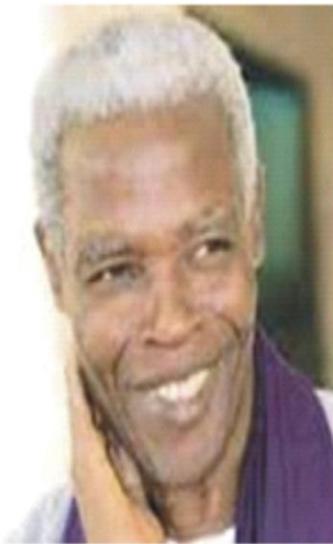


THIRTY OUTSTANDING AFRICAN POETS



A Publication of the West Africa Young Writers and Publishers Association

**Compiled and Edited by:
Wole Adedoyin**

Tchicaya U Tam'si

Tchicaya U Tam'si (25 August 1931 - 22 April 1988) was a Congolese author. His official name is **Gérald-Félix Tchicaya**; his artist name means "small paper that speaks for a country" in Kikongo.

Life

Born in Mpili in 1931, U Tam'si spent his childhood in France, where he worked as a journalist until he returned to his homeland in 1960. Back in Congo, he continued to work as a journalist; during this time he maintained contact to the politician Patrice Lumumba. In 1961, he started to work for UNESCO.

He died in Bazancourt, near Paris.

Since 1989, the Tchicaya U Tam'si-Award is given every two years for African poetry in the small Moroccan city of Asilah.

Style

U Tam'si's poetry incorporates elements of surrealism; it often has vivid historic images, and comments African life and society, as well as humanity in general.

Works

- *Ces fruits si doux de l'arbre a pain* 1990
- *Les Cancrelats* 1980
- *La veste d'intérieur suivi de Notes de veille* 1977
- *À triche-coeur* 1960
- *Feu de brousse* 1957
- *Mauvais Sang* 1955

Kofi Awoonor

Kofi Awoonor (13 March 1935 – 21 September 2013) was a Ghanaian poet and author whose work combined the poetic traditions of his native Ewe people and contemporary and religious symbolism to depict Africa during decolonization. He started writing under the name **George Awoonor-Williams**. He taught African literature at the University of Ghana. Professor Awoonor was among those who were killed in the September 2013 attack at Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi, Kenya, where he was a participant at the Storymoja Hay Festival

Biography

Awoonor was born in Ghana when it was still called the Gold Coast. He was the eldest of 10 children in the family.¹ He was educated at Achimota School and then proceeded to the University of Ghana. While at university he wrote his first poetry book, *Rediscovery*, published in 1964. Like the rest of his work, *Rediscovery* is rooted in African oral poetry. In Ghana, he managed the Ghana Film Corporation and founded the Ghana Play

House. His early works were inspired by the singing and verse of his native Ewe people.

He then studied literature at University College London, and while in England he wrote several radio plays for the BBC. He spent the early 1970s in the United States, studying and teaching at Stony Brook University (then called SUNY at Stony Brook). While in the USA he wrote *This Earth, My Brother, and My Blood*. Awoonor returned to Ghana in 1975 as head of the English department at the University of Cape Coast. Within months he was arrested for helping a soldier accused of trying to overthrow the military government and was imprisoned without trial and was later released. *The House by the Sea* is about his time in jail. After imprisonment Awoonor became politically active. he continued to write mostly nonfiction. Awoonor was Ghana's ambassador to Brazil from 1984 to 1988, before serving as his country's ambassador to Cuba. From 1990 to 1994 Awoonor was Ghana's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, where he headed

the committee against apartheid. He was also a former Chairman of the Council of State.

Death

On 21 September 2013, Awoonor was among those killed in an attack at the Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi. He was in Kenya as a participant in the Storymoja Hay Festival, a four-day celebration of writing, thinking and storytelling, at which he was due to perform on the evening of his death. His nephew Nii Parkes, who was attending the same literary festival, has written about meeting him for the first time that day. The Ghanaian government confirmed Awoonor's death the next day. His son Afetsi was also shot, but was later discharged from hospital.

Awoonor's remains were flown from Nairobi to Accra, Ghana, on 25 September 2013.

His body was cremated and buried at particular spot in his hometown at Weta in the Volta Region. Also there

was no crying or mourning at his funeral all according to his will before death.

Works

Poetry

- *Rediscovery and Other Poems* (1964)
- *Night of My Blood* (1971) – poems that explore Awoonor's roots, and the impact of foreign rule in Africa
- *The House By the Sea* (1978)
- *The Promise of Hope: New and Selected Poems* (to be published in 2014)

Understanding and interpreting his works

It is said that Awoonor wrote a great number of his poems as if he was envisioning his own demise. But he is a peculiar and unique writer, one who strives, almost too hard, to bring his ancestry and culture into his poems, sometimes even borrowing words from the local Ewe dialect. Being such a strong and avid practitioner of

the traditional religion meant that he was of a relict species. Especially for one so highly educated, it was an even rarer phenomenon. That awareness, not only that he was a relict specimen as an individual, but that the entire culture was suffering entropy, may have come through his poems in a manner that would suggest at first that he was writing about his mortal end. Besides the personal and cultural lament, Awoonor also shrewdly decried what he would have considered the decadent spectre of Western influences(religions, social organisation and economic philosophy) on the history and fortunes of African people in general. He would lambast the thoughtless exuberance with which Africans themselves embraced such things, and gradually engineered what he would have considered a self-degradation that went far beyond a loss of cultural identity. He would often construct his writings to look at these things through the lens of his own Ewe culture.

Novels

- *This Earth, My Brother* (1971) – a cross between a novel and a poem
- *Comes the Voyager at Last* (1992)

Non-fiction

- *The Breast of the Earth: A Survey of the History, Culture, and Literature of Africa South of the Sahara* (1975), Anchor Press, ISBN 0-385-07053-5
- *Ghana: A Political History from Pre-European to Modern Times* (1990)
- *The African Predicament: Collection of Essays* (2006)

Raphael Armattoe

Raphael Ernest Grail Armattoe (12 August 1913 – 22 December 1953) was a Ghanaian doctor, author, poet and politician. He was nominated for the 1949 Nobel Peace Prize and was a campaigner for unification of British and French Togoland. He was called by the *New York Post* "the 'Irishman' from West Africa", and the BBC producer Henry Swanzy referred to him as the "African Paracelsus".

Biography

Early life and education

Armattoe was born at Keta in the Gold Coast (in what is now the Volta Region of Ghana). As Togoland changed from German to British and French hands, Armattoe ended up being fluent in German, French and English. He also spoke his native Ewe language. After his basic education in the Gold Coast, he left for Germany in 1930 for further studies. Most of his tertiary education was in Germany and France. He apparently left Germany for

France due to rising Nazism. He continued his studies in anthropology, literature and Medicine at the Sorbonne.

Medicine

Armattoe moved to Edinburgh, where he qualified to practice Medicine. He got a locum job in Belfast, Northern Ireland, and following that worked at the Civil Defence first-aid post in Brooke Park, Derry, between 1939 and 1945. After the Second World War, he opened a medical practice at his home on Northland Road in Derry. He later became the director of a research institute. His research into the use of the *abochi* drug against human parasites led to his nomination for the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 1948. At this stage, he started being more involved with writing and giving talks, especially relating to anthropology. He was described by some who knew him as a marvellous doctor and a good speaker.

Writing and research

Armattoe started devoting more time to writing. He established the Lomeshie Research Centre, named after his mother. In 1947, he attended the Nobel Prize laureation ceremonies with his friend Erwin Schrödinger, who won the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1933. Schrödinger later wrote the foreword for Armattoe's book *The Golden Age of West African Civilization*. Armattoe later successfully applied for an anthropological research grant worth £3,000 at the time from the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research. In 1948 he returned to West Africa, where he conducted his research mainly on Ewe physical anthropology. He presented his findings in 1949 and was nominated for the Nobel Peace prize for medicine and physiology. The prize was eventually won by John Boyd Orr, 1st Baron Boyd-Orr, a medical doctor and the director of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation at the time.

Poetry

After his return to the Gold Coast, Armattoe set up a medical clinic at Kumasi in the Ashanti Region. He also turned his attention to poetry, writing and politics. His first collection of poems was *Between the Forest and the Sea* (1950). His next collection, *Deep Down in the Black Man's Mind* was published in 1954, after his death.

Politics

Armattoe and Kwame Nkrumah first met at the 1945 Pan African Congress in Manchester. Though they both favoured independence for the colonies, Nkrumah was centrist while Armattoe was federalist. He joined the Ghana Congress Party rather than Nkrumah's Convention People's Party. He belonged to the Ewe ethnic group and campaigned for the Ewe people divided by colonial powers into British Togoland, the southern part of the Gold Coast and French Togoland to be united as one Ewe nation-state. He was also active with the Togoland Congress, which advocated Ewe unification.

Death

In 1953, Armattoe travelled to New York City leading a delegation to address the United Nations about the "Eweland question", seeking international support for a union between British and French Togo. On his way back to the Gold Coast, he visited his daughter Irusia, then a student in Dublin, Republic of Ireland and then Germany. He fell ill and died in a hospital in Hamburg. His wife reported that he said he had been poisoned by some unknown persons. He had apparently been attacked previously by supporters of Kwame Nkrumah.

Family

Armattoe was married to Swiss-born Leonie Schwartz, who was also known as "Marina". They had two daughters, the elder, Irusia, being born in Londonderry. Armattoe and his family lived at Kumasi in Ghana until his death. His father, Robert Glikpo Armattoe, was a merchant who traded mainly with the Germans and also studied local indigenous languages.

Legacy

A blue plaque in his honour was unveiled by the Ulster History Circle at 7 Northland Road, Londonderry, where Armattoe lived from 1939 to 1945 lived there and carried on his practice as a GP.

Essays and publications

- *Articles, mainly on medical subjects, reprinted from periodicals.* ASIN B000WETQ54.
- *The Pattern Youth: An interim report.* 1943. ASIN B0007KF9CW.
- *A Dental Survey of the British Isles.* 1943. p. 5. ASIN B0007KF9D6.
- *A Racial Survey of the British People ... Lecture.* Londonderry: Sentinel. 1944. ASIN B000WEXNRQ.
- *The Swiss Contribution to Western Civilization.* Dundalk: Dundalgan Press. 1944. ASIN B00408QC0A.
- Armattoe, Raphael; Gaetano de Gennaro, Erwin Schroedinger and Albert Schweitzer (1945). *Homage to Three Great Men: Schweitzer,*

Schroedinger, De Gennaro. Londonderry: Sentinel. ASIN B000WEQ18O.

- *The Golden Age of West African Civilization.* The Londonderry sentinel for the Lomeshie Research Centre. 1946. ASIN B0006EUHIA.
- Armattoo, Raphael (1946). *Space, Time, and Race;: Or, The Age of Man in America.* p. 16. ASIN B0007JLE22.
- *Personal Recollections of the Nobel Laureation Festival of 1947: With an appendix listing all the distinguished guests at the Nobel banquet.* Lomeshie Research Centre. 1948. p. 62. ASIN B0007J26WO.
- *Between the Forest and the Sea": Collected Poems.* Armattoo. 1950. p. 78. ASIN B0000CHOO0.
- *Deep Down in the Black Man's Mind: Poems.* Ilfracombe: Alfred H. Stockwell. 1954. p. 112. ASIN B0000CIX8L.
- Wiegraebe, P.; Raphael Armattoo (1954). *Early Ghanaian Poetry.* Periodicals Service Company. ISBN 978-0-8115-3039-2.

Véronique Tadjó

Véronique Tadjó (born 1955) is a writer, poet, novelist, and artist from Côte d'Ivoire. Having lived and worked in many countries within the African continent and diaspora, she feels herself to be pan-African, in a way that is reflected in the subject matter, imagery and allusions of her work.

Biography

Born in Paris, Véronique Tadjó was the daughter of an Ivorian civil servant and a French painter and sculptor. Brought up in Abidjan, she travelled widely with her family.

Tadjó completed her BA degree at the University of Abidjan and her doctorate at the Sorbonne in African-American Literature and Civilization. In 1983, she went to Howard University in Washington, D.C., on a Fulbright research scholarship.

In 1979, Tadjó chose to teach English at the Lycée Moderne de Korhogo (secondary school) in the North of Côte d'Ivoire. She subsequently became a lecturer at the English department of the University of Abidjan until 1993.

In the past few years, she has facilitated workshops in writing and illustrating children's books in Mali, Benin, Chad, Haiti, Mauritius, French Guyana, Burundi, Rwanda and South Africa.

She has lived in Paris, Lagos, Mexico City, Nairobi and London. Tadjó is currently based in Johannesburg, where since 2007 she has been head of French Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand.

Awards

Tadjó received the Literary Prize of L'Agence de Cooperation Culturelle et Technique in 1983 and the UNICEF Prize in 1993 for *Mamy Wata and the Monster*, which was also chosen as one of Africa's 100 Best Books of the 20th Century, one of only four children's books

selected. In 2005, Tadjo won the Grand prix littéraire d'Afrique noire.

Works

Poetry

- *Latérite* (poems; Éditions Hatier "Monde noir Poche", 1984). Bi-lingual edition, *Red Earth – Latérite*; translation by Peter S. Thompson (Washington University Press, 2006)
- *A vol d'oiseau*, Éditions Harmattan; 1986); translated by Wangui wa Goro as *As The Crow Flies* (AWS Heinemann, 2001)
- *A mi-chemin* (poems; Éditions Harmattan, 2000)

Novels

- *Le Royaume aveugle* (novel; Éditions Harmattan, 1991); translated by Janis Mayes as *The Blind Kingdom* (Ayebia Clarke Publishing, 2008)

- *Champs de bataille et d'amour* (Éditions Présence Africaine; Les Nouvelles Éditions Ivoiriennes, 1999)
- *L'ombre d'Imana: Voyages jusqu'au bout du Rwanda*, Actes Sud, 2000); translated as *The Shadow of Imana: Travels in the Heart of Rwanda* (Heinemann AWS, 2002)
- *Reine Pokou* (Actes Sud, 2005); translated by Amy Reid as *Queen Poku* (Ayebia Clarke Publishing, 2009)
- *Loin de mon père* (Actes Sud, 2010)

Children's

- *La Chanson de la vie* (for children; 1990)
- *Lord of the Dance: An African Retelling* (*Le Seigneur de la Danse*; Nouvelles Editions Ivoiriennes, 1993; 1988)
- *Grandma Nana* (*Grand-Mère Nanan*; Nouvelles Editions Ivoiriennes, 1996; for children; 2000)
- *Masque, raconte-moi* (Nouvelles Editions Ivoiriennes)

- *Si j'étais roi, si j'étais reine* (Nouvelles Editions Ivoiriennes); translated by the author as *If I Were a King, If I Were a Queen* (London: Milet Publishing, 2002)
- *Mamy Wata et le Monstre* (*Mamy Wata and the Monster*) (Nouvelles Editions Ivoiriennes, 1993; Prix UNICEF, 1993; bi-lingual edition London: Milet Publishing, 2000)
- *Le Grain de Maïs Magique* (Nouvelles Editions Ivoiriennes, 1996)
- *Le Bel Oiseau et la Pluie* (Nouvelles Editions Ivoiriennes, 1998)
- *Nelson Mandela: "Non à L'Apartheid"* (Actes Sud Junior, 2010)
- *Ayanda, la petite fille qui ne voulait pas grandir* (Actes Sud Junior, 2007; Nouvelles Editions Ivoiriennes/CEDA)

Kwesi Brew

(**Osborne Henry**) **Kwesi Brew** (1928–2007) was a Ghanaian poet.

Life

Born to a Fante family, Brew was brought up by a British guardian - education officer, K. J. Dickens - after his parents died. He was one of the first graduates from the University College of the Gold Coast in 1951. He was published in *Okyeame*, and four of his poems were included in the 1958 anthology *Voices of Ghana*. His first published collection, *The Shadows of Laughter* (1968), was divided into five thematic sections: "Passing Souls" (on death); "Today, We Look at Each Other"; "The Moment of Our Life" (nature); "A Plea for Mercy" (the supernatural); and "Questions of Our Time". His poetry has been characterized as "the poetry of statement and situation".

Works

- *The Shadows of Laughter*, London: Longman, 1968
- *African Panorama and Other Poems*, 1981
- *Return of No Return and other poems*, 1995
- *The Clan of the Leopard and other poems*, 1996

Jared Angira

Jared Angira (born 21 November 1947) is a Kenyan poet. He has been called "the country's first truly significant poet"

Life

Angira studied commerce at the University of Nairobi from 1968 until 1971. He contributed to the first (1968) issue of the journal *Busara*, and was appointed its editor-in-chief in 1969. He also founded the Kenya Writers' Association.

Works

- *Juices*, 1970
- *Silent Voices*, 1972
- *Soft Corals*, 1973
- "Experimental Writing", in Gurr and Calder, *Writers in East Africa*, 1974.

Jack Mapanje

Jack Mapanje (born 1944) is a Malawian writer and poet. He was the head of English at the University of Malawi before being imprisoned in 1987 for his collection *Of Chameleons and Gods*, which indirectly criticized the administration of President Hastings Banda. He was released in 1991 and emigrated to the UK, where he worked as a teacher.

Background

The child of Nyanja and Yao parents, Mapanje was born in Kadango Village, Mangochi District, Malawi. He received his BA in education from the University of London and worked for a time as a lecturer in Malawi before returning to the UK to study linguistics at University College, London in the early 1980s.

He later became head of the Department of Language and Linguistics at the University of Malawi.

Imprisonment

During the rule of President Hastings Banda, Mapanje was jailed without charge in 1987, apparently for publishing his poem collection *Of Chameleons and Gods*. The collection obliquely criticized Banda's government, and the 'chameleon' of the title refers to the disguise of personal voice Mapanje deemed necessary in order to mount a criticism of the politics at the time. The book received no official ban, but was "withdrawn from circulation". Amnesty International declared him a prisoner of conscience and campaigned for his release. Its protests included a reading of selections from *Of Chameleons and Gods* outside the Malawian High Commission in London by UK Nobel laureate Harold Pinter. Mapanje was also awarded the 1990 PEN/Barbara Goldsmith Freedom to Write Award during his imprisonment, which carried a US\$3,000 cash award. PEN's president, US novelist Larry McMurtry, stated that "the point [of the award] is to generate enough heat so Mapanje gets out of jail". Nigerian Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka and UK playwright Ronald Harwood also campaigned for his release.

Mapanje was held for three-and-a-half years before being released in 1991. After his release, he was told he needed to reapply for his previous professorship at the University of Malawi. After a lengthy delay in his application, he instead emigrated to the UK. He later wrote a memoir about the experience, *And Crocodiles Are Hungry At Night*, which was also adapted into a play.

Exile

After arriving in the UK, Mapanje was awarded a fellowship at York University. He later became a visiting professor at Leeds University. He also taught creative writing in prisons.

In 1994, he returned to Malawi with BBC2 to make a documentary.

Chameleon Politics

He is credited for applying the term, "Chameleon Politics" to describe a political environment where

politician switch and forge alliances without transparency or notice in his extended metaphor which compares political shifting to chameleons that change color and rapidly changing political environments where party switching, floor crossing, and coalition formations are rampant. The notion is described in stems in his 1981 book, "Of Chameleons and Gods".

Works

- *Of Chameleons and Gods*, 1981
- *The Chattering Wagtails of Mikuyu Prison*, 1993
- *The Last of the Sweet Bananas: New and Selected Poems*, 2004
- *The Beasts of Nalunga*, 2007

Awards

- 1988 Rotterdam Poetry International Award
- 1990 PEN/Barbara Goldsmith Freedom to Write Award
- 2002 African Literature Association (USA) Fonlon-Nichols Award

David Rubadiri

James David Rubadiri (born 19 July 1930 in Liuli) is a Malawian diplomat, academic and poet, playwright and novelist. Rubadiri is ranked as one of Africa's most widely anthologized and celebrated poets to emerge after independence.

Education and career

Rubadiri attended King's College, Budo in Uganda from 1941-1950 then Makerere University in Kampala from 1952-1956, where he graduated from with a bachelor's degree in English literature and History. He later studied Literature at King's College, Cambridge. He went on to receive a Diploma in Education from the University of Bristol.

At Malawi's independence in 1964, Rubadiri was appointed Malawi's first ambassador to the United States and the United Nations. When he presented his credentials to President Lyndon B. Johnson at the White House on 18 August 1964, he expressed the hope that his

newly independent country would get more aid from the USA; he said that Malawi needed help to build its democratic institutions and noted that Malawi was already receiving US economic and technical help. That same year Rubadiri appeared on the National Educational Television (New York City) series *African Writers of Today*.

Rubadiri left the Malawian government in 1965 when he broke with President Hastings Banda. As an exile, he taught at Makerere University (1968–75), but he was again exiled during the Idi Amin years. Rubadiri subsequently taught at the University of Nairobi, Kenya (1976–84), and was also briefly, along with Okot p'Bitek, at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria, at the invitation of Wole Soyinka. Between 1975 and 1980 he was a member of the Executive Committee of the National Theater of Kenya. From 1984 to 1997 he taught at the University of Botswana (1984–97), where he was dean of the Language and Social Sciences Education Department.

In 1997, after Banda's death, Rubadiri was reappointed Malawi's ambassador to the United Nations, and he was named vice-chancellor of the University of Malawi in 2000. He received an honorary doctorate from the University of Strathclyde in 2005.

Writings

Rubadiri's poetry has been praised as being among "the richest of contemporary Africa". His work was published in the 1963 anthology *Modern Poetry of Africa* (East African Publishers, 1996), and appeared in international publications including *Transition*, *Black Orpheus* and *Présence Africaine*.

His only novel, *No Bride Price*, was published in 1967. It criticized the Banda regime and was, along with Legson Kayira's *The Looming Shadow*, among the earliest published fiction by Malawians.

Selected works

- *Growing Up With Poetry: An Anthology for Secondary Schools*, 1989
- *Poems from East Africa* (ed., with David Cook), 1971
- *No Bride Price* (novel), 1967
- *Come To Tea* (play), 1965

Abioseh Nicol

Davidson Sylvester Hector Willoughby Nicol or **Abioseh Nicol** (14 September 1924 – 20 September 1994) was a Sierra Leonean academic, diplomat, physician, writer and poet. He has been considered as one of Sierra Leone's most educated citizens of recent times¹, as he was able to secure degrees in the arts, science and commercial disciplines.

Early life

Nicol was born as Davidson Sylvester Hector Willoughby Nicol in 1924 in Freetown, the capital city of Sierra Leone. His family belonged to the Creole minority who were an educated and elite ex-slave community. He attended primary school in Nigeria and, in 1946, graduated with first class honours from Christ's College, Cambridge University in the United Kingdom. He earned his Ph.D. in 1958 and then proceeded to study for a medical degree at Barts and The London School of Medicine and Dentistry, Queen Mary, University of London's medical school. Following the completion of

his studies, Nicol lectured at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria.

Academia

Beginning in 1960, Nicol was the first native principal of the prestigious Fourah Bay College in Freetown (left in 1966) as well as a member of the Public Service Commission (left in 1968). Nicol continued his administrative career at the university level in Sierra Leone as first the chairman (1964–69) then as Vice-Chancellor at the University of Sierra Leone (1966–69).

Diplomacy

Nicol left academia in 1969 to become the Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone to the United Nations, which he served as until 1971. In that year, Nicol became the High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, which ended in 1972. In 1972, Nicol became the Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations under Austrian Kurt Waldheim, which he served as until 1982. While serving as Under-Secretary General, Nicol also served as

head of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR).

Return to academia and retirement

He maintained a home for many years in Thornton Road, Cambridge, England, frequently visiting Christ's College, of which he had been made a distinguished Honorary Fellow, meanwhile serving from 1987 until retiring in 1991 as a visiting professor of International Studies at the University of California (1987–88) and University of South Carolina (1990–91). Nicol retired in 1991 at the age of 67 to Cambridge, where he died three years later at the age of 70.

Nicol's writings

Beginning in 1965 with *Two African Tales*, Nicol was a published author of short stories, as well as poetry, music, academic literature and a biography of Africanus Horton, an early Sierra Leonean author and one of the founders of African Nationalism. His last piece of published work was *Creative Women* in 1982.

Selected bibliography

- *Africa, A Subjective View*, 1964
- *Two African Tales*, 1965
- *The Truly Married Woman, and Other Stories*,
1965
- *Creative Women*, 1982

Mia Couto

António Emílio Leite Couto (born July 5, 1955), better known as **Mia Couto**, is a world-renowned Mozambican writer and the winner of the 2014 Neustadt International Prize for Literature.

Life

Early years

Couto was born in the city of Beira, Mozambique's second largest city, where he was also raised and schooled. He is the son of Portuguese emigrants who moved to the former Portuguese colony in the 1950s. At the age of fourteen, some of his poetry was published in a local newspaper, *Notícias da Beira*. Three years later, in 1971, he moved to the capital Lourenço Marques (now Maputo) and began to study medicine at the University of Lourenço Marques. During this time, the anti-colonial guerrilla and political movement FRELIMO was struggling to overthrow the Portuguese colonial rule in Mozambique.

After independence of Mozambique

In April 1974, after the Carnation Revolution in Lisbon and the overthrow of the *Estado Novo* regime, Mozambique was about to become an independent republic. In 1974, FRELIMO asked Couto to suspend his studies for a year to work as a journalist for *Tribuna* until September 1975 and then as the director of the newly created Mozambique Information Agency (AIM). Later, he ran the *Tempo* magazine until 1981. His first book of poems, *Raiz de Orvalho*, was published in 1983; it included texts aimed against the dominance of Marxist militant propaganda. Couto continued working for the newspaper *Notícias* until 1985 when he resigned to finish his course of study in biology.

Literary work

Not only is Mia Couto considered one of the most important writers in Mozambique, but many of his works have been published in more than 20 countries and in various languages, including Portuguese, English, French, German, Italian, Serbian and Catalan. In many

of his texts, he undertakes to recreate the Portuguese language by infusing it with regional vocabulary and structures from Mozambique, thus producing a new model for the African narrative. Stylistically, his writing is influenced by magical realism, a style popular in modern Latin American literatures, and his use of language is reminiscent of the Brazilian writer Guimarães Rosa, but also deeply influenced by the baiano writer Jorge Amado. He has been noted for creating proverbs, sometimes known as "improverbs", in his fiction, as well as riddles, legends, metaphors, giving his work a poetical dimension. An international jury at the Zimbabwe International Book Fair named his first novel, *Terra Sonâmbula* (Sleepwalking Land), one of the best 12 African books of the 20th century. In 2007, he became the first African author to win the prestigious Latin Union literary prize, which has been awarded annually in Italy since 1990. Mia Couto became only the fourth writer in the Portuguese language to take home this prestigious award, having competed against authors from Portugal, France, Colombia, Spain, Italy, and Senegal. Currently, he is a biologist employed by the

Limpopo Transfrontier Park while continuing his work on other writing projects.

Awards and honors

- 2014 Neustadt International Prize for Literature
- 2007 Latin Union Prize

Books

- *Raiz do Orvalho* (poetry, 1983)
- *Vozes Anotecidas* (short stories, 1986). [*Voices Made Night*. Translated by David Brookshaw. (1990) ISBN 0-435-90570-8]
- *Cada Homem É uma Raça* (short stories, 1990) ISBN 972-21-0071-8
- *Cronicando* (crônicas, 1991) ISBN 972-21-0585-X
- *Terra Sonâmbula* (novel, 1992) ISBN 972-21-0790-9 [*Sleepwalking Land*. Translated by David Brookshaw. (2006) ISBN 1-85242-897-X]
- *Estórias Abensonhadas* (short stories, 1994) ISBN 972-21-0933-2

- *Every man is a race* [Translation of selected works from: *Cada homem é uma raça*, and *Cronicando*; translated by David Brookshaw] (1994) ISBN 0-435-90982-7
- *A Varanda do Frangipani* (novel, 1996) ISBN 972-21-1050-0 [*Under the Frangipani*. Translated by David Brookshaw. (2001) ISBN 0-86486-378-0]
- *Contos do Nascer da Terra* (short stories, 1997)
- *Mar Me Quer* (novella, 1998)
- *Vinte e Zinco* (novella, 1999) ISBN 972-21-1250-3
- *Raiz de orvalho e outros poemas* (1999) ISBN 972-21-1302-X
- *O Último Voo do Flamingo* (novel, 2000) ISBN 972-21-1334-8 [*The Last Flight of the Flamingo*. Translated by David Brookshaw. (2004) ISBN 1852428139]
- *Mar me quer* (2000)
- *O Gato e o Escuro* (children's book, 2001)
- *Na Berma de Nenhuma Estrada e Outros Contos* (short stories, 2001)

- *Um Rio Chamado Tempo, uma Casa Chamada Terra* (novel, 2002)
- *Contos do Nascer da Terra* (short stories, 2002)
- *O País do Queixa Andar* (crônicas, 2003)
- *O Fio das Missangas* (short stories, 2003)
- *A chuva pasmada* (2004) ISBN 972-21-1654-1
- *Pensatempos: textos de opinião* (2005) ISBN 972-21-1687-8
- *O Outro Pé da Sereia* (novel, 2006) ISBN 972-21-1795-5
- *Venenos de Deus, Remédios do Diabo* (novel, 2008) ISBN 978-972-21-1987-0
- *Jesusalém* (novel, 2009)
- *A Confissão da Leoa* (novel, 2012)

Ahmad al-Tifashi

Ahmad al-Tifashi (or Ahmad ibn Yusuf al-Tīfāchī), born in Tiffech, a village near Souk Ahras in Algeria (1184- died 1253 in Cairo) was an Arabic poet, writer, and anthologist, best known for his work *A Promenade of the Hearts*.

Biography

Little is known of al-Tifashi's life. He appears to have lived mostly in Tunis, Cairo, and Damascus, although he may even have been nomadic. He was highly educated and cultured. He compiled *A Promenade of the Hearts*, a 12-chapter anthology of Arabic poetry and jokes about erotic and sexual practices, that featured both heterosexual and homoerotic entries with a bias towards the latter.

A French translation by René R. Khawam, based on an Arabic copy held in Paris, was published as *Les Délices des cœurs par Ahmad al-Tifachi* (1971 and 1981).

A scholarly translation by Edward A. Lacey of the homoerotic sections was published in English as *The Delight of Hearts, or What You Will Not Find In Any Book* (1988). This version won a Lambda Literary Award in 1989.

al-Tifashi also wrote several treatises concerned with sexual hygiene, one of which is preserved in a copy at The National Library of Medicine. He is, however, primarily known for his lapidary, which was the most famous and most comprehensive medieval Arabic treatise on the use of minerals. It covers 25 gems and minerals in great detail, giving medicine and magical uses for each as well as some Persian etymologies of the names. It is preserved in numerous manuscript copies and was used by many subsequent writers.

Arthur Shearly Cripps

Arthur Shearly Cripps (10 June 1869 - 1 August 1952) was an English Anglican priest, missionary and activist, short story writer, and poet who spent most of his life in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe).

Biography

Cripps was born in Tunbridge Wells, Kent, and was educated at Charterhouse School and Trinity College, Oxford, where he read history. He then trained at Cuddleston Theological College, taking holy orders, and from 1894 had the parish Ford End in Essex.

He became a missionary for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, intending to work in Mashonaland, after reading criticism of the methods of Cecil Rhodes. From 1902 he had a parish near Enkeldoorn (now known as Chivhu) in what was then Southern Rhodesia.

He was in conflict with the British South Africa Company over land distribution, taking the side of the African population. He was given the Shona name *Mpandi*, or 'the man who walks like thunder'. After more than 20 years he returned to England for a time after a quarrel with the British administration; but went back shortly for the rest of his life, having in 1927 published *Africa for Africans*, on the land issue.

Arthur Cripps lived for some time in Manyene Communal Lands, about 120 km South of Harare, 20 km North of Chivhu. An area of Manyene is now known by the name he gave it when he established the mission work there, Maronda Mashanu, which means "The Five Wounds" in the local Shona language. Father Cripps was buried in the chancel of the church (now a ruin) at Maronda Mashanu.

Some people from the area believe that Arthur Cripps performed miracles. For example there are claims that a white man who wanted to assault him for associating with Africans was crippled the moment he raised his

hand. They claim that the man was only healed when Father Cripps prayed for him.

His great-great-nephew is the Welsh poet, Owen Sheers, who has written about him in the award-winning *Dust Diaries* (2004).

Legacy

In his research on his great-great-uncle, Owen Sheers attended the annual memorial service at Cripps' grave.

“There were huge crowds of people dancing around the grave,” said Sheers. “It was fascinating that a missionary priest who had gone out there at the turn of the century in a period when the British were more or less the bad guys was still being honoured almost 50 years after his death.”

There is also a road in Harare, Cripps Road, named after Arthur Cripps.

Works

- *Titania and Other Poems* (1900)
- *Primavera: Poems by Four Authors* (1900)
- *Jonathan: A Song of David* (1902)
- *The Black Christ* (1902) poems
- *Magic Casements* (1905)
- *Lyra Evangelistica: Missionary Verses of Mashonaland* (1909)
- *Faerylands Forlorn: African Tales* (1910)
- *The Two of Them Together: A Tale About Africa To-Day* (1910)
- *The Brooding Earth* (1911) novel
- *Pilgrimage of Grace, Verses on a Mission* (1912)
- *Bay-Tree Country* (1913) novel
- *Pilgrim's Joy Verses* (1916)
- *Lake and War: African Land and Water Verses* (1917)
- *Cinderella in the South: South African Tales* (1918)
- *An Africa for Africans: A Plea on Behalf of Territorial Segregation Areas and Their Freedom in a Southern African Colony* (1927)
- *Africa: Verses* (1939)

Wole Soyinka



Akinwande Oluwole "Wole" Soyinka (Yoruba: *Oluwòlé Šóyinká*, pronounced "Shoyinka") (born 13 July 1934) is a Nigerian writer, notable especially as a playwright and poet; he was awarded the 1986 Nobel Prize in Literature, the first person in Africa to be so honoured.

Soyinka was born into a Yoruba family in Abeokuta. After study in Nigeria and the UK, he worked with the Royal Court Theatre in London. He went on to write plays that were produced in both countries, in theatres and on radio. He took an active role in Nigeria's political history and its struggle for independence from Great Britain. In 1965, he seized the Western Nigeria Broadcasting Service studio and broadcast a demand for the cancellation of the Western Nigeria Regional Elections. In 1967 during the Nigerian Civil War, he was arrested by the federal government of General Yakubu Gowon and put in solitary confinement for two years.^[2]

Soyinka has strongly criticised many Nigerian military dictators, especially late General Sanni Abacha, as well as other political tyrannies, including the Mugabe regime in Zimbabwe. Much of his writing has been concerned with "the oppressive boot and the irrelevance of the colour of the foot that wears it". During the regime of General Sani Abacha (1993–98), Soyinka escaped from Nigeria via the "Nadeco Route" on a motorcycle. Living abroad, mainly in the United States, he was a professor

first at Cornell University and then at Emory University in Atlanta, where in 1996 he was appointed Robert W. Woodruff Professor of the Arts. Abacha proclaimed a death sentence against him "in absentia". With civilian rule restored to Nigeria in 1999, Soyinka returned to his nation. He has also taught at the universities of Oxford, Harvard and Yale.

From 1975 to 1999, he was a Professor of Comparative Literature at the Obafemi Awolowo University, then called the University of Ife. With civilian rule restored in 1999, he was made professor emeritus. Soyinka has been a Professor of Creative Writing at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. In the fall of 2007 he was appointed Professor in Residence at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, California, US.

Life and work

Early life and education

A descendant of a Remo family of Isara-Remo, Soyinka was born the second of six children, in the city of

Abẹokuta, Ogun State in Nigeria, at that time a British dominion. His father, Samuel Ayodele Soyinka (whom he called S.A. or "Essay"), was an Anglican minister and the headmaster of St. Peters School in Abẹokuta. Soyinka's mother, Grace Eniola Soyinka (whom he dubbed the "Wild Christian"), owned a shop in the nearby market. She was a political activist within the women's movement in the local community. She was also Anglican. As much of the community followed indigenous Yorùbá religious tradition, Soyinka grew up in an atmosphere of religious syncretism, with influences from both cultures. While he was raised in a religious family; attending church services and singing in the choir from an early age; Soyinka himself became an atheist. His father's position enabled him to get electricity and radio at home.

His mother was one of the most prominent members of the influential Ransome-Kuti family: she was the daughter of Rev. Canon J. J. Ransome-Kuti, and sister to Olusegun Azariah Ransome-Kuti, Oludotun Ransome-Kuti and Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti. Among Soyinka's

cousins were the musician Fela Kuti, the human rights activist Beko Ransome-Kuti, politician Olikoye Ransome-Kuti and activist Yemisi Ransome-Kuti.

In 1940, after attending St. Peters Primary School in Abeokuta, Soyinka went to Abeokuta Grammar School, where he won several prizes for literary composition. In 1946 he was accepted by Government College in Ibadan, at that time one of Nigeria's elite secondary schools.

After finishing his course at Government College in 1952, he began studies at University College in Ibadan (1952–54), affiliated with the University of London. He studied English literature, Greek, and Western history. In the year 1953–54, his second and last at University College, Ibadan, Soyinka began work on "Keffi's Birthday Threat," a short radio play for Nigerian Broadcasting Service. It was broadcast in July 1954. While at university, Soyinka and six others founded the Pyrates Confraternity, an anti-corruption and justice-seeking student organisation, the first confraternity in

Nigeria. Soyinka gives a detailed account of his early life in his memoir *Aké: The Years of Childhood*.

Later in 1954, Soyinka relocated to England, where he continued his studies in English literature, under the supervision of his mentor Wilson Knight at the University of Leeds (1954–57). He met numerous young, gifted British writers. Before defending his B.A., Soyinka began publishing and worked as an editor for the satirical magazine *The Eagle*. He wrote a column on academic life, often criticising his university peers.

Early career

After graduating, he remained in Leeds with the intention of earning an M.A. Soyinka intended to write new work combining European theatrical traditions with those of his Yorùbá cultural heritage. His first major play, *The Swamp Dwellers* (1958), was followed a year later by *The Lion and the Jewel*, a comedy that attracted interest from several members of London's Royal Court Theatre. Encouraged, Soyinka moved to London, where he worked as a play reader for the Royal Court Theatre.

During the same period, both of his plays were performed in Ibadan. They dealt with the uneasy relationship between progress and tradition in Nigeria.

In 1957 his play *The Invention* was the first of his works to be produced at the Royal Court Theatre. At that time his only published works were poems such as "The Immigrant" and "My Next Door Neighbour", which were published in the Nigerian magazine *Black Orpheus*. This was founded in 1957 by the German scholar Ulli Beier, who had been teaching at the University of Ibadan since 1950.

Soyinka received a Rockefeller Research Fellowship from University College in Ibadan, his alma mater, for research on African theatre, and he returned to Nigeria. He produced his new satire, *The Trials of Brother Jero*. His work *A Dance of The Forest* (1960), a biting criticism of Nigeria's political elites, won a contest that year as the official play for Nigerian Independence Day. On 1 October 1960, it premiered in Lagos as Nigeria celebrated its sovereignty. The play satirizes the

fledgling nation by showing that the present is no more a golden age than was the past. Also in 1960, Soyinka established the "Nineteen-Sixty Masks", an amateur acting ensemble to which he devoted considerable time over the next few years.

Soyinka wrote the first full-length play produced on Nigerian television. The Play, titled *My Father's Burden*, directed by Segun Olusola was featured on the Western Nigeria Television (WNTV) on 6 August 1960. Soyinka published works satirising the "Emergency" in the Western Region of Nigeria, as his Yorùbá homeland was increasingly occupied and controlled by the federal government. The political tensions arising from recent post-colonial independence eventually led to a military coup and civil war (1967–70).

With the Rockefeller grant, Soyinka bought a Land Rover. He began travelling throughout the country as a researcher with the Department of English Language of the University College in Ibadan. In an essay of the time, he criticised Leopold Senghor's Négritude movement as

a nostalgic and indiscriminate glorification of the black African past that ignores the potential benefits of modernisation. "A tiger does not shout its tigritude," he declared, "it acts." In *In Death and the King Horsemen* he states: "The elephant trails no tethering-rope; that king is not yet crowned who will peg an elephant."

In December 1962, his essay "Towards a True Theater" was published. He began teaching with the Department of English Language at Obafemi Awolowo University in Ife. Soyinka discussed current affairs with "négrophiles," and on several occasions openly condemned government censorship. At the end of 1963, his first feature-length movie, *Culture in Transition*, was released. In April 1964 *The Interpreters*, "a complex but also vividly documentary novel", was published in London.

That December, together with scientists and men of theatre, Soyinka founded the Drama Association of Nigeria. In 1964 he also resigned his university post, as a protest against imposed pro-government behaviour by authorities. A few months later, he was arrested for the

first time, accused of underlying tapes during reproduction of recorded speech of the winner of Nigerian elections.¹ He was released after a few months of confinement, as a result of protests by the international community of writers. This same year he wrote two more dramatic pieces: *Before the Blackout* and the comedy *Kongi's Harvest*. He also wrote *The Detainee*, a radio play for the BBC in London. His play *The Road* premiered in London at the Commonwealth Arts Festival, opening on 14 September 1965 at the Theatre Royal. At the end of the year, he was promoted to headmaster and senior lecturer in the Department of English Language at University of Lagos.

Soyinka's political speeches at that time criticised the cult of personality and government corruption in African dictatorships. In April 1966 his play *Kongi's Harvest* was produced in revival at the World Festival of Negro Arts in Dakar, Senegal. *The Road* was awarded the Grand Prix. In June 1965, Soyinka produced his play *The Lion and The Jewel* for Hampstead Theatre Club in London.

Civil war and imprisonment

After becoming chief of the Cathedral of Drama at the University of Ibadan, Soyinka became more politically active. Following the military coup of January 1966, he secretly and unofficially met with the military governor Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu in the Southeastern town of Enugu (August 1967), to try to avert civil war. As a result, he had to go into hiding.

He was imprisoned for 22 months as civil war ensued between the federal government and the Biafrans. Though refused materials such as books, pens, and paper, he still wrote a significant body of poems and notes criticising the Nigerian government.

Despite his imprisonment, in September 1967, his play *The Lion and The Jewel* was produced in Accra. In November *The Trials of Brother Jero* and *The Strong Breed* were produced in the Greenwich Mews Theatre in New York. He also published a collection of his poetry, *Idanre and Other Poems*. It was inspired by Soyinka's visit to the sanctuary of the Yorùbá deity Ogun, whom

he regards as his "companion" deity, kindred spirit, and protector.

In 1968, the Negro Ensemble Company in New York produced *Kongi's Harvest*. While still imprisoned, Soyinka translated from Yoruba a fantastical novel by his compatriot D. O. Fagunwa, called *The Forest of a Thousand Demons: A Hunter's Saga*.

Release and literary production

In October 1969, when the civil war came to an end, amnesty was proclaimed, and Soyinka and other political prisoners were freed. For the first few months after his release, Soyinka stayed at a friend's farm in southern France, where he sought solitude. He wrote *The Bacchae of Euripides* (1969), a reworking of the Pentheus myth. He soon published in London a book of poetry, *Poems from Prison*. At the end of the year, he returned to his office as Headmaster of Cathedral of Drama in Ibadan, and cooperated in the founding of the literary periodical *Black Orpheus* (likely named after the 1959 film directed

by Marcel Camus and set in the favela of Rio de Janeiro.)

In 1970 he produced the play *Kongi's Harvest*, while simultaneously adapting it as a film by the same title. In June 1970, he finished another play, called *Madman and Specialists*. Together with the group of fifteen actors of Ibadan University Theatre Art Company, he went on a trip to the United States, to the Eugene O'Neill Memorial Theatre Center in Waterford, Connecticut, where his latest play premiered. It gave them all experience with theatrical production in another English-speaking country.

In 1971, his poetry collection *A Shuttle in the Crypt* was published. *Madmen and Specialists* was produced in Ibadan that year. Soyinka travelled to Paris to take the lead role as Patrice Lumumba, the murdered first Prime Minister of the Republic of the Congo, in the production of his *Murderous Angels*. His powerful autobiographical work *The Man Died* (1971), a collection of notes from prison, was also published.

In April 1971, concerned about the political situation in Nigeria, Soyinka resigned from his duties at the University in Ibadan, and began years of voluntary exile. In July in Paris, excerpts from his well-known play *The Dance of The Forests* were performed.

In 1972, he was awarded an Honoris Causa doctorate by the University of Leeds. Soon thereafter, his novel *Season of Anomy* (1972) and his *Collected Plays* (1972) were both published by Oxford University Press. In 1973 the National Theatre, London, commissioned and premiered the play *The Bacchae of Euripides*. In 1973 his plays *Camwood on the Leaves* and *Jero's Metamorphosis* were first published. From 1973 to 1975, Soyinka spent time on scientific studies.¹ He spent a year as a visiting fellow at Churchill College Cambridge University¹1973-74 and wrote *Death and the King's Horseman*, which had its first reading at Churchill College (which Dapo Ladimeji and Skip Gates attended), and gave a series of lectures at a number of European universities.

In 1974 his *Collected Plays, Volume II* was issued by Oxford University Press. In 1975 Soyinka was promoted to the position of editor for *Transition*, a magazine based in the Ghanaian capital of Accra, where he moved for some time. He used his columns in *Transition* to criticise the "negrophiles" (for instance, his article "Neo-Tarzanism: The Poetics of Pseudo-Transition") and military regimes. He protested against the military junta of Idi Amin in Uganda. After the political turnover in Nigeria and the subversion of Gowon's military regime in 1975, Soyinka returned to his homeland and resumed his position at the Cathedral of Comparative Literature at the University of Ife.

In 1976 he published his poetry collection *Ogun Abibiman*, as well as a collection of essays entitled *Myth, Literature and the African World*. In these, Soyinka explores the genesis of mysticism in African theatre and, using examples from both European and African literature, compares and contrasts the cultures. He delivered a series of guest lectures at the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana in Legon. In

October, the French version of *The Dance of The Forests* was performed in Dakar, while in Ife, his *Death and The King's Horseman* premiered.

In 1977 *Opera Wonyosi*, his adaptation of Bertold Brecht's *The Threepenny Opera*, was staged in Ibadan. In 1979 he both directed and acted in Jon Blair and Norman Fenton's drama *The Biko Inquest*, a work based on the life of Steve Biko, a South African student and human rights activist who was beaten to death by apartheid police forces. In 1981 Soyinka published his autobiographical work *Ake: The Years of Childhood*, which won a 1983 Anisfield-Wolf Book Award.

Soyinka founded another theatrical group called the Guerrilla Unit. Its goal was to work with local communities in analyzing their problems and to express some of their grievances in dramatic sketches. In 1983 his play *Requiem for a Futurologist* had its first performance at the University of Ife. In July, one of Soyinka's musical projects, the Unlimited Liability Company, issued a long-playing record entitled *I Love*

My Country, on which several prominent Nigerian musicians played songs composed by Soyinka. In 1984, he directed the film *Blues for a Prodigal*; his new play *A Play of Giants* was produced the same year.

During the years 1975–84, Soyinka was also more politically active. At the University of Ife, his administrative duties included the security of public roads. He criticized the corruption in the government of the democratically elected President Shehu Shagari. When he was replaced by the general Muhammadu Buhari, Soyinka was often at odds with the military. In 1984, a Nigerian court banned his 1971 book *The Man Died*. In 1985, his play *Requiem for a Futurologist* was published in London.

Since 1986

Soyinka was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1986, becoming the first African laureate. He was described as one "who in a wide cultural perspective and with poetic overtones fashions the drama of existence". Reed Way Dasenbrock writes that the award of the

Nobel Prize in Literature to Soyinka is "likely to prove quite controversial and thoroughly deserved." He also notes that "it is the first Nobel Prize awarded to an African writer or to any writer from the 'new literatures' in English that have emerged in the former colonies of the British Empire." His Nobel acceptance speech, "This Past Must Address Its Present", was devoted to South African freedom-fighter Nelson Mandela. Soyinka's speech was an outspoken criticism of apartheid and the politics of racial segregation imposed on the majority by the Nationalist South African government. In 1986, he received the Agip Prize for Literature.

In 1988, his collection of poems *Mandela's Earth, and Other Poems* was published, while in Nigeria another collection of essays entitled *Art, Dialogue and Outrage: Essays on Literature and Culture* appeared. In the same year, Soyinka accepted the position of Professor of African Studies and Theatre at Cornell University. In 1990, the second portion of his memoir *Isara: A Voyage Around Essay* appeared. In July 1991 the BBC African Service transmitted his radio play *A Scourge of*

Hyacinths, and the next year (1992) in Sienna (Italy), his play *From Zia with Love* had its premiere. Both works are very bitter political parodies, based on events that took place in Nigeria in the 1980s. In 1993 Soyinka was awarded an honorary doctorate from Harvard University. The next year another part of his autobiography appeared: *Ibadan: The Penkelemes Years (A Memoir: 1946–1965)*. The following year his play *The Beatification of Area Boy* was published. In October 1994, he was appointed UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for the Promotion of African culture, human rights, freedom of expression, media and communication.

In November 1994, Soyinka fled from Nigeria through the border with Benin and then to the United States. In 1996 his book *The Open Sore of a Continent: A Personal Narrative of the Nigerian Crisis* was first published. In 1997 he was charged with treason by the government of General Sani Abacha. The International Parliament of Writers (IPW) was established in 1993 to provide support for writers victimized by persecution. Soyinka

became the organization's second president from 1997 to 2000. In 1999 a new volume of poems by Soyinka, entitled *Outsiders*, was released. His play *King Baabu*, premiered in Lagos in 2001, a political satire on the theme of African dictatorship. In 2002 a collection of his poems, *Samarkand and Other Markets I Have Known*, was published by Methuen. In April 2006, his memoir *You Must Set Forth at Dawn* was published by Random House. In 2006 he cancelled his keynote speech for the annual S.E.A. Write Awards Ceremony in Bangkok to protest the Thai military's successful coup against the government.

In April 2007 Soyinka called for the cancellation of the Nigerian presidential elections held two weeks earlier, beset by widespread fraud and violence. In the wake of the Christmas Day (2009) bombing attempt on a flight to the US by a Nigerian student who had become radicalised in Britain, Soyinka questioned the United Kingdom's social logic that allows every religion to openly proselytise their faith, asserting that it is being abused by religious fundamentalists thereby turning

England into a cesspit for the breeding of extremism. He supported the freedom of worship but warned against the consequence of the illogic of allowing religions to preach apocalyptic violence.

Legacy and honours

- In 2011, the African Heritage Research Library and Cultural Centre built a writers' enclave in his honour. It is located in Adeyipo Village, Lagelu Local Government Area, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. The enclave includes a Writer-in-Residence Programme that enables writers to stay for a period of two, three or six months, engaging in serious creative writing.
- 1973: Honorary PhD, University of Leeds
- 1973–74: Overseas Fellow, Churchill College, Cambridge
- 1983: Elected an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature
- 1983: Anisfield-Wolf Book Award, United States.

- 1986: Nobel Prize for Literature
- 1986 Agip Prize for Literature
- 1986 Commander of the Federal Republic, CFR.
- 1990: Benson Medal from Royal Society of Literature
- 1993: Honorary doctorate, Harvard University
- 2005: Honorary doctorate degree, Princeton University.
- 2005: Conferred with the chieftaincy title of the Akinlatun of Egbaland by the Oba Alake of the Egba clan of Yorubaland. He was made a tribal aristocrat with the right to use the Yoruba title **Oloye**.
- 2009: Academy of Achievement Golden Plate Award
- 2013, Anisfield-Wolf Book Award, Lifetime Achievement, United States.

Works

Plays

- *The Invention* (1957)

- *The Swamp Dwellers* (1958)
- *The Lion and the Jewel* (1959)
- *The Trials of Brother Jero*
- *A Dance of the Forests* (1960)
- *My Father's Burden* (1960)
- *The Strong Breed* (1964)
- *Before the Blackout* (1964)
- *Kongi's Harvest* (1964)
- *The Road* (1965)
- *Madmen and Specialists* (1970)
- *The Bacchae of Euripides* (1973)
- *Camwood on the Leaves* (1973)
- *Jero's Metamorphosis* (1973)
- *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975)
- *Opera Wonyosi* (1977)
- *Requiem for a Futurologist* (1983)
- *Sixty Six* (short piece) (1984)
- *A Play of Giants* (1984)
- *From Zia with Love* (1992)
- *The Detainee* (radio play)
- *A Scourge of Hyacinths* (radio play)
- *The Beatification of Area Boy* (1996)

- *King Baabu* (2001)
- *Etiki Revu Wetin*

Novels

- *The Interpreters (novel)* (1964)
- *Season of Anomy* (1972)

Short stories

- *A Tale of Two* (1958)
- *Egbe's Sworn enemy* (1960)
- *Madame Etienne's Establishment* (1960)

Memoirs

- *The Man Died: Prison Notes* (1971)
- *Aké: The Years of Childhood* (1981)
- *Ibadan: The Penkelemes Years: a memoir 1946-65* (1989)
- *Isara: A Voyage around Essay* (1990)
- *You Must Set Forth at Dawn* (2006)

Poetry collections

- *Idanre and other poems* (1967)
- *A Big Airplane Crashed Into The Earth* (original title *Poems from Prison*) (1969)
- *A Shuttle in the Crypt* (1971)
- *Ogun Abibiman* (1976)
- *Myth, Literature and the African World* (1976)
- *Mandela's Earth and other poems* (1988)
- *Early Poems* (1997)
- *Samarkand and Other Markets I Have Known* (2002)

Essays

- *Towards a True Theater* (1962)
- *Culture in Transition* (1963)
- *Neo-Tarzanism: The Poetics of Pseudo-Transition*
- *Art, Dialogue, and Outrage: Essays on Literature and Culture* (1988)
- *From Drama and the African World View* (1976)
- *The Credo of Being and Nothingness* (1991)

- *The Burden of Memory – The Muse of Forgiveness* (1999)
- *A Climate of Fear* (originally held as the BBC Reid Lectures 2004, audio and transcripts)

Movies

- *Kongi's Harvest*
- *Culture in Transition*
- *Blues for a Prodigal*

Translations

- *Forest of a Thousand Daemons. [a translation of D O Fagunwa's OGBOJU ODE NINU IGBO IRUNMALE]*
- *In the Forest of Olodumare. [a translation of D O Fagunwa's IGBO OLODUMARE]*

Gabriel Okara

Gabriel jibaba Okara (born 24 April 1921) is a Nigerian poet and novelist who was born in Bomoundi in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. In 1979, he was awarded the Commonwealth Poetry Prize.

Biography

Gabriel Imomtimi Gbaingbain Okara, the son of an Ijaw chief, was born in Bomoundi in the Niger delta in 1921. He was educated at Government College, Umuahia, and later at Yaba Higher College. He studied journalism at Northwestern University in 1949, and before the outbreak of the Nigerian Civil War worked as Information Officer for the Eastern Nigerian Government Service.

Writing

His most famous poem is "Piano and Drums". Another popular poem, "You Laughed and Laughed and Laughed", is a frequent feature of anthologies. Okara is

very concerned with what happens when the ancient culture of Africa is faced with modern Western culture, as in his poem "Once Upon a Time". He pursues that theme in his novel *The Voice* (Africana Publishing: ISBN 0-8419-0015-9) Its protagonist Okolo, like countless post-colonial Africans, is hunted by society and haunted by his own ideals.

In addition to his poetry and fiction, Okara has also written plays and features for broadcasting.

Many of his manuscripts were destroyed during the Nigerian Civil War.

Bibliography

- 1970 *The Voice* - novel
- 1978 *The Fisherman's Invocation* doodoo

Dennis Chukude Osadebay



Dennis Chukude Osadebay (June 29, 1911—December 26, 1994) was a Nigerian politician, poet, journalist and former premier of the now defunct Mid-Western Region of Nigeria, which now comprises Edo and Delta State. He was one of the pioneering Nigerian poets who wrote in English.

As a politician, he detested party politics and tried to form unbiased opinions on important matters of the period. He was also a leader of the movement to create a Mid-Western region during the Nigerian First Republic.

Biography

Early life and poems

He was born in Asaba, Delta State to parents of mixed cultural backgrounds. He attended Asaba Government School at Asaba, the Sacred Heart School in Calabar and Hope Waddell Training Institute. He joined the labor force in 1930 as a custom officer working in Lagos, Port Harcourt and Calabar. He subsequently went to England to study Law during the 1940s. It was while studying that he started publishing poetic verses. He was then known as a newspaper poet, as most of his writings were published in the West African Pilot and a few other newspapers. In his writings, Osadebay used both his personal life and public events as inspiration. In *Africa Sings*, a collection of poems, he delved with themes from a personal point of view, such as a sullen poem written about his twenty fifth birthday and the coming of middle age. However, his best work in the volume, were poems written from an impersonal view point. In his adventurous poem, *black man troubles*, he used Pidgin English to lament the status of black Africans in colonial

Africa and injustice in the society. His poems were also notable for faithfully representing modern poetic rhythm.

Political career

Osadebay was one of the founding members of the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons in 1944. He left the country to read law a few years later. After completing his studies, he returned to Nigeria and established a law practice in Aba and was also made the legal adviser of the N.C.N.C. In 1951, he contested and won a seat on the Western Region House of Assembly which was dominated by the rival Action Group (AG). He soon became the leader of opposition in the region from 1954-1956 but gave the mantle to Adegoke Adelabu in 1956. After the death of Adegoke Adelabu, he took on his familiar oppositional role in 1958. In 1960, he became the president of the Nigerian Senate and upon the creation of the Mid-Western Region in 1963, became the pioneer premier of the newly created region.

Christopher Okigbo

Christopher Ifekandu Okigbo (1930–1967) was a Nigerian poet, who died fighting for the independence of Biafra. He is today widely acknowledged as the outstanding postcolonial English-language African poet and one of the major modernist writers of the twentieth century.

Early life

Okigbo was born on August 16, 1930, in the town of Ojoto, about ten miles from the city of Onitsha in Anambra State. His father was a teacher in Catholic missionary schools during the heyday of British colonial rule in Nigeria, and Okigbo spent his early years moving from station to station. Despite his father's devout Christianity, Okigbo felt a special affinity to his maternal grandfather, a priest of Idoto, an Igbo deity personified in the river of the same name that flowed through his village. Later in life, Okigbo came to believe that his grandfather's soul was reincarnated in him, and the

"water goddess" figures prominently in his work. *Heavensgate* (1962) opens with the compelling lines:

*Before you, mother Idoto,
naked I stand,*

while in "Distances" (1964) he celebrates his final aesthetic and psychic return to his indigenous religious roots:

I am the sole witness to my homecoming.

Another influential figure in Okigbo's early years was his older brother Pius Okigbo, who would later become the renowned economist and first Nigerian Ambassador to the European Economic Commission (EU).

Days at Umuahia and Ibadan

Okigbo graduated from Government College Umuahia (in present Abia State, Nigeria) two years after Chinua Achebe, another noted Nigerian writer, having earned himself a reputation as both a voracious reader and a versatile athlete. The following year, he was accepted to

University College in Ibadan. Originally intending to study Medicine, he switched to Classics in his second year. In college, he also earned a reputation as a gifted pianist, accompanying Wole Soyinka in his first public appearance as a singer. It is believed that Okigbo also wrote original music at that time, though none of this has survived.

Work and art

Upon graduating in 1956, he held a succession of jobs in various locations throughout the country, while making his first forays into poetry. He worked at the Nigerian Tobacco Company, United Africa Company, the Fiditi Grammar School (where he taught Latin), and finally as Assistant Librarian at the University of Nigeria in Nsukka, where he helped to found the African Authors Association.

During those years, he began publishing his work in various journals, notably *Black Orpheus*, a literary journal intended to bring together the best works of African and African American writers. While his poetry

can be read in part as powerful expression of postcolonial African nationalism, he was adamantly opposed to Negritude, which he denounced as a romantic pursuit of the "mystique of blackness" for its own sake; he similarly rejected the conception of a commonality of experience between Africans and black Americans, a stark philosophical contrast to the editorial policy of *Black Orpheus*. It was on precisely these grounds that he rejected the first prize in African poetry awarded to him at the 1965 Festival of Negro Arts in Dakar, declaring that there is no such thing as a Negro or black poet.

In 1963, he left Nsukka to assume the position of West African Representative of Cambridge University Press at Ibadan, a position affording the opportunity to travel frequently to the United Kingdom, where he attracted further attention. At Ibadan, he became an active member of the Mbari literary club, and completed, composed or published the works of his mature years, including "Limits" (1964), "Silences" (1962–65), "Lament of the Masks" (commemorating the centenary of the birth of W. B. Yeats in the forms of a Yoruba

praise poem, 1964), "Dance of the Painted Maidens" (commemorating the 1964 birth of his daughter, Obiageli or Ibrahimat, whom he regarded as a reincarnation of his mother) and his final highly prophetic sequence, "Path of Thunder" (1965–67), which was published posthumously in 1971 with his magnum opus, *Labyrinths*, which incorporates the poems from the earlier collections.

War and legacy

In 1966 the Nigerian crisis came to a head. Okigbo, living in Ibadan at the time, relocated to eastern Nigeria to await the outcome of the turn of events which culminated in the secession of the eastern provinces as independent Biafra on May 30, 1967. Living in Enugu, he worked together with Achebe to establish a new publishing house, Citadel Press.

With the secession of Biafra, Okigbo immediately joined the new state's military as a volunteer, field-commissioned major. An accomplished soldier, he was killed in action during a major push by Nigerian troops against Nsukka, the university town where he found his

voice as a poet, and which he vowed to defend with his life. Earlier, in July, his hilltop house at Enugu, where several of his unpublished writings (perhaps including the beginnings of a novel) were, was destroyed in a bombing raid by the Nigerian air force. Also destroyed was *Pointed Arches*, an autobiography in verse which he describes in a letter to his friend and biographer, Sunday Anozie, as an account of the experiences of life and letters which conspired to sharpen his creative imagination.

Several of his unpublished papers are, however, known to have survived the war. Inherited by his daughter, Obiageli, who established the Christopher Okigbo Foundation in 2005 to perpetuate his legacy, the papers were catalogued in January 2006 by Chukwuma Azuonye, Professor of African Literature at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, Boston, who assisted the foundation in nominating them for the UNESCO Memory of the World Register. Azuonye's preliminary studies of the papers indicate that, apart from new poems in English, including drafts of an

Anthem for Biafra, Okigbo's unpublished papers include poems written in Igbo. The Igbo poems are fascinating in that they open up new vistas in the study of Okigbo's poetry, countering the views of some critics, especially the troika (Chinweizu, Onwuchekwa Jemie and Ihechukwu Madubuike) in their 1980 *Towards the Decolonization of African Literature*, that he sacrificed his indigenous African sensibility in pursuit of obscurantist Euro-modernism.

"Elegy for Alto", the final poem in *Path of Thunder*, is today widely read as the poet's "last testament" embodying a prophecy of his own death as a sacrificial lamb for human freedom:

*Earth, unbind me; let me be the prodigal; let this
be*

the ram's ultimate prayer to the tether...

*AN OLD STAR departs, leaves us here on the
shore*

Gazing heavenward for a new star approaching;

The new star appears, foreshadows its going

*Before a going and coming that goes on
forever....*

Niyi Osundare

Niyi Osundare (born in 1947 in Ikere-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria) is a prolific poet, dramatist and literary critic. He gained degrees at the University of Ibadan (BA), the University of Leeds (MA) and York University, Canada (PhD, 1979). Previously professor (from 1989) and Head of English (1993–97) at the University of Ibadan, he became professor of English at the University of New Orleans in 1997. Niyi has a wife, Kimi, and three children, two girls and a son who still lives in Nigeria. His deaf daughter is the real reason Niyi settled in the United States. She could not go to school in Nigeria so they found a school in the U.S. for her. They moved with her so Niyi and Kimi could be closer to her.

He has always been a vehement champion of the right to free speech and is a strong believer in the power of words, saying, "to utter is to alter". Osundare is renowned for his commitment to socially relevant art and artistic activism and has written several open letters to

the former President of Nigeria (Olusegun Obasanjo), whom Osundare has often publicly criticised.

Osundare believes that there is no choice for the African poet but to be political:

"You cannot keep quiet about the situation in the kind of countries we find ourselves in, in Africa. When you wake up and there is no running water, when you have a massive power outage for days and nights, no food on the table, no hospital for the sick, no peace of mind; when the image of the ruler you see everywhere is that of a dictator with a gun in his hand; and, on the international level, when you live in a world in which your continent is consigned to the margin, a world in which the colour of your skin is a constant disadvantage, everywhere you go – then there is no other way than to write about this, in an attempt to change the situation for the better."

Under the rule of the dictator General Sani Abacha (1993–1998), Osundare regularly contributed poems to a Nigerian national newspaper (now part of the collection

Songs of the Season) that criticised the regime and commented upon the lives of people in Nigeria. As a result he was frequently visited by Security Agents and asked to explain his poems and to whom they referred:

"By that time I realized that the Nigerian security apparatus had become quite 'sophisticated', quite 'literate' indeed!"

"A couple of my students at the University of Ibadan had become informers; a few even came to my classes wired. And when I was reading abroad, someone trailed me from city to city. At home, my letters were frequently intercepted."

In 1997, he accepted a teaching and research post at the University of New Orleans. In 2005 Osundare was caught in Hurricane Katrina, and he and his wife were stuck in their attic for 26 hours. Their neighbor, who at the time was driving by in his boat, heard their shouts for help. They were rescued and bounced around from rescue shelters till they ended up in Ringe, New Hampshire, where Osundare could get a teaching job as

a professor at Franklin Pierce Collage till things settled down.

He is a holder of numerous awards for his poetry, as well as the Fonlon/Nichols award for "excellence in literary creativity combined with significant contributions to Human Rights in Africa".

His 60th Birthday Literary Fete took place at venues in Ikere-Ekiti, Ibadan and Lagos state of Nigeria in March 2007.

His poem "Not My Business" is compulsory study in the AQA A syllabus for GCSE English Language.

Publications

- *Songs from the Marketplace* (1983)
- *Village Voices* (1984)
- *The Eye of the Earth* (1986, winner of a Commonwealth Poetry Prize and the poetry prize of the Association of Nigerian Authors)
- *Moonsongs* (1988)

- *Songs of the Season* (1999)
- *Waiting Laughters* (1990, winner of the Noma Award)
- *Selected Poems* (1992)
- *Midlife* (1993)
- *Thread in the Loom: Essays on African Literature and Culture* (2002)
- *The Word is an Egg* (2002)
- *The State Visit* (2002, play)
- *Pages from the Book of the Sun: New and Selected Poems* (2002)
- *Early Birds* (2004)
- *Two Plays* (2005)
- *The Emerging Perspectives on Niyi Osundare* (2003)
- *Not My Business* (2005)
- *Tender Moments: Love Poems* (2006)

Tanure Ojaide

Tanure Ojaide (born 1948) is a prolific Nigerian poet and writer. He is noted for his unique stylistic vision and for his intense criticism of imperialism, religion, and other issues.

Ojaide, a Ph.D., has won major national and international poetry awards, including the Commonwealth Poetry Prize for the Africa Region (1987), the BBC Arts and Africa Poetry Award (1988), the All-Africa Okigbo Prize for Poetry (1988 and 1997), and also the Association of Nigerian Authors' Poetry Prize (1988 and 1994).

Poems

- Waiting for the Hatching of a Cockerel (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2008)
- The Tale of the Harmattan (Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2007)
- In the House of Words (Lagos: Malthouse Press Ltd., 2005)

- I Want to Dance and Other Poems (San Francisco: African Heritage Press, 2003)
- In the Kingdom of Songs (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2002).
- Invoking the Warrior Spirit: New and Selected Poems (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2000).
- When It No Longer Matters Where You Live (Calabar, Nig.: U of Calabar Press, 1999).
- Invoking the Warrior Spirit (Ibadan: Heinemann, 1999).
- Delta Blues and Home Songs (Ibadan: Kraft Books, 1998).
- Daydream of Ants (Lagos: Malthouse Press Ltd., 1997).
- The Blood of Peace (Oxford, UK: Heinemann, 1991).
- The Fate of Vultures (Lagos: Malthouse Press Ltd., 1990).
- Poems (Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Poetry International, 1988).
- The Endless Song (Lagos: Malthouse Press Ltd., 1988).

- The Eagle's Vision (Detroit: Lotus, 1987).
- Labyrinths of the Delta (New York: Greenfield Review Press, 1986).
- Children of Iroko & Other Poems (New York: Greenfield Review Press, 1973).

Fiction

- Matters of the Moment (Lagos: Malthouse, 2009).
- The Debt-Collector and Other Stories (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2009).
- The Activist (A Novel) (Lagos: Farafina Publications, 2006).
- Sovereign Body (A Novel) (Spring, TX: Panther Creek Press, 2004). Tanure Ojaide
- God's Medicine Men and Other Stories (Lagos, Nigeria: Malthouse Ltd., 2004)

Non-fiction

- Great Boys: An African Childhood (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1998). (a memoir)

Remi Raji

Aderemi Raji-Oyelade is a Nigerian poet, writing in English. He is popularly known by his pen name, **Remi Raji**.

A Salzburg Fellow and visiting professor and writer to a number of institutions, among them Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, the Universities of California at Riverside and Irvine, University of Cape Town, South Africa, and Cambridge University, UK, Raji has had scholarly essays published in journals including *Research in African Literatures* and *African Literature Today*. He has read his poems widely in Africa, Europe and America. In 2005, he served as the Guest Writer to the City of Stockholm, Sweden.

His volumes of poetry include *Webs of Remembrance* (2001), *Shuttlesongs America: A poetic guided tour* (2003), *Lovesong for My Wasteland* (2005), *Gather My Blood Rivers of Song* (2009) and "Sea of My Mind" (2013). Raji's works have been translated into French, German, Catalan, Swedish, Ukrainian, Latvian, Croatian

and Hungarian. He has been an Alexander von Humboldt Scholar to Humboldt University, Berlin, Germany.

Remi Raji was elected as the Publicity Secretary of the Oyo State chapter of the Association of Nigerian Authors in 1989. His second elective position was as Vice Chair of the Association in 1997. He became the substantive Chairman of the Association from 1998 to 2000, at the election of Dr. Wale Okediran to the national executive committee of ANA. Raji served as the Year 2000 Editor of the ANA REVIEW, the official journal of the association. On December 3, 2011, during the thirtieth anniversary celebration of the founding of the Association of Nigerian Authors, Remi Raji was elected as the eleventh President of ANA.

Raji was the National Coordinator of the resuscitated Nigerian PEN Centre in 1999 before he was elected as the Secretary of the Centre, a position he held till February, 2010. During this period, Raji facilitated international workshops and strategic meetings of

African PEN Centres within Africa and in Europe. He was unanimously elected as the first Coordinating Secretary of PAN, the Congress of PEN African Centres, at a special meeting of the group on November 22, 2003 in Mexico City.

At his university, University of Ibadan, Nigeria, the Professor of English and African Literatures and Creative Writing has served in many administrative capacities which culminated in his appointment as the Head of the Department of English in 2011. Over a year after that substantive position, he was elected as the Dean of the Faculty of Arts.

Bibliography

- *A Harvest of Laughters*, 1997, joint-winner of the Association of Nigerian Authors/Cadbury Poetry Prize and winner of the Association of West African Young Writers' VOCA Award for Best First Published Book
- *Webs of Remembrance*, 2001

- *Shuttlesongs America: A Poetic Guided Tour*, 2001–2003
- *Lovesong for My Wasteland*, 2005
- *Gather My Blood Rivers of Song*, 2009.
- "Sea of My Mind", 2013.

Dambudzo Marechera

Dambudzo Marechera (born Charles William Dambudzo Marechera, June 4, 1952, Rusape, Southern Rhodesia – August 18, 1987, Harare) was a Zimbabwean novelist and poet.

Early life

Marechera was born in Vhengere Township, Rusape, Zimbabwe (then known as Southern Rhodesia), to Isaac Marechera, a mortuary attendant, and Masvotwa Venenzia Marechera, a maid.

In his 1978 book, *The House of Hunger*, and in interviews, Marechera often falsely suggests that his father was either run over by "a 20th century train" or "came home with a knife sticking from his back" or "was found in the hospital mortuary with his body riddled with bullets". Such incorrect accounts may be part of Marechera's penchant to revise even the "facts" of his own life. German researcher, Flora-Veit Wild seems to give too much weight to an account given by

Marechera's older brother, Michael, about the destructive element in the younger Marechera's life. Michael suggests that Dambudzo was a victim of their mother's muti, implying that he was cursed in some way. Interestingly, when Marechera returned from London and was made writer-in-residency at the University of Zimbabwe, his mother and sisters attempted to come and meet him but he rejected them offhand, accusing the mother of trying to kill him. Still, it is known that Marechera never even made an effort to meet with any member of his family until he died in 1987.

He grew up amid racial discrimination, poverty, and violence. He attended St. Augustine's Mission, Penhalonga, where he clashed with his teachers over the colonial teaching syllabus, the University of Rhodesia (now the University of Zimbabwe), from which he was expelled during student unrest, and New College, Oxford, where his unsociable behaviour and academic dereliction led to another expulsion.

In his short career he published a book of stories, two novels (one posthumously), a book of plays, prose, and poetry, and a collection of poetry (also posthumous).

Works

His first book, *The House of Hunger* (1978), is the product of a period of despair following his time at Oxford. Among the nine stories it contains, the long title story describes the narrator's brutalized childhood and youth in colonial Rhodesia in a style that is emotionally compelling and verbally pyrotechnic. The narrative is characterized by shifts in time and place and a blurring of fantasy and reality. Regarded as signalling a new trend of incisive and visionary African writing, the book was awarded the 1979 *Guardian* fiction prize.

Black Sunlight (1980) has been compared with the writing of James Joyce and Henry Miller but it did not achieve the critical success of *House of Hunger*. Loosely structured and stylistically hallucinatory, with erudite digressions on various literary and philosophical points of discussion, Marechera's second book explores the idea

of anarchism as a formal intellectual position. *The Black Insider*, posthumously published in 1990, is set in a faculty of arts building that offers refuge for a group of intellectuals and artists from an unspecified war outside, which subsequently engulfs them as well. The conversation of the characters centres on African identity and the nature of art, with the protagonist arguing that the African image is merely another chauvinistic figure of authority.

At Oxford University, Marechera struck his professors as a very intelligent but rather anarchic student who had no particular interest in adhering to course syllabi, choosing rather to read whatever struck his fancy. He also had a reputation for being a quarrelsome young man who did not hesitate to fight his antagonists physically, especially in the pubs around Oxford. He began to display erratic behaviour that may have been a result of excessive drinking or culture shock but which the school psychologist diagnosed as schizophrenia. Marachera threatened to murder certain people and attempted to set the university on fire. He was also famous - or notorious

- for having no respect for authority derived from notions of racial or class superiority. For trying to set the college on fire, Marechera was given two options: either to submit to a psychiatric examination or be sent down; he chose the latter, charging that they were mentally raping him.

At this point, the trajectory of Marechera's life became troubled, even landing him in a Welsh jail for possession of marijuana. He joined the rootless communities around Oxford and other places, sleeping in friends' sitting-rooms and writing various fictional and poetic pieces on park benches and regularly getting mugged by thugs and terrorized by the police for vagrancy. During this period he also lived for many months in the squatting community at Tolmers Square in central London, and it is believed that this is where he finished writing his first book. It was thus from the combined experiences at the University of Rhodesia, Oxford and vagrancy on the streets of England and Wales that Zimbabwe's most celebrated novel, *The House of Hunger*, emerged. After it was taken on by James Currey at Heinemann and

published in their African Writers series, Marechera became something of an instant celebrity in the literary circles of England. However, his self-destruct button proved irresistible and he constantly caused outrage. At the buffet dinner for the award of the *Guardian* fiction prize to him for *House of Hunger*, in a tantrum Marachera memorably began to launch plates at a chandelier. Nevertheless, Leeds University offered him a position as writer-in-residence - something that Marechera liked to misrepresent as a professorship, though this may have been part of his eccentric tendency to have several narratives for virtually everything about himself.

It seems that Marechera thought the British publishing establishment was ripping him off, so he resorted to raiding the Heinemann offices at odd times to ask for his royalties. Still, he lived in dire poverty and his physical health suffered greatly because he did not eat enough and drank too much. Friends, fellow Zimbabwean students such as Musaemura Zimunya (a poet in his own right), Rino Zhuwarara, Stanley Nyamufukudza (another

gifted writer) and mere casual friends were all suspected by Marechera of being involved in his many troubles even when they acted in good faith. In the end he hung around with the down-and-outs who lived on the fringes of the literary establishment, barging into parties and generally getting into trouble and more than once, being bailed out by Currey. To complicate matters, many Africans, including fellow Zimbabwean students, did not feel Marechera was helping his cause by putting on airs, affecting an upper-class English accent and having an eccentric sense of dress. For his disruptive behaviour, Marechera was regularly thrown out of the Africa Centre, the cultural meeting-place for African and Afrocentric scholars and students. Some accounts suggest that Marechera married to a British woman but not much is known about the union.

Marechera returned to the newly independent Zimbabwe in 1982 to assist in shooting the film of *House of Hunger* but fell out with the director and remained behind in Zimbabwe when the crew left, leading a homeless existence in Harare before his death five years later,

from an AIDS-related pulmonary disorder. *Mindblast; or, The Definitive Buddy* (1984) was written the year after his return home and comprises three plays, a prose narrative, a collection of poems, and a park-bench diary. The book criticizes the materialism, intolerance, opportunism, and corruption of post-independence Zimbabwe, extending the political debate beyond the question of nationalism to embrace genuine social regeneration. The combination of intense self-scrutiny, cogent social criticism, and open, experimental form appealed to a young generation of Zimbabweans, the so-called mindblast generation, who were seeking new ways of perceiving their roles within the emergent nation.

Marechera's poetry was published posthumously under the title *Cemetery of Mind* (1992). Like his stories, his poems show the influence of modernist writers from Arthur Rimbaud and T. S. Eliot to Allen Ginsberg and Christopher Okigbo, and confirm his proclivity for perceptive social critique, intense self-exploration, and verbal daring.

In an interview Marechera said of himself, "I think I am the doppelganger whom, until I appeared, African literature had not yet met." This is an accurate assessment of Marechera's role in shocking the reader into looking at himself anew through the eyes of the other. His individualism, literary experimentation, and iconoclasm ensure that his work resists narrow definitions; it is constantly shifting and crossing boundaries.

Marechera's legacy

Dambudzo Marechera remains Zimbabwe's most important cultural product on the creative writing front. Since his death, dozens of younger writers and many of his colleagues have written numerous accounts and biographies detailing his troubled life and works. In the 1990s, the most prominent were foreigners, especially the German scholar, Flora Veit-Wild, who has written both a biography and a sourcebook of Marechera's life and works. What Wild misses dismally is the fact that Marechera edited his own life as he went along. Wild

seems to take many of the things she got from Marechera as facts. In an article in *Wasafiri* magazine in March 2012, Wild answered the question of why she "did not write a proper Dambudzo Marechera biography", by saying: "My answer was that I did not want to collapse his multi-faceted personality into one authoritative narrative but rather let the diverse voices speak for themselves. But this is not the whole truth. I could not write his life story because my own life was so intricately entangled with his." She then described in detail her very personal involvement with him over an eighteen-month period.

Hadrawi

Hadrawi (born **Mohamed Ibrahim Warsame** in 1943) (Somali: *Maxamed Ibraahim Warsame (Hadraawi)*, Arabic: محمد ابراهيم وارسام هدرأوى) is a prominent Somali poet and songwriter. He is considered by many to be the greatest living Somali poet, having written many notable protest works. Hadrawi has been likened by some to Shakespeare, and his poetry has been translated into various languages.

Biography

Hadrawi was born in Burco, situated in the former British Somaliland protectorate. He hails from the Isaaq clan. His family was poor and consisted of one girl and eight boys. In 1953, at the age of nine, he went to live with an uncle in the Yemeni port city of Aden. There, Warsame began attending a local school where he received the nickname "Hadrawi" (*Abu Hadra*), a pseudonym by which he is now popularly known. In 1963, he became a primary school teacher.

Return to Somalia

After Somalia gained its independence, Hadrawi relocated from Aden to Mogadishu, the nation's capital, and began working for Radio Mogadiscio. In Mogadishu, he both attended and later taught at Lafoole (Afgooye) University. He also worked for the government's Department of Information.

In addition to love lyrics, he was a powerful commentator on the political situation and critic of the then military regime in Somalia. Imprisoned between 1973 and 1978.

In 1973, Hadrawi wrote the poem *Siinley* and the play *Tawaawac* ("Lament"), both of which were critical of the military government that was then in power. For this dissent, he was subsequently arrested and imprisoned in Qansax Dheere until April 1978.

Somali National Movement

Following his release from prison in 1978, Hadrawi became the director of the arts division of the Academy of Science, Arts, and Literature in Somalia. when he joined the opposition Somali National Movement based in Ethiopia. He was a very powerful voice in the ensuing years of civil war and the repressive military regime, and continues to be a very important poet commenting on the predicament the Somalis face.

Hadrawi relocated to Great Britain in 1991. During this period, he traveled frequently throughout Europe and North America to participate in folklore and poetry festivals.

In 1999, Hadrawi returned once more to his native Somalia, this time settling in Hargeisa. The following year, the mayor of Chicago invited him to participate in the latter city's Millennium Festival.

Hadrawi now lives in Burco, and has reportedly made the pilgrimage to Mecca (hajj).

Contributions to popular music

Besides volumes of poems and dozens of plays, Hadrawi has participated in numerous collaborations with popular vocal artists. His lyrical corpus includes:

- *Baladweyn* - song performed by Hasan Adan Samatar in 1974
- *Saxarlaay ha Fududaan* - sung by Mohamed Mooge Liibaan
- *Jacayl Dhiig ma Lagu Qoraa?* - sung by Magool, and later translated by Hanna Barket as "Is Love Written in Blood?" or "Do You Write Love in Blood?". Another translation of the song by the British linguist and Somali Studies doyen Martin Orwin is "Has Love Been Blood-written?".

Awards

In 2012, Hadrawi was awarded the Prince Claus Award for his contributions to peace through his poetry.

Works

- Hooya la'anta ("Motherless")
- Hablaha geeska
- Gudgude
- Siinley
- Sirta nolosha
- Tawaawac
- Aqoon iyo afgarad

Khalil Abdulkadir Farah Hersi

Adbulkadir Hersi (1946–2005), also known as **Yam Yam**, was a Somali poet who was active in the 1960s.

He was born and raised in Hargeisa, Woogiga Galbeed, the capital of the de facto state of Somaliland on September 4, 1949. He was the youngest child of 6 and the only son to his mother as his other siblings had a different mother. He attended the Somaali School of Natural Sciences and graduated from Mogadishu University, majoring in Social Sciences and obtained a Master's degree in Biology at Harvard University. He is a member of the religion of Islam, which is the predominant religion in Somaliland. He is famous for his extensive study on peat bogs in the East Africa region and for his many report novels.

Along with the writer Ahmed Farah Ali 'Idaja', Hersi wrote the historical play *Dabkuu Shiday Darwiishkii*, translated as *The Fire that the Dervish Lit*. Primarily in verse, the play is about the Dervish State established by

Mohammed Abdullah Hassan in the early twentieth century.

There is no one consistent English translation of his name. Alternative spellings include Cabdulqaadir or Cabdilqaadir Xirsi.

Some of his more famous poems are *Gabay ammaan ah* (A poem of praise), *Kowda Maajo: Hambalyo 1975* (The First of May: Congratulations 1975), "Hees" (A hees poem), and *Ma riyaa ma run baa* (Is it a dream? Is it reality?). Two of his poems appeared in the magazines *Sahan* (Reconnaissance) and *Horseed* (Vanguard), although most of them still reached the public in oral form. Cali often wrote on social topics. One of his poems, for instance, was a commentary on the political situation of the Somali people in the late 1950s, and another, written in 1962, was a protest against the import of foreign cars when the mass of the people were still living in poverty.

At the Somalia National Peace Conference held in 2000, YamYam described the national of Somalia as "in ruins" and said he no longer celebrated national holidays.

Noureddine Aba

Noureddine Aba (1921 – September 19, 1996) was an Algerian poet and playwright. His work mainly focuses on political themes, such as the Algerian revolution, the Arab–Israeli conflict and Nazi Germany. In 1990, he established the Fondation Noureddine Aba, which continues to present the annual Noureddine Aba Prize to Algerian writers.

Early life

Aba was born in 1921 in the Algerian town of Sétif. In his autobiographical work *Le chant perdu au pays retrouvé* (*The Lost Song of a Rediscovered Country*, 1978), he described his childhood as an unhappy period, writing: "I had to envy children in some parts of the world who went through childhood with the frivolity of butterflies". After completing his secondary education in Setif, he spent one year studying law at the University of Algiers. In the 1940s, he began writing some poetry, including his 1941 collection *L'Aube de l'amour* (*The Dawn of Love*). In 1943, he was conscripted into the

Algerian army, where he served for two years until the end of the Second World War.

Writing career

After the war, Aba became a journalist and reported on the Nuremberg Trials. When the magazine *Présence Africaine* was established in 1947, Aba became one of its writers. At this point, Aba was living in France, where he spent much of his adult life.

Wartime experiences, particularly his outrage at the Sétif massacre of May 1945, also inspired Aba to commit to writing more poetry. His work is primarily focused on themes relating to politics and the impact of violence on humans, covering topics such as the Algerian revolution, the Arab–Israeli conflict and Nazi Germany. The themes of his work led the scholar Jean Déjeux to compare him to Mohammed Dib. Aba's more well-known collections include *Gazelle au petit matin* (*Gazelle in the Early Morning*, 1978) and *Gazelle après minuit* (*Gazelle after Midnight*, 1979), which take the form of a series of love

poems inspired by the deaths of a young couple at the point of the country becoming independent from France.

Aba has also written many plays, which are often farces with political themes. They have been performed in French theatres and on Radio France Internationale;^[1] plays are rarely performed in Algeria unless they are in Arabic. His plays include *Tell el Zaatar s'est tu a la tombée du soir* (*Silence at Nightfall in Tell el Zaatar*, 1981), which relates episodes from the history of Palestine, and *L'Annonce faite à Marco, ou a l'aube et sans couronne* (*The Annunciation to Marco, or Uncrowned at Dawn*, 1983), which is set during the Battle of Algiers in 1957.

Awards and honours

Aba's work gained greater critical recognition in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In 1979 he was presented with the Prix de l'Afrique méditerranéenne for his poetry, and in 1985 he was awarded the Fondation de France's "Prix Charles Oulmont" for his contribution to literature. His

1981 play *Tell el Zaatar...* won the Prix Palestine-Mahmoud Hamchari.^[4]

Other work

Aba has lectured at a number of universities, including a period teaching Algerian literature at the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign.^[1] Aba has been a member of the Académie des Sciences d'Outre-mer and the Académie Universelle des Cultures. He was also part of the Haut Conseil de la francophonie, having been appointed to this by François Mitterrand.^[4]

Aba has also been active in politics. He returned briefly to Algeria in the late 1970s and worked in the Ministry of Information and Culture, before becoming disillusioned with Algerian politics and returning to France. Throughout his life, he was particularly sympathetic to Palestinian nationalism. Before his death, he petitioned the French government to persuade them to help bring an end to the Algerian Civil War.

Death and legacy

Aba died in 1996 in Paris, aged 74. The Fondation Nouredine Aba, established by the author in 1990, continues to present the annual Nouredine Aba Prize to Algerian writers writing in French or Arabic. Previous recipients have included Tahar Djaout and Redha Malek.

Okot p'Bitek

Okot p'Bitek (7 June 1931 – 20 July 1982) was a Ugandan poet, who achieved wide international recognition for *Song of Lawino*, a long poem dealing with the tribulations of a rural African wife whose husband has taken up urban life and wishes everything to be westernised. *Song of Lawino* was originally written in Acholi language, and self-translated to English, and published in 1966. It was a breakthrough work, creating an audience amongst anglophone Africans for direct, topical poetry in English; and incorporating traditional attitudes and thinking in an accessible yet faithful literary vehicle. It was followed by the pendant *Song of Ocol* (1970), the husband's reply.

The *East African Song School* or *Okot School poetry* is now an academic identification of the work following his direction, also popularly called "comic singing": a forceful type of dramatic verse monologue rooted in traditional song and phraseology.

Life

Okot p'Bitek was born in Gulu, in the North Uganda grasslands. His father Jebedayo Opi was a schoolteacher, his mother Lacwaa Cerina was a traditional singer. His background was Acholi, and he wrote first in Lwo, one of the Western Nilotic languages.

He was educated at Gulu High School, then King's College, Budo, and later at universities in the United Kingdom. At school he was noted as a singer, dancer, drummer and athlete; he composed and directed an opera while at college.

He travelled abroad first as a player with the Ugandan national football team, in 1958. At this point he gave up on football as a possible career, staying on in Britain; he studied education at the University of Bristol, and then law at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth. He then took a B. Litt. degree in social anthropology at the University of Oxford, with a 1963 dissertation on Acholi and Lango traditional cultures.

According to George Heron he lost his commitment to Christian belief during these years. This had major

consequences for his attitude as a scholar of African tradition, which was by no means accepting of the general run of earlier work, or what he called "dirty gossip" in relation to tribal life. His character Lawino also speaks for him, in some places, on these matters.

He wrote an early novel, *Lak Tar Miyo Kinyero Wi Lobo* (1953), in Lwo, later translated into English as *White Teeth*. It concerns the experiences of a young Acholi man moving away from home, to find work and so a wife. He organised an arts festival at Gulu, and then at Kisumu. Subsequently he taught at Makerere University and then was Director of Uganda's National Theatre.

He became unpopular with the Ugandan government, and took teaching posts outside the country. He took part in the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa in 1969. He was at the Institute of African Studies of University College, Nairobi from 1971 as a senior research fellow and lecturer, with visiting positions at University of Texas at Austin and University of Ife in Nigeria in 1978/9. He remained in exile during the

regime of Idi Amin, returning in 1982 to Makerere University, to teach creative writing.

Apart from his poetry and novels, he also took part in an ongoing debate about the integrity of scholarship on traditional African religion, with the assertion in *African Religions in Western Scholarship* (1971) that scholars centred on European concerns were "intellectual smugglers". His point, aimed partly at Africans who had had a training in Christian traditions, was that it led to a concentration on matters distant from the actual concerns of Africans; this has been contested by others. He was an atheist.

He died in Kampala of a stroke in 1982. He is survived by daughters Agnes Oyella, Jane Okot p'Bitek, who wrote a *Song of Farewell* (1994), Olga Okot Bitek Ojelel and Cecilia Okot Bitek who work as nurses, Juliane Okot Bitek who writes poetry, and a son George Okot p'Bitek, who is a Teacher in Kampala. Olga, Cecilia, and Juliane all live in Vancouver, Canada. In 2004 Juliane was the recipient of an award in the Commonwealth Short Story

Contest for her story "Going Home". These are the daughters of his wife Caroline.

Critical reception

The *Song of Lawino* has been described as one of the most important works of African literature of the 1960s. The Luo original was written in rhymed couplets, and was metrically regular. The English translation, published a decade later in 1966, is in a staccato form of free verse, running to 13 sections and some 5000 lines. It develops from many angles Lawino, the almost-discarded wife of an upwardly-mobile husband, as a persona or type, but also as an individual of great verbal resource who probably reflects the author's mother. Kwame Anthony Appiah remarks in *In My Father's House* that the specific cultural points made are carried off without the need for much exposition. Given that the form mixes harangue with self-reflection, it is always clear where the argument tends and the context is brought along with the main thrust, whether the issue is cooking, Lawino's relatives being told they cannot drop

in unannounced, or the pretensions and fashions of the urban second wife.

Scholars have identified numerous allusions in and sources of *Song of Lawino*, in Acholi traditional songs. These can be found at the level of particular phrases. They also come from across the range of genres, making the *Song of Lawino* a cross-section of an entire culture.

The shorter sequel *Song of Ocol* was less well received. The self-justification of the ambitious husband had no doubt a satirical and political aim. It has also dated much more quickly, while the many-faceted *Lawino*, who starts with the comment 'My husband's tongue is bitter', is more likely to become a timeless creation.

In *Two Songs*, he addressed other issues, in the same style. *Song of a Prisoner* drew on his reactions to Kenyan politics, and *Song of Malaya* deals with the life of a prostitute.

Works

- *Lak Tar Miyo Kinyero Wi Lobo* (1953); novel in Luo, English translation *White Teeth*
- *Song of Lawino: A Lament* (1966); poem, translation of a Luo original *Wer pa Lawino*
- *The Defence of Lawino* (1969); alternate translation by Taban Lo Liyong
- *Song of Ocol* (1970); poem, written in English
- *Religion of the Central Luo* (1971)
- *Two Songs: Song of a Prisoner, Song of Malaya* (1971); poems
- *African Religions in Western Scholarship* (1971, Nairobi)
- *Africa's Cultural Revolution* (1973); essays
- *Horn of My Love*; translations of traditional oral verse. London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1974. ISBN 0-435-90147-8
- *Hare and Hornbill* (1978) folktale collection
- *Acholi Proverbs* (1985)
- *Artist, the Ruler: Essays on Art, Culture and Values* (1986)

Taban Lo Liyong

Taban Lo Liyong (born 1939) is one of Africa's well-known poets and writers of fiction and literary criticism. His political views, as well as his on-going denigration of the post-colonial system of education in East Africa, have inspired criticism and controversy since the late 1960s.

Biography

He was born in Uganda. After matriculation there, he attended Howard University and the University of Iowa Writer's Workshop, where he was the first African to graduate in 1968. On the completion of his studies in the U.S., the tyrannical regime of Idi Amin prevented him from returning to Uganda. He went instead to neighbouring Kenya, and taught at the University of Nairobi. He has also taught at international universities in Sudan, Papua New Guinea, Australia, Japan, and South Africa, and maintains that his diverse experience offers an opportunity to place Africa in a position intellectually on par with the rest of the world, thereby

recognizing its various and valuable contributions to history and scholarship.

In collaboration with Henry Owuor-Anyumba and renowned Kenyan academic and writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o, he wrote *On the Abolition of the English Department* in 1968. Acknowledging the formidable influence of European literature over African writing, Liyong and his colleagues called for the educational system to emphasize the oral tradition (as a key traditional African form of learning), Swahili literature, as well as prose and poetry from African-American and Caribbean society.

Through *On the Abolition of the English Department*, Lo-Liyong and his allies attempted a re-consideration of the humanities curriculum at the University of Nairobi, most particularly of its investment in foreign (British) literature and culture. They questioned the value of an English Department in an African context: "We have eyes, but we don't see. We have ears, but we don't hear. We can read, but we don't understand what we read."

They suggested that the post-colonial African university must first establish a counter-curriculum of African languages and literatures and then return to a study of European and other world literatures from an African perspective: “If there is a need for ‘study of the historic continuity of a single culture’, why can’t this be African? Why can’t African literature be at the centre so that we can view other cultures in relationship to it?”

Liyong, Owuor-Anyumba, and wa Thiong'o were criticized for advocating cultural or even racial purity within academia. Rather, they sought to re-establish in East Africa traditional modes of knowledge and understanding in literature, in an effort towards authenticity and as a means for the region to better understand itself in the context of national independence. By placing African culture at the centre of education, “all other things [would] be considered in their relevance to [the African] situation, and their contribution towards understanding [itself]”. This philosophy was also politically significant at a time when East African

governing bodies were struggling against the influence of colonial powers such as the U.S. and Britain.

Independently, Liyong has had published over twenty books. These include *Carrying Knowledge Up a Palm Tree* (1998), an anthology of poetry that addresses various contemporary issues and follows African progress in recent history.

The East African Literature Bureau (EALB) published many of Liyong's earlier works in English as well as East African languages. The EALB played an instrumental role in disseminating the opinions of African academics in the period right after Kenyan independence from Britain in 1963. Many of these publications criticized neocolonialism, the new method by which former colonial nations maintained their dominance over the newly independent states. The emerging theories held that East African governments and institutions were manipulated by money and corruption into upholding structures that undermined local culture while uplifting colonial ideals.

Lo-Liyong's work emerges from this environment of cultural and political uncertainty. His work draws on the continent's tradition in its form as well as its content. Of his poetry, Liyong says: "the period of introspection has arrived; personal introspection, communal introspection. Only through introspection can we appraise ourselves more exactly." In one of his most controversial assertions, Liyong rejects long-established literary conventions defined by Aristotle for effective writing. In *The Uniformed Man* (1971), Liyong calls for readers to approach text in a less familiar way, that is, not to follow the usual conventions of literature such as "introduction, exposition, rising action, etc. up to the climax". Instead, text should be unconstrained by expectation and read with a consistent appreciation for "each word, phrase, or sentence".

Lo-Liyong addresses an African audience in the majority of his work, but mostly he attempts to universally put forward the idea that African knowledge is of benefit to the intellectual world at large. African experience, including that of the diaspora, should not be

marginalized intellectually. In his introduction to *The Uniformed Man*, he addresses the issues raised in *On the Abolition of the English Department* when he claims that “the [African] audience can only get full emotional satisfaction when they find that the world of the theatre and their world is completely evoked”.

Despite his various contributions to poetry and fiction, Liyong considers his essays of most significance, calling them “essays with a practical nature”. His eclectic and unconventional approaches to literature and literary theory make him an enduring study and a living icon of African nationalism. He remains a staunch political activist, committed to the causes of exploited communities. He was recently a professor of literature and Head of the Centre for African Studies at the University of Venda in South Africa. Professor Liyong is currently the Acting Vice Chancellor of Juba University in South Sudan. After over 20 years of war, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement brought peace to South Sudan and Professor Liyong has returned home to

contribute his outstanding intellectual and managerial prowess.

Bibliography

- *The Last Word* (1969)
- *Meditations in Limbo* (1970)
- *Franz Fanon's Uneven Ribs* (1971)
- *Another Nigger Dead* (1972)
- *Ballads of Underdevelopment* (1976)
- *Another Last Word* (1990)

Gladys Casely-Hayford

Gladys May Casely-Hayford *alias Aquah Lalah* (11 May 1904, Axim - October 1950, Freetown) was a Sierra Leonean writer, daughter of Adelaide Casely-Hayford. She started the Krio language literature.

She studied in Ghana and Wales, danced with a Berlin jazz band, and returning to Africa taught at her mother's Girls' Vocational School in Freetown. Her first poems were published in the *Atlantic Monthly* and *The Philadelphia Tribune*. Her poetry has been widely anthologized.

Works

- *Take'um so*, 1948 (poetry)

Lenrie Peters

Lenrie Leopold Wilfred Peters (1 September 1932 - 28 May 2009) was a Gambian surgeon, novelist, poet and educationist.

Biography

Peters was born in Bathurst (now Banjul) in to Lenrie Ernest Ingram Peters and Kezia Rosemary. Lenrie Sr. was a Sierra Leone Creole of West Indian or black American origin. Kezia Rosemary was a Gambian Creole of Sierra Leonean Creole origin. Lenrie Jr. grew up in Bathurst and moved to Sierra Leone in 1949, where he was educated at the Prince of Wales School, Freetown, gaining his Higher School Certificate in science subjects.

In 1952 he went up to Trinity College, Cambridge, to read Natural Sciences, graduating with a B.Sc. in 1956; from 1956 to 1959 he worked and studied at the University College Hospital, London, and 1959 was awarded a Medical and Surgery diploma from

Cambridge. Peters worked for the BBC from 1955 to 1968, on their Africa programmes.

While at Cambridge he was elected president of the African Students' Union, and interested himself in Pan-Africanist politics. He also began writing poetry and plays, as well as starting work on his only novel, *The Second Round* (published in 1965). Peters worked in hospitals in Guildford and Northampton before returning to the Gambia, where he had a surgical practice in Banjul. He was a fellow of the West African College of Surgeons and the Royal College of Surgeons in England.

Peters was President of the Historic Commission of Monuments of the Gambia, was president of the board of directors of the National Library of the Gambia and Gambia College from 1979 to 1987, and was a member and President of the West African Examination Council (WAEC) from 1985 to 1991.

He died in Dakar, Senegal, aged 76.

Published works

Poetry

- 1964: *Poems* (Ibadan: Mbari Publications)
- 1967: *Satellites* (London: Heinemann, African Writers Series No. 37)
- 1971: *Katchikali* (London: Heinemann, African Writers Series No. 103) ISBN 0-435-90633-X ; ISBN 0-435-90103-6
- 1981: *Selected Poetry* (London: Heinemann, African Writers Series No. 238) ISBN 0-435-90238-5

Novels

- 1965: *The Second Round* (London: Heinemann, African Writers Series No. 22) ISBN 0-435-90022-6

Bernadette Sanou Dao

Bernadette Sanou Dao (born 25 February 1952 in Bamako, French Sudan) is a Burkinabé author and politician. At age 11 her family returned to Upper Volta from Mali. She attended Kolog-Naba college in Ouagadougou and later Ohio University in the United States and the Sorbonne in Paris, France. From 1986 to 1987 she was Burkina Faso's Minister for Culture. She currently lives in Ouagadougou. She writes poetry, short-stories and children's stories.

Abdoulaye Ascofaré

Abdoulaye Ascofaré (born April 20, 1949 in Gao) is a Malian poet and filmmaker.

Biography

Ascofaré was a radio host until 1978, at which point he became a teacher at the Institut National des Arts in Bamako. In 1984, he received a diploma in film studies from the Moscow State Institute of Cinematography, and in 1985 he joined the Centre National de Production Cinématographique in Bamako as a director.

Beginning in 1991, he produced several short films, and in 1997 he produced his first full-length film, *Faraw, une mère des sables* (Faraw, a mother of the sands), which retraces twenty-four hours in the life of a Songhaï woman. *Faraw* won the Golden Bayard for Artistic Creation at the 1997 Namur Film festival.

As a poet, he has published *Domestiquer le rêve* (Domesticating the Dream).

Filmography

- *Welcome* (1981)
- *M'sieur Fane* (1983)
- *L'Hôte* (1984)
- *Sonatam, un quart de siècle* (1990)
- *Faraw, une mère des sables* (1997)

Micere Githae Mugo

Micere Githae Mugo (born **Madeleine Mugo** in 1942) is a playwright, author, activist, instructor and poet from Kenya. She is a literary critic and professor of literature in the Department of African American Studies at Syracuse University. She was forced into exile in 1982 from Kenya during the Daniel Arap Moi dictatorship for activism and moved to teach in Zimbabwe, and later the United States. Mwalimu Mugo teaches Orature, Literature, and Creative Writing. Mugo's publications include six books, a play co-authored with Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and three monographs. She has also edited journals and the Zimbabwean school curriculum. The East African Standard Century listed her among the most influential people in Kenya in 2002 – "The Top 100: They influenced Kenya Most during the 20th century".

Early life

Mugo was born in 1942, in Baricho, Kirinyaga District, Kenya. The daughter of two progressive (liberal) teachers, she received a solid primary and secondary

education in Kenya, attending Alliance Girls High School. She became one of the first black students to be allowed to enroll in what had previously been a segregated academy. She later attended Makerere University (where she gained her B.A. in 1966), the University of New Brunswick (gaining her M.A. in 1973) and University of Toronto (where she gained her PhD in 1978).¹ She took up a teaching position at the University of Nairobi in 1973, and in 1978 or 1980 became Dean of the Faculty of Arts, making her the first female faculty dean in Kenya. She taught at the University of Nairobi until 1982, and has also taught at the University of Zimbabwe.

Works

Mugo is a distinguished poet, and the author or editor of fifteen books. Her work is generally from a traditional African, Pan-African and feminist perspective, and draws heavily upon indigenous African cultural traditions. She has also collaborated with the

Zimbabwean writer Shimmer Chinodya in editing plays and stories for adolescents in Shona.

Plays

- *The Long Illness of Ex-Chief Kiti*, East African Literature Bureau, 1976
- *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*, (co-authored with Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o), Heinemann, 1976

Poetry

- *Daughter of My People, Sing!*, East African Literature Bureau, 1976
- *My Mother's Song and Other Poems*, East African Educational Publishers, 1994

Literary Criticism

- *Visions of Africa: The Fiction of Chinua Achebe, Margaret Laurence, Elspeth Huxley, and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o*, 1978
- *African Orature and Human Rights*, National University of Lesotho, 1991

Autobiography

- *Writing & Speaking from the Heart of My Mind*, Africa World Press 2012

Achievements

- The top 100:They influenced Kenya Most during the 20th century", East African Standard Century – 2002
- Distinguished Africanist Scholar Award – 2007
- Courage Award, Girl Scout Council of Central New York
- President of United Women of Africa
- CNY Women of Distinction Award – 2008,
- Lifetime Community Service Award (CNY Women Syracuse Chapter)
- Beyond Community Recognition Awards, Inc. – 2004,
- Human Rights Award, Onondaga County Human Rights Commission – 2004.
- Rockefeller Foundation Award for writing and publication – 1992

- Ford Foundation Award for research on African orature and human rights 1987–90
- Marcus Garvey Award from the Canadian Branch of UNIA (1985).

Kama Sywor Kamanda

Kama Sywor Kamanda is an award-winning writer and poet from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Biography

Kamanda Kama Sywor was born on November 11, 1952, in Luebo, Democratic Republic of Congo, from father Malaba Kamenga and mother Kony Ngalula.

After publishing a first collection of stories at the age of 15, Kamanda studied literature, journalism, political science, philosophy and law, and worked in journalism. In 1970, he participated in the creation of the Union of Congolese Writers (Union des écrivains congolais). Forced to leave the Congo in 1977 due to his political activities, Kamanda lived in various European countries before settling in Luxembourg.

In 1985, Kamanda was the founding president of the African Association of Writers, of which L. S. Senghor was the honorary president. As a poet, story teller and

novelist, Kamanda subsequently produced a considerable body of literary work, including a dozen anthologies of poetry, several hundred stories, as well as several novels.

Living in perpetual exile, this universal writer has gained worldwide notoriety that has seen him travelling constantly for conferences, poetry readings and festivals.

Kamanda's works have been translated into many languages, including English, Japanese, Italian, and Greek. This writer has earned several major prizes and distinctions, including the Paul Verlaine Prize from the Académie française (1987), the Louise Labbé Prize (1990), the Black Africa Grand Prize for Literature (1991), and the Théophile Gautier prize (1993) from the Académie française. In 2005, the International Council for Francophone Studies (Conseil international d'études francophones) conferred upon him the prestigious Maurice-Cagnon Certificate of Honour, for his unique contribution to world francophone literature.

His stories draw their imagery from African traditions, but constitute a universe at the boundary between the

fantastic and the author's own reality. His numerous books of poetry focus on the themes of celebrating Africa and of the pain of exile and solitude, all against a backdrop of fervent celebration of love.

"My poetry speaks of men and women from all continents who fight for a real and just humanism where their dreams can become reality. It's a poetry of life, of love, of hope and of the exaltation of values that encourage the blossoming of the individual within a community where harmony depends upon the contribution of each member." ~ Kama Sywor Kamanda

Literary works

Stories

- Les Contes des veillées africaines, 1967, 1985
- Les Contes du griot, t. I, Préface de Léopold Sedar Senghor, 1988
- Les Contes du griot, t. II (La Nuit des griots), 1991, 1996

- Les contes du griot, t.III (Les Contes des veillées africaines, édition augmentée), 1998
- Les Contes du crépuscule, 2000
- Contes (édition illustrée) 2003
- Contes (Les œuvres complètes) 2004
- Contes africains (Grund) 2006

Poetry

- Chants de brumes. Preface by Jacques Iozard, 1986, 1997, 2002
- Les Résignations. Preface by Mateja Matevski, 1986, 1997
- Éclipse d'étoiles. Preface by Claude Michel Cluny, 1987, 1997
- La Somme du néant. Preface by Pierrette Micheloud, 1989, 1999
- L'Exil des songes. Preface by Marc Alyn, 1992
- Les Myriades des temps vécus. Preface by Mario Luzi, 1992, 1999
- Les Vents de l'épreuve. Preface by Salah Stétié, 1993, 1997

- Quand dans l'âme les mers s'agitent. Preface by Jean-Baptiste Tati Loutard, 1994, 1998
- L'Étreinte des mots. Preface by Maria Luisa Spaziani, 1995
- Le Sang des solitudes, 2002
- Œuvre poétique, 1999
- Oeuvre poétique (édition intégrale), 2008

Novels

- Lointaines sont les rives du destin, 1994, 2000, 2007
- La Traversée des mirages, 2006
- La Joueuse de Kora, 2006
- L'Insondable destin des Hommes, 2013

Essay

- Au-delà de Dieu, au-delà des chimères, 2007

THEATER

- L'Homme torturé, 2013

Translated works

- English : *Wind Whispering Soul*, 2001 ; *Tales*, 2001
- Italian : *Le miriadi di tempi vissuti*, 2004 ; *La stretta delle parole*, 2004
- Japanese : *Les Contes du griot*, t. I, 2000 ; t. II, 2005
- Chinese : *Les Contes du griot*, t. I, 2003 ; t. II, 2004

Prizes and distinctions

- French Academy Paul Verlaine award, 1987
- Louise Labé award, 1990
- Black Africa Association of French-Speaking Writers, 1991
- Special Poetry Award, Academic Institute of Paris, 1992
- Silver Jasmin for Poetical Originality, Agen, 1992
- French Academy Théophile Gautier award, 1993

- Melina Mercouri award, Greek Poets and Writers Association, 1999
- Poet of the Millennium 2000 award, International Poets Academy, India, 2000
- Honorary Citizen Joal-Fadiouth, Senegal, 2000
- Poetry award, International Society of Greek Writers, 2002
- Exceptional Contribution Honor Certificate Maurice-Cagnon, International Council for French Studies, 2005
- Master Diploma for Specialty Honors in Writing, World Academy of Letters, United States of America, 2006
- French Academy Heredia award, 2009

Angèle Bassolé-Ouédraogo

Angèle Bassolé-Ouédraogo (born 1967) is an Ivoirian born Canadian poet and journalist. She was born in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire and raised in, Upper Volta and was educated at the University of Ouagadougou. She subsequently studied in Canada, receiving a doctorate from the University of Ottawa and a journalism degree from the Université de Montréal.

She is currently a researcher in women's studies at the University of Ottawa, and the managing editor of Éditions Malaïka.

Her 2003 book *Avec tes mots* won the Trillium Book Award for French language poetry.

Bibliography

- *Burkina blues*. Brossard, Québec: Humanitas. 2000. ISBN 2-89396-196-7.
- *Avec tes mots*. Ottawa: Malaïka. 2003. ISBN 2-913991-23-8.

- *Sahéliennes*. Ottawa: L'Interligne. 2006. ISBN 2-923274-10-5.