

# Kistrech

8TH EDITION



**Kistrech Poetry Festival  
Kenya 2022, Vol.8**

7<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup> October 2022





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# 2022 Team

Prof. John S. Akama – **Patron**

Dr. Christopher Okemwa – **Founder/Director/Editor**

Lilian Gisesa – **Overall Co-ordinator**

Dr. Bwocha Nyagemi – **Co-ordinator**

Dr. Matunda Nyanchama – **Co-ordinator Nairobi edition/publisher**

Dr. Cyprian Makiya Ratemo – **Transport & Accommodation**

Mr. Evans Mutie Mwendwa - **Programme Officer**

Miss Loice Robi Mwita – **Assistant Programme Officer**

Mr. Derrick Ogato Ong'uti – **Co-ordinator, Student-Poets**

Creative Design – **Achoki Navy, Fly Media Ventures Kenya**

Printing – **Fly Media Ventures Kenya**

# MESSAGE FROM THE PATRON

Welcome to the 2022 Kistrech International Poetry Festival. As a patron of this event, I am pleased that a good number of poets are able to travel to Kenya this year to attend our poetry event. I take this opportunity to heartily welcome each one of you to this year's edition of the festival.

I realize that we have poets attending this year for their first time and from countries that have not been represented in this event before. For the first time we have a poet from Spain – Yolanda Castaño -- who is a renowned Galician and Spanish poet, essayist, editor and curator. We sincerely thank the Spanish Embassy in Nairobi for funding Yolanda Castaño's trip to Kenya, and we hope the embassy will continue collaborating with this festival in future editions.

The country of Scotland is being represented for the first time by the celebrated poet, Chrys Salt, who is accompanied by her husband, Mr. Richard Macfarlane. Chrys Salt has roots in poetry and theatre, and her husband, Mr. Macfarlane, is always in the forefront in assisting her in literary productions. The Kistrech International Poetry Festival is thankful to the Scottish Books International Author Travel Fund for enabling Chrys Salt to participate in this event. In that regard, our genial request to SBI is for them to kindly sponsor a poet to this festival every year.

In the past editions we have had poets coming from Hungary to this festival. This year we are privileged to have Professor Turczy István who is the secretary General of the Hungarian PEN Center and Vice-President of World Congress of Poets. Professor Turczy has won many awards and been translated into 25 languages. We sincerely thank Petőfi Kulturális Ügynökség for sponsoring Professor Turczy's attendance in this festival, and we further request them to continue supporting Hungarian poets to this event.

I welcome the Dutch poet, Niels Frank Alvarado, and two of his friends, Gerardo Alvarado and Maria Diken. Niels Frank has had numerous publications and translations in his literary productions, and has been both poet and journalist. On the other hand, Maria Diken is an associate professor of Danish language and literature. In 2017 she won the Danish Arts Foundation Literary Prize for best first novel in Denmark. I welcome the three of you to Kenya. In this regard I thank the Danish Arts Foundation for the generous support they have given to Niels Frank to come to Kenya. We humbly request the foundation to partner with us and continue giving support to Danish poets who come to Kenya for this event.

The Israeli Embassy in Nairobi has been associated with this poetry festival ever since it started and has always given us their support. For the last four years, the embassy has supported poets from Israel to attend this event. The Embassy has also been generous in giving a "small support" to the festival. This year Israel is represented by the reputable poet, Gili Haimovich, who is a bilingual poet and translator in Hebrew and English. She is the author of ten poetry books. This festival is sincerely thankful to the Embassy of Israel in Nairobi for funding her trip to Kenya.

I also welcome Prof. Dr. Laksmisree Banerjee from India. She is an established poet, literary critic, editor, and former Vice-Chancellor of Kolhan University. This festival is glad and very much privileged to have



Professor Laksmisree and her daughter, Miss Sudipta Banerjee. We are sure Prof. Dr. Laksmisree's attendance will add immense value to this event.

One notable poet this year is Karla Brundage from the USA. I remember her from the poetry exchange, WO2WA, she recently initiated between poets in the US and 12 student-poets from Kisii University. The twelve students have vastly benefitted from the exchange and I hear there is an anthology, *Black-Rootedness: 54 Poets from Africa to America*, where their works are published. Three of the twelve students have gone further to produce their own first poetry collections: Ruth Jepkorir Koech, a first year student, has produced a collection of poems, *Bile on My Face*; Alfred Nyagaka Nyamwange, a postgraduate student, has authored *The Girl of Red Beauty*; our Linguistic lecturer, Dr. Evans Gesura Mecha has had his poetry book, *Window into Worlds* published, while others have large collections of manuscripts ready for publication. Additionally, we thank the WO2WA for their donation to the festival and another donation to Kistrech Scholarship Fund.

I hope you will all take your time to nurture talents among the student-poets in Kenya and give them hope in their endeavor to produce artistic works in their career as writers. I am sure that students and upcoming poets in our institutions will benefit immensely from your participation and presence at this festival. On the other hand, guest-poets will also benefit from the many raw poetic materials lying around, be able to learn and experience African culture, languages, customs, knowledge and wisdom. I wish you a wonderful festival, positive interaction and memorable experiences during your short stay in Kenya.

**Professor John Akama**  
**Vice Chancellor, Kisii University**

# MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

The year 2020 & 2021 was a difficult time in the history of literary creativity around the world. All literary activities were suspended due to the fear of corona. There are few of those events that were successfully done virtually. Kistrech Poetry festival closed down all together, as many of us lived in fear and had no guts to plan anything.

During that period, filled with panic and fright, I called for poems on covid-19 and in response 550 poets from around the world sent in their compositions. The 1200-page anthology that I compiled and edited, *Musings during a Time of Pandemic: A World Anthology of Poems on Covid-19*, was, and is, the largest anthology on the pandemic globally and has attracted a lot of rave reviews.

When George Floyd, the black American man, was killed in 2021 by a white police officer in the US, I again called for poems on racism. In response to this call 600 poets sent in their essays and poems. The anthology, *I Can't Breathe: A Poetic Anthology of Social Justice* came out at the end of 2021. The 1300-page massive anthology, one of the many large anthologies in the world, received an amazing positive critical appraisal from around the world.

Currently, I am receiving poems for the anthology *Peace in Ukraine*, and many of the poems cry out for justice to those being killed without any mistake of their own. It talks of the children, the women and the poor innocent citizens who are caught between blasts, explosions and shrapnel. You can smell the blood, the fear and the ghosts of the dead between the lines of this poetry.

During the compilation & editing of these three gigantic poetic anthologies, I have come to realize that poetry has more functions than normally thought of. It is a need and an ingredient of life. Poetry, it is true, carries a soul with it. Poetry is life itself. In the first anthology, many of the poets featured therein expressed intense fear, consoled those who were bereaved, encouraged the doctors and nurses and expressed words of comfort. The words carried a soul with them. They aroused the spirit of togetherness, of healing, of resilience, of triumph. of hope.

In the second anthology on George Floyd, the poets expressed their disappointment against those who harbour feelings of hatred against others because of their skin colour. The poets used their compositions to condemn racism in the US and elsewhere in the world. They weaved their poetry to bring love, kindness and unity among humanity in the world.

In the Ukraine anthology condemnations of war and care for humanity ring through the pages. The poets capture the wastages, the destruction and unnecessary deaths. In this anthology, the underlying concern is the destructive nature of wars and the wastages of resources to exterminate others.

Poetry should carry a soul with it. As much as we aspire to embody aesthetics in our works, the content of our poetry still remains as important. Poetry without a lesson or aim is spineless, and runs amok like a headless chicken. Poets should strive therefore to write poetry that educate, pass information, console, condemn evil, and stops hatred



among humanity. As Ngugi wa Thiong'o has noted in his many critical books, poetry comes from the society where it is written, and in turn transforms that same society towards the direction it deems fit. Let us all enjoy writing our poetry that betters humanity and advances their common will and brings hope to all.

*During the compilation & editing of these three gigantic poetic anthologies, I have come to realize that poetry has more functions than normally thought of. It is a need and an ingredient of life. Poetry, it is true, carries a soul with it.*

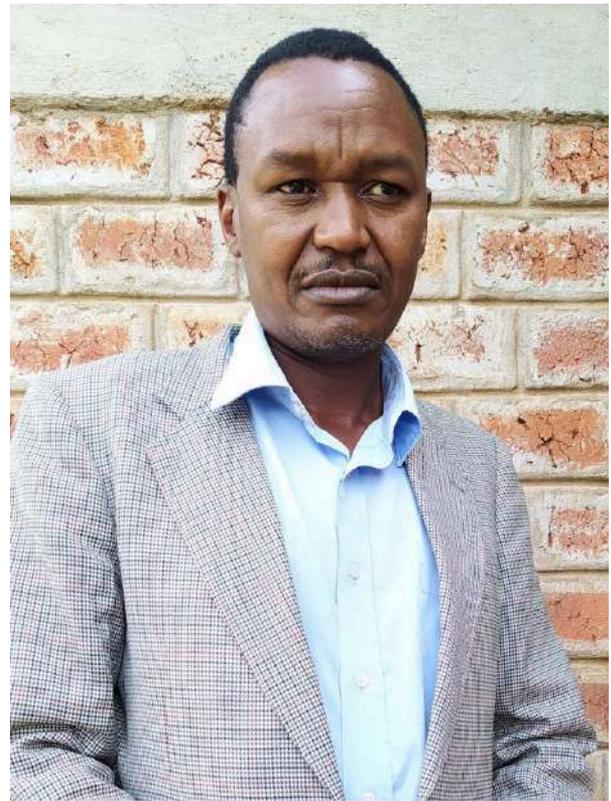
**Dr. Christopher Okemwa**  
Editor & Director

# ALFRED NYAGAKA NYAMWANGE



Alfred Nyagaka Nyamwange graduated from the University of Nairobi with a Bachelors degree in English, Political Science and Anthropology. Nyamwange did his Masters in English Literature in Education from Kampala University, Uganda. He is a teacher by profession and he is currently pursuing a PhD in Literature at Kisii University with a bias to Popular studies, Culture and oral poetry. His published novels include, *The Blood Stains* (The Writers' Pen, 2020), *The Broken Column* (Elongo, 2020); *The Woman Called Angel*, an anthology of short stories (African Ink Publishers, 2020), and *The Smell Of New Shoes*, a children's story (The Writers' Pen, 2020). He has also contributed to various poetry anthologies, such as *Kistretch 7th Edition*, *Shackles Of Pain*, *I Can't Breathe: A Poetic Anthology of Social Justice & The Precious Core*. Nyamwange is launching his new poetry collection, *The Girl of Red Complexion*, during this festival.

E-Mail: [nanganet@gmail.com](mailto:nanganet@gmail.com)



*Let the flowers be full and bright With true feelings, natural, real  
Not photo sessions, masking our Pain of lost horizons, lost promises*

## Why

If you hate me all other days  
Paint my life with grey and gloom  
Torture my mind with bitter songs.  
Why blast me with lights and reds  
With flowers and smiles that wither  
Untouching my broken body and soul?

Then let that day be not valentine  
But a day of what I miss, what I long  
Away with plastic smiles, laughter  
Cold songs, food and touches, pain  
That wipes our sunny sky, dull moments.

Let the flowers be full and bright  
With true feelings, natural, real  
Not photo sessions, masking our  
Pain of lost horizons, lost promises  
But full, real, unmasked, true love.

## A Puff

Me and you  
Just a puff like  
Morning dew on blades  
A drop bubble on gutters  
Waiting, fattening and thinning  
As the base swells and swells.

The petal  
Stretches, thins out  
The suspense is cataclysmic  
The breath is suspended, the end looms.

A thin  
Holds to the receptor  
The drop grows heavy, the end races

And in  
A pop and screech  
The puff plummets  
Into the atmosphere and vanishes  
In thin air, dissolved never seen again

## Mismatched

if i was God i'll create you  
with mongloid eyes  
and negroid melanin  
caucasoid nose  
and place you in  
high places  
at the junction of public  
Derision  
of a god whose priorities  
were a mismatch.  
and those who see you  
will laugh and laugh  
at your ugly visage  
and point fingers at me  
But I am not God.

# ANDREA RUGGERI

 ITALY

Andrea is an activist involved in many fields connected to their life experience. Andrea was born in Palermo, Italy, in 1992; when they was a child, members of the family abused of his body and were also part of a religious sect. Andrea is still working on their past and they is focusing on reconnecting with their body and spirit.

Today Andrea lives in Bologna, Italy, and they's a freelancer, working for non-profit projects as a fundraising consultant and partnerships developer. Andrea also sits on the Board of Gruppo Trans, a large empowerment group of trans\* people, Centro Risorse LGBTI, a thematic research group, and NaKa, a youth center in their hometown. Since May 2021, they has taken on the role of Regional Coordinator for Europe for Young Humanists International.



## Night Crumbs - Crumbs of nights

Published in Italian in Italy in June 2021 by L'erudita, Giulio Perrone publisher's poetry publication. ISBN: 978-88-6770-667-9  
<https://www.lerudita.it/shop/briciole-di-notti/>

Crumbs of Nights is a journey through the twists and turns of the mind, where dream and reality have a border that only thanks to the use of the word the poet manages to cross. A dialogue with our inner person to open up an intimate channel of communication, digging inside and extrapolating that distant memory victim of oblivion. Within this collection, Andrea Ruggeri tells their story, talks with their desires and with their own nightmares, retraces their own life looking at themselves from the outside, analyzing all the moments in which they was about to succumb, but one step away from the brink verses saved them.

Crumbs of Nights is a full experience, where each poem is accompanied by a song and some even by an image. The reader's mind is wide open to those who get dragged in this journey between words, images, and music.

[extract] March 26, 2010

*Hi Didu, this is the new notebook I will be writing in. The criteria I used to choose it don't make much sense. A lot of things don't make sense. And I'm wrong. [...] I'll leave you with a quote: 'but what if he's an ordinary man, to whom nothing but a mediocre destiny falls?'*

## Tight Strings

Tight strings  
Waiting for a sign  
That I waited in vain  
For me and for you.

Now you're over there running  
Running far and unaware  
You left me among the hung ones.

Heavy sound of a piano  
Breaks my silence in two

And you break into my  
Crumbs of nights  
Without knowing it.

## Jibaro and the Golden Siren

The scream of thousand screams  
It devours you (long pause)  
deep into your black guts.

A dance old as life  
over the water,  
over the blood  
of our sons and daughters.

The silence I reach  
when your mouth is sealed  
sounds like gold coins  
ceasing a race onto the seabed.

# ANTANAS A. JONYNAS



LITHUANIA

Antanas A. Jonynas, poet, translator, was born in 1953 in Vilnius, graduated from Vilnius University in 1976 and worked for a number of years as an editor at Vaga Publishers. Presently, he focuses his activities on his literary work, writing poetry and translating German, Latvian, and Russian poetry, most notably Goethe's Faust. Jonynas' poems first appeared in print in 1973 and since then he has published 14 collections of poems and has been awarded all of the main Lithuanian literary prizes.



## LAIKO BALADĖ

Švino ir alavo šunys  
ten ant laiptų terasų  
gulinėja kolonų pavėsy

ledų ir dešrelių prekiautojai  
ten nepasirodo

o laiko skriestuvus apie mane  
dar mažesnj apibrėžia ratą

dulkėtoj saulės šviesoj  
žolės sidabras ten mėlynas

noris kaukti  
lyg būtum išduotas  
bet švino ir alavo šunys  
ten tyli

## TIME'S BALLAD

Lead and tin dogs  
on the stair's terrace  
lying in the columns' shade

ice cream and sausage vendors  
don't show their faces there

and time's compass draws  
an even smaller circle around me

in the dusty sunlight  
the grass's silver is blue

the urge to howl  
as though betrayed  
but the lead and tin dogs  
are silent

## MIEGANČIOJI GRAŽUOLĖ

Kas esu šitame kambary  
šiam mieste šiam pasauly

švelniai virpančios šnervės  
vos praviros lūpos  
tvinkinti kaklo arterija

ar dar iš tiesų egzistuoju  
miegamojo daiktų baltoje konkretybėj  
taip lengvai sunaikinamas  
tavojo miego

viršum tavo veido parimęs  
nykstančiais kontūrais  
ir vieną akimirką jau nebeturintis kuo  
pajusti artėjančio siaubo

## SLEEPING BEAUTY

What am I in this room  
in this city, in this world

softly quivering nostrils  
barely open lips  
pulsing neck artery

do I really still exist  
in the white concreteness of the bedroom  
so easily destroyed  
by your sleep

above your upturned face  
contours disappearing  
and in one moment no longer having what  
with  
to feel the approaching terror

## KELIONĖS DAINA

Iš mano miego tie miškai atsiranda  
tos laukymės alksnynai pakrantėj

subilda malūnas aptaško šalikelę  
purslais  
ir pravažiuoja pro šalį

būgnininkas ir sargas – jie tyli  
už jų avietynas dulkėtas

eidavo ežeru būna žmogus  
eina artyn ir mažėja

kol galiausiai tarp švendrų išnyksta

užrakinti kapinių vartai bet aš įeinu  
savo viešbučio raktą pritaikęs

## JOURNEY SONG

Those forests appear from my sleep  
those clearings in the alder groves on the  
shore

a windmill knocks about, splashes the  
branches with spray  
and a drummer and watchman

drive by – they are silent  
beyond them a dusty raspberry patch

a man used to walk on the lake,  
it happened,  
he was getting smaller, but approaching

then finally disappearing  
between the cattails

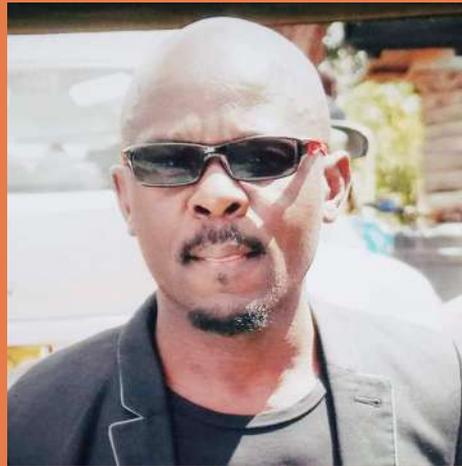
the cemetery gates are  
locked but I enter  
my hotel key fits

Translated by  
**Medeinė Tribinevičius**

# Antony Wesonga Oduori



KENYA



Antony Wesonga Oduori was born in Namwitsula, Busia County, Western Kenya. He attained his bachelors' degree in linguistics and literature from the University of Nairobi in 2004 and a Masters degree in International Studies in 2011. He is in today-speak what they call a universal banker with standard chartered bank, Kenya. His poetry anthologies include Jam On Our Faces and 327 Thousand Feet High. His poetry is featured in The Griots of Ubuntu, An Anthology of Contemporary Poetry from Africa, edited by Christopher Okemwa.

## Clean Bills

What happened to my time?  
It is my time that gets low,  
Each time you play me  
Or pass on the task to someone less key  
Like a centre that does not want to tally  
'Stay put'  
They kept saying  
We ran in and out breath waiting  
The nations' heartbeat stilled  
The chief exclusive sleepless at night with  
A promise and a drive  
Images of happy singing patrons, busting granaries  
Loyal revellers  
Delicate ones appeased  
Fully engaged functional personnel with stable grins  
Until they disowned him citing opaqueness  
Before the next generation of ones and zeros disrupts our routine little lives  
Reduced to spectators  
As the privileged enjoy their great heritage  
Assisted by robots  
Eating seedless grapes  
In a steam bath  
Holograms replaced television  
Driverless cars  
Gearless motorcycles  
Precision medicine? They don't fall sick  
Radiation pills?  
Do we need those around here? Radiation pills?  
My guy in statehouse  
After the votes disappeared for a week  
A clean bill of health  
Fuck the voters, they too foolish  
Did you see how they howled in his name?  
Drank on, and with clean shiny new bills?  
Wait  
Soiled the bills already are.  
Lazily I walk back to my little life.

## Real Estate

He was always calm  
Her too  
Giving insight on how to make much more  
He laughs at my lack of it  
More of something else instead  
He stayed hungry, she stayed plain  
Zero impulse  
What a life when you can't have some things sometimes  
Just sometimes  
For the sake of your last moments  
On this floating breathing moat around one humongous sun  
In a sea of one hundred billion suns in one galaxy,  
In another sea of one hundred billion galaxies  
In another sea of clusters...sea after sea  
But here we are annoyed our names were pronounced wrongly  
Grow some nuts  
For less carbon  
For less wishful thought too  
When giving in to life badly lived;  
Customer service,  
Kenyan Elections; a prayerful people amidst malpractice  
Steal pray steal pray steal pray. There is no faith here but a habit  
always has been. Fucking pagans!  
Immediately we are dead, she sells the house  
and the real estate too  
a deceased's account is activated  
he lived well, that's why  
if there is nothing to sell; well, he lived stupid.  
billions burnt exploring space  
While the earth harbours mystery, shirking  
Inadequate toilets, explore the cosmos we must  
They smell tasks oncoming, and like infantry seek vantage  
stations  
seek wealth, die late and in your sleep  
to work the least if at all having worked harder  
then suck on dead men's proceeds for they notice not  
What will we find in deep space? if ever?  
Water 1000 light years away using the JWST  
We brought it on us  
The little schooled farmer wished that we bump into things,  
evil things.

# Bengt O Björklund



The poet, artist, journalist, photographer, writer, musician and editor Bengt O Björklund was born in Stockholm 1949. In 1968 he landed in jail in Istanbul for \$ 20 worth of hash and met a bunch of international artists, poets and musicians. It was then he embarked on his artistic voyage in many directions as well as learning to cook, do yoga and generally get a life.

The source of his inspiration in Turkey those early years (1968-1973) were his Japanese friend, the artist Koji Morrishita and the Italian artist, poet, and Dadaist Antonio Rasile. The character Erich in the movie Midnight Express is based on Bengt.

Bengt has published 10 books of poetry, five are written in English, five in Swedish.

Bengt was recently awarded Sweden Beat Poet Laurette by the National Beat Poetry Foundation Inc. and received his honour in Connecticut on September 1 2018.

For 50 years Bengt has written poetry both in his mother tongue Swedish and in English. So why this half a century long love for writing poetry in English? It all started, he says, because no one spoke Swedish in the jails of Istanbul.

Bengt has been invited to perform his poetry in Wales, USA, Egypt, Romania, Argentina and is published in many anthologies and translated into Arabic, Spanish, Bangladeshi, Romanian and Roma.



## POEMS by Bengt O Björklund

seldom is a long word  
daring late convention  
when it comes to islands  
formed in the aftermath  
of a loving silence

night falls as always  
among small men  
exposed by fire  
burning with small men ire  
seldom will be mine

talking wilderness  
into small packages  
of love and care  
I find my long days  
bound for a forestall glory  
simmering in evening glow

long distance is a sweet call  
carried by the words of yesterday  
into the here of it all

affinity is the source of wild winds  
blooming in the dessert  
the reason why we love the moon

it is in our nature to encompass  
all we aspire and need  
there will be a tomorrow

I walked into near oblivion  
talked into turning lights off  
before it's dawn again

remedies do not apply here  
nor will umbrellas be needed  
the pointless are still in  
command

the rescue team turned up at  
eleven  
there was still smoke smouldering  
from the badly scorched carcass

if you hear a soft hum running  
it's only me in defiance  
turning day to wine and soft skin

# Bonface Nyamweya



Born in 1997, Bonface Nyamweya is an upcoming Kenyan author. The Pan African Writers Association published his short story, "Whose Title Died", in their anthology *Voices that Sing behind the Veil* (2022). He has also published two novels: *Peeling the Cobwebs* (2020) and *Her Question Pills* (2020). He has a degree in philosophy from the Pontifical University of Urbaniana, Rome. He is currently winding up his Masters degree in Philosophy at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa.



## Tough Time

I pick my bag and leave  
I can't wait for it  
At the booking office  
The conductor looks into my bag  
And sees my torn pants and vests  
"Just enter." He says.  
This is a private probox  
You cannot get a public vehicle now  
Perhaps as from mid next month  
People are running to their suburbs  
No one is ready to die  
And I remind myself to forget it  
But how?  
Last time my bananas and vegetables were eaten  
My left arm was smashed and chopped  
Just because I couldn't utter their language  
Next week election day comes  
The drums are beating  
No person ought to kill or wound another  
Or loot or mock or poke or puke...  
Just because of politics  
Politics with poly-ticks is love  
Politics with poly-tricks is hatred  
Sound politics isn't loud poly-tricks  
Politics of division is poly-wrongs  
True politics is love and harmony of a people

# Bonface Otieno



Bonface Otieno is a student of Kabarak University graduating this year with a bachelor's degree in Education arts. He is a dramatist and a playwright. He is a prolific poet and eloquent public speaker. He currently works as a teacher at St. Andrews Tarabete secondary school Naivasha sub-county in Kenya where he mentors students in creative writing. His published works include *Wicked and other Songs* (part 1) and *Horror In the Storm* (a play).

## TIME FOR SLEEP

Sleep, sleep and sleep!  
A swift and restful sleep  
Hollow and dim  
Without thoughts  
Slipping below fluffy blankets easy  
A practically instantaneous,  
More of a profound sensation

When it's time to sleep  
Reducing breathing  
Like the aquatic centre  
Slowly, magically swift, and perfect  
Refreshing, a sleep timeless  
A quiet and soft air  
Warmth caressing one's chick  
And Bosom, strange!

When it's time to sleep  
It's the time to escape life in life  
Into a comma with surety  
That walking up assured  
Of sleep with ultimate refreshment

But sleep, oh sleep like rest  
Eternally like the Kingdom  
Like the slaughter of a bull  
Which is a loss  
The lapse of belief  
Destruction and fear.

Oh sleep of unseen venom  
Annihilation beyond hearts bearing  
Yes! When it's time to sleep  
Sleep so unstoppable  
More unfortunate  
Without a knock nor sense  
Sense of humanity but accommodating  
With great hospitality is the horrible sleep.

When it's time to sleep  
It's time to sleep!

# Caren Jepkogei



Caren Jepkogei (Carina) is a Kenyan poet based in Eldoret. She has a bachelor's degree in English and Literature. She has participated East to East Africa Poetry Exchange, Asian Literally Society, Ndimi Za Kalar Kistretch Poetry Festival.



## Tell My Mother

My dear sisters tell my mother  
Inform her that dinner will delay today  
Papa will quarrel and beat mummy  
The village will be in the search for me  
Tell mama please I'll delay a little bit longer

If she sends you to get me home  
Please tell her my favourite pot broke down  
Tell her that I fell down by the river and broke my arm  
Comfort her that I will be coming soon  
Tell mama it shall be well with me

When she calls for my elder brother  
Tell her there's an ogre by the river side  
That feeds on male blood and flesh  
He should sit back and wait for me at home  
Open the window to my bedroom in case I come  
Tell my mother that my brother will bring me home

When the village trumpet is blown  
Alert the strong morans  
That the neighboring village are raiding our land  
They should protect the cattle and our people  
I'm protected by the gods  
Tell my mother that I'm hiding in the thickest ends of the forest

When you come to the stream today  
Bring with me my favourite beads  
Sing and dance to the tunes of your heartbeat  
And when you go home tell my mother all you told her was a lie  
Except two things  
One, I'm married to the king of the sea  
Two, I gave birth to a bouncing baby boy

*If she sends you to get  
me home  
Please tell her my  
favourite pot broke  
down...*

# Dr. Christopher Okemwa



Christopher Okemwa is a literature lecturer at Kisii University, Kenya. He has a PhD in performance poetry from Moi University, Kenya. He is the founder and current director of Kistrech International Poetry festival in Kenya ([www.kistrechpoetry.org](http://www.kistrechpoetry.org)). His novella, *Sabina* and the *Mystery of the Ogre*, won the Canadian Burt Award for African Literature in 2015. He has written eight books of poetry and been translated to Armenian, Chinese, Greek, Norwegian, Finnish, Hungarian, Arabic, Polish, Chinese, Nepalese, Turkish, Russian, Spanish, Catalan, Taiwanese and Serbian. He has also translated four literary works of international poets from English to Swahili. He is the editor of *Musings During a Time of Pandemic: A World Anthology of Poems on COVID-19*, *I Can't Breathe: A Poetic Anthology of Social Justice and Coming Out of Isolation: Poems on Resilience, Triumph & Hope* and, currently compiling an anthology of poems on Peace in Ukraine. He is the author of ten folktales of the Abagusii people of Kenya, three children's storybooks, one play, one collection of short stories, two novels and four oral literature textbooks.  
Website: [www.okemwa.co.ke](http://www.okemwa.co.ke)

## Esegi Nigo Enga...

Esegi ne'rigena rikubu  
Riguateka  
Riaiteka, riasiaroka  
Obotioku bwaye  
Bwaiteka ase amasio aito  
Twatama totari korigereria magega  
Togotokerwa.  
Twatuba chimioro chieito.  
Twatiga magega chindera chiamariga aito.  
Amabarato aito  
Arimera amaroba inse.  
Ebitono biamanyinga aito  
Twatindeka.  
Emeika na amauga ya baibori baito  
Twatuba chimbuche chiobong'aini bwabo  
Namaroba.  
Twabogoria ribu  
Riechindoto chiabana baito  
Twachituguta buna omoubero okogusa.  
Ase omorero bwamakweri  
Twasamba egesakwa  
Ki'abana, abachokoro ne'bichembene.

## War is like...

War is a rotten egg  
that burst broken  
Splashing its ordour  
before our facades and faces  
We run, choking  
Pinching our nostrils tightly  
leaving behind  
traces of our tears  
Our mortal footsteps  
Sink below the earth  
Stained with trails of blood  
We inter our  
Parents' souls and bones  
And cover their grey wisdom  
With rabble and soil  
We carry the ash  
Of our children's dreams  
Blowing them off like wind  
And on the pier  
We smoke up the soul of the generation  
Of our grand children.

# Chrys Salt



Although Chrys has written in almost every genre except the novel, she's primarily a poet with roots deeply planted in the theatre. Her work is published in magazines and anthologies worldwide, has been broadcast on BBC Radio 3 and 4 and performed across the UK and in Festivals and venues in France, Germany, The USA, Canada, Finland, India and Australia. Her poems have been set to music by several composers and translated into a number of languages including French, Romanian, Finnish and Arabic. She has written four full poetry collections and five pamphlet collections along with numbers of books and plays for both radio and theatre.

Chrys has been the recipient of bursaries and awards (various) including a National Media Award, an Arts and Business Award and a Fringe First at the Edinburgh Festival. In 2014 she received a Creative Scotland Bursary to finish her collection *Dancing on a Rock* (Pub: IDP) and another in 2016 to research her most recent collection *Skookum Jim and The Klondike Gold Rush* (Pub IDP 2020) in The Yukon.

In 2019 she was awarded an International Travel Grant to perform at The Tasmanian Poetry Festival where she was their International Poet 2019, followed by an extensive reading tour up the East Coast of Australia.

In 2014 she was awarded an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List for Services to The Arts.



## Flight (the Himalayas 1959)

'We must go now. We must go now,  
we must go now,' my father said.  
'The iron bird flies, their horses come on wheels!'

And from the savage tenor of the times,  
I learn how frost can gobble noses,  
blizzards bite, snow blind, and mountains fall,

how men will stalk us with their guns,  
across the frozen halls of dark,  
our tears and cries too loud for secrecy,

how small and sudden is goodbye,  
how hope and terror weigh the same,  
how many ways there are to die.

How when the moon is bright we'll hide,  
or hand in hand stumble down broken stairs of night.  
How tombs of snow will follow us,

men fall like boulders down ravines,  
shoes shred, cold burn and friends betray.

How when one dies we will not stop or grieve.

How I will see my dad piss arcs of blood,  
a crimson poppy blossoming in snow.  
How still he'll carry me like faith

through air as thin as prayer and skin,  
past roaring cataracts, down slithering rock,  
careful as sacred culture on his back.

How when we cross to safety in this land,  
I'll find a tiny patch of flowers like stars,  
nuzzled in a barren cleft of stone.

How I will offer dad my sad bouquet,  
and place it gently in his ruined hands.  
And he will hug me in glad arms, and weep.

*Note: following the failed Tibetan uprising against Chinese religious suppression in 1959, the Dalai Lama fled across The Himalayas to find political asylum in India. Many thousands of Tibetan refugees followed him into permanent exile. In October of that year some of them set up The Tibetan Refugee Centre, a self-supporting rehabilitation centre in the Darjeeling Himalayan hill region. The production of Tibetan handicraft, especially carpets, is the Centre's main activity.*

*Poems from The Punkawallah's Rope. Pub: Indigo Dreams Publishing 2017*

## Refuge (Darjeeling 2016)

Balls in their colour coded wool store,  
glow like sun-struck apples in a loft.  
Madder root, walnut husk and indigo.

Bent fingers with long memories,  
tease wool and card industriously.  
Feet that have climbed through ice and sky,  
tread makeshift spinning wheels.  
No one looks up, they have their work to do.

Others, perhaps their daughters, crouch on stools,  
bend to the clatter clunk of looms,  
the bang of mallets, patter of young feet.  
Phoenix and dragon climb the warp,  
with cranes, mandalas,  
snow-lions, lotus-flowers.

Out of the blue, one asks how old I am.  
Taken aback, I tell her, show off,  
pirouette on one leg like a dancer.  
Lacking a common language, play the fool.  
Then she says through an interpreter,  
'Old women walk like this in our culture,'  
crooks her back, hobbles across the floor,  
mimes toothlessness to gales of laughter.

# Cornelius Muthuri (Tsurie)



Cornelius Muthuri (Tsurie) was born and brought up in Meru, Kenya. He is an enthusiast poet and article writer, currently working as a freelance writer. He graduated with a Bachelor of Education Arts (English and Literature) degree from Kisii University. Muthuri has co-authored *Garden of Wild Roses* and *Sapiens become Serpents* (poetry collections published by *The World of Hidden Thoughts*, India). His recently published poetry anthology is titled *The Harlot's Cup*.

## I Love Every Ounce of Me

I love every ounce of me;  
The tiny pores glittering on my skin  
The puddles of perspiration on my fingertips  
And the curling of the black hair  
Stitching my head like mistletoe  
On the canopy of oaks  
Or like a chameleon twined  
On the branch of a cypress

How flexible are my knuckles!  
I love the sinking of my dimples  
Every moment I smile.  
The furling of my wrinkles  
Whenever I'm depressed  
Dissuades me from desperation  
And the beating of my heart in temptation  
Preserves the holiness of my temple

I'm fearfully and wonderfully made  
The fighting spirit in me  
Has emboldened the bone of my knee  
I stand strong like a soldier  
Amidst the raging storms,  
I cry my distresses in forlorn  
And holds not my anger for long  
To uphold the tranquil path, I tread on!

## A Plea for a Foundation of Ages

Eternity is rolling  
In the dream of my night slumber  
Sleep, like a leaking oasis  
Is dripping in a limited measure  
My heart is yearning for a tender grip  
And my mind, like wildebeest unsettled.  
Time is running short in mortality  
And the eternity, unknown, draws  
In the calm of my dreariest bliss  
Come! Come! O my dearest haven  
Come to the rescue of my careless soul  
A cup of mesmerizing wine thou art  
Yet, like a gasp of palpable air  
You slip the shards of my broken heart!

*How flexible are my knuckles!  
I love the sinking of my dimples  
Every moment I smile...*

# Dr. Evans Gesura Mecha



Evans Gesura Mecha is a Poet, Literary Critic and Linguist. He is a holder of a doctorate in Linguistics from the University of Nairobi (2013) and a Master of Arts in English and Linguistics from Kenyatta University (2007). Currently he is a Linguistics lecturer in Kisii University with interest in poetry and its criticism. He has a long stint of writing poetry which he begun with a debut poem published in the journal, *The new Age*, back in the year 1991. He has taught literature in High school for fourteen years (1998-2010) before transiting to university teaching in the year 2009. Some of his verses have been published on the online platform provided by Poetry.Com.



## Window into Worlds

Words are the window to the genesis of worlds  
The living breath that is ever breathing into things  
And all there is and is not but a living lexicon.

Words are as windows to reclaim weathered worlds  
Opening the loamy libraries of fossilised nature  
And laying forth treasure troves is dulcet syllables.

Words are the latent fire, bursting from a cavern  
awakening an ancient urge, to yearn for a nursery bottle,  
and a soothing lullaby while leaning on an alien lap.

Words are the window into the heart of a lover  
Silently speaking with the silence of gaze  
That burbles into a lyrical torrent of a song.

Words are the sauce of the Melancholic  
Speaking to flies in the bustling Streets  
In his mouth a flurry of unpalatable truths.

Words are the window to the world of the other  
Harshly rending us from the lab of a Mother  
To the letter of hard decrees of the Father.

Words are windows to the Omega of worlds  
Like the harsh conclusion of a heated dispute  
Cutting down the covenant with the Maker.

## Taking a New Name

'What's in a name? . . .  
A rose in any other name smells as sweet'  
- Romeo and Juliet, Shakespeare

**I.**  
For one original slur in paradise  
earned a legion of unsainted names for gentiles

So upon my confirmation  
They have given me a new name  
Never written anywhere for use

Just a name for the day  
like nicknames we outgrow  
To new ones, uttered behind back.

Is a name not a harpoon  
Shot at you, and it sticks  
A rigid tag to bear  
For good and bad  
Not even death to part you?

**ii.**  
And they name the spirit child  
Running between two worlds  
After a grave and the Hyena

When death heard the dirty name  
It passed over

They abandoned the child  
By the road as if done for  
Spat and threw leaves  
Mourned him in the name of a road  
A dross of flies licked it for dead

Death blindly believed the ruse  
And passed over

## lv.

The Whole of holy Christendom  
Has burrowed baptismal fonts  
To change and cleanse pagan names

Talk of taking up of ones cross:  
So many names changed but not hearts.  
So many new names without epiphany.

The names Abraham, Paul and stephen  
Have not brought down tongues of fire  
And the coherent Babel of Pentecost.

## v

Talk of pagan names is forgetting culture  
And there's the folly of loosing  
The ancestral chain of connections  
Some long litany of divine provenance

To be given a name by a eunuch  
While the matrons weed plants  
What would that be?

Will the ancestors sleep well  
Or turn for you?

No more shall we gather  
At the shades, on parturition  
To call out all good spirits  
Till the new-born sneezes  
Goes quickly to the spirit world  
And bring back the dear lost.

## vi

Roots and family trees are a myth  
Debunked in the cynical gossips tongue  
Maliciously trading your illegitimacy  
In a jolly making of bastards

**vii**

If I were given a new name  
 In every turn in life from grace  
 How many dog-names will I have?

**viii**

What was it about having an African name?  
 Was it a way to doff the colonial mind,  
 Or a way to puzzle us with a riddle?

I cannot now tell whether I ascribe  
 The right thoughts to the two people:  
 Whether Johnstone is Kenyatta  
 Leaves me in a Fregean quandry.

**ix.**

I tell you my name  
 And you say my name?

Only I truly know my name-  
 It is not a key to open me up  
 So why call out my Name.

I do not open the thought  
 I am in full possession of  
 When I say my name

So you ask for my name  
 As if it is all I am  
 And all you need  
 To know me well

**X**

And if a voice calls my name  
 I will not think it was He  
 He who says 'I am what I am'

I wonder which name  
 He will call me by  
 If he comes to calling me

No one takes a call  
 In the night of Africa  
 When witches fly about

If it gets to calling me  
 By name in the African night  
 He would miss a Prophet  
 To say 'I am sent me'

**Xi**

If I have been asking her name  
 And she has now told me  
 Then I will know her.

**xii**

I am only afraid of lecterns  
 On which are given big names  
 To non-existent no-things.

*Words are the  
 window into the  
 heart of a lover  
 Silently speaking  
 with the silence of  
 gaze  
 That burbles into  
 a lyrical torrent of  
 a song.*

*Words are the  
 sauce of the  
 Melancholic  
 Speaking to flies  
 in the bustling  
 Streets  
 In his mouth a  
 flurry of  
 unpalatable  
 truths.*

# Gili Haimovich



Gili Haimovich is a bilingual Israeli poet and translator in Hebrew and English, as well as creative writing facilitator and photographer who has a Canadian background. She is the author of ten poetry books, four in English and six in Hebrew, as well as a multilingual book of her poem Note. Her recent books include her volume of poetry in French translation, *Hesitant Sun*, (*Soleil hésitant*) and *Promised Lands* published in the US. Gili's poems won the international Italian poetry competitions *I colori dell'anima* (2020) and *Ossi di Seppia* (2019) for best foreign poet, a grant for excellency by the Ministry of Culture of Israel (2015), a fellowship residency in the International Writer's Workshop, Hong Kong (2021) and more. Both of her Hebrew books, *Landing Lights* (*Orot Nechita*, 2017) and *Baby Girl* (*Tinoket* 2014), won grants from The Acum Association of Authors as well as her forthcoming book. Her book, *Reflected Like Joy* (*Mishtakefect Kmo Osher*, 2002), won The Pais Grant for Culture. The short film she had written and directed *A Dictionary for Those Who Don't Need* (*Milon Lemi Shein Bu Tzorech*, 1997) won a grant from The Israeli ministry of Culture and was screened in both Israel and Canada. Her poems are translated into more than 30 languages such as Chinese, Hindi, Italian, German, Turkish, Russian, Spanish, Japanese, Arabic, Greek, Portuguese, Bangla, Serbian, Romanian, Georgian and Albanian and featured in anthologies and journals worldwide including: *The Best Asian Poetry*, *World Literature Today*, *101 Jewish Poems for the Third Millennium*, *Tok – Writing the New Toronto* and festivals in Canada, Mexico, Hong Kong, India, Italy, Chile, France, Romania, Mongolia, Kosovo and more. Her publications in Israel include all major literary journals and number of seminal anthologies such as *The Most Beautiful Poems in Hebrew – A Hundred Years of Israeli Poetry*, *A Naked Queen – An Anthology of Israeli Social Protest Poetry*, *On This Night, We Read Poetry – Poetry anthology of Modern Jewish Exodus*.

## Colonized

How lucky we are  
to be colonized into English,  
to have found each other there.  
Is it a message disguised as a poem  
or a poem fused into message?  
I am counting on your drunkenness.

You are out there somewhere  
in the ocean of cyberspace  
I imagine you are drowning there  
I image the ocean has drunk you  
I sms this s.o.s.  
It won't save you.

## Birdwatching

Our world begged for existence.  
We carried our valor secretly  
No witnesses for our triumphs  
For overcoming another day.  
Not being able to save even ourselves,  
We dropped on the bed  
As if we'd lost a battle.

In the mornings we melted back  
From sleeping like rocks  
Into floating bodies in a void.  
We watched the birds  
From our square-foot lawn and cherished  
Not just their movement –  
Their gift of coming from different worlds –  
But our own growing ability,  
While standing up, standing still  
To notice them.

## Note

You're my wall,  
you're my Wailing Wall,  
not the one in Jerusalem, but here in our home,  
built on my heart.  
This is the happiness you're capable of bringing me,  
being a place to cry.  
This poem is a note  
I'm hiding inside you,  
pleading to have more than you  
to be familiar with.  
This poem is a prayer  
that the note will be found and heard  
by someone other than yourself.

# James Tian, Tianyu



James Tian, Tianyu, male, born in 1994 Shandong Province Tai'an City. The member of Chinese poetry society, China central television (CCTV) "Chinese wisdom" group director, calligraphy and painting at the signing of a writer, the member of the American China frequently, international archaeological and historical linguistics institute researcher, director, Serbia Alia Mundi magazine at this stage the only interview Chinese poets.

## Death Is Merely a Peace

As small as a seed,  
And thin like a tree.  
Maybe one day is the last day,  
Perhaps someday I'll vanish.

Like a star full of hope,  
Like a river never empty.  
What the choice of my fate,  
I don't want to be that Paris.

Yearning for more dreams,  
Ignored the stuff and switches.  
Disappeared just like appearing again tomorrow,  
Death is merely a peace.

*Love can  
defeat anything,  
Know this ancient  
word has been used  
many times...*

## Love Can Defeat Anything

Anytime and anywhere,  
There have many myths through our eyes.  
Several times,  
I'd like to make it sure,  
What's the meaning of this life.

Anything and anyone,  
There need more feelings to be as tide.  
Day and night,  
Keep combat,  
Believe firmly the love can solve all the crimes.

Love can defeat anything,  
Know this ancient word has been used many times.  
As long as its expression from our very heart,  
There'll have the infinite burst of power and light.

Love can defeat anything,  
But can always guard the true aspect.  
Hold this tight and draw with soul,  
You never know what the kindness can do till you try.

## A City Without You

A city without you,  
Flowing time is just like drove.

Have the wings,  
But can never touch the ruby,  
Each night the token of love  
seems like to lose.

A city without you,  
The moonlight is like a dying rose.

Praying to the God,  
Can bring me to your side soon,  
Let our love story  
be so moving too.



# JAN KUNZE



CZECH REPUBLIC

Jan Kunze is a poet, lyricist, singer, curator of contemporary art exhibitions and a publisher.

His first poetry collection, *Hičhaikum* (2004), was published in a total of three editions. In 2007, he published *bibliophilia After Darkness*. The author published his second collection a year later under the title *Dekadent dezert* (its second edition was published in 2012). He co-founded the Independent Publishing House *Perplex*, with which he organized the *Opava Poetry Marathon*, the *Poetry Day in Opava* and a series of author readings *Nadějně vyhlídky*. Prior to recent 2020, *Perplex* published his book, *Monstre charmant*.

He has published in the magazines *Host*, *Protimluv* and in several anthologies, such as the *Ostrava Briquette*, *From Slow to the Word* and many others. A selection of his poems was heard several times on radio program, *Green Feathers*, including his "live" version in Brno's theatre *Goose on a String*. In 2018, he co-directed and acted a play, *Jam Sessions Beatiks*. He is the initiator and implementer of the *Opava Poetry Project*.

He is a lyricist and singer in the rock bands *KOFE-IN* and indie rock band *Munroe*. Since 2004, he has been performing with the *Hičhaikum* music-recitation project, which has been presented at a lot of author readings, poetry workshops, drama and music festivals. In 2010, the project recorded CD *Hlavně nepanikař!*. He participated in the creation of the music-literary project *Abendland*. He initiated and prepared several exhibition projects, some of which appeared in galleries throughout the Czech Republic. He works as the director of the *Center for Contemporary Art EPO1* and the exhibition curator of the *UFFO Trutnov Gallery*.

[www.jankunze.cz](http://www.jankunze.cz)

nějaký pohyb  
nějaký nový zázrak  
nebo odhalenou existenci  
neznámého tvora  
něco takového by to chtělo  
narušení pokojného řádu  
náboženskou extází propašovanou ven z kostela  
totální úžas  
bezbrehou radost  
sbírku básní jako bestseller  
nový neslyšený tón  
a hudbu, která tě pošle do kolen  
krok blíž  
větší odstup  
pohon na všechny čtyři  
novou Mekku a Betlém  
nový život  
nový svět  
lepší než ten tady

a shift  
a miracle  
or a revealed existence  
of an unknown creature  
this is what you need  
a disruption of your peace and quiet  
a religious ecstasy smuggled out of the church  
an utter amazement  
a boundless joy  
a bestselling collection of poems  
a tone never heard before  
and music that will bring you to your knees  
take one step closer  
keep your distance  
go full throttle  
to the new Mecca and Bethlehem  
a new life  
a new world  
better than this one

# PROF. JOHN MUGUBI



John Mugubi is an Associate Professor of Film and Theatre Arts. He holds B.A. and M.A. degrees in Dramatic Arts from the University of Nairobi, Kenya, and a PhD from Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya. Currently, he is the Dean, School of Film and Media Studies at Kenyatta University. He has published internationally in Dramatic Arts, Literature and Film. He focuses on Playwriting, Theory and Research Methods in the Visual and performing Arts, Screenwriting, Poetry and Film Genres.



## LORD, SHOULD I TRUST YE?

Thou shalt have none other gods before me  
While Polytheists prosper and the faithful fail  
Thou shalt not make thee any graven image  
While the makers make monumental monies, become myths  
New denomination for domination and reputation, no deputation.

Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them nor serve them  
While bowers bloom, servers survive  
Un-bowers gloom, servers suffer.

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord in vain  
While vain-takers victorious, vanquish the veritable.

Six days thou shalt labour and rest on the seventh  
While seven day workers rule the earth  
Six day workers scrap the earth  
All day God-talkers, scum of the earth.

Honour thy father and mother that thy days may be prolonged  
As disobeyers and who keep mum and dad at bay  
Are healthier, wealthier, appropriate ponderous pay  
Good life, May to May, early grave, No way!

Thou shalt not kill  
Patricide, matricide, infanticide, homicide, on the rise  
Perpetrators and posterity in Paradise  
Palaces and parliaments.

Thou shalt not commit adultery  
As adulterous the wondrous, fornication is monstrous  
Devoted to conjugal trustworthiness, you are doomed to loneliness  
Debauchery is fashion, would you rather alienation?  
Decadence is salvation, effervescent emotion  
Age is but a number, Paedophilization is sober  
Rape, rape, escape, aren't we just clothed ape?  
Then bastardization and scott-free inattention  
And child criminalization and dungeon reformation  
And the un-adulterous damnation, childlessness or artificial  
insemination.

Thou shalt not steal  
As the thief becomes the Chief  
Robberman, noble man.

Thou shalt not bear false witness  
When fake affirmation flings into richness

Thou shalt not covet  
When coveters are the getters

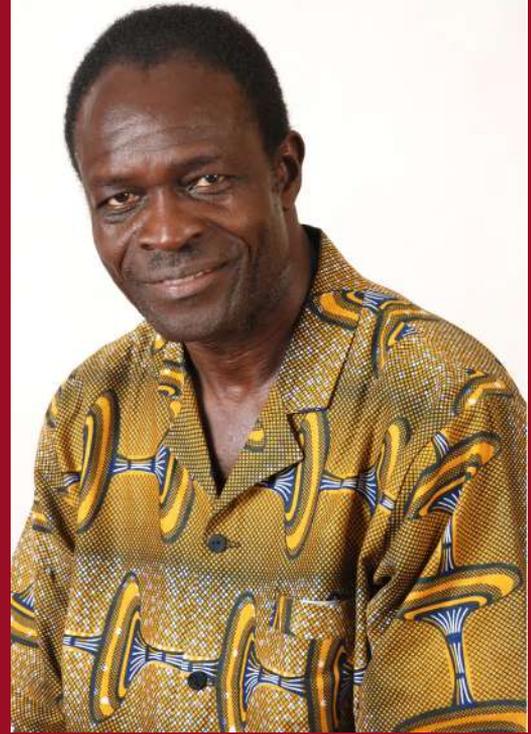
Oh Lord, Should I trust Ye?

# DR. JOSEPH MULEKA



## Walking, talking and taking, democratically

Democracy is a discussion;  
More so an argument to be won  
or an argument to be lost  
But on whose behalf?  
Democracy is a jumble;  
A mixture of good faith and bad faith  
It is soft, it is hard  
It is sometimes murky, sometimes noisy, sometimes messy  
And . . . sometimes lousy, even contentious;  
With an open door to casualties  
Nevertheless, democratic democracy  
Is that democracy contenting, elating  
And . . . gratifying, even uplifting;  
With every open door for gains  
But whose gains?  
We subject democracy to the ballot;  
The winning side feels exultant  
As the losing side feels downcast  
But to whom does the vote really belong?  
The win, neither to you nor me belongs  
And the loss, to you or me oughtn't belong  
Rather, the win is for a small clique  
Who at the end of the game  
Wave you and me, goodbye  
Then elatedly match off to join the high table  
Concealed behind doors, locked and sealed  
You of the side that won,  
I of the side that lost  
Once again congregate at the sufferers' corner  
To pray for our next meal  
Poised to start again;  
To surge forward into another 'democratic' future;  
A future set and determined  
To strangle us and swallow us up, democratically.



Joseph Muleka is a writer, critic, scholar, musician and educationist. He holds a PhD in Literature from the University of Nairobi (Kenya) and is currently a senior lecturer at the Department of Literature, University of Nairobi. He has published in numerous local and international journals, on subjects of literature, culture, theory and gender. His complete works in the latter area include *Images of Women in African Oral Literature* and *Girl Characters in Children's Books: A Patriarchal Portrait*. He has also written student guides, short stories and story books for junior readers. Some of the titles for the junior readers' category include: *Naomi and the Cannibals*; *Naomi in her New School*; *Naomi the Detective* (Nominated for The Wahome Mutahi Prize for Literature, 2014); *Naomi's Stories*; *Naomi and Cindy*; *A Terrible Disease* and *Lion the King*. He is now in the process of collecting poetry under the title "Three Sides of a Coin" and an anthology of short stories by the title "The Brick Fence". Muleka also holds Certificate in Teacher Education – P1 (Mosoriot Teachers Training College); Dip. Ed (Kagumo College); B.Ed. (The Catholic University of Eastern Africa) and MA in Literature (Kenyatta University).

*We subject democracy to the ballot;  
The winning side feels exultant  
As the losing side feels downcast*





# JOSEPHAT NDEGE MAUTI



Josephat Ndege Mauti is a playwright and poet. Through his writings, he chronicles the theme of moral decadence in society and looks forth to altering the status quo for a better society. He has published two plays – *The Valentine Wedding* (2017) and *The Forbidden Fruit* (2022). His poems have also been published in the Kistrech Poetry Festival (KPF) annual Official Magazines, *Musings During a Time of Pandemic: A World Anthology of Poems on COVID-19* (2020), and *The Griots of Ubuntu: An Anthology of Contemporary Poetry from Africa* (2022).

## The Defeathered Wing

When she was spotted in the woods,  
The peacock made the swing-sway dance in style.  
She displayed her bountiful beauty to the on-coming masters-to-be,  
But the on-comers battled enormous ruffles  
And the smoke of their cigars choked to death.

Into a narrow cage the peacock was confined,  
And her wings clipped,  
And her feet tied.  
She was shipped to the far West,  
To begin her lifetime test.

Henceforth, the peacock could never swing-sway,  
Only sings a sad song of fear  
And rage.  
She has so far sung for ages  
And the sorrowful words of her sad song reverberate across the hills  
And valleys of distant destinations.  
She sings seeking freedom from the master's defeathering scissors.

The peacock can never swing-sway,  
For the beauty in her feathers is no more.  
The master defeathered her.  
He broke the point of her pride  
And she can no longer feel the breeze of the legendary swing-sway.

The defeathered-winged peacock sings the song of freedom.  
The trees breeze in a tune of hope  
With a promise to blow back home the defeathered peacock.  
So, the defeathered-winged peacock never ceases to sing,  
She sings of her clipped wings,  
And her tied feet,  
And her lost pride,  
And her now hard-to-do swing-sways.  
She sings,  
For there is little she could do.  
But she has borne many who have made the master GREAT!

## Sometimes

Sometimes I sleep on one ear,  
Eyes open.  
Sometimes I wake up to a beautiful day.  
Sometimes I bite my lips,  
All in agony.  
Then I wonder why my head spins . . .  
Perhaps it's the stinking neighborhood,  
Or, maybe, the grotesque images forming in my mind.  
I dance to a tune reverberating nowhere!  
But my heart goes slow though,  
For I need to go gentle on myself:  
A relief to lay down, and  
Stay,  
Get back up, ultimately,  
For healing comes in waves:  
The waves and tides raid and  
Mom says I am healing;  
Yes.  
I am healing, for sure.

## My In-Laws

Their fiery, red eyes protruded through the fence,  
Unblinking, waiting.  
At my back, little Nyansiaboka yawned.  
The old, tattered leso loosely held her,  
I tightened it.  
The eyes shifted, I pressed forward.  
I balanced the water-pot on my head and pressed uphill  
I could see my little hut up the hill  
And my littles as they staged a spirited fight over a pot of porridge.  
The old leso tore,  
Phew! Little Nyansiaboka almost landed with a thud. I caught her midway.  
But the pot fell. It broke!  
The red fiery eyes rushed forth,  
Unblinking, carrying sticks, mouths foaming, chanting  
SHE MUST GO! SHE MUST GO! THIS WITCH MUST GO!  
The sticks landed on me, mercilessly.  
How dare I break their pot?  
Enough! I cried. I'm going back home.  
'Go away, barren witch! My boy wants sons, not good for nothing girls'  
My littles stood at the doorstep, eyes watered,  
They stared up at me, unblinking.  
I sighed, carried them to the kitchen,  
Silently sobbing,  
How can I leave you, my sweet ones!



# Karla Brundage



Karla Brundage was born in the summer of love to a black mother and a white father. She grew up in Hawaii and developed a love of nature. She taught for three years in Cote d'Ivoire where she founded West Oakland to West Africa Poetry Exchange. Author of two books, *Swallowing Watermelons* and *Mulatta- Not so Tragic*, her writing can also be found in *Essential Truths*, *Konch*, *Hip Mama*, *SPARKLE & BLINK*.

## Alabama Dirt

never tasted Alabama soil  
phloem clay  
it's the dust I'm made of

sweet tomatoes  
Uncle Sam bowed  
under the sun  
gently handles the small fruit

so few men in my  
family line  
live

family secret  
buried in denials

Sammy lies in a pool of my mind  
golf club in hand of blood

I call my mom on the phone to ask  
about vigilante justice in  
the segregated south

we don't talk about that

but was there justice?  
I ask

time follows no rules  
and gun shots still deafen  
as I child I was obsessed  
with a black and white photo- I'd hide  
in  
the corner and go over it  
in my mind

lay in the bed with Sammy Younge Jr.  
dreaming him to smile

what made him decide to fight his battle  
alone  
at night  
in Macon County  
after participating always as part of a team

you had emotional problems  
mother says,  
back then  
I just did not want to talk about it

all the things she does not want to  
talk about  
my emotional problems she calls  
them

images of blood still pooling on  
Black cement  
imagined weapon  
justification  
for death

was it in his beautiful head  
that they found the bullet  
college educated brains shot out  
for being hot headed, uppity

ripples of this one death  
penetrate generations

here I am still  
swallowing pills

*First published by Sparkle and Blink vol. 108.*

## White Woman in Africa

skin alabaster shining  
I see her walking from a distance  
Dust road – dirt plasters her white legs  
They told us not to wear shorts  
for 6 months I have covered my shoulders  
against  
to protect  
blue sky  
white woman arrives uncovered, unaware,  
shoulders beckoning solicitations giving all  
western women whispered label whore  
little suns  
dance  
water down dusty path  
shoulders bare  
in defiance  
I cannot  
Allow myself the freedom to  
Dress how I want- so European/So American to  
Arrive and not respect the culture  
To be in her  
skin allows  
freedom (with a capital F)  
to defy all tradition or  
embrace it as her own  
My own thoughts swirl manically in my head. Back in the  
Motherland and still I am not free.  
Voices of “respect” your elders and “respect” the culture-  
you are not an outsider here you will  
finally belong.  
But I don't.  
Her womb carries  
the white skin the  
right tone to shadow  
over darkness  
I do envy her freedom. She does not even know it's hers.  
How can she walk in this culture with  
bare legs? She is safe always safe.  
she walks easily-danger  
Every footstep  
A grave

# Race Trait(d)or

I am not black. I am not even an ally. In my own skin, I am the enemy. Contextualized in this black vs white frame. I am a traitor. I evade the margins and disappear.

If one believes those pithy sayings that being silent is worse than the actual crime, or the christian doctrine at that thinking the thought is the same as doing it. Then I am all 10 sins.

I am first a murderer. I have slain myself in full and in part, denying life first to one half of myself and then to the other.

A covetous robber, I have taken the lord god's name as a weapon to smite my enemy, especially when god wore blue jeans (eyes) and walked in wolf's clothing inside my house to take what he wanted including my body which I gave willingly a sacrifice for worship to him.

The one sin from which I find absolution is a matter of semen/tics - for how can I have committed adultery without coveting my neighbor's... but he was not a wife, just kept, passive, a possession.

I have dishonored both mother and father and that is a story I will live to tell. It is on this Lord's day that I bear this false witness. In writing these words, my prayer is to be absolved

Here is another one:

I am a race trader (traitor)

When I was born, they would have called me a black baby, but I traded that in for beautiful baby girl.

At some point, I became black and white baby eventually passing for Hawaiian

I evolved to I dont give a fuck what you think teenager then

beautiful long legs long hair dare devil, never says no to anything girl

In college, I was exotic girl from hawaii

pretty for a black girl

not like the others

not really black or white girl girl

I became flying by, running through,

I became runner girl, stalker girl, barefoot, panty less

Snoring girl

I became

Girl who had seizures, with black eye, sleeping in class and though exams girl

I became what am I girl,

what are you girl

mixed up

mixed race

victim or rape

not survivor girl

I became yellow girl

wanna be white girl

passing girl

poet

I became who are you

Eventually I became a woman

mother

not so black as her daughter

abandoned

Single

I became black woman

I became black woman in Africa

not black african woman

murungu in africa

black teacher

not black enough teacher

not real black teacher

I became woman angry,

angry black woman

too much black/white

not enough black/white

I became dance poet

I became poet teacher

I became forgive me mother

Forgive me father

I became me, mother

I became and am becoming

me

I

am

me

The one sin from which I find absolution  
is a matter of semen/tics - for how can  
I have committed adultery without  
coveting my neighbor's...

# Prof. Dr. Laksmisree Banerjee



Prof. Dr. Laksmisree Banerjee is an established Poet, Literary Critic Educationist, Editor and Vocalist with many National and International Publications & Awards to her credit. She is a Senior Fulbright Scholar & Professor (USA), Commonwealth Scholar (UK), National Scholar Calcutta University, India, UGC Post-Doctoral Research Awardee and Founder Pro-Vice Chancellor & Ex Vice Chancellor of Kolhan University. As a University Professor of English & Culture Studies, Dr. Banerjee has taught, lectured and recited her Poetry & Music in premier Universities, Literary Festivals & International Conferences across the globe. She has Eight published Books of Poetry with One Hundred Twenty Academic & Creative Publications in Journals and Anthologies, including books across the world. She is an avid Rotarian, a Multiple Paul Harris Fellow and the Indian Rashtrapati's Nominee on Boards of Central Universities. Of her many Awards, she is the Recipient of the Sahitya Akademi AVISHKAR Accolade, cited as "a Scholar-Artiste & a Poet-Musician"(2002). She is also the recipient of the prestigious UGC (Govt. of India) POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH AWARD for her path-breaking Work on the Comparative Studies of World Women Poetry (2006). In the recent past she is the Recipient of the KALARATNAM Award 2021, the Honour of The CONNOISSEUR OF THE CREATIVE ARTS by the Tunisian-Asian Poetry Society and the INTERNATIONAL REUEL LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD 2021 among others. She believes in using her Pen and Voice for Equality, Social Justice and International Understanding.



Prof. Dr. Laksmisree Banerjee with her daughter Miss Sudipta Banerjee

## Resurrection

I roam in this grey jumbled jigsaw  
While my life half-lit drenches out  
Through self-woven silk soul cocoons,  
Soon to die till I move out in renewal  
From this enmeshed blighted carapace  
Casting off my wraps of reptile skin  
An ornate raiment of delusional artifice  
To be discarded in sacred stimulus  
An amazing light released in the cumulus  
From the frills, trills, my fake scent,  
The perjury of a beautiful diseased body  
To incarnate into my love's radiance  
A whole cosmos hidden within  
The resurrection of my new being  
Fluttering free with omniscience  
Me the butterfly of life

## Morning of Hope

The sun is rising slowly  
but steadily  
with its orbed crowning glory  
soothing in its orange pulpy story  
our nature's rotund fruit  
of gleaming succulence  
calming the turbulent seas  
of aching strife,  
of ruddy pain and angry blight.

## Let us Live and Love

This speck of life  
This mote of dust  
From the elements  
To my insignificant me  
Seems to waver, quiver, invigorate  
In the cuddle of my genial palms  
In the beating of my cherry-rose heart  
So intangibly tied in gossamer strings  
With the aureoles and vast cosmic heavings ---  
  
Life that magical pied piper  
Ever treacherous  
Ever scintillating  
Fights with my perennial love  
Yet serenades the magic song of bonding  
Never ever lasting as we thought it was  
Still an infinite rhyme beyond the ephemera ---

So let us hug, dance, love and sing the real  
Keep the sequined midnight revelling  
In the perfumed breeze before sunrise  
Let us keep this fairy song ceaseless and alive  
With the breath of our ambrosial being  
The divine eternities we already snuggle  
Preserved within our soul-inter-  
stices of light ---  
  
We disseminate this love and life  
Through ether, land and water  
In every particle, bloom, minuscule fireflies  
As blithe butterflies we dance in honey-gardens  
Through the sunny arches of the nectarine air and skies  
Across the pink blushing cheeks of the horizon---  
  
Till God descends to purify our desiccated desert  
And transform the grey spectral mirage  
Into our dazzling unending oasis of love-laden life  
So we may stop, think, in the sunrise revive  
In this hospitable wayside inn  
Stretching jubilant beyond the night----

# Prof. Maria Dixen



Maria Dixen from Denmark (born 1973).

1998 – 2000: Autor School

Copenhagen, Denmark

2016: Published

*Alt det krat, alle de buske (All those twigs, all those bushes)*

2017: Won the literary prize: Danish Arts Foundation for best first novel in Denmark

2022: Publishing:

*Hvad jeg godt vil have at du husker (What I would like you to remember)*

Work:

Associate Professor at the University, teaching Danish language and literature.



None of them  
surfaced again.  
Neither did you,  
once you laid  
yourself down.

**1** When I stepped into the yellow brick house a few years later, it stuck me that the tap in the kitchen was still dripping. It was the first thing I heard when I entered. It occurred to me that the drip of the water was possibly the last thing you heard before you closed the door behind you. I went out to the kitchen. The black pot was still in its place just beside the kitchen range. When I lifted the lid, I could smell the fragrant mix of spices, meat and vegetables from the stew you'd cooked. The sauce that sloshed around the cuts of meat until they gradually absorbed the moisture and sank to leave small thread patterns on the enamelled pot. The vegetables, too, swirling round the sprigs of thyme and rosemary, you'd pushed down into the stew.

All this I saw when you got me to keep stirring it, up on the stool. The potatoes had just cooked through. There they are steaming in a bowl on the kitchen table. The steam rises and settles on the shelf above the range. It embraced the blue jug and pearls of water settled in splotches on the wall. The embroidered oven mitts hung from their usual place at the side of the shelf. One of them still bore the blackened mark from that time we burned them. I looked towards the window and had to pull the lower lacer curtain to one side to look out across the courtyard. The table and the chairs were still standing in front of the outhouse. Neither one of us had remembered to bring in the coffee cups or sugar bowl, which were still in the middle of the table. The biscuit tray with the flowered pattern, too. I saw that and the cream jug, which was always closest to where you sat.

I opened the window, and your sounds, as you stirred your spoon in the coffee cup, echoed all about the yard. You stayed sat there for hours stirring the spoon in that cup. Even when there was no more coffee in it. The spoon tapping against the porcelain became a gaping cavern, in which I tried to find you when you'd left the house again.

Luckily, for the most part you left traces – a stained serviette you'd dropped, a handkerchief, or glove if it was winter. And when I just couldn't go on searching for you any longer, I saw you through the kitchen window sitting at the table at the courtyard. You sat all bent over. You took one biscuit after the other and drowned them in the black liquid. It was as if the weight of your body latched you to the mattress. Soon you couldn't even move a single bone. All the same I put your shoes on every morning and took them off you when night descended. And as I walked down the path through the fields, you still walked beside me.

2 It occurs to me that I'd like reconstruct my own car crash you say, then say: I need a car, a snowplough, a field and a road. It has to be dark, or at least late in the evening. Street lamps must be absent from this place. There will be one lamp on the road, but it must not be lit. or rather, it is lit. but only a bit. I need a verge. A roadside verge. It's this that has to separate the road from the field. There is nothing on this hard shoulder. Nothing other than weeds and rough grass. But you can't see that because it's snowing.

There has to be some turnips lying in the field. There has to be clumps of them in the field and spilling into the verge. Two turnips also have to be lying in the road itself, under the streetlamp. One of these turnips is a bit smashed. Just a half-piece, really, just lying there. The other turnip has to be whole. That's the one nearest the streetlamp. It has to be icy. It has to be snowing as well – ice and snow have to be there. We can make it late afternoon, if you like. Here I come in the car. Driving from over there. When you see my car lights, you have to be ready. I come driving from up there. My car lights are on. There is a little light in the glove compartment as well. It's open with the flap down. The little bulb illuminates the compartment. The dashboard is all lit up, too. Your blue hat is on the floor below the passenger seat. There's a pair of brown gloves on the seat.

No, I am wearing the brown gloves.

There will be one lamp on the road, but it mustn't be lit. There must be clumps of turnips and the one closest to me must be covered with snow. The roadway mustn't be straight; it starts to swerve from around about midway. There has to be a path through the fields, but you can't see that from where I am sitting, you say. I will appear, driving the red car along the road towards the path. You must not be sitting in the back seat. The dashboard has to be illuminated and heat has to flow over the glove compartment. The glove compartment has to be open. There's a little glowing bulb inside it. There is a book about animals in there as well.

I have the wipers going., but they are not very effective. I am driving and now I stop. Beside me, to the left, I see a big clump of turnips. Or rather, I can't see if they're turnips or not, because I can't see anything through the window.

But what about erasing the tracks of events and recreating the original situation? You say, and I say: but every thought is blurred and I can't see clearly. It's almost as if a cloud of ambiguity has taken possession of the event itself, and only fragments of what happened remain – pepping out from behind a mass of other ideas about what I believe happened.

Like the snowplough for example.

There has to be some turnips lying in the field. There has to be clumps of them in the field and spilling into the verge. Two turnips also have to be lying in the road itself, under the streetlamp. One of these turnips is a bit smashed. Just a half-piece, really, just lying there. The other turnip has to be whole.

3 I no longer remember very clearly whether it was actually there, or it was the wish for it to be there that engendered its existence in my thoughts, you say. Or take the steering wheel and its yellow velour cover, which fits tightly to the round plastic frame with just a single opening to its inside lining. This is a crucial factor for whether the event actually took place or not. Because if there are two openings to the lining it's irrelevant whether it's the same situation, you say, and then say: because then it's already changed to something else, which also has an original situation, but not this one we're in.



# Mathura (aka Margus Lattik)



Mathura (aka Margus Lattik, b. 1973) is an Estonian writer and artist. In 2014, his collection of poems *Käe all voogav joon* (The Line Flowing Beneath Your Hand) won the Gustav Suits Poetry Prize, 2016 saw the publication of his first prose book *Jääminek* (As the Ice Lifts) which received the Virumaa Literary Award for the year's best historical novel. His latest works are a series of haikus on Hong Kong, loosely strung into a narrative, and a poetry collection dealing with loss („Lahusolek“ – „Separation“). His poetry has been translated into a dozen languages, including Swedish, Chinese and Hebrew. He is a member of Estonian Writers Union and does programs for Estonian National Broadcasting.

## THE RIVER

There is a river  
deep inside our yellow house

a drift of songs and destinies  
dark petals flowing

and birds that seek  
the depths of underground

while children play  
in silent knowing

replace, recast the spell  
of inner geography

a galaxy inside  
the womb

the worlds not here nor there  
but inbetween

a dead man's face  
where oceans loom

and sorrows keep  
their careful light

a canoe of stars  
a sickle rowing

like dreams relinquished  
to the naked sky

where we must crest and pass  
and keep on growing

## AS STONES

Everything that has been  
has been  
and will not be again,  
or if it is, it will not be  
in the same way.  
After a thousand years of settling  
the sea washes us out  
onto a light blue shore,  
oblivious of our weight  
and roundness,  
we are as numb as  
a statue's hand.  
We need a book  
to tell us we are secrets,  
yet the pages stick together  
like the yearly rings of a tree,  
we see them  
but not into them;  
we need a set of laws  
about forgotten beauty,  
death's repulsive face,  
the racing wheel of time,  
yet beauty  
remains an unwritten book,  
like life,  
days, days,  
white blossoms,  
mist on the sea,  
pages fall out,  
full of something,  
or nothing

## HVÍTÁ

Once the snow melts to bare the land  
again,  
the skies too will awaken to a new life.  
Horse, the perfect animal, comes  
to drink at a river while the moss  
rustles  
and grows tall underneath his heavy  
hooves.  
Night gathers up its remains  
and travels away South. Three days.  
For three whole days there hasn't been  
a soul in sight, so that my inside  
is now just as empty as the wilderness  
around.  
Empty, full of expanse.

We need a book  
to tell us we are secrets,  
yet the pages stick together  
like the yearly rings of a tree,  
we see them  
but not into them;

# Moncho Iglesias Míguez



SPAIN

Moncho Iglesias Míguez is an award-winning poet, novelist and translator from Galicia, Spain. Recent collections include *Oda ás nais perennes con fillos caducos entre os brazos* (Positivas, 2007), *pedras de Plastilina* (Toxosoutos, 2012), *Tren* (Urutau, 2018) and *Cheira* (Urutau, 2020) and the novels *Tres cores, azul* (Estaleiro, 2009) and *Don Pepe* (Do Peirao, 2017). He has translated from the Hebrew of Etgar Keret, *O conductor de autobús que quería ser Deus* (Rinoceronte, 2006) and *Saudades de Kissinger* (Rinoceronte, 2011) as well as from the Arabic of Mahmud Darwish *Carné de identidade* (Barbantesa, 2012) and from the English of Randa Jarrar *Un mapa do lar* (Hugin e Munin, 2015). He collaborates in the magazine *Tempos Novos* and the newspaper *Praza* and he works as a teacher. Due to his job, he has been teaching in different countries such as Bangladesh, India, China, Palestine or Djibouti.



## My dad's last trip

Rides the rider in his swallow  
and knocks on the knocker of his house  
and waits for the blessing of all in the nest  
and all lean the snout on the window

Rushes the rider next to his mummy  
leaving the tiles of his kitchen behind  
He covets the hugs and their warmth  
but no neighbour approaches his soul

Everything is useless inside the castle  
which only covers of the mask the shadows  
and deformed bodies on the way to heaven

Grabs the rider the moan in the veil  
and lands the fly on the last link  
on the kiss of the word that just tastes to accused

## The Parrots

I have a friend runs skivvies  
who told me about parrot smuggling  
up through the Fire Mountains  
Apparently they learn Arabic in the Territories  
kitchens filled with lessons  
He never returned them  
to where they came from  
He hasn't a clue how many there are  
how many there were  
but 47 doesn't sound right  
All he knows is where they come from  
where they go  
the parrots and their cages.

*Everything is useless inside the castle which only covers of the mask the shadows and deformed bodies on the way to heaven*



# NICHOLAS OMONDI



## BREWING PEACEFUL ELECTION

Two cups of Madoadoa phrase  
'Kehi' call him, and claim it's a praise  
Add two days of propaganda to the mixture of tribal utterance  
A pot full of questionable academic papers  
Stir using a local newspaper, ensure the headlines are bias.

To the grassroot politics, retain all the incumbents  
As party leader, squeeze their pockets until dry.  
Whisk the poured party primaries then deny citizens their choice.  
-ensure he runs on independent ticket-

To few media stations,  
Display unverified statistics  
"In the Kenyan map shown, coalition X covers blue regions"  
To the rallies, keep journalists in oblivion.

With one vote in your pocket- ubiquitously-  
"Promise" your gods  
"I'll deliver ninety percent of my people to you  
For my luncheon  
And  
For your infernal pauper life."

## \*PET\* ?

A pet-  
A strange diction in Africa  
For a black cat is a jini-  
An infernal Lucifer,  
Wheedling peace off humanity.

Strange word indeed  
For all brown dogs are rabid dog  
Kissed with a hurled stone  
For Africans are David and stray bitches are Goliath

Strange word-a pet  
For birds caged are for witches  
And their songs-  
A harbinger of impending danger.

Tortoise and turtles  
Kept in the house?  
Strange,  
Their dexterous footprints  
On sandy floor  
And short strides  
So amazing  
Yet for us,  
Ecstasy we get from crushing their shells,  
Their death, our joy.

## I'M TIRED OF CORRECTION

'Thought handkerchiefs are meant for running nose  
And sweat  
And dirt  
Until  
She dressed in one.  
My dress, my choice!

The laughter that sent a dreadful embarrassment  
For  
I asked him to mend his torn trouser  
Cracked at the knees  
'Swag', a new word in town, he coined.

"Please, tie your belt well  
It's long and hanging"  
"What do you mean well?"  
A response, with a look-corrosive  
A bag's hand-turned belt  
Creative but strange.

"Wassup yoh?"  
A curious greeting  
To a teacher  
Ah! I'm tired of correcting.

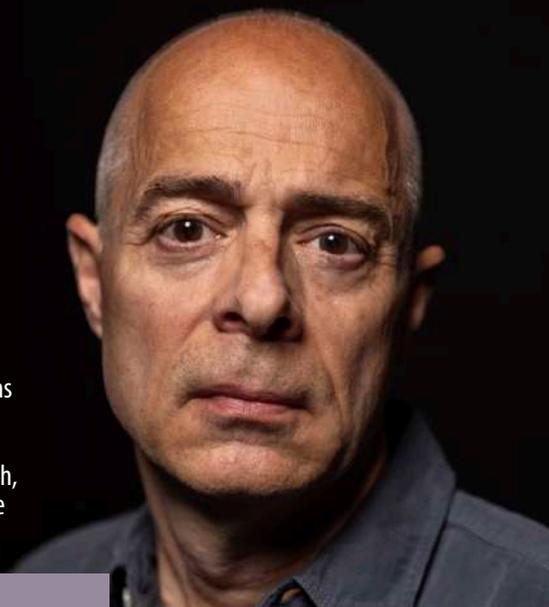
The slap I received  
When I said her back was bare  
Exposing her delicate skin to spearing sun heat,  
My dress, my choice!

# Niels Frank



DENMARK

Niels Frank, born February 25th 1963 in Braedstrup, Denmark. MA in literary history from University of Aarhus, Denmark. He has written numerous book reviews, worked as editor of several literary journals as well as book series. From 1996-2002 he was the head of the Danish Authors' School in Copenhagen. A great number of readings in Europe, South America, and USA. His poetry has been translated into many languages and been printed in journals and magazines. One collection of poetry has occurred in Swedish, another was published in 2011 in an English translation by BookThug in Toronto, Canada, under the title Picture World.



## Publications

- 2019 Sidste vers (Last Chapter), novel
- 2018 Vulkaner på månen (Volcanoes on the moon), novel
- 2015 Tristhedens historie (The History of Sadness), character portraits
- 2013 Nellies bog (Nellie's Book), novel
- 2010 Spørgespil (Who's Asking), shorter prose
- 2008 Små guder (Small Gods), poems
- 2007 Alt andet er løgn (Everything Else Is a Lie), essays on modern literature
- 2006 Tak for i går (Thanks for Yesterday), short stories on art and artists
- 2005 Én vej (Picture World), poems
- 2004 Første person, anden person (First Person, Second Person), essays, poems, shorter prose
- 2001 CV (CV), photo book
- 2001 Amerikansk katalog (ed., American Catalogue), anthology of 20th century literature and art in USA
- 2000 Kritisk alfabet (ed., Critical Alphabet), a collection of essays by Danish literary critic Poul Borum
- 1998 Livet i troperne (Life in the Tropics), poems and shorter prose
- 1996 Tabernakel (Tabernacle), poems
- 1993 Yucatán (Yucatán), essays on literature, music, and art
- 1988 Genfortryllesen (The Re-Enchantment), poems
- 1986 Digte i kim (Poems in Embryo), poems
- 1985 Øjeblikket (The Moment), poems

## Translations

- 2005 Bret Easton Ellis: Lunar Park (Lunar Park)
- 2005 Francis Ponge: At tage tingenes parti (Le parti pris des choses)
- 2001 Anne Carson: Selvbiografi i rødt (Autobiography of Red)
- 1996 Paul Muldoon: Enhjørningen forsvare sig selv (The Unicorn Defends Himself)
- 1989 John Ashbery: Selvportræt i et konvekst spejl (Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror)
- 1987 John Ashbery: En bølge (A Wave)

## Acknowledgments

- 2014 National Critics' Award
- 2013 The Danish Art's Foundation's prize for book of the season
- 2009 The Montana Prize for Literature
- 2008 Life Award from the Danish Art's Foundation
- 2007 The Georg Brandes Prize from the Danish Literary Critics' Association
- 1999 The Otto Gelsted Prize from The Danish Literary Academy
- 1996 Book grant from Gyldendal Publishers
- 1995 Aarestrup-Medaillen from the Danish Writers' Union
- 1992 Henrik Steffens Studienstipendium der Stiftung F.V.S. of Hamburg, Germany

## In the Californian Backyard

After David Hockney

The water splashes and the palms rise above the most mundane banalities we revel in.

The rest merely looks on, casually studies the external, extroverted side of itself. It's a pleasant day, a good day to live.

Everything is so simple, but simplicity is an enormous art. For if suddenly every detail disappears, dissolved in sunlight, only the idea itself remains, the abundance, and it cannot distinguish between day side and night side.

In the idea, reality is only an impression. In the idea, reality is impeccable. It covers its own tracks, so that each remaining thing may mark an enclosed here.

But the water, too, is a trace, especially if someone plunges into it from a yellow diving board. The splash hisses up in a chased coolness and betrays him, destroys the perfection of the surface, makes it crackle. It marks a here which is absent. What's most alluring is concealed, you can only dream of it, unless the most alluring things are precisely those you can only dream of. Everything else is indifferent in its explicitness.

Maybe you can get to know him better, sit in the pool chairs and eat ice cream with him while the sinking sun glitters in each of the thousand pearls on thighs and shoulders. In this way the idea keeps fumbling for more and more details, until a light rain falls over the deserted pool, and all surmises complete themselves.

From: *Tabernakel (Tabernacle)*, 1996

## Conspiracies

The parrot kicks. You can say that. The parrot answers himself in a profound voice. You can say that. In his own way the parrot is a genius. But nobody is in his own way and least of all him. But how do you tell him that.

My coffee hides in the cup. You can say that. But from whom? Steam rotates vaguely as I look into the depths, a kind of horror that makes itself invisible before me, the purest nothingness which in reality is water. But how do you tell it that.

And that many mediocre dreams just rumble blindly through a darkness. And that the stars bloom high up in it. And that all the consequences of this begin to quote themselves brilliantly as soon as you turn your back on them.

In the most taciturn language, as for example this, such atrocities take place all the time. The parrots squawk. The coffee is silent. To my credit I repeat its silence, a conduct of life I loudly proclaim. In this way the incantations fail to recognize each other, but are continually combined. Yes. You can say that. They're combined into a powerful theory. Forgive me for constantly proving it.

From: *Tabernakel (Tabernacle)*, 1996

## 15

Did I really say that:  
my slightly poetic language  
– that's priceless!  
Because poetry is not a language. I mean:  
as soon as it becomes a language it's no longer poetry  
– poetry poetry poetry!  
Or: as soon as words become poetry they also become a language and then they're no longer poetry.  
Something like that. That's why I prefer the words  
before they've arranged themselves into poetry. I mean:  
before poetry has corrupted the words  
before it rides their asses off.  
If I'm to interpret the call of the words  
(but not their calling)  
they say something like:  
what on earth is poetry  
now that it's not a language?  
Okay. If poetry is not a language  
if  
it may be a focusing within a huge field of blurs.  
And as soon as it begins to focus on a cactus or some flagstones propped up against each other in Berlin

on a splash in a swimming pool or bread crumbs in bed  
on traffic lights shifting from red to green at a deserted intersection  
– well THEN WHAT actually?  
Then the thing we call a poem will emerge  
I think  
in the middle of this focusing. That's right: a poem  
– poem poem poem!  
And then the poem will be to poetry what a snowflake is to a snowstorm: each flake must be the eye of the snowstorm because the snowstorm itself can't see anything.

Sorry for making it so complicated. So corrupted. I just wanted to tell you that I'm alone most of the time  
– alone alone alone!  
But I'm never all by myself.  
The poem is there  
you know.  
And as always the hardest thing is not to write the poem  
but to get to the writing of it. To get to the poem is harder than anything! Trust me. To get to this tiny mountain built of bread crumbs is inconceivably hard and I respect its heights almost to the point of veneration.  
But I can climb it with my eyes closed.

Now and then I sense that the poem has seen something  
now and then I grab a pen from the mug and write down the poem  
almost as if I'd come along for a look.  
A look. Not a vision. For the visionary things and pictures are connected like Siamese twins.  
Not for me. Climbing the tiny bread-crumbs mountain is for me not a struggle against the ice-cold wind or against wild animals or going snow-blind. It's a struggle against the pictures.  
As if writing the poem were all about fighting the pictures.

What does that mean? It means:  
everything we have no picture of  
everything that's without the least little glittering picture  
must be poetry.

It's all that simple.  
Poetry too.

From: *En vej*, 2005, published in Canada as *Picture World*, 2011  
All three poems translated by Roger Greenwald with the poet

# RUTH JEPKORIR KOECH KENYA

Ruth Jepkorir Koech is a 20 year old female student poet pursuing a Bachelor degree in English and Literature at Kisii University. Although Ruth's poems have been featured in various international magazines and literary journals, Bile on My Face, is her first full collection of poems. The book will be launched during this festival..



## \*I'm Still Writing...\*

\_Far\_ ,  
\_Far from your lovely eyes.\_  
\_I can't hear your heartbeat from here, are you dead?\_  
\_My mind is a lonely place crowded with words,  
but there are posters of missing letters, "I Love you" is no longer in the view.\_

\_My Mind is a library of the unknown ,but you knew how to drive me mad.\_

\_Your love like a river non knew where it will end ,but yours took a detour and fell off my chest.\_

\*It fell off my chest.\*

\_I thought love was Blind until yours saw its way out of my life,\_

\_I kept on throwing money I thought love was Blind until yours saw more gold on another soul.\_

\*Your love was just a beggar while my pockets were as empty as our promises so you left.\*

\_Love is blind but yours had eyes for six packs while I couldn't stomach the fact that we were never meant to bear.\_

\*So,\*

\_If I were to describe you in simple terms,\_

\_I would call you Shakespeare with Adele's tale for you wrote the best Heartbreak story of my life.\_

\*Hello can you hear me ?\*

\_Hitting note after note, you were my favorite Villain that's why you went out with a bang!\_

\*Hello can you hear me ?\*

\_You didn't look back when you left, to hell with that\_

\_You didn't even stammer when you asked for a break.

*My Mind is a library of the unknown but you knew how to drive me mad.\_*

## \*Blinded by Love\*

Blinded by love,  
I dived into the smoke  
That roses with half demons  
Into the ocean storms,  
Of their dark forms splashing sin.

Blinded by love,  
I became the shadow,  
That burns to shine  
Up the diamond night phantom.

Blinded by love,  
I became the scent,  
That you inhaled  
With your nostrils  
And I believed  
That you were God sent.

Blinded by love,  
I painted all the rainbows  
Bedazzled in our bleeding wounds  
Just to heal the douleur,  
That was in our hearts.

Blinded by love,  
I became the rose  
That dripped gushing  
In crimson and chrome.

Blinded by love,  
I became the drunk cloud  
That rained love  
Non-stop.

Blinded by love  
I became the  
\_Once upon a love\_



# Sitawa Namwalie



KENYA

Sitawa Namwalie is an award-winning Kenyan poet, playwright and performing artist known for her unique dramatized poetry performances which combine poetry and classical Kenyan musical traditions. "Cut off My Tongue," her first performance was performed in Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda and at the Hay Festival in the UK in 2009. In 2010 "Cut off my Tongue" was selected by the Sundance Theatre Lab in the first East African Sundance Lab held on Manda Island. Sitawa's growing body of work includes short stories, dramatized poetry productions and plays, "Homecoming" (2010), "Silence is a Woman", (2014), "Black Maria on Koinange Street" and "Room of Lost Names" (2015), "Taking my Father Home" (2020), "Escape" the Musical. Sitawa Namwalie is a fellow of the Tallberg Foundation and lives in Nairobi and works as an international consultant. Sitawa holds a BSc in Botany and Zoology from the University of Nairobi and an MA in Environmental Studies from Clark University, Massachusetts, USA. Sitawa represented Kenya in tennis and hockey in her youth.

## Eh, Kumbe I'm Poor!

They told me I am poor,  
International experts, government officials, NGOs,  
All sat together in conferences,  
Wagged sad heads,  
And sang in unison,  
"You are poor,  
You live on less than one dollar a day!"

At first I dismissed them,  
Told them Kwenda Kabisa!  
I have all I need,  
Luxuriant heritage, verdant calm,  
Cool waters slake my thirst.  
Besides, did I not bequeath you land for your churches, your  
schools?  
Just like that!

The experts were adamant,  
They sang one song in unison,  
"You are poor,  
You live on less than one dollar a day!"

Led by the educated ones,  
My own children joined the ranks of my doubters.  
I knew then I was lost,  
They said, "Baba",  
"You are poor,  
You have 500 Zebu cows?  
Pahhhh! A poor man's breed!  
Humpbacked, misshapen, so thin!  
Others, out there in the world, have, gleaming stacks of things!  
In many shapes and colours!"  
Guarded against the vagaries of life,  
Coddled on feather beds,  
They partake of rainbow tinctures,  
Transport themselves through richly seasoned dreams,  
Baba, your life is naked, elemental, without adventure,

Your nights, deep, dark, relentless boredom!  
My offspring coiled their lips at me!  
Envy glinted their eyes,  
They craved the history of others, coveted triumphs of strangers,  
I was confounded!  
To imagine,  
I traded my wealth,  
For this?  
For progress?  
Poor, poor,  
"You are poor,  
You live on less than one dollar a day!"

Cowed by their dismissive disdain,  
My laughter disappeared.

I see their point,  
Indeed, I lack so much,  
I need bottled mineral water,  
All I have are flowing rivers!  
I need glittering gems,  
All I have are raw deposits.

I am drained!  
Afflicted by strange maladies,  
They attack my nerve!  
Give me aches, pains!  
Leave me dissatisfied, listless!  
I'm so without substance,  
Small things flatten me!

Poor, poor,  
"You are poor,  
You live on less than one dollar a day!"

Heh!  
I dare not tell them the truth,  
I never see a dollar any day!  
They will declare me dead!  
Eh, Kumbe!

## Unknown History

See me as I am!  
See me as I am!  
Father why do you hide me from myself?  
You lost my fore-mothers,  
Interred them in untold stories,  
Mislaid their heroism,  
Their foibles have gone astray, as foibles will,  
You bequeathed me shamed silence, instead  
Was that your intention?  
Mother why do you hide me from myself?  
My life is a pulsing shadow  
When I encounter me in a mirror,  
I see what I am not,  
I am unknown history,  
Phantoms are the silent listeners in my every discourse,  
I do battle with legions of ghosts, enraged with cunning secrets!

Enough!  
No more,  
I must unearth concealed names,  
See me as I am!  
See me as I am!

*Mother why do you hide me from myself?  
My life is a pulsing shadow  
When I encounter me in a mirror,  
I see what I am not,  
I am unknown history.*

## Abandoned Lives

Our abandoned lives  
Can no longer straddle the world  
We are forsaken,  
In one place, lost,  
Another recently found,  
Who are we then?

Our abandoned lives,  
Beg attention,  
To no response,  
Inimitable sounds go untended,  
Find no reason for being,  
Lose shape,  
Softly fade away,  
Become buoyant memories of unfathomable sorrow  
Meanwhile, I am indolent in my new life, trying to find a fit.  
I notice nothing.

## Say My Name

What's in a name?  
Is the name in the rose or the rose in the name?  
Where does the sweetness lie?  
I don't know the answer to those questions my friend,  
No philosopher am I.  
What I do know is my own name  
What is my name?  
Sitawa, the Third Namwalie.  
Shhh, listen for the magic unleashed when I call it.  
Catch the glimpse of the dancer stirring,  
Feel the sway of sinuous gyrating,  
Hear drum beats from distant pasts evoking  
Joy! When I call my name.

What's in a name?  
I ask again  
Is it nothing but hubris or is hubris nothing?  
Does dignity lie in a name?  
Questions deep and concealing.  
Me, I know my name.

What is my name?  
Sitawa The Third Namwalie  
Watch my step now firming  
Shoulders squaring!  
My hips start rolling  
To the rhythm of feet dancing  
From distant mists of time.  
I hear music when I call my name.

What's in a name?  
Will you answer me at last?  
Does belonging lie in a name  
Or does the name belong?  
Does freedom come with a name?  
Let's ponder that question long and hard, my friend.  
My name is me and I am my name.  
Call me my name!  
Sitawa The Third Namwalie!  
I feel the struggle ceasing,  
The constant warring ebbing,  
Calm returning,  
Love!  
When I call my name!

What's in a name?  
Let's look at this question afresh.  
Is the name creation or is creation the name?  
Does enchantment lie in a name?  
I know the answer to that question my friend!  
Listen close and I will tell you,  
I am Sitawa The Third Namwalie!  
My name is a secret unfurling,  
Wild effervescence foaming,  
A drink to refresh  
On a hot, dusty morning.  
My name will quench your longing.  
Say my name,  
Sitawa The Third Namwalie  
Say my name!



# Tony Mochama



KENYA

Tony Mochama is the multiple award-winning poet and author of twelve books across different genres. He has a poetry collection 'What If I'm a Literary Gangsta?', a poetry text book 'Modern Poetry for Secondary Schools' and a second collection coming out in December titled 'In the City on Water – the Venice poesy.'

## A Poem on Life as an Airport

### Arrivals & Departures

Life is an airport  
The Unborn are runaways on the runway  
Waiting to access life through multiple Concourse

The lone nine-month wait in the corridor  
of course, before most are let through by  
'Passport Control'  
into a life we have little real control, over.

Some will walk on sky-bridges  
others will hover on the Walkways,  
the unfortunate spent their time in the underground  
tunnels, trying to funnel their way up ...

Walk around and see the plastic coffee cups  
Sit a while on the stool at the Airport pub  
Check out what's new and what's up -  
For a few life is Duty Free.  
(smell the perfume)

There are those who will spend their time on their feet  
trying to see when their airplane leaves.

Live. For there are no times, or names of the craft  
that will take you out - on these boarding signs.

Some will spend their entire time in the Waiting Area  
waiting for something spectacular to happen.  
Others spend their time 'Here' lugging around their baggage  
(and asking for direction from anyone who cares to listen).

They WILL call YOUR name at some point  
Check your boarding pass at the Exit Gate  
and ask you to leave the airport  
(That's why they call it 'Terminal'.)

And the rest, left inside this Connection  
constructed (or construed) of light, glass and concrete  
stare out of the floor-to-sky windows,  
And wonder if there is reincarnation.

Musing on whether we are Cloud 9 bound souls  
or just a crowd of cargo; if there is a Higher Power  
in the control tower, or just random radar . . .  
Trying to track the flotsam of Arrivals and Departures.

## 'Mkono Juu'

*(a morbid piece o' poesy dedicated to the late 'Total Man' Biwott)*

At the back of Lee's Funeral Home, sequestered from the  
other cadavers by satin curtain/ and seated on the black  
slab lab bench used for dissections that try to detect  
if the corpse's last meal was laced with poison ...

The ghost of General Nkaiisery rises and receives the recent  
apparition  
of Kipyator, as he comes in through the door, raising one arm  
protectively like a toi blocking a random blow thrown in a par-  
ental brawl, then, relief: 'Oh, it's you general! I thought it was  
Ouko.'

So they sit and discuss those dead (and dead end decades)  
The '80s and the '90s, voices falling and rising as they reminisce  
on 'Operation Nyundo' and that time in Auckland when Kip,  
Total Romeo, tried to wekea a chambermaid hio 'Nyundo ya  
Komeo.'

Until the clock in the mortuary hall chimes five, or maybe  
it is the call of the muezzin in a mosque not far from the morgue  
and General N. now a veteran at these matters of Refrigeration  
says - 'Quick, now we must slide back into our cold drawers  
before the mortician finds us out here and certifies us Alive!  
and ... put your goddamn hand DOWN, Kipyator!'

'I cannot,' says Kip sadly. 'I think rigor mortis may have set in.'

And that's how Dr. Johansen Oduor, Government Pathologist  
will find him  
right arm raised  
like a clever child in a classroom  
patiently waiting for teacher to pick (on) him  
so he may answer the eternal quest (ion).  
'To Be What?'



# Prof. TURCZI ISTVÁN

 HUNGARY

Hungarian poet, writer, translator, university professor and founding editor-in-chief of Parnasszus poetry magazine and publishing house. Received National Literary Prize, Prima Primissima Grand Award, Poet Laureate of Hungary and Order of Commander. In January 2020 he was awarded with the prize Pro Cultura Hungarica. He is Secretary General of the Hungarian PEN Center and Vice-President of World Congress of Poets. His poems have been translated into 25 languages.

## The Voice

Through the starry nights sharp as specters  
streaks a voice over the stagnant gold of  
whisperings:

„show me the poets you read,  
and I'll tell you who you are.”

Show me the poets you respect  
and I'll tell you who you were.  
I see our grandfather's gaunt figures  
during times that seemed unbearable  
when parks withered and we only had our  
books  
to tide us over the winter.

Show me the poets you rally around,  
and I'll tell you what will become of you.”

“

**The basis of  
every belief  
and despair  
is the  
unchangeable.  
Night is  
falling and it  
shall fall  
tomorrow,  
too.**

## Write the way others pray

Where is the hand that creates,  
you asked, at the end of our trip  
inside the cool closed eyed church.

Like two street musicians  
without instruments we sit  
on the stone floor of the isle.  
Don't expect my amazement.  
You never know when your words  
start to affect someone.  
Like a time bomb,  
something tightens, rattles in your brain  
until it finally explodes.

They, the seers of death are wiser than us.  
If I close my eyes, I can see them,  
as they lie next to each other,  
and like the grass they inhale  
the light of the underground.

The basis of every belief and despair  
is the unchangeable.  
Night is falling and it shall fall tomorrow, too.

While this poem stubbornly runs ahead  
in the paper meadows of Elysium.

„Write the way others pray.”

„Live the way others die.”

„Die like the sun, with dignity.”

You never know when your words  
start to affect someone.

Our adult sons, lava-eyed daughters  
reproach our selfishness in vain  
We'll cry because we miss them,  
we'll cry because they miss us.  
Then we bow our heads, rest  
in the coolness of the cathedral  
and in the slow, farinaceous brightness  
seeping through the fissures  
of the interconnected shadows  
we collect a palmful of hope.

## Friendship

I'm scared.

Ever since the trees entered my room to  
warm up,  
it's been a tight squeeze.  
Suspiciously they blinked at me: just what  
kind  
of creature am I?  
Why all the legs, hands, why the gleaming  
eyes? And why isn't my hair green?  
They tasted my dinner, pulled up their  
noses,  
flicked through my books, took pity on me.  
The bed gave them a cramp in their hips,  
while  
the postman's motorbike scared them to  
death.  
They came to like Mozart though. Each  
afternoon  
the cheery sound of the flute welcomed me  
home.  
Till the blossoming buds did our friendship  
last.  
This morning the lumberjack arrived,  
and by means of a greeting he cut  
a nice part out of my past.  
The trees clung together.

*(Translated by David Robert Evans)*



# Yolanda Castaño



SPAIN

Poet, essayist, editor and curator Yolanda Castaño is director of the International Writer's residence Residencia Literaria 1863 in A Coruña, Galicia. The most international name in Galician contemporary poetry, she has published six poetry collections in Galician and Spanish (*Depth of field* and *Second Tongue* among the last ones), she also has poems translated into more than 30 different languages, but also poetry volumes in English, Italian, French, Macedonian, Serbian and Armenian.

She has participated in festivals and literary manifestations all over 40 countries of Europe, America, Asia and the north of Africa. A finalist of the National Poetry Prize, she is the Winner of the National Critics Award, the Espiral Maior Poetry Award, the Fundación Novacaixagalicia Prize, the Ojo Crítico (best poetry book by a young author in Spain), the Estandarte Award (best poetry collection in Spain in 2020) and the 'Author of the Year' by the Galician Booksellers' Association. She has been awarded International fellowships including the IWTCR in Rhodes, Villa Waldberta (Munich), the HIP-Beijing (China), Hawthornden Castle (Scotland) and Valparaíso Foundation (Andalusia).

She is also the author of translations, literary editions, biographies, history of Galician Poetry and poetry books for children. She is a relevant cultural activist too, regularly organizing festivals, literary and translation workshops and the only international monthly readings series in all Spain, all of them hosting local to international poets since 2009. She has mixed poetry with music, visual arts, video, architecture, film in 360°, comic, dance and even cookery, being awarded for that too.

*Translations into English by Keith Payne*

## MAZÁS DO XARDÍN DE TOLSTOI

Eu,  
que bordeei en automóbil as beiras do Neretva,  
que rebañei en bicicleta as rúas húmidas de Copenhague.  
Eu que medín cos meus brazos os buratos de Saraxevo,  
que atravesei ao volante a fronteira de Eslovenia  
e sobrevoei en avioneta a ría de Betanzos.  
Eu que collín un ferry que arribase ás costas de Irlanda,  
e á illa de Ometepe no Lago Cocibolca;  
eu que non esquecerei aquela tenda en Budapest,  
nin os campos de algodón na provincia de Tesalia,  
nin unha noite nun hotel aos 17 anos en Niza.  
A miña memoria vai mollar os pés á praia de Jurmala en Letonia  
e na sexta avenida séntese coma na casa.  
Eu,  
que houben morrer unha vez viaxando nun taxi en Lima,  
que atravesei o amarelo dos campos brillantes de Pakruojis  
e crucei aquela mesma rúa que Margaret Mitchell en Atlanta.  
Os meus pasos pisaron as areas rosadas de Elafonisi,  
cruzarón unha esquina en Brooklyn, a ponte Carlos, Lavalle.  
Eu que atravesei deserto para ir ata Essaouira,  
que me deslicei en tirolina dende os cumios do Mombacho,  
que non esquecerei a noite que durmín na rúa en Amsterdam,  
nin o Mosteiro de Ostrog, nin as pedras de Meteora.  
Eu que pronunciei un nome no medio dunha praza en Gante  
que unha vez suquei o Bósforo vestida de promesas,  
que nunca volví ser a mesma despois daquela tarde en Auschwitz.  
Eu,  
que conducín cara o leste até preto de Podgorica,  
que percorrín en motoneve o glaciar de Vatnajökull,  
eu que nunca me sentín tan soa coma na rue de Sant Denis,  
que xamais probarei uvas coma as uvas de Corinto.  
Eu, que un día recollín  
    mazás do xardín de Tolstoi,  
quero voltar a casa:  
o recanto  
que prefiro  
da Coruña  
  
xusto en ti.

## MANZANAS DEL JARDÍN DE TOLSTOI

Yo,  
que bordeé en automóvil las orillas del Neretva,  
que apuré en bicicleta las calles húmedas de Copenhague.  
Yo que medí con mis brazos los boquetes de Sarajevo,  
que atravesé, al volante, la frontera de Eslovenia  
y sobrevolé en avioneta la ría de Betanzos.  
Yo que partí en un ferry que arribaba a las costas de Irlanda,  
y a la isla de Ometepe en el Lago Cocibolca;  
yo que nunca olvidaré aquella tienda en Budapest,  
ni los campos de algodón en la provincia de Tesalia,  
ni una noche en un hotel a los 17 años en Niza.  
Mi memoria va a mojar los pies a la playa de Jurmala en Letonia  
y en la sexta avenida se siente como en casa.  
Yo,  
que pude morir una vez viajando en un taxi en Lima,  
que atravesé el amarillo de los campos brillantes de Pakruojis  
y crucé la misma calle que Margaret Mitchell en Atlanta.  
Mis pasos pisaron las arenas rosadas de Elafonisi,  
cruzarón una esquina en Brooklyn, el puente Carlos, Lavalle.  
Yo que atravesé desierto para ir hasta Essaouira,  
que me deslicé en tirolina desde las cumbres del Mombacho,  
que no olvidaré la noche que dormí en plena calle en Amsterdam,  
ni el Monasterio de Ostrog, ni las piedras de Meteora.  
Yo que pronuncié un nombre en el medio de una plaza en Gante,  
que surqué una vez el Bósforo vestida de promesas,  
que nunca volví a ser la misma después de aquella tarde en Auschwitz.  
Yo,  
que conduje hacia el este hasta cerca de Podgorica,  
que recorrí en motonieve el glaciar de Vatnajökull,  
yo que nunca me sentí tan sola como en la rue de Sant Denis,  
que jamás probaré uvas como las uvas de Corinto.  
Yo, que un día recojí  
    manzanas del jardín de Tolstoi,  
quiero volver a casa:  
el escondite  
que prefiero  
de A Coruña  
  
justo en ti.

### Apples from Tolstoy's Garden

I,  
who steered my car by the shores of the Neretva,  
who swept my bike through the damp streets of Copenhagen.  
I who stretched my arms across the chasms of Sarajevo,  
who at the wheel crossed the Slovenian border  
and soared in a bi-plane over the Ria of Betanzos.  
I who took a ferry that landed on the shores of Ireland,  
and at the island of Ometepe in Lake Nicaragua;  
I who will never forget that shop in Budapest,  
or the cotton fields of Thessaly,  
or the night when I was 17 in a hotel in Nice.  
My memory paddles on Jurmala beach in Latvia  
and feels just right at home on Sixth Avenue.  
I,  
who once could have died in a taxi in Lima,  
who walked the yellow fields of Pakruojis,

and crossed like Margaret Mitchell that street in Atlanta.  
My feet trod the pink sands of Elafonisi,  
took a zip-line down from the peaks of Mombacho,  
I will never forget the night I slept on the streets of Amsterdam,  
or the Ostrog Monastery, or the rocks of Meteora.  
I who spoke a name in a square in Ghent,  
who once ploughed through the Bosphorus clad in promises,  
who will never be the same since that day in Auschwitz.  
I,  
who drove east as far as Podgorica  
who steered a snow mobile across the Vatnajökull glacier,  
and I never felt as alone as I did on Rue Saint-Denis,  
I will never taste grapes like the grapes of Corinth.  
I, who one day picked

apples from Tolstoy's garden

I want to go home:  
to that hideaway  
I love the most  
in A Coruña

that's you.

*in A Coruña á luz das letras (2008)*

## Reciclaxe

E o azougue gastado no espello do toucador.

Dende a man que procura o pálpito  
aproveito folios xa usados;  
a tinta negra da outra cara advírtese por tras  
e penso  
que tamén se escribe así,  
anotando palabras novas mentres outras  
anteriores  
se transparentan.

## Reciclaje

Y el azogue gastado en el espejo del tocador.

Desde la mano que procura el pálpito  
aprovecho folios ya usados;  
la tinta negra de la otra cara se advierte por detrás  
y pienso  
que también se escribe así,  
anotando palabras nuevas mientras otras  
anteriores  
se transparentan.

## Recycling

And the quicksilver gone from the mirror.

From the hand feeling for the trace  
I make the best of jaded pages;  
the black ink from the flip side shows  
and I think  
this could also be write;  
scribbling new words while other  
earlier words  
seep through the page.

*A Segunda Lingua [La segunda lengua] (ed biling, 2014), Second Tongue (English translation, 2020)*

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*From the hand  
feeling for the trace  
I make the best  
of jaded pages;  
the black ink from the  
flip side shows*

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## PAN DE CELEBRACIÓN. (IT'S AN UNFAIR WORLD)

O mundo é un hotel sen mostrador de recepción.  
O don da elocuencia non é un ben comunitario.

Non se repartiron así nin os pans nin os peixes.  
Por estribor a carne e por babor as espiñas.

Ides perder a cabeza e chóvenvos  
sombreiros,  
os ricos terán cartos os pobres terán fillos.

Eu sei dun pan que eu partiría en anacos  
que fosen minúsculos e durase para os restos;  
se unha faragulla pode ocuparlle a boca a alguén,  
se pode saciar, se talvez destrabala.

Coma botes salvavidas na gloria do Titanic,  
soutos de peites para quen está  
calvo.

Urbi et orbi da retórica: nin está nin se espera.  
Calcétanse barbas para quen non ten queixelo.

Tocáronlles a algunhas bocas tres segundos de memoria.  
E Deus ha dar ese pan  
a alguén con ben menos dentes.

## PAN DE CELEBRACIÓN. (IT'S AN UNFAIR WORLD)

El mundo es un hotel sin mostrador de recepción.  
El don de la elocuencia no es un bien comunitario.

No se repartieron así ni los panes ni los peces.  
Por estribor la carne y por babor las espinas.

Vais a perder la cabeza y están lloviéndoos  
sombrosos,  
los ricos tendrán dinero los pobres tendrán hijos.

Yo sé de un pan que partiría en pedazos  
que fuesen minúsculos y durase para los restos,  
si acaso una migaja puede ocuparle a alguien la boca,  
si puede saciar, si tal vez destrabarla.

Como botes salvavidas en la gloria del Titanic,  
pinas de peines para quien está  
calvo.

Urbi et orbi de la retórica: ni está ni se la espera.  
Aquí se calcetan barbas y tú aún sin mandíbula.

Les tocaron a algunas bocas tres segundos de memoria.  
Y Dios le dará ese pan  
a alguien con menos dientes.

# Kistrech Poetry Festival 2013



KPF 2013 - Drink, Professor! A visit to the village.



KPF 2013- Sarah Poisson (Luthuania)- A visit to the village- Photo by V.Suslavicius



KPF 2013 - Onarinde Fiyinfoluwa (Nigeria)- Photo by V.Suslavicius



# Kistrech Poetry Festival 2015



# Kistrech Poetry Festival 2017





KPF 2018-Vice-Chancellor, Kisii University

# Kistrech Poetry Festival 2018



KPF 2018-A Visit to the Village  
Cyprus Poet, Nese Yasin



KPF 2018-Kuria Dancers in Migori

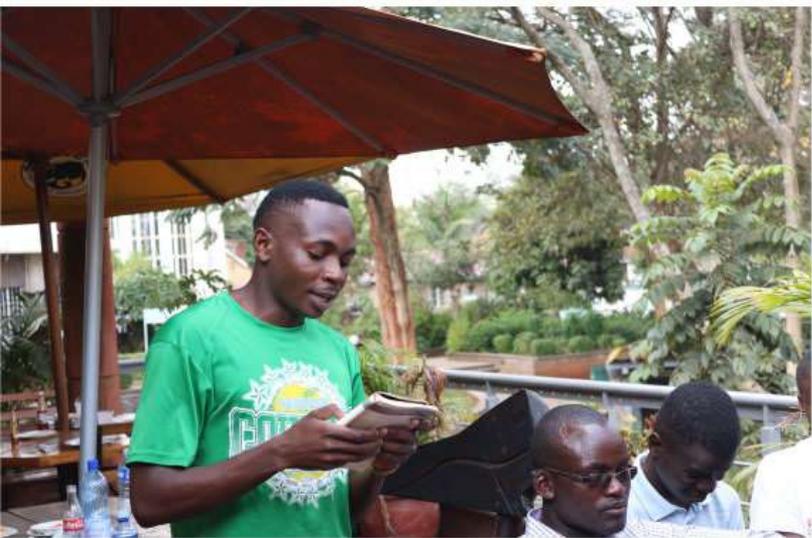


KPF 2018- Guest Poets from Europe



A Visit to Maasai Mara  
Game Reserve

# Kistrech Poetry Festival 2019





# Kistrech

8TH EDITION

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