kistrech

Theme: Poetry and Performance

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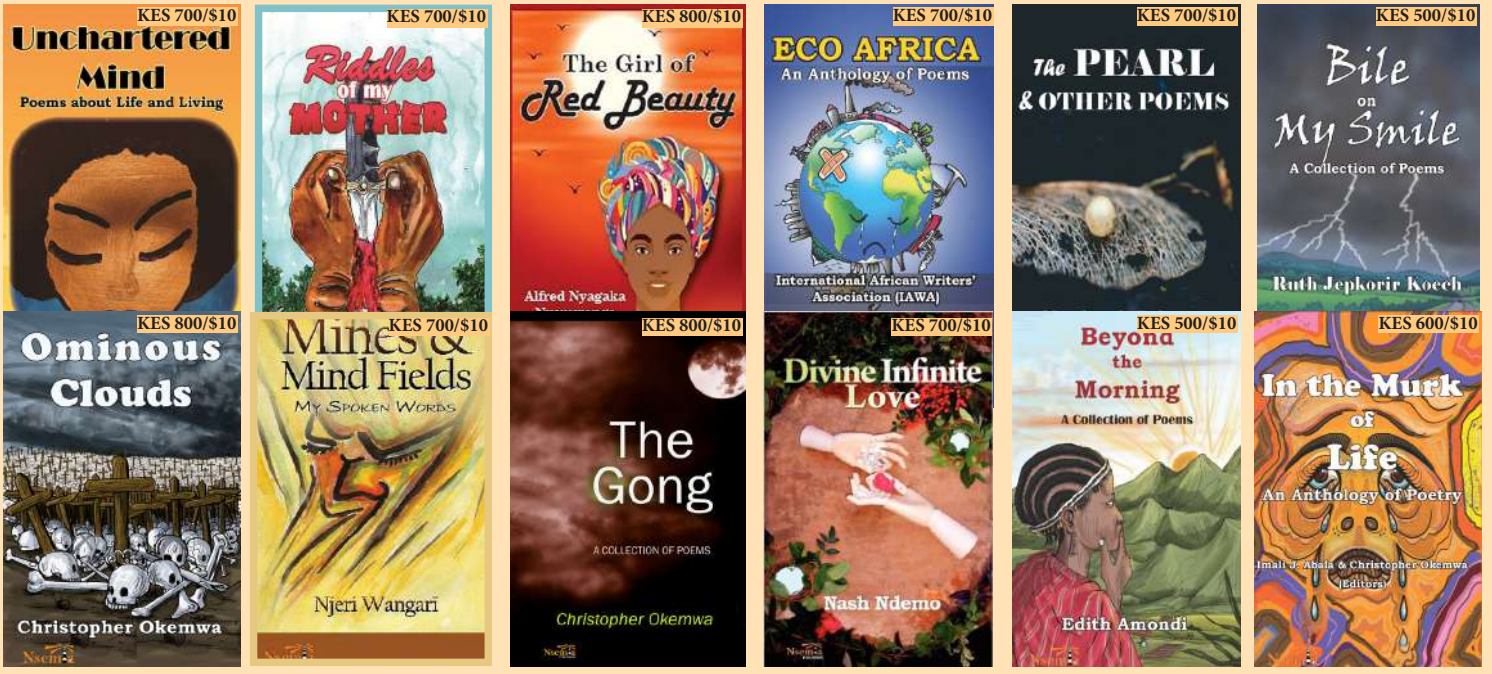

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Dr. Christopher Okemwa (Executive Director, Kistrech International Poetry Festival)

KPF 2025 MESSAGE FROM

THE PATRON,

KISTRECH INTERNATIONAL POETRY FESTIVAL

This year's Kistrech international Poetry Festival is lean in terms of global representation, as we have fewer poets than in the past editions. On that note, I would like to announce the participation of Winston Farrell, a renowned poet from Barbados, and who was a participant at our festival in 2023. Winston is a theatre arts practitioner and A published poet, a winner of the Frank Collymore Literary Endowment Prize, the Governor General's Award for poetry 2015 and the 2020 and 2023 Gine On Peoples' Choice Poet of the Year. Winston has an MA degree in Theatre and Development Studies (Leeds). By virtue of having participated twice in this festival, we shall award him a trophy this year as a life member of Kistrech International Poetry festival.

Our second poet, Riina Katajavuori, is a Finnish poet and author. Her poems have been translated into 30 languages and she has performed her poetry in Japan, Canada and Peru. Her latest collection is Vasemman käden runot (Left hand poems), 2023. I take this opportunity to welcome Riina Katajavuori to the 15th edition of Kistrech International Poetry Festival.

Our third poet, Tereza Riedlbauchová, is from Czech Republic. She is a poet, publisher, translator and literary historian. Tereza who has taken part in international festivals of poetry, book fairs and literary residences in many countries, is the author of the collections Modrá jablka (Blue Apples, 2000), Velká biskupovská noc (Great Biskupov Night, 2005), Don Vítor si hraje a jiné básně (Don Vitor Playing and Other Poems, 2009), Pařížský deník (Paris Notebook, 2013), Inkoustová skvrna Karibiku (Ink Spot of the Caribbean, 2020) and the lyric poem Podoba panny pláč (The Image of the Weeping Virgin, 2002). I take this opportunity to welcome Tereza Riedlbauchová to this year's Kistrech Poetry Festival.

We thank Kenyan poets who are participating at the festival this year: Dr. Evans Gesura Mecha, Dr. Alfred Nyagaka Nyamwange, Matthews Obiri Nyamari, Obino Nyambane, Mzee Nemwel Mogere Atemba, and Dr. Christopher Okemwa.
I sincerely thank the Arts Promotion Centre Finland and Kirjallisuuden edistämiskeskus = Literature Promotion Centre for supporting the Finnish poet, Riina Katajavuori, to participate in this event. We urge them to send one or more poets in future editions of Kistrech festival.

We sincerely thank the festival patron, Dr. Christopher Okemwa, for funding this year's Kistrech Poetry Festival Magazine. Dr. Okemwa's family will also offer internal transport and, occasionally, food to this year's guest-poets.

Regardless of lack of funds for this event, Kistrech International Poetry Festival continues to function and carrying out poetic activities. We are nurturing student poetic talents and helping them get their poetry published. Many of them have released their maiden collections and many others have contributed their poems to international magazines and literary journals.

We are nurturing student poetic talents and helping them get their poetry published.

We thank this year's Kistrech Team who volunteers to work for this festival, even when the festival has no funding and lacks the capacity to sufficiently fulfil the requirement of the festival. The updating and maintenance of the festival website, printing of the festival magazine, ground transport during the event, stationery, banners and fliers, have posed major challenges to the event due to lack of support. As we continue looking for a permanent financial solution, we ask our international guest-poets, local poets, student-poets and the public at large to bear with us. Otherwise, I wish you joy and beauty that comes with this year's festival.

Dr. Christopher Okemwa
Executive Director, Kistrech International Poetry Festival

Dr. Alfred Nyagaka Nyamwange

KENYA

Dr. Alfred Nyagaka Nyamwange is a Kenyan writer, scholar, and teacher of English and Literature affiliated with Kisii University. He studied at the University of Nairobi, Kenyatta University, Kampala University, and earned his PhD in Literature at Kisii University.

His works explore Gusii traditions, values, and contemporary realities, including the long poems The Footfalls of My Heart (2025) and The Girl of Red Beauty (2022), the novels The Blood Stains (2020) and The Broken Column (2020), the children's story The Smell of New Shoes (2020), and the short story anthology The Woman Called Angel (2020). He has also published Inkscapes: Whispers of a Motherland (2024) and Tell Me a Story (2024).

Nyamwange's works appear in several anthologies and refereed journals. He is an active member of the Writers Association of Kenya, Kistretch Poetry Association, and other scholarly forums, often engaging in national and international literary discourses.

TORENDE OBWOAMATE.

Torende ki minto?
Ase amate agosiaroka aika
Ebe maate gose rogoro
Nigo tokorokana eamate
Enchera ende ab'amate
Togosanga orobebe nabo oroche
Endagera na amange

Ogosanga nakwo kware kwagacha
Obwoamate ase amate are goika
Ase obote bwarekonyororoka
Twa'gachana, twasirana egere torende
Obwoamate.

Omogusii omokoro na abakoronto
Gotingia obwa'mate bwamate.
Ase enyuomo barwa chisambagera chichiete oo
Korendaabako na kwagacha ereri.
Omwencheri oyonde okoriete ebigocha
Otimigwa egetinge oboiko bwacha ang'e
Ase okorenda?
Obwoamate.

Omoaka nigo amenyete Gesarate
Aiga bareterwa obokima n'omwana
Ere omanya orobago rwabagokire
Ochicha kogita erinde arende
Obwoamate.

Kagocha namanyete omorugi omotang'ani
mosera ibu engencho yaye nigo anyumeretwe
Saiga abamura batare kobucha ibu Agatang'ana
koribucha ase obonge
Obwatigwana nyamesanchwa,abareri
Goika oyogatano — nere nyageita,
bisieri gose nyamekorogoto
ore kwagacherwa ange negeita
Ase engencho y'okorenda obw'amate!
Nyagetiria oyo— nere orenge nyakaberera,
omongare ase omoaka are koratimokera —
egere arende ki minto?
Obwoamate

Eamate ere ensemo nero nabo
Yare gotogirera emeino gose gotoumbia
Korende tokobeka egechuri,
Tokobugia ebichuuri nse ye'chinyomba
Nyabichuri bachicha twasanga amo
Abande twasanga ase amatati
Kwagacha obw'amate bwamate

Omoaka kabekerwe ekebundu, egechuri
Osokia orokore kebininchi rotichete
Ogemba omong'iti ongusa chinsea chiasarera
Onya goteberera erinde arende ki?
Gose bono! Gete aba nabuo eamate yao?
Oria ore bwango omoa ekeendi,
Anywe bwango bwango asameri amate —
ongusa rimo rwaticha arende ki?
Obw'amate.

Omoaka omonyanguru ebiage mbitato
Biakabeire bwoye erio abasangami bakomotara
banyora nigo akwaora buna barabwo
Ekiage ki omoaka kera omon'gina nigo are
Kogesa endagera entongire onyebeka
Bakoera bonsi giachoire churi —.
Kera omon'gina obeka ekiage kiaye
Ase akoria korwa n'abana baye.
Ekiage kende nekiabasumi na abainani
Ase bare nkonyora oboigami, noborembe
Egere omoaka bwamasikani arende ki?
Obwoamate.

Abana nigo bare korerwa nab'amate,
bagotabanana gochia maate, baikorwa emete.
Gakomocha ochwanigwa nomwamate —
Oikorwa, oswagwa, obinderigwa, nomwamate
Osunyuntwa — naende onde tare koboria ekiagera
Obw'amate nigo bware korendwa buya.
Tari rero omwana agogotenenera,
agotinongera obora moka Nyarebe —.
ninche otambeerete buna ekonga,
naende kende ngekoba ekiagera
ntorendeti?
Obwoamate.

Obw'amate obuya rero nebigeri biao
Bobwekane egetinginye ekeng'aini —
Kiare korigia obuundi kiagacha mwaye gegotwa,
Giasoa mwaye — kerende ki minto?
Omosacha agosaacha na oringa enkundi —
Omon'gina ogokunga tagosiakeria endagera
Bwonsi barendete,
obwoamate.

Omwana ogokora omokia,
na osogota embwa — nki arendete?
Obwoamate.
Erinde nka sobo — naboigo ekenyoro
eamate techandeka erose...
Omwana orendete chinsoni.
Naboigo amanga'na ansoni
nigo okobwenera minto ase eamate
Nekenyoro,nonya ase Engoro
Karendete ki?Obwoamate.
Gaki eamate tiga torende Oboamate.
Tobarere, togite chimbagora
ase engencho yaki minto?
Obwoamate.

BUILD GOOD NEIGHBOURLINESS

TWe should build good neighbourliness?
At the distance of spewing saliva
Those found within that cycle
We should call on our saliva mates
These are those we enjoy
Sharing borders and a river
Food and so forth
Through sharing what was built
Good neighbourliness within saliva distance
Where salivating dripped closely
We build and support one another
The old Gusii and legends
Fortified saliva neighbourliness
By offering enough cattle
To support the marriage and offspring
My beloved who after stumbling
Placed a footring to bind me
To bind our hearts closer
In good neighbourliness

The husband who lived at Gesarate
He was brought food by a child
It's signal the fence was broken
And should hasten home to repair it
In order to promote neighbourliness
He understood the position of the first wife
She who collected the first ashes of the hut
From the fireplace warriors never swept
She began the scooping of the ashes
Nyamesanchwa came second as the first
Maids to number five who was at the gate
Known as one of the door and fastening logs
Her hut strategically placed at the gate
To protect neighbourliness
She was a jumpy young blooded calf
The youthful doe where the husband camped
In order to promote what, kinsmen?
Neighbourliness

Sometimes one's neighbours could snub
Joining your poetry singing, ignore you
However when the beer party opened
With whistles from houses with staked roofs
To signal living manhood, they visited to share
This sharing was encouraged during mourning
To promote neighbourliness of saliva mates

But the man was still served his beer
He brought out the short blocked straw
Gave the stingy one to suck, the cheeks hurt
He made him busy in order to promote what
Your guess? Aren't they your neighbours
The one in hurry got a straw that opened fast
He took a gulp to drown his thirsty
Then in subsequent draughts it blocked
yet it promoted neighbourliness
The host would pull out his longer straw
The resounding noises of sipping were heard
He shook it to release the dregs to sip more
In order to provide his body what, kinsmen?
Promote neighbourliness

A hardworking man had three granaries
So that when the 'shareholders' visited
There was something to eat with him
The husband's granary received harvest from
Every wife's farm
By end of harvesting, the granary brimmed
Yet each wife had her own granary
From whence she fed her family
The other granary was for the beggars
Here they found shelter and peace
In order the honourable elder found
Peaceful neighbourliness

Children were brought up by the neighbours
If they tried to stray canes worked
If he messed the neighbour corrected him
The neighbours disciplined such a child
And nobody could take offense
Because it was part of good neighbourliness
Unlike nowadays when a child arrogantly
Reminds you whose wife you're
That your tallness has no say in his decisions!
And there is nothing you can do
Because we don't care about neighbourliness
Good neighbourliness is your sweat
Like the effort of a little bird that is wise
That finds fluff to nest before the rains
And shelter comfortably - neighbourliness
A man fended and folded his fists
The wife received and protected food
Both protecting neighbourliness

A child should work harder
And keep good conduct to build?
Good neighbourliness
So that within their home and village
Neighbours have no issues
A child full of respect and adhering
To respect rules and tenets
Fits in the neighborhood
In the village and even before Engoro, God
Promoting good neighbourliness
Kindly neighbours let's build friendship
Mend and fence so that we don't lose
Because you and me, we've a stake
To preserve good neighbourliness

MONTO NCHARA

nigo achachanete kerage
arabogete,a machwari kera ase
ebigoro ebirosu bitari nten'ge
nusu getirianda ebesti entambe
are gokurura ase amagoro aye

konya oititire ekerage
ngina tarenge ange
agoitita akoigusigwa
ekeongoreka agochura
korwa emioyo ime

ngina akanyora ogoyire
osundokire, enchara yamoengeire
akarigereria onsi agesokera
akabwoania omwana nobw'anchani
omwana agaetiga ase ngina

akaigora egekuba kiaye
ebirandi biichire bikagwa
egetwanga kiabibwatete gekabichoria
akamwana gagacharokera endagera
buna amache gakangusa
erango enchara konya yamoitire pi
akangusa mboto chichieto oo
borio borio gochia nda
kaoyerera, ense egategerera
erango,enchara mbiiyio ya! choi!

omwana akaruta akamotwe gochia
maega agasoncha ngina,naye oyo!
ngina akamorigereria n'obwanchani
gakaimokia ekiara giokogoro mabuo
mama, naye bweka gaki, omogoko
nganchere ngwakere mbuya
ekengwerere eke,gaki netwoni!

THE FAMISHED ONE

it had cried empty
ashen-faced, scratches all over
tiny, weakened legs
half nude in a singlet
dangling loosely to its feet

it had cried enough
the absence of the mum
made it sob in tremors
in hiccups and screeching sounds
emitted from deep within the throat

the mother came and found it tired
dozing off, hungrier
and the mother noted it all
and grabbed it in a passionate embrace
and he surrendered fully

she loosed her blouse
and the full gourds fell
scattered from the holding thong
the two-year-old jumped at the chance
and like water poured
on thirsty ground, hit it

pulled mouthfuls that landed
noisily in his stomach
then after that drink — that quieted
the thirst, the hunger, the emptiness
he threw his head back
and smiled up in appreciation
and when the mum smiled back
he lifted his main toe in gladness
and poked it gently into her mouth
the sweetest thanks
from the little one

BLAISE OBERSON

SWITZERLAND

Blaise Oberson has always been passionate about writing and poetry, and began publishing his texts in 2021. This was a decisive turning point, initiated by his participation in the anthology Désirez-moi! (Éditions Les Minimes, Angers). The enthusiastic reception she received from readers encouraged him to continue along this path, giving birth to his first collections, two of which won awards:
- Fracas du Couchant (Éditions Le Lys Bleu, 2022)
- Espace Infidèle (Éditions Le Lys Bleu, 2023), awarded the 3 Stephen Liégeard poetry prize and a finalist in the Prix Renée Vivien 2024.
- Épeler le miracle (Spelling the Miracle), published in 2024 by L'Harmattan and awarded the 5th Stephen Liégeard poetry prize.
- L'Impossible Nuit (Éditions L'Harmattan), will be released in November 2025.

Blaise Oberson's career path, prior to poetry, was guided by numerous international experiences. After completing a Master's degree in Arts at the University of Geneva, he joined the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), going on mission to conflict zones across Latin America, Asia and the Middle East, where he directed, among other things, a number of international projects.

Following this, Blaise Oberson held positions as Worldwide Human Resources Director in Groups, such as Edipresse and Chopard, before co-founding a management consulting company. His commitment then led him to become CEO of the Non-Violence Project Foundation, an international organization that fights violence through education. Today, Blaise Oberson continues to explore and share poetry in a variety of forms. An active member of several literary committees and associations, he is involved in numerous collective projects, such as the organization of the "Poésie en Ville 2024 festival" in Geneva. He also gives frequent stage performances and readings to music, notably slams and poetry shows, accompanied by musicians - cellist or electric guitarist with his brother Xavier Oberson - who gives another dimension to his words. A few months ago, Blaise Oberson opened his website (www.blaiseoberson.com) The site is much more than just an author's portal: it's a living space where poetry is breath, resistance and light "Spelling Miracle" exposes life in all its forms, and revolves around the passing of time, with its moments of melancholy and anger, but also of happiness and hope. It's a call to the living, a path to fulfillment through the emotions and passions we experience every day. It's also an outcry against the world around us.
www.blaiseoberson.com

Two poems in "Épeler le miracle", published by L'Harmattan

Woodland window
You contemplate utopia
Defiant hole
On a murky whiteness
Decor of prowess
Or a painting of junk (pacotille in French)
Coherence sings
The ultimate moment
Because behind the tower,
You'll find the frail elegance
Of hope.

Let the word be
May beauty remain
pierced by the sunset of yesteryear
Come to us!
Wait no longer for the swarm of becoming
In the meanders of blood
Deceive the day and sing the alarm clock
In the fog the purpose will disappear
Parading the future to the still distant
I would rather walk towards the breeze
Hand outstretched to the halo of a smile
And understand the breadth of renewal
On the lips of the present.

ELIANE VERNAY

SWITZERLAND

Eliane Vernay was born in Switzerland on the French border. After her childhood in the Jura French then in Italy, she obtained a bachelor's degree in literature and a diploma in journalism in Geneva, while simultaneously pursuing music studies (piano and singing).

After three years of teaching, she worked as an editor at Naville and Kister Editions and as a translator for the Confederation. Then she was appointed as a producer of the music programs and literary programmes at the Radio suisse romande (Espace 2). In 1977, she created a publishing house in Geneva that bore her name which she led for twenty years, publishing 150 titles of poets, workshop dialogues, books for children, testimonies, etc. Eliane Vernay has also, for years, hosted writing classes for different clienteles.

His first book collection appeared in 1976 at Chambelland in Paris, followed by about thirty others, prose (three narratives and short stories) and poetry, published in Switzerland, France, and Belgium, translated into several languages (Japanese, German, Portuguese, Greek, Italian, Iranian, etc), often in collaboration with painters (e.g., At the other end of the eyes, at Ed. Voix d'encre in France, dialogue with 36 painters) or Comme elle s'obstine, aux Ed. Le Taillis Pré, ill. by the illustrious artist Gérard Titus-Carmel in 2024.

She received the Rilke Prize for Barely a Breath on the bark, the prize of the Gaspoz Foundation, the literature prizes of the canton of Bern and of the city of Geneva, the prize of Valais writers, etc., and several commissions for works by the Swiss Foundation Pro Helvetia. She has also participated in international poetry festivals in Morocco, Quebec, Italy, Medellin/Colombia, and Babylon. Eliane Vernay has lived in Madrid, Vienna, New York, and currently travels between Geneva and Paris.

Poem I

So long have they announced the return of the swallows...
Standing without prayer
announced the long nights armed before the sun warms the earth
and that all around the eyes
infinitely the sea
delivered to the sea beyond the memories,
beyond this wound of space inside not hatched not shared.
The bodies, they saw them
to swallow to tear
further than empty.
The skins
ride flasks
with cut wings.
The enjoyment?
of the black
broiling in the dark - a greed with long teeth.
Tombs of Eternity.
They saw, still facing the light.
Seen, in their absence -
they are absent
in the black grass of the other's body that they were tearing out by handfuls
to fill in the words
(inhabit them/away from time)
- and the stomachs too,
to say, populate this inside that they wanted hot but how, this fire without flames
who runs without them,
fire of black moons
thickening the hours,
how to cross without shuddering.... Trying to exist, how
with fallen hands
and words that have forgotten?
MUSIC
There were indeed sometimes like a bite of ancient suns that split them in two,
the incision was vertical. Words breaking the sun and the sweat of the tides in these places where hearts beat red...
the red again of the wind
that of the peonies
behind the eyes and in the hollow of the shoulders,
this sense above under the wings
and bramble,
pell-mell between
slots of eternity...
This appeasement then: honey
from one stone to the other thighs... But where to find the unborn words yet, small enough for
even in bits, fragments
or open mouths on pieces without holes without nails? Words to inhabit.
In the shadow of time.

Poem II

Touch? one can. It's invisible but one can. To say, like living, a wandering: In the holes, the journey of the stars.
Wandering from the sea to the sea.
Go-
return. And the exile
to connect. By the deceased guardians of dreams.
And so from night to night
go back up
reweave one at a time the words – remove.
Under the languages together From the sea to the sea
one by one the syllables. Inside means. Infinite ink task
and from memory. . . .
by them the breath
By the hand, caressing. Very close under the hand. Further away. Behind the tree inside. The skin caresses
- does not grasp.
The caress neither:
rather dismisses.
Thus the word. Meeting at the dawn of the centuries. Say
the colors of the sea,
those
of a face. The colors of time
Widen it, inside below - But how?
Go without a compass
raw,
towards where it broke?
towards these oceans of memory from before childhood
when standing gazes together, and all the space gathered in arms?
inside and outside near grass? and that then together born
it's where did it fall where it was torn, by where
it wasn't talking yet
or speak
otherwise when without noise move the lips...? That's to say an absence that is shared inside gently
shaped like a tree or a bird
a face to kiss all along the veins
and in the same momentum springing up similarly beyond memories of the velvet wind that never stops
sometimes surprised to find a place like that without knowing without looking
a hand at random of a flower without question
who would travel around the world
that of the day is the one of the shoulders,
at the edge or like the moment right inside a place on the way like a nest between sea and sky...? A tenderness not identifiable,
untouched in the dark, skylights frayant way -
word-window? Light,
and the black in the dark touché? That's how it is. Inexhaustibly started again given birth. Tirelessly
this life that turns, this movement
which does not stop: swirl flow flot everywhere? In the tiniest, stem, blade of grass?
A sky - like childhood bread?
and the crumbs everywhere
in those windows mornings where nothing -
otherwise the smell of grass and fig tree a sky like something a field of grass with an open heart
a rod on the way?
Maybe. A sky with meadows and caresses for the hands,
for nothing
otherwise just to walk easier the steps,
walk
without counting. But inside? try again always,
she says these waves of silence
to unroll on the sea. The sea unfolds - sees far.
Scars. The wool of the clouds.
The flesh of the fingers all tangled up with that of the words.
Reconciled.
(Words too, reconciled.)
And the earth. Light fertilizations.
At the dawn of time and memories.
MUSIC
Words from the skin:
peony, nightingale. Morning lark, edelweiss
childhood bouquet, it doesn't make a noise
but rise clear.
Said without saying.
Or says nothing.
But just resonate.
Just by the skin
and the skin is all over it. Bird to the open sea. and everywhere
- everywhere?
speaks.
Talk? Give form. Name.
Name?
a name? to refocus together.
Momentum of dawn, weasel
sealing alliance.
No more than the hair of an angel.
Or perhaps simply the shadow of a rumor, a glimmer... Shadow rumor on the fly -
Cross. It's like a transparency at your fingertips. At the end of the words, in a watermark.
End of the time. A tap at point blank range.
An echo
which neither begins nor ends
between shared arms. Between the arms shared
a little would be enough to bloom the cobblestones.
MUSIC
And when the sky widens it's from inside
press nothing, it's
in everywhere
holding tightly together
with the swallows' moose.
No one hears them.
Their song goes up though
even if - especially without a mark
off the waters. Skins. The skin knows it well, who likes when with silence everywhere below simmer hot, in the veins out of the veins...
MUSIC
Set foot,
reaching out? Maybe. A vibration without moving. Does not need to move:
is. Warm and wide everywhere, at the edge
and the edge is all over it.
Right in the heart.
The eyes then no longer count. The words even less. And maybe from one bank to the other of time will we join?

Eliane Vernay – Geneva/Paris, June 2025

Dr. Evans Gesura Mecha

KENYA

Evans Gesura Mecha (c. 1974-date) is a senior lecturer of linguistics at Kisii University, and an established contemporary poet from Kenyan. He has written two poetry collections: Window into Worlds (2022) and Coronach to Ophir (2020). His works have been featured in several international Anthologies and Journals.

Mosaiga Agaacha Egesa

Mosaiga agaacha egesa kia abagaka
Mechie yaito yabeire n'óbokendu
Aye obogotu obo, bogotu ng'esa nko.

Amagachi onsi a gesarate aerie
Nanywerereire ekerama ekerangesa
Aye obogotu obo, bogotu nge'sa nko.

Abamura bachiire bonkoro
Ningo orangirererie oroko?
Aye obogotu obo, bogotu ngésa nko.

Abangina banseseire,nigo bagotoriera ebiku
Batameire bana korere abachokoro
Aye obogotu obo, bogotu nge'sa nko.

Togenie kwao, tonyagwatia amangana
Onye agakima karoo, totiichere amakere
Aye obogotu obo, bogotu ng'sa nko.

Mosaiga buna egesa, abagaka baikare
Tobeeke emeino, togonguse eki'órokore
Aye obogotu obo, bogotu ng'esa nko.

Riuko Gochia Moniibi One

Aye ng'egenete nga no're monibi one
Ng'á nombwate koboko ndie boko buya,
N'ekemaene naye okongeeteria.
Ng'a kaa monibi ki otari mogaanga?

Egeka giaetire, obonyansi bwamerire
Enchera ya kogoikera, Nao tobaraachete
Buna sese eganyete omororia.
Ngá kaa moniibi ki otari mogaanga?

Afisi yao chinyambobe Chiaimuganiiri,
N'egesute kereo, mbasia togosiomasiomia
Yatiokire buna etanyakoigorwa; ntokorore.
Ngá Kaa Monibi ki otari mogaanga?

Moirete ebia Odinga mwaikereeire
Mokwombogana buna ebisombasike
Ng'a ninwe mokoria nchoke mota-morero
Ngá kaa moniibi ki otari mogaanga?

Ng'a Getembe n'ekeumbu, amasiinga
Tagokama keumbu, mwaigoire amakere;
Ndi moraigote, gose omotagete moateke?
Ngá kaa moniibi ki otari mogaanga

Tiga nkuumbe gesa aiga nkire
Inwe genderera koagora amako
Eke moratigarie toe, ntore n'obotaka.
Ng'a kaa moniibi ki otari mogaanga?

FIDEL ONGOLLA

KENYA

LE´ QUEEN PIN

In the mouth piece under Africa's Nose,
She is the queen bee,
Lovely when she talks but be weary when she stings,
Diplomatically she sings, quietly she lives,
She - the damnation of us all,
even Samael became Lucifer so that he could be the brightest star of all, the best singer of all
11 trillion and a huge chunk is Domestic
Yet 90% of us don't got even got a pot to piss in,
I apologize if I sound overly static – bit dramatic
I just want allude to her,
Le' queen pin
Handed over the reigns? she remains, under - behind the curtains, pulling the strings - the puppet master,
It's sunny then it rains- yet she still remains, the pied piper
They fall - they all come and go - yet she still maintains,
Permanently progressively perpetually scheming,
oh how wonderful! the credulous gallery will forever stay gullibly gleaming,
Le Queen Pin
She tasked - so she could tusk, without taxing and when someone asked, he was gagged n musked,
She - blatantly brilliant - that was why she was handed over,
The keys of the empire,
We trusted the blood donor custodian to be a vampire,
She, schemes executes and now she skims of the bottom of the whole quagmire,
While the ants think they own the whole thing? Only just but as slaves to
Le' Queen Pin
The whiteness n brightness's Alpha and omega and yet she's just human,
The supreme mvp - of svps and suvs, of nse and industries, yes you see - she owns it all n in between,
If you have dreams - such as flying above the skies as an eagle does,all you can do is pay her,
She gets us in debt on her behalf,
All our springs owe her one hundred 7th letters from the onset since le queen needs a luxurious bath;
even if it's made in blood,
No securities exchanges coz her ex changed it.
No Tom, no dick no Harry - she is never in a hurry,
Le' Queen Pin.
All comfortable in the ant hill,
Yes they maybe many queens in the scene?
but she - the one who stock the most fat on her bossom,
Her tentacles are long and hidden,
Her brilliance is unmatched
Her demeanour is glorious as Eden
Her deviance is unmulched,
From your entry points, to your happy points, from your health, to your wealth,
From your poverty, to your absurdity,
She owns it all,
Your so-called Yes God pride,
She lays and in there she resides,
Your coffee and tea, she has it with your bread n yam,
Yummy she goes- mummy she is, greed is cool especially if it soars, protect it at all costs - was what the mummified dead king told,
Hence for; her family n her kin she'll stack up and grow.
Till when she breathe no more,
'tis why she - is Le' Queen Pin
She'll take it all from you and I,
She's masterful at it,
She'll take the oxygen too as soon as she finds out how to,
Shell make sure yall have enough to breathe at the bear minimal
Bear critical, under siege chronicles, the anthill has been?
N the most scariest part? is not her spectacular tentacles,
It's the ten lessons of tackles that she dished onto her kin,
Now weaponized them into a militia that stays scheming,
Taking it all in front of your eyes n yet your not blinded,
Hind sided, now you see me now you don't she infiltrated it all with her kindred, Your opinion don't count, yeah I know you know how to count,
With all the Degrees still, lays our degree of imbecility,
Between what is fact, truth and what's real,
And you know what they say,
The truth shall set us all free.
But I don't think we will ever be.
So long as Haki sio ngao na mlinzi.
Na mlinzi akiwa - le' Queen Pin.

HASSANAL ABDULLAH

USA

Hassanal Abdullah (b. 1967) is an author of 60 books in various genres including 21 collections of poetry, and three novels. His Collected Poems (in Bengali) was published by Ananya in two volumes. He received the Homer European Medal of Poetry and Art (2016), Klement Janesky International Poetry Award (2021) from Poland, Paul von Heyse Award (2024) from Germany, and a translation grant from New York City Department of Cultural Affairs (2019). His poetry has been translated into seventeen languages and was published in anthologies throughout the world. He introduced Swatantra Sonnets, seven-seven stanza pattern and abcdabc efgdefg rhyming scheme, and wrote an epic illustrating human relationships with cosmology. As an invited poet, he attended many international poetry festivals.
Mr. Abdullah retired from New York City High School in 2024, after teaching mathematics for 27 years.

VULTURES ARE DOING WELL

In my boyhood, I saw a few vultures.
They used to sit on the giant branches of the sky-high trees.
Usually, we did not notice them.
They might have thought of themselves
to be in the upper class.
Therefore, I could not often see their extravagant wings
and long hairless throats.

Once in a while, however, they were seen
on the other side of the highway
eating the flesh of dead bulls.
I saw a group of quarrelsome crows, jackals,
and gentle carnivorous village dogs
eating the delicious breasts of a dead cow.
"Vultures do not come to the locality often,
they live in the mountains," commented our elders.
Still, they occasionally came down to our village, in the open field,
or on the big palm trees. We, the teenagers,
watched them from a distance
with a mix of fear and curiosity.

Now, I see vultures—lots of them living around us.
They lead a gorgeous life eating expensive food.
I see thousands, millions of them.
They are healthy, brightly colored—
yellow, blue, black, and crimson—
waiting for a chance to tear at civilization with their sharp beaks.

Now, I see vultures all around me.

Translated from the Bengali by the poet

EBIGONKORU MBUYA BIRE

ase obosae bwane, naroche ebigonkoru ebike iga
Biagaikaransire as emete emetaambe egoika erioba igoro
Mono, tituakabirorire
Ebiekagete buna ebiare
Ebi'obogima buaigoro
Ase igo tinakarorire chimbaba chiabo
Nebigoti bitari na marionya

Erituko rimo iga, korende, ngororekana biare
Ense eeria y'ebara enene
Kibikoria chieri chikuete
Ngarora amakoru, ebibwe
Nechisese chiekenyoro
Kibikoria eng'ombe enyansu yakure
"Ebibaki tibiri gocha emechie botambe
Ebimenyete ebitunua igoro,"abagaka bagateba
Rimo iga ebiagachire ekenyoro, ase egetii
Gose as emete ya amakendo. Intwe, abasae abake
Tuakabisonchire korwa are
Nobuoba na okogania okonene

Bono, nigo indoche ebibaki--ebinge bimenyete amo naintwe
Bimenyete obogima obuya bikoria endagera yerigori
Nigo ingorora chilifu, chimillion
Ebire emebere emiya, bichabeire buya
Mayaye, bulu, emwamu, and monyinga
Biganyete bitandore oborero namaino abo

Bono nigo indoche ebibaki onsi ase tomenyete

Omoriki chincherere echiga n'ere buonchorete chincherere echiga korwa ege'Benga gochia Egesongo
Omonyagitari Chrisopher Okemwa agaonchora korwa ase Ekenyamorero gocha ase Ekegusii

THIS HAND

This hand
is a postulate of a postmodern poem.
Removing the drastic dust of modernism hastily,
it brings minds and moments
to the heart of human heritage.
Cool, robust, crafty—
gentle and tranquil,
artistically composed and mutually supportive.

This hand
is of Africa,
at the hazy sights of Asia,
a vigorous treatment of temporal time.
Accepting amulets of the wrenched human beings
and their staggering survival in New York City,
this hand turns momentarily
further apace.

Visiting the refugee camps of Kosovo,
supplying bottles of milk
to the naked
hungry
lacerated children of Iraq,
sitting beside the arsenic-scalded
less-fortunate housewives of Bangladesh
and washing out the heartache with tears,

this hand
rises up against the nuclear terror
fifty-two weeks a year.

Translated from the Bengali by Siddique M. Rahman

OKOBOKO OKO

Okoboko oko
Ne ekeerorekanua guekerero
Gokorusia amang'ana yekerero bwango
Nigo gokorenta amongo nechingaki
Ase engoro y'omonto
Obotoereru, chinguru, obokarakari--
Bwanseranire na obotoereru
Borosirie nobong'aini na bogokonya

Okoboko oko
Nogu'Afrika
Ase ritaturi ri'Esia
Ogokera chingaki chinyeng'e
Oguancha ebikoro biamwany'abanto
N'obogima babwate omochi o Niu Yoki
Okoboko oko ekoguonchokana
Ase egeka egeke goeta

Gotarera ase abagotama bamenyete
Koa abanto amabere
Abare gesogono
Bare nenchara
Abana basambegete ba'Iragi
Baikaransete ang'e n'abasubati
Ba, Bangiladeshi basambire nechi'bomu
Bagosibia obororo namariga abo

Okoboko oko
Gokoimoka igoro gotanga chinukilia
Chiwiki emerongo etano n'ebere

Chincherere echi rikire korwa ege omonwa o"Benga gocha ase Egesongo na Siddique M. Rahman
Omonyagitari Chrisopher Okemwa agaonchora korwa ase Ekenyamorero gocha ase Ekegusii

MATTHEWS OBIRI NYAMARI

KENYA

Matthews Obiri Nyamari obtained Bachelor of Education degree in English and Literature from Kenyatta University and an MA degree in Literature from the University of Nairobi. He has written two unpublished plays, Manhood to Madness and The Last Chance. He has also written unpublished poetry books. He is a high school teacher.

THE GRAND DISCOVERY

Brethren,
It is setting in my life
Behind my joys and strife
Into the quarry of distress
I dig deep into the stress
The power to emancipate myself
I have not
Nor does any that was created

Brethren,
I desire what I know not
End of the road have I come
With a longing of what I know not

Mortal being!
What do I crave?
Oh! I now know
I confide all together
In the all-powerful God
I know you'll listen to me
And hear my ardent prayers

Fill my heart with the hope
Of that bright morning
Of the everlasting home
Of life beyond the mortal mas

THE MYSTIC SILENCE

The Gusii Hills stolidly lay,
In the vast turbulence of the time
Oblivious of the past savagery.
Oblivious of the urgency of their voice
To counsel the generation
On the ongoings of the mother.

If the hills would speak:
What would Sameta Hills say
Of the mother whose sons and daughters
Are decomposing in alien lands?
What would the magic Emanga Hills say
Of the mother whose vision has been blurred,
By the torchbearers?
What would Nyamasibi and Kiong'ayo Hills say
Of the mother whose blood the leeches suck
To swell their stomachs and pant like toads?

If the hills would speak:
What would kiong'ongi and Kiombeta Hills say
On the beloved mother's auction as political merchandise
To those whose hands carry our blood stains?
What would Nyanchwa and Sugubo hills say,
Of the mother whose identity has been swept
By the euphoria of modernity?

Speak!
Gusii hills peak to heal
The beloved mother's malady and tragedy.
Cry Gusii Hills cry to wash and cleanse the beloved mother.

DEAR GOD

Give me the wisdom to discern when am wrong
And the courage to admit it
Give me the craving to relentlessly seek thy
Holiness and satisfaction to dwell in it
Give me the wisdom to know and to do only
What is right and the conviction to stand by it.
Give me the ability to forget the painful
Past and hope for a promising future

Give me the energy to soar above mediocrity
And the meekness to be humble beyond recognition
Give me the voice to speak for the oppressed
And the gratitude to shower that bless

Give me the wit to know, to defend and
To stand by what is right
Even by the fall of the stars.
For truth and courage never rot
Whatever the depth they are buried.

RIINA KATAJAVUORI

FINLAND

Riina Katajavuori (b. 1968, Helsinki) is a Finnish writer and poet whose poems have been translated into 30 languages, including Japanese. Her latest collection is Vasemman käden runot (Left hand poems), 2023, and her fourth novel Kypros (Cyprus) was published in 2021. She is also a prize-winning children's writer. Katajavuori enjoys writing radio plays and song lyrics.

Riina Katajavuori: Vasemman käden runot (Left hand poems, 2023)

Yhtenä yönä

kukat muuttuivat marjoiksi.

Olin utelias ja ahne.
Laitoin marjan suuhuni.

Marjasta tuli irvistys.

Kului vuosi,
ja irvistyksestä tuli kukka.

***

One night

flowers turned into berries.

I was curious and greedy.
I put a berry in my mouth.

The berry turned into a grimace.

A year went by,
and the grimace turned into a flower.

(English translation by Saara Pääkkönen)

Riina Katajavuori: Vasemman käden runot (Left hand poems, 2023)

Sanat eivät ole vedenpitäviä.
Sanat eivät ole suoria,
ne eivät sano sitä mitä ne sanovat.

Sanat ovat käännöksiä,
välineitä,
työkaluja,
aseita.

Sanat ovat huteria ruusuja,
kehnon suunnistajan ilmansuuntia.
Niillä on jano ja pyrkimys ja
vain täysin epämääräinen käsitys aarteen kätköpaikasta.

***

Words are not watertight.
Words are not straight,
they do not say what they are saying.

Words are translations,
instruments,
tools,
weapons.

Words are rickety roses,
a poor orienteerer's points of compass.
They thirst, and aspire, and have
only an utterly vague idea of where the treasure is buried.

(English translation by Saara Pääkkönen)

Riina Katajavuori: Kuka puhuu (Who Speaks, 1994)

Paluu

Vain viikon kukkivat nuo kermaiset kukat,
joita varten matkustan takaisin.

Vainiot leuhuvat,
viljantähkät joita en erota toisistaan.

Leipä ei ollut lämmintä

se makasi vielä märkänä pellolla
nuhruisena, kallellaan.

Tähän maisemaan kaivan koloni
niin kuin minulla olisi jotakin sanomista.

***

The Return

Only for a week they bloom, those creamy flowers,
my reason for travelling back.

The fields wave,
ears of grain, I can't tell one from the other.

The bread was not warm

wet on a field it still lay,
shabby, on a tilt.

Into this landscape I dig my lair
as if I had something to say.

(English translation by Anselm Hollo)

Riina Katajavuori: Kuka puhuu (Who Speaks, 1994)

Herääminen

Miten paljon, miten vähän lunta.
Kuulen, kuinka sama pisara
on pudonnut putoamistaan
miten kauan, miten halukkaasti hankeen,
keskelle sileää valoa
keskelle elävää vettä
miten pitkä
ja kylmä ja turvallinen oli talvi
miten ilmaista sen hengitys.

The Awakening

How much, how little snow.
I hear how the same drop
has fallen and gone on falling
how long, how eagerly, into the drift
into the center of smooth light
into the center of living water
how long
and cold and safe was winter,
how free of charge its breathing.

(English translation by Anselm Hollo)

Riina Katajavuori: Omakuvat
(Self-portraits, 2011)

Ihmetys siitä, että on muille joku, vaikka itselleen epäselvä. Vaaleanpunainen viisto aamuvalo ikkunalaudan kinoksella on muuttunut kultaiseksi.

Päähenkilö elää jatkuvasti siinä lähes-hajoamisen tilassa, joka valtaa mielen yksin matkoilla, kun on rakennettava kotiinpaluun vedenpitävä varmuus. Aamuöiset lumiaurat raapivat uhkaavina asfalttia.

Kesämökillä muut vetäytyvät, ja päähenkilö vetäytyy. Hauraus laskeutuu, uskottelu pyjamassa. Sitä ollaan vain selviävinään kaikesta, mökistä, siinä nukkumisesta, roikutaan joidenkin apupuhelinnumeroiden ja hätänumeroiden varassa, keskellä metsän omaa ääntä ja elämää.

Varmasti on astronautteja, kosmonautteja, kirurgeja, joilta puuttuu edellä mainittu sisärakenne (pimeänpelko, avaruudenpelko, tyhjyydenpelko, merenpohjanpelko, yönpelko, tähtitaivaanpelko, laajuus-ahdistus).

Päähenkilö on tallentunut dokumenttikameralle tai novelliin. Leikkaajan pöydällä on paraikaa se pätkä, jossa päähenkilö pyörii vaieten pallotuolissa. Taustalla ääninauha puhuu päähenkilön ajatuksia.

***

The bewilderment that to other people I am someone, though to myself I am undefined.
The slanted, pink morning light on the snowy window ledge has turned golden.

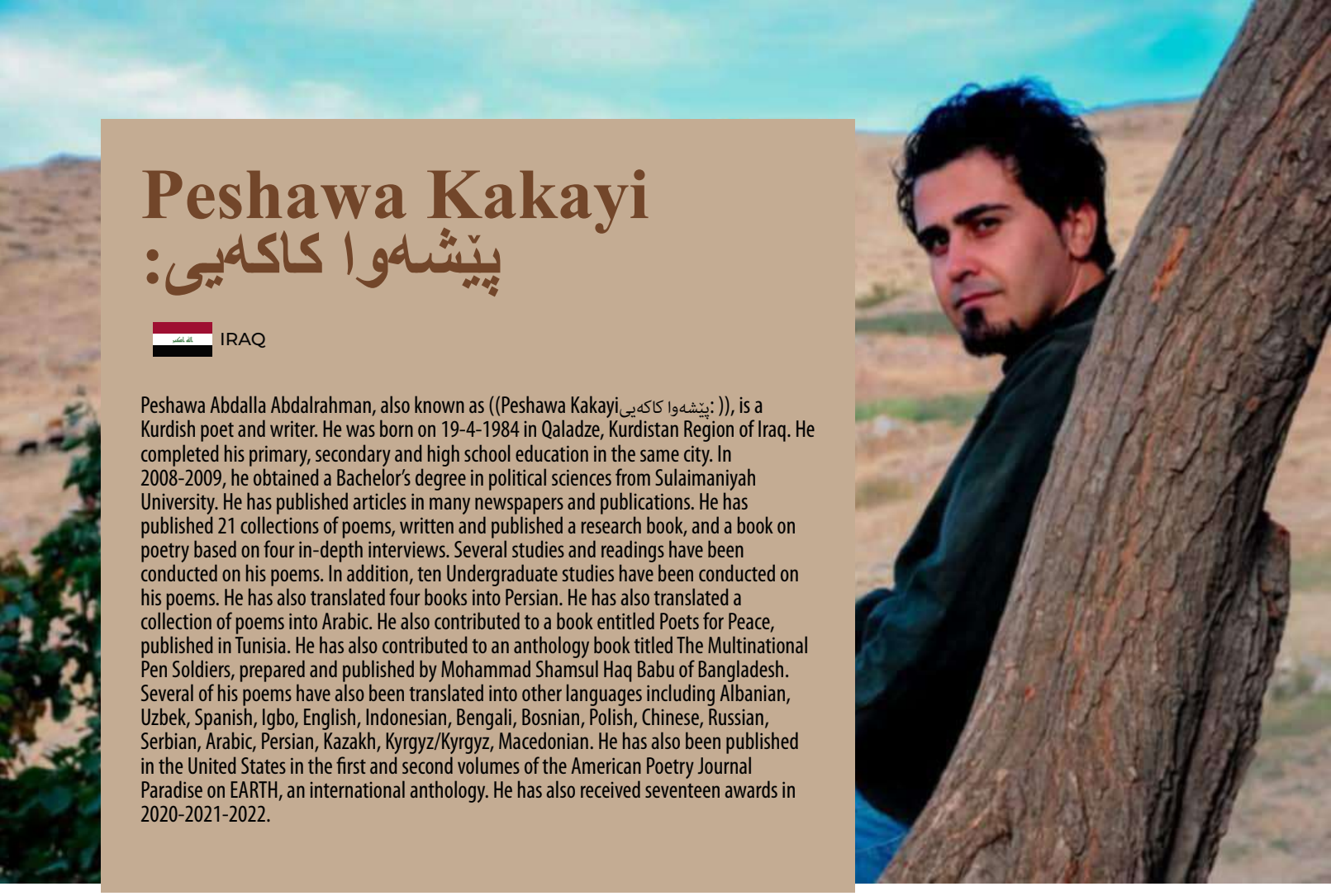
The protagonist exists in a constant state of near collapse, one that consumes the mind when travelling alone, when the watertight certainty of eventually returning home must be constructed. In the early hours snowploughs scrape menacingly across the asphalt.

At the summer cottage the others retire, and the protagonist retires, too.
Fragility descends, pyjama-pretending. We pretend we can survive anything at all, the cottage, spending the night there, dangling on a lifeline
of helpful phone numbers, the emergency services,
there amid the forest's own life and sound.

There must surely be astronauts, cosmonauts, surgeons who all lack such an inbuilt trait (fear of the dark,
fear of space, fear of the empty, the bottom of the sea, fear of the night and the starry sky, spatial anxiety).

The protagonist is documented on film or captured in a novella. Right now, there on the cutting desk is the section in which the protagonist is spinning wordlessly in a ball chair. In the background, a tape speaks the protagonist's thoughts out loud.

(English translation by David Hackston)



Peshawa Kakayi
پێشەوا کاکەیی:

IRAQ

Peshawa Abdalla Abdalrahman, also known as ((Peshawa Kakayi پێشەوا کاکەیی:)), is a Kurdish poet and writer. He was born on 19-4-1984 in Qaladze, Kurdistan Region of Iraq. He completed his primary, secondary and high school education in the same city. In 2008-2009, he obtained a Bachelor's degree in political sciences from Sulaimaniyah University. He has published articles in many newspapers and publications. He has published 21 collections of poems, written and published a research book, and a book on poetry based on four in-depth interviews. Several studies and readings have been conducted on his poems. In addition, ten Undergraduate studies have been conducted on his poems. He has also translated four books into Persian. He has also translated a collection of poems into Arabic. He also contributed to a book entitled Poets for Peace, published in Tunisia. He has also contributed to an anthology book titled The Multinational Pen Soldiers, prepared and published by Mohammad Shamsul Haq Babu of Bangladesh. Several of his poems have also been translated into other languages including Albanian, Uzbek, Spanish, Igbo, English, Indonesian, Bengali, Bosnian, Polish, Chinese, Russian, Serbian, Arabic, Persian, Kazakh, Kyrgyz/Kyrgyz, Macedonian. He has also been published in the United States in the first and second volumes of the American Poetry Journal Paradise on EARTH, an international anthology. He has also received seventeen awards in 2020-2021-2022.

Oh New Zealand

Translated by Goran sabah

Oh New Zealand!
I am not an immigrant,
But my tongue is an untiring courier
Turns my jaw into sky,
Takes me over the mountain range of my teeth,
I slip,
My teeth stabilize my balance,
I am scared of bears in the mountains,
Of a wolf, peeling off my skin and eat me,
Then a dog lick my bones
My tongue would not be able to
Carry my bones and put them in my mouth
So that my teeth
Talk about their journey while grinding my bones!

When my teeth stabilized my balance,
The tongue licked me,
Gathered and put me back inside itself,
I got soaked in its saliva,
The tongue turned me into a thick and chewy word, I passed through the Willington streets,
Without being a goose soaked under rain,
My wings fluttered and my tongue clucked.
Dogs behind me showed me their tongues,
I wished to be only a word,
When they bite me,
If peeled my skin and left only my bones,
I could at least fix my letters!
*

I walk through water,
Cannot guard the ocean,
But when I see its huge waves,
I raise, almost touching the clouds,
My bladder explodes, creating a hurricane,
My breath becomes windstorm
My vision blurs,
Am I the storm?
Or a storm whirls me around.
I don't know where is the head of the ocean
To where its leg extends.
But I know it is about to drown my with both its hands,
It thinks I am British
Have come to take the diamond in its belly.

Oh ocean!
The ships passed on your chest,
Ploughed you,
Took your jewels out.
Oh ocean!
I am not one of the emperors who turned
Asia into a storm,
Emptied the stomach of Africa,
I understand your conceived waves,
Dying because of human beings;
I understand your complaints,
Who didn't visit you
To open your belly!
I am not an explorer who steals,
I am an explorer of language
Do not conquer any place,
Only look into your palms
To interprete your wishes so that
You can read them in my poems.

Goran Sabah: Goran Sabah is a novelist, critic and translator based in Erbil, capital of Iraqi Kurdistan. His notable works include Cheap Humans (Science Fiction), How to critique novels (criticism) and How to write novels.

Elder, Nemwel Mogere Atemba

KENYA

Mzee Nemwel Mogere Atemba is a live member of Gusii Elders Council, founder member of Okoegerera Ekegusii Association, member of A.K.I.M {K}, member IHRM, member of Court Annexed Mediators {K}, member of certified public mediators {EA}, BA {peace and conflict management}. Author of many Cultural and Heritage Books/Poems and Lyrics. He is a specialist in the oral poetry and story-telling tradition of the Abagusii people of Kenya.

IN PRAISE OF MY MUM {OGWETOGERIA BABA}

An Omogusii sage was once asked to advice as to who was the better parent, the father or the mother. He recited the following poem which has since stood the test of time.
Riborio: Aye Onsongo Mokina bwango mointo o Nyakundi. . . Totebie aango. . . ning'o ore omuya goetania oyonde . . . Iso gose Inyako?
Riiranerio: Baba imbaba na Tata intata, bensi n'abaya ko imbinto bikoboora tokobaagoorera.

Ko boono Baba nomuya, nere ondereire kwaa,
imagega a'boronge, na ingoobo chimarera.
Akagenda seremani- ge chinda chikoreka insabo,
Akagenda tugutugu- ge chinda chikoreka insabo,
Akagenda magunkura - ge chinda chikoreka insabo,
Baba, nere okomanya ko'nomiire,
ombegera iyoondi nabeka imbotoo
amaara abuga buna chogochogochogo buna
amaemba a'nkongo/nkomba,
Baba n'omuya!!! Baba n'omuya!!!
Baba nere okomanya ke riberera riandire,
ko onsunyutera obwara-inse na goto-kwambeba nakenda,
Baba nyamarioki mange, ogosegasega suumi,
osegasega geeta, ko'irungu,
ko bamuuma bekeretie eero,
bakona gosungora chinduko chia Nyanduko, \
bakagete buna ne chiabo.
Baba otacha iiga riaye na nyakaruga yaye,
gakoiyora risai rirorio ne'ekeriero bakoboria,
gakoiyora ekemunu, n'okwaamuuma bakwamuuma buna muuuuuuu!
Baba nyamarioki mange, kerandi kiaye kia rongoori getooma,
Baba nyamarioki mange gesege kiaye kia mabere getoma,
Baba nyamarioki mange, Nyoongo yaye ya boori e'keaande etoooma,
Baba nyamarioki mange, monyoncho ooye bw'amaemba amatogoro otoooma,
Baba nyamarioki mange, kiage kiaye kia Bituma amasioboria getoooma,
Baba n'omuya! Baba n'omuya!
Nimbwekanie, baba, Moraa o Kiage,
akama 'ng'ombe akama mbori
Baaba nomuya, baaba nomuya.
Onye baaba ore moyo,
moe amankinda n'amaminyore egere agosesenie.
Onye tari, eye nero ekogera abasubatii ba bogetutu
barorombia buna "ontangoori omonyibori Ngesire,
okogoota ni mbaraaga, konya na mbura egotwa imbaragere gesona!
Baba tareenge Gesire,
nakio kiagerete agatimoka bosiani,
--abanto abaya nabo bagotimooka bosiani igo!
AMIIIIINA.

NB: - Naye Ise-banto, bono abasemia bao batigaire, n'abana bao boka.
Gaaki nagosoroire, tobaisa gotegerera Mwa-Nyamose, eria ekoragora marara, etancha isembe yonde erabe, oiche gweitia ing'a tangoori irionya -ria nsoti gose irionya ria kong'a, inyiruruke ingwe maiko, tindora ayio!

IN PRAISE OF MY MUM

Translation

-An Omogusii sage, Onsongo Mokina-Bwango son of Nyakundi, was once asked to advice as to who was the better parent, the father or the mother? He recited the following poem which has since stood the test of time.

Father is father
Mother is mother
Both of them are wonderful
If only we possessed enough goodies
To shower them with.

However, my mother's goodness
Is incommensurable
She nurtured me
Arm-locking
Vertical backing,
With swaddling skin clothes.

My mother is good
She had to bend sideways
Till her stomach ached
Bend backward till her stomach ached
Bend forward till her stomach ached

My mother is good
She detects when I am starving
Hands over to me a lump of ugali,
Which I gulp down my gullet
My intestines produce
A chogochogochogooo-sound
Like raw sorghum being pounded.

My mother is good
She knows when I have fever
Gives me a concoction of Obwara-inse
Ogoto-kwambeba herbs
To cool me down.

My mother is good
She owns many cookers,
Whereby, she keeps on dotting
Through the kraal,
The father's sitting place
Inner chamber,
While the visiting in-laws are just seated
Relaxing at the sitting room,
Blithering with my sister Nyanduko's beads
As if they own them

My mother is good
She steadily steps on her cooking stone
If she manages to bake ugali
In risai, big straw plate
Then the visitors demand for a delicacy
Like beef to accompany it
But if she manages Ekemunu,
A small straw plate
Then they are heard murmuring, muuuuuuu!

It is my mother
The owner of many cookers
Whose egesege, milk gourd, never gets dry

It is my mother
Who owns many cookers
That her porridge gourd never gets dry.

It is my mother
Who owns many cookers,
That her fine wimbi pot never gets dry.

It is my mother
Who owns many cookers,
That her ban of fattened millet never gets exhausted.

It is my mother
Who owns many cookers
That her granary of white maize never gets exhausted.
My mother is wonderful;
My mother is wonderful!
My mother may only be likened to Moraa,
Daughter of Kiage of the fame of
"Milking both cows and goats"!

If your mother is living
Shower her with softies and goodies
To secure her blessings
If not living, mourn
Like the daughters from Bogetutu

I wish my parent were an axe
So that when he/she ages
He/she could be smelt back.

Tereza Riedlbauchová

CZECH REPUBLIC

Tereza Riedlbauchová (b. 1977, Prague), poet, publisher, translator and literary historian. A graduate in Czech Language and Literature and French of Charles University in Prague, she completed her doctorate in Czech literary history. In 2009 she obtained a 'Master 2' qualification at the Sorbonne (Paris IV Faculty), where she worked as a teacher of Czech between 2007 and 2011. After that (till 2017) she was academic councillor and deputy director of the Museum of Czech Literature. Now she is working on different projects like freelancer.

She founded the association Literární salon in 2006 in continuity of the organization of salons in the home. Between 2001 and 2010 more than thirty evenings of author's readings, sometimes supplemented by exhibitions and musical and theatrical performances took place, especially in Prague flat (some of them also in Paris). Since 2007 Literární salon became publishing house focused on poetry, especially for beginning poets – 40 titles published.

Tereza Riedlbauchová is author of the collections Modrá jablka (Blue Apples, 2000), Velká biskupovská noc (Great Biskupov Night, 2005), Don Vítor si hraje a jiné básně (Don Vitor Playing and Other Poems, 2009), Pařížský deník (Paris Notebook, 2013), Inkoustová skvrna Karibiku (Ink Spot of the Caribbean, 2020) and the lyric poem Podoba panny pláč (The Image of the Weeping Virgin, 2002).

Her poems have appeared in thirteen languages in many magazines and anthologies and her books have been translated into Bulgarian, English and French: Great Biskupov Night (trans. Dimana Ivanova, Bulgaria, 2011), Paris Notebook (trans. Stephan Delbos, USA, 2020), Ink Spot of the Caribbean, (trans. Katia Hala, France, 2023).

She has taken part in international festivals of poetry, book fairs and literary residences in many countries (Canada, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Romania, Scotland, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Turkey etc.).

Her first book for children Pohádky z kolotoče (Fairy Tales from Carousel) is forthcoming.

www.terezariedlbauchova.eu
www.literarnisalon.cz

Květina-loď

ráno začala kvést orchidej
brzy bude mluvit stejně jako Louise Glück

zatím vystrčila bílý kapesník
a rozbaluje tuhou plachtu

několik měsíců pak na ráhnoví
bude třepotat motýly

Flower-ship

this morning the orchid began to bloom
soon it will speak just like Louise Glück

meanwhile it sticks out a white handkerchief
and unfurls a stiff sail

for months now the rigging
will tremble with butterflies

V mém květináči začala nečekaně klíčit rostlina

Když se nad hlínou objevil klíček,
s údivem jsem se na něj dívala.
Přestože každým dnem rostl vzhůru,
měla, a nechtěla jsem ho vytrhnout.
Právě naopak – opatrně jsem ho zalévala
a někdy – potajmu – kořenila i slzami.

Nikdy mě nenapadlo, že slza
a semeno jsou si tak blízko.

A plant began to sprout unexpectedly in my flowerpot

When a sprout appeared above the soil,
I looked at it amazed.
Although it grew upwards every day,
I should have, but I didn't want to pull it out.
On the contrary – I watered it carefully
and sometimes – in secret – even salted it with tears.

It never occurred to me
how close a tear is to a seed.

Navštívila mě báseň

Nejdříve přišlo vlnění
ulice se smrštila, rozšířila v avenue
a pak nebyla vidět ani dalekohledem

Další dny se mízy v těle občas zhouply
kočka vrkala jako by v bytě byl někdo cizí
a kytky se snažily vylézt z hlíny

Nakonec jednoho rána
po vydatném spánku
si ke mně cestu báseň prorazila

A Poem Visited Me

First came an undulation
the street shrank, widened into an avenue
and then wasn't visible even through binoculars

For days afterward the sap in my body swayed
the cat cooed like a stranger was in the flat
and the flowers tried to climb out of the soil

Finally one morning
after a deep sleep
a poem broke through to me

O touze

Touha s námi zmítá ode zdi ke zdi:
po životech, které jsme měli a už nemůžeme mít,
po životech, které jsme mít mohli a nezvolili je,
po životech, které jsme neměli a ani mít nemohli,
po životech, které odešly spolu s jinými bytostmi,
po životech, které chceme právě teď,
a i po životech budoucích.

A nakonec jsme rádi jen, když se vše na chvíli zastaví,
a veškerá náplň světa se vměstná
do povlávání záclony ve větru,
do slastného protahování kočky.
Nakonec jsme rádi za hvězdu:
jež zasvítila do protržené sítě
a zacelila ji.

About Desire

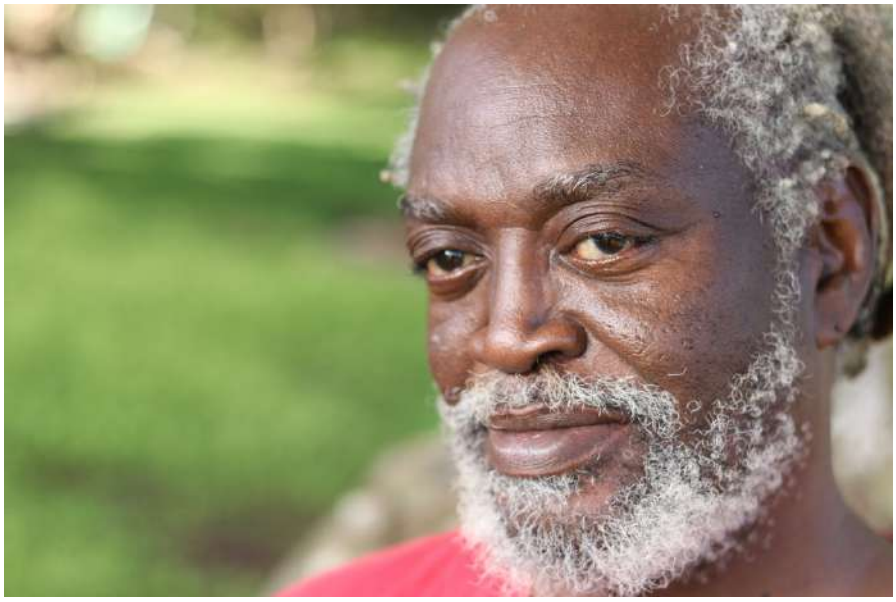
Desire shakes us from wall to wall:
for lives we had once and can never reclaim,
for lives we could have had and did not choose,
for lives we did not have and could not have,
for lives gone away with other beings,
for lives we want right now,
and even for lives to come.

And in the end we are happy only when everything pauses,
and the fullness of the world fits
into the flutter of a curtain in wind,
into the blissful stretch of a cat.
In the end we are happy for the star:
that flashed into the torn net
and mended it.

Winston Farrell, MA

BARBADOS

Winston Farrell is a theatre arts practitioner and published poet from Barbados. He enjoys reading and performing his work -- on and off the page. He engages his audience with the power and the rhythm in the word. A winner of the Frank Collymore Literary Endowment Prize, the Governor General's Award for poetry 2015 and the 2020 and 2023 Gine On Peoples' Choice Poet of the Year. He has an MA degree in Theatre and Development Studies (Leeds).



Bus Blues in Bim

1. Prelude

the yellow and blue
pride of my island's
black soil
waddles its tail to
the city

its tough sedan heart
made of iron and
packed baskets of
bananas and fruit
hums the journey's song

the crossing
from home to plantation
like a slaver - it sails
the cold morning air
chops like sea spray
passengers in panic
pushing
still afraid of
the whip's new horizon
the echo of the master's voice

2.

it is five past eight
an' I late
de bus stan' long enuff
dis morning
it is five past eight
an' I late
dis is de time de store does open

it is five past eight
an' I late
i hope de bus ain't brek down
or de driver tekkin' he time
it is five past eight
an' I late
got a pain in me hip from standin'
corners of de store want cleanin'

it is five past eight
an' I late
de hot tea in muh stomach
ain't settle
an' de fear in much heart is certain

come bus
come chariot
it is five past eight
an' I fired
got a warning from me
boss yesterday

3

before six
before bing and bang
of clock
of cock a' doodle's crow

come
come
sweet chariot
come quick

deliver dem
to de
work house
quick!! quick!!

before the sun could awake
she is ready
food flask hot with oat flakes
she hurries towards the pole
to wait
she is patient
for she can hear the distant grunt
of the engine
yet she is uncertain
for the space in her train
might be taken or
the rush for the door
might be heavy

come
come

sweet chariot
come
quick!
deliver dem
to de
work house
quick!! quick!!

Milly must get to the market
she was up before three
packing her basket with
limes and lemons and
pears and plums
she must regain her spot
in the shade of the market
catch the first penny in the
shade of the market
while Rick goes to school in
St. Lucy
and Jan just short in St. James
they all cluster the bus stop
in the morning
in one humble prayer

come
come
sweet chariot
come
quick!
deliver dem
to de
work house

quick!! quick!!

Cynthia got a pick in
one o' dem down-town
firms yesterday
an Mr. Thomas yelled to Glen
about gettin' on de job late
now de bus up de hill
like it stick on its will
eyes seek
it's six hours out dem
pay dis week

come
Come
sweet chariot
come

quick!
deliver dem
to de
work house
quick!! quick!!

4

every morning dem waiting
by de bus stop dem talking
'bout de bus man

school chil'ren and workers
baskets of hawkers sweating
but man

if it stay too long
it is confusion
O de bus man

it's a cussin' an' a fretting'
an' when de bus come 'long
it by pass dem into town
O de bus man

sun gone down
in de bus-stan'
O de bus man

it's a easing an' a squeezin'
for a wallet
in de bus-stan'

but once yuh sittin' there
de driver take good care
in de bus man

Oistens to Bridgetown
Holetown to Speightown
De busman

bus man
must be fun man
drivin' de bus man

in dem street man
backin' down in dem corners
wheelin' round dem ben's
sailin' thru dem cars an' ting
hear de engine sing

de bus man
mus' be fun man
de bus man
de BUS MAN -
mus' be panic man.

Free up yuhself (The African)

free up yuhself brother african
free up yuhself now
african yuh better know yuhself
african yuh better know yuhself
put him in barbados
him a bajan
put him in jamaica
him jamaican
put him in england
him ah englishman
put him in america
god damn yankee man
african yuh better know yuhself
african yuh better know yahself.

rip we 'way from we lan'
mek we wuck fuh white man
rip we 'way from we civilization
mek we wuk pun a damn plantation
african yuh better know yuhself
african yuh better know yuhself
come fuh we in a ship at night
packin' we rough and packin' we tight
leavin' half ah we behind
before dem get to where dem gine

black man struggle through de years
oppressed with de burdens and de fears
white whip rules his head
shackled soul makes him ah dead
african yuh better know yuhself
african yuh better know yuhself
development arisin' all around
de concrete got him nail to de ground
wuckin' an' wuckin' don't know wha he wuckin for
say that he free but is psycho slavery.

de yout' of today are strong
teach dem right don't teach them wrong
mek them know 'bout dem culture
mek them know mother africa
cause african yuh better know yuhself
say african yuh better know yuhself
all black people haffa unite
to liberate africa yuh must stand and fight
don't run away from yuhself
people, can't run away from yuhself.

Zita Holbourne FRSA

Photo credit is: Josimar Senior / Black Writers Guild.

UNITED KINGDOM

Zita is a multi-award winning, trade union, community & human rights campaigner and activist, an author, visual artist, curator, poet, vocalist and writer.

Journey by Train

On a train journey - instead of forwards
I never realised how sitting backwards
Could give perspective and lingering views
Of such bright wonderful sights to peruse
Meandering through English countryside
Uncovering delights, displayed with pride

Such wonders, nuggets and serenity
Landmarks and symbols of prosperity
Covert canals reappear fleetingly
At the foot of pristine fields secretly
Henge presenting ruins of weathered stone
Fragments of ancient castle stand alone

Against a backdrop of rolling hillsides
Above across the sky a woodlark glides
Tinted mauve, a steady blanket of blues
Warm glow of sunshine on my face renews
Spring beckons as a winter tree branch swells
With leafy sprouts and buds like rosy bells

Upon sleepers of steely tracks shining
Under the midday sun, turning, winding
Past isolated farm houses dotted
Purveying their land as if besotted
Fluffy sheep like cumulus clouds fleeting
Old gnarled trees and fresh water springs trickling

Industrial plants cut through scenery
Pausing the beauty periodically
Then seas of green with no horizon stretch
Until the newly arrived swallows etch
Shadowy patterns on the azure skies
My face warmed by the sun, I close my eyes

At peace now, for just a moment dozing
Until abruptly I am awoken
Hollering opinions down his new phone
A grey suited man passes through alone
Full of self importance his voice bellows
Instructions to someone as his voice grows

Unaware or uncaring that he's cut
Right through our coach's peace with his abrupt
And gruff, persistent, bullying voice tone
Signs that inform this is a quiet zone
Ignored! "Bub-Bye, Bub-Bye, Bub-Bye" he ends
Returning to his seat with no amends

We pass FedEx vans en masse retired
To a vast yard, no longer desired
Wind turbines white and tall, rotate with ease
As if lifted by the afternoon breeze
Reservoirs glisten and shine, reflecting
The skyscape architecture projecting

Then a flash of coloured jackets and coats
Of busy people who appear to float
Awaiting as we swish through the station
A slower train to their destination
Up on a hill a thatched house wink winks
Looking down on us like a Giza sphinx

A church in Norman attire stands proud
As one who's stood the test of time, unbowed
Slowing down now approaching a station
I think we might pause our commutation
Rows of houses that look the same don't yield
Suburbia surrounded by greenfield

Quiet as a mouse, all children in school
Commuter belt, probably once thought cool
Parents journeying to city based roles
As years of daily travel destroy souls
Mistaken, as we've picked up speed once more
Flung into the dark of a tunnel's core

Momentarily, we're hit by bright light
As we exit we're greeted by the sight
Of canal boats chugging, green, red and blue
Above, a wood copse, surveys them anew
Proud church steeple - the skyline's highest point
Refreshing not to see a high-rise joint
Like the cladded one that I once lived in
And that which robbed so many of their kin
We intersect with a concrete causeway
Carrying trucks that seem to swerve and stray
Heavy from the burdened loads they carry
Tired and worn out, not in a hurry

I try to catch names of stations we pass
My eyes dart from side to side but alas
These moments are too fleeting to focus
On signs adorning stations that pass us
Grateful for such times like these I breathe deep
Blessed moments that make me want to weep

Joyful tears for this chance to savour signs
Of Spring, of nature, of life, of sun shines
Often taken for granted - so I miss
Just how full these moments are of pure bliss
Peace at last in my life - hope in my heart
Which sometimes hurt so hard, that taking part

In life, meant I was too busy to see
On journeys just like this, the sheer beauty
Of wonders and nature all around me
Because then, unlike now, I was not free
To observe the world outside peacefully
Absorb life's simple pleasures joyfully

CHRISTOPHER OKEMWA

KENYA

Christopher Okemwa is a lecturer of literature at Kisii University, Kenya. He holds a PhD in performance poetry from Moi University, Kenya. He is the founder and current director of the Kistrech International Poetry Festival in Kenya (www.kistrechpoetry.org).

His novella, Sabina and the Mystery of the Ogre, won the Canadian Burt Award for African Literature in 2015. Its sequel, Sabina the Rain Girl, was selected for the UN SDG 2 Zero Hunger reading list. Okemwa has published twelve poetry collections, including Toxic Love (2004), The Gong (2009), Ominous Clouds (2018), Purgatorius Ignis (2016), Love from Afro Catalonia (2020), The Pieta (2019), Tisztítótűz (Purgatory) (2020), Izabrane Pesme: Selected Poems (2021), Between the Walls and Empty Spaces (2021), Christopher Okemwa's Selected Poems (2023), On the Podium of Lies (2023), Orchids in Taiwan (2024), The Fear of the Void (2024), and Chřadnoucí růže (A Withering Rose) (2024).

Okemwa is the editor of In the Murk of Life: An Anthology of Poetry (2019); Musings during a Time of Pandemic: A World Anthology of Poems on COVID-19 (2020); I Can't Breathe: A Poetic Anthology of Social Justice (2021); The Griots of Ubuntu: An Anthology of Contemporary Poetry from Africa (2021); Coming Out of Isolation: An Anthology of Poems on Triumph, Resilience, and Hope (2022); Kenya through a Foreign Eye: A Collection of Poems (2022); Ukraine: A World Anthology of Poems on War (2023); Kistrech Poetry Anthology: Celebrating Ten Years of Poetic Experience (2023); Voices from the Woods: An Anthology of Poems from East Africa & Beyond (2024); Song of the Plains and Other Poems (Approved for Juniour Secondary Schools in Kenya) (2025); Young Kenyan Poets, an Anthology of Poems (2024); and Silence: An International Anthology (2025).

His five children's books include The Village Queen (2009), Let's Keep Tiger (2010), The Visitor at the Gate (2010), Moraa and Miya the Cat (2023), and Chubot the Cursed One and Other Stories (2011). He has written four oral literature text books, titled Riddles of the Abagusii of Kenya: Gems of Wisdom from the African Continent (2011), Proverbs of the Abagusii of Kenya (2012), Otenyo the Great Warrior of the Abagusii, a play (2016), and Oral Poetry of the Abagusii of Kenya (2020). Okemwa has written five folktales of the Abagusii people of Kenya, namely Ogasusu na Okanyang'au (The Hare and the Hyena) (2014); Ogasusu na Oganchogu (The Hare and the Elephant) (2014); Kerangeti na Kerantina (Kerangeti and Kerantina) (2014); Okang'ombe, Okanyang'au na Ogakondo (The Cow, the Hyena and the Monkey) (2015); and Ogasusu na Okanyambu (The Hare and the Chameleon) (2015).

BUTTERFLIES IN GAZA

Little children are butterflies
Monarch
Marigold
Brimstone and swallowtail
Common tiger
Common blue

They embody
Admiration and inspiration
Beautiful and playful
Flap about like small skippers

In the Gaza
Their wings
Their thorax
Incapacitated

Their waterfall sound,
Their clicking
Can't protect them from predators

They can't flutter about
To suckle nectar from lilac flowers
Their proboscis are crushed
And can't reach the base of the
Tube that contains the nectar
Of their freedom

Nor display gorgeous colours
To ward off predators

They are a heap of bones
Scrawny and hungry
Wasting away, malnourished
The once-beautiful fritillary
In Gaza, are now rubble.

A DARK NIGHT FOR A FACE

God, in his silent abode
has a dark night for a face
a thorn-made halo round his head
His eyes no longer flicker
with love, enthusiasm and hope
Silence in his celestial spaces
is broken by much din, chaos
screams of children, bomb-shells
bullets, shrapnel. sirens,
smoke and dust sting his eyelids for tears
smudges his smiling face
He is startled, attacked by anxiety
Saddened, ashamed of the human race
He talks to his children
the Israelis, the Palestinians
Smiles and whispers to the Hamas
and holds the hand of Israelis
Oh, pure descendants of Abraham
May your fore-fathers
Isaac and Ishmael
bear a tongue of a dove
create a table of a truce
The foundation of a stone of love
which he laid between them, that is
him, his body and his blood
is flying up in rubble, smoke and fire
May you heed when He talks
May you accept His hand of love
May you reflect His smile on your faces
and bear a forgiving tongue
Oh, pure descendants of Abraham

Kistrech Poetry Festival
Past Events

Fatemeh Ekhtesari (Norway), Dr. Christopher Okemwa (festival director) & Mattia Scarpulla (Canada)

KPF 2023 Bengt O Bjorklund (Sweden)

KPF 2023 Canadian Poet, Nora Atalla

KPF 2023 Dr. Steve Tharakan, DHM, Swiss Embassy

Kistrech Poetry Festival
Past Events

KPF 2023 Canadian Poets, Mattia & Nora

KPF 2023 Hassanal Abdullah (USA)

KPF 2023 Kevin Dublin (USA)

KPF 2023 Peggy Morrison (USA)

Kistrech Poetry Festival
Past Events

KPF 2023 Canadian Poets, Mattia & Nora

KPF 2023 Salim Abdali (Denmark)

KPF 2023 Mattia Scarpulla (Canada) & Fatemeh Ekhtesari (Norway)

KPF 2023 Norwegian Poets Fatemeh & Erlend

Kistrech Poetry Festival
Past Events

KPF 2023 Opening ceremony at Goethe Institute

KPF 2023 Swiss Poets Andrea Grinder & Lucilla Trapazzo

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