. On a mission.

In the shadow of the clock
tower where

Many lovers, married and
divorced, had met,

A skinny bespectacled
shop assistant,

Didn't look over twelve
years old, thought, he must
have,

It odd that Don had a
copy of Led Zeppelin II

Tucked between pit and
torso. Maybe he's been
buying in Brees.

We want a record player,
Dad informed him. His
name badge told us,

Malcolm was his name,
but Dad didn't call him that.
Dad

Was holding onto his work
bag as if a theft may take
place on

That busy Christmas Eve
afternoon. After all it held
his empty lunch box and

Flask. Passage To India,
lunchtime read.

Stereo, Don told Malcolm.

Malcolm had a look on
face that told us the Isley
Brothers were as

Cool as he got swaying at
the Palais with Maureen.

Erm, yes, Malcolm told us,
looking my Dad up and
down thinking

Not a lot of wage here,
We have one that would
suit your pocket, Sir.

He showed us on the shelf,
turntable arm with two
speakers.

It's got two of those, Dad
told him as if Malcolm
hadn't realised. Is

That right? Don ignored
him informed Malcolm, We
want to listen to this.

Waving the LP in front of
his face reflecting the cover
in the lens of his spectacles.

Well, we don't usually.
You can listen in Brees. Or
Lewis's.

Want, nodding in his
direction, Dad to hear.

Malcolm didn't think Dad would like Led Zep, but he wasn't saying.

Erm, ok. Malcolm put the record player on a table. Placed the speakers side on side.

Took the disc from its sleeve. Don't touch the surface. Placed it on the turntable.

DEDED guitar spin from one speaker and then the other. Don tapped his foot. Shoppers

Looked over. Dad smiled said, Can you play it using one speaker?

Well, yes, said Malcolm. Did you not hear it Dad? And Don sang the chords. Play it again,

Don squinted at the badge, Malcolm. Be careful with it. DEDED.

You think your Mum will like this? I will Don was thinking.

Yes. I'll take it. Snap decision.

I told Dad, At home, I'll wrap it.

Cool, a girl of fourteen eyeing up Don. Love Led Zep she told him. Don

Gave her his sweetest smile and thought about Lynne in Manchester

Round Lennon specs and piggy nose.

Mum loved it. Wore out Whole Lotta Love.

We listened. One speaker and then the other.

And back again.

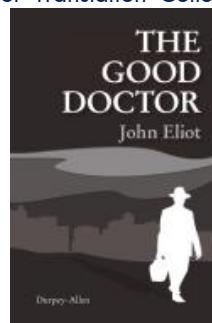
*The title of a Led Zeppelin song.

c. John Eliot
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- Poetry: *Ssh* (2014)
- *Don't Go* (2006)
- *Turn on the Dark* (2018) –
- *Canzoni del Venerdì Sera*
English/Italian Anthology (2020) All Mosaique Press

Editor Translation Collections



- *Correnti Incrociate* (2021 ISBN 9781906852610)
- *Correnti Incrociate 2* 2022 ISBN 9781906852634) *Correnti Incrociate 3* 2023 (ISBN 9781906852634)
- *Correnti La Räscrucce* 2021 (ISBN 9781906852610)

Collections and others

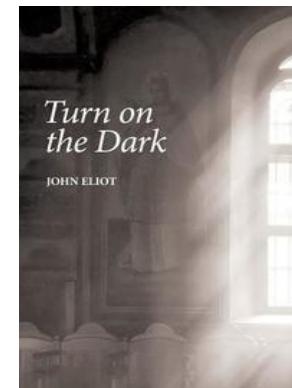
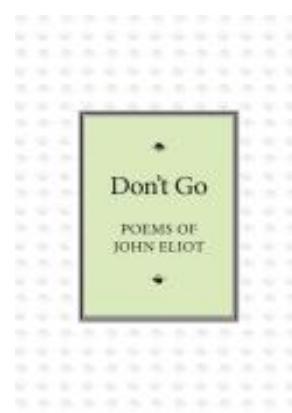
- *Friday Night Songs* 2005-2019 (Cyberwit 9789389690118)
- *Far Flung* 2020 (Writers Abroad ISBN 9798687579278)
- *Dreich Season 6 Issue 7* Pub Blue Planet (ISSN 26338998)
- Foreword to poetry collection *dancing in the sun* by Karen Gemma Brewer (2022 Cowry Publishing 9781908146113)

Forthcoming:

- Editor of anthologies from Germany, Hungary, Italy, Romania.

As Glyn Pope

- Novels: *The Fall* (ISBN 9781847991478 2007) *To The End of love* (Turner Maxwell 2008) *The Doctor, The Plutocrat, and The Mendacious Minister* (ISBN 97809829181 Cactus Rain 2010) *An Angel Passed Through* (Anthology 2005 Slingink)



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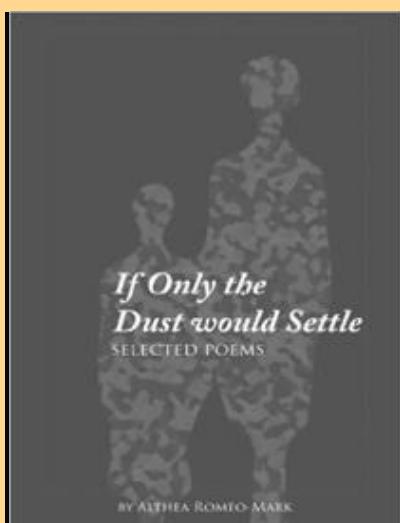
Althea Romeo MARK

Born in Antigua, West Indies, Althea Romeo-Mark is an educator and writer who grew up in St. Thomas, US Virgin Islands. She has lived and taught in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, USA, Liberia(West Africa), England and Switzerland since 1991.

Althea Romeo Mark is the author of two full-length poetry collections, *The Nakedness of New* and *If Only the Dust Would Settle*, (English-German), four chapbooks *On the Borders of Belonging*, 2023, *Beyond Dreams: The Ritual Dancer, Two Faces, Two Phases*, *Palaver*, and *Shu-Shu Moko Jumbi: The Silent Dancing Spirit*, an anthology that includes poems by Althea Romeo-Mark and prose and poetry from participants in a Black Writers workshop conducted at the Department of African American Affairs at Kent State University.

Publications so far 2023

Poem "A Thief Stealing Peace", published in *Antologia Letteeraria, Multilingue, Pax Toto Orbe Terrarum, Edizioni Universum, Italy, 2023*, "Three poems and a short story published in *Musings In A Tea Shop*, anthology, Trinidad and Tobago, 2023, poem, "Checkpoint," published in *Persimmon Tree, Summer edition* featuring international poetry, <https://persimmontree.org/summer-2023/international-poetry/> The Waterfronts Women and Men", published in Bookends, Jamaica Sunday Observer Jamaica; The Memory Thread, A poetry collection in English and Chinese that features poets Vasiliki Dragouni, William Marr and Althea Romeo Mark: several poems published in *Breaking the Silence: Anthology of Liberian Poetry*. Edited by Dr Patricia Wesley, the 302-page anthology of poetry is the first comprehensive collection of works of literature from the 1800s to the present. University of Nebraska Press, 2023; "Malaria Misery," Nano Poems for Africa, The Silk Road Anthology, Egypt, 2023.



HOW THE POOR BECOME HERCLES

Deprive them of their staple diet—rice
by quadrupling its price.
Watch, feel their anger erupt
like a volcano blowing its top.

The poor are set on fire
by their hunger to set right
what they feel as being
ground under
like detested insects by those
in power.

Marketers, roadside sellers,
street hustlers, pickpockets,
beggars,

those living on last pennies,
morph into Hercules.

Doors to stores, boarded up,
and secured with bolted iron
bars,
at the first signs of combat,
are wrenched open, and
stock plundered
by the angry
underprivileged.

Like driven driver-ants the
oppressed
loot buildings of their
content.

Everything is snapped up,
stripped and ripped-up —
shelves, counters, sinks,
toilets, and tiles.

Nothing is left behind.
Refrigerators, washers,
are carried away on heads.
To the unlettered eyes,
tinned cat and dog food are
prizes.

Politicians, business owners,
the privileged, cry behind the
scenes.

A war-zone is not the place
to be
when the fired-up poor are
fuelled by vengeance,
when the might of Hercules
reigns in hearts and heads.

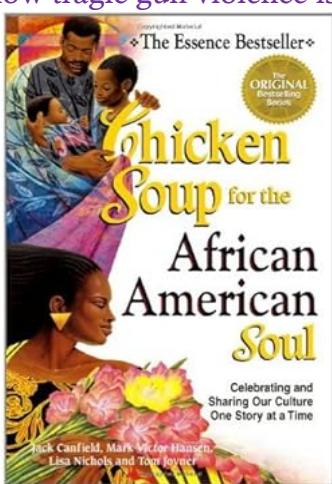


© Althea Romeo-Mark

Poet of Purpose

by:
RuNett Nia Ebo

RuNett Nia Ebo, "Poet of Purpose" has been writing poetry for six decades. She is most known for the poem entitled, "Lord Why Did You Make Me Black"? Her creative works have been published in various magazines like *Philly Magazine* and *50-Bold*; also several books including *Chicken Soup for the African American Soul* ©2004. *KWEE Magazine*, a Literary Liberian publication selected her as October's Poet of the Month in 2016. In 2022, she was appointed Official Poet Laureate at her church, Germantown Church of The Brethren where she also authors a blog entitled *Keeping It Real*. She has recently become a contributing editor with *The Philadelphia Obituary Project* writing the stories of homicide victims in Philadelphia so readers will know these people as more than victims and understand how tragic gun violence is.



A Lowercase g

10/01/2022

I know this is the 21st Century
and there's a host of things that are a challenge for me.
I'm not Cyberspace literate or Instagram smart but some grammar issues truly hurt my heart.
See, I was taught when there's a title or a proper



name when I write, all the letters cannot be the same.
I'm aware (that) this is modern technology but here is the thing that truly bothers me When I think of what Almighty God has done for me I cannot write His name with a lowercase g.

A lowercase g? A lowercase g!

How can I spell God with a lowercase g?
When I think of everything my God has done for me I'm not typing His name with a lowercase g!

When I speak of Jesus Christ the issue is the same
I have to be respectful when I write His name. He found me when I was lost
I was drowning in sin and He paid the cost
I lived a life of defeat; He gave me victory so I cannot write a lowercase "J" or a "C."
When I was out of work, He helped me pay my bills
and at the hospital He took away all my ills.
When I was depressed; I wanted to die.
I called out to God and He heard my cry.
I live a better life now cause He rescued me so I just can't praise God with a lowercase g.
When I remember all the things (that) God has done for me; it's not right to print His name with a lowercase g.
So, I don't understand it when I see it typed and I'm amazed so many don't wanna get it right.
But when I take a pen to write G-O-D
I will never write God with a lowercase g.

**A lowercase g? A lowercase g!
My God deserves better than a lowercase g.**



.©2023
R.N.E., P.O.

IL ÉTAIT TEMPS

(EXCERPT FROM BAKWA 10: FAMILY POLITRICKS)

BERTILLE MBARGA

"Elle est morte."

Je ferme les yeux un instant. Inspiration, expiration. Je reprends mon souffle. La voix de ma sœur au téléphone me semble si... irréelle. Si lointaine, d'autant plus qu'avant cet appel, ça faisait bien cinq ans que je ne l'avais plus entendue. Dans un premier mouvement, je pense à raccrocher, mais elle a tout fait de me signaler que c'est pour Mama qu'elle m'appelle. Je me retiens de pleurer car une femme forte ne pleure pas, mais ma mère était la seule personne pour laquelle j'appréciais encore de l'affection dans cette famille.

"Les obsèques c'est pour quand?"

– Veillée tous les soirs et la suite du 24 au 25 de ce mois à la maison familiale et non au village.

– D'accord, je serai là."

Je raccroche, je m'écroule. J'appréhendais fortement ce retour à Yaoundé, j'avais dit que je n'y mettrai plus jamais les pieds mais je n'avais pas pensé à la mort dans tout ça. Ayant prévu de n'assister qu'à l'enterrement, je prends ainsi la route le matin du 25, toute seule.

Le jardin n'a pas changé, les mêmes arbres sont toujours aux mêmes endroits. Toujours aussi bien entretenus par les bons soins de Mama, du goyavier aux fruits acides aux tiges d'aloua vera, en passant par le grand rosier rouge dont les fleurs ont toujours été fraîches et

agréablement parfumées, même en saison sèche. Aucun flux inhabituel dans les alentours et encore moins dans la concession. Suis-je en avance ? J'ai un mauvais pressentiment en franchissant le portail. Je risque de ne pas aimer du tout ce qui m'attend et malheureusement mes doutes se fondent.

"Concrètement, les filles, qu'est-ce que je fais ici ?"

Je me tiens devant la porte d'entrée, mes sœurs et ma mère sont en train de discuter, oui ma mère ! Je les regarde tour à tour en attendant la courageuse qui pourrait m'expliquer ce qui se passe. Nongo notre aînée, qui m'a passé le coup de fil, regarde Mama. Mena quant à elle me toise comme à son habitude et à juste le temps de critiquer ma tenue qu'elle trouve trop osé pour un "enterrement". Abena est trop occupée à pianoter sur son téléphone pour s'intéresser à ma présence. Je suis venue pour le deuil de Mama mais de deuil, il n'y en a point. Je crois que j'avais oublié à quel point cette femme est rusée, mais de la à simuler sa propre mort pour que je revienne ? Je trouve cela juste pathétique. Une colère brusque m'enveloppe car les souvenirs enfouis en cette maison me reviennent peu à peu.

"Tu arrives, tu ne nous salues même pas ! Dounia tu nous détestes à ce point ?" lance Mama comme pour adoucir l'ambiance.

A contrecœur je leur tends la main à tour de rôle et je fais une accolade à Mama. Après avoir pris place dans le canapé, je réitère ma question. Sans perdre de temps, Mama prend

la parole et dit qu'elle en a marre que nous vivions comme ça, chacune dans notre coin. Cinq ans que j'avais obtenu mon baccalauréat. Trois mois après ce visa pour ma liberté, je me suis mariée malgré leurs réticences et m'en suis allée dans le Sud avec mon mari, avec qui j'ai déjà deux enfants qu'elles n'ont jamais vu. Mama parle en pleurant. Quel mélodrame ! J'en suis presque émue. Depuis mon départ, je l'appelle presque chaque fin de trimestre et lui envoie de l'argent, c'est suffisant non ? C'est même par respect pour les neuf mois passés dans son ventre. Elle continue son baratin qui me fait plus bailler qu'autre chose tandis que je regrette d'avoir mis les pieds à ce "deuil" sans demander le programme des obsèques.

« Je ne compte pas passer ma retraite seule donc j'irai m'installer au village... avec votre père. »

Je ne comprends pas Mama, comment peut-elle se remettre avec un homme qui l'avait quittée parce qu'elle ne lui donnait que des filles ? J'étais la fille de trop, alors il est parti. Je l'ai vu quelques fois mais je ne l'ai jamais aimé bien qu'il ait essayé plusieurs fois d'être dans mes bonnes grâces. J'estime que la plupart des malheurs de mon enfance étaient sa faute, car il n'était pas là, car il n'y avait pas de testostérone ambulante pour tenir en laisse les hormones hystériques de ces femmes qui se déclenchaient chacune à leur tour et ne me laissaient de ce fait aucun répit. Ktre dernière-née est une malédiction et c'est pour cette simple raison que je me suis mariée si jeune, pour partir, fuir, m'évader, courir après un soupir de bonheur bien

que je ne sois pas encore amoureuse de mon mari à cette époque. Je serais allée n'importe où avec n'importe qui mais je n'aurais pas pu rester en ce lieu plus longtemps.

J'écoute d'une oreille le monologue de Mama, elle dit que nous pouvons déjà voler de nos propres ailes, que nous sommes grandes maintenant. En fait elle s'adresse particulièrement à Abena car c'est elle qui n'est pas encore stable depuis ce que j'ai pu comprendre. Éternelle étudiante ne voulant pas grandir, vivant en semi-concubinage, très immature, le cliché parfait pour illustrer l'irresponsabilité dans le dictionnaire maternel.

Mama parle dans le désert, nous le savons toutes. Abena ne l'écoute qu'à demi-mot. C'est dans ce tableau que Mama, s'étant enfin rendu compte que son discours est vain, va droit au but et d'une voix douce annonce que j'hérite de la maison familiale. Mon épisode bâillement est interrompu d'une façon nette, en pleine exécution. Nongo et Mena me regardent avec surprise et aussi surprenant que cela puisse paraître, Abena non seulement pose son téléphone mais aussi exprime calmement son mécontentement. Je suis née trois ans après elle et elle ne me l'a jamais pardonné, c'est pourquoi quand nous étions petites on devait tout nous acheter au même moment sinon elle se servait chez moi. En fait Abena et Mena étaient les pires, Mama et Nongo étaient juste trop laxistes et me laissaient me faire mater soit disant à cause du droit d'aînesse à respecter. Puis, Nongo est partie trop tôt en mariage, elle a quitté la maison à vingt ans alors que je n'en avais que cinq.

« Pourquoi c'̄ider la maison a une b̄tarde ? »

Des larmes perlent au coin de mes yeux. A ses yeux, je ne suis donc qu'une b̄tarde parce que notre rire n'avait m̄me pas voulu me reconnaître. C'en est trop ! Je m'en vais et cette fois-ci pour de bon. Elles peuvent la garder leur maison de tortionnaires ! Je me lève. Nongo se lève a son tour et applique une belle claque a Abena. Je m'arrête, la scène est assez choquante car Abena réplique aussitôt en faisant pareil. On aurait dit une droguée, ce qui ne me surprendrait pas. Nongo, très posée de nature se touche la joue, ce qui ne pr̄isage rien de bon mais Mama lui demande de se calmer. Contre toute attente Mena bondit sur Abena sans que je ne sache trop pourquoi et la roue de coups. Cette dernière ne se laisse pas faire et la sur le sol, je regarde mes grandes sœurs se taper dessus et je m'en fous. Je sors mon téléphone pour filmer la scène. Ça fait un bon souvenir a montrer a mon mari et, pour la première fois depuis mon arrivée, je rigole. L'issue de ce combat est difficile à pronostiquer puisqu'elles sont de corpulence et de force presque égales. Mama du haut de sa soixantaine d'années essaye de séparer ses filles. Je filme en riant. Ce n'est pas très noble de ma part mais jouer l'hypocrite et faire comme si je voulais y mettre fin non plus. Elles saignent du nez, a travers leurs vêtements déchirés par endroits, on aperçoit des traces de griffures. Elles n'y vont pas de main morte a ce que je vois. Les insultes ne sont pas en reste, des « sale pute », « parvenue », « n'importe quoi », « déchet » fusent

entre elles. On les sépare enfin et Mena assine une dernière gifle.

« Ne la traite plus jamais de b̄tarde tu m'entends ? Sinon tu ne pourras plus t'identifier devant un miroir.

– Ce n'est pas alors une b̄tarde ? Essaye ! je n'ai pas peur de toi.”

Bon ! L'action finie, je peux rentrer. Mama me rappelle durement et sans me laisser le temps de répondre, elle me dit que je la déçois, moi et ma froideur envers mon propre sang.

Ma respiration s'accélère, mon cœur prend du volume, c'est donc moi la méchante ? Avec tout le respect que je lui dois je me mets a lui rappeler pourquoi j'étais partie. Dans mon enfance Abena m'avait fait vivre des galères, elle me frappait, me menaçait, prenait mes affaires, mais je me disais que ça arrive entre tous les enfants. Sauf qu'en grandissant, ça ne s'arrêtait pas amélioré. Ça avait même empiré. Quant aux paroles blessantes sur mon physique, Mena savait toujours quand et lesquelles utiliser pour me faire me sentir plus vermine que je ne l'étais déjà. Je n'avais pas le droit d'avoir des amis, je travaillais tout le temps afin de ne pas avoir le temps de sombrer dans l'oisiveté disait-elle, la bastonnade était inscrite dans ma routine quotidienne. Je n'avais plus de nouvelles robes, il me fallait attendre celles d'Abena, j'avais même appris a me faire des tresses toute seule car il n'y avait personne pour moi. Je ne sais pas ce qui avait changé mais personne ne m'aimait plus du tout. Je n'avais qu'une hâte, obtenir mon baccalauréat et m'en aller. Peu importe le moyen. Je priais Dieu pour qu'il m'envoie une porte de secours, cette dernière se matérialisa sous les

traits de Souhiel. Un bel homme de trente cinq ans plein aux as. Je n'avais pas hésité. Bien qu'il fût marié, il fallait que je m'en aille. Ça n'avait pas été facile de me faire accepter par sa famille vu que je suis une fille du Centre. Cependant mon prénom "Dounia", d'origine arabe, ma virginité et mes cheveux ondulés rappelant ceux des arabes Choua avaient joué en ma faveur. Il a été la lumière pleine d'espoir que la vie m'offrait et notre foyer polygamique avait marché à merveille, cet espoir ayant tenu en bonheur. Seulement, ma famille ne l'a jamais su, elle n'aurait jamais accepté de donner ma main dans ces circonstances.

Je me mets à parler de toutes les punitions, des nuits blanches à garder les jumeaux de Mena, des jours noirs à rester sans manger, des après-midis ensoleillées où je n'avais pas le droit de sortir jouer avec ceux de mon âge. Pendant ma tirade, mes larmes comme des torrents dévalent mes joues, mon regard à l'encontre de toutes ces femmes ne cesse de croire. J'ai tellement à raconter qu'une journée ne serait pas suffisante, mais ça c'est parce que ça fait beaucoup trop longtemps que je n'en ai pas parlé, j'avais besoin de me libérer pour une fois car avant, quand j'essayais, on me sommait d'arrêter de faire la victime. Ne l'étais-je donc pas ? Je faisais peine à voir. Je n'avais que 45 kg pour 1m68, à dix-huit ans. Je me demande encore comment Souhiel avait fait pour deviner que je n'étais pas laide pour de vrai, que je n'étais pas dans mon état normal. En tout cas, je l'avais toujours remercié de m'avoir fait sortir de là par la grande porte, de m'avoir honorée et fait de moi

l'heureuse maman d'une paire de jumeaux. Une phrase d'Abena me fait sortir de mes tristes souvenirs.

« Tu comptes lui dire la vérité un jour ?

— Je suis fatiguée de garder le secret, tu vois bien qu'elle te déteste, dis-lui », ajoute Mama.

Je regarde celle vers qui tous les regards sont tournés. Elle pleure à chaudes larmes, se rapproche et m'enlace.

« Je suis désolée mon bébé, je ne voulais pas que tu sois comme moi, aussi j'ai toujours été dure avec toi. »

Je ne comprends pas bien car elle parle très vite, comme si elle court après quelque chose. Je m'écarte de son étreinte car je ne me sens pas à l'aise dans ses bras. Elle nettoie ses yeux d'un geste lent.

« "Dounia", en arabe, signifie richesse, source de vie. Tu es ma vie. »

Je fais vite un calcul rapide, juste pour me rassurer que je ne suis pas en train de rêver... 36-23 font 13. Peut-être que je ne comprends pas bien mais est-elle en train de sous-entendre qu'elle est ma mère ? Je leur demande à quoi elles jouent mais elles ne me répondent pas. Je n'aime vraiment pas ça. Mon cœur bat la chamade alors qu'aucun son n'est en mesure de sortir de ma bouche. Je fixe Mama et j'observe de temps en temps les autres pour qu'elles me disent que ce n'est pas vrai, que ce n'est qu'une blague... Non, nous ne sommes pas encore en avril.

A treize ans ? Était-ce un viol ? Elle répond par la négative. On se rassoit, Mama me ramène un verre d'eau parce qu'elle sent que j'en ai besoin. Mena, ma vraie mère, me raconte

alors, le regard figé sur le mur de l'autre côté de la pièce que, ce n'était pas un viol mais une histoire d'amour. Ceux que j'ai toujours considérés comme mes parents vivaient à Garoua, tous les deux enseignants, et ils avaient demandé chacun à être affecté à Yaoundé. La demande de Mama aboutit avant celle de son mari. Elle dut alors partir avec les enfants à Yaoundé mais elles revenaient dans l'Adamaoua pendant les congés et les vacances en attendant l'affection de Papa. Mena, à douze ans, n'était pas encore une femme mais elle tomba amoureuse d'un des fils du lamido et c'était réciproque. Un soir d'avril, ils faiblirent face à l'appel de leur chair, et le soir d'après également, ainsi que tous les soirs qui ont suivi ce soir jusqu'à la fin des congés de Pâques. Vers la fin des grandes vacances, grand-mère remarqua que ma grand-mère prenait du poids, de la poitrine et un peu de ventre. Bien que ses premières menstruations n'aient pas encore arrivées, Mama suspecta une grossesse et, après un test positif, Papa fou de rage les renvoya directement à Yaoundé. Il était cependant trop tard pour qu'une quelconque mesure soit prise car elle en était à quatre mois. Elle a dû accoucher de moi et mes grands-parents m'ont adoptée pour qu'elle puisse continuer ses études.

Je suis sous le choc. Celle qui m'a maltraitée toute une partie de ma vie est ma grand-mère, celle qui dans la douleur m'a poussé de ses entrailles, celle dont j'étais censée être la prunelle des yeux m'a maltraitée soit disant pour que je ne sois pas aussi précoce qu'elle et parce que mon père l'a abandonnée. Il n'était jamais venu la voir à Yaoundé comme promis et ça s'était arrêté là, elle ne voulait pas en

savoir plus car il lui avait brisé le cœur. Ses larmes semblent sincères mais ça va être difficile de lui pardonner car il s'agit bien d'une vie et non d'une semaine à effacer. Les jumeaux de Mena sont en fait mes petits frères et Abena et Ngono sont mes tantes et elles le savent depuis tout ce temps ? Pourquoi être méchantes avec moi dans ce cas ?

Je n'ai dit mot durant cette confession. J'ai encore très soif et je me mets à gratter nerveusement mon cuir chevelu. Il est où mon père ? Il m'a vraiment abandonnée lui aussi ! J'imagine ce qu'elle a pu vivre à son jeune âge et je la serre dans mes bras pour la première fois dans mes souvenirs, juste pour ça. Son attitude vis-à-vis de moi m'a forgée et a fait de moi la guerrière que je suis désormais, même si je maintiens qu'elle y était allée trop fort. Mama, les yeux hagards, se lève et se place devant la baie vitrée ; récemment installée car je n'en ai aucun souvenir. Les deux autres femmes affichent un air soulagé et placide puisqu'elles ne portent plus ce secret en elles.

Cinq minutes passent dans le silence total. Mama brise la glace en nous invitant à table. Je veux refuser mais sa mine déconfite me l'interdit. Après tout, j'ai faim et un ragoût de porc avec du plantain pilé ne demande qu'à être mangé. Il serait insultant de résister, de passer outre les gargouillis de mon ventre. L'ambiance du dîner est froide et calme, même Abena nous fait grincer de son téléphone et mange timidement. Elles ont dû comprendre que j'ai besoin de temps pour tout digérer et elles ont raison !

Une dernière pièce manque au puzzle : pourquoi grand-père n'est jamais venu vivre ici, n'a jamais été présent depuis

plus de 20 ans? Mena répond qu'il supportait mal le fait qu'elle soit tombée enceinte à treize ans, que ça lui procurait une sensation d'écœurement dans son éducation. Alors, pour ne plus avoir à supporter la vue de celle qui incarnait cet écœurement, il a préféré s'éloigner un temps. Il sait qu'il n'aurait pas dû, il regrette ses décisions passées et il m'offre la maison pour se faire pardonner. J'accepte son cadeau, surtout parce qu'Abena le voulait aussi et que c'est ma façon de me venger. J'ai également appris qu'il n'était pas venu à la réunion car c'était trop tôt pour moi. Après ce brillant échange sur mon grand-père, nous nous mettons à parler de sujets divers tels que la paix dans le monde et la protection de l'environnement. Suite à quoi, je décide de passer la nuit à la maison, le cœur moins lourd, et je songe même à revenir avec mes jumeaux pour les présenter à ma famille.

Il est un peu plus de dix huit heures, l'heure où se termine la sieste, où le ciel s'assombrit et les moustiques sortent de leur cachette. À cette heure là, où il est conseillé de parler en chuchotant, je vais dans la chambre de Mama lui poser quelques questions. Je ne suis pas dupe, je ne la connais que trop bien et je sais qu'elle n'a pas tout dit. Je la trouve en pleurs et, au sortir de cette chambre, j'ai perdu mon innocence : je suis désormais une des leurs.

*Deux mois déjà que je suis rentrée de Yaoundé. Après une longue hésitation, j'ai décidé en fin de compte, grâce à Souhiel, d'aller dans la famille de mon père. Une fois à Garoua, je n'ai eu aucun mal à être conduite au bon endroit, vu leur popularité et la bonne volonté des gens de la région. J'ai laissé mes cheveux flotter au gré du vent pour l'occasion, qu'ils voient que je suis une des leurs. Au lamidat, ils connaissent

bien Bilal Abdel mais il a disparu depuis longtemps, très longtemps. Une jeune fille me conduit vers la case de celle que je devine être sa mère vu son âge. Elle m'accueille en disant qu'elle sait qui je suis, je souris. Elle dit que je ressemble à sa mère à elle. Je donne mon nom après qu'elle m'ait donné le sien, elle m'informe que je suis définitivement la réincarnation de sa mère qui s'appelait également Dounia. Je me sens directement à ma place. Elle me parle de son fils, mon père. Il avait pris le train pour Yaoundé, disant qu'il lui réservait une surprise, mais il n'était jamais revenu, plus aucune trace de lui. Je lui narre la jolie version officielle : ma mère m'a détestée toute ma vie parce que mon père l'avait abandonnée à treize ans avec une grossesse dont il était heureux au départ. Je pleure, car ce n'est pas juste pour une mère d'ignorer où se trouve son enfant, mais comment lui dire que son fils n'a pas été bête ? Comment lui dire qu'il repose actuellement, et ce depuis plus de vingt ans, dans le jardin de mes grands-parents, en dessous du rosier aux fleurs éternellement rouges et de quelques tiges d'aloes vera. Comment lui expliquer qu'il a été brutallement arraché à la vie par mon grand-père qui, l'ayant pris pour un bandit, l'avait poignardé car il s'était introduit dans le camp résidentiel peu après minuit, afin de rencontrer furtivement Mena. Il n'avait pas l'intention de tuer le jeune homme mais ce dernier s'était rapidement vidé de son sang, il n'avait que dix-huit ans... Mon grand-père, ma grand-mère et moi partagerons ce secret jusqu'à la mort. C'est ainsi. Et tant que ce sera ainsi, j'aurai désormais mes deux familles à mes côtés.

"Il était temps " est tiré de Bakwa 10:
Family Politricks

A B.A.D. Poem

Shut-up and Pay Attention!

To those teachers
who 'neva saw-us,
sitting in the back of those classrooms.

We paid attention to you.
We paid attention to you.

From the back of the room;
we watched you teach
the "select" few.

We paid attention to you.
We paid attention to you.

From the back of the room;
looking at the pictures on the board,
while watching your mouth(s) move.

We paid attention to you.
We paid attention to you.

Now, looking at us, watching and wondering
"How do "that" intellectual mind, do what-it-
do?"

Glad you asked.
Now, I'll tell you:
In the midst of your discrimination, while you
pay us no mind.

We paid attention to you.
We paid attention to you.

Dedicated to: If you ain't 'gone teach I before E
except after C to 'ryone...GET OUT THE
WAY!

(Renee's Poems with Wings are Words in Flight).



Books and e-Books by Drummond-Brown:

- ~BULLIES NEED LOVE TOO
- ~Unapologetically Poetry
- ~Poignant Poetic Potpourri
- ~Take Your Shoes Off; You're Standing on Poetic Ground.
- ~Poetic Injustice
- ~Paper Dolls
- ~We All Wear the Mask
- ~RocDeeRay Poems and Essay by Reneé
- ~Poetic Tales in 'Da Hood
- ~The Haiku
- ~Hush Lil' Blackbird Don't Say a Word
- ~BLOOD, SWEAT & TEARS
- ~A Bridge Over Troubled Water
- ~TRIED, TESTED and TRUE POETS from ACROSS THE GLOBE
- ~A B.A.D. Poem
- ~The Power of the Pen
- ~SOLD: TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER
- ~Renee's Poems with Wings are Words in Flight-I'll Write Our Wrongs



LIBERIAN PROVERBS

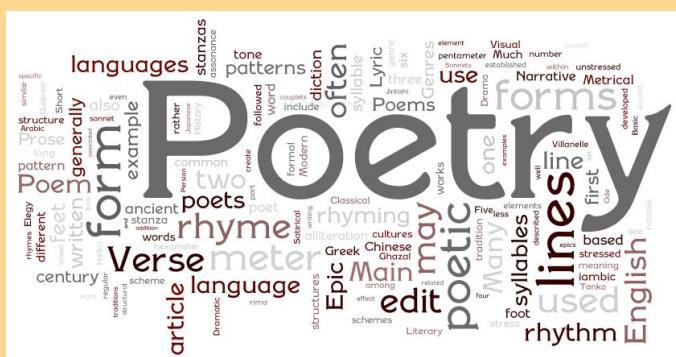
1. A woman who has not been twice married cannot know what a perfect marriage is. *Experience is often said to teach us better than anything else does. Sometimes, we master certain things only after we have had to experience them ourselves the hard way.*
2. A woman who is not successful in her own marriage has no advice to give to her younger generations. *What good advice can one offer on an issue that one is failing at; except perhaps to not do things the same way? To teach something, one must know rather well.*
3. A word is (like) an egg. *Words are extremely powerful. They can be potent or soothing. They have the ability to make or break people; hence, we should utter them with as much care as we would treat an egg.*
4. A word to the wise is quite sufficient. *Some people only need a warning, a push of encouragement to go further along. In a typical*

Liberian fashion, this parable is meant to advise someone not to continue an action; it is most likely tempting and has the potential to cause trouble, hence, it is like a warning to stop or else things could get ugly.

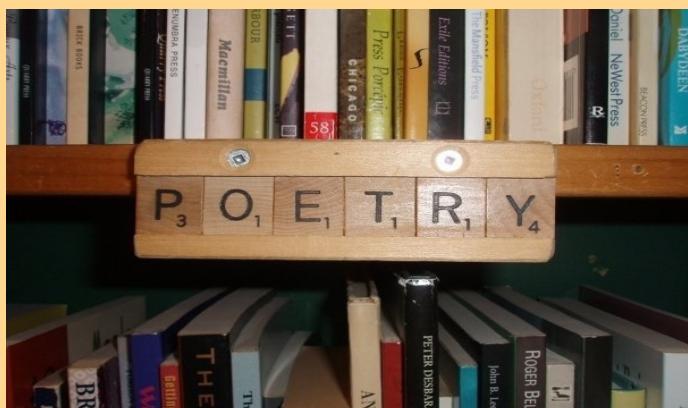
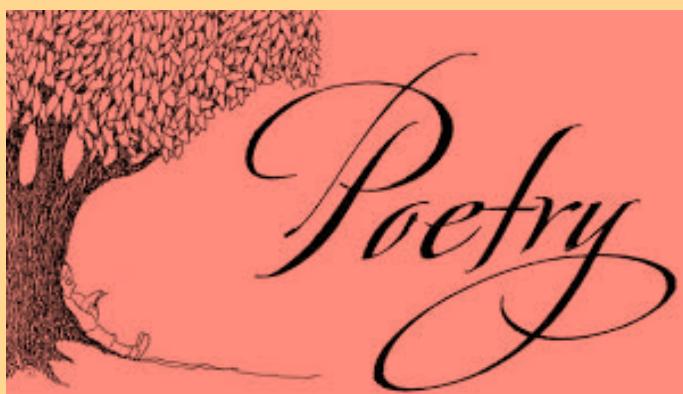
5. A young wife tends to cook too much at first. *It takes time to master anything. An inexperience person grows to mastery with practice.*
6. After we fry the chicken, we don't throw it away. *No one wastes good food. Everyone wants something of value.*
7. All lizards lie on their bellies; hence, you can't tell which one has a stomachache. *One has to take a closer look at some situations before they can truly understand them. The first look or the outward appearance is not enough to make an accurate decision.*
8. Although the snake does not fly, it has caught the bird whose home is in the sky. *With proper planning, what appears impossible or seeming out of reach, tends to be attainable.*

Excerpted from *The Elder's Wisdom*

Poetry Section



POETRY IS NOT DEAD!



'Twas Brillig

Richard Wilson Moss

Church Bells at Easter

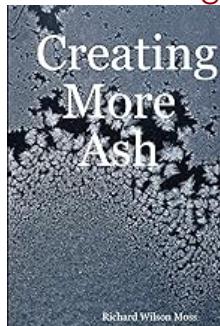
It is only at the end of autumn
Do I feel I may understand
The beginning of spring.
Why leaves barely green must brown
Vines starting to climb
Higher every evening hour
Must lie down.
The ripening orange never picked
Must sour.
Church bells at Easter
Meaning less long after they ring.
It is only at the end of autumn
Can I feel the start of spring.



Gas Stations

I like gas stations
On summer nights
Those found in no phone
On roads unknown
They appear from nowhere
Like warm stars after cool storms
No one there really
Neon and tired song

But while there sometimes
Another drives up
From surrounding darkness
Pumps gas looking at me
As if nothing
In the world is wrong
And for a moment
A very brief moment
I feel as if this
Is where we belong.



The Lost

Crossing, I find the avenue
I no longer recognize as mine
The houses there are purple and gold
In the twilight of days forgotten
But like thrones finding no kings
They rot, they ridicule empire.
I find I am part of a crowd gorgeous
With the rags of fashion
Looking for things and places and times
When god was the only demon
Wrapped in the pure white feathers
Of an angel consecrated in the halls of hell.
I find I am lost like the homeless are lost

In the streets of their birth
I crisscross the avenue of my reasons
To find again that which eludes
The misery of the poor blistered bare footed man
Carrying new shoes in his arms.
I look but I cannot find my houses, my sidewalks
My cars, my towns, my nations
My forests, my oceans, my rivers,
I look, always knowing, always knowing
I am lost.



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Richard Wilson Moss



Richard Moss is the author of numerous full length poetry books. You can find his books on every major platform.

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CLASSICS

ALL THE WORLDS A STAGE

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages.

At first, the infant,
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms.

Then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel
And shining morning face, creeping like snail
Unwillingly to school.

And then the lover,
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
Made to his mistress' eyebrow.

Then a soldier,
Full of strange oaths and bearded like the pard,
Jealous in honor, sudden and quick in quarrel,
Seeking the bubble reputation
Even in the cannon's mouth.

And then the justice,
In fair round belly with good capon lined,
With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,
Full of wise saws and modern instances;
And so he plays his part.

The sixth age shifts

Into the lean and slippered pantaloons,
With spectacles on nose and pouch on side;
His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide
For his shrunk shank, and his big manly voice,
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes
And whistles in his sound.

Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.

William Shakespeare

CONTEMPLATIONS

- 1 Sometime now past in the Autumnal Tide,
- 2 When Phoebus wanted but one hour to bed,
- 3 The trees all richly clad, yet void of pride,
- 4 Were gilded o're by his rich golden head.
- 5 Their leaves and fruits seem'd painted but was true
- 6 Of green, of red, of yellow, mixed hew,
- 7 Rapt were my senses at this delectable view.

2

- 8 I wist not what to wish, yet sure thought I,
- 9 If so much excellence abide below,
- 10 How excellent is he that dwells on high?
- 11 Whose power and beauty by his works we know.
- 12 Sure he is goodness, wisdom, glory, light,
- 13 That hath this under world so richly dight.
- 14 More Heaven than Earth was here, no winter and no night.

3

- 15 Then on a stately Oak I cast mine Eye,
- 16 Whose ruffling top the Clouds seem'd to aspire.

- 17 How long since thou wast in thine Infancy?
- 18 Thy strength and stature, more thy years admire,
- 19 Hath hundred winters past since thou wast born?
- 20 Or thousand since thou brakest thy shell of horn?
- 21 If so, all these as nought, Eternity doth scorn.

4

- 22 Then higher on the glistering Sun I gaz'd,
- 23 Whose beams was shaded by the leafy Tree.

- 24 The more I look'd, the more I grew amaz'd
- 25 And softly said, what glory's like to thee?
- 26 Soul of this world, this Universe's Eye,
- 27 No wonder some made thee a Deity.

- 28 Had I not better known (alas) the same had I.

Anne Bradstreet

DEATH BE NOT PROUD

Death, be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow,
Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.

From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,
Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow,
And soonest our best men with thee do go,
Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.

Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell;
And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well
And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?
One short sleep past, we wake eternally,
And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.

by John Donne

The Battle Of Salamis

The Best Poem Of Aeschylus

The night was passing, and the Grecian host
By no means sought to issue forth unseen.
But when indeed the day with her white steeds
Held all the earth, resplendent to behold,
First from the Greeks the loud-resounding din
Of song triumphant came; and shrill at once
Echo responded from the island rock.
Then upon all barbarians terror fell,
Thus disappointed; for not as for flight
The Hellenes sang the holy psalm then,
But setting forth to battle valiantly.
The bugle with its note inflamed them all;
And straightway with the dip of plashing oars
They smote the deep sea water at command,
And quickly all were plainly to be seen.
Their right wing first in orderly array

Led on, and second all the armament
Followed them forth; and meanwhile there was heard
A mighty shout: "Come, O ye sons of Greeks,
Make free your country, make your children free,
Your wives, and fanes of your ancestral gods,
And your sires' tombs! For all we now contend!"
And from our side the rush of Persian speech
Replied. No longer might the crisis wait.
At once ship smote on ship with brazen beak;
A vessel of the Greeks began the attack,
Crushing the stem of a Phoenician ship.
Each on a different vessel turned its prow.
At first the current of the Persian host
Withstood; but when within the strait the throng
Of ships was gathered, and they could not aid
Each other, but by their own brazen bows
Were struck, they shattered all our naval host.
The Grecian vessels not unskillfully
Were smiting round about; the hulls of ships
Were overset; the sea was hid from sight,
Covered with wreckage and the death of men;
The reefs and headlands were with corpses filled,
And in disordered flight each ship was rowed,
As many as were of the Persian host.
But they, like tunnies or some shoal of fish,
With broken oars and fragments of the wrecks
Struck us and clove us; and at once a cry
Of lamentation filled the briny sea,
Till the black darkness' eye did rescue us.
The number of our griefs, not though ten days
I talked together, could I fully tell;
But this know well, that never in one day
Perished so great a multitude of men.

Aeschylus

CHRISTMAS POEMS

ACCOUNT OF A VISIT FROM ST. NICHOLAS

MAJOR HENRY LIVINGSTON,
JR.

'Twas the night before
Christmas, when all thro'
the house,
Not a creature was
stirring, not even a mouse;
The stockings were hung
by the chimney with care,
In hopes that St. Nicholas
soon would be there;
The children were nestled
all snug in their beds,
While visions of sugar
plums danc'd in their
heads,
And Mama in her
'kerchief, and I in my
cap,
Had just settled our brains
for a long winter's nap —
When out on the lawn
there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from the bed to
see what was the matter.
Away to the window I
flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters,
and threw up the sash.
The moon on the breast
of the new fallen snow,
Gave the lustre of mid-day
to objects below;
When, what to my
wondering eyes should
appear,
But a miniature sleigh,
and eight tiny rein-deer,
With a little old driver, so
lively and quick,

I knew in a moment it
must be St. Nick.
More rapid than eagles
his coursers they came,
And he whistled, and
shouted, and call'd them
by name:
"Now! Dasher, now!
Dancer, now! Prancer,
and Vixen,
"On! Comet, on! Cupid,
on! Dunder and Blixem;
"To the top of the porch!
to the top of the wall!"
"Now dash away! dash
away! dash away all!"
As dry leaves before the
wild hurricane fly,
When they meet with an
obstacle, mount to the
sky;
So up to the house-top the
coursers they flew,
With the sleigh full of
Toys — and St. Nicholas
too:
And then in a twinkling, I
heard on the roof
The prancing and pawing
of each little hoof.
As I drew in my head,
and was turning around,
Down the chimney St.
Nicholas came with a
bound:
He was dress'd all in fur,
from his head to his foot,
And his clothes were all
tarnish'd with ashes and
soot;
A bundle of toys was
flung on his back,
And he look'd like a
peddler just opening his
pack:
His eyes — how they
twinkled! his dimples how
merry,

His cheeks were like
roses, his nose like a
cherry;
His droll little mouth was
drawn up like a bow.
And the beard of his chin
was as white as the
snow;
The stump of a pipe he
held tight in his teeth,
And the smoke it encircled
his head like a wreath.
He had a broad face,
and a little round belly
That shook when he
laugh'd, like a bowl full
of jelly:
He was chubby and
plump, a right jolly old
elf,
And I laugh'd when I saw
him in spite of myself;
A wink of his eye and a
twist of his head
Soon gave me to know I
had nothing to dread.
He spoke not a word, but
went straight to his work,
And fill'd all the stockings;
then turn'd with a jerk,
And laying his finger
aside of his nose
And giving a nod, up the
chimney he rose.
He sprung to his sleigh,
to his team gave a
whistle,
And away they all flew,
like the down of a thistle:
But I heard him exclaim,
ere he drove out of sight
—
Happy Christmas to all,
and to all a good night.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light;
The year is dying in the night;
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells, across the snow:
The year is going, let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind
For those that here we see no more;
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out a slowly dying cause,
And ancient forms of party strife;
Ring in the nobler modes of life,
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out the want, the care, the sin,
The faithless coldness of the times;
Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes
But ring the fuller minstrel in.

Ring out false pride in place and blood,
The civic slander and the spite;
Ring in the love of truth and right,
Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease;
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;
Ring out the thousand wars of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free,
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be.

THE THREE KINGS

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

Three Kings came riding from far away,
Melchior and Gaspar and Baltasar;

Three Wise Men out of the East were they,
And they travelled by night and they slept by day,
For their guide was a beautiful, wonderful star.

The star was so beautiful, large and clear,
That all the other stars of the sky
Became a white mist in the atmosphere,
And by this they knew that the coming was near
Of the Prince foretold in the prophecy.

Three caskets they bore on their saddle-bows,
Three caskets of gold with golden keys;
Their robes were of crimson silk with rows
Of bells and pomegranates and furbelows,
Their turbans like blossoming almond-trees.

And so the Three Kings rode into the West,
Through the dusk of the night, over hill and dell,
And sometimes they nodded with beard on breast,
And sometimes talked, as they paused to rest,
With the people they met at some wayside well.

"Of the child that is born," said Baltasar,
"Good people, I pray you, tell us the news;
For we in the East have seen his star,
And have ridden fast, and have ridden far,
To find and worship the King of the Jews."

And the people answered, "You ask in vain;
We know of no King but Herod the Great!"
They thought the Wise Men were men insane,
As they spurred their horses across the plain,
Like riders in haste, who cannot wait.

And when they came to Jerusalem,

Herod the Great, who had heard this thing,
Sent for the Wise Men and questioned them;
And said, "Go down unto Bethlehem,
And bring me tidings of this new king."

So they rode away; and the star stood still,
The only one in the grey of morn;
Yes, it stopped—it stood still of its own free will,
Right over Bethlehem on the hill,
The city of David, where Christ was born.

And the Three Kings rode through the gate and the guard,
Through the silent street, till their horses turned
And neighed as they entered the great inn-yard;
But the windows were closed, and the doors were barred,
And only a light in the stable burned.

And cradled there in the scented hay,
In the air made sweet by the breath of kine,
The little child in the manger lay,
The child, that would be king one day
Of a kingdom not human, but divine.

His mother Mary of Nazareth
Sat watching beside his place of rest,
Watching the even flow of his breath,
For the joy of life and the terror of death
Were mingled together in her breast.

They laid their offerings at his feet:
The gold was their tribute to a King,
The frankincense, with its odor sweet,
Was for the Priest, the Paraclete,
The myrrh for the body's burying.

And the mother wondered and bowed her head,
And sat as still as a statue of stone,
Her heart was troubled yet comforted,
Remembering what the Angel had said
Of an endless reign and of David's throne.

Then the Kings rode out of the city gate,

With a clatter of hoofs in proud array;
But they went not back to Herod the Great,
For they knew his malice and feared his hate,
And returned to their homes by another way.

CHRIST'S NATIVITY

HENRY VAUGHAN

Awake, glad heart! get up and sing!
It is the birth-day of thy King.
Awake! awake!
The Sun doth shake
Light from his locks, and all the way
Breathing perfumes, doth spice the day.

Awake, awake! hark how th' wood rings;
Winds whisper, and the busy springs
A concert make;
Awake! awake!
Man is their high-priest, and should rise
To offer up the sacrifice.

I would I were some bird, or star,
Flutt'ring in woods, or lifted far
Above this inn
And road of sin!
Then either star or bird should be
Shining or singing still to thee.

I would I had in my best part
Fit rooms for thee! or that my heart
Were so clean as
Thy manger was!
But I am all filth, and obscene;
Yet, if thou wilt, thou canst make clean.

Sweet Jesu! will then. Let no more
This leper haunt and soil thy door!
Cure him, ease him,
O release him!
And let once more, by mystic birth,
The Lord of life be born in earth.

THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

ANONYMOUS

The first day of Christmas,
My true love sent to me
A partridge in a pear tree.

The second day of Christmas,
My true love sent to me
Two turtle doves, and
A partridge in a pear tree.

The third day of Christmas,
My true love sent to me
Three French hens,
Two turtle doves, and
A partridge in a pear tree.

The fourth day of Christmas,
My true love sent to me
Four colly birds,
Three French hens,
Two turtle doves, and
A partridge in a pear tree.

The fifth day of Christmas,
My true love sent to me
Five gold rings,
Four colly birds,
Three French hens,
Two turtle doves, and
A partridge in a pear tree.

The sixth day of Christmas,
My true love sent to me
Six geese a-laying,
Five gold rings,
Four colly birds,
Three French hens,
Two turtle doves, and
A partridge in a pear tree.

The seventh day of Christmas,
My true love sent to me
Seven swans a-swimming,
Six geese a-laying,
Five gold rings,
Four colly birds,
Three French hens,

Two turtle doves, and
A partridge in a pear tree.

The eighth day of Christmas,
My true love sent to me
Eight maids a-milking,
Seven swans a-swimming,
Six geese a-laying,
Five gold rings,
Four colly birds,
Three French hens,
Two turtle doves, and
A partridge in a pear tree.

The ninth day of Christmas,
My true love sent to me
Nine drummers drumming,
Eight maids a-milking,
Seven swans a-swimming,
Six geese a-laying,
Five gold rings,
Four colly birds,
Three French hens,
Two turtle doves, and
A partridge in a pear tree.

The tenth day of Christmas,
My true love sent to me
Ten pipers piping,
Nine drummers drumming,
Eight maids a-milking,
Seven swans a-swimming,
Six geese a-laying,
Five gold rings,
Four colly birds,
Three French hens,
Two turtle doves, and
A partridge in a pear tree.

The eleventh day of Christmas
My true love sent to me
Eleven ladies dancing,
Ten pipers piping,
Nine drummers drumming,
Eight maids a-milking,
Seven swans a-swimming,
Six geese a-laying,
Five gold rings,
Four colly birds,

Three French hens,
Two turtle doves, and
A partridge in a pear tree.

The twelfth day of Christmas
My true love sent to me
Twelve fiddlers fiddling,
Eleven ladies dancing,
Ten pipers piping,
Nine drummers drumming,
Eight maids a-milking,
Seven swans a-swimming,
Six geese a-laying,
Five gold rings,
Four colly birds,
Three French hens,
Two turtle doves, and
A partridge in a pear tree.

THE BURNING BABE

ROBERT SOUTHWELL SJ

As I in hoary winter's night stood shivering in the snow,
Surpris'd I was with sudden heat which made my heart to glow;
And lifting up a fearful eye to view what fire was near,
A pretty Babe all burning bright did in the air appear;
Who, scorched with excessive heat, such floods of tears did shed
As though his floods should quench his flames which with his tears were fed.
"Alas!" quoth he, "but newly born, in fiery heats I fry,
Yet none approach to warm their hearts or feel my fire but I!
My faultless breast the furnace is, the fuel wounding thorns,
Love is the fire, and sighs the smoke, the ashes shame and scorns;
The fuel Justice layeth on, and Mercy blows the coals,
The metal in this furnace wrought are men's defiled souls,
For which, as now on fire I am to work them to their good,

So will I melt into a bath to wash them in my blood."

With this he vanish'd out of sight and swiftly shrunk away,

And straight I called unto mind that it was Christmas day.

MISTLETOE

WALTER DE LA MARE

Sitting under the mistletoe (Pale-green, fairy mistletoe),
One last candle burning low,
All the sleepy dancers gone,
Just one candle burning on,
Shadows lurking everywhere:
Some one came, and kissed me there.

Tired I was; my head would go
Nodding under the mistletoe (Pale-green, fairy mistletoe),
No footsteps came, no voice, but only,
Just as I sat there, sleepy, lonely,
Stooped in the still and shadowy air
Lips unseen—and kissed me there.

IN THE BLEAK MIDWINTER

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan,
Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;
Snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow,
In the bleak midwinter, long ago.

Our God, Heaven cannot hold Him, nor earth sustain;
Heaven and earth shall flee away when He comes to reign.
In the bleak midwinter a stable place sufficed
The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.

Enough for Him, whom cherubim, worship night and day,
Breastful of milk, and a mangerful of hay;
Enough for Him, whom angels fall before,

The ox and ass and camel which adore.

Angels and archangels may have gathered there,
Cherubim and seraphim thronged the air;
But His mother only, in her maiden bliss,
Worshipped the beloved with a kiss.

What can I give Him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
If I were a Wise Man, I would do my part;
Yet what I can I give Him: give my heart.

[little tree]

E. E. CUMMINGS

little tree
little silent Christmas tree
you are so little
you are more like a flower

who found you in the green forest
and were you very sorry to come away?
see i will comfort you
because you smell so sweetly

i will kiss your cool bark
and hug you safe and tight
just as your mother would,
only don't be afraid

look the spangles
that sleep all the year in a dark box
dreaming of being taken out and allowed
to shine,
the balls the chains red and gold the fluffy
threads,

put up your little arms
and i'll give them all to you to hold
every finger shall have its ring
and there won't be a single place dark or
unhappy

then when you're quite dressed
you'll stand in the window for everyone to see
and how they'll stare!
oh but you'll be very proud

and my little sister and i will take hands
and looking up at our beautiful tree
we'll dance and sing
"Noel Noel"

THE OXEN

THOMAS HARDY

Christmas Eve, and twelve of the clock.
"Now they are all on their knees,"
An elder said as we sat in a flock
By the embers in hearthside ease.

We pictured the meek mild creatures where
They dwelt in their strawy pen,
Nor did it occur to one of us there
To doubt they were kneeling then.

So fair a fancy few would weave
In these years! Yet, I feel,
If someone said on Christmas Eve,
"Come; see the oxen kneel,

"In the lonely barton by yonder coomb
Our childhood used to know,"
I should go with him in the gloom,
Hoping it might be so.

THE MAGI

WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

Now as at all times I can see in the
mind's eye,
In their stiff, painted clothes, the pale
unsatisfied ones
Appear and disappear in the blue depths
of the sky
With all their ancient faces like rain-beaten
stones,
And all their helms of silver hovering side
by side,
And all their eyes still fixed, hoping to
find once more,
Being by Calvary's turbulence unsatisfied,
The uncontrollable mystery on the bestial
floor.

For Christmas Day: Hark! the Herald Angels Sing

CHARLES WESLEY

Hark! the herald Angels sing,
Glory to the new-born King,
Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinner reconcil'd.
Hark! the herald Angels sing,
Glory to the new-born King.

Joyful all ye nations rise,
Join the triumph of the skies,
With the angelic host proclaim,
Christ is born in Bethlehem.
Hark! the herald Angels sing,
Glory to the new-born King.

Christ by highest Heaven ador'd,
Christ the everlasting Lord!
Late in time behold him come,
Offspring of a virgin's womb.
Hark! the herald Angels sing,
Glory to the new-born King.

Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,
Hail, the incarnate Deity,
Pleased as Man with man to dwell,
Jesus our Immanuel!
Hark! the herald Angels sing,
Glory to the new-born King.

Hail the Heaven-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings,
Risen with healing in his wings.
Hark! the herald Angels sing,
Glory to the new-born King.

Mild he lays his glory by,
Born that man no more may die,
Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth.
Hark! the herald Angels sing,
Glory to the new-born King.

GOOD KING WENCESLAS

JOHN MASON NEALE

Good King Wenceslas look'd out,
On the Feast of Stephen;
When the snow lay round about,
Deep, and crisp, and even:
Brightly shone the moon that night,
Though the frost was cruel,
When a poor man came in sight,
Gath'ring winter fuel.

"Hither page and stand by me,
If thou know'st it, telling,
Yonder peasant, who is he?
Where and what his dwelling?"
"Sire, he lives a good league hence,
Underneath the mountain;
Right against the forest fence,
By Saint Agnes' fountain."

"Bring me flesh, and bring me wine,
Bring me pine-logs hither:
Thou and I will see him dine,
When we bear them thither."
Page and monarch forth they went,
Forth they went together;
Through the rudewind's wild lament,
And the bitter weather.

"Sire, the night is darker now,
And the wind blows stronger;
Fails my heart, I know now how,
I can go no longer."
"Mark my footsteps, good my page;
Tread thou in them boldly;
Thou shalt find the winter's rage
Freeze thy blood less coldly."

In his master's steps he trod,
Where the snow lay dinted;
Heat was in the very sod
Which the Saint had printed.
Therefore, Christian men, be sure,
Wealth or rank possessing,
Ye who now will bless the poor,
Shall yourselves find blessing.

CHRISTMAS TREES

ROBERT FROST

(A Christmas Circular Letter)

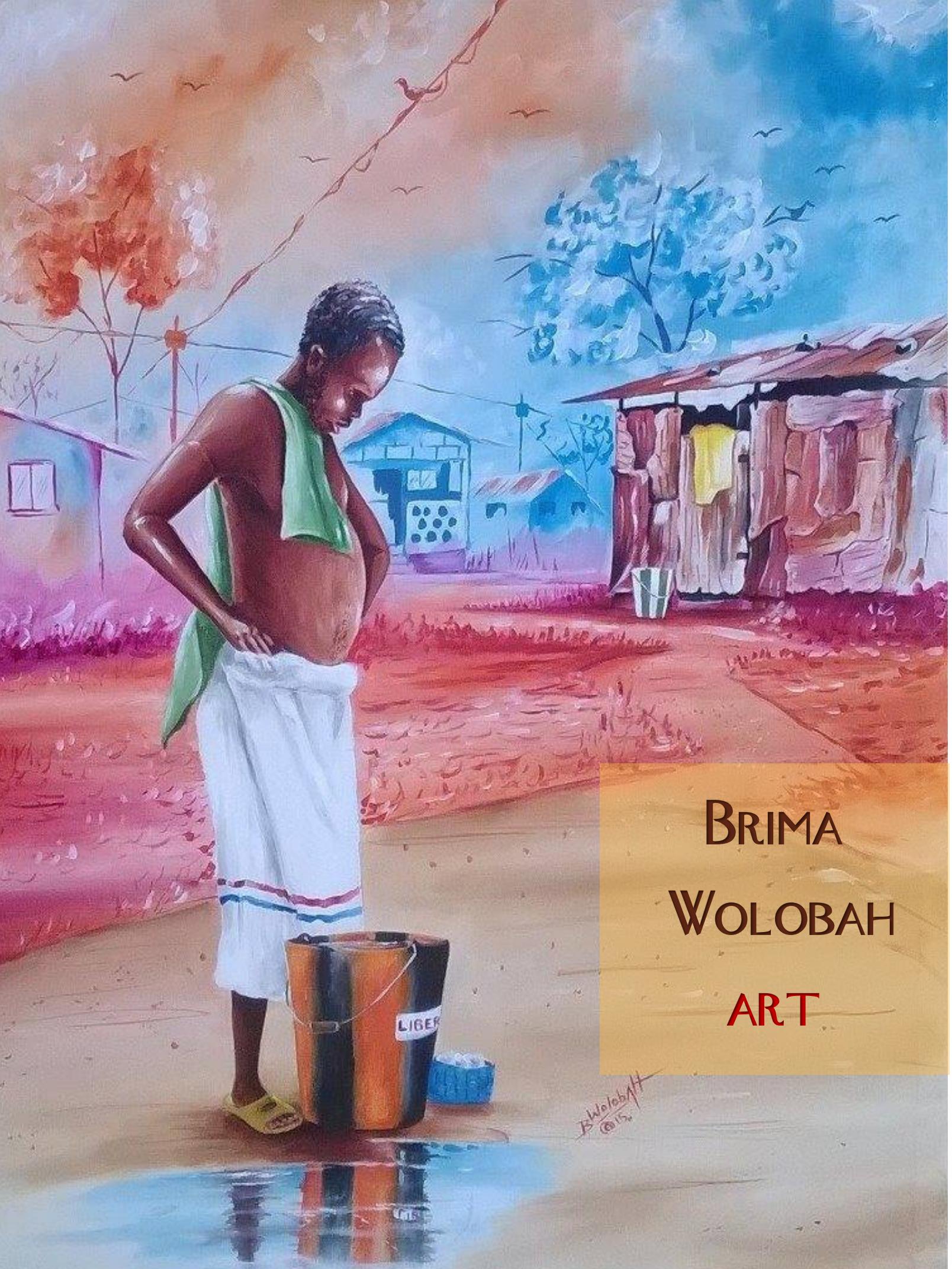
The city had withdrawn into itself
And left at last the country to the country;
When between whirls of snow not come to
lie
And whirls of foliage not yet laid, there
drove
A stranger to our yard, who looked the
city,
Yet did in country fashion in that there
He sat and waited till he drew us out
A-buttoning coats to ask him who he was.
He proved to be the city come again
To look for something it had left behind
And could not do without and keep its
Christmas.
He asked if I would sell my Christmas
trees;
My woods—the young fir balsams like a
place
Where houses all are churches and have
spires.
I hadn't thought of them as Christmas
Trees.
I doubt if I was tempted for a moment
To sell them off their feet to go in cars
And leave the slope behind the house all
bare,
Where the sun shines now no warmer
than the moon.
I'd hate to have them know it if I was.
Yet more I'd hate to hold my trees except
As others hold theirs or refuse for them,
Beyond the time of profitable growth,
The trial by market everything must come
to.
I dallied so much with the thought of
selling.
Then whether from mistaken courtesy
And fear of seeming short of speech, or
whether
From hope of hearing good of what was
mine, I said,
"There aren't enough to be worth while."
"I could soon tell how many they would
cut,
You let me look them over."

"You could look.
But don't expect I'm going to let you have
them."
Pasture they spring in, some in clumps too
close
That lop each other of boughs, but not a
few
Quite solitary and having equal boughs
All round and round. The latter he nodded
"Yes" to,
Or paused to say beneath some lovelier
one,
With a buyer's moderation, "That would
do."
I thought so too, but wasn't there to say
so.
We climbed the pasture on the south,
crossed over,
And came down on the north. He said,
"A thousand."

"A thousand Christmas trees!—at what
apiece?"

He felt some need of softening that to me:
"A thousand trees would come to thirty
dollars."

Then I was certain I had never meant
To let him have them. Never show
surprise!
But thirty dollars seemed so small beside
The extent of pasture I should strip, three
cents
(For that was all they figured out apiece),
Three cents so small beside the dollar
friends
I should be writing to within the hour
Would pay in cities for good trees like
those,
Regular vestry-trees whole Sunday Schools
Could hang enough on to pick off enough.
A thousand Christmas trees I didn't know I
had!
Worth three cents more to give away than
sell,
As may be shown by a simple calculation.
Too bad I couldn't lay one in a letter.
I can't help wishing I could send you one,
In wishing you herewith a Merry
Christmas.



BRIMA
WOLOBAH
ART

P.Wolobah
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Happy
New
Year

To the people of
Liberia

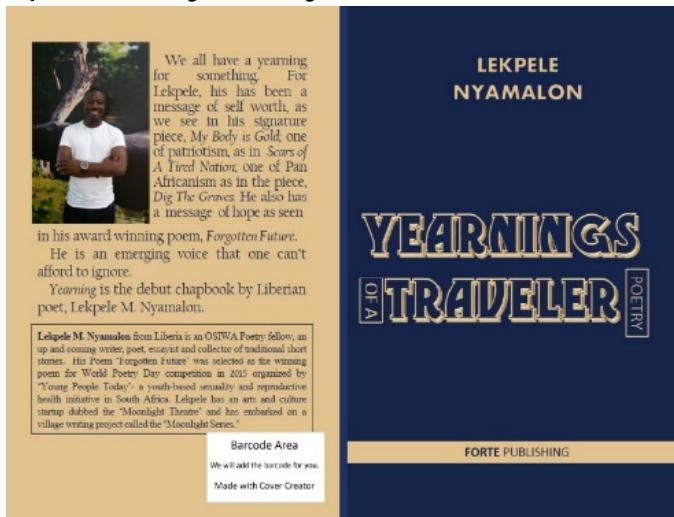
Happy
New Year
Long Live
Liberia



Recommended Reads

Yearnings Of A Traveler

We all have a yearning for something. For Lekpele, his has been a message of self worth, as we see in his signature piece, My Body is Gold; one of



patriotism, as in Scars of A Tired Nation; one of Pan Africanism as in the piece, Dig The Graves. He also has a message of hope as seen in his award winning poem, Forgotten Future. He is an emerging voice that one can't afford to ignore. Yearning is the debut chapbook by Liberian poet, Lekpele M. Nyamalon.

LEKPELE M.
NYAMALON



FORTE PUBLISHING

Recommended Reads

Portor Portor

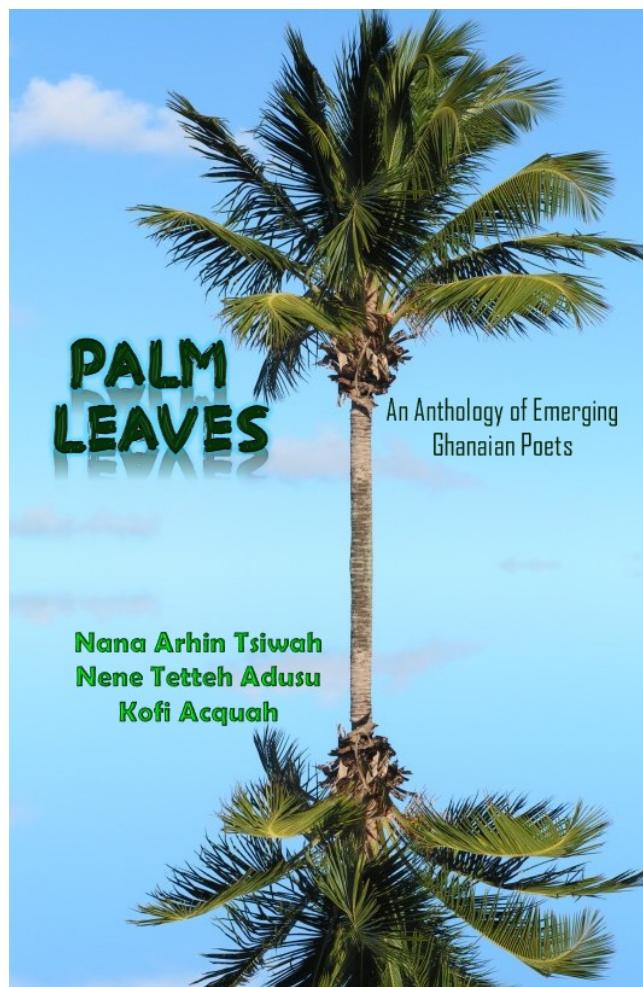
Introduction by: Elma Shaw

Portor Portor is an anthology of emerging and established poets from Liberia, Nigeria, Ghana, and Botswana. Portor-Portor, a Liberian concept, refers to a pot of unevenly cooked rice-soft, sticky, grainy and lumpy. Within a single pot, is the embodiment of the notion of unity in diversity.

Portor Portor features 12 African poets whose poems cover a wide range of topics- from daily life issues to religious, traditional and contemporary issues plaguing the continent. They offer us a rare glimpse into a diverse modern Africa. Portor Portor, in this edition, presents a unified voice amidst that diversity.

KWEE: Liberian Literary Magazine

Edited by: D. Othniel Forte



Around Town

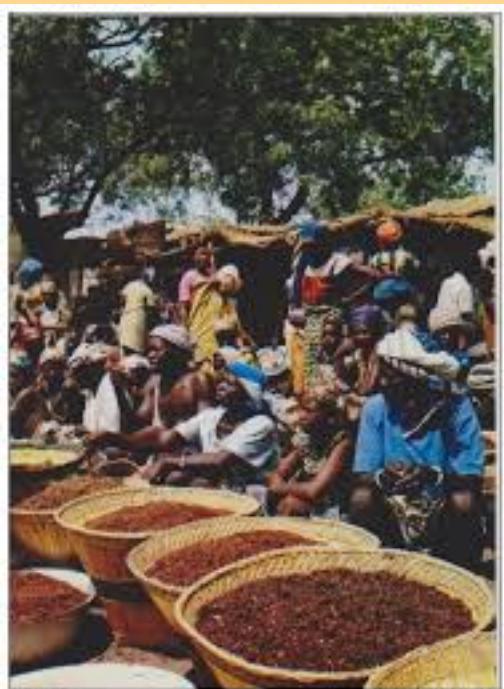
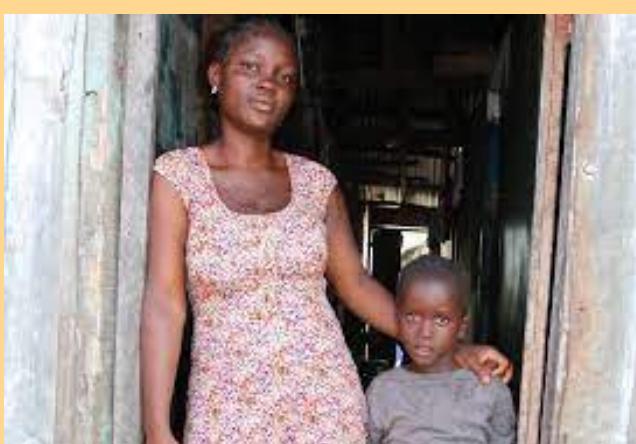
LIB Style



Happy Thanksgiving Day
first Thursday in November



A Powerful message in support of arts/artists





KWE

Liberian Literary Magazine

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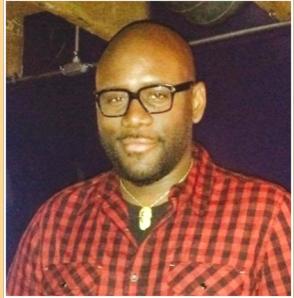
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Here at Liberian Literary Magazine, we strive to bring you the best coverage of Liberian literary news. We are a subsidiary of [Liberian Literature Review](#).

For too long the arts have been ignored, disregarded or just taken less important in Liberia. This sad state has stifled the creativity of many and the culture as a whole.

However, all is not lost. A new breed of creative minds has risen to the challenge and are determined to change the dead silence in our literary world. In order to do this, we realized the need to create a *culture of reading* amongst our people. A reading culture broadens the mind and opens up endless possibilities. It also encourages diversity and for a colorful nation like ours, fewer things are more important.

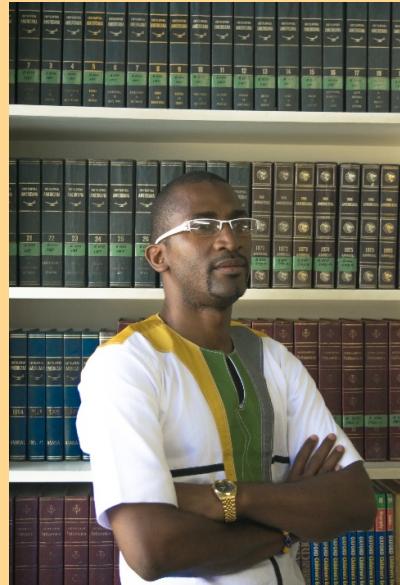


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