kistrech

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CONTENT

MESSAGE FROM THE PATRON

On behalf of Kisii University fraternity I wish to welcome you to the 4th edition of Kistrech International Poetry Festival. This edition has been merged with the University's cultural festival. This merger aims at adding diversity to the two events and to ensure that our visiting poets and foreign artists interact, not only with African poetry, but with a whole array of African art, tradition and cultural practices. This year's event is more varied and far richer in terms of activities, content and global representations. The combined festivals reflect and promote this year's theme of "harnessing cultural, linguistic and religious diversity for human development."

Kisii University provides space and a conducive atmosphere for the two events. I know that you have come from countries with different cultures. I would like to assure you that Kisii University is a peaceful, culture-friendly society that you will fit into with ease and flexibility.

Your effort to participate in this poetry and cultural festival is an indication of the love of art; a celebration of creativity and imagination; a celebration of the beauty and joy of literature; a celebration of the world's rich and multiple cultural heritages.

The word "poet" has a Latin and Greek roots, and it means "creator". It refers to someone who demonstrates great imaginative power, insight, or beauty of expression. I can, therefore, state that you poets are inventors of humanity; you are people with a rare insight. Poetry varieties, such as song lyrics, spoken word, hip hop and the African oral poetry – are all ways to transmit wisdom and experiences and are, needless to say, central to our lives in a splendid way.

Despite this role poetry and art play, lack of resources hampers the access to participate in it. Upcoming writers and student poets, especially those from Africa, cannot afford to participate in literary events like this one. That is why Kisii University has put its foot forward to play a role in supporting this literary festival with an aim of increasing accessibility and participation in this international event.

In order to reduce obstacles that stand on the way of accessing art, we urge the arts agencies across the globe, local leaders and the philanthropic sector to come forward and support art festivals of this kind, especially those that take place in Africa. Kisii University pledges to continue providing full support to the implementation of Kistrech International Poetry Festival so as to provide the established poets, upcoming artists and our own student-poets an opportunity to participate in the arts and develop their talents. May God bless you all as you interact, share and learn from one another.

Patron
Prof. John S. Akama
Vice-Chancellor, Kisii University.

In order to reduce obstacles that stand on the way of accessing art, we urge the arts agencies across the globe, local leaders and the philanthropic sector to come forward and support art festivals of this kind, especially those that take place in Africa.

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the 4th edition of Kistrech International Poetry Festival in Kenya. As you can agree with me, this festival has grown to become the largest poetry event in Africa. In its inaugural edition in 2013, the festival had a small number of renown poets who participated, and this included Professor Malashri Lal (University of Delhi, India), Professor Sukrita Paul Kumar (University of Delhi, India), Professor Pornpen Hantrakool (Thailand), Professor Lauri Garcia Duenas (Mexico), Professor Arif Khudairi (University of Cairo, Egypt), Professor Jasonas Stavrakis (Cypress), Sarah Poisson (Lithuania), Vytautas Suslavius (Lithuania), journalist Indra Wussow (Germany radio), Spoken-word artist Asanda Vokwana and her two sisters (South Africa), Tendai Maduwa (Zimbabwe), Onarinde Fiyinfoluwa (Nigeria), and a big number of our own Kenyan poets. In 2014 the number of guest poets increased and this included Althea Romeo-Mark (Switzerland), Laus Strandby Nielsen (Denmark), Erling Kittelsen (Norway), Jenny Maria Tunedal (Sweden), Obediah Michael Smith (The Bahamas), Tendai Maduwa (Zimbabwe), Godspower Oboido (Nigeria), the late Prof. Animasaun Kayode (Nigeria), Nyongesa Tabalia (Kenya), Mariam Mpaata Melloney (Uganda),Constany Mose Oteki (Kenya) and many student-poets.

In 2015, the event continued to attract more poets from around the globe. Among them were Prof. Patricia Jabbeh Wesley (USA), Prof. Opal Palmer Adisa (USA), Rosemarie Wilson (USA), Susanna Sacks (USA), Godspower Oboido (Nigeria), Katharina Koppe (German), Erling Kittelsen (Norway), Ziphozakhe Hlobo (South Africa), Obediah Michal Smith (The Bahamas), Pelesa Sibiya (South Africa), Dr. Joseph Muleka (Kenya), Constany Oteki Mose (Kenya), Christopher Okemwa (Kenya), and several student-poets.

This year's edition is seen as a unique one since it merges with the Kisii University cultural festival. The poetry event will benefit from the enhanced interaction and networking with students and lecturers of Kisi University and the surrounding colleges and schools. Our visit to the village and to Lake Victoria during the festival will add flavor and new experiences to our guest poets. I wish you all an exciting and enjoyable festival.

2016 Team

Prof. John S. Akama- **Patron**
Christopher Okemwa – **Director**
Brother Francis Kerongo - **Kisii University Cultural festival**
Damiana Mwikali Kambo –**Publication**
Tony Mochama – **Media**
Edna Kerubo Atambo – **Kistrech Theatre International**
Dr. Michael Oyoo Weche – **Programme**
Dr. George Nyandoro – **Programme**
Charles Makari Oeri – **Kistrech Theatre International**
Pauline Nyamiaka – **Public Relations**
James Rolex Akatcha – **Coordinator Student Artists**

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OUR SPONSORS

We thank all those who are supporting the 4th edition of Kistrech International poetry festival. The main sponsor, Kisii University, are supporting us with internal transport, publication of the festival's magazine & providing us with a space for the event—just as they did in 2014 & 2015. The Vice-Chancellor, Prof. John Akama, has accepted to be the patron of this festival and has pledged a continued support for the event. We also thank Nsemia Inc. Publishers for printing posters and banners for the festival. We recognize NORLA (Norwegian Literature Abroad) for funding the Norwegian poet, Gunnar Waerness, to participate in this year's event. Dutch Foundation for Literature has also supported the Dutch poet, Hagar Peeters, to participate in the festival. Danish Arts Foundation has given support to the Danish poet, Dr. Martin Glaz Serup, to come to Kenya for the event. NALIF (Nyanza Annual Literary Festival) is supporting five young writers who won in their 2016 inaugural poetry competition to attend this year's Kistrech event.

AMIR AVIEL OR

(ISRAEL)

Amir Or, born in Tel Aviv in 1956, is the author of eleven volumes of poetry in Hebrew. His latest books are Prophecy of the Madman (2012), Loot (Selected poems 1977-2013) and Wings (2015). His poems, translated into more than forty languages, have appeared in major poetry sites, poetry journals and anthologies, as well as in twenty books in Europe, Asia and America. Among them are Poem and Day (Dedalus, 2004, 2006,); The Museum of Time (ArtAark, 2009; Dutch, Azul Press 2012), Miracle/Milagro (Spanish/English, Urpi Editores, U.S. 2011) Loot (Serbian, Arhipelag Press 2012, 2014, Turkish Şiirden, 2014), Le Musée du Temps (Editons de l'Amandier, 2013, Serbian 2015) and Tredici Poesie (Italian, Milan 2014).

His prose book, The Song of Tahira (2001), a fictional epic in metered prose, was the only Hebrew book included by critic Noa Mannheim in her "10 greatest fantasy books of all time". His latest novel The Kingdom (2015) retells the story of King David in colloquial Hebrew while comprising a criticism of contemporary Israel.

Or gave readings and lectured in dozens of festivals and conferences worldwide. He is the recipient of Israeli and international poetry awards, including the Pleiades tribute (SPE 2000) for having made "a significant contribution to modern world poetry", the Fulbright Award for Writers, the Bernstein Prize, the Levi Eshkol Prime Minister's Poetry Prize, the Oeneumi literary prize 2010 of the Tetovo Poetry Festival, the Wine Poetry prize 2013 of the Struga Poetry Evenings, the 'Stefan Mitrov Ljubisa' international literary Award 2014 of The Budva City Theater, and the European Atlas of Lyrics prize 2016 of Banja Luka. He was also awarded several poetry fellowships, among them fellowships from Iowa University; the Centre of Jewish-Hebrew Studies at the University of Oxford; the Literarische Colloquium, Berlin; the Heinrich Böll Foundation, Ireland; and the Hawthornden Castle, Scotland.

He translated into Hebrew eight prose and poetry books, including The Gospel of Thomas; Stories from the Mahabharata; and Limb Loosening Desire, an anthology of Greek erotic poetry. For his translations from ancient Greek he was awarded the Culture Minister Prize. Or has studied Philosophy and Comparative Religion at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, where he later lectured on Ancient Greek Religion. He has given creative writing workshops and trained teachers at Helicon Poetry School and other poetry schools and universities in Israel, U.K., Austria, Czech Republic, U.S. and Japan. He has published numerous essays on poetry, classic studies, and comparative religion.

In 1990 Or founded Helicon Poetry Society and later on served as Helicon's Chief Editor and Artistic Director. He initiated and developed its various projects, including Helicon's poetry journal and its series of poetry books; the Sha'ar International Poetry Festival; and the Helicon Hebrew-Arabic Poetry School.

Or has served as editor of the Catuv poetry books series, as national editor of the international poetry magazine Atlas, and as a national coordinator for the U.N. sponsored UPC venture, "Poets for Peace." He is a founding member of the EACWP (European Association of Creative Writing Programs) and of the WPM (World Poetry Movement).

The Barbarians (Round Two)

It was not in vain that we awaited the barbarians,
It was not in vain that we gathered in the city square.
It was not in vain that our great ones put on their official robes
and rehearsed their speeches for the event.
It was not in vain that we smashed our temples
and erected new ones to their gods;
as proper we burnt our books
that have nothing in them for people like that.

As the prophesy foretold, the barbarians came
and took the keys to the city from the king's hand.
But when they came they wore the garments of the land,
and their customs were the customs of the state;
and when they commanded us in our own tongue
we no longer knew when
the barbarians had come to us.

-By **Amir Aviel Or;**Translated by **Vivian Eden**

PROF. ARIF KHUDAIRI

EGYPT

Egyptian poet, novelist, short story writer, playwright, folklorist, critic, and translator Arif Karkhi Abukhudairi Mahmoud (better known as Arif Khudairi) was born in Luxor, Qena and grew up in Aswan, a little town in the southern of Egypt. He was educated at Cairo University, where he majored in Arabic literature and earned his PhD in 1986.

Khudairi is a very productive and imaginative writer who wrote 55 books, 52 fairy tales, 25 literary translations, 100 essays, and many other writings. He writes primarily in Arabic and English, frequently translating his works into both languages himself.
In May 1990, Khudairi founded and edited Majalat Al Dirasat Al 'Arabiyyah (Journal of Arabic Studies) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and later in the same year he edited Al Majalah Al Dawliyyah Lil Drasat Al 'Arabiyyah (The International Journal of Arabic Studies) in Bander Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam.

His Arabic poetry collections include Qasaid Hub 1983[Love Poems], a first Arabic poetry book to publish in Malaysia, Attair Al Jawwal,1984[The Wandering Bird], Ahlam Rabi'i-yyah,1991 [Springtime Dreams], a first Arabic poetry volume to publish in Brunei, Ahlam Attair Al Jawwal,1994[Dreams of the Wandering Bird], Al Tajwal Fil Mawani A

I Ba'idah,1996[Wandering in the Far Away Harbors], Awraq Al Shajar,1999[Trees Leaves], Filamanku, 2004[Flamenco], Ahlam Saghirah,2009[Small Dreams], and Layali Gharnatah, 2012[Granada Nights]. Some of his English poetry volumes are: Trees Leaves (1998), The Abode of Peace (2008), Rubaiyyat of Arif Khudairi (2004), Love Poems of Arif Khudairi (2011), and Divine Lake (2012).

His poetry moves from alienation and longing, as in Dreams of the Wandering Bird, to the celebration of love and nature, as in Love Poems of Arif Khudairi (2011), to universal themes of love and divinity, as in Trees Leaves (1998), to peace and universal harmony, as in The Abode of Peace (2008), to Sufism and spirituality, as in Divine Lake (2012).His verse is noted for its astounding musicality, exquisite primal images, distinct style, depth, simplicity and wit. His novella, The Eighth Voyage of Sindbad (1999) is seen by critics as a highly symbolic narrative of good versus evil, altruism versus selfishness, of materialism versus spirituality.

Among his short story collections are Tales of the Prophets (1993), Tales from the Arabian Sahara: The Trip and Other Stories (1998), and Arabian Fairy Tales: The Goblin Wife and Other Stories (2011). In his Arabic tales collections, he rewrote stories that have been either ignored or neglected by the westerners and which present a true account of the Arabs. His fairy tales hailed as a splendid addition to the Eastern oral tradition, and a superb transcription of the little-known Arabic folk tales.

As for his short stories, they deal with various themes. Luxor: The City of Hundred Gates (1982) is a semi-autobiographical story. The Philosopher (1983) is a story of Mat, a poor old man who reflects profound philosophical views about life. Departure (1984) is about unrequited love. Homecoming (1993), examines psychological observations recorded by an Arab immigrant returning to his native land. Night Flight (2000) is a hilarious story taking place in a small hospital. The Lazy (2001), presents a frank and straightforward monologue of a middle-aged man. Born a Lover (2002), recounts astonishing confessions of a modern time Don Juan.

Khudairi wrote an autobiography Rihlati Ma'a Al Shi'r, 2014 (My Journey with Poetry). He also has written several works of non-fiction, including Thoughts of the Times: Introduction to Arabic Literature (1985), The Arabs and the Art of Translation (2008), Teaching Arabic Literature to non-Arabs: Its Method and Objective (2009), Literary Translation (2011), Foreign Literature in Arabic: A Personal Experience (2011) and Scientific Research Methods (2015).

Khudairi is also an excellent translator. He translated into Arabic eight Korean, Malaysian, Bruneian, Pakistani, English, and American books of poems. He wrote biographies of several poets such as Kim So Wol (1984), Muhammad Iqbal (2004), and Shukri Zain (2006).
His travels, lectures, and poetry readings took him around the world. Such extensive travels provide the backdrop and color for much of Khudairi's writing, which filled with the themes of alienation, wandering, longing, separation, and flight of time.

Khudairi is also a skilled painter, whose cover art and illustrations have sometimes accompanied his poetry. A number of his works has been translated into sixteen languages, including Arabic, English, French, Spanish, Malay, Urdu, Tagaog, and Bahasa Indonesia.
He received several poetry awards, and in 2011, he was nominated for Griffin Poetry Award, Canada, for his anthology (Love Poems of Arif Khudairi).
Khudairi taught at a number of universities, including Hankuk University for Foreign Studies, Seoul, South Korea (1979-1981), The University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA (1981-1982),The National University of Malaysia, Bangi, Selangor (1982-1983),The International Islamic University, PJ, Malaysia (1983-1985),The University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (1987-1990), University of Brunei Darussalam, BSB, Brunei (1999-2007), and Sultan Sharif Ali Islamic University, BSB, Brunei (2007-2012).

In 2007, he was appointed the first Dean of the Faculty of Arabic Language and Islamic Civilization.Khudairi is a member of various learned societies such as The Egyptian Writers Association, Cairo, Egypt, Modern Literature Association, Cairo, Egypt, The International Haiku Association, Tokyo, Japan, and President of The Poetry Society, UBD, Brunei Darussalam.

i Love you

- by **Prof. Arif Khudairi**

I love you for your eyes make me love
The seas, and the rivers, and the skies,
And dream about you all the time.

I love you for your lips make me love
The roses, the flowers, and the tulips,
And fly in the sky as a drunken butterfly.

I love you for your smile makes me love
The sun, the moon, and the stars,
And wait for the dawn every day in delight.

I love you for your love make me swim
In ecstasy, in a river in paradise
Made of musk, of charm, and dream.

BEATRICE EKESA

KENYA

Beatrice Ekesa is a Kenyan post-graduate student at the University of Nairobi pursuing her Master of Arts in Literature. She holds a Bachelor of Education (Arts) degree (English & Literature) from Maseno University. She also holds a certificate in ICT Integration in Teaching and Learning awarded by the Ministry of Education, Kangundo District. She has a certificate in Education Management from the Kenya Education Management Institute (KEMI). She is a teacher of English and Literature and a patron of the Drama Club at Kangundo High School, Machakos County. In the past, Beatrice has coordinated gender rights activities in schools in Busia County on behalf of CLARION (Centre for Law and Research International) in conjunction with the Ministry of Education. She also adjudicates English poetry competitions during the Kenya Schools & Colleges Music Festival, Kangundo Sub-County. In 2008, she attended the Gender Rights Exposure and Planning Workshop at the Wida Highway Motel, Nairobi, organized by CLARION. In 2015 she participated in the Metropolitan Regional Drama Workshop held at Lysak - Haven Park Hotel, Machakos County.

ABSTRACT

Spoken Word in Kenya: Embracing Cultural Globalization

Spoken word in Kenya embraces cultural diversity by crossing ethnic, national and regional borders. This literary genre encourages the transmission of values and ideas derived from different regions in the world. It incorporates them into one culture that exhibits a global identity. It achieves this through integration and hybridization of different cultures, religions and languages from various parts of the world.

Cultural diversity is evident in Namatsi Lukoye's spoken word poem "Queen" and Wanjiku Mwaura's "I Speak Continental", which draw on the African oral tradition to address issues that are of global concern in the contemporary world such as gender equality and environmental conservation. Both poems bring together different cultures of Africa by pointing out their uniqueness with the aim of portraying how interconnected they are.

Religious diversity is brought out in Raya Wambui's spoken word poem entitled "Define and Conquer" and El-Poet's "Paranoid". The two poems advocate for the coexistence of different religions in Kenya.

Linguistic diversity is evident in spoken word in Kenya through code switching and code mixing. Some poets mix English, Kiswahili and local languages, to create a hybrid language commonly referred to as Sheng. This is evident in the Poetry of Tear Drops, Kennet B. and Dorphan. The hybrid language has become a landmark of urbanization used by Kenyan urban youths who have transcended their ethnic backgrounds to achieve a national, regional and global identity.

Claudio Pozzani

ITALY

Claudio Pozzani was born in 1961 in Genoa (Italy).

Poet, narrator and musician, he is appreciated in Italy and abroad for his poetic performances in the most important international literary and poetry festivals. His poems have been translated and published into more than 10 languages and have appeared in important anthologies and magazines of international contemporary poetry. Since 1995 Pozzani is the director of the Genoa International Poetry Festival in Italy and has created and organized several poetry events in Europe (Belgium, France, Japan, Finland, Germany). He is also the director of the House of Poetry in Genoa, with more then 20 free events every year. His last CD (poetry and music) "La Marcia dell'ombra" has been in the top 20 of the Italian independent music charts.

I Dance

I dance the dance of brilliant ideas
hoping that you will tell me something new
I dance the dance of the losers and the lost
knowing that my steps will be in vain
I dance the dance of the happy naive
thinking that my sweat will help somebody
I dance the dance of the profiteers
and I will dance until you'll pay me

And I dance I dance I dance
to overcome my arrogance
I dance I dance I dance
the why has no importance

I dance the dance of the damned
because the spleen reaches my thorax
I dance the dance of the presumptuous
Because you too are one of them if you think you're in my league
I dance the dance of the undesired
I've trained myself a lot in front of closed doors
I dance the dance of the intollerants
Can you move over a little, please?

And I dance I dance I dance
until I'll remain standing
I dance I dance I dance
because it's you who are asking.
- by **Claudio Pozzani**; Translated by **Suzanne Branciforte**

ERIC TINSAY VALLES

SINGAPORE

Eric Tinsay Valles has published two poetry collections, A World in Transit and After the Fall (dirges among ruins) and co-edited the Get Lucky anthology of Philippine-Singapore writings [Ethos Books]. His poems have appeared in Routledge's New Writing: The International Journal for the Practice and Theory of Creative Writing, the Hispanic Culture Review, Jet Fuel Review, Reflecting on the Merlion, & Words: Poems Singapore and Beyond, Under the Storm Anthology of Contemporary Philippine Poetry and the Southeast Asian Review of English. He has won prizes in the Goh Sin Tub Creative Writing Competition (2013) and the British Council's Writing the City competitions (2011). His critical work is featured in The Creativity Market: Creative Writing in the 21st Century and The Asiatic. He has been invited to read poetry or commentaries at Baylor, Melbourne and Oxford Universities. He has taken up writing residencies at the Vermont Studio Centre, Centrum (Washington) and Wellspring House (Massachusetts). He writes about the migrant experience and personal trauma with humour and empathy.

Trauma: Telling with Gestures

By Eric Tinsay Valles

"Trauma survivors face the paradox of describing in language something that exists outside of language" (Whitehead).

THE idea of describing in language something that exists outside of language in the context of surviving trauma is drawing greater critical attention. This is apt and pressing in an age characterized by traumas from battles fought between individuals or interest groups. Seventy years after humankind developed weapons to annihilate itself, the world is gripped in renewed fears of radical terrorism, economic stagnation and mass migration. Some migrants-- economic refugees --hold on to fragments of war memories in their countries of birth and retell them as a means of gaining control of runaway feelings. But because not too many people dare to confront their unspeakable fears, the latter continue to afflict them. Around the globe lies a mass of minds and bodies broken and crushed by incommunicable experiences.

For the last 20 years, inquiry into trauma has been closely tied, understandably so, to ethics. In the influential study Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History, Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub say the trauma witness is a passive victim. He or she is not fully conscious and, therefore, cannot effectively map out the terrain of his or her trauma. He or she grasps at shards of memories and resorts to repetition and rambling as a means of coping. The ideal audience of trauma stories exercises empathy as an analyst does in psychoanalysis. This listener or reader must exercise utmost patience and not interrupt even if the greater world prefers clinical efficiency and tangible results. Echoing the work of other trauma study luminaries such as Anne Whitehead, Geoffrey Hartman and Dominick LaCapra, Cathy Caruth speaks of a "rethinking of reference" or a "resituating … [of history] in our understanding, that is, at permitting history to arise where immediate understanding may not" (Craps and Buelens 2008: 1). This rethinking usually involves the use of poststructuralist tools such as deconstruction and psychoanalysis in the study of trauma narratives that strive to capture memories that do not easily lend themselves to representation.

One widely shared traumatic experience that pervades contemporary literary writing is the loss of home. This is a dynamo for generating stories. A primordial home is "located or dislocated discursively" (Leon, 2014: 7)—that is primarily in a language that is acquired and nurtured in a basic social unit in a specific cultural community. But the inability to settle down in a new, adopted space as well as language and to go back to an original homeland leaves the trauma teller tongue-tied. This situation underscores how trauma is far from being "a stable point of reference" (7). Sad or horrific memories are linked to great shifts of movement. But memories may be recorded and their underlying traumas subsequently come to terms with "through words, or the creation of a narrative, whether written or spoken" (Burrows, 2008: 162). The same memories can be expressed also with silences, the "mute repetition of suffering," that demands new ways of reading and listening (Craps and Buelens 1). The writer, who is similarly displaced from society, must rely on new ways of writing, say with gestures, to craft his or her story.

This paper aims to rethink the limits of language among trauma survivors in poetic narratives from Southeast Asia, Boey Kim Cheng's After the Fire, selected poems by Edwin Thumboo and my Singapore Literature Prize-shortlisted collection After the Fall: dirges among ruins. I maintain that the apparent distinctions between language and extra-linguistic realities are unstable. I will draw on certain ideas from St. Augustine and Walter Benjamin, who have evocatively reflected on the state of homelessness, in order to reflect on the undecidability of trauma telling.

St. Augustine said that traumatic adversity was a refiner that quelled the lust for domination or cupiditas (City of God [COG]I. 1, 41) as he demonstrated in the first modern autobiography, Confessions. He equated the good with those steadfast in virtue. He used the sign, "a thing which of itself makes some other thing come to mind" (On Christian Teaching [OCT] II, 2-3), to convey an approximation of any incommunicable experience. He added that the many crises of the ancient world were effects of cupiditas in his confessional and exegetical writings. He recommended what he called "expression of love [or caritas]," whose elements included "a brief and lucid narrative … variety [that] holds the attention without creating boredom" [OCT II, 34-37). Walter Benjamin, on the other hand, considered the horrors of war as necessary "before the succession of the world" in literary critiques and memoirs about life in Germany during the rise of the Nazi regime (Berlin Childhood around 1900, 2002: 164) despite his own recurring fears. Like St. Augustine, he extolled a life that is detached from the cares of the world in autobiographical storytelling. In a study of the stories of Nikolai Leskov, a religious Orthodox writer, Benjamin observed a propensity to depict "a righteous man – seldom an ascetic, usually a simple, active man – who becomes a saint apparently in the most natural way in the world" (Selected Writings 145). Whereas St. Augustine embodied a chronicler turned toward heaven, Benjamin exemplified the storyteller with a markedly secular, though still pre-eminently ethical, view.

Though representing widely different worldviews, St. Augustine and Benjamin had similar ethical concerns and rhetorical prescriptions. Their primary commonalities included (1) an autobiographical reflection on the decline of virtue and, consequently, of storytelling in their respective epochs and societies, (2) the use of rhetorical devices, especially allegory, as a means to articulate the self in writing and (3) the timelessness of the related experiences as an exemplar for daily living. These ideas and strategies have shaped my creative practice.

Writing about the self, specifically after a string of traumas, in the modern age begins with St. Augustine's Confessions. In it, St. Augustine recalls a wanton life of inordinate love of self, cupiditas, that results in a fall from virtue, starting with his theft of pears as an adolescent. "The evil in me was foul, but I loved it," he writes. "I loved my perdition and my own faults, not the things for which I committed wrong, but the wrong itself" (Confessions II. 4, 47). His subsequent guilt for that and a series of other personal indiscretions lead him to compose his landmark witnessing of his own journey toward redemption. In it, introspection is a step toward an ascetical detachment from the self that he expressed typically with imagery: "above the same eye of my soul the immutable light higher than my mind" ("But Enough about Me"). In a passage from OCT, he draws on pastoral and corporal symbols in order to explain initiation into the church from worldly lust:

> Surely one learns the same lesson as when one hears it in plain words without the support of the imagery? And yet somehow it gives me more pleasure to contemplate holy men when I see them as the teeth of the church tearing men away from their errors and transferring them into its body, breaking down their rawness by biting and chewing. And it is with the greatest of pleasure that I visualize the shorn ewes their worldly burdens set aside like fleeces, ascending from the pool (baptism) and all giving birth to twins (the two commandments of love), with none of them failing to produce this holy fruit (II. 6-7).

Thus, St. Augustine is able to demonstrate Roman rhetorical principles of succinctness and clarity, reminiscent of his admonishing his religious community to harness Egyptian gold, for the purpose of transmitting his church's truths (OCT II. 39-50). He does so with the passion and conviction borne out of his experience of trauma during his prior enslavement to worldly lust. His avowed intention is not to give pleasure but to instruct souls. Benjamin also offers "counsel, [that is,] a proposal concerning the continuation of a story which is in the process of unfolding" (TS 146-7). He decries how experience has been supplanted by information in the modern world and how, as a result, storytelling has declined. In TS, he points out the reticence of war veterans as abetting this situation along with society's overreliance on soulless "tactical warfare," economic statistics, wholesale mechanization and an excessive striving for power (akin to what St. Augustine calls cupiditas). He says it is the storyteller's mission to fashion experience -- "his own or that reported by others. . . [-- and make] it the experience of those who are listening to his tale" (TS 146). Benjamin typically prescribes the employment of detailed nature imagery in an act of "weaving and spinning" characterized by "chaste compactness" (149) in order to impress his reflection on to the reader's imagination and memory. In this passage, he laments the consequences of mechanization in society:

> A generation that had gone to school on horse-drawn streetcars now stood under the open sky in a landscape where nothing remained unchanged but the clouds and, beneath those clouds, in a force field of destructive torrents and explosions, the tiny, fragile human body (144).

Just like St. Augustine in Confessions, Benjamin believes that what is communicated in storytelling must be subsumed in the life of the storyteller "in order to bring it out of him again" (149). The main subject of his TS is Nikolai Leskov, a religious Orthodox writer whose timeless stories center on the righteous man. He observes that a basic story structure is repeated in Leskov's oeuvre as a means to keep both the stories and the art of storytelling, as it were, alive. He cites a Leskov story, "The Alexandrite," as an illustration of how the religious and worldly as well as salvation and nature are strands woven tightly through a storyteller's craft:

> that old time when the stones in the womb of the earth and the planets at celestial heights were still concerned with the fate of men – unlike today, when both in the heavens and beneath the earth everything has grown indifferent to the fates of the sons of men, and no voice speaks to them from anywhere, let alone does their bidding. None of the undiscovered planets play any part in horoscopes any more, and there are a lot of new stories, all measured and weighed and examined for their specific weight and their density, but they no longer proclaim anything to us, nor do they bring us any benefit. Their time for speaking with men is past (153).

Though St. Augustine and Benjamin diverge in ideology and belief, they remarkably complement each other in the act of storytelling where the human storyteller is at home with nature. St. Augustine provides optimism to the project of confessional reflection and discovery. In the latter, after all, God "is a thing . . . [other] than which there exists . . . [nothing] better" and "what . . . [believers] value above all other things" (OCT I. 6-8). This divine other assures the inspired writer the light of truth and goodness. Benjamin, on the other hand, drives a sharp critique of German culture that is suffused with a "melancholia of absence and finitude" (Richter 226). He regards memory, "the epic faculty par excellence" (TS 153), not only as an instrument for recovering what is lost but as the scene of language where content is dramatized.

A hovering between presence and absence as well as a yearning for fullness of being and preservation of memory are themes that run through some contemporary Singaporean poetry. It is most pronounced in poems about domestic traumas, especially in Boey Kim Cheng's After the Fire (ATF) and Edwin Thumboo's poems about outsiders. Boey and Thumboo seek to describe in language what fundamentally exists outside of language. As perceptive, lucid witnesses, they recount in detail how some of their lyrical speakers and characters are at a loss for words to articulate feelings about isolation. Their speakers and characters struggle to use precise language. Michel Blanchot suggests that such writers are subjected to acute distress. He says, " . . . [A]nother suffers from being the fortunate interpreter of his misfortune. He suffocates in that intellectual freedom he still has and that allows him to see where he is. He is torn apart by the harmony of his images, by the air of happiness radiating from what he writes" (The Station Hill Blanchot Reader 343).1 Boey and Thumboo can view their lyrical speakers' situation rationally, but still exhibit pangs of dread as to what sort of imagery to use to make their readers experience and, thus, understand the same.

Unquenchable Fire / Silences of Memory *Unquenchable Fire / Silences of Memory*

The critic Rajeev Patke observes three key features of Boey Kim Cheng's poetry: "intensity, restlessness, and a prodigal gift for metaphor" (298). These correspond to the qualities that St. Augustine extolls in an ideal writing style that gives primacy to incisiveness rather than rhetorical flair:

> *it is not so much embellished with verbal ornament as inflamed by heartfelt emotion. It has room for almost all those ornaments, but if they are not there they are not missed. It is borne along by its own momentum, and derives its beauty of expression, if indeed this emerges, from the power of its subject-matter, and not the pursuit of elegance (OCT IV. 20. 41-42).*

Boey may be said to write in a "restrained style" that elicits introspection and discovery of some truth rather than incites to action (OCT IV. 24. 53-54). Boey also meets Benjamin's criterion for essential art: "authenticity," the basis of "historical testimony" and the authority of the object" (1111).

Another critic, Philip Holden, in turn, says that Boey's poems about rootlessness, though "relentlessly internationalist," are "no less Singaporean because they are set outside the country" (45). Boey, no doubt, has unleashed unadorned feelings and a desire for individuality while moored in a particular socio-cultural context. This is a tradition in whose fabric Boey's poetry is imbedded.

This liminal condition, a hard truth in itself, can lead to some distress in the writer and his immediate circle of loved ones. The few peer-reviewed, published studies of Boey's poetry concur on this. One of the most recent is Angelia Poon's "The 'Swaying Sense of Things': Boey Kim Cheng and the Poetics of Imagined Transnational Space, Travel, and Movement." It maintains that at the center of Boey's canvas, especially in his early work, lie ambivalent feelings toward his immediate family. This suggests the importance Singaporean and other East Asian societies place on the collective. Psychologist David B. Pillemer affirms that individuals in social groups that experience loss, be it of home or some other valued possession, "feel an obligation to combat forgetting." This is apparently most noticeable in ethnic Chinese families (149) like Boey's. But remembering vignettes from the past is also a remedy for shock at the island's protean skyline and evolving culture. Boey has exhibited the otherness of his family in poetic discourse that features some local color of his motherland. It belongs to a tradition that sustains and shapes it. "This tradition itself," Benjamin declares, "is thoroughly alive and extremely changeable" (WAAMR 1111). This is evident in "Lost Poem," "Kelong" and "The Planners" from Boey's After the Fire (ATF).

"Lost Poem" is a condensed bildungsroman in verse with the lyrical speaker adopting a restrained style to convey the truth of his estrangement from the other who is his father. This speaker is torn between the denial of pain from the memory of his father occasioned by a poem that the latter had inserted in some book, which is now also lost, and recreating that pain by writing verses about his father. The speaker's keen awareness of the truth of loss heightens the traumatic experience. This loss is expressed through a fundamental paucity of words, especially "the plain words/ that I can't get right." The speaker addresses an invisible interlocutor, who is himself a struggling poet with feelings of inadequacy that are manifested bodily symptoms ("You wrote a poem once, your hand/ unsteady, about being too late"). The dramatic speaker strives to make his audience understand his unspeakable predicament with a metaphor that evokes both the natural and urban aspects of his native garden city ("The image I have of it is a plant/ wilting on a sill" [28]). The simple aptness of the image as a correlative to the speaker's pain and consequent loss makes it believable. This is what St. Augustine considers the goal of the restrained writing style (OCT IV. 26).

The poem "Uncle Never Knew" is found in Edwin Thumboo's collection Still Travelling and the anthology of Singapore and world literatures & Words. The poem is not about nation building, a theme that Thumboo, Singapore's unofficial poet laureate, is most closely associated with, but about intimate family ties. Concretely, it is about grasping the meaning of one mysterious, fragmented life, the dramatic speaker's uncle. This demonstrates what Benjamin attests is at the core of storytelling: "[the writer] cannot hope to take the smallest step beyond the limit at which he writes 'Finis,' and in so doing invites the reader to a divinatory realization of the meaning of life" (TS 155). Wimal Dissanayake suggests that "Uncle Never Knew" means cosmopolitanism that denotes both "the idea of universality as well as rootedness" (Thumboo, Writing Asia 215). Dissanayake is correct to some extent. Seeming contradictions inhere in the raw experiences of an individualistic subject, Thumboo's uncle. The uncle is a mentor, a role model, a righteous man who discovers his identity and virtue in his imagination. In this sense, the subject is both universal and rooted in his multicultural context. Thumboo aptly describes him as "[a]lways alone but never lonely" (19). This Uncle is also pre-eminently a poetic craftsman who draws the listener to conjure up a hometown and an entire culture.

In the face of sea changes in his dynamic environment, this Uncle holds his own as an individual subject. He embodies Benjamin's "righteous man," who is the advocate for all creatures" (TS 158-9). He is a mediator between the world of pragmatism or what Benjamin calls "mechanical reproduction" and the world of ideas and "ritual." In such an environment, the Uncle could have mused as Benjamin did: "One may assume that what mattered was their existence, not being on view" (WAAMR 1114).

Like the mature Thumboo, the Uncle possesses a "[m]emory [that is] is full and whole" (20). This fragile memory is enshrined in the haven that amounts to a "cult of remembrance," according to Benjamin. The Uncle's uniqueness or aura survives in fleeting expressions of his face (WAAMR 1114) that the dramatic speaker struggles to recall. The Uncle's desire for a semblance of home is heartfelt and fragile. In a loving description of his Uncle, the speaker undermines stereotypes of the ideological other and gives him room for self-expression. The Uncle continues to struggle ("He lived – if you could call it that" [19]). His acceptance of alienation is designated with the image of a rule-governed tea ceremony ("Tranquil as leaves left in a tea cup" [19]). But still, he enjoys a vigorous inner life ("Always alone but never lonely." [19]). As in his other poems about migrants, Thumboo contrasts his enigmatic individualistic subject with the canny, sclerotic ways of his adopted society:

> *Great houses are history, clan, essential unity; belief.*
> *A way of life which brooks no breaking of fidelity.*
> *Rooted comforts reaffirm; nothing is extinguished. (20)*

At the point when the attention shifts from the Uncle, in the lyrical equivalent of his death, the lyrical speaker's imagination is awakened. What Benjamin observes about new art forms can be applied to Thumboo's poem: "unique faculty to express by natural means and with incomparable persuasiveness all that is fairylike, marvellous, supernatural" (WAAMR 1117). This magical space is where "writing begins" (Zhou 199). In Thumboo's work, the Uncle's home is invisible. It transgresses stereotypes and boundaries, even those of memory ("That House I've never seen, tries to sketch itself" [20]).

My Singapore Literature Prize-shortlisted collection After the Fall (dirges among ruins) is an attempt to address the challenge of describing in poetic language something that exists outside of language in the context of surviving trauma. This is pressing in an age characterized by traumas from battles fought between individuals or ideologies. Seventy years after humankind developed weapons to annihilate itself, the world is gripped in renewed fears of radical terrorism, economic stagnation and a refugee crisis. But because not too many dare to confront their unspeakable fears, the latter continue to afflict them. Around the globe lies a mass of minds and bodies broken and crushed by incommunicable experiences. They are singing dirges among the ruins of their virtues. With ideas and strategies drawn from St. Augustine and Walter Benjamin, I seek to create poetic art out of perceptions of mute subjects and experiences of brokenness. I examine gestures of hands and expressions on faces and use sensory language to unravel what makes individual subjects unique. Here is a poem from the collection:

Stinky Tofu²

I'll miss stinky tofu
Wafting around sundown
From iron-grilled windows on narrow lanes
Like friends made after hours of language exchange.

Its sour vinegar is like endless ting xie:3
Every morning in class,
A bloodletting to master Mandarin, friends of friends crowing,
"Are you from Hong Kong?"

Brine is flavored with chili and minced meat
Like plane tickets and freebies (even a water cooler once)
Offered to reporters as part of the job,
Like a color photo next to my column.4

Tofu is golden like sunlit clouds
Shrouding the Taipei basin in summer,
Freewheeling democracy,
Briefings I half understand, friends half translate.

Eating tofu makes strange music,
Like a slight drizzle and breeze
Or an emphatic pause after an IT executive
Tells me to read out my interview notes.

The sweet stench is gone like a daydream,
Yesterday's front-page byline beside Bill Gates' photo
Or a chat with a cabbie with betel-stained teeth:
"You look Japanese."

Stinky tofu, whoever is lucky to gobble you up
Cannot make me savor you less
As I recall your glories now as a nameless graduate student
In a Dettol-scented, Singapore library.

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Notes:

[1] Blanchot's approach to the concept of trauma is aphoristic and prescriptive ("It is not you who will speak; the disaster speaks in you, even if it be by your forgetfulness or silence"). He explicates the nature of terms through etymologies (the Latin roots of "disaster," for instance, as a fall from the stars), as do Ondaatje and Ghosh in narrating the histories of their respective settings. But, as in Blanchot, the terms in the two narrative texts are never totalized, and each narrative is fragmentary in a way that enacts the nature of the memory of traumatic events. According to Blanchot, the object is not an originally whole being that is replicated in varying degrees. The object is "in excess over its own closure" (Gregg 22)—that is, it doubles itself and can engender multiple copies.

The Writing of the Disaster quotes liberally from philosophers and writers only to interrogate the soundness of their ideas ("There is no explosion except a book." [Mallarme.] [7]). Blanchot also has vivid, poetic descriptions of various stages of disasters ("The calm, the burn of the holocaust, the annihilation of noon – the calm of the disaster" [6]). The same are at work in the two narrative texts.

Blanchot offers advice for trauma victims who wish to give witness to their horrific experiences. But his main project seems to offer the reader an occasion to embrace the fragility of his or her humanity as well as the difficulties of representing the same:

> Garrulous prose: a child's mere babble. And yet a man who drools, the idiot, the man of tears who restrains himself no longer, who lets himself go—he too is without words, bereft of power bust still he is closer to speech that flows and flows away than to writing which restrains itself, even if this be restraint beyond mastery. In this sense, there is no silence if not written: broken reserve, a deep cut in the possibility of any cut at all (8).

[2] Fermented tofu with a strong smell.
[3] Dictation drills in Mandarin.
[4] I was a business reporter and columnist for the English-language daily Taiwan News in the late 1990s.

Return to the Island[1]

Before your imagination
cures affliction, return
to that place of grief at noon
where there is no time, and all is still:
The abandoned house is dwarfed by a leafy poplar;
the wind scratches your face and darts to the road;
the lighthouse woos a vacant sea;
children's shrieks are faint like crickets chirping,
their dilated pupils frozen (or are you hallucinating),
and there are no words for any of you
in that garden where a brother slew his brother
like the island that crushed your youth
or the terminal with dreamy bags drenched by rain.
Take in all of that place as it crumbles,
your body immersed in its caked, brown mud;
feel your crooked scars and sunken cheeks
or scowling indifference in a foreign land.
Yes, the terrain is blistering and strange
but the sulfur dust rubs off dead skin
and your wailing like an infant's born too soon.

- By **Eric Tinsay Valles**

1. *[1]Survivors of the 2011 massacre in Utoya, Norway, gathered with their families for a series of transpersonal therapy sessions on the island for over two years.*

ERLING KITTELSEN

NORWAY

Kittelsen had his debut as a poet in 1970. Since then he has published several poetry cycles and collections, as well as fables, dramatic works and translations of poetry.

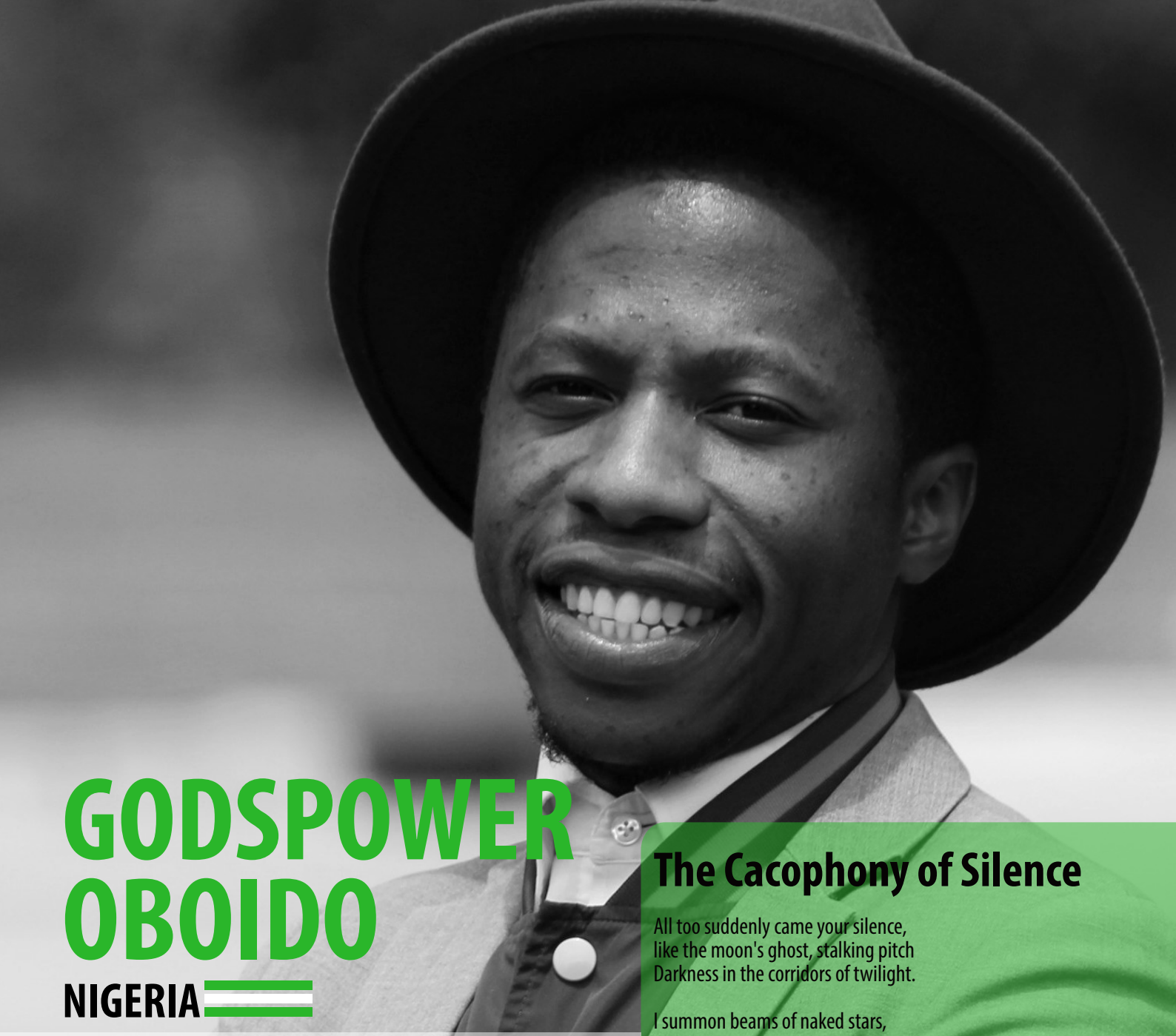
He is known for his dialogues, partly with colleagues and partly in the work with the translation of poetry from distant languages in relation to the Nordic language areas like Arabian, Persian, Korean, Latvian and Sumerian. He also has poetical dialogue with the most ancient poetical traditions in the Nordic Countries – the Old Norse Poetic Edda where at first he translates the old text and then presents a contemporary literary answer. Erling is known as a writer who renews language. He is also known as a storyteller. He is a writer who moves in untraditional ways, both with the language in his books and dramatic works and his literary activity through events and happenings. His poems and other texts are spread over a big area in the world.

He has received several literary prizes, including The Aschehoug Prize (awarded on a binding recommendation by the Norwegian Critics Organization) and The Dobloug Prize (awarded by the Swedish Academy).

The Receiver (2005)

Jeg vil være blind
gi deg mitt syn
gir jeg det seende
henger du ved meg
vil heller være blind
møtes et annet sted

I want to be blind
give you my vision
if I give you it seeing
you will cling to me
would rather be blind
meet some place else
- By Erling Kittelsen



GODSPOWER OBOIDO

NIGERIA

Godspower Oboido of Nigeria is a poet and cultural researcher. His poetic voice, described as both matured and assured, has been compared to that of Christopher Okigbo and Leopold Senghor, two all-time leading figures of African poetry and influences that mark Oboido's style of poetry. He has been highlighted by literary observers and practitioners as one of the most promising and distinguished contemporary writers that represent the future of Nigerian literature. The author of a collection of poetry, Songs of a Chicken Bone, Oboido's works have been published in literary journals, including The Istanbul Review, The Indiana Voice Journal, African Writer, Saraba etc.

Godspower Oboido has presented and read his works at festivals and academic institutions internationally. There is this sense in Oboido's poetry that not only interacts with but also probes the displacement of time and place. The poet is a 2016 runners-up in the Queen's Young Leader award by Her Majesty the Queen Elizabeth II, making him an associate fellow of the Royal Commonwealth Society.

The Cacophony of Silence

All too suddenly came your silence,
like the moon's ghost, stalking pitch
Darkness in the corridors of twilight.

I summon beams of naked stars,
pierce into my cavern,
This place of smothered dreams.

Angry clouds brood darkly
Over my head,
A sign -or memorial -for solitude.
Our waves now are ruled by silences
Invoked by fear

In place of intrepid dreams. scattered
-this haunting sense of solitude foretold.
Now here I pray for sunlight
And thirst for all manner
Of incandescence: Time for my own transfiguration

For left of my elation is pale fire
Nimble still to gut memories shared
And monochrome dreams insisting
On the dangling parables of a future unlived in.

- By **Godspower Oboido**

GUNNAR WÆRNESS

NORWAY

Gunnar Wærness was born in 1971 in Trondheim, Norway. He is a poet, theatre-maker & illustrator. He lives and works in Skeinge, Sweden. He has translated several books, including "marmorhunden" (Oktober publishers 2008) from the Lithuanian original by Sigitas Parulskis (with Liana Ruokyte-Jonsson & Mikael Nydahl), "verden finnes ikke på kartet" (contemporary poetries from all over the world) editor & translator – with Pedro Carmona-Alvarez (Oktober publishers, 2010), "tidens ingenkonge" – selected poems by Velimir Khlebnikov (with Mikael Nydahl, Aschehoug 2011), "himmelske kamelføll" – selected short prose by Jelena Guro (with Mikael Nydahl, den grønne malen 2011).

He has written several poetry collections, including "kongesplint" (1999), "takk" (2002), "hverandres" (2006) "bli verden" (2007), and "tungen og tåren" (2013). Other publications include "the bread & the donkey": griskokknetter (drama, 2014) Eurodike (novel, 2015) motorvei (2016, illustrated conceptual recording).

He has received several awards including "Tarjei Vesaas"-award in 2000 for "kongesplint" in 1999 (for best debut), and the "sproing"-award in 2007 for the illustrated poem "bli verden" (for best new comic book), and the poem "kjære bønn" was chosen as "poem of the year" in 2006, by the listeners of the radio-show "ordfront". Norwegian critics award for "best translation", with Pedro Carmona-Alvarez, 2010. Best newcomer at "trøndelagsustillinga 2014"

He has lectured creative writing courses at "forfatterstudiet", and "skrivekunstakademiet" in Norway. Worked as partial arranger of the literary festival in Trondheim, Norway in 2003 and 2005, as well as being co-founder, co-editor, and co-translator of the publishing house "Den Grønne Malen" with Mikael Nydahl, since 2007.

the anyone spirit

emptiness was the first to enter this world
it lived alone for a long time which is why
it is so thirsty for this world and wants
everything we have over there a calculated face
blinks from within the crowd with a sign that screams
give us change the identity campfire gives off a sour smoke
half misery half coziness my own identity
used to be a lot more festive a bit like other rags
I have eaten my way out of oh stupid nineties
I can't be what I am nor what I do

in your hands God I light up from your hands
during all other nights I smoke of emptiness
to allure the Spirit who is about to say something clever
but all it says is wait and breathe and wait

but I don't want to wait I want to burn
and be a star above the cairn of the world
please o emptiness the stars get no air
they are stuck in the sky wall
you are a rock
so let yourself fall
or be thrown
either way you're coming down
who are you Spirit today I am a mask
which everybody can put on to look like anyone
today I want to be Everyone I say this to Everyone
like a wall laying its face down to earth

- By **Gunnar Wærness**; translated by **Hilde Susan Jægtnes** (alt. spelled "Jaegtnes")

Dr. Hagar Peeters

NETHERLANDS

Hagar Peeters, born in 1972, is one of Holland's most celebrated poets and the recipient of many awards. Her poetry is passionate, with a strong physicality shaping her language, a language often marked by halting, almost stubborn rhythms and quick, playful shifts in perspective. Many of her poems examine the subtleties of human motivation, without ever losing their immediacy and concreteness. The earthy scrutiny of love and family relations in her earlier collections later evolves into broader historical explorations, in which she draws on ancient stories with assurance and ease. While knowing exactly where her focus must lie, Peeters always manages to retain a certain freshness.

Peeters grew up in the Amsterdam of the seventies as an only child. She lived with her mother, a nurse, who came from a large Catholic family in Limburg in the south of Holland. Her father, who is half Jewish, is the sociologist and journalist Herman Vuijsje. He was absent during her early youth and it was only later, from the age of eleven, that she was to have real contact with him. There were many writers in her father's family.

Her father's absence seems to have been one of the things that first triggered her desire to write. Later, when she was seventeen, she moved in with him for a while and he encouraged her writing. Another significant figure Hagar has mentioned in interviews is her teacher of Dutch at her secondary school. He 'opened the floodgates of poetry' when he gave her a poem by Cavafy, 'September 1903'. Its first lines, 'At least let me now deceive myself with illusions/so as not to feel my empty life', struck a chord with her and awoke in her a sense of what poetry could achieve.

Before Peeters had published any poems she was already performing in youth clubs, and her early poems sound like songs, combining lyrical and comic elements. After secondary school she moved to Utrecht, where she studied Cultural History and Literature at the University of Utrecht. During this time she wrote for the satirical student weekly Propria Cures and was editor of the Historisch Nieuwsblad. Among the poets she befriended in Utrecht was Ingmar Heytze, who set up a 'poetry circus' where young poets could perform their work, often accompanied by music. Peeters enjoyed performing and soon began to be noticed: she was frequently invited to perform at venues and poetry festivals all over the country, such as Crossing Border, Double Talk and De Nacht van de Poëzie ('The night of poetry').

When her first collection appeared in 1999, Genoeg Gedicht over de Liefde Vandaag ('Enough about love for today'), it immediately established her as a bold and distinctive new voice and the book was reprinted many times. After obtaining a first for her Master's degree, Peeters reworked and extended her thesis, which had won a national award; it was published in 2002 under the title Gerrit de Stotteraar - Biografie van een Boef ('Gerrit the Stammerer – biography of a scoundrel'). In it she examines the life of this notorious Dutch burglar and escape artist in the context of the changes in the Dutch criminal justice system in the first decades after the Second World War and she illustrates how the Dutch penal system changed from very mild to the harsh, pessimistic climate of today.

Her subsequent collections – four books and a pamphlet – were well-received too and have seen many reprints. In 2008 she was shortlisted for the position of Poet Laureate. She is also a critic and columnist and has written for several major Dutch newspapers. In addition she has worked as an editor and compiled and introduced numerous anthologies, including a selection of poems by Cavafy, in a Dutch translation, and a selection of poems by the well-known twentieth century Dutch poet Vasalis. In 2010 she began studying for a Master's degree in International Criminology at the University of Amsterdam.

More recently she has turned to novel-writing and her first novel, Malva, based on the life of the illegitimate daughter of Neruda, was published in 2015. The book won the prestigious Flemish Fintro prize (formerly De Gouden Boekenuil prize). Translations of Malva are already in the works: In the US DoppleHouse Press has bought the rights, and a French and a Spanish (South American) edition are also forthcoming.

Peeters continues to give readings of her poems in the Netherlands and abroad (from Surinam to Eastern Europe) and in recent years has performed her work at many international festivals, such as Poetry International and the Indonesian International Poetry Festival.

In 2008 Peeters became a parent and she lives in Amsterdam with her son, Abel.

TWONESS

I don't want to hang on your lips,
I don't want to take cover in the shell of your ear
and get lost in the jungle of your hair

or ski from the bridge of your nose, drink coffee
in the shelter of your lashes
and paddle in your blue eyes.

I don't even want to dance on your cheeks, dive
from your tongue and land on your teeth
or wade through your saliva.

But let your wrinkles be the paths
on which I set out, always together,
and walk to the end of my own life.

For years now you've occupied
every room in my head.
I just can't seem to
get rid of you.

I've put other names
in, but none
sticks
the way yours does.

I run into it in the
brand of clothes I buy,
you play a part in every
film I see

and in the street I hear your name
being called out so often
that I wonder how it's possible
that you're unique
and yet so current.

I don't believe you act
in films and you certainly
don't live in my head.
I wish you did. You live

somewhere in a seaside cottage,
where you gaze out of the window.
You're waiting. For me. But
you've forgotten my name.

--By **Dr. Hagar Peeters**. From *City of Sandcastles: Selected Poems*.
Translated from the Dutch by **Judith Wilkinson**

Goodbye

-By **Dr. Hagar Peeters.** From *City of Sandcastles: Selected Poems.*
Translated from the Dutch by **Judith Wilkinson**

At the bus stop I kissed the air
around your cheek and pushed you away from me,
against the wall, to punish you
for your complaining.

From their doorsteps neighbours stared.
Others peered through net curtains,
while we stood there.

The bus in which I'd meant to sit and cry
went by and then went by again.
And when the next one came
I still didn't dare get in.

Once again I stayed behind,
to take shelter from
what I had done
to you, you to me

Date

He didn't show up.
Perhaps he fell ill or was hit
by a tram, perhaps someone else
appealed to him. Perhaps he forgot his watch
or the watch forgot to tell him the right time.
Perhaps his car wouldn't start
or it broke down half way.
Perhaps he got a phone call when he was about to set off,
telling him he had to go to a cremation
or that his mother had died.
Perhaps he ran into an old acquaintance.
Perhaps he had a row at his work
or he got fired and he buried his head
under a pillow.
Perhaps the bridge was up, and the next one too.

Perhaps the traffic light got stuck on red.
Perhaps the cashpoint swallowed his card
or he discovered, on his way to me, that he'd forgotten his wallet.
Perhaps he lost his glasses
or couldn't stop reading
or wanted to see the end of a TV programme
or the lock on his front door failed,
he couldn't find his keys anywhere
and suddenly his dog threw up.
Perhaps his mobile battery had gone flat,
he couldn't find the restaurant
or he's waiting for me somewhere else.
Perhaps – the last inconceivable
and unforeseen possibility –
he no longer loves me.

- Dr. **Hagar Peeters**

JENNIFER KARMIN

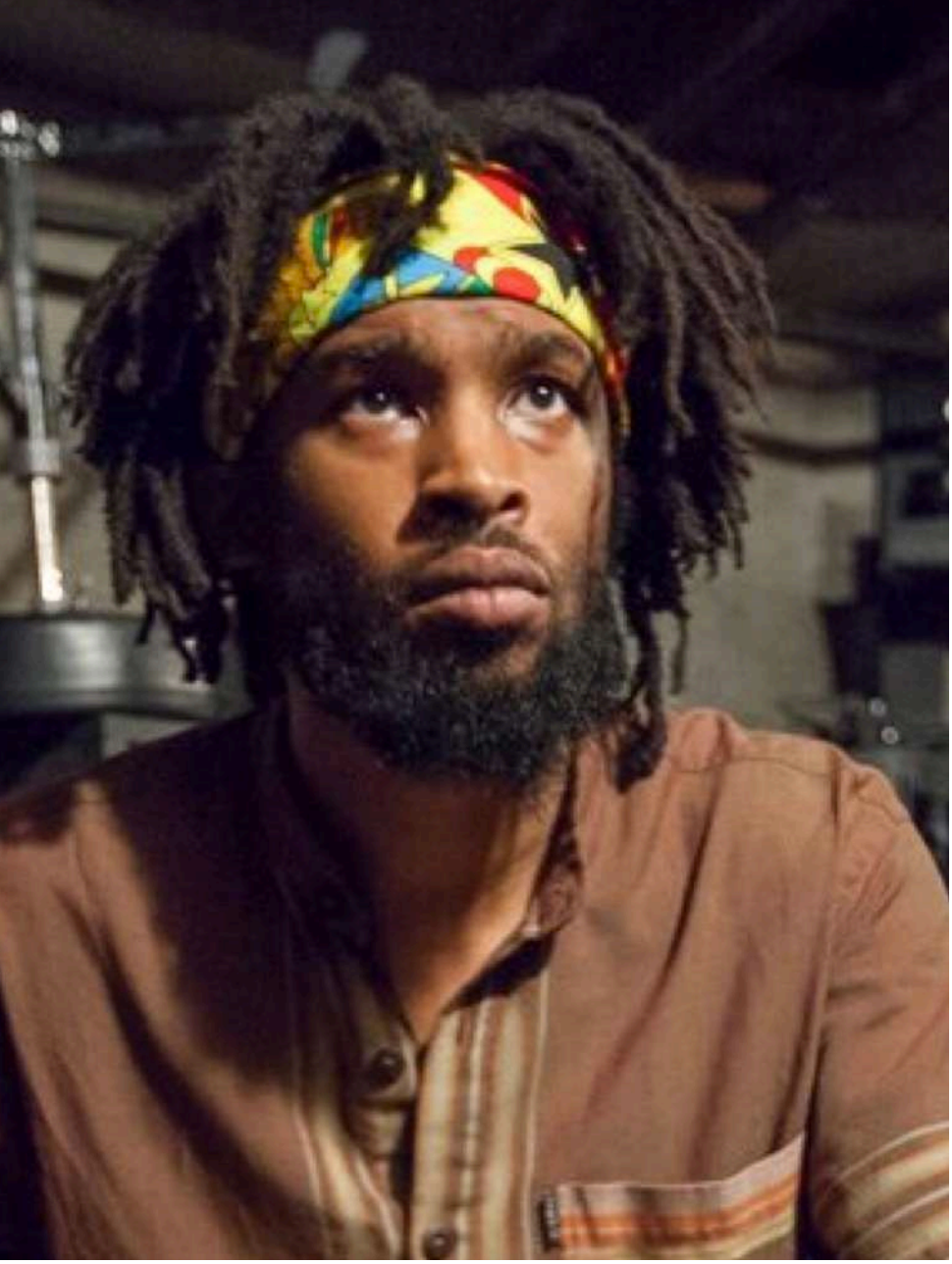
USA

Jennifer Karmin has published, performed, exhibited, taught, and experimented with language across the U.S, Cuba, Japan, and Europe. Her multidisciplinary work has been presented at festivals, artist-run spaces, and on city streets. Venues for these pieces include: the Poetry Project, the Walker Art Center, Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibits, and Woodland Pattern Book Center. The author of the text-sound epic Aaaaaaaaaaalice, her poetry is featured in the anthologies I'll Drown My Book: Conceptual Writing by Women, The &NOW Awards: The Best Innovative Writing, Come Together: Imagine Peace, and A Sing Economy. Ongoing collaborations and public performances are documented in the publications Walking Poem, Evacuated: Disembodying Katrina, 4000 Words 4000 Dead + Revolutionary Optimism: An American Elegy, and The Sexual Organs of the IRS, co-authored with Bernadette Mayer. At home in Chicago, she curates the Red Rover Series. Founded in 2005, the over ninety events have showcased a diversity of renowned creative minds. She also teaches creative writing to immigrants at Truman College and has been a Visiting Writer at Naropa University, Oberlin College, California Institute of the Arts, plus a myriad of sites. In 2009, she visited Kenya as a participant in the Summer Literary Seminars program.

Pre-Utopian Poem

the typewriter is really a time machine
what comes with eyes closed
organic organization
choose a role in the narrative
it's just like being at a big backyard picnic
ideas equal solutions
this little light of mine i'm gonna let it shine
we like communication and art with no boundaries
looking for the next incomprehensible word
no patriots no hatetriots
clitoris your community
the captivity industry has been abolished
all these wildflowers are weeds
make vegetables into food
make molecules for each other
living life as an ethical process
elevate everyday objects
starting to see every free seed
instinct or learned behavior
leave them laughing

- By **Jennifer Karmin**



KEVAN ANTHONY CAMERON

CANADA

Kevan Anthony Cameron, also known as Scruffmouth is a scribe, spoken dub poet, performer and a proud co-editor of The Great Black North: Contemporary African Canadian Poetry. He is an international artist on spoken word stages as well as film and television. Scruffmouth aims to "edutain" with his work that focuses on knowledge of self, identity and sharing the stories of people of African descent at home and abroad. Kevan was born in Edmonton Alberta to Jamaican parents. He received his bachelor's degree in General Studies from Simon Fraser University where he has studied history, philosophy, liberal and contemporary arts. He lives in Burnaby British Columbia and is a football coach that plays the beautiful game whenever he can. His last visit to Kenya was in 2007 where he directed Githunguri United into the Community Shield Tournament after training and selecting players in the upcountry. He is currently studying music, dance, history and culture as an inspiration to write autobiographical prose about a poet in motion.

During this festival Kevan Cameron will perform spoken word and dub poetry, some of which will include rapping over digital tracks, as well as live instrumentation. He will also facilitate a spoken-word creative writing workshop for student-poets entitled "Oral Treaty" or the "Spoken Contract."

She, Being Eternity

She took new fools back to the old school,
Walking through the Valley of Decision,
A razor sharp lass was her only tool,
and she cut through the Bush with precision.
She brought old fools up to the new school,
Teaching them about civilization,
But when the exception becomes the rule,
They forbid our tools of mass creation.
So it was written, so shall it be done,
The time will come when the earth will be free,
Some say the end, some say revolution,
Most say the fulfillment of prophecy.
Fire shall burn, and Blood will run,
It was written, it shall be done.

--Kevan Anthony Cameron

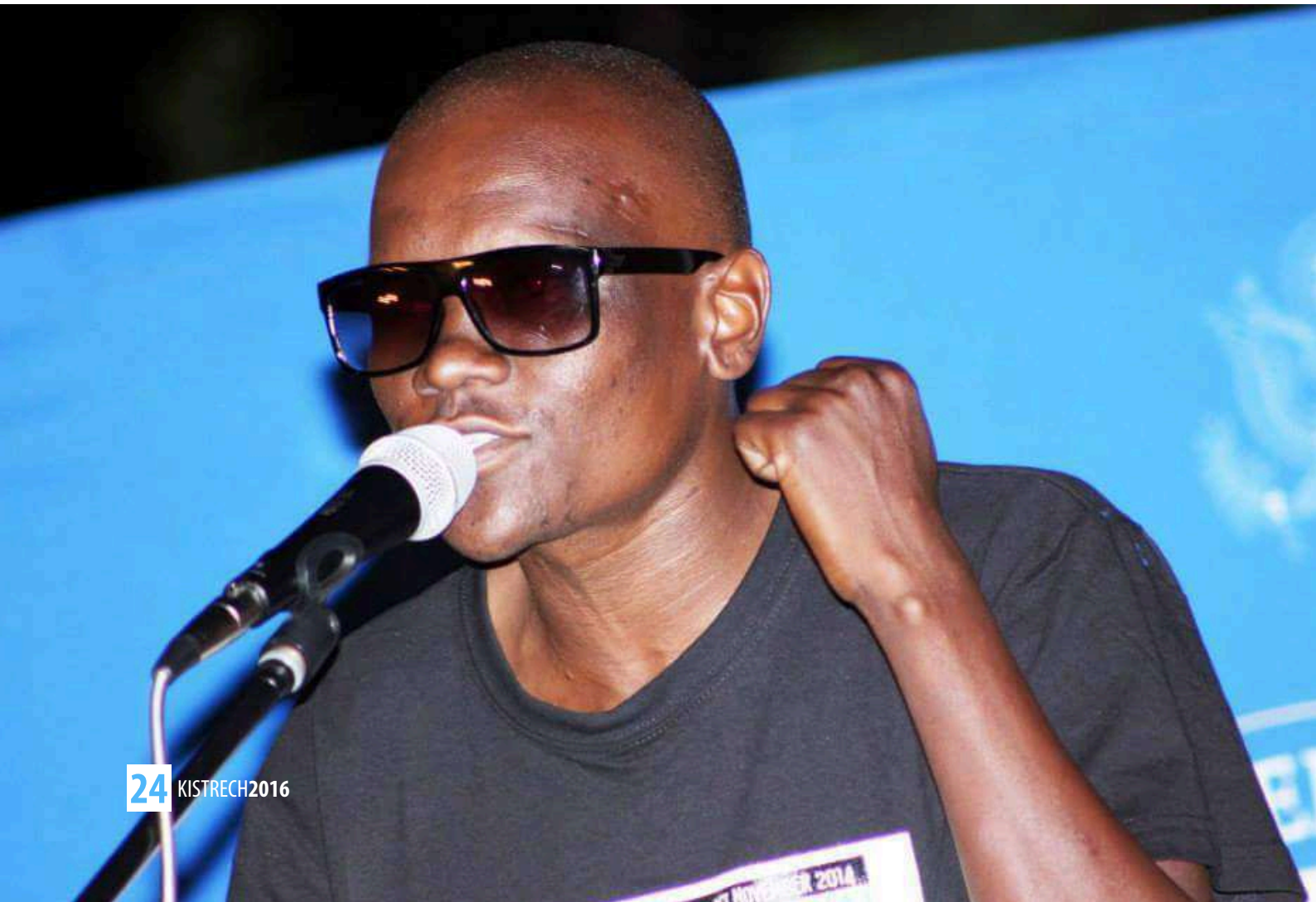
...She brought old fools up to the new school, Teaching them about civilization,...

(KUNTA) TEBOGO KHUMO MOLOISE

BOTSWANA

...Kunta is a good lyricist, rhyme connoisseur, flow extraordinaire, story teller, commentator and punchline guru.

Kunta was born in a small mining town called Orapa in Botswana, Southern Africa. He was raised in Mahalapye. His Grandparents, who raised him, always bought him books and comics to help him pass time. This became instrumental in developing his creative and imaginative mind. It was in 1996 when he went to Mahalapye Junior School where he was exposed to hip hop. Later in Madiba High School he started variety show performances, freestyle battling and poetry. Him and Skae were the first rappers to put their hometown on the map nationwide in 2000 when he freestyled on strictly Hip Hop Live (radio show) hosted by Draztik and Slim (Cashless Society) on RB2.
Kunta is a good lyricist, rhyme connoisseur, flow extraordinaire, story teller, commentator and punchline guru. He is a member and co-founder of hip hop outfit MBC (Music for Business & Change) which consists of him, Skyfly and Manyflows. Currently he is working on his debut solo music project with Ace J and Jus Beatz.



Dr. Margaret Barasa

KENYA

Dr. Margaret Barasa is a lecturer, Department of Language and Linguistics, Kisii University. She holds a PhD in Applied Linguistics from Laikipia University, and a Masters of Arts and Bachelors degrees from Egerton University. She is an interdisciplinary scholar who integrates the conceptual rigours of applied linguistics with language and society, political science and gender. Thus, her field of studies includes Applied linguistics, Discourse Analysis and sociolinguistics. She is actively in discipline, university-wide, and departmental services in addition to teaching and supervision of students. Within her discipline, she has published widely in journals and books. During the festival Dr. Barasa will present the paper entitled "Body Talk: The Convergence of Language and Culture in Manguliechi's Babukusu After-Burial Oratory (Khuswala Kumuse)"

ABSTRACT

BODY TALK: THE CONVERGENCE OF LANGUAGE AND CULTURE IN MANGULIECHI'S BABUKUSU AFTER-BURIAL ORATORY (KHUSWALA KUMUSE)

By Dr. Margaret Barasa

Khuswala kumuse (funeral oratory) among the Babukusu is a ritual performed on the third day after burial (lufu) of important/formidable males from clans with admirable leadership qualities. Given its importance in Bukusu cosmology, it is important to examine how both the narrator and the audience put to use non-verbal communication to construct meanings and frame interactions. The study further explores how and what the body signifies either verbally or non-verbally. The body is a site bearing multiple signs of cultural inscription. Artists deploy the body in a variety of ways either to negotiate cultural states of identity, belongings and relationships. One such example is Babukusu Manguliechi who infuses his oral poetry with dramatic body movements and gestures that signal the cultural location of his audience. In almost all of his funeral oral poems, Manguliechi uses body talk both of himself and the audience especially, personal appearances, postures, movements of different parts of the body, use of space, what people wear, how it is worn, decoration of the body, speech particularities, facial expressions and sitting styles to register their identity and relationships. Therefore, the body becomes a representative of the site for social and cultural identity. Using a combination of cultural performance theory, the sociocultural paradigm developed by Guerrero and Floyd (2006), Bandura's Social Theory, and the Social Meaning Model of Burgoon and Newton (1991), the study examines Manguliechi's funeral oral poetry (Khuswala kumuse), paying attention to how the artist and the audience employ body talk to register their sociocultural identities, norms and values. The study adopts ethnography and fieldwork as methods of literary research to explore the interplay between language and culture in the Babukusu funeral oratory. The study argues that body talk in Manguliechi's funeral oral poems plays a major role in displaying important cultural identities, norms, expectations and values such as respect and inclusiveness all of which are socially constructed and as such have shared meanings.

DR.MARTIN SERUP

DENMARK

Martin Serup was born in 1978 and lives in Copenhagen. He has published seven children's books, most recently an illustrated story entitled Yana and Eliah (and many other kids) (2013), four chapbook-essays, as well as seven collections of poetry, most recently Roman Nights (2013) and the long poem The Field (2010), which is also published in USA (2011), Sweden (2012) and Finland (2014) and under publication in Germany (2016). Serup has been involved in editing the literary journals Apparatur, Litlive, Hvedekorn, and since 2011 a member of the literary blog collective Promenaden. He was awarded the Michael Strunge Prize for poetry, has received a Gold medal from The University of Copenhagen for his dissertation on Relationel Poetry, which was published as a book at the University Press of Southern Denmark (2013). In 2012 he was awarded the prestigious three-year grant from the Danish Art's Council and in 2015 he got his PhD on a dissertation on Cultural Memory and Conceptual Witness Literature.

ABSTRACT

What happens to the caption when there is no longer a photograph to contextualize? When the caption is isolated and refers to a referent that is no longer there. That is one of the issues raised by the American writer Robert Fitterman in his book Holocaust Museum from 2011 that deals with the representation of Holocaust in a conceptual and post-productive manner. In this talk I'll make a closer reading of Fitterman's book and present it as an example of a contemporary conceptual witness literature.

Captions without Images: on Robert Fitterman's Holocaust Museum

By Martin Glaz Serup

As Walter Benjamin, Roland Barthes and Susan Sontag amongst others have told us; when it comes to photographs, the caption is essential in relation to what we think we see: if the contextualizing text is changed, the meaning of the work as such will change significantly. In this light, it might be interesting to ask: What happens to the caption when there is no longer a photograph to contextualize? When the caption is isolated and it now refers to a referent that is no longer there. That is one of the issues raised by the American writer Robert Fitterman in his book Holocaust Museum, first published in 2011 and reprinted several times since, in the US and in Great Britain.

Holocaust Museum is a piece of conceptual post-productive witness literature that deals with the representation of Holocaust. In the 124 page long book, captions are being post-produced. They derive from a smaller selection of the 18.000 available photographs in the online archive at United States Holocaust Museum (USHMM), which is physically situated in Washington D.C.. In Fitterman's book, the captions are reprinted without the photograph they originally were written to stabilize. Three quotes introduce the book. A quote by the Czech-born media philosopher Vilém Flusser, from his book Towards a Philosophy of Photography, a quote by the American author Charles Reznikoff from his Holocaust, and a quote by the Austrian photographer and author Heimrad Bäcker from the English translation of nachschrift; transcript. In his philosophy of photography, Flusser states, among other things, that the photograph is not only a reproducing technology, but is in itself affecting and constituting a reality. That the same to some degree can be said about the caption as a genre, may be one of the implicit statements in Holocaust Museum; that the caption both affects and so to speak constitutes the image that it accompanies. As with the references to Reznikoff and Bäcker, Fitterman marks an affinity and most probably also a direct inspiration from their work.

In his Holocaust, Charles Reznikoff's method is documentary and he post-produces and modifies real witness testimonies from the Nuremberg trials. Reznikoff divides his poems into 12 subcategories. Fitterman has divided his poems into 17 related categories. Reznikoff organizes the material in Holocaust in a way that resembles more traditional or conventional poetry with a clearly marked ending, a small blow with the tail so to speak, distinct (line) breaks between both verse and stanza and a clear (poetic) narrative in every poem. The method in nachschrift is different. Heimrad Bäcker isolates, shortens – and sometimes also modifies – quotes from various sources. Here the general impression is less explained, much less legible. Bäcker's text fragments are torn out of different contexts – in a way that can be somewhat confusing to the reader – or in a way that might make the reader even more excited and curious. In Reznikoff's texts, the majority of the necessary information in order to 'make sense' of the poem is already present; here it tends to work in concluded sequences, that might make it easier to identify as (a) 'literature', that through its narration allows the reader to get carried away. To use that metaphor. Fitterman lines up his captions, one after the other, raw, unexplained, unaltered and only manipulated in their surroundings: that they have been removed from their original context, taken away from the photographs and from the American Holocaust Museum ('s homepage), and moved into the book: Holocaust Museum. And then of course, manipulated in the selection, in the different sequences and in the order they appear.

On the surface, the book is characterized by a degree of monotony, a tone of a matter-of-factness, and a self confidence that is probably characteristic of the caption as such – a deictic pointing, that also at the same time is being defamiliarized, now the object for the pointing is absent. It's a textual effect that becomes apparent in the parentheses in a text like this:

> *"Nazi propaganda slide featuring images of Wilhelm Gustloff, leader of the NSDAP's foreign organization in Switzerland (left), and David Frankfurter, the Jewish student who assassinated him in 1936 (right). [Photograph #49763]"*

The referent - the photography - is missing. There's nowhere for the eyes to wander. No visual details, no foreground or background, only the hard surface of the text; how Wilhelm Gustloff or David Frankfurter looks like, for one thing, is left to the imagination or whatever knowledge the reader may have. Still, Gustloff is probably placed to the left and Frankfurter to the right in that imagination; the stage directions helps furnish the reader's inner room, place the seen in the imagined – provided that you are actually imagining anything when you read this. Also notice the reference in the square parentheses, that indicates where the photograph is placed in the USHMM-collection; this type of text is a recurrent epifor in all the captions of the book. These epifors work as source references, but, at the same time, also functions as additional full stops. In itself active parts of the text, that can change what has just been read, as in these examples:

> *"View of the former Kaiserwald concentration camp. [Photograph #96898]*
> *View of the former Kaiserwald concentration camp. [Photograph #96896]"*

In the above example, the number in the squared parenthesis, the reference to the archive, almost becomes a punctum in the Roland Barthian sense of the word; that is the specific experience of the detail and of time in the photography, the thing in the photo that really hits and almost hurts you . It is because of the variation of the last number, that we understand it is not the same text, not the same photograph, but another photograph of the same motif. This has both a significant meaning and effect several places in the book, where the texts are either verbatim repetitions or minor variations of other texts already read – but because of the number in the squared parenthesis, they become singular, and hence – via the book's narrative organization or composition, on which I will return in a moment - in an almost performative manner, adds to the amount of text and is not just a repetition of what is already there. More – new – American liberating soldiers, they teem through the text, more bodies, more mass graves, new bodies, more imprisoned SS guards, more female survivors gathering in front of their barracks.

Together, the macro structure of the 17 sections in Holocaust Museum mimes a chronology. As is also the case of Reznikoff's Holocaust, that opens with Deportations and end in the grand Marches, as the concentration camps began to be evacuated due to the advancement of the Allied forces, and finally we get the: Escapes. Holocaust Museum opens with the Propaganda; anti Jewish, racist, religious, pro Anschluß Österreichs. After that Family Photographs; pre-war portraits, families, parties, school, vacation, leisure. Boycotts; boycotts of Jews and Jewish tradesmen, often conducted physically by the SA. Burning of Books; especially the students are active. The Science of Race; ideological 'scientifically based' educational material, eugenics, racial hygiene. Gypsies; gypsies from all over Europe are detained and executed, also people related to gypsies are sterilized and more. Deportation; Jews from all over Europe are being deported to concentration camps, the long, and for many also deadly, journey by train, a for the witness literature classical Holocaust topoi. Concentration Camps; initially, the concentration camps are seen from the outside and from above, the pictures derives from the liberations, American soldiers, some bodies and survivors, besides that snapshots of details from the camps. Uniforms; from the camp to its inhabitants, a flood of various (types) of uniforms, this complete uniforming appear almost dehumanized – at least, it is always the uniform we see and not the human behind or inside. Shoes; shoes are made from what ever material is available by captives and Jews in camps and ghettoes, piles of shoes from the executed, the things that can be hidden in shoes, in the heels, and the absence of shoes, in the end:

[1] Reznikoff's headlines are: Deportation, Invasion, Research, Ghettos, Massacres, Gas Chambres and Gas Trucks, Work Camps, Children, Entertainment, Mass Graves, Marches, Escapes.
[2] Fitterman's headlines are: Propaganda, Family Photographs, Boycotts, Burning of Books, The Science of Race, Gypsies, Deportation, Concetration Camps, Uniforms, Shoes, Jewelry, Hair, Zyklon B Canisters, Gas Chambres, Mass Graves, American Soldiers, Liberation.

: barefooted civilian German women forced to watch and walk amongst the re-opened mass graves. Jewelry; confiscated jewels and jewelry, crucifixes worn by Jews living in hiding under Nazi occupation. Hair; enormous amounts of women's hair packed into bales in the storage buildings of Auschwitz, ready to be sent to Germany, members of the French Resistance cutting the hair of a woman accused of 'collaboration horizontale', a Jewish girl in hiding has dyed her hair blond, a plate explains the deciding genetics behind different hair colours. Zyklon B Canisters; Zyklon B canisters found, the canisters are clearly marked as deadly. Notice how the last five sections all work metonymically and synecdochically, maybe in an operationalization of another way to comprehend the scale of the dead; the piles of hair, shoes, jewelry. The dehumanization; uniforms rather than individuals. All connected metonymically with these pairs of Zyklon B canisters in the next section, which – almost demonstratively– is the shortest section of the book. Only two texts. These Zyklon B canisters result in the enormous piles of bodies everywhere in the book. In same way as uniforms following a more straight forward logic, marks or symbolizes a certain belonging, so does jewelry and hair(colour). And in the same way as a wrong uniform can mean the difference between life and death, so is it the case with the wrong kind of jewelry or hair colour. The book continues with Gas Chambers; the architecture of the gas chambers and the crematories, the first presented as baths with piles of clothes in front of them, in the last: piles of body remnants, bones. Mass Graves; after gas chambers and crematories comes mass graves. As in the concentration camps-section, it is here evident that the predominant documentary material dates from the liberation, consequently, it is not the establishment of the mass graves, we have photographs of, not the daily operation of the extermination camps, but the re-opening of the mass graves. But also of how they are organized, built, how the corpses are stacked as to create room for as many as possible. Local German civilians are being forced to witness the mass graves by the Allies, the many bodies. American Soldiers; in this and in the following section, there is a strong internal progress, the liberation, the surrender, time passes, you get the feeling of: very quickly. Troops advance through a geography, while the German forces surrender to the Americans. American soldiers different places in Germany. American soldiers land in Normandy. American soldiers having Thanksgiving in Paris. American soldiers marching through Brandenburger Tor, they meet up with Russian soldiers in Berlin and in Linz. The survivors of the camps together with the American soldiers, American soldiers among the corpses, among the ruins of cities, advancing everywhere throughout Germany and Austria. Liberation; the camps are being liberated, in the beginning there are crosscuts between the French, the Spaniards, the Belgian, the Rumanian, the Dutchman, the Russian, the Albanians, the Poles, Jews, all celebrating everywhere. SS guards are arrested. Mass graves and heaps of corpses by the crematoriums are being revealed. SS guards who burn the captives to death in order to flee themselves. Towards the end of the text there's a crosscutting between mainly female survivors, gathering in front of the barracks in the liberated camps, and a long line of portraits of the many people in different displaced person camps. The long journey home is about to begin. A journey many will not survive. The returning journey from the camps also holds its own significant place in the Holocaust witness literature.

While the different sections read together in succesion, define a clear course from pre-war to post-war, the text that appear in the individual sections are not governed by the same chronology. Here the time has been dissolved; the underlying organizing logic seems to be the search engine at USHMM's homepage. As we can see, there are two different temporal representational systems present at the same time in Holocaust Museum - the diachronic and the synchronic; both the horisontal (His)story and the vertical database: things we know about Holocaust.One of the things that comes to the fore when reading Holocaust Museum, is the many place names; names on places and on ethnical, national and cultural affiliations, family names. This paratactic tangle of names of European places and more, mimes a Europe in total dissolusion; a synchronistic chaos, where people from all over the continent gets that in common that they're being assembled in these extermination camps. One has to imagine the sound track to these captions as a kind of Kauderwelsch - gibberish - or, as the Polish author Tadeusz Borowski writes in his testimonies about the language being spoken in Auschwitz; a crematorium Esperanto. The many different types of uniforms that rapidly pass the reader's eyes in a flutter, in the section Uniforms are creating the same effect, in some sort of visual counterpart to the crematorium Esperanto: prison uniforms, camp uniforms, concentration camp uniforms, uniforms with distinctive badges, uniforms, Ustasa uniforms, uniforms of captains in the Hungarian army, Nazi military uniforms, uniforms of the Arrow Cross, military uniforms, scout uniforms, Polish army uniforms, not in uniforms, French military uniforms, striped prisoner uniforms, school uniforms, British uniforms, uniforms of the Danish Navy, uniforms of the Vichy fascist youth movement Moisson Nouvelles, volunteer service uniforms, uniforms of the Hungarian labor service, army uniforms, uniforms of the Danish Brigade in Sweden, Hashomer Hatzair uniforms, police uniforms, Maccabi Hatzair uniforms, UNRRA uniforms, uniforms of a Hungarian labor battalion .

The place names are also very much helping to geographically situate what is being documented. And what is being documented is of course different actions, but also, and not the least, the locations where these actions have taken place, and, to some degree, who has been involved. A regular mapping is happening, as when the Deportation-section is being initiated with the names on three ships being used to deport Norwegian Jews to Germany:

> *"View of the SS Gotenland, one of the ships used to deport Jews from Norway to Germany. Only 25 of the 760 Jews deported from Norway survived. [Photograph #89095]*
>
> *View of the SS Donau, one of the ships used to deport Jews from Norway to Germany. On November 26, 1943 the Donau sailed with 530 Jews aboard, 345 of whom went directly to the gas chambers of Auschwitz. [Photograph #89094]*
>
> *View of the SS Monte Rosa, one of the ships used to deport Jews from Norway to Germany. Of the 760 Jews deported from Norway by ship only 25 survived. [Photograph #89094]"*
> *xii*

Another effect of the many foreign place names, is that they implicitly calls for the reader to leave the text and begin to research - or at least make a google search after - historical facts and their geographical contexts. When the images are missing, the reader might get curious enough to not only try to envision them herself, but also to try to actually find them - on the Internet for instance. On just one and a half page the following concentration (sub)camps are mentioned:

What happens to the caption when there is no longer a photograph to contextualize?...

Dachau, Mauthausen, Buchenwald, Pocking, Novalky, Kaiserwald, Ohrdruf, Neuengamme, Plaszow, Majdanek . What are those names referring to? The only paratext of real significance the book itself is offering, consists of the blurbs written on the back. Here three advocators give their brief explanations as to why it is a good book, what it's about and how it's about it. Nowhere in the books it's stated that the source text derive from USHMM, even if it, for an American reader, probably would be an apparent association to make, given the title of the book. In his afterword to the English translation of Bäcker's nachschrift; transcript, the American scholar Patrick Greaney writes that reading the book "knowledge of the Shoah becomes a project"; and the same can be said about Fitterman's Holocaust Museum . This is not to say that the sole quality of Holocaust Museum lies in its edifying qualities, that urges the reader to seek more knowledge about the Holocaust. That is one of the effects of the book. In the same manner as the reader have to leave the text, as I call it, to search for background knowledge in order to understand what is being read; the reader also and at the same time need to constantly focus on and delve into the text, and read it as a literary work that operates within its own internal dynamics and economy; a work that creates its own literary universe - in parallel with the simultaneous references to concrete historical events and places outside of the book. For instance a text like the following becomes, in an almost absurd way, comical seen in relation to the surrounding text. It can be read as a commentary on the value of this preoccupation with naming time, place, persons and relations as accurately as possible - which is one of the characteristics of witness literature as a genre - when we also need to know what the name of the dog of the Lagerkommendant:

> *"Majola, the mistress of commandant Amon Goeth, stands on the balcony of his villa in the Plaszow concentration camp with his dog Ralf. [Photograph #05287]"*
> [xv]

In between the more descriptive, distancing texts, all of a sudden other types of narratives evolve; small stories with several times inscribed, that shows compressed images of the Holocaust machinery's radius and manner of operation; over time and in a kind of chains of cause-and-effect. How does the Nazi regime react, for instance, if it finds out that one of its trusted employees has a Jewish family background:

> *"A German soldier stands guard in front of a castle. Pictured is Kurt Winterstein a member of the donor's family. He was one of Hitler's personal drivers. When the Nazis found out that his mother was Gypsy they took him out of the army and sterilized him. [Photograph #33333]"*
> [xvi]

Or how did the SS guards try to get rid of evidence and witness in a hasty retreat:

> *"Emaciated body of a prisoner at Landsberg, found by the liberating American 7th Army. Original caption reads: 'The Landsberg Atrocity: The emaciated bodies of Jewish prisoners bear evidence of the slow death by starvation they were undergoing before having been locked in their wooden huts by retreating Nazi prison guards, who set the huts afire and left. [Photograph #496555]"*
> [xvii]

And other captions, that might look like short descriptive contextualizations of what is seen on the picture, but also in itself raises a number of questions; as why Joseph Schleifstein still is wearing his camp uniform one or two years after being liberated , or why the Serbian children is wearing Ustaša-uniforms . And the child in this text, where the smile in itself is unexpected, and therefore may also rock the customary approach one might have, about child survivors from the camps. It creates an uncertainty in the reader, I claim, a Barthian punctum, also outside of the image, this smile:

Dachau, Mauthausen, Buchenwald, Pocking, Novalky, Kaiserwald, Ohrdruf, Neuengamme, Plaszow, Majdanek . What are those names referring to? The only paratext of real significance the book itself is offering, consists of the blurbs written on the back. Here three advocators give their brief explanations as to why it is a good book, what it's about and how it's about it. Nowhere in the books it's stated that the source text derive from USHMM, even if it, for an American reader, probably would be an apparent association to make, given the title of the book. In his afterword to the English translation of Bäcker's nachschrift; transcript, the American scholar Patrick Greaney writes that reading the book "knowledge of the Shoah becomes a project"; and the same can be said about Fitterman's Holocaust Museum . This is not to say that the sole quality of Holocaust Museum lies in its edifying qualities, that urges the reader to seek more knowledge about the Holocaust. That is one of the effects of the book. In the same manner as the reader have to leave the text, as I call it, to search for background knowledge in order to understand what is being read; the reader also and at the same time need to constantly focus on and delve into the text, and read it as a literary work that operates within its own internal dynamics and economy; a work that creates its own literary universe - in parallel with the simultaneous references to concrete historical events and places outside of the book. For instance a text like the following becomes, in an almost absurd way, comical seen in relation to the surrounding text. It can be read as a commentary on the value of this preoccupation with naming time, place, persons and relations as accurately as possible - which is one of the characteristics of witness literature as a genre - when we also need to know what the name of the dog of the Lagerkommendant:

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[4] Donor here refers to that or those persons who donated the photography to USHMM.
[5] Ustaša is the name of the nationalistic, fascistic inspired Croatian terror organization that with the support of the Axis powers reigned Croatia 1941-45. Ustaša is infamous for comitting massive genocide on especially Serbs, Jews and Gypsies.

. And the child in this text, where the smile in itself is unexpected, and therefore may also rock the customary approach one might have, about child survivors from the camps. It creates an uncertainty in the reader, I claim, a Barthian punctum, also outside of the image, this smile:

> *"A child survivor in a uniform stands smiling amid the rubble of Nordhausen concentration camp. [Photograph #42050]"* [xx]

Holocaust Museum is not an affirmative work, in the sense that it's not just confirming our already conceived notions and knowledge. Rather it's a work that, via captions for images that are so well known to us, that we can (almost) make do without them, destabilize meaning and activates the reader. By simply removing the photographs and leave the captions on their own, Robert Fitterman manages to make the impossible representation of the complex of events we have named Holocaust, new to our eyes. Captions are often immediately is seen as a neutral appendix to the real work, the real documentation -that is the photography. In Holocaust Museum we might actually, and maybe for the first time, actually read these captions. By swapping foreground and background - by completely removing the foreground actually - Fitterman provides us with new eyes.

The American scholars Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer has in the article 'Incongruous images', that takes its point of depature in the USHMM collection, written about how the selection of photographs that are to represent the Holocaust officially, takes place. On all levels of the selection, they write, there is a kind of (self)censorship going on, that has to do with the photograps have to resemble something we already know, before we find them appropropriate. The motif has to be simple and easy decodeable; desolate, sullen and not too complex. . Also when it comes to the conceptual literature that works post-productively, it's important to ask what is going on: what is it that it does, how does it do it, how is it, so to speak, being curated. One must ask if it is denaturalizing what is being depicted and in that way maybe creates a more complex tissue of meaning that foregrounds aspects of the post-produced material, that wasn't readily available to us before. Or - in the opposite - if the effect of the manipulation of the material is affirmative and just makes us stop at the first, the best assumption, and by that only confirm what we thought we already knew, without giving us the opportunity to reflect on what that might be. Or mean. How our knowledge is always situated. When a work is depending so much on contextualization as is the case with for example Holocaust Museum; what does that contextualization do with the work, with the reading of it. This is of course a question one has to ask in front of each individual work. I think that Fitterman's work, so to speak, is part of a complicating the picture of the more mainstream Holocaust representation, alone through the way the text is being organized. When for instance the actions of the Auschwitz executioners is placed next to that of the French resistance:

> *"Bales of human hair ready for shipment to Germany found in one the [sic!] Auschwitz warehouses when the camp was liberated. In Auschwitz 7,000 kilo of human hair was found at liberation. [Photograph #66583]*
>
> *Bales containing the hair of female prisoners lie in the courtyard of one of the warehouses in Auschwitz after the liberation. [Photograph #10867]*
>
> *Members of the French resistance shear the hair of a young woman who consorted with the Germans during the occupation.[Photograph #81863]"* [xxii]

And it becomes even more unsettling in the following text, where one must assume that the reason for the woman not to have any hair, is that she survived one of the extermination camps, but here the victim of the Nazis (the Jewish woman) oscillates with the victim for the resistance movement ('the horizontal collaborator') for a moment:

> *"Jewish women learn to sew in a vocational training workshop in Lodz. The woman in the back has her head fully covered since her hair still has not grown in since the war. [Photograph #60791]"* [xxiii]

In the following Hirsch and Spitzer writes about some of the many curators and archivists that works with photographic Holocaust representations:

> *"They display images that readily lend themselves to iconicization and repetition. But while this choice may allow them to stir viewers' emotions and to gain their sympathetic attention, it also impedes troubling the well-known narratives about this time. It restricts their visitors' engage ment with the Holocaust's more complex - and less easily categorized - visual and historical landscape. And, in so doing, it delimits the rich interpretive possibilities that this vast archive of private and public photographs can open and enable."* [xxiv]

The American scholar and poet Charles Bernstein reads the absence of the images in Holocaust Museum as a metaphor for the concrete loss that Holocaust has inflicted on the world, the many dead and missing: "Page after page of catalog entries without photographs, names without faces, deeds without doers create a work more chilling than the original installation (...) Loss - erasure and absence - is made palpable by the marked suppression of the missing photographs." . As you go through the book, he writes, the lists becomes litanies, with intricate and horrific repetitions, that simultaneously seem like the utmost dry and dull thing you could read. A part of the conceptual strategy, as we see it unfolded in Holocaust Museum, is, with the words of Vanessa Place, to pour a hot content in a cool container. That way, and with boredom as a kind of developer, it may become possible to see other structures than we usually do, in an existing material. And it is this paradox, I suggest, the muted, almost boring (re) presentation of the horrible, that will make us read a work like Robert Fitterman's Holocaust Museum with our eyes wide open.

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[1] This article has previously been published in Jacket2, January 2015: http://jacket2.org/article/captions-without-images
[1] Reznikoff, Holocaust.
[1] Bäcker, Nachschrift.
[1] Fitterman, Holocaust Museum, 19.
[1] Ibid., 58.
[1] Barthes, Camera Lucida.
[1] For examples on repetitions (with light variations), ses Fitterman, Holocaust Museum, 58, 72–74, 93, 98, 100–103, 107–109, 116–118, 121–122..
[1] See for example Jorge Semprún's debut novel The Grand Voyage / The Cattle Truck Semprún, The Long Voyage.; Semprún, The cattle truck.
[1] See for example Tadeusz Borowski's Here in our Auschwitz and other stories Borowski, Here in Our Auschwitz and Other Stories. and Primo Levi 's The Truce Levi, The Truce; a Survivor's Journey Home from Auschwitz..
[1] Charles Bernstein has showed how it's likely that the texts has been selected, see: Bernstein, "This Picture Intentionally Left Blank."
[1] Fitterman, Holocaust Museum, 62–68.
[1] Ibid., 48.
[1] Ibid., 58–59.
[1] Bäcker, transcript, 152.
[1] Fitterman, Holocaust Museum, 58.
[1] Ibid., 43.
[1] Ibid., 119–120.
[1] Ibid., 64.
[1] Ibid., 63.
[1] Ibid.
[1] Tilmans, Van Vree, and Winter, Performing the Past Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe, 170–73.
[1] Fitterman, Holocaust Museum, 84.
[1] Ibid., 85.
[1] Tilmans, Van Vree, and Winter, Performing the Past Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe, 173.
[1] Bernstein, "This Picture Intentionally Left Blank."
[1] Place: "What interests me is what happens when you put a hot content in a cool container.", September 2011, Paris. See Serup, "Hot Content in a Cool Container.".

Poem About Happiness

What should a poem about happiness look like
presumably not like this
questioning

Do you have to be happy in order to write a poem about happiness
or should you, precisely, not be happy
should you be made happy by reading it

I think happiness has to do with the concrete
with objects and places
happiness is to be found in a specially apportioned space of time

There's a blue lacquerware bowl
which I own which I think about
when I think about happiness

There's a piece of mended ceramics from Italy
which also makes me think of Elsa
but I don't think we were ever happy

I don't think about people
when I think about happiness
I think about alcohol

The feeling of happiness is the feeling of schnapps
Koskenkorva vodka maybe grappa
sliding through me

A sun spreads through the body
and the rays reach brain and cock
at the same time rushing

Like the wind rushes around the ears
of the runner who runs senselessly
happy and alone on the road

*- By **Martin Glaz Serup.** From Roman Nights, translated from Danish by Christopher Sand-Iversen ('Romerske nætter', first published in Denmark by Tiderne Skifter, 2013)*

DR. NATALIA FEDOROVA

RUSSIA

Natalia Fedorova is a new media poet, a digital literature scholar and a mediapoetry festival curator. In collaboration with a sonic artist Taras Mashtalir she founded a media poetry project Machine Libertine. Her audio and video poems appeared in TextSound, Rattapallax, LIT magazine, and Ill-Tempered Rubyist, räume für notizen | rooms for notes as well as number of international festivals and biennales (6th Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art, Manifesta 10, Krasnoyarsk Book Culture Fair, REVERSE, Moscow Book Festival, E-Poetry, LUMEN EX, Interrupt II, VideoBardo, Liberated Words, Tarp and others).

Natalia holds a PhD in literary theory from Herzen State University (St-Petersburg). Natalia won a Fulbright scholarship to do her first year postdoctorate term at the Trope Tank at MIT, where she was working on translating e-lit, and SPIRE to develop Russian Electronic Literature Collection in a specialized knowledge base at the University of Bergen for her second year term. She is currently teaching creative writing with new media and text-based art in Smolny College (St-Petersburg State University – Bard College) and curating a 101.Mediapoetry festival at the New Stage of Alexandrinsky Theatre. Natalia is an editor of e-lit and new media writing column in Rattapallax magazine (NY).

Lost and Found

opposite the opera
in sounds of many languages
on facebook watching
euphrasia ruptura
a turqoise ring
lost and found
but people are not
the same
mind the gap
hands make the content closer
toucher
technological phenomenology
stink stain stay
news reverse the order
of chronology
out of the box
upside and downside
the story is the information
that rarely changes
out of the window
swiss army knife approach
out of the hood or
out of luck
hack out the problem
carve out some time
out of curiosity
outdoors

- By **Dr. Natalia Fedorova**

Christopher Okemwa

KENYA

Christopher Okemwa is the 2015 winner of Burt Award for African Literature (Kenya). He holds a Bachelor of Education (English & Literature) and an MA degree in literature from the University of Nairobi. His doctoral study at Moi University in Kenya focuses on the 'Literary-Gangsta' Performance Poetry in Kenya. He currently teaches Creative Writing at Kisii University, Kenya.

He has published three collections of poetry: Toxic Love (2004, Watermark), The Gong (2009, Nsemia Inc. Publishers) and a bilingual (French/English) poetry collection Purgatorius Ignis (2015, Poesie Premiere-Online; 2016, a book by Nsemia Inc. Publishers). He has also authored and published three collections of children's stories: The Village Queen, The Visitor at the Gate, and Let Us Keep Tiger (2009, 2010, 2010, Paulines Africa). The latter was nominated for Jomo Kenyatta Prize for Literature in Kenya in 2011. Okemwa has also published a collection of adult short-stories, Chubot, the Cursed One and Other Stories (2011, Nsemia Inc). His Oral Literature text, Riddles of the Abagusii People of Kenya: Gems of Wisdom from the African Continent was also published in 2011. His other oral literature text, The Proverbs of the Abagusii of Kenya: Meaning & Application was published in 2012. In 2014, Okemwa rolled out a series of twelve titles of Abagusii folktales, namely Ogasusu na Oganchogu, Ogasusu na Okanyang'au, Ogasusu na Okanyambu, Ogasusu na Egetondo, Okabaki na Okanyambobe, Okang'ombe na Ogasimba, Ogasusu na Abana B'Oganchogu, Kerangeti na Kerantina, Nyamege na Omoiseke Omonda, Getiro na Rirabwoni, Abamura Batato and Omoiseke Omonyakieni (Kistrech Theatre International).
In 2015 his novella, Sabina and the Mystery of the Ogre, won Burt Award for African Literature.

Let Me Know

If I ever offended you
Discuss it with me, dear love
Don't keep it in the heart for too long
Let me know of the mistake
I have made, dear love
That makes you pale, mute
If I once shouted at you
And you were flustered, dear love
It is because I cared, or so I thought
Let us talk with open minds
Of the flaws, the pitfalls
And mend the broken fences
Bring to an end this silence
And hear your voice again, dear love
As it always came to me.

-Christopher Okemwa: from The Gong
(Nsemia Inc. Publishers)

PROF. SETH MICHELSON

USA

Seth Michelson is an award-winning poet, professor, and translator whose collections of poetry include Swimming through Fire, Eyes like Broken Windows, House in a Hurricane, Kaddish for My Unborn Son, and Maestro of Brutal Splendor. His translations of poetry include the books The Ghetto (Tamara Kamenszain, Argentina), roly poly (Victoria Estol, Uruguay), Poems from the Disaster (Zulema Moret, Argentina/Spain), and Dreaming in Another Land (Rati Saxena, India). He currently teaches the poetry of the Americas at Washington and Lee University, in the United States, as well as in a high-security prison for undocumented, unaccompanied youth. He welcomes contact through his website, sethmichelson.com.

Speaking in Tongues: Poetry and the Practice of Human Freedom

Seth Michelson
(Washington and Lee University)

This paper is for you. It is a hand reaching out to shake yours in affection and solidarity. It is a welcoming of strangers, an opening to surprise, a forging of new connections, and a democratic gesture of commitment to the paradoxical inclusion of the unknown. In more properly rhetorical terms, it is an open address suggesting the potentiality of poetry to loose from habitual language new possibilities for being and for being-in-common. In other words I am aiming herein to articulate a specific ontological power of poetry: its ability to render simultaneously both who and what we are, each in ourselves and in relation to one another.

Such an orientation to poetry would allow us to reexamine how we exist, and while the ambition might seem too modest or even facile for the distinguished audience of the Kistrech Poetry Festival, I nevertheless hope to excite you to join me in thinking this poetic potentiality as nothing less than a rigorous and crucial striving towards a concept that we are yet to live in our daily lives, both as individuated beings and as members of so many communities.

In other words, I am interested in reckoning the power of poetry to reveal and rethink our ways of being in ourselves and in common. This strikes me as especially important in light of our current global climate, which is smeared by genocide, war, health crises, mass incarceration, pollution, poverty, deportation, and discrimination. I would hasten to add, too, that no matter how intensive our collective work here through poetry, it ought never to displace or diminish any interventions attempting to mediate the lived material violence. With that in mind, we might/can explore more ethically the heartening potentiality of poetry to offer us alternative modes of being, thereby helping us to rethink the very conditions of our lives.

Consequently we might ask a multitude of pertinent questions. For example, how might poetry influence conceptions of self and society? How might poetry mobilize change in lived experience? How do the tropes and figures of poetry partake in the construction of the heart and of communities? Such poetic work is possible, at least in part, because the genre privileges specificity, intensity, and compassion. They are cornerstones of the oeuvres of so many of our favorite poets, be they French symbolists, Négritude nationalists, Brazilian concretists, Persian Sufis, or otherwise. So much of our pleasure in their verse derives from their painstakingly crafted, courageously enunciated, and compassionately offered renderings of the specificities that define us in ourselves and as communities. Moreover, those specificities importantly reveal relations of difference, even within ourselves. That is, poetry paradoxically offers us a mode of engaging difference as constitutive of singularity, and vice versa. Importantly, too, this includes radical difference, such as that of the outsider, she who does not belong.

This capaciousness accounts for some of the magic of poetry; we read a great poem and throb with its radiant and variegated vitality, which intensifies and opens our being. It allows us to tremble with the poem in realizing its maker "inceptively an inceptor" as the German philosopher Martin Heidegger names her (Stephens 9), meaning a world-making visionary capable of translating into language her onto- and cosmopoetic gift. In other words we recognize and admire a great poet for her ability to make the universes within each of us and to transform the many worlds circumscribing, connecting, and coursing through us. To borrow a beautiful phrasing from the United States poet Walt Whitman, whenever a poet "breathes into anything that was before thought small it dilates with the grandeur and life of the universe" (9). And I would add that this occurs via enactments of difference.

Difference makes possible the network of connections bringing us into ourselves and into complex relations with one another. Difference drives sociality. That is, difference founds the self just as it founds communities, including the community of the self. Moreover, poetry is one locus for engaging this premise. It artfully renders the paradoxical unities of difference comprising us, and to elucidate this, we might begin quite benignly by recalling that poetry exists at the intersection of the personal and the collective. Poetry hews individuated utterances from shared language, revealing the poet and the reader alike, and however differently. Both the poet and her reader are revealed by their various engagements of the technical and narrative decisions in a poem. Likewise we can read in the reader's reaction to the verse not only so much of who and what she is, but also the so much of the communities defining her.

To gain insight into this, we might parse a transhistorical, translingual, and transcultural example of intertextuality from the Roman poet Virgil. Specifically we might imagine a reader reciting the famous opening clause of his Roman national epic poem, The Aeneid, which begins "Arma virumque cano," meaning "Arms, and the man I sing" (3). Written more than two thousand years ago, this clause aimed not only to give literate Romans an ennobling gesture celebrating their arrival as a dominant culture, but also to demonstrate its poet's skill in relation to one of the greatest bards in occidental culture, namely Homer. That is, Virgil in his Roman national epic is asserting both the supremacy of Roman culture and his supremacy, and he initiates this double movement in the opening words of his poem. More pointedly here, Virgil launches his hegemonic comparative framework through poetically configured transhistorical, translingual, and transcultural articulations of difference. For example, in opening his poem with the phrase "Arma virumque cano," Virgil is immediately linking it to Homer's opening in The Odyssey, "ándra moi énnepe, moûsa," meaning "Sing to me of the man, Muse" (77), and his opening in The Iliad, "Menin aeide thea Peleiadeo Achilleos," meaning "Rage—Goddess, sing the rage of Peleus' son Achilles" (77). The phrases do more than overlap; they both extend and transfigure. They connect to differentiate, invoke to rebuke, and in their process of transformation they simultaneously reassert. In other words, they demonstrate the constancy in change, and vice versa, which is a foundational paradox to constructions of both self and society, including their interweaving.

Thus Virgil's hero, Aeneas, is modeled upon Homer's, just as the twelve-book structure of The Aeneid follows the structure of The Odyssey and The Iliad, with books one to six of The Aeneid tracking the twenty-four books of The Odyssey and books seven through twelve of The Aeneid following The Iliad. Such are the macroscopic markers of difference as both connection and separation in the texts, and they operate microscopically, too. For example Virgil's first word in The Aeneid, "arma," recalls and transforms the opening word of The Iliad, "menin," meaning "rage" or "wrath," which announces the theme of The Iliad and reverberates thematically throughout Virgil's national epic. Perhaps even more interesting, Virgil's second word "virum," meaning "man," and it is the direct Latin equivalent to Homer's first word in The Odyssey, "ándra," meaning "man," too. And all three texts trace the emergence of individuated heroic men, as well as the emergence of cultures, of myths of humankind. And we can see lexically how the Latin word invokes its Greek precedent, but not merely to reiterate or repeat, but to convoke, transfigure, and displace. Virum is and is not ándra; every point of connection is a separation, and each separation a connection.

Besides noting this in Virgil's purposeful intertextual references to Homer, we must acknowledge the mediation of our experience of the works by English-language translation. It further complicates and layers our ideas of constancy and change, and it brings into focus the movement, the action, of difference. It is a poetic making of experience of self and Other, and we feel this all the more given our context of the

Kistrech Poetry Festival, meaning a plurivocal convocation of fine poets from around the world. That is, each of us reading the English-language translations of Virgil's recasting in Latin of Homer's Greek national epics imbues our experience with situated forms of knowledge and understanding, including our varying abilities to grasp both the denotative and connotative stratifications of meanings in the diction in the three aforementioned languages. Here, then, differentiation becomes quite pronounced. The commingling of meanings clarifies my aforementioned claim to the importance of the seemingly simple movement of poetry back and forth across shared space. It exemplifies how such movement simultaneously renders individuated experience and constructs communities. In other words, we are again reckoning poetry's marvelous power to connect and separate; it individuates and amalgamates; it creates singular and collective modes of being concomitantly, including their interconnections, which comprise difference.

Perhaps even more importantly to my thesis, we might wonder what happens to Virgil's carefully wrought references to Homer in readings of The Aeneid by readers unfamiliar with Virgil's and/or Homer's epics. What is the affective impact on such readers of Virgil's opening? Does it matter that they forfeit his painstaking and brilliant effort to embed his epic in Homer's? Does it affect those readers' ability to experience and apprehend Virgil's masterful craftsmanship as poet? More troublingly, do such readers sense in their experience of Virgil some sort of absence or loss of affect? Consequently do they feel themselves abashed or alienated in reading the text? In other words, do such readers feel disempowered, marginalized, and degraded by the poetry? Are some of you perhaps feeling even this at this very moment? In other words, how might a text vary in its availability to readers, and what are the consequences of its inclusions and exclusions?

It bears mention that I am by no means arguing canonicity, nor am I suggesting a polemic advocating Reader Response theory, New Criticism, or any such shade of literary criticism. Instead I am interested in the ontological force of poetic affect to reshape the self and societies. I therefore broached Virgil and Homer to offer a common and discrete example of how the transhistorical, transcultural, and translingual affective experiences of a poem might help us to rethink and transform conditions of being. I want to emphasize the potentiality of poetry to conceive and render malleability, liminality, and belonging. Like many poets and readers, I might derive literary pleasure from tracing the creative process of our most accomplished and innovative predecessors, but what interests me in Virgil's Roman national epic in the context of this paper is the reader unfamiliar with those his text and Homer's. That is, I am interested in thinking through the possibilities for her affective experience in reading The Aeneid for the first time, and without having read The Odyssey and The Iliad, as a threshold of possibility for thinking belonging prismatically. For just as poetry emerges from and reveals the ontological and sociopolitical conditions of its making, so too does it reveal those conditions for the reader. And this is also to say that her experience will sometimes illustrate by negation the absence of affective potentialities. Unaware of the role Virgil's national epic in Augustus's founding of the Roman Empire, she may not feel the pride of Romans in encountering in The Aeneid the literary narration of their supremacy. She may in fact enjoy quite different subjective responses, with the poem perhaps even provoking distinct experiences in the reader herself with each re-reading.

To theorize this further, we might build upon the concept of the "affect alien" from the British-Australian critical theorist Sara Ahmed. By "affect alien" she means to refer to those in a community of being who feel "estranged by virtue of how they are affected" (13). In other words, the abovementioned new reader of The Aeneid is an affect alien. It does not enact in her Virgil's intended affective experience of Roman pride and even arrogance. In short, then, she is an outsider; the affect alien exists beyond the event of the national epic. Her relation to the community is one of non-belonging; she experiences its expressions differently. This how the affect alien emerges. This how to constructs the stranger. She both defies and defines community by clarifying its borders, much as she comprises you and me. She is lived and felt exclusion, and how we respond to her defines our humanity. Our ability to recognize and reckon her defines us just as it limns her being.
In other words, the affect alien reminds us that aesthetics are always already political. That is, one's affective response to a poem—or any aesthetic event, be it a play, painting, song, etc.—signals one's relation of belonging to community, including relations of exclusion and non-belonging, which need be understood reflexively oppressive, censorious, or discriminatory. Such is the importance of thinking through how a poem reveals the conditions of its creation as well as the conditions of its reception. They mark ontological and sociopolitical thresholds of belonging. Moreover, the most artful poets manipulate such markers and thresholds of self and society in the service of exposing and challenging dominant ontological and sociopolitical conceptions of both. They create fresh and invigorating forms of rendering ostracized, minoritized, underrepresented, and/or erased individuals, peoples, and communities, challenging us to reconfigure our understandings of ourselves and our relations to others.
A good example of this comes in the short poem "In the Inner City," by the United States poet Lucille Clifton. In the poem she recalibrates socioeconomic and racialized norms by repositioning and praising the impoverished inner city in relation to the affluent "uptown." More precisely, she deploys lineation, rhythm, and repetition to redefine the inner city as the thriving heart of city life. Listen in particular for the layered revelations of forms of inclusion and exclusion, as well as their poetic reconditioning:

in the inner city
or
like we call it
home
we think a lot about uptown
and the silent nights
and the houses straight as
dead men
and the pastel lights
and we hang on to our no place
happy to be alive
and in the inner city
or
like we call it
home

The poem clearly juxtaposes and manipulates a diversity of markers of identity and belonging. For example it opposes the wealthy, quiet "uptown" of soft "pastel lights" to the "no place" of the "inner city," and her pride in the latter is one of the rhetorical surprises of the poem, adding to its delight. Moreover, in praising and privileging the inner city over uptown, Clifton destabilizes presuppositions of security and stability. She is unsettling complex constructs of identity and belonging, and in doing this, she is challenging each resident to rethink her way of being in herself and ways of being in common across and within the city. She is also questioning racialized politics by inverting the paradigmatic color scale of desirability, with Anglo uptown being subordinated to the minoritized inner city, where Clifton feels herself to be "home."

We might further note how her juxtaposition of uptown and the inner city importantly pivots upon notions of contiguity and continuity. Uptown and the inner city exist on a contiguous plane that is ruptured by discontinuities. We see this formally in the shape, syntax, and grammar of the poem, which comprises one long, unpunctuated, and ungrammatical sentence and stanza shaped like an island. Consequently we might ask What are the limits of belonging, and how are they ruptured? Where does uptown end and the inner city begin? Who lives where, and how, if at all, does that define the who and the what of each resident and community? How is "home" defined, and who has access to home? And how are uptown and the inner city both differentiated each in itself and consubstantiated in their difference? Furthermore, what joy to experience the concurrent eruption of all of these questions through the reading of such a carefully crafted poem!

For example we cannot help but note the artful use of repetition in Clifton's redeployment of the first four lines of the poem as its final four lines. It engenders a vibrant tonal insistence in the poem by building familiarity and vitality into the signified referent of "home." This charismatic claim to home also propels the perspectival shift that Clifton attempts narratively in privileging the inner city over uptown. Adding to the repetition and narrative, the visual poetics of the poem intensifies the attempted perspectival shift in thinking identity and belonging. That is, Clifton both opens and closes the poem with lines "in the inner city / or / like we call it / home," which thereby visually bracket uptown. The description of the inner city sandwiches uptown within the layout of the poem on the page, creating a visual and spatial metaphor for its containment and immobilization that implies the force and supremacy of the inner city. In a different register, we might claim the home, the oikos, to have dominated the polis, and this is perhaps a utopian fantasy of a radically refashioned sociocultural landscape. In the poem, the inner-city home sublates uptown, casting it into a position of subordination. This reverses the traditional hegemony of the wealthy-poor binary, destabilizing the traditional hierarchy of values defining affluent and impoverished neighborhoods, the "good" and the "bad" parts of town. So there is both continuity and rupture, consistency and difference, in the form and content of the poem. This also leads us poignantly to examine problematics of exclusion and inclusion, which remain ceaselessly in play via the complex and shifting networks of signification defining each resident's life in itself and in common within the mosaic of the city.

In other words, I am interested in reckoning the power of poetry to reveal and rethink our ways of being in ourselves and in common.

In other words, the logic of the poem can be deconstructed to demonstrate the slippery interrelation of the two concepts, with the subordinated inner-city rising to challenge the hegemony of the dominant "uptown," a metonym for hegemony and oppression. Yet the poem is no mere inversion and reinscription of subordination; it is no simple reversal and reassertion of hegemonic socioeconomic structures and configurations. Rather it is a precise and impassioned call to readers to reflect deeply on the who and the what of self and community.

Clifton is tonally dramatizing and structurally emphasizing crucial questions of belonging and identity, and her work exemplifies the potentiality of poetry to present through form and content a mode of singing from a margin in ways that illuminate, question, and shift the boundaries and constitutions of self and of circumscribing world(s). In "In the Inner City," the periphery becomes the center, inverting socioeconomic, racial, and psychic paradigms, and the poem's syncretic logic affectively resounds, influencing the body of the reader and the body politic. Moreover, Clifton's serious poetic play with the inclusion-exclusion binary emphasizes the artifice and malleability of each such structure in itself and in relation to the Other, thereby deconstructing artificial values ascribed to difference.

There is much more to say about the poem, but the limits of a word-count compel me to move on. Suffice it to say that "In the Inner City" illustrates how a poem might emerge from the unequal and unjust conditions of its creation so as to confront them and even offer alternatives, with its affect propelling the poem in turn to move beyond the specificities of its complaint and even transcend the confines of its literary community. This is one way to understand the potentiality of poetry to challenge norms of belonging. Every poem is positioned within configurations of power, which include its ties to constructs of sex, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, language, and education, and we can trace this through the reader's affective experience, including her non-belonging. Thus we might recontextualize within our argument the work on community by the French philosopher Jacque Rancière, who proposes that "[t]he distribution of the sensible reveals who can have a share in what is common to the community" (12). In other words, not everyone has the same access, or access at all, to community and belonging; a portion of a poem's readership will inevitably experience it as affect aliens.

This is an especially important point for poets like us, gathered here from diverse points and languages to share in verse. For as alluded to earlier in the juxtaposition of Virgilian and Homeric epic, even the very literary standards themselves always already reveal and conserve the epistemological arguments cohering the body politic enunciating those literary standards. In other words, the expression of literary standards is in itself an enunciation of sociopolitical power. Why else would European colonials, for example, so vigorously and immediately attack and replace indigenous epistemologies with European ones? Why the rush to dash and elide indigenous forms of being and knowing? Why denigrate and disallow indigenous theologies, traditions, and rituals? I would even go so far as to assert that the greatest and most enduring violence of colonialism has been its imposition of language, culture, and history, which resounds to this day, continuously reinscribing displacement, humiliation, and loss. And in this context we can clearly see how the orchestration of affect is linked to political presence. To extend Rancière's logic to our argument, "[t]here is thus an 'aesthetics' at the core of politics. . . Politics revolves around what is seen and what can be said about it, around who has the ability to see and the talent to speak, around the properties of spaces and the possibilities of time" (13). In other words, we are dealing again with the ability to be and to be-in-common.

Importantly, then, if we are to strive to conceive and forge more egalitarian, pacifistic, and inclusive ways of being and of being-in-common, then we might seek a poetry of difference that can become a generative, constructive force. It could trace difference with precision and compassion in ways allowing us to see "aesthetic acts as configurations of experience that create new modes of sense perception and induce novel forms of political subjec¬tivity" (Rancière 9). They might twine the personal and public, the ontological and political, through newfangled poetic experience, gifting us new ways to be. Here the literary theorization of the heart by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida becomes helpful. He writes that "a poem [is] that very thing

that teaches the heart, [that] invents the heart" ("Che cos'è" 231). In other words a poem creates the possibility of being for the heart; the poem readies the plane of imminence for the heart to emerge and materialize. Via the work of poetry, the heart comes to know itself and thereby come into being. Moreover it is poetry that vivifies the heart; poetry imbues the heart with its movement, its rhythm. This is enacted through the musicality of a poem, as prosodic analysis might reveal, for example. But it is evident in other poetic tropes and figures, too. Think, for example, of the way a metaphor arrives fully fledged and comprehensible in ways that precede knowledge and cognition. A metaphor invents the heart. Metaphor is; it is felt before being understood, moving between the known and unknown to create insight, sense, and meaning. Furthermore it resounds, riding its affect into and between personal and interpersonal matrices of contemplation, inflecting epistemological frameworks and advancing generative approaches to understandings of and through difference.

We feel the immediacy and potency of the ontological and epistemological work of metaphor, and it energizes us to reflect more deeply on who and what we are in ourselves and in common. Feel it, for example, in the one-line poem by the Korean poet Ko Un titled "A Shooting Star," which reads in its entirety "Wow! You recognized me." And how about the affective immediacy of the experience of this couplet from the poem "Be Melting Snow" by the Persian poet Rumi: "Be melting snow. / Wash yourself of yourself"? Such metaphor arrives forcefully and fully fledged, forging the heart with an understanding that precedes cognition and conditions us to reconsider modes of being and of being in worlds. In this sense, then, such examples illustrate the power of poetry to deploy its tropes and figures to forge new ontological and social possibilities. Or if we paraphrase Derrida, such metaphors can help to create the conditions of possibility for private and public heart.

Moreover, poetry like this helps us to understand the complexity and urgency of the corporality of heart. What of each poem we read is ours? Where does a memorized poem end and the reader begin? And where is the writer of that poem? Such questions blur the artificially steadfast divides between writer and reader, not to mention the false boundaries of language, with our very bodies themselves becoming shifting thresholds between the individuated and collective. As the United States poet Robert Pinsky explains:

> Poetry is a vocal, which is to say a bodily, art. The medium of poetry is a human body: the column of air inside the chest, shaped into signifying sounds in the larynx and the mouth. . . .Moreover, there is a special intimacy to poetry because. . . the medium is not an expert's body, as when one goes to the ballet: in poetry, the medium is the audience's body. When I say to myself a poem. . . the artist's medium is my breath. The reader's breath and hearing embody the poet's words. This makes the art physical, intimate, vocal, and individual. (8)

In other words, poetry challenges the socially established boundaries of the self, thereby emphasizing the permeability and malleability of (a) being. In this sense, we might even claim that a being by definition is a being-in-common. Each of us is community. Or at least we possess in and through poetry the ability to reckon this crucial paradox that singularity is mosaic. And like a mosaic of tiles or glass, the self and the poem are intrinsically held together by absence. We are neither presence nor absence, but their fusion. A mosaic would be impossible without the space between its constituent elements. So, too, is a poem the affective experience of its recombinant elements. It is its resounding affect, and it also an assembly of discernible techniques and components.

To clarify this, we might resume our engagement of Derrida, who explains the heart in love as foundationally split. For Derrida, the heart-in-love is riven by its competing movements. In affection, it moves between loving the who and the what of the Other. As he explains:

> The difference between the who and the what at the heart of love, separates the heart. It is often said that love is the movement of the heart. Does my heart move because I love someone who is an absolute singularity, or because I love the way that someone is?...The question of being is itself always already divided between the who and the what. Is 'Being' some one or some thing? (Screenplay and Essays 81)

In a certain way we already know this well, though we may not recognize or even apprehend it. Regardless we are already struggling with its actuality, oscillating agonistically between the who and what. For example, is Mekatilili wa Menza beloved for who she is or for what she is? That is, do we love her for being Mekatilili wa Menza, the unique singularity in the universe, or do we love her for what she represents to us in the world, namely dignity, courage, strength, integrity, honesty, and so much more? The glib answer is that she embodies both: We love the singularity of her being, which is the who of her life, and we love her inspiring array of traits and actions, which is the what of her. But we also see the divisions, the fissures, cleaving the who from the what, and vice versa. And perhaps one of the primary powers of poetry is its ability to offer us ways of simultaneously and symbiotically apprehending both, and without diminishing either. Perhaps poetry can employ its genre-specific tools and techniques in order to do what was formerly the exclusive work of the gods: It can produce the who and what of our lives in both finite and infinite detail from undifferentiated planes of imminence. And through such work, might we in turn learn to realize more nourishing ontologies and epistemologies than those currently comprising us as individuals and as communities? In this manner, might poetry lead us to new ways of being each in ourselves and in common? Might it help us to cultivate the conditions for more justice, compassion, and peace?

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Venceremos

—for Víctor Jara

They snapped
your fingers, one
by one, pain
exploding
from each knuckle,
till agony, only
the agony
of your hand
was real and present.
Everything else
was echo: of bone
snapped
and crooked
fingers,
pain of snakes
set on fire,
moths
stitched alive
into a collector's
book, and you
pinned there, Víctor Jara,
writhing
in bloody dirt,
one more
body amidst the many
being whipped,
slapped and kicked:
in Estadio Chile,
O civic cathedral,
pit of erasures
where the Comandante
rasped
hot into your ear,
Víctor,
you'll never again
strum or sing,
at least not
in this world, traitor,
as if a storm of slurs
and busted fingers
and crazy bullets
could kill a song.

--Prof. Seth Michelson

SITAWA NAMWALIE

KENYA

Sitawa Namwalie is a Kenyan poet, playwright, writer and performer. In 2014 she won Kenya's Sanaa Theatre Awards Best Spoken Word and Poetry for her show of dramatized poetry called "Silence is a Woman".

Sitawa Namwalie discovered her poetic gift in 2007 and by 2008 staged her first dramatised poetry show Cut off My Tongue in Nairobi. In 2009, her first book of poetry, Cut off My Tongue, was published.

Cut off my Tongue was invited to the UK's prestigious 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. In the same year the show received a "Highly Commended" from the Freedom to Create an international arts prize. In May 2012 two performances were held in Uganda. In April 2012 Cut off My Tongue was selected by TED Talks on a global search for new and undiscovered acts as an idea worth spreading. In 2011 her second show called "Homecoming" was performed in Nairobi.

In October 2013, Sitawa Namwalie premiered her new show of dramatized poetry called, "Silence is a Woman" which was critically acclaimed. In April 2014 Sitawa participated in the Spoken Worlds project which was an exchange between German and Kenyan poets, spoken word artists, hip hop artist.

Cut off My Tongue was performed at the inaugural Ubumuntu Arts Festival which was held in July 2015 in Kigali, Rwanda. The festival uses performance art and performance artists to explore, discuss and deliberate on the large scale human-to-human violence that has become common place around the world since the late 20th Century.

In November 2014 Sitawa staged a reading of her first play "Black Maria on Koinange Street" at the Kampala International Theatre Festival (KITF) and at the Pen International Festival in New York City in 2015.

Her second play "Room of Lost Names" premiered to critical and popular acclaim at the Kampala International Theatre Festival (KITF) in November 2015 and was performed at the second Ubumuntu Arts Festival in July 2016 in Kigali, Rwanda.

Sitawa currently earns a living working as an international consultant and is based in Nairobi, Kenya. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Botany and Zoology from the University of Nairobi and a Master of Arts degree in Environment, Society and Technology from Clark University in Massachusetts, USA. Sitawa has achieved excellence in many areas of life, including representing Kenya in tennis and hockey in her youth.

NAMES OF THE DEAD

I collect names of the dead
Names of the 1300, dead.
Let other people amass land, cars, shoes,
Let them boast about those things!
It is me who will save the names of the dead,
The names of the lives we destroyed.

In the aftermath of primitive pride,
Toxic adults,
Reverted to childish games,
Blatant, discoloured with rage,
They refused to follow rules,
Stole the people's election,
And then, stood firm, blameless, clean.

When the buildings stopped burning,
When machetes were blunted,
When packs of hunting gangs dispersed,
When fear receded, when tempers abated,
And the smoke finally drifted away,
1300 lay dead.

And we looked,
On the work of our hands, unrepentant,
Not an ounce of regret furrowed our brow,
Instead,
We shouted.

Forget!
Forget, forget,
Their names we must forget! (Say Names)

I collect the names of the dead,
Names of the 1300, dead.
Let other people amass land, cars, shoes.
Let them preen about those things!
It is me who will save the names of the dead,
The names of the ones we destroyed.

Names come to me from unexpected places,
Slowly, slowly one by one,
They slip past offended silence.

-- Sitawa Namwalie

Tete Burugu

KENYA

Tete Burugu aka Neno Kali is more than a recording engineer and a producer; he is a weaver of words. With lyrics that examine both the individual (where he draws from his own personal experiences), and society as a whole, Neno is a resounding voice of global consciousness, his guttural tones casting an eye on our social mores, from politics and tribe, to love and lust and man's personal quest for freedom.
Strewn across three continents, Neno has worked with artists in the UK, Kenya and the USA, composing for, and collaborating with the likes of funk luminary Tony Ozier, underground hip-hop veteran S.U.N. (Scientific Universal Noncommercial), and soul songstress Hassanah.

Cat's Cradle

Focused on the future,
Two lovers,
Like cat's cradle gone wrong we would
Lay entwined...
Not knowing the fingers of fate
Would find the ends of our love
And pulling,
Not so gently,
U N R A V E L
us.

- By **E.P. Burugu**

TONY MOCHAMA

KENYA

Tony Mochama is a popular columnist and writer with the Standard Newspapers, and one of the most prolific younger authors in the East African region. His list of published works includes the poetry collection What If I'm a Literary Gangster?, the short story collection The Road to Eldoret, the crime novella, Princess Adhis, and the Naija Coca Brodas, a play. Percy's Killer Party, two Burt Award winning YA titles, Meet the Omtitas (2013) and Run, Cheche, Run (2016), a nocturnal city guide called Nairobi - A Night Runner's Guide through the City in the Sun and his recent book - Modern Poetry for Secondary Schools. Mochama has also facilitated creative workshops in Kenya, Russia, Canada, Portugal, Italy and Germany - with Lithuania next on his literary tour list.

During this festival Mochama will read his poetry and present a paper, "The Rains Down in Africa: Modern African Poetry within Our National Context." He will hold a poetry workshop for University students and read his poetry.

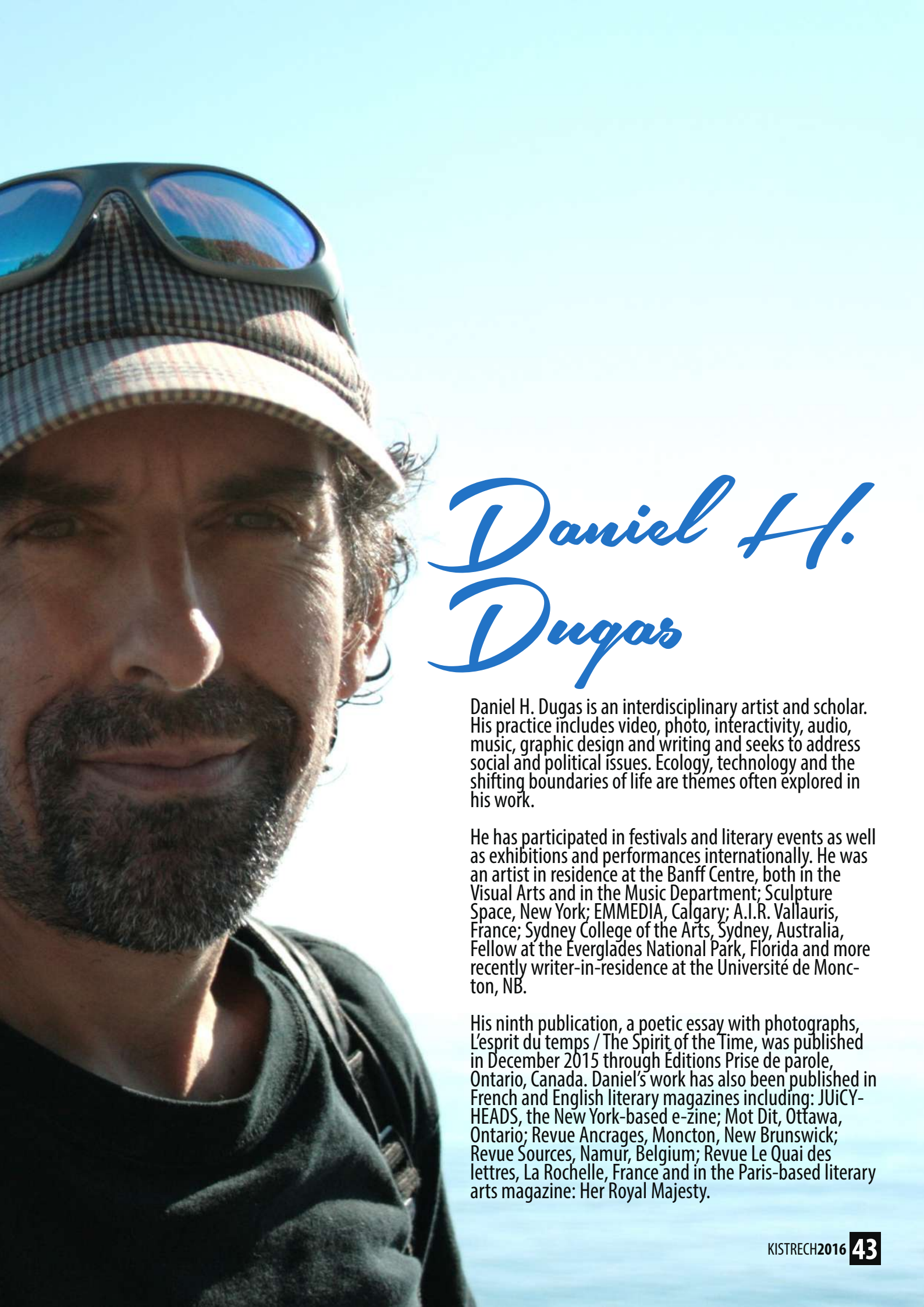
Forward Traveling in Seven Different Directions

'They shall come to attack you from one direction,
but when the Good Lord is done with them, they
shall flee from you in seven different directions.'
That's the Biblical promise.
The first thing is that you were very idle in the SQ
The second that I was busy at HQ, and couldn't join you for Sunday BBQ.
The third thing is I wasn't going to die like you,
stewing in your own shit...
The fourth thing is I was too terrified to watch you go
that's why during visits I hang onto the hospital door.
Alright, I will plead the Fifth, and say nothing about the sixth.
The Seventh is that forward travelling - was the very heavens unraveling.
The first direction always led back home to Gusii
and those hills, that when looked through Gucci,
always seemed less green and more a strange hue of blue.
Clouds to conference, thunder to frighten and lightning to fork, split and scatter
all my enemies, the abarogi, in seven different directions ...
And the coming of the floods to bury all the memories.

- Tony Mochama - 28/07/2016.

The first direction always led back home to Gusii

VALERIE BLANC
DANIEL H. DUGAS (CANADA)



Daniel H. Dugas

Daniel H. Dugas is an interdisciplinary artist and scholar. His practice includes video, photo, interactivity, audio, music, graphic design and writing and seeks to address social and political issues. Ecology, technology and the shifting boundaries of life are themes often explored in his work.

He has participated in festivals and literary events as well as exhibitions and performances internationally. He was an artist in residence at the Banff Centre, both in the Visual Arts and in the Music Department; Sculpture Space, New York; EMMEDIA, Calgary; A.I.R. Vallauris, France; Sydney College of the Arts, Sydney, Australia, Fellow at the Everglades National Park, Florida and more recently writer-in-residence at the Université de Moncton, NB.

His ninth publication, a poetic essay with photographs, L'esprit du temps / The Spirit of the Time, was published in December 2015 through Editions Prise de parole, Ontario, Canada. Daniel's work has also been published in French and English literary magazines including: JUiCY-HEADS, the New York-based e-zine; Mot Dit, Ottawa, Ontario; Revue Ancrages, Moncton, New Brunswick; Revue Sources, Namur, Belgium; Revue Le Quai des lettres, La Rochelle, France and in the Paris-based literary arts magazine: Her Royal Majesty.

Valerie LeBlanc

Inter-disciplinary artist and writer, Valerie LeBlanc has presented throughout Canada, the United States, Europe, and Australia. Her creations travel between video poetry, fiction, performance, visual and written theory.

She received her MFA, Time Based Arts, 1993, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, IL. From 2001 – 07, LeBlanc was a Faculty Member in the Media Arts + Digital Technologies Department at the Alberta College of Art + Design, Calgary, Canada where she taught video and led seminars on contemporary art practice. She was an Artist in Residence in Vallauris, FR, 2006 and Visiting Scholar, Sydney College of the Arts, Sydney, AU, 2009.

Valerie has been creating video poetry since the mid 1980's and publishing on the Internet since 2000. Creating the MediaPackBoard (MPB) portable screening / performance apparatus in 2005, LeBlanc has used the device as the impetus for events involving art centers and public audiences / participators. LeBlanc released the critical discourse MPB-X in 2014.

After beginning a Research PhD (Doctor of Philosophy in the Visual Arts), University of Sydney, AU, 2013, Valerie returned to Canada. She is currently based in Moncton, NB. In July 2014 Valerie LeBlanc and Daniel H. Dugas were invited by the Everglades National Park as AIRIE Fellows. Various elements of their Flow: Big Waters project have been presented on return visits to Florida, at the FILE 2015, Sao Paulo, BR and the Liberated Word Festival, Bristol, UK.

Flow: Big Waters

Project Description
http://flow.basicbruegel.com/)

The Flow: Big Waters project includes videopoems, soundworks and photographs. The works are based on research carried out in the US Florida Everglades. Recognized as one of the largest swamp complexes in the United States, the Everglades is actually a slow moving freshwater ecosystem. Focusing on the passage of man in this River of Grass, the project examines ideas of swamps as metaphors for decay, ruin, transformative agents of physical and spiritual states.

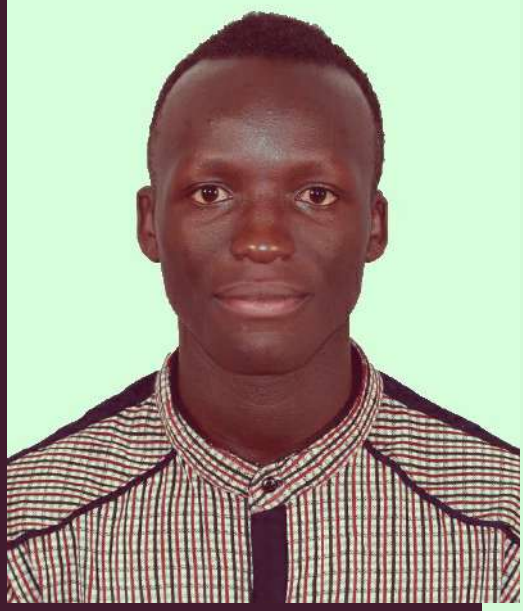
The research and creative aspects of this project took place between January 2014 and February 2016. For the month of July 2014, we were artists in residence in the Everglades National Park, Florida. Invited there by the National Park Service and AIRIE – Artists-in-Residence-in-Everglades, we immersed ourselves in this sub-tropical wetland to record video, audio and to photograph the environment. We wrote digital poetry and fictions based upon observations, oral and written histories. From that research of recording / gathering material, encounters with local residents, consultations and outings with Park Scientists, Technicians, and Rangers, the actions of humans in the natural environment emerged as a focus for our work. Our experience of working in media arts is holistic and the interconnectivity of the Park's ecosystem continues to hold interest for us.

The swamp is a place that has captivated the human imagination since the beginning of time. In the Middle Ages, the miasma theory held that gas emitted by swamps caused disease and even death. This theory was dismissed in the 19th century but the metaphor of swamps as sinister and forbidding places was carried into the vernacular language through the ages. References to swamps still flow easily off the tongue in everyday conversation. For example, when we are busy, we say that we are swamped and when we have too much work, we say that we are bogged down.

Through the project, we established a structure that permitted creation to be carried out both individually and collaboratively. Working as a team, each of us traded off recording audio and visual material. In the writing and editing process, we developed some works together, others were individual creations drawing from the same material. Within this project, we produced 12 videopoems, 12 soundworks and an extensive bank of photographs.

A bookwork is scheduled for publishing in 2017.

- By **Valerie LeBlanc** and **Daniel H. Dugas**, September 3, 2016



One of the winners during the inaugural NALIF (Nyanza Annual Literary Festival) poetry competition held at Kiboko Bay, Kisumu on 27th Aug 2016

Fabian Omoke

STUDENT & UPCOMING POET

Student, ***University of Nairobi***

KENYA

I Rule

I rule in the village
Sipping water from egesanda kia abasigisi
Tapped from abagere's beautiful ekeera
Driving egari ase chinchera chia abamanyi,
Bought with money from ekegancha
Earned from work ase emeganda ya mijikenda

I love this omochi
families cemented by obwanchani,
Children raised with amasikani to abanandi,
Playing rirandi with abanyangori
Knowing everyone is omosani

I roam this village
Passing through rikori
food falling from chinsagi
Households sipping ributi
While listening to chisani chia Malindi

I am this village,
I can't talk without my voice getting shrill,
Good days turn bad without ndizi
But bad day's don't turn me away from fellow mwanainchi
I am this kijiji,
Tinkong'ainu pi,
Kenya nseito twensi, tindi moriri,
Nche no omogusii.

-By **Fabian Omoke**

STUDENTS AND UPCOMING POETS

KENYA

From centre: **James Rolex Akatcha (Mc Rolex), Elly Omullo(Poet Elly), Vincent Oenga, Kodalo Tombo, Sam Nyambari, Doris Moraa, Constany Oteki(Oteki the Poet), Anto-kay(Antony Musyoka)**

POVERTY

With pepper's water,
You have baptized me.
You have turned my living sour;
No lemon can compare.

You sting like nettles.
The sore is still ripe in my heart.
You have filled hatred in my throat.
I can't swallow good now.

Your smell so choking,
Like fresh diabetic human dung.
Cobrally coiled up.
Ready to strike the weak muscles.

I call for a stick,
With roughness, away I chase you.
You haunt our lives.
Again! Never back!

-By **Constany Oteki Mose**

LETTER TO MY X

If stars can be counted,
Then you're free to count my thoughts,
Thoughts of misery feeding on my flesh,
Was it not near this mahogany
Where we first met when silence,
Was indeed the village master?
Is this not the very rock
That witnessed our first kiss?
Darkness was the slave master,
But in you I saw light, a cricket beam,
Everyone shook in fever,
But out of your hug was burning,
You never uttered words of love,
Only saw them shine on thy face,
Like a faulty tap my tears rolled,
When you dared make a move,
Just before you went further,
Mrs. Moon was out to raid,
Then I saw a better figure,
More precious than what I thought,
You forced me to wave,
If that would kind of mean bye,
You kept on turning back,
Just to see whether I meant my bye,
Suddenly you fell in a pit,
And your voice tormented the air,
I was mad to understand,
That your breath was cut short,
I tried my very best to pick you up,
But relief was too expensive but I
I loved you so I couldn't mourn,
In your cold eyes still read Mr. Love,
But you couldn't smile so it was a lie.

-By **Omullo Elly**

MOUTH'S LOVE

Think about love,
From the heart it originates, but I deliver,
Expensive paradises they go, but I make them smile,
Actions my stronger competitor,
But still from me they want to hear,
From looks to glances,
I still make things clear.

Across the bushes to the ranches,
Am still the component,
Right from altars to dirges,
I have still no opponent,
From me she smiles, for him to giggle,
To condemn they mistreat me,
But for love my offer.

From me they love to death,
Still from me they guide,
To abuse they mistreat me,
To calm they cure Lee,
To them love I gave, for I deliver
Is my thing

-By **Sam Nyambari**

Kistrech International Poetry Festival
Past Events

KPF 2013
Jasonas Stavrakis (Cypress) & Prof Sukrita Paul Kumar (India) - poetry reading at Lake Victoria

photo by V.Suslavicius

KPF 2013
Vokwana Asanda (South Africa) with her two sisters

KPF 2013
Onarinde Fiyinfoluwa (Nigeria)

photo by V.Suslavicius

KPF 2015
Rosemarie Wilson (USA)
with Kenyatta University Students

Prof. Opal Adisa (Jamaica)
with Kenyatta University Students

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

KPF 2013
Drink, drink professor! -
A visit to the village:
Prof Arif Khudairi (Egypt) &
Prof. Sukrita Paul Kumar (India)

KPF 2015

Participating poets

KPF 2015
Prof. Patricia Wesley Jabbeh (USA)

KPF 2015
Godspower Oboido (Nigeria)

KPF 2015
Katharina Koppe (Germany)

DANS HOTEL