

An International Anthology of Writing
by Women of African Descent

New

'Essential'
Guardian

Daughters

of

Africa

Edited by Margaret Busby



Praise for *New Daughters of Africa*

"*New Daughters of Africa* is a beautiful, essential anthology. It is both long-awaited and urgently needed; it recognises the individual voices and interwoven histories of every facet of womanhood. More than a work of political activism, more than a living archive, more than entertainment, it is a testimony to the shifting nuances of having African origins, and forms a conversation about a future that encompasses all of us. It belongs in every library, on every school and university curriculum and home bookshelf, and is a true celebration of the collective power of women's words."

—Preti Taneja

"This remarkable book constitutes a powerful affirmation of literary achievement, demonstrating that contemporary black women writers are part of a vital and extensive tradition. Just as significantly, the anthology brings these works into dialogue with one another, becoming a potent assertion of a collective identity that transcends political, religious, linguistic, regional and generational boundaries... *New Daughters of Africa* demonstrates that this work does not exist in a vacuum. Black women writers have always had something significant to say to the world and to each other."

—Ladee Hubbard, *Times Literary Supplement*

"A necessary wealth of work—a welcome addition to any book shelf and a compulsory education for anyone unaware of the countless gifted African women journalists, essayists, poets and speakers who should influence how we see the world. Sometimes you need an anthology to remind you of the variety, strength and nuance of writing among a certain region or group of people. *New Daughters of Africa* is indispensable because African voices have been silenced or diminished throughout history, and women's voices even more so."

—Sally Hayden, *Irish Times*

"Here is the book so many have been waiting for. The book to make sense of so many others... The topics... shine bright lights on the lives of critically underrepresented women of color, and on the contributions of these gifted literary scholars: motherhood, slavery, love, work, immigration, assimilation, friendship, thwarted aspiration, infidelity, racism, marriage, poverty, and on and on. The only thing that is not varied here is the gloriously even quality of the writing. These are stories for crying and laughing and thinking... It is, perhaps, this excess, this non-superfluous surplus, this literal and literary

embarrassment of riches that sends the strongest of messages. Yes, there is this much talent and achievement here in the literature of people of color, the roots of these writers in Africa, but their immense contribution extends to every continent. It is this good. It is this great.”

—Anjanette Delgado, *New York Journal of Books*

“Anthologies can read as mere assortment or collection. But their function, particularly when well composed, can be much more deliberate. Busby’s choice to organise the writers by generation has a powerful effect. From the 18th century to the present, the location of black women across borders—yet always in the winds of political, economic and social orders—emerges. Questions of freedom, autonomy, family, race and social transformation present themselves in generational waves. It shines a light on the overlooked interior lives of black women who have faced decades of political struggle. *Daughters of Africa* was groundbreaking for bringing the tradition of black women writers to the fore. This new anthology has an increased urgency. It is also necessary. We live in an age when old forms of bigotry are being revived. We also live at a time when there are increasing demands on our attention. It is easy to note only the splashiest debut, or a single voice that speaks for many marginalised people. Busby invites us to slow down, to read through a tradition that will lead us to fall in love with beautiful and insightful writers we might not otherwise encounter, and to be open to a wide variety of forms, themes and authors.” —Imani Perry, *Financial Times*

“*New Daughters of Africa* has introduced me to an enormously compelling body of works and writers... I found myself immediately engrossed in each woman’s ‘story’...they each have something profound to say and many pieces, albeit fragments of a larger piece, are also immensely moving. Each extract serves as an enticement to look further into many of the writers’ lives and works. One can ask for little more from an anthology so spilling over with such a wealth of history, hope, wisdom and talent.”

—Anne Maxwell, *Sydney Morning Herald*

“This kind of book is rare today. The availability of such a big collection of writings by women of African descent, spread over several generations, from different parts of the world, in different professions, writing in different languages (but translated), writing in different styles, writing in different genres, speaking of and to different subjects, writing within different historical contexts etc, is a provocation or challenge to whoever is interested in the story of women of African descent to work harder at

creating, recording, disseminating, sharing, critiquing, and preserving such stories. For even though the struggle for gender equity tends to be overly political, it is cultural ideas and practices that really need to be interrogated and changed. And there is no better way to change attitudes and practices towards women, and acknowledge them as equal partners to men, than by way of (re-) creating and (re) telling stories about them, their world, feelings, views, contribution to humanity and belonging.”

—Tom Odhiambo, *Daily Nation* (Kenya)

“Totally covetable... It’s organised in a really interesting way, with links between mothers and daughters, and so much else besides. It is hugely diverse in the genres it represents. This is an essential book.”

—Claire Armitstead, *The Guardian*

“It is a literary tour-de-force that must be read slowly and savoured... This is the joy and richness a reader will discover in this book: explosiveness, urgency, and a fantastic global literary encounter.”

—Selwyn Cudjoe, *Trinidad Daily Express*

“This is a beautiful, challenging and triumphant collection of writing that increases our understanding of humanity and entertains royally... Anyone interested in Africa, gender politics, good storytelling and writing that pushes the boundaries of the form will love this book... The depth of psychological, political, economic and cultural insight here is awe-inspiring.”

—Paul Burke, *NB magazine*

“It has been a long time since a book created this kind of buzz and excitement. Busby has described the array of contributors as ‘an amazing party guest list’. One can see why. Reserve a special place for this one on your bookshelf, it’s a must-have.”

—Samira Sawlani, *African Arguments* Best African Books of 2019

“This anthology inspires a great sense of pride in discovering the enormous number of black women writers and their rich body of literary works going back over a century.”

—Kari Mutu, *The East African*

“...possibly the most important anthology published in 2019, featuring some of the most incisive and visionary writing I’ve read in a long time. I can’t think of anything else I’ve read this year that matches this for its scope and beauty.”

—Anthony Joseph, *Wasafiri* magazine

“With more than 200 black women writers in its 700 eventful pages, this inspiring collection punches above its very considerable weight. The result is great diversity within a supposed minority, a resounding statement of the infinitely rich life experience of the ‘sisters’ drawn from Africa and the Diaspora.”
—Kevin Le Gendre, *Echoes* magazine

“An international treasure... *New Daughters of Africa* is not only for people of African descent; it is for everyone... This work was assembled for a time such as this, and it will echo the unified voice of women of African descent for generations to come.”

—Johnna Rocker-Clinton, *San Francisco Book Review*

“The historical sweep and diversity of this literary compendium is staggering, with judiciously selected works of African and African-Diasporan women... Every Black home should own a copy of the book. The literary voices of Black women need to be heard even more urgently now.”

—John Stevenson, *Black History* 365

“A great literary assembly put together for the purpose of reconstructing perceptions about Africa and her women, celebrating African women in literature and showcasing the dazzling range of their work... At once a war-front, a home-front and a sanctuary for our souls, the page is where Africa’s literary daughters wield our pens like swords to stake our claim to a true feminism whose power, urgency and truth can be found only at gender’s intersections: colonialism, race, culture, class, sexuality, history and nation.”

—Olatoun Gabi-Williams, *The Guardian* (Nigeria)

“With sly humour, piercing knowingness, lush descriptions and rousing calls to action, this multitude of women from Antigua to Zimbabwe to the US demonstrates the deep-seated heritage that unites them. The sheer span of history is a revelation... It’s a book to keep by your bed or on your desk, to pick up and put down constantly, a collection to savour slowly in the parts that make up its towering whole. Lively and impatient, their voices glow.”

—Michele Magwood, *Wanted Online*

“...showcases just how varied and geographically disparate the range of women writers with roots in Africa is today. ... this book will be a cause for celebration and ought to be read by all.”
—LitHub

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Margaret Busby CBE, Hon. FRSL (Nana Akua Ackon) is a major cultural figure in Britain and around the world. She was born in Ghana and educated in the UK, graduating from London University. She became Britain's youngest and first Black woman publisher when she cofounded Allison & Busby in the late 1960s, presiding as editorial director over an international list of notable authors including Buchi Emecheta, Nuruddin Farah, Sam Greenlee, Rosa Guy, Roy Heath, Chester Himes, C. L. R. James, George Lamming, Adrian Mitchell, Michael Moorcock, Jill Murphy, Ishmael Reed, Michèle Roberts, John Edgar Wideman and Val Wilmer.

A writer, editor, broadcaster and literary critic, she has also written drama for BBC radio and the stage. Her radio abridgements and dramatizations encompass work by Henry Louis Gates, Timothy Mo, Walter Mosley, Jean Rhys, Sam Selvon and Wole Soyinka. She has interviewed high-profile writers (among them Toni Morrison and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o), judged prestigious literary prizes including the Booker Prize, and served on the boards of such organizations as the Royal Literary Fund, *Wasafiri* magazine, Tomorrow's Warriors and the Africa Centre in London.

A long-time campaigner for diversity in publishing, she is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and recipient of several honorary doctorates and awards, including the London Book Fair Lifetime Achievement Award, the Bocas Henry Swanzy Award, the Royal Society of Literature's Benson Medal and the Royal African Society's inaugural Africa Writes Lifetime Achievement Award.

For Eileen
(1943–2020)

To sisterhood,
love,
and friendship

NEW DAUGHTERS OF AFRICA

**Edited by
Margaret
Busby**



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Introduction

What a joy to be introducing *New Daughters of Africa*—a truly collaborative venture that will have an inspiring legacy for years to come! Enabling it to be assembled in record time, writers not only came on board with enthusiasm and alacrity but often steered me in the direction of others whose work they admire, lest these were not already on my radar. Altogether, more than 200 living writers have contributed work to these pages—an amazing party guest list!

A template of sorts was provided by the anthology I compiled more than twenty-five years ago, *Daughters of Africa*; yet this present volume represents something of a fresh start, since it duplicates none of the writers who appeared in the 1992 collection.¹

New Daughters of Africa begins with some important entries from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—and that a limited number of names represent these periods is not to say that there are not many others whose words could have expanded the early sections; however, these few names serve as a reminder of the indisputable fact that later generations stand tall because of those who have gone before. The chronology continues in the ordering of the twentieth- and twenty-first-century writers who follow by decade of birth, primarily to give context to the generational links.

Beginning this anthology with Nana Asma'u² (1793–1863) signals that there are foremothers who could have occupied a leading place in any era. A revered figure in northern Nigeria, she spoke four languages and was an educated and independent Islamic woman who can be considered a precursor to modern feminism in Africa. In her “Lamentation for 'Aysha”, epitomising the depth of connection that at best can be found between sister-friends, she mourns the loss of her lifelong confidante with the words:

1 See a full listing of those who appeared in *Daughters of Africa* (1992) on pp. 920–22.

2 Nana Asma'u was brought to my attention, after the publication of *Daughters of Africa*, by Jean Boyd, who kindly sent me her 1989 book *The Caliph's Sister: Nana Asma'u 1793–1865: Teacher, Poet and Islamic Leader*, and who translated much of this extraordinary woman's work, published in *The Collected Works of Nana Asma'u, Daughter of Usman dan Fodiyo 1793–1864* (edited by Jean Boyd and Beverly B. Mack).

Know you not that love, when firmly established, is priceless?
 There is no child who could make me forget that love
 and no brother, nothing that could soothe me, not even all sorts of
 riches.

...

I cry for her with tears of compassion
 and of longing and sympathy for her, and loving friendship...

Sarah Parker Remond (1815–1894), abolitionist, lecturer, suffragist and much else, who leads the nineteenth-century grouping, demonstrates many of the themes and serendipitous connections that characterise this collection. A prime example of internationalism, she was born in Salem, Massachusetts (where her father had been brought as a child from the Dutch island of Curaçao), and lectured and studied in England before relocating to Italy, where she became a doctor and married. Her letter of September 1866 to the London *Daily News*, in which she waxes eloquent on “the reactionary movement against the coloured race in the United States”, and castigates the social commentator Thomas Carlyle for having “claims to the gratitude of all negro haters on both sides of the Atlantic”, makes one wonder how she might have reacted to a tweet by Donald Trump. Delia Jarrett-Macauley’s essay “The Bedford Women” delves further into her remarkable story, along the way revealing personal links much closer to home.

It gives pause for thought that Elizabeth Keckley (1818–1907), her life bridging the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, was describing first-hand the trauma of enslavement in her autobiography *Behind the Scenes: Or, Thirty Years a Slave and Four Years in the White House*, published in 1868—exactly one hundred years before the “mould-breaking year” that Jarrett-Macauley refers to, when “on university campuses from Paris to New York, students were protesting against the old order, against bureaucratic elites, against capitalism, sexism and racism and all forms of authoritarianism”, one direct result being the birth of black studies programmes in such places of learning as Cornell, Howard and Harvard. And 1968 would be blighted by the assassination of Dr Martin Luther King in April (later that month MP Enoch Powell gave his notorious “Rivers of Blood” speech, scaremongering about mass immigration to the UK), and made notable too for the moment when at the Mexico City Olympic Games, African-American athletes Tommie Smith and John Carlos raised their fists in an iconic Black Power salute on the podium after winning medals, watched by, among others, the only black girl in Angela Cobbinah’s Cornish village, who recalls: “I felt

an unfamiliar emotion. Call it connection or kinship, or the bubbling of a youthful rebelliousness...”

Such connections, and bonds of kinship, actual as well as intuited, strengthen the links between contributors to this volume, and those in my earlier anthology, and those who hopefully will discover themselves in these pages or draw inspiration to continue the legacy in their own ways. There are the literal mother-daughter relationships, beginning here with Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin (1842–1924) and Florida Ruffin Ridley (1861–1943). It is especially pleasing to note the emergence as a writer of Yvonne Bailey-Smith, having raised and empowered three children (Zadie Smith and her brothers) to successful careers, and to see Atillah Springer follow the pathway of her mother Eintou Pearl Springer, a contributor to *Daughters of Africa*, and to see Rebecca Walker, daughter of Alice Walker, achieve prominence in her own right. Exciting, too, to see work from Julianne Okot Bitek and Wanjiku wa Ngũgĩ, whose fathers’ writings I have enjoyed, and illuminating to read the experience of Arthenia Bates Millican (1920–2012), mentored by a father who was mired in “stuckness” but taught by Langston Hughes about “the value of humor in literature as a means to obliterate the soreness from difficult bruises to the soul”.

We each have our individual experiences of the mother-daughter relationship, some of which are shared in these pages, such as Marina Salandy-Brown’s “Lost Daughter of Africa”. Recognition of connection to the crucial and indelible maternal spirit is given by H. Cordelia Ray (1852–1916) in her 1991 poem “To My Mother” and in Akosua Busia’s elegiac “Mama”:

She is the centre of my earth
 The fire from which I warm my soul
 The spark that kindles my heart.
 The sustenance I feed my daughter
 Is the nourishment I sucked from her once-succulent flesh
 Turned brittle-boned, held together by willpower
 Mama feeds me still—

Permeating the very personal stories in these pages is always an awareness of the wider world, and of the impact of national and international politics. As well as honouring her mother, Cordelia Ray celebrates the heroic Toussaint Louverture, leader of the Haitian Revolution, expelling the French, British and Spanish armies that enforced slavery in Haiti and Santo Domingo. Effie Waller Smith (1879–1960), meanwhile, both addresses world issues in her

poem “The Cuban Cause” and finds time from the perspective of the first decade of the twentieth century to praise “The ‘Bachelor Girl’”:

She’s no “old maid,” she’s not afraid
To let you know she’s her own “boss”...

Of politics and all the tricks
And schemes that politicians use,
She knows full well and she can tell
With eloquence of them her views...

She does not shirk, but does her work,
Amid the world’s fast hustling whirl,
And come what may, she’s here to stay,
The self-supporting “bachelor girl.”

(Definitely one of the “Independent Women” sung about by Destiny’s Child.)

In many ways 1992 seems longer ago than a quarter-century; yet, while much has changed, many challenges remain to impact on the publication of work by women of African descent. Who imagined in 1992 that we would celebrate the first African-American US president in 2008, and who could have predicted what would follow Barack Obama’s achievement, a decade later, on the watch of his successor in the White House? Much more empowering to think of 2018 as the year former first lady Michelle Obama broke records on the publication of her autobiographical memoir *Becoming*, which sold 1.4 million copies in its first week.

In 1992, Toni Morrison had not yet been awarded the Nobel Prize. Only the following year did she become the first black woman to win that laureate, and to my mind her international celebrity had been slower to come than it should have been, given that *The Bluest Eye* was published in 1970. Since then, I had looked up to her, and was privileged to spend time with her when she was in London for the British publication of *Beloved*—I interviewed her in 1988 (recorded by then fledgling filmmaker Sindamani Bridglal, and subsequently shown on Channel 4), not long before she won the Pulitzer Prize. Toni Morrison was my beacon. In the 1960s, when I started out as a publisher, she was the only other black woman editor I knew of, the first black woman senior editor at Random House, championing books by Toni Cade Bambara, Angela Davis, Gayl Jones, Henri Dumas, as well as compiling *The Black Book* (1974), an anthology of photographs, illustrations, essays and

other documents of black American life. She continued as an editor while producing extraordinary novels of her own, before leaving publishing in the 1980s to devote more time to her writing, including her play *Dreaming Emmett*, about the 1955 murder of the black teenager Emmett Till—also the subject of Bonnie Greer’s contribution to this present anthology. *Beloved*, too, was inspired by a true story, that of enslaved African-American Margaret Garner, whose story Morrison discovered while compiling *The Black Book*. History “rememoried” unfailingly drives many of the stories that keep these pages turning.

In 1992 came Morrison’s novel *Jazz*, the second in a trilogy that ended with *Paradise* (following publication of which I would again have the honour of being in conversation with her, at the Queen Elizabeth Hall in 1998), as well as her succinctly powerful volume of essays, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, containing the stand-out quote: “As a writer reading, I came to realise the obvious: the subject of the dream is the dreamer.”

That special year 1992 also saw the publication of Terry McMillan’s *Waiting to Exhale*, which remained on the *New York Times* bestseller list for months, and with the election of Bill Clinton as US President, Maya Angelou would in 1993 read her poem “On the Pulse of Morning” at his inauguration, the second poet (after Robert Frost at Kennedy’s inauguration in 1961) in history to read a poem at a presidential inauguration, and the first African-American and woman.

Many accomplishments were years away, and names now very familiar and deservedly lauded were still at the starting line. Jackie Kay, current poet laureate (or makar) of Scotland, had only just begun to receive recognition and the accolades that would start piling up after the 1991 publication of her first collection of poems, *The Adoption Papers*; her additional talents as novelist and memoirist were yet to be shown to the world. Ama Ata Aidoo was on her ever-upward journey, and was two decades away from becoming the subject of a film by Yaba Badoe.

Custom, tradition, friendships, mentor/mentee relationships, romance, sister-hood, inspiration, encouragement, sexuality, intersectional feminism, the politics of gender, race and identity—within these pages is explored an extensive spectrum of possibilities, in ways that are touching, surprising, angry, considered, joyful, heartrending. Supposedly taboo subjects are addressed head-on and with subtlety, familiar dilemmas elicit new takes.

How candid and engaging is Jay Bernard’s “I resist the urge to destroy my own records by reflecting on archives, how I use them, and what they have meant to me”:

I used to be a bit of a psychogeographer. All criticisms considered, I used to like the term, the ideas, and made a zine for a short time called *Psychogeography for the Modern Black Woman*. I equated my gender with the city around me. I was not simply a woman, but a specific knot of places, perceptions, possibilities. It detailed my walks around London and mentioned the bookshops, squats and other spaces I used to go to—Silver Moon, Index, Kennington Books, New Beacon—locations that made me make sense. Only one of those, New Beacon, still exists.

Isn't that just what happens? Things disappear.

How fearlessly revelatory is Nawal El Saadawi in “About Me in Africa — Politics and Religion in My Childhood”, in which she writes:

I was brainwashed by my official education as a Muslim, Egyptian girl from the working class. In primary school the British and Egyptian teachers praised the upper-class girls, with fair white skin. My maternal Turkish grandmother despised my dark skin, which I inherited from the poor peasant family of my father.

My maternal aunt used to hide my dark skin with white powder, and would straighten my hair with a hot iron. I liberated my mind from this slavery by educating myself. Also, my enlightened mother and father helped me to undo what teachers did to me.

How disarming and informational is Zuleica Romay Guerra in “Something About Me”, which concludes by saying:

I am the Cuban Revolution, I am an outcome of the process started in the sixteenth century when, weighed down with chains in the lower decks of the slave ships, brutally dropped into their own excrement, and thrown overboard as garbage when they were on the point of death, more than a million African men and women arrived upon this island in order to keep on writing a history in which their offspring—all Cubans today, without any qualifying prefixes whatsoever—keep on with our struggles to win the fullest justice ever.

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How courageous and touching is Andaiye's recollection of her amity with Audre Lorde:

I do not remember when I wrote Audre but I did, and I remember that she answered immediately and sent me a copy of *A Burst of Light* with the inscription, “Sister Survivor—May these words be a bridge over that place where there are no words—or where they are so difficult as to sound like a scream!”

And so began my friendship with Audre Lorde, around the sharing of the fear of living with, perhaps dying from, cancer. She wrote often, mostly on cards. She’d say, “I need your words too.” I couldn’t write too many. So I called, often. And she called too.

Lorde’s is a name that recurs in other contributors’ work, including that of Edwidge Danticat, Sisonke Msimang and Panashe Chigumadzi, who writes:

It wasn’t until I met the force of the unflinching stories of our mothers and grandmothers and aunts and sisters written by black women—Yvonne Vera, Tsitsi Dangarembga, Bessie Head, Ama Ata Aidoo, Alice Walker, Toni Morrison, Audre Lorde, Jamaica Kincaid, Edwidge Danticat, Maryse Condé—that I was compelled to ask more of my view of their worlds, to find an answer to the question: what did it mean to be a black woman in my grandmother’s time?

Echoes and cross-references abound; the history we all are part of creating can be reimagined in many ways. Makhosazana Xaba and Diana Ferrus both pay poetic tribute to Sarah Baartman. Dorothea Smartt contributes “Poem Beginning With A Line From Claudia Rankine”, and Rankine herself contributes “Making Room” from her innovative *Citizen: An American Lyric*.

In my introduction to the 1992 anthology, I concluded that “Throughout these women’s words runs the awareness of connectedness to a wider flow of history, to the precursors, our foremothers. Our collective strength, like that of a chain, derives from maintaining the links.”

The different ways of connecting to an African heritage is an ever-present theme, as are stories of migration, and specifically “Windrush stories”, typified by the writing of Andrea Levy, whose father was among those immigrants who sailed to Britain from the Caribbean on the *Empire Windrush* in 1948, to be joined soon by her mother. To quote from Levy’s acclaimed novel *Small Island*: “It was inconceivable that we Jamaicans, we West Indians, we members of the British Empire would not fly to the Mother Country’s defence when there was

threat.” Windrush is an inescapable reference point in the British-Caribbean nexus, whether mentioned specifically (as in Beverley Bryan’s “A Windrush Story” or Selina Nwulu’s poetry) or informing and permeating the creative consciousness. Stories of mothers separated from offspring, and the resultant psychological effects, inform many of the contributions. Ifeona Fulani’s essay “Three Islands, Two Cities: The Making of a Black/Caribbean/Woman Writer/Scholar” talks of how her parents’ migration, “a few steps ahead of the great wave of Caribbean migrants to England in the late 1960s”, led her to becoming accustomed to being “the single grain of allspice floating in the milk jug” in the course of her very British education, and of her own transatlantic criss-crossings with which so many others would find common cause.

Jamaican-born Yvonne Bailey-Smith draws on her own memories of rejoining a mother who had gone ahead to the promised land that forever beckons immigrants, laying the ground for her daughter Zadie later to muse—as she is accepting the Langston Hughes medal in New York—about the significance of “all those years I’d spent as a child in England trying to prove that I was both Black and British; that I knew their plays and poems and history, that I could get into the finest institutions of education they had to offer, that I could perhaps even add a few words to the history of their literature—that I, too, was England.”

Yvette Edwards in her short story “Security” brilliantly captures the emotions of a septuagenarian woman regarded as a foreigner worthy of deportation after half a century of sacrifice and thwarted hope in Britain. Carmen Harris, in her “Hello... Goodbye”, pins her hopes on being able to recreate an identity through her father’s migration story.

Sue Woodford-Hollick’s “Who I Was Then, and Who I Am Now” gives another aspect of finding identity in the course of growing up in Britain, as does Simi Bedford’s excerpt from her novel *Yoruba Girl Dancing*, showing the particular experience of being an African at boarding-school in England shared by many (myself included). Others who speak to the British experience include Kadija Sesay, whose formative years included being fostered (an experience in common with Patience Agbabi). Time and again, a topic that arises is the need to be uplifted by finding oneself mirrored in early reading.

Whether the journey is from a childhood in West Africa—as happened to Nah Dove—or from rural Cornwall in England’s southwest—Angela Cobbinah’s early life—it is London that encapsulates the Black British experience, with all its possibilities for racism, and much else besides. For Donu Kogbara, whose harrowing tale is of being kidnapped in her Nigerian homeland (“Losing My Fragile Roots”), London has become a sanctuary.

Women reveal themselves in these pages as survivors of violence and trauma. Verene Shepherd gives some valuable context in “Historicizing Gender-Based Violence in the Caribbean”. A variety of partnerships and marital relationships elicit poignant writing, including Barbara Jenkins’ “A Perfect Stranger”, Reneilwe Malatji’s “My Perfect Husband”, and Catherine Johnson’s “The Year I Lost”.

Andrea Rosario-Gborie, whose personal commentary from the perspective of her last days of working in Hollywood has resonances for today, identifies 1992 as a landmark in other ways: the year of major rioting in Los Angeles in April, following the acquittal of four police officers in the Rodney King beating criminal trial, while in the same month in Sierra Leone, West Africa, a group of young soldiers launched a military coup that brought to power a new twenty-five-year-old head of state.

Minna Salami, introduced to feminism by her mother, acknowledges that “we are feminists because there were women before us who were feminists. What causes the sense of loss, then, is that due to the invasion of Africa, the majority of historical records of these women are missing. So when someone says that feminism isn’t African, we are reminded that we do not have the historical proof to show how continuous our presence is in the continent.” She quotes from my introduction to *Daughters of Africa* — “Tradition and history are nurturing spirits for women of African descent. For without an understanding of where we have come from, we are less likely to be able to make sense of where we are going.” She goes on to assert: “Without doubt, it was this sense of loss that led me to Oya, who unlike any other figure in precolonial African history has expanded my purview of where I come from and of where I am going.”

That restorative African feminist lineage is something Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie finds in the conclusion to her iconic essay “We Should All Be Feminists”:

My great-grandmother, from stories I’ve heard, was a feminist. She ran away from the house of the man she did not want to marry and married the man of her choice. She refused, she protested, spoke up whenever she felt she was being deprived of land and access because she was female. She did not know that word *feminist*. But it doesn’t mean she wasn’t one. More of us should reclaim that word. The best feminist I know is my brother Kene, who is also a kind, good-looking and very masculine young man. My own definition of a feminist is a man or a woman who says,

“Yes, there’s a problem with gender as it is today and we must fix it, we must do better.”

All of us, women and men, must do better.

Self-image is examined in numerous ways. “You will get your hair done” is the refrain in Bridget Minamore’s piece, “New Daughters of Africa”. Zadie Smith, accepting her Langston Hughes medal, concludes her acceptance speech, poignantly and humbly, by saying:

... I am so thankful that tonight it has stretched far enough to include a Black-British woman like me, a freckle-faced woman like me, a mixed-marriage woman like me, a green-card holder like me, an immigrant like me, a second-generation Jamaican like me, a distant but not forgotten daughter of Africa, like me. Thank you.

The importance of nomenclature is a recurrent theme. Ellah Wakatama Allfrey in “Longchase”, linking her Zimbabwean heritage—specifically the saga of her great-uncle, a veteran of colonial warfare—to her own engagement with the world and the perennial traversing of borders, reflects that it is “an imprecise thing, this English naming of Africans”. For the main protagonist of Chibundu Onuzo’s story (“Sunita”), Toni Morrison’s epiphany “that the subject of the dream is the dreamer” could not be more apt, while Nana-Ama Danquah in “Saying Goodbye to Mary Danquah” points out:

The practice of conferring Christian, or English, names on African children was introduced by missionaries from the Western world who came to what they considered the Dark Continent for the purpose of religious indoctrination. In many cases, children were required to have Christian names in order to register and attend classes in the missionary-run schools. Usually that meant balancing an existence of duality—using one name when operating within the colonial system and using another when operating within one’s native culture.

The process of translation from one culture to another is amplified when it comes to language itself. This anthology, though, of course, limited by resources, gives a rich glimpse of the dynamic range of original sources out there to be discovered. Trifonia Melibea Obono’s *La Bastarda* was the

first book by a woman writer from Equatorial Guinea to be published in English and I am delighted to be able to include a passage of her work, “Let the Nkúkúma Speak”, translated by Lawrence Schimel, who also provided translations of the poems by multilingual Benin writer Agnès Agboton, whose mother tongue is Gun.

The genres represented here are widely varied—fiction of different types, including short stories and extracts from longer works; essays; journalism; columns; blogs; poetry; speeches; extracts from plays and film scripts; poetry; other experimental forms... An unexpected pleasure is to read writers expressing themselves in a genre with which they are not normally associated. Who knew that Nadifa Mohamed, one of *Granta’s* “Best of Young British Novelists” in 2013, was also a fine poet? Adrienne Kennedy, best known as a playwright, contributes the memorable poem “Forget” about her white grandfather. Zoe Adjonyoh, from whom cookery writing might have been expected, delivers a memoir of her father that is indeed “A Beautiful Story”.

As much as the contributors are all grouped together as writers, they are each made up of many parts, that if labelled according to the work they do would run almost the gamut of the alphabet: academics, activists, bloggers, campaigners, children’s writers, critics, curators, diarists, directors, dramatists, editors, essayists, fiction writers, filmmakers, historians, journalists, lecturers, lyricists, memoirists, novelists, painters, performance artists, playwrights, poets, politicians, producers, publishers, science fiction writers, screenwriters, short-story writers, speculative fiction writers, travel writers, young adult writers...and more.

Now, as in past decades, the nature of the publishing industry has a bearing on what reaches the marketplace. In *Daughters of Africa* I touched on the importance of pioneering black publishers—including New Beacon Books (founded in 1966) and Bogle-L’Ouverture, begun half a century ago by Jessica Huntley, who responded to the 1968 “Rodney riots” that followed the banning from teaching in Jamaica of Guyanese scholar Walter Rodney by producing his book *The Groundings with my Brothers* in 1969. (Earlier in that same year Allison & Busby—the publishing company I co-founded—defied all odds by turning Sam Greenlee’s subversive first novel *The Spook Who Sat By the Door* into a publishing success.) Other imprints to be remembered include the Black Ink Collective, and Buzz Johnson’s Karia Press, credited with having “rediscovered” Claudia Jones by reprinting her writing. Both Jessica Huntley and I were founding members of an initiative called Greater

Access to Publishing (GAP), campaigning to bring about a more multiracial publishing industry, and a 1988 article that I authored (together with Lennie Goodings of Virago) in trade magazine *The Bookseller* began with a statement by Toni Morrison that chimed with our reasoning thirty years ago, and remains relevant: “It’s not patronage, not affirmative action we’re talking about here, we’re talking about the life of a country’s literature.”

Lasting change in the publishing workforce as a whole has yet to be achieved, although the aspirational mantra of inclusivity and diversity has become increasingly routine in today’s mainstream and corporate industry. The category of African literature, let alone literature by women of African descent, is debatable, depending on who is doing the categorisation. Lesley Lokko in her essay “No more than three, please!” says:

The tensions over classification are exacerbated by the fact that much African literature is published outside Africa, for audiences that may *include* Africans, but not exclusively, with everyone having a view on what it should be, what it should say, who can write it and who may read it. Yet the confusion and contestation are liberating. The “real” question is whether current and aspiring African writers will invent forms of their own.

Verna Wilkins, founder in 1987 of the children’s imprint Tamarind Books, in “A Memory Evoked” explains what frustrates and motivates her:

Having witnessed, year after year, over more than a quarter of a century, the exclusion of Black and ethnic minority children from books aimed exclusively at children, something had to be done...

I...began working in diverse classrooms in the UK. The existing barriers that exclude children of colour from books aimed at children could start with the children. They should see themselves as the authors, editors, designers, illustrators and publishers of the future.

It was in 2000 at a publishing party that I first met Ellah Wakatama Allfrey—we could hardly have missed each other, being the only two black women present. She was at the time working at Penguin Books, and the connection we made then has been sustained through many a project. (For example, at her request I wrote an introduction to the Penguin Modern Classics edition of Bessie Head’s *A Question of Power*.) Beyond that, the

role she has played in mentoring others is exemplary, culminating in her taking on the laudable adventure of becoming Publishing Director of new publishing house the Indigo Press. Likewise, the indefatigable Bibi Bakare-Yusuf of Cassava Republic Press is a role model for how to grow a respected independent list.

Individual editors have an opportunity to make change happen, particularly where they lead imprints, as in the UK with Sharmaine Lovegrove heading Dialogue Books at LittleBrown, or Valerie Brandes at Jacaranda. Other ventures to applaud include gal-dem, Digitalback Books, and Knights Of, as well as such online resources as Mostly Lit, Brittle Paper, Kinna Reads, Africa in Dialogue, and James Murua's blog. Among those to whom kudos is due in the US are Amistad, founded by Charles Harris, a ground-breaking publisher in an era that also saw flourish the likes of Paul Coates of Black Classic Press, and the late Glenn Thompson of Writers and Readers.

Festivals and literary celebrations—Aké Arts and Book Festival in Nigeria, Abantu in South Africa, Mboka in The Gambia, Bare Lit and Africa Writes in London, the Bocas Lit Fest in Trinidad, Calabash in Jamaica, the Yari Yari conferences put on by the Organization of Women Writers of Africa, and the African Writers Trust in Uganda, the Harlem Book Fair in New York—have played their part in nurturing literary careers, as have initiatives such as Africa39 (represented in these pages by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Monica Arac de Nyeko, Jackee Budesta Batanda, Nana Brew-Hammond, Edwige Renée Dro, Hawa Jande Golakai, Nadifa Mohamed, Glaydah Namukasa, Chibundu Onuzo, Taiye Selasi, Namwali Serpell, Lola Shoneyin, Novuyo Rosa Tshuma, Chika Unigwe and Zukiswa Wanner), *Granta's* "Best of" lists of novelists (the British choices including in 2013 Nadifa Mohamed, Taiye Selasi and Zadie Smith, who also featured in 2003; the American choices listing Edwidge Danticat and Chinelo Okparanta), and prizes and competitions such as the Caine Prize for African Writing, winners over the years including Leila Aboulela, Monica Arac de Nyeko, Makena Onjerika, Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor and Namwali Serpell (intimations of Chimamanda's increasingly stellar talent came when she was a runner-up, in 2002 when I was a judge, pipped to the post by the visionary Binyavanga Wainaina, who used his prize money to found the influential Kenyan journal *Kwani?*), the Brunel African Poetry Prize (winners including Warsan Shire and Safia Elhillo), the SI Leeds Literary Prize, the Etisalat Prize, the Golden Baobab, and the Bocas Prize, which has showcased the gifts of Tiphonie Yanique, Edwidge Danticat, Jacqueline Bishop, as well as *Daughters of Africa* alumnae Lorna Goodison and Olive Senior.

From the Myriad First Drafts Competition, which in 2018 focused on women of African descent, came two excellent winners whom we gladly welcomed on board, Anni Domingo, with an excerpt from her debut novel *Breaking the Maafa Chain*, about Sarah Forbes Bonetta, and Rutendo Chabikwa with “Mweya’s Embrace” from her work-in-progress *Todzungaira*. Mention must in addition be made of the shortlisted candidates—Christine Amede, Gila K. Berryman, Emmanuella Dekonor, Malika K. McCoy, Ethel Maqeda, Morenike May, Melita Vurden and Roxanne Young—who all, it is to be hoped, will be emboldened to keep creating.

Many glorious firsts are represented among contributors, whether Diane Abbott becoming in 1987 the first black woman elected to the British parliament, or Warsan Shire, who won the inaugural African Poetry Prize in 2013, in 2014 being appointed the first Young Poet Laureate for London, or Safia Elhillo becoming the first Sudanese American to win the George Ellenbogen Poetry Award in 2018. We must aim high and strive to break through glass ceilings and barriers; but let us be wary of the trap of remaining “the only”. Ponder the words of Karen Lord: “If we want people to walk this path again, we have to tell more than facts. We must tell truths, root-deep, tree-tall testaments to understanding...”

Countries represented include Antigua, Australia, Bahamas, Barbados, Benin, Bermuda, Botswana, Brazil, Burundi, Cameroon, Canada, Cuba, Dominica, Egypt, England, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Ivory Coast, Jamaica, Kenya, Liberia, Nigeria, Norway, Portugal, Puerto Rico, St Thomas, US Virgin Islands, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Scotland, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda, USA, Wales, Zambia, Zimbabwe...

Yet the history of these regions is driven by constant social and political change—the Bahamas of Patricia Ginton-Meicholas probably connects with that of Meta Davis Cumberbatch more in terms of memory than actuality, yet she says defiantly: “I ain’t goin’ nowhere/this land and me is one.” Nevertheless, few of us remain static forever. Deise Faria Nunes, born and raised in Brazil, and living in Norway for the past two decades, as she embarks on an exploration of Candomblé, with its West African roots, writes in “The person in the boat”:

Some fellowships we do not choose; we are born into them. Others we walk voluntarily into, with our eyes wide open, even though we do not know what will meet us on the other side.

There is legitimacy in the joy and burden of one's place of origin, the joy and burden of one's place of settlement, the joy and burden of one's adopted homeland, the affiliations rejected or chosen. I feel some native pride that Ghana is a chosen subject or destination for many who originally hail from elsewhere—Candace Allen, Attillah Springer, Sandra Jackson-Opoku and others—knowing also that I have familial ties in Dominica, Trinidad, Barbados, Bermuda, the Bahamas, Europe, America... We are universal, and it is the right of any artist to resist categorisation or the sort of pigeonholing that sets out to be restrictive and stifling. But just as naming oneself can be liberating, so we need never feel limited by labels. Explaining why she does not mind being called a black writer or a black woman writer, Toni Morrison has said: "I really think the range of emotions and perceptions I have had access to as a black person and as a female person are greater than those of people who are neither... So it seems to me that my world did not shrink because I was a black female writer. It just got bigger."

Wasafiri magazine, the literary journal that since 1984 has been a champion of black and diasporic writers worldwide (its name deriving from a KiSwahili word meaning "travellers"), marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of *Daughters of Africa* with a special issue in December 2017, a feature of which was brief testimony from a handful of writers about what their first encounters with the anthology meant to them. Hailing the milestone, Bermudian Angela Barry spoke of her thrill at coming across a contributor whose father was from her island, allowing her to feel "that I also was a daughter of Africa and that I too had something to say."

Goretti Kyomuhendo revealed: "I first encountered *Daughters of Africa* nearly ten years after it was first published—and my first reaction was that of total excitement. I carried a few copies back with me to Uganda, which I shared with nearly forty members of FEMRITE—The Uganda Women Writers Association, which I was directing at the time. *Daughters of Africa* was to become the gift that never stopped giving..." Somali novelist Nadifa Mohamed testified that her writer's block was cured as the result of a copy of the anthology being passed on to her, enabling her to follow the thread of writers "who left their stamp on the world only through the written word."

Phillippa Yaa de Villiers, who as Commonwealth Poet in 2014 performed her poem "Courage—it takes more" at Westminster Abbey, wrote: "We were behind the bars of apartheid—we South Africans had been cut off from the beauty and majesty of African thought traditions, and *Daughters of Africa*

was among those works that replenished our starved minds, connecting us to the Black planet of memory and imagination, correcting the imbalance of information and awakening our own potential in ourselves... *Daughters of Africa* brings our separate spaces on the planet into each other's purview, our experiences accented by our geographical and historical conditions, a text that creates solidarity, appreciation and reminds us that we are never alone... Putting African experience at the centre of our understanding, at the centre of ourselves, we learn more about how to be together, to heal ourselves and to plan for the most fabulous future."

Edwige Renée Dro from Côte d'Ivoire talked about the fact that, as she was starting out on her literary journey, "literary columnists were talking about the rise of African writing, a wonderful fact for me even if the majority of the writing they were praising seemed to come from Nigeria. Or from anglophone Africa..." She continued:

So here I was, heralding from a country that needed its name translated for people to have any idea, living in England and writing in English. Here I was also immersed in a literary milieu that defined Nigerian writing as African writing. What was a lacking-in-confidence aspiring francophone writer living in England to do but set her novel in Nigeria? It is during that time that I stumbled upon a copy of *Daughters of Africa* at my local library... I let out a Yes! as I recognised names like that of my compatriot Véronique Tadjo, but also other francophone writers including Aminata Sow Fall or Mariama Bâ or Marie Vieux-Chauvet with their works set in Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, and Haiti. From that moment, I stopped the transportation of my story to a country I hadn't even been to. The writer's block lifted and my confidence returned. It was as if the daughters of Africa featured in that anthology were telling me, their daughter and granddaughter, to bravely go forth and bridge the literary gap between francophone and anglophone Africa.

That these intrepid writers have found their rightful place in *New Daughters of Africa* is a source of immense satisfaction to me, and I trust to them as well.

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The passing years since this book's ancestor, *Daughters of Africa*, appeared have meant saying goodbye to irreplaceable friends and family. My own

mother, my dedicatee in 1992, had died the previous year (my father in 1981), so could not share the pleasure of seeing the project come to fruition. Many whose words graced those pages we will not see again:

Maya Angelou (1928–2014), **Toni Cade Bambara** (1939–1995), **Valerie Belgrave** (1946–2016), **Louise Bennett** (1919–2006), **Gwendolyn Brooks** (1917–2000), **Barbara Burford** (1944–2010), **Octavia Butler** (1947–2006), **Aída Cartagena Portalatín** (1918–1994), **Alice Childress** (1916–1994), **Michelle Cliff** (1946–2016), **Lucille Clifton** (1936–2010), **J. California Cooper** (1931–2014), **Jayne Cortez** (1934–2012), **Noémia de Sousa** (1926–2002), **Alda do Espírito Santo** (1926–2010), **Buchi Emecheta** (1944–2017), **Mari Evans** (1919–2017), **Beryl Gilroy** (1924–2001), **Rosa Guy** (1922–2012), **Kristin Hunter** (1931–2008), **Noni Jabavu** (1919–2008), **Alice Perry Johnson** (1932–2011), **Amryl Johnson** (1944–2001), **Marion Patrick Jones** (1931–2016), **June Jordan** (1936–2002), **Caroline Khaketla** (1918–2012), **Ellen Kuzwayo** (1914–2006), **Audre Lorde** (1934–1992), **Lina Magaia** (1940–2011), **Anne Moody** (1940–2015), **Gloria Naylor** (1950–2016), **Lauretta Ngcobo** (1931–2015), **Flora Nwapa** (1931–1994), **Grace Ogot** (1930–2015), **May Opitz** (1960–1996), **Anne Petry** (1908–1997), **Carolyn Rodgers** (1940–2010), **Sandi Russell** (1946–2017), **Ntozake Shange** (1948–2018), **Zulu Sofola** (1935–1995), **Maud Sulter** (1960–2008), **Efua Sutherland** (1924–96), **Elean Thomas** (1947–2004), **Miriam Tlali** (1933–2017), **Adaora Lily Ulasi** (1932–2016?), **Margaret Walker** (1915–1998), **Myriam Warner-Vieyra** (1939–2017), **Dorothy West** (1907–1998), **Sherley Anne Williams** (1944–1999).

We mourn them, but are thankful that their words still inspire and urge us on.

Countless other writers, past and present, deserve to be celebrated alongside those in these pages, and indeed in any company, and we stand on the shoulders of many. Restrictions of space, time and resources are the blight of every fantasist anthologist.

There are those on whom the spotlight will always shine, those whom the cameras seek out, yet who sometimes yearn for anonymity. For others, to bask in reflected glory is enough, to see our sisters triumph and take curtain calls, to stand tall while giving others a well-deserved standing ovation. Yet the imagination respects no hierarchy. There will be names within these pages that are, as yet, unfamiliar to many readers but deserving of as much attention as the household names.

My ambition was and is to shine a light on as many as possible of the deserving, whether or not they are acknowledged or lauded by the gatekeepers, who traditionally single out a privileged few, seemingly never too many to rock the boat. But the boat is going nowhere if it is content to drift in stagnating water.

In November 2018, Canadian contributor Esi Edugyan added another award, a second Giller Prize, to her enviable collection. Her thoughtful and perceptive essay, “The Wrong Door: Some Meditations on Solitude and Writing”, provides a caveat to the celebrity that many an aspirant craves:

I think it would come as a surprise to most readers to learn that most writers in their middle to late careers regard with nostalgia their days of obscurity. I remember being puzzled when a writing professor sat us down and told us to savour our collegiate days, because our motives for writing would never again be this pure. We dismissed her as jaded, and longed for the days when we would see our words bound and prominently displayed in the local bookstore.

... But I understand now too that what she was speaking of was a certain lack of privacy, a certain public spotlight that can begin to erode not only our artistic confidence but even motive, the very impetus for writing in the first place. I have spoken to a German writer who after publishing an international bestseller thirteen years ago struggles to write, paralyzed by the idea of tarnishing his own reputation with an unlikeable follow-up. I have spoken to an American writer who was so badly shamed for an extra-literary occurrence that she cannot bring herself to enter again the public sphere. All of these tragedies are tragedies of exposure, and they speak to the very fundamental need for an area of silence, a room of, yes, one's own.

I feel undeterred in my proselytising for greater visibility for women writers of African descent, which until relatively recently I had thought that I began doing towards the end of the 1980s, when I began to work on compiling *Daughters of Africa*. However, while searching through the archive of papers surrounding me at home, I happened on a letter from Wole Soyinka (who in 1986 made us all proud by becoming the first African to be awarded the Nobel Prize for literature). In 1975, while he was editor of

Transition magazine, he wrote me a letter responding to something I had said when our paths had crossed in London and I had seemingly berated him for not including enough women in an anthology he had recently curated. His warm response read, in part: “It goes to show—the proportion of women poets never did occur to me—a greater testimony to my non-sexist outlook I cannot imagine! But seriously though, it’s quite true, and I am sure you wouldn’t have wanted double standards applied in selection. But you are right to point it out. I know that in the next edition I will especially search for poetry by women.” Thank you, Prof, for speaking out boldly against male monopoly as recently as December 2018 at the award ceremony for the prize that bears your name, which I was honoured to judge—and which was won jointly by a man and a woman—take a bow, Harriet Anena from Uganda.

Long may those handsome garlands keep coming. For my part, I award every woman—more than 200 of you—who did me the honour of accepting my invitation to feature in this anthology the Venerable Order of True African Sisterhood. May you wear it proudly! A legacy of *New Daughters of Africa* that has been facilitated by your generously waiving your usual fees is a major new scholarship at London University’s School of Oriental Studies (SOAS). This will directly benefit African women, making possible a course of study free of the worry of fees and accommodation costs.

And may all who find their way to this anthology, regardless of gender, class or race, feast well on its banquet of words.

Margaret Busby

Acknowledgements

Back in 1989, I met a young editor called Candida Lacey, from feminist publishers Pandora Press, who had just brought out *An Anthology of British Women Writers* (edited by Dale Spender and Janet Todd). We talked of the need to rectify the absence of black women from the literary canon, and I agreed to take on the world single-handedly with her commissioning me to compile *Daughters of Africa: An International Anthology of Words and Writings by Women of African Descent from the Ancient Egyptian to the Present*. Then I became a sort of literary stalker. Pandora transitioned to HarperCollins, and I followed; I was right behind Candida when she moved on to Jonathan Cape, where *Daughters of Africa* was eventually published in 1992. Twenty-five years later, with the original long out of print, and Candida now publisher of Myriad Editions, along came the notion of a completely new edition.

Thank you, Elise Dillsworth, for kickstarting the idea, and thank you again, Candida, for running with it with so enthusiastically. Your hands-on commitment to *New Daughters of Africa* demonstrates everything one could wish for in a publisher. And gratitude aplenty for the dedication of the Myriad-New Internationalist team — seen and unseen — including Corinne Pearlman, Kelsi Farrington, Dawn Sackett, Emma Dowson, Anna Burt, Charley Chapman, Linda McQueen...

Brilliant backup from the US came in the person of Stephanie Steiker, whose efforts resulted in the welcome partnership with Amistad.

I owe more than I can ever express to my siblings — George and Eileen — who have been by my side from day one, ready to help whenever and however necessary, including with translations. Other family members around the world continue to be loyal cheerleaders and keep me going in various ways — Allyson, Phyllis, Moira, Natalie, Ibrahim, Jamil, Kathryn ...

Innumerable friends (which category embraces contributors too — you know who you are) and colleagues gave time, encouragement, practical help, and occasionally much-needed chocolate. To mention just a few: Pauline Melville; Burt Caesar; Joan Harris; Christopher MacLehose; Irene Staunton; Sylvester Onwordi, son of the late Buchi Emecheta; Eve Lacey; Miranda

Pyne; Ike Anya; Nicola Cross; Nuruddin Farah; Lorna Goodison; Mandla Langa; the late Ernest Hecht...

How fortunate I am to have Luke Daniels in my life, providing sustenance, sharing the good times and keeping me on my toes. There is no one I'd rather go dancing with!

Which brings me to music, without which I can't function, so the soundtrack of NDOA features Aaron, Abbey, Abdullah, Ahmad, Al, Albert, Alberta, Alexander, Ali, Alice, Alicia, Alick, Althea, Amadou, Amakye, Andra, Andy, Angela, Angelique, Anita, Ann, Anne-Marie, Antonio, Archie, Aretha, Art, Arthur, Asa, Aston, Astor, Ayanna, Baaba, Baba, Babs, Barbara, Barry, Bébé, Bebo, Ben, Benny, Beres, Bessie, Betty, Bettye, Beverley, Beyoncé, Bheki, Bi, Bill, Billie, Billy, Bob, Bobby, Bonga, Booker, Brandi, Brenda, Brian, Brook, Bruno, Bud, Buddy, Burt, Byron, Caetano, Cal, Cannonball, Carl, Carla, Carlos, Carmen, Carole, Cassandra, Cece, Cecil, CeeLo, Celia, Celina, Cesaria, Chaka, Chano, Charles, Charlie, Cheikh, Chet, Chick, Chucho, Chuck, Cissy, Clarence, Cleo, Cleveland, Cliff, Clifford, Coleman, Corinne, Count, Cuba, Curtis, Daddy, Dakota, Damian, Dave, David, Dawn, Dee Dee, Della, Denise, Denyse, Derrick, Desmond, Des'ree, Dexter, Diana, Diane, Dianne, Dick, Dinah, Dionne, Dizzy, Dobet, Dolly, Don, Donna, Donnie, Donny, Dorothy, Duke, Eartha, Ed, Eddie, Eddy, Edwin, Elizabeth, Ella, Ennio, Eric, Erma, Ernestine, Ernie, Erroll, Erykah, Esperanza, Esther, E.T., Etta, Fats, Fela, Femi, Filomena, Fontella, Francis, Frank, Freda, Freddie, Freddy, Fundi, Gary, Gato, Gene, Geoffrey, George, Gil, Gladys, Gloria, Grace, Gregory, Guy, Gwen, Habib, Hank, Harold, Harry, Hazel, Heather, Helen, Herbie, Hope, Horace, Hugh, Inez, Irene, Irma, Isaac, Ivie, Jackie, Jamelia, James, Janet, Jean, Jeff, Jeffrey, Jennifer, Jevetta, Jill, Jim, Jimi, Jimmy, JJ, Joan, Joe, John, Johnnie, Johnny, Jon, Joni, Joseph, Josephine, Joyce, Kadija, Kai, Kaissa, Keith, Ken, Kenny, Ketty, Khadja, Kirk, Kitch, Lauryn, Lee, Lena, Lenny, Leona, Les, Lester, Letta, Linda, Lionel, Lisa, Lizz, Lonnie, Lorez, Lorraine, Lou, Louis, Lucky, Lukie, Luther, Lynn, Ma, Machel, McCoy, Macy, Mahalia, Manu, Marcel, Marcia, Marcus, Maria, Mariah, Mariam, Mariza, Mark, Marlena, Martha, Martinho, Marvin, Mary, Mary Lou, Mavis, Max, Maxine, Maya, Melba, Melissa, Mercedes, Me'shell, Miatta, Michael, Michel, Mildred, Miles, Millie, Milt, Milton, Minnie, Miriam, Mitty, Monica, Monty, Moses, Mwenda, Nana, Nancy, Nat, Natalie, Nawal, Nene, Neneh, Nico, Nikki, Nina, Nneka, Noel, Nona, Norah, Norma, Oleta, Oliver, Omar, Omara, Ornette, Oscar, Otis, Oumou, Owen, Paco, Papa, Pat, Patrice, Patsy, Patti, Paul, Paulinho, Peabo, Peaches, Pearl, Peggy, Percy, Pharoah, Pharrell, Phineas, Phoebe, Phyllis, PP, Prince, Queen, Quincy, Rachelle, Randy, Ray,

Rebecca, Red, Regina, Richie, Rita, Roberta, Rokia, Roland, Ronald, Rose, Roy, Ruben, Ruby, Ruth, Ry, Sade, Salena, Salif, Sam, Samantha, Sambou, Sammy, Sarah, Sathima, Sergio, Seydu, Shadow, Sheila, Shirley, Shontelle, Sibongile, Siphso, Slim, Smokey, Solomon, Sona, Sonny, Souad, Sparrow, Stanley, Stephanie, Stevie, Susana, Susheela, Syreeta, Tadd, Taj, Tammi, Tania, Teddy, Thad, Thelma, Thelonious, Thomas, Tina, TK, Tommy, Toni, Tony, Toots, Toumani, Touré, Tracy, Tunde, Tyrone, Virginia, Vusi, Walter, Wasis, Wayne, Wes, Whitney, Wilson, Winston, Wyclef, Wynton, Yemi, Yolanda, Youssou, Yvonne, Yusuf, Zoe, ZZ... (stop me when I run out of space, because I won't run out of names), ABBA...

Pre-1900

1900s

1920s

1930s

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1950s

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1980s

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1990s

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Nana Asma'u

(1793–1863)

An inspirational West African poet, social activist and scholar, who remains a revered figure in northern Nigeria, she was the daughter of the founder of the 19th-century Sokoto Caliphate. She is variously held up as an example of education and independence of women possible under Islam, and as a precursor to modern feminism in Africa. Historical narratives, laments and admonitions are among her more than 60 surviving works, written over 40 years, including a large body of poetry in Arabic, Fulani and Hausa. She wrote two elegies to her lifelong friend 'Aysha, moving expressions of personal grief ("I am desolate over losing her... my confidante from our earliest days") and revealing of the mutually supportive relationship the women shared. The Collected Works of Nana Asma'u, daughter of Usman dan Fodiyo 1793–1864, edited by Jean Boyd and Beverly B. Mack, was published in 1997.

From "Lamentation for 'Aysha II"

This is the poem of Asma'u, daughter of our Shaykh Uthman d'an Fodiyo, in lamentation of her friend and dear one, 'Aysha, the daughter of Umaru Alkammu.

Oh, my eyes weep liberally for my loved one
as a consolation for my grief and a companion for my gloom.
Shed copious tears for the loss of 'Aysha
the noblest of my dear ones of my age group, my friend...
This poem was written because there is no one else like her
from among the Brethren. How long my nights dwell on her.
How often she helped me to forget my own grief
and how often she helped me most kindly.
The depth of my sadness and loneliness after her death has grown
O the multitude of sorrows, the deepening of my gloom!
Know you not that love, when firmly established, is priceless?
There is no child who could make me forget that love
and no brother, nothing that could soothe me, not even all sorts of
riches.

Therefore my heart withers from worrying:
sigh after sigh rises up from my grief;
Tears have continued to flow constantly
as if they would never dwindle or cease...
I cry for her with tears of compassion
and of longing and sympathy for her, and loving friendship...

Sarah Parker Remond

(1815–1894)

Born in Salem, Massachusetts, she grew up in an educated and abolitionist household. She became, along with her brother Charles Lenox Remond, a respected speaker for the American anti-slavery movement, and gained wide acclaim as one of the few Black women anti-slavery orators during lecture tours of Ireland and England between 1859 and 1861. While in Britain, she studied the classics at Bedford College for Women (later part of the University of London and now merged with Royal Holloway College). She stayed at the home of the honorary secretary of the Ladies' London Emancipation Society and was among the 1,500 signatories to a petition requesting the right of women to vote, prepared in 1866. In her forties, she moved to Florence, retrained as a doctor, and in 1877, married Sardinian painter Lazzaro Pintor Cabras. She never returned to the United States and remained in Italy until her death.

Why Slavery is Still Rampant

Although the anti-slavery enterprise was begun some thirty years ago, the evil is still rampant in the land. As there are some young people present—and I am glad to see them here, for it is important that they should understand this subject—I shall briefly explain that there are thirty-two states, sixteen of which are free and sixteen slave states. The free states are in the north. The political feelings in the north and south are essentially different, so is the social life. In the north, democracy, not what the Americans call democracy, but the true principle of equal rights, prevails—I speak of the white population, mind—wealth is abundant; the country, in every material sense, flourishes.

In the south, aristocratic feelings prevail, labor is dishonorable, and five millions of poor whites live in the most degrading ignorance and destitution. I might dwell long on the miserable condition of these poor whites, the indirect victims of slavery; but I must go on to speak of the four millions of slaves. The slaves are essentially things, with no rights, political, social, domestic, or religious; the absolute victims of all but irresponsible power. For the slave there is no home, no love, no hope, no help; and what is life without hope? No writer can describe the slave's life; it cannot be told; the fullest description ever given to the world does not skim over the surface of this subject. You may infer something of the state of society in the southern states when I tell you there are eight hundred thousand mulattoes, nine-tenths of whom are the children of white fathers, and these are constantly sold by their parents, for the slave follows the condition of the mother. Hence we see every shade of complexion amongst the slaves, from the blackest African hue to that of women and men in whose cheeks the lily and the rose vie for predominance. To describe to you the miserable poor whites of the south, I need only quote the words of Mr. Helper, a Southerner, in his important work on slavery and the testimony also of a Virginian gentleman of my acquaintance. The five millions poor whites are most of them in as gross a state of ignorance as Mrs. Stowe's "Topsey" in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

The free colored people of the northern states are, for no crime but merely the fact of complexion, deprived of all political and social rights. Whatever wealth or eminence in intellect and refinement they may attain to, they are treated as outcasts; and white men and women who identify themselves with them are sure to be insulted in the grossest manner.

I do not ask your political interference in any way. This is a moral question. Even in America the Abolitionists generally disclaim every other ground but the moral and religious one on which this matter is based. You send missionaries to the heathen; I tell you of professing Christians practicing what is worse than any heathenism on record. How is it that we have come to this state of things, you ask. I reply, the whole power of the country is in the hands of the slaveholders. For more than thirty years we have had a slaveholding President, and the Slave Power has been dominant. The consequence has been a series of encroachments, until now at last the slave trade is re-opened and all but legitimized in America. It was a sad backward step when England last year fell into the trap laid by America and surrendered the right of search. Now slavers ply on the seas which were previously guarded by your ships. We have, besides, an internal slave trade. We have states where, I am ashamed to say, men and women are reared, like cattle, for the market. When

I walk through the streets of Manchester and meet load after load of cotton, I think of those eighty thousand cotton plantations on which was grown the one hundred and twenty-five millions of dollars' worth of cotton which supply your market, and I remember that not one cent of that money ever reached the hands of the laborers. Here is an incident of slave life for you—an incident of common occurrence in the south. In March, 1859, a slave auction took place in the city of Savannah. Three hundred and forty-three slaves, the property of Pierce Butler—the husband of your own Fanny Kemble—were sold, regardless of every tie of flesh and blood; old men and maidens, young men, and babes of fifteen months—there was but one question about them, and that was decided at the auction-block. Pierce Butler, the owner, resides in Philadelphia, and is a highly-respected citizen and a member of a Church. He was reputed a kind master, who rarely separated the families of his slaves. The financial crisis took place, and I have given you the result to his human property. But Mr. Butler has in no wise lost caste amongst his friends; he still moves in the most respectable society, and his influence in his Church is so great that, with other members, he has procured the removal from the pulpit of Rev. Dudley Tyng, who had uttered a testimony against slavery; and in that pulpit, the man who now preaches, Mr. Prentice by name, is the owner of a hundred slaves. Such is the state of public opinion in America, and you find the poison running through everything. With the exception of the Abolitionists, you will find people of all classes thus contaminated. The whole army and navy of the United States are pledged to pursue and shoot down the poor fugitives, who panting for liberty, fly to Canada, to seek the security of the British flag. All denominations of professing Christians are guilty of sustaining or defending slavery. Even the Quakers must be included in this rule.

Now I ask for your sympathy and your influence, and whoever asked English men and women in vain? Give us the power of your public opinion, it has great weight in America. Words spoken here are read there as no words written in America are read. Lord Brougham's testimony on the first of August resounded through America [On August 1, 1859, Lord Brougham addressed a London gathering, including Sarah Parker Remond, in observance of the anniversary of West Indian emancipation]; your Clarkson and your Wilberforce are names of strength to us. I ask you, raise the moral public opinion until its voice reaches the American shores. Aid us thus until the shackles of the American slave melt like dew before the morning sun. I ask for especial help from the women of England. Women are the worst victims of the Slave Power. I am met on every hand by the cry "Cotton!"

“Cotton!” I cannot stop to speak of cotton while men and women are being brutalized. But there is an answer for the cotton cry too, and the argument is an unanswerable one.

Before concluding I shall give you a few passages from the laws of the slave states. By some of these laws, free colored people may be arrested in the discharge of their lawful business; and, if no papers attesting their freedom can be found on them, they are committed to jail; and, if not claimed within a limited time, they may be sold to pay the jail fees. By another law, any person who speaks at the bar, bench, on the stage, or in private, to the slaves, so as to excite insurrection, or brings any paper or pamphlet of such nature into the state, shall be imprisoned for not less than three nor more than twenty-one years; or shall suffer death as the judge decides. I could read such laws for hours, but I shall only add that in Maryland there is at present a gentleman in prison, condemned for ten years, because a copy of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was found in his possession. The laws are equally severe against teaching a slave to read—against teaching even the name of the good God.

The Negro Race in America

To the Editor of *The Daily News* (London), 1866

Sir,—Will you allow me to say a word in reference to the reactionary movement against the coloured race in the United States? It seems almost like trifling to write a short letter upon a subject so important, and teeming with so many facts, to prove that a new leaf is now being turned over in the history of the negro, and that there is a reaction; a most intense reaction, against that race in the United States. What is the principal cause of the political conflict now going on? Never has there been more at stake than the present position of affairs involves. Why does the conflict assume such gigantic proportions? Why is it that reconstruction has become so exceedingly difficult? Why is it that party spirit is now reaching a height almost, if not quite beyond, any political struggle known even in that country so accustomed to political conflicts. Why is it that in so many of the States neither the freedmen nor their friends find any longer suitable protection? Why is it that the only really liberal newspaper that was published at New Orleans is now discontinued? What was the cause of the riot at New Orleans? Why were the men who served the country in her hour of need shot like dogs? There is but one answer, and one source from which all these difficulties emanate—slavery in the past and its hateful remnants in the present. The Southerners and their

Northern allies are determined that the black race shall not be recognised, shall not receive justice. They are determined to prevent the consummation of emancipation, to make freedom almost nominal. Reconstruction cannot be permanently settled until hatred of the coloured race is kept in check or exterminated. No one who has kept pace with the history of the coloured race can hope to re-educate a nation at once: therefore the only remedy is to check this hatred, made up of fashion, prejudice, and intense ignorance. This is the prolific source of the struggle between the contending political parties. The combatants may or may not recognise this fact. It assumes many many shapes, puts on and off at pleasure such a variety of costumes, adapts itself to almost all circumstance with so much skill, that at first only its victim can defeat it. Fresh hatred seems to have been added to the old stock, and then taken complete possession of the Southerners and their Northern allies. The same elements animated by the same spirit which produced the civil war, starved Northern prisoners, and then assassinated the President when he became the firm friend of the slave population, now desire to gain new political strength. The Southern chivalry now demand that all their former slave population shall be represented in Congress, instead of the three-fifths representation which they formerly possessed. What bold injustice! Deny a race their civil and political rights and then endeavour to use them as an element of political strength to degrade them. Should they obtain this, perhaps another generation would pass before the consummation of emancipation. Many republicans are deserting their principles, and joining the ranks of the enemy. Who can foresee the result of the coming contest? It may be that another fiery trial awaits the tried but faithful friends of the republic. A share of the same feeling of hatred towards the coloured race can now be most clearly seen in the minds of many Englishmen, of whom Mr. Thomas Carlyle is the best representative. He has special claims to the gratitude of all negro haters on both sides of the Atlantic. I know of no man who could so consistently be the defender of Mr. Eyre and the Jamaica massacre as Mr. Carlyle. It seems to be a most congenial occupation. He does his work con amore. The name of Mr. Thomas Carlyle, the literary leader of public opinion, has been for many years synonymous with all that is ungenerous and wantonly insulting to the negro race. His position as a literary man has given him the power of influencing the minds of the young. The same influence has been for many years a weapon in the hands of our enemies for adding deeper and more scornful insults. Negro haters on both sides of the Atlantic have again and again repeated his offensive insults, and his outspoken hatred in his recent letter against a race because they chance

to be of a darker hue than himself is a fit offering to the spirit which seeks to defend might against right. Why Mr. Carlyle considers it his duty to attack a defenceless race with such hatred and passionate fury is a problem which I leave his many admirers on both sides of the Atlantic to solve.—I am, &c.,

*Sarah Parker Remond
Florence, Sept. 19*

Elizabeth Keckley (1818–1907)

Born into slavery, she eventually bought freedom for herself and her son in St Louis, moving in 1860 to Washington DC. There she became a successful seamstress, creating an independent business based on clients who were the wives of the government elite. In 1861 she met Mary Todd Lincoln, wife of newly elected president Abraham Lincoln, and was appointed her personal dressmaker and dresser, becoming an intimate witness to the life of the First Family. In 1864 she founded the Contraband Relief Association, an organisation providing support for recently freed slaves and sick and wounded soldiers. After the American Civil War (1861–65), she wrote an autobiography, Behind the Scenes: Or, Thirty Years a Slave and Four Years in the White House (1868), described by its publisher as a “literary thunderbolt”, from which the following extract is taken.

Where I Was Born

My life has been an eventful one. I was born a slave—was the child of slave parents—therefore I came upon the earth free in God-like thought, but fettered in action. My birthplace was Dinwiddie Court-House, in Virginia. My recollections of childhood are distinct, perhaps for the reason that many stirring incidents are associated with that period. I am now on the shady side of forty, and as I sit alone in my room the brain is busy, and a rapidly moving panorama brings scene after scene before me, some pleasant and others sad; and when I thus greet old familiar faces, I often find myself wondering if I am not living the past over again. The visions are so terribly distinct that I almost

imagine them to be real. Hour after hour I sit while the scenes are being shifted; and as I gaze upon the panorama of the past, I realize how crowded with incidents my life has been. Every day seems like a romance within itself, and the years grow into ponderous volumes. As I cannot condense, I must omit many strange passages in my history. From such a wilderness of events it is difficult to make a selection, but as I am not writing altogether the history of myself, I will confine my story to the most important incidents which I believe influenced the moulding of my character. As I glance over the crowded sea of the past, these incidents stand forth prominently, the guide-posts of memory. I presume that I must have been four years old when I first began to remember; at least, I cannot now recall anything occurring previous to this period. My master, Col. A. Burwell, was somewhat unsettled in his business affairs, and while I was yet an infant he made several removals. While living at Hampton Sidney College, Prince Edward County, Va., Mrs. Burwell gave birth to a daughter, a sweet, black-eyed baby, my earliest and fondest pet. To take care of this baby was my first duty. True, I was but a child myself—only four years old—but then I had been raised in a hardy school—had been taught to rely upon myself, and to prepare myself to render assistance to others. The lesson was not a bitter one, for I was too young to indulge in philosophy, and the precepts that I then treasured and practised I believe developed those principles of character which have enabled me to triumph over so many difficulties. Notwithstanding all the wrongs that slavery heaped upon me, I can bless it for one thing—youth's important lesson of self-reliance. The baby was named Elizabeth, and it was pleasant to me to be assigned a duty in connection with it, for the discharge of that duty transferred me from the rude cabin to the household of my master. My simple attire was a short dress and a little white apron. My old mistress encouraged me in rocking the cradle, by telling me that if I would watch over the baby well, keep the flies out of its face, and not let it cry, I should be its little maid. This was a golden promise, and I required no better inducement for the faithful performance of my task. I began to rock the cradle most industriously, when lo! out pitched little pet on the floor. I instantly cried out, "Oh! the baby is on the floor;" and, not knowing what to do, I seized the fire-shovel in my perplexity, and was trying to shovel up my tender charge, when my mistress called to me to let the child alone, and then ordered that I be taken out and lashed for my carelessness.

The blows were not administered with a light hand, I assure you, and doubtless the severity of the lashing has made me remember the incident so well. This was the first time I was punished in this cruel way, but not the

last. The black-eyed baby that I called my pet grew into a self-willed girl, and in after years was the cause of much trouble to me. I grew strong and healthy, and, notwithstanding I knit socks and attended to various kinds of work, I was repeatedly told, when even fourteen years old, that I would never be worth my salt. When I was eight, Mr. Burwell's family consisted of six sons and four daughters, with a large family of servants. My mother was kind and forbearing; Mrs. Burwell a hard task-master; and as mother had so much work to do in making clothes, etc., for the family, besides the slaves, I determined to render her all the assistance in my power, and in rendering her such assistance my young energies were taxed to the utmost.

I was my mother's only child, which made her love for me all the stronger. I did not know much of my father, for he was the slave of another man, and when Mr. Burwell moved from Dinwiddie he was separated from us, and only allowed to visit my mother twice a year—during the Easter holidays and Christmas. At last Mr. Burwell determined to reward my mother, by making an arrangement with the owner of my father, by which the separation of my parents could be brought to an end. It was a bright day, indeed, for my mother when it was announced that my father was coming to live with us. The old weary look faded from her face, and she worked as if her heart was in every task. But the golden days did not last long. The radiant dream faded all too soon.

In the morning my father called me to him and kissed me, then held me out at arms' length as if he were regarding his child with pride. "She is growing into a large fine girl," he remarked to my mother. "I dun no which I like best, you or Lizzie, as both are so dear to me." My mother's name was Agnes, and my father delighted to call me his "Little Lizzie". While yet my father and mother were speaking hopefully, joyfully of the future, Mr. Burwell came to the cabin, with a letter in his hand. He was a kind master in some things, and as gently as possible informed my parents that they must part; for in two hours my father must join his master at Dinwiddie, and go with him to the West, where he had determined to make his future home. The announcement fell upon the little circle in that rude-log cabin like a thunderbolt. I can remember the scene as if it were but yesterday;—how my father cried out against the cruel separation; his last kiss; his wild straining of my mother to his bosom; the solemn prayer to Heaven; the tears and sobs—the fearful anguish of broken hearts. The last kiss, the last good-by; and he, my father, was gone, gone forever.

The shadow eclipsed the sunshine, and love brought despair. The parting was eternal. The cloud had no silver lining, but I trust that it will be all silver

in heaven. We who are crushed to earth with heavy chains, who travel a weary, rugged, thorny road, groping through midnight darkness on earth, earn our right to enjoy the sunshine in the great hereafter. At the grave, at least, we should be permitted to lay our burdens down, that a new world, a world of brightness, may open to us. The light that is denied us here should grow into a flood of effulgence beyond the dark, mysterious shadows of death. Deep as was the distress of my mother in parting with my father, her sorrow did not screen her from insult. My old mistress said to her: "Stop your nonsense; there is no necessity for you putting on airs. Your husband is not the only slave that has been sold from his family, and you are not the only one that has had to part. There are plenty more men about here, and if you want a husband so badly, stop your crying and go and find another." To these unfeeling words my mother made no reply. She turned away in stoical silence, with a curl of that loathing scorn upon her lips which swelled in her heart.

My father and mother never met again in this world. They kept up a regular correspondence for years, and the most precious mementoes of my existence are the faded old letters that he wrote, full of love, and always hoping that the future would bring brighter days. In nearly every letter is a message for me. "Tell my darling little Lizzie," he writes, "to be a good girl, and to learn her book. Kiss her for me, and tell her that I will come to see her some day." Thus he wrote time and again, but he never came. He lived in hope, but died without ever seeing his wife and child.

I note a few extracts from one of my father's letters to my mother, following copy literally:

SHELBYVILLE, Sept. 6, 1833.

MRS. AGNES HOBBS.

Dear Wife: My dear biloved wife I am more than glad to meet with oportuntuy writee thes few lines to you by my Mistress who ar now about starterng to virginia, and sevl others of my old friends are with her; in compeney Mrs. Ann Rus the wife of master Thos Rus and Dan Woodiard and his family and I am very sorry that I havn the chance to go with them as I feele Determid. to see you If life last again. I am now here and out at this pleace so I am not abble to get of at this time. I am write well and hearty and all the rest of masters family. Deeply this time my Mistress that ar just from thee all sends love to you and all my old frends. I am a living in a town called Shelbyville and I have wrote a greate many letters since Ive beene here and

*almost been reeady to my selfe that its out of the question to write any more at tall: my dear wife I dont feeld no whys like giving out writing to you as yet and I hope when you get this letter that you be Inncougege to write me a letter. I am well satisfied at my living at this place I am a making money for my own benifit and I hope that its to yours also If I live to see Next year I shall heve my own time from master by giving him 100 and twenty Dollars a year and I thinke I shall be doing good bisness at that and heve something more thean all that. I hope with gods helpe that I may be abble to rejoys with you on the earth and In heaven lets meet when will I am detemnid to nuver stope praying, not in this earth and I hope to praise god In glory there weel meet to part no more forever. So my dear wife I hope to meet you In paradase to prase god forever **
** * * * I want Elizabeth to be a good girl and not to thinke that becasue I am bound so fare that gods not abble to open the way * * * **

GEORGE PLEASANT,
 Hobbs a servant of Grum

The last letter that my mother received from my father was dated Shelbyville, Tennessee, March 20, 1839. He writes in a cheerful strain, and hopes to see her soon. Alas! he looked forward to a meeting in vain. Year after year the one great hope swelled in his heart, but the hope was only realized beyond the dark portals of the grave.

Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin (1842–1924)

Born in Boston, Massachusetts—to a father of French and African descent from Martinique, and a mother from Cornwall, England—she was a publisher, journalist, civil rights leader, suffragist and editor. She helped form the American Woman Suffrage Association in 1869, wrote for the black weekly paper The Courant, and was a member of the New England Woman's Press Association. In 1894 she founded the Women's New Era Club, an advocacy group for black women, and also started and edited The Woman's Era—the first national newspaper published for

African-American women—which called on black women to demand increased rights for their race, at the same time as promoting interracial activities. In 1895, she organised the National Federation of Afro-American Women, and on 29 July that year convened the first National Conference of Colored Women in Boston, an unprecedented gathering attended by representatives of 42 nation-wide black women's clubs.

Address to the First National Conference of Colored Women, 1895

It is with especial joy and pride that I welcome you all to this, our first conference. It is only recently that women have waked up to the importance of meeting in council, and great as has been the advantage to women generally, and important as it is and has been that they should confer, the necessity has not been nearly so great, matters at stake not nearly so vital, as that we, bearing peculiar blunders, suffering under especial hardships, enduring peculiar privations, should meet for a “good talk” among ourselves. Although rather hastily called, you as well as I can testify how long and how earnestly a conference has been thought of and hoped for and even prepared for.

These women's clubs, which have sprung up all over the country, built and run upon broad and strong lines, have all been a preparation, small conferences in themselves, and their spontaneous birth and enthusiastic support have been little less than inspiration on the part of our women and a general preparation for a large union such as it is hoped this conference will lead to. Five years ago we had no colored women's club outside of those formed for the special work; to-day, with little over a month's notice, we are able to call representatives from more than twenty clubs. It is a good showing, it stands for much, it shows that we are truly American women, with all the adaptability, readiness to seize and possess our opportunities, willingness to do our part for good as other American women.

The reasons why we should confer are so apparent that it would seem hardly necessary to enumerate them, and yet there is none of them but demand our serious consideration. In the first place we need to feel the cheer and inspiration of meeting each other; we need to gain the courage and fresh life that comes from the mingling of congenial souls, of those working for the same ends. Next we need to talk over not only those things which are of vital importance to us as women, but also the things that are

of special interest to us as colored women, the training of our children, openings for boys and girls, how they can be prepared for occupations and occupations may be found or opened for them, what we especially can do in the moral education of the race with which we are identified, our mental elevation and physical development, the home training it is necessary to give our children in order to prepare them to meet the peculiar conditions in which they shall find themselves, how to make the most of our own, to some extent, limited opportunities, these are some of our own peculiar questions to be discussed. Besides these are the general questions of the day, which we cannot afford to be indifferent to: temperance, morality, the higher education, hygiene and domestic questions. If these things need the serious consideration of women more advantageously placed by reason of all the aid to right thinking and living with which they are surrounded, surely we, with everything to pull us back, to hinder us in developing, need to take every opportunity and means for the thoughtful consideration which shall lead to wise action.

I have left the strongest reason for our conferring together until the last. All over America there is to be found a large and growing class of earnest, intelligent, progressive colored women, women who, if not leading full useful lives, are only waiting for the opportunity to do so, many of them warped and cramped for lack of opportunity, not only to do more but to be more; and yet, if an estimate of the colored women of America is called for, the inevitable reply, glibly given is: "For the most part ignorant and immoral, some exceptions, of course, but these don't count." Now for the sake of the thousands of self-sacrificing young women teaching and preaching in lonely southern backwoods for the noble army of mothers who has given birth to these girls, mothers whose intelligence is only limited by their opportunity to get at books, for the sake of the fine cultured women who have carried off the honors in school here and often abroad, for the sake of our own dignity, the dignity of our race and the future good name of our children, it is "mete, right and our bounded duty" to stand forth and declare ourselves and principles, to teach an ignorant and suspicious world that our aims and interests are identical with those of all good aspiring women.

Too long have we been silent under unjust and unholy charges; we cannot expect to have them removed until we disprove them through ourselves. It is not enough to try and disprove unjust charges through individual effort that never goes any further. Year after year southern women have protested against the admission of colored women into any national organization on the ground of the immorality of these women, and because all refutation has

only been tried by individual work the charge has never been crushed, as it could and should have been at the first.

Now with an army of organized women standing for purity and mental worth, we in ourselves deny the charge and open the eyes of the world to a state of affairs to which they have been blind, often willfully so, and the very fact that the charges, audaciously and flippantly made, as they often are, are of so humiliating and delicate a nature, serves to protect the accuser by driving the helpless accused into mortified silence. It is to break this silence, not by noisy protestations of what we are not, but by a dignified showing of what we are and hope to become that we are impelled to take this step, to make of this gathering an object lesson to the world.

For many and apparent reasons it is especially fitting that the women of the race take the lead in this movement, but for all this we recognize the necessity of the sympathy of our husbands, brothers and fathers. Our women's movement is woman's movement in that it is led and directed by women for the good of women and men, for the benefit of all humanity, which is more than any one branch or section of it. We want, we ask the active interest of our men, and, too, we are not drawing the color line; we are women, American women, as intensely interested in all that pertains to us as such as all other American women: we are not alienating or withdrawing, we are only coming to the front, willing to join any others in the same work and cordially inviting and welcoming any others to join us.

If there is any one thing I would especially enjoin upon this conference it is union and earnestness. The questions that are to come before us are of too much import to be weakened by any trivialities or personalities. If any differences arise, let them be quickly settled, with the feeling that we are all workers to the same end, to elevate and dignify colored American womanhood.

This conference will not be what I expect if it does not show the wisdom, indeed the absolute necessity of a national organization of our women. Every year new questions coming up will prove it to us. This hurried, almost informal convention does not begin to meet our needs, it is only a beginning, made here in dear old Boston, where the scales of justice and generosity hang evenly balanced, and where the people "dare be true" to their best instincts and stand ready to lend aid and sympathy to worthy strugglers. It is hoped and believed that from this will spring an organization that will in truth bring in a new era to the colored women of America.

H. Cordelia Ray

(1852–1916)

Born in New York City to Charlotte Augusta Burrough and abolitionist and newspaper publisher Charles B. Ray, she had six siblings (one of her two sisters, Charlotte E. Ray, was the first Black American female lawyer). She graduated from the University of the City of New York with a master's degree in pedagogy, but gave up working as a teacher in order to write. After an 1876 memoir of her father, she published her first poetry collection, Sonnets (1893), which opened with a poem celebrating her mother. Demonstrating an engagement with Black politics, Ray dedicated the sonnet below to Haitian revolutionary leader Toussaint L'Ouverture (1743–1803). Her subsequent book, Poems, was published in 1920.

Toussaint L'Ouverture

To those fair isles where crimson sunsets burn,
 We send a backward glance to gaze on thee,
 Brave Toussaint! thou wast surely born to be
 A hero; thy proud spirit could but spurn
 Each outrage on thy race. Couldst thou unlearn
 The lessons taught by instinct? Nay! and we
 Who share the zeal that would make all men free,
 Must e'en with pride unto thy life-work turn.
 Soul-dignity was thine and purest aim;
 And ah! how sad that thou wast left to mourn
 In chains 'neath alien skies. On him, shame! shame!
 That mighty conqueror who dared to claim
 The right to bind thee. Him we heap with scorn,
 And noble patriot! guard with love thy name.

To My Mother

January 1, 1891

Sweet Mother! rare in gifts of tenderness!
 Thou who didst nurse my child-life into bloom
 And for each native grace made ample room
 To blossom in love's light, —how can we bless

The Power that gave thee to us! In the stress
 Of life's great conflict, what could e'er illumine
 Its mystic shadows and its deepest gloom,
 Like smiles and loving words from thee! No less
 Than widest sunshine is thy sympathy.
 O precious Heart! so rich in sacrifice.
 And—boon beyond compare—supremest love,
 May Heaven's choicest blessings rest on thee.
 Rarer than jewels of the costliest price!
 And Peace brood o'er thy path like calmest dove!

Florida Ruffin Ridley

(1861–1943)

Born in Boston to pioneering parents—writer, civil rights leader, and suffragist Josephine St. Pierre and George Lewis Ruffin, the first black graduate of Harvard Law School and first black judge in the US—she too became an activist, involved with founding the Woman's Era Club and the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, and one of the first black public schoolteachers in Boston, as well as having a literary career as journalist, essayist, writer of short stories and editor of the black woman's newspaper The Woman's Era. In the latter capacity she was the only female contributor to a feature on manners in The Boston Globe on May 27, 1894. Days earlier, an open protest letter she had written to visiting English writer Laura Ormiston Chant appeared in the same pages.

Our Manners—Are They Bad?

Without doubt the Americans have not generally the finished manner which characterizes some other nations; that they are not lacking in the foundation of good manners, the kindly heart, is also without doubt; but what the influence is that has brought about a certain poverty in the outward expression of an inward grace it is difficult to say. Even the black man with

his traditional courtesy has succumbed to the hidden influence, and is now seldom seen bestowing his genial and elaborate bows upon all alike—he is even dropping his old epistolary style which was so delicious in its affluence.

Some say that in this latter day Americans are too busy after the material things of life, and that they have little faith in devoting time to anything that has not a marketable value: others believe that their naturally honest and independent spirit has revolted against the tendency to degrade manners into mannerism and to bow down to a conventional code.

Doubtless there is some justification for both these beliefs, and, as far as the latter is concerned, who of us has not been astounded at the way common sense and common kindness are sometimes prostrated before rules of etiquette? A beautiful, but, as some would say, overbred girl was the source of much amusement to me upon a rainy day. She was about to take, unknowingly, a seat in an open car, which had become very wet from the rain. I attempted to detain her, but she was so shocked at my lack of breeding in addressing a stranger that she deliberately sat down in the water and tried to administer a deserved rebuke by turning upon me a cold, but decidedly shapely, shoulder. Before this I had thought Rev. E. E. Hale's story of the girl in the car who preferred to lose her bundle rather than pick it up at the suggestion of a man who had never received an introduction to her something of a joke, but now I know it is true.

Whatever the causes which prevent a more general use of the outward signs of cultivation, American women can and do congratulate themselves that in this country the relation between men and women generally is that of real dignity and true courtesy. For all this, a tendency to discredit the proper and legitimate cultivation of manners is to be regretted. True cultivation is never lost. It makes the coarse man presentable and the fine man irresistible, and lack of attention in this direction is apt to lead before long to a deterioration of standard. Witness the number of excellent people who characterize that fine, manly and altogether delightful little fellow, Lord Fauntleroy, "as a prig." There are already too many who mistake boisterousness for manliness, who call that in a girl which is "pertness," "brightness," and who forget that gentleman is a gentle man.

After all, the surest and truest way to measure people is by their children, and tried by this test can we really and truly put a great big NO after the question, "Are our manners bad?"

If we could but draw a veil over the lack of reverence and deference to elders, and over the intrusiveness of the average American child! It is hard to criticize our own, but sometimes it is best that it should be done.

Doubtless we are in a transition state. After a time, when we shall have become better acquainted with ourselves, we shall have thrown off that which is superficial and burdensome in the accepted code of manners, and shall present as an example to our children a people almost ideal in manners, a people who are free to give full expression to their kindliness of heart, who believe in the value of a current form of intercourse, but who do not mistake form for substance. I believe there is now a chance for criticism of our manners just because we are, unconsciously perhaps, struggling towards that end.

Protest Against Lynch Law

Dear Mrs. Ormiston Chant,

One year ago this month the members of the Woman's Era club of Boston were privileged to have you address them as a body. The occasion was the first public meeting of the club, and besides yourself, Mrs. Lucy Stone, Mrs. Cheney, Mrs. Diaz and Mrs. Spaulding spoke.

It is safe to say that of all these noble women and fine speakers no one did more than yourself in strengthening the impulse to good works, in giving fresh inspiration toward right living,

Your name and that speech has been to us a refreshing memory. Think, then, the shock it has occasioned us to hear that through your efforts a resolution at the national conference of the Unitarian church denouncing lynching was defeated.

We feel assured, and do truly believe, that you opposed the resolution from a high moral standpoint, but we also feel assured that your position on this subject is the result of influences entirely one-sided, and that you will at least be interested to hear "the other side."

We, members of the Woman's Era club, believe we speak for the colored women of America. We have organized, as have our women everywhere, to help in the world's work, not only by endeavoring to uplift ourselves and our race, but by giving a helping hand and an encouraging word wherever they may be called for.

As colored women, we have suffered and do suffer too much to be blind to the sufferings of others, but naturally we are more keenly alive to our own sufferings than to others, and we feel that we would be false to ourselves, to our opportunities and to our race, should we keep silence in a case like this.

In the interest of common humanity, in the interest of justice, for the good name of our country, we solemnly raise our voice against the horrible

crimes of lynch law as practiced in the south, and we call upon Christians everywhere to do the same or be branded as sympathizers with the murderers.

We here solemnly deny that the black men are the foul fiends they are pictured; we demand that until at least one crime is proved upon them judgment be suspended.

We know positively of case after case where innocent men have died horrible deaths; we know positively of cases that have been “made up;” we know positively of cases where black men have been lynched for white men’s crimes. We know positively of black men murdered for insignificant offense.

All that we ask for is justice, not mercy or palliation—simple justice.

Surely that is not too much for loyal citizens of a free country to demand.

We do not pretend to say there are no black villains; baseness is not confined to race. We read with horror of two different colored girls who have recently been horribly assaulted by white men in the south.

We do not expect that white women shall feel as deeply as we. We know of good and high-minded women made widows, of sweet and innocent children fatherless by a mob of unbridled men and boys “looking for fun.”

In their names we utter our solemn protest. For their sakes we call upon workers of humanity everywhere, if they can do nothing for us, in mercy’s name not to raise their voices against us.

Florida Ruffin Ridley,

Secretary, Woman’s Era Club, Boston, May 19, 1894

Effie Waller Smith

(1879–1960)

Born in the rural mountain community of Chloe Creek in Pike County, Kentucky, she was the child of former slaves Sibbie Ratliff and Frank Waller, who ensured that their children were well educated. She attended Kentucky Normal School for Colored Persons, and from 1900 to 1902 she trained as a teacher, then taught for some years. Her verse appeared in local papers, and she published her first collection, Songs of the Months, in 1904. That same year she entered a marriage that did not last long, and she divorced her husband. In 1908 she married Deputy

Sheriff Charles Smith, but this union was also short-lived. In 1909 she published two further collections, Rhymes from the Cumberland and Rosemary and Pansies. She appears to have stopped writing at the age of 38 in 1917, when her sonnet "Autumn Winds" appeared in Harper's Magazine. She left Kentucky for Wisconsin in 1918.

The "Bachelor Girl"

From Rhymes from the Cumberland

She's no "old maid," she's not afraid
To let you know she's her own "boss,"
She's easy pleased, she's not diseased,
She is not nervous, is not cross.

She's no desire whatever for
Mrs. to precede her name,
The blessedness of singleness
She all her life will proudly claim.

She does not sit around and knit
On baby caps and mittens,
She does not play her time away
With puggy dogs and kittens.

And if a mouse about the house
She sees, she will not jump and scream;
Of handsome beaux and billet doux
The "bachelor girl" does never dream.

She does not puff and frizz and fluff
Her hair, nor squeeze and pad her form.
With painted face, affected grace,
The "bachelor girl" ne'er seeks to charm.

She reads history, biography,
Tales of adventure far and near,
On sea or land, but poetry and
Love stories rarely interest her.

She's lots of wit, and uses it,
Of "horse sense," too, she has a store;
The latest news she always knows,
She scans the daily papers o'er.

Of politics and all the tricks
And schemes that politicians use,
She knows full well and she can tell
With eloquence of them her views.

An athlete that's hard to beat
The "bachelor girl" surely is,
When playing games she makes good aims
And always strictly minds her "biz."

Amid the hurry and the flurry
Of this life she goes alone,
No matter where you may see her
She seldom has a chaperon.

But when you meet her on the street
At night she has a "32,"
And she can shoot you, bet your boots,
When necessity demands her to.

Her heart is kind and you will find
Her often scattering sunshine bright
Among the poor, and she is sure
To always advocate the right.

On her pater and her mater
For her support she does not lean,
She talks and writes of "Woman's Rights"
In language forceful and clean.

She does not shirk, but does her work,
Amid the world's fast hustling whirl,
And come what may, she's here to stay,
The self-supporting "bachelor girl"

The Cuban Cause
From Songs of the Months

What was it caused our nation
To take up arms 'gainst stubborn Spain?
Was it to only conquer her
That she might praise and glory gain?

Or was it territorial greed,
That she might richer be?
Or was it beneficial
To her on land or sea?

Oh, no, not these, not these at all
Did ever cause this war;
For it was something nobler
And holier by far.

It was for suffering Cuba,
'Twas for her liberty
To save her from the Spanish yoke
Of awful cruelty.

Who then would dare to say: "Don't go,"
To relatives or friends, "And fight for rights and freedom
'Till Cuba's suffering ends."

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Meta Davis Cumberbatch

(1900–1978)

Although born in Trinidad, she spent most of her life in The Bahamas, where she became known as the “Mother of the Arts”. Her parents sent her to England to study medicine, along with her two sisters, but she chose to follow her passion for music instead, graduating from the Royal Academy of Music in 1925. She married fellow Trinidadian Dr Roland Cumberbatch, and when he accepted a post through the Colonial Medical Service in The Bahamas they relocated there. A pioneering cultural activist, she taught piano, gave recitals and lectures, wrote poetry, plays and essays, and was a catalyst for an annual national arts festival. “A Child of Nature (Negro of the Caribbean)”, one of her most celebrated poems, appears in Complete Works of Meta Davis Cumberbatch (edited by her grandson Peter D. Maynard, who also wrote the 2010 companion volume Great Awakening: Meta Davis Cumberbatch).

A Child of Nature (Negro of the Caribbean)

Shackled? No shackles can bind me!
Enslaved? I am free!—
I roam the fields, pluck the flowers,
Spend with nature happy hours,
Bare my body to the sun,
Share its rays. Leap and run
In sheer abandon. Seeking fun,
In little things much joy I find.
Nature is to me quite kind.
The air, the sky, the land, the sea,
Fruits in season are all there for me.
The moon, it shines and lights my way
It bridges night-time into day.
With dancing feet and voice to sing,
Passing joys to me they bring.

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Much within my breast I yearn,
And many are the things I learn,
I live, I love, I laugh, I sorrow.
Each day brings with it tomorrow.
I toil, I labour for my bread.
For shelter for my weary head.
Yet lazing under a shady tree
I feel the world belongs to me!
With mocking laugh and look of scorn,
You seek to crush a child free-born!
You captor vile who would enslave me; –
You are shackled. I am free!

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Arthenia Bates Millican

(1920–2012)

*Born in Sumter, South Carolina, she was a poet, short-story writer, essayist and educator. She was encouraged to write by her Baptist minister father, her first poem appearing in a local paper when she was 16 and still at school. She earned a BA in English from Morris College (1941) and an MA from Clark Atlanta University (1948), where she studied under Langston Hughes, becoming his protégée. She went on to earn a PhD from Louisiana State University (1972), with a thesis on James Weldon Johnson. Her teaching career spanned four decades, culminating in her holding the position of Professor of English at Southern University, Baton Rouge, until she retired in 1980. Her writing appeared in many journals and she published two collections of stories, the acclaimed *Seeds Beneath the Snow* (1969) and *Such Things from the Valley* (1977), as well as a novel, *The Deity Nodded* (1973).*

The Autobiography of an Idea

The purpose of this essay is to support the premise that an idea is born, nurtured, and raised to maturity just as an individual is. That idea is death, the cessation of life—or death-in-life—as the sole source stream in a writer’s world. That idea was/is a gift. For me, it is a second-hand gift, because I was influenced by a certain group of writers via the influence that this group exerted on my first mentor in creative writing.

I received the ideas pandered by my mentor from many writers, even Paul Laurence Dunbar, the first professional African-American poet, and the American poet Edgar Allan Poe, but more readily from the pre-romantic writers of English literature. Some of the pre-romantics belonged to the eighteenth-century Graveyard School of writing. Back-story reveals that my mentor occupied his mind with the thoughts of others to buttress the “brutal dilemmas” of his own existence, dilemmas that had in part faced the writers of his favorite literary works, especially Robert Burns and Edgar Allan Poe. Catherine Haich, after experiments and experiences with spiritualism, expresses the view in her book *Initiation* that “it is possible to receive the thoughts of another human being” (90). After years with Sweet Mary by “Sweet Afton,” the tragic child bride Annabel Lee, the “Raven” quoting

"Nevermore," and the man without a country (but with a "dead soul") sauntering the deck of ship after ship, mumbling, "I can never say again, [This is my own native land,]"¹ I became an initiate of "tragedy" as my mentor envisioned it, and was eventually baptized as a true believer.

My mentor was my father, Calvin Shepherd Jackson (1880?–1947) of Winsborn, South Carolina. He became my mother country as a writer. His spirit, his consciousness, his thoughts permeated my being so completely that it is fair to say that he was my god from 1923 to 1930. This man, who became a Christian minister, believed in the efficacy of fate. His classical studies at Benedict College in Columbia, South Carolina, in the field of Greek literature introduced him to the Greek mind/spirit that held fate as the grand arbiter in human affairs. He never came to terms with the idea that Jehovah God could man the affairs of the being created in his own image with justice and mercy. He, somehow, did not ingest the ideas that, though the tragic hero moved to catastrophe because of his flaw in character, he maintained his moral courage and spiritual prowess. A line from Calvin's poem "The Apple Man" reads: "All my themes become discord." Since Calvin was my god, I worshipped at his shrine of "tragedy," unconsciously bringing a predilection for doom and gloom into my stories and verse.

When Lance Jeffers, the revered African-American poet, read my short stories in the mid-1980s, he said in a letter, "Several of your stories are realistic tragedies. There is often in 'Rena' in *Such Things from the Valley*, 'Silas,' 'Little Jake,' and 'Runetta' in *Seeds Beneath the Snow*, that element that sobers and brings tears to the eyes."² My few faithful critics have never become tear-struck on reading my fiction,³ although they do note some characters who are struggling to alleviate inordinate justice. Lance, however, set me thinking.

I knew Aristotle's "imitation of an action" definition of tragedy. I knew about Shakespeare's tragedies. But Lance's words came across to me as "What have I to do with Hecuba?" in terms of my having an affinity with tragedy as a writer. Me? Tragedy? Then, I remembered Linda's conversation with her sons in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*. Her inference that a small boat has as much need for a harbor as a large one shows us the "brutal dilemmas" in the life of the humble man, whose life counts as well as the life of a mighty ruler.

1 Edward Everett Hale (1822–1909), a clergyman and author, wrote the realistic story "The Man Without a Country".

1 My Jeffers file was misplaced during one of the hurricanes in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

2 Several reviewers have made pertinent remarks about my works, but the "faithful critics" are Charles Rowell, Jerry W. Ward, and Rita B. Dandridge.

The death of Linda's husband Willie Loman is a metaphor of fallen humanity. For the first time I was moved to examine my own stories to see why my people were always falling. I was surprised to learn that my characters of note were set to fall.

In 1990, I found "My Last Affair," a short story that I wrote in the spring of 1947 in Langston Hughes's class when he was guest professor of creative writing at Atlanta University. My father had died a few weeks before that spring semester started, so I was full of grief because I had wanted my father to visit the Oxford University of the South, the Atlanta University system.

Hughes tried to market "My Last Affair" with no success. He said that people coming from work were reading the magazines he approached. He said a tired person would not want to deal with a forlorn character who could find no way out of depression. Hughes could see that he had provoked me. He asked, "Arthenia, aren't you happy about anything?" I failed to understand his ignorance in regard to my need to suffer. Had not the people who influenced my father been "blessed to suffer"?

Celeste, the protagonist in "My Last Affair," apes my sorrowful experiences as a dethroned "debutante" of sixteen. She is determined to (and with the help of a sister, an aunt, and an uncle does) attend her Senior Class Day Reception even though her mother had commanded her to stay at home. But her mother arrives on the scene and demands that she leave the reception while teachers and students look on with surprise.

The popular song of that season, "My Last Affair," is her favorite, and it becomes more precious to Celeste as she dances to the time (her first dance) with the Romeo that she sights with one eye (a tall, skinny, half-fed-looking youth). She is the "old apple man" whose theme has become discord once her mother crashes the scene. Her heart sings as she trails her mother back to the house before sundown:

"Tragedy just seems to be the end of me, my happiness is misery, this is my last affair." Actually, it was a first glimpse for the girl into a world where young people wore pretty dresses, new hairstyles, whole suits—dark suits, white shirts and ties—just to sit down to eat good food, cake, ice cream, drink punch, and dance.

As I read over and over again in 1990 the sentence "This is my last affair," I began hearing my father's voice speaking of the 1927 flood: "We will drown; we will starve, there is no way out. God has broken His promise by destroying us again with water instead of fire." Tragedy? The father who was god appeared to me now as an "inevitable pessimist." Hopefulness is essential to tragedy, but fate had deleted that element from his book of life.

Then Langston's voice became clear. I could at last buy Lance's idea of the "realistic" in my stories. Hughes told me to examine my own life as a black person, and to deal with African Americans in my milieu and with the tenor of their lives. He stressed the value of humor in literature as a means to obliterate the soreness from difficult bruises to the soul. My father now became a man in my view, not my god of seven years in our West Street home in Sumter, South Carolina.

"Striking incongruities" claimed Calvin's consciousness when he was a Benedict College student in the 1890s. And he had, in a way, found his Langston Hughes. His English teacher, an Anglo-American lady from New England, asked Calvin to stay after class one day. She asked: "Calvin, did you write this?"

"Yes, Miss Livingston," he replied.

She did not allow them to say "Yes, mam."

"My boy," she continued, "God has given you a gift. Always write."

He did, though most of his writings are lost, and he never published a word. Like Hughes, this woman became a friend to her students. When she learned that he was an orphan working to secure an education, she asked all of her friends to use his hack services.

Calvin would have a different experience with his mathematics teacher. This prominent African-American minister became his role model, the kind of man that he would be as an educator. He gave his students assignments that required hard, laborious preparation. The assignment that determined whether or not a senior would finish his term was the main conversation at the preparatory school. This was Calvin's challenge for excellence. He fought sleep until late in the night to work the algebra problems. He passed his work in certain that he had won his professor's respect. He would graduate.

Calvin waited with "bated breath" to hear the words of praise. The professor had asked him to remain after class.

"Calvin, I kept you after class to reprimand you for stealing the problems from your roommate. He solved the problems and you became the copycat. You will not graduate."

"No, sir," Calvin replied, "my roommate was out on the town; I did the problems."

The Reverend Professor smiled down on the so-called offender and said, "Do you think I would take your word against that of your roommate? He is somebody's son."

Calvin knew that he was a child of fate—a cursed being. Legend has it that his father Primus, who was named for a saint, became a living devil in

life. Through some deed, it is believed that he brought down a curse on his progeny.

In 1981, the Calvin Jackson heirs joined the Jackson clan with roots in Winsboro and Fairfield County, South Carolina, in a sizeable gymnasium in Philadelphia. It was full of people. I met ministers, educators, artists, land barons, entrepreneurs—you name it. But no one would call the name of Primus Jackson. I faced this impenetrable barrier to self, the backstory of my existence that Calvin had known, no doubt, most of his life.

Robert Bly explains “stuckness” as a paternal phenomenon: “The wound a man receives from his father, or from life, [hurts]. Through that hurt, his way of dealing with the world was damaged. He is enveloped in a mood of “stuckness” (71–72). Bly’s *Iron John: A Book about Men* was/is a gift. It is a second-hander. The father, Bly continues, “does not exist, as the hero through his heroism nor through his invincibility, as the warrior does, but he exists through his wound” (73).

I realize that this “stuckness” my father experienced is, through him, a part of my experience. Finding the evidence of the experience is another task to assume as I examine my canon rife with the old influence—especially in *Seeds* (1969, 1973, 1975) and *Valley* (1977).

“Striking incongruities” exist in my life. Conflict is an eternal verity.

I understand why my father wrote, “And all my themes become discord.” But I have kissed the darkness hello. And as I move, I search through that darkness for the most brilliant fight.

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Barbara Chase-Riboud

A US-born visual artist, sculptor, novelist and poet, she attained international recognition with her first novel, Sally Hemings (1979), which imagines Hemings' life as a slave, including her now historically proven relationship with President Thomas Jefferson. The book won the Janet Heidinger Kafka Prize and sold more than one million copies. She is also the author of the novels Valide: A Novel of the Harem (1986), Echo of Lions (1989), The President's Daughter (1994), and more recently Hottentot Venus (2003), which humanises Sarah Baartman, a Khoikhoi woman who was exhibited in 19th-century freak shows in Europe. Chase-Riboud's poetry collections include Memphis & Peking (1989) and Everytime a Knot is Undone, a God is Released (2014). Her numerous honours include the Carl Sandburg Prize for poetry and the Women's Caucus for Art's Lifetime achievement award. In 1996, she received the French Ordre des Arts et des Lettres.

Ode to My Grandfather at the Somme 1918

For James Edward Saunders (1898–1966)

He stands a solitary figure in
Dark brown and khaki along the Somme trenches,

Wearing the uniform of the Union dead
On the foreign soil of the Western Front,

Himself a foreigner in his own homeland
A ferocious volunteer in the 366 Infantry Regiment

Of the segregated all-Negro volunteer division raised
From the depths of the Black Philadelphia ghetto,

A lonely steel-helmeted figure, erect in a field of blood
Having traversed the Atlantic in an American vessel

Just like his great grandfather
170 years before except this time not

In the ship's hole in iron chains but chained nonetheless
To America's destiny and the idea of patriotism

In a useless war that freed no one,
Changed nothing nor set any human goal
Nor any value on human life which will result
Only in engendering World War II
Separating this war from the next war
As *The Great War*, killer of an entire generation
The boy stands wondering what is great
About a war in which both sides are
Cannon fodder for the guns of the other
And white men fight for a hollowed-out hill
As a respectable excuse for one million dead,
In awe the French called the Black soldiers *Men of Bronze*,
While generals tried out their new maiming machines
And mustard gas made its entry into war's Hell.
The boy carries a just issued machine gun
And a vacant-eyed black-goggled canvas gas mask,
No protection from the searing pain of
Poison gas outlawed by the Geneva Convention.
Mercenary bombs burst in countless numbers
Blowing off arms and legs around his muteness
Like scarlet oak leaves fluttering, splattering
On the rich, brown French soil
In a senseless, useless White Man's War
That has claimed 4 million dead on both sides
The boy stands in never-dry leggings,
Binding 26 days of mud and mold,
Dead skin that must be scraped off
With the bayonet of his gun in order to stand
At attention resisting the fog of deadly gas,
Believing that the duty to die for one's country

Was his duty as a Negro and his right as a citizen
Even as he was despised as being unfit to wear

The uniform he wore or shed the blood he shed
For years afterwards coughing blood from burned lungs

I remember the brown syrup on a lump of white sugar
That kept his breathlessness at bay, his only medication,

That and his veteran's pension and the right to a
Military burial but not the right to march with

American troops down the Champs Elysées in triumph
Among the flags and the confetti, a Yank like all the rest,

Revered by the French as the victors of the Armistice
And the savior of European peace and civilization,

Safe for those same Europeans who had enslaved his
Great-grandfather but never safe for him neither along the

Somme, nor in Paris, nor in Philadelphia, nor for that matter
Safe for democracy, the vote, the labor union, the working man.

Returning home to my grandmother Lizzi, struck dumb with joy
That it was over, over there but just beginning over here.

And our surprise in 1966 to learn that
Our silent patriarch was a hero.

Who had the right to a military funeral with honors
And the cannon salute he never received from the French.

Who had never revealed what had happened to him over there for
How can 1,000,000 cadavers be conceived within one square kilometer?

The folded flag rests in my arms, his faithful granddaughter's
The last tribute to the last *Bronze Man of the Somme*.

Nawal El Saadawi

Born in Egypt, she is a medical doctor, a leading feminist activist and an internationally renowned writer of non-fiction and fiction. Once banned from public speaking and imprisoned under President Sadat, she is founder and president of the Arab Women's Solidarity Association, co-founder of the Arab Association for Human Rights, and is an outspoken campaigner against Female Genital Mutilation. Her extensive body of writing— including plays, memoirs, novels and short stories—is studied in universities across the world. She has received three honorary degrees, the North-South Prize from the Council of Europe, the Inana International Prize in Belgium, and the Seán MacBride Peace Prize. She lives in Cairo and continues to write in Arabic. Her numerous works in translation include Woman at Point Zero (1982), God Dies by the Nile (1984), Memoirs of a Woman Doctor (1994) and Love in the Kingdom of Oil (2001).

About Me in Africa—Politics and Religion in my Childhood

In my childhood I did not know that Egypt is in Africa. The Egyptian government under King Farouk did not consider Egypt as part of Africa. They followed the British colonizers, who divided Africa into Black and White. Divide and Rule has been the main plan of any colonizers throughout history.

To exploit people, you must veil their minds, and create conflicts and wars between them. This is happening today in our life as happened in earlier societies.

Religion is the best tool to veil the minds of people and divide them. The Egyptian educational system followed that of the British colonizers and contained many racist, patriarchal, religious, and capitalist ideas.

I was brainwashed by my official education as a Muslim, Egyptian girl from the working class. In primary school the British and Egyptian teachers praised the upper-class girls, with fair white skin. My maternal Turkish grandmother despised my dark skin, which I inherited from the poor peasant family of my father.

My maternal aunt used to hide my dark skin with white powder, and would straighten my hair with a hot iron. I liberated my mind from this slavery by educating myself. Also, my enlightened mother and father helped me to undo what teachers did to me.

To weaken the human mind you need an absolute power in Heaven and on Earth. Obedience must be the rule, to God, the King or the President. In Ancient Egypt, God *was* the King. In fact, "God's power" was created by the statesmen or the politicians to conceal the King's domination and exploitation. Throughout human history, political economic power was the origin of all religions. Obedience to God is inseparable from obedience to the ruler. The idea of secularism, or of separating religion from state, is misleading. No state can control its peoples without their submission to God's Will, which hides their submission to the government or ruler.

Democracy and secularism are deceptive words, among others, masking the politics behind religion. The post-modern, so-called, Daesh, El Quaida, Taliban, Boko Haram, Muslim, Christian, Jewish state, and all other religious fundamentalist states or groups, are political imperialist capitalist powers, created by global-local colonizers under the name of God.

When I was a primary school student during the 1940s, I noticed that King Farouk, who was head of the state and the army in Egypt, had more power over the Egyptian people than God and his Prophet Mohamed. However, the British general of the invading army in Egypt had more power over King Farouk and the Egyptian army and government. My father told me one day that the British army had surrounded the palace of King Farouk and threatened to kick him off the throne if he did not obey the British order to appoint El Nahhas Pasha as prime minister of the Egyptian government.

Al Azhar, the highest Islamic power in Egypt, could not defend the King, though its top Islamic sheikhs declared every Friday, in all the country's mosques, that His Majesty the King was protected by His Majesty God and His Prophet from all evils, and that he, the King, would rule Egypt for ever, never to be de-throned unless by God's Will.

I asked my father this question: "How can the British Will be above God's Will?" My father replied that no human will can be above the Will of God, but God can use the British colonizer or any human being as a tool to punish our king Farouk, who was corrupt and unjust.

In July 1952, while I was a student in the medical faculty, King Farouk was overthrown by the Free Officers Movement led by Nasser. My father said that God used Nasser and his group as a tool to realize God's Will. It became clear to my mind that, in reality, the only Will working is that of the state and the army.

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In fact, religion is needed today, as in all times and places, to transform the human being into a tool in the hands of the dominating global-local

powers. Today we use the new word “glocal” to show that the global and local are inseparable.

My father died in February 1959; he did not live to witness the big defeat of Nasser in June 1967, but the top Islamic sheikh declared that the defeat was God’s Will, not the Will of the British-French-Israeli-American powers. He considered Nasser a communist atheist secular dictator and that God had punished him.

Nasser died in September 1970 and the new ruler, Sadat, opened the doors of Egypt to American-Israeli goods, he signed a peace treaty with Israel, changed the constitution to declare Egypt an Islamic state, and named himself The Believer, The Father. Sadat would start his speeches with God’s name—Allah—and end with the Prophet Mohamed’s name.

The leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood were released from Nasser’s prison and were encouraged to hold political and religious posts. Women and even female children started to wear the veil. In September 1981 Sadat imprisoned all opposition leaders, men and women, who criticized his policies, including myself. I was accused of being against Sadat and God.

I used to see God in my dreams when I was a child. He was inseparable from Satan the Devil. When I started my childhood diary, both of them, God and Satan, were always together. I could not separate them in my imagination or in reality. Imagination was inseparable from reality. When God resigned in any of my novels, Satan had to resign. And when Satan resigned, God had to resign.

It was not my fault. Since I started reading the three monotheistic holy books — The Qur’an, the New and Old Testaments—I have found God and Satan together all the time. I was severely punished by political-religious powers because I did not separate between God and the local-global President.

Anyway, I stopped hiding my dark skin very early in my life, since I discovered that Egypt is in Africa, not in the so-called Middle East. In fact, I never use the term Middle East.

*December 2017
Cairo, Egypt*

Adrienne Kennedy

Influential as a playwright and memoirist, she was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and raised in Cleveland, Ohio. She draws on myth, autobiography and history to explore issues of race, kinship, and violence in her work, which has been produced, read and taught internationally for more than six decades. She is best known for her one-act play Funnyhouse of a Negro, which was written in 1960, the year she visited Ghana, and won an Obie Award in 1964. Other notable works followed, including The Owl Answers (1965), A Rat's Mass (1967), A Beast Story (1969), and June and Jean in Concert (1996), earning her many prestigious honours, among them a Guggenheim fellowship (1967), an American Academy of Arts and Letters award in Literature (1994), the 2003 Anisfield-Wolf Lifetime Achievement Award, the PEN/Laura Pels International Foundation for Theatre award (2006), and an Obie Lifetime Achievement Award in 2008. Her most recent play, He Brought Her Heart Back in a Box, premiered in 2018. In November 2018, she was inducted into the US Theater Hall of Fame.

Forget

I met my white grandfather a few times.
of course he lived on the white side of town.
he sent his chauffeur who was black and his name was Austin
in a black car to

my grandmother's house to get us.
my mother wanted my brother, herself, and me to walk
but he insisted.

we went to his house.
his white wife wanted us to go in the back
door,
but he insisted we come into the front.

full of contradictions,
he sent my mother and her half-sister to college,
bought them beautiful things

but still maintained the distance. they called him
by his surname and he never shared a meal with them.

we sat in his parlor twice.
he was slightly fascinated by my brother and me.
he said something like you all have northern accents.
he was interested in our schooling in Cleveland.
he was interested in the fact that people
said I was smart.

at that time the thirties and before the WAR
he owned a lot of the town

and had three children by black women.
my mother's mother was fifteen, worked in the peach orchards.
like the South itself, he was an unfathomable
mixture of complexities,
these are two generations of white men
removed

who went all the way to Africa to get SLAVES,
quite mad.

I was lucky enough to spend a day and evening in his
and his family's house. built about 1860
where he was born...his father was the town's first bank owner.
the house, white, wooden in weeping willow trees
down a long archway.

by 1940, when I visited, the house had one usable
room, the rest all boarded up
and was lived in by black COUSINS
of his Negro family.

despite her Atlanta Univ education and marrying a Morehouse man
and making a nice life in Cleveland,
my mother found it impossible to say her mother's name.
and impossible to call her father by anything but his
surname.

she used to say to me when I was a child,
Adrienne, when I went to town to get the
mail, they would always say
here comes that little yellow bastard.

Pre-1900

1900s

1920s

1930s

1940s

1950s

1960s

1970s

1980s

1990s

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Andaiye

(1942–2019)

Guyanese-born, she has been described as a transformative figure in the region's political struggle, particularly in the late 1970s, '80s and '90s. She has devoted most of her adult life to left and women's politics in the Caribbean and internationally. She was an early member of the Executive of Guyana's Working People's Alliance with (among others) Walter Rodney and worked alongside him as he wrote A History of the Guyanese Working People: 1881–1905. She was a founder of Red Thread women's collective, and served on the Regional Executive of the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA). Later, she was associated internationally with Women of Colour in the Global Women's Strike. Throughout her life she published articles and chapters, mainly on women in Guyana and the Caribbean, and continually supported organising for radical change. She survived cancer twice before sadly passing away in 2019, and she was a founder of the Guyana Cancer Society and Cancer Survivors Action Group.

Audre, There's Rosemary, That's For Remembrance

For Audre Lorde (1992)

I met Audre Lorde toward the end of 1988 at the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA) meeting. I was chairing (they call it facilitating) a session. CAFRA members were being—as usual—disorderly, and why not? I was in my best head-teacher mode. Audre came in late. I recognized her face from the back cover of books, but I had to make a point; she was late. I asked her to identify herself. She said, looking a little surprised (she was not humble): “Audre Lorde.” I led the acknowledgement by thumping the table. She acknowledged the recognition with a slight raising of the eyebrow, a ducking of the head.

A short time after, I was asked if I could be interviewed with Audre. I agreed. It took some time to get the interview together. When I was free, I heard she was tired. When she wasn't, I was busy. I wasn't trying to be difficult. I hadn't read the cancer books; I didn't know about her struggle with cancer. Eventually we did the interview at a table (I think; my memory is bad) in a room full of people and smoke. I think, too, I was smoking myself. As I said, I didn't know she had cancer. And I didn't know I had cancer.

Somewhere in the next six months I learned she had cancer. Somewhere in the next six months—on International Women's Day, 1989—I learned that I, too, had cancer.

I remember only fragments of what happened over the next few days. I remember being at my father's house and people coming in, the women breaking the silence of awkwardness by asking me what I needed washed or ironed or bought for the hospital; the men, not socialized into housework, having nothing to break the silence. I remember my friend, Jocelyn Dow, taking me to see a play that was on in celebration of IWD: *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/When the Rainbow Is Enuf*. I remember going to the home of another friend, Alice Thomas, where I cried and Alice said, "Done, done, never mind, the diagnosis probably wrong." Mother words. I remember yet another friend, Nesha Haniff, saying angrily that we all know Guyana's medical services had fallen apart so why were we so stupid as to believe they could read any slides? I remember my father sitting with Jocelyn making arrangements for me to go to Canada for the diagnosis to be checked, even as he denied the possibility it might be right. I remember him calling my mother, who was in England, and who did what she did best—pretended she was coping well; how was her daughter? I remember my brother, Abyssinian, calling to say that he would leave his job in New York (as he did) and come wherever I would be, to be my nurse (as he was). I know I spoke during those few days, too, to other women who became major supports; the thing I call not yet a women's movement called in.

I do not remember when I wrote Audre but I did, and I remember that she answered immediately and sent me a copy of *A Burst of Light* with the inscription, "Sister Survivor—May these words be a bridge over that place where there are no words—or where they are so difficult as to sound like a scream!"

And so began my friendship with Audre Lorde, around the sharing of the fear of living with, perhaps dying from, cancer. She wrote often, mostly on cards. She'd say, "I need your words too." I couldn't write too many. So I called, often. And she called too.

West Indians are a people who, for good or evil, express the serious as joke, so across all my weekly and monthly phone calls with Audre in four years, here's what I remember most sharply.

I was well into my treatment and had developed a reputation as a person who was dealing well with cancer and chemotherapy. And I *was* brave. I knew from reading that the drugs I was using would cause me to lose my hair. I arranged to shave it all off when it began to fall. I was determined that I would be in control. Every time I went for chemo I vomited my guts out,

then, vomiting over, called for soup with pigtail, which my Aunt Elsene or mother made. I watched people watching me with pity—hair gone, cheeks deformed by steroids—and managed to laugh. My friend Karen de Souza, a photographer, would come from Guyana to visit me and climb up high to take pictures of the sun shining on my head and my cheeks, so that (she said) I could see later where I had been and acknowledge the journey. I genuinely found that funny. At least she assumed there would be a later.

I was brave until the day I was told I had to lose several teeth, which, given the teeth I had been losing since childhood, meant that I had to get a plate.

A plate, teeth in a cup, at night; worse than cancer, a metaphor for old age. I went back to the home where I was staying with my friend Elsie Yong, entered my bedroom, closed the door, climbed into my bed, went into the foetal position and lay.

Somewhere within this—the same day, next day?—Audre called.

“Hi, girlfriend,” she said.

“Hi,” I muttered, the first time I had ever felt or sounded not glad to hear her voice.

She chatted and then eventually asked what was wrong.

I said, “I have to take out teeth and get a plate and soak it in the night like old people.” One breath, whining.

I heard a noise like a person who hadn’t managed to get her hand over the phone before she giggled. Then Audre said, “I lost my two front teeth. Which teeth are you losing?”

“The remaining ones on the right side,” I answered.

“Oh, that’s bad,” she said. “But not as bad as front teeth.”

I sucked the teeth I had left.

“Listen,” she said. “You know I’m supposed to be so brave? Well, when I lost my two front teeth I felt worse than when I lost my breast. I mean, you don’t have to show your breast or use it every minute, but your teeth!”

I giggled, then said, “But this is it. This is the end. This is teeth in a cup, in the night. The end of...”

“No,” she interrupted. “Here’s what I do. In the night, I go into the bathroom and close the door, firmly. I take out my two front teeth. I brush the teeth in my mouth, then the teeth in my hand. Then I put the teeth in my hand in my mouth. I go to bed. Now, if you have expectations (and, girlfriend, you and I might seem to have different expectations but they’re really the same expectations), you wait till the expectations are met or if none are forthcoming you raise some...”

I giggled.

"Stop interrupting," she went on. "After your expectations are met (she/he approaching, you approaching), you wait for the right moment (she/he asleep) and you take out your teeth (if you think you must) and place them strategically under your pillow."

I giggled.

"Girlfriend, you put them there so you can get at them quickly if any further expectations come up. And if they don't, in the morning you get up, take them quickly from under the pillow, go to the bathroom, close the door firmly, brush the teeth in your mouth then the teeth in your hand, put the teeth in your hand in your mouth and you're ready to meet any further expectations..."

"OK, OK, OK," I giggled. "OK."

It occurred to me then, it occurs to me now, that the story had been made up out of whole cloth. But what does that matter?

A few times Audre called me because she needed to find company in the place she was in. When the alternative therapy that had helped her stay alive for so long wasn't shrinking her liver tumor anymore or even keeping it the same size, the question was whether finally to take chemotherapy even though she was tired of carrying her life every day in her hands.

"Girlfriend," she inquired, "tell me about methotrexate."

I answered; she hummed.

She asked, "You think I should take that, you who've felt it?"

I tried a balancing act: I wanted her to take anything that might keep her alive; I wanted to support her in her determination not to switch gears from a form of therapy that was about strengthening the immune system to one that could destroy it; I wanted her to take poison if poison would keep her alive.

We spoke when after she had taken the chemo her locks had fallen out and she asked, "Do you understand thin with bloat?"—because she had lost weight while parts of her body had grown fat.

She called when, for love of those for whose love of her, she was considering more chemo, although her heart and her body and her mind said no. And all she asked of me, at those moments, was that, as a person in a place similar to hers (although never the same), I would listen to her weigh options I had weighed and tell her the truth of what I had discovered, so she could use that in her weighing of the options.

A person in a similar place. For we were; never, Audre and I, "sister survivors", surviving in the same place. No one else I came to know who had cancer had travelled such a road, from breast cancer to liver cancer

to ovarian cancer. From mastectomy to hysterectomy. From a person who started like the rest of us with little knowledge of cancer and its treatment to a person fully informed about the disease and the options for treatment; from a person just living to a person having to make decisions every day about what to do or not to do just to live, who found the courage to choose a road with no one ahead to guide her—no person who had chosen that road and walked it for so long through such pitfalls and reached the places she wanted to be.

Audre told me, as she told countless others, that I should write—a diary entry each day, poems. I didn't.

When Gloria said Audre had died, I thought (I didn't know what else to think) I would write her a poem. I couldn't. I wrote, "I want you in this world." Nothing else. What I meant was that although I believe she will always be in this world in her children, her partner, her blood and non-blood sisters, all her life's work, I wanted her in this world—at the other end of a phone or postcard, talking about the loss of teeth and hair, about bloating bellies and cheeks and Bush and the Gulf War, about where she was going/had been to see an eclipse of the sun, about why something I had written was OK but not good enough because I had chickened out on homophobia, about why she would forgive me that (for a while) in the face of CNN images of Rodney King, Ethiopia, Brazilian street children, the thing they call "black-on-black violence" with its origins in white-on-black violence, in New York, DC, the townships of South Africa. About living with and dying from cancer. About her loving me and I, her.

For I loved her, this woman who came so late to my life but whose death leaves a void in the centre of my life.

Audre, there's rosemary. That's for remembrance.

Joan Anim-Addo

From Grenada, she has long championed Caribbean writers, particularly black women to a wide public and academic audience. She is the Director of the Centre for Caribbean and Diaspora Studies, Goldsmiths, University of London, where she continues to teach and inspire students. Her publications include a libretto,

Imoinda (2008), which re-imagines the life of a woman sold into the Atlantic slave trade, the poetry collections *Haunted by History* (2004) and *Janie Cricketing Lady* (2006), and a literary history, *Touching the Body: History, Language and African-Caribbean Women's Writing* (2007). Her co-edited books include *Caribbean-Scottish Relations* (2007), and *I am Black, White, Yellow: An Introduction to the Black Body in Europe* (2007) and *Interculturality and Gender* (2009). She started *Mango Publishing* in 1995, and is the founder-editor of *New Mango Season*, a journal of Caribbean women's writing.

Ashes, She Says

We do not—and I mean not—touch the computers today. We listen. I use “we” to include those of us whose lives these days are being recorded so much of the time. Still, we mindlessly provide data by one means or another. Right? Think social media, for example. Aha! That means you, I believe. And you. You, too. Yes, she smiles. And me? I’m as guilty as the rest. But what I’m inviting you to do is to put your finger on the link to today’s question: where do we find significant data from earlier times? She taps at the lobe of her right ear, holds up a handful of printed sheets and, her shoulder against a pillar crammed with cable, reads to her class:

It all happened before this place, before this time, long before you were born. And I forget so much. You see, memory has been tortured out of me. They tell me that I’ve never lived such a life, that I’m deluded to talk of Princes and Kings, palace and courtiers. They might just be right. I myself can’t trust a memory that produces lives so different from those we know so well here. Besides, my head’s too full. Too much has happened. Take what you want of this sorry tale and throw away the rest, mash it underfoot, like sand. Perhaps like ashes. Yes, ashes. Minutes, hours, days, a whole life time burnt to ashes.

At first he touched me with words. Words alone, mark you. Words, light and airy, words like bubbles dancing in morning sunlight. In that place before here, the surprise of his words made me look at him again, search his face, simply because I had never heard words behave like that before. Not that I could remember, anyway. Words that gurgled. Words that tickled. Words that sounded like I’d always known I’d hear them, at once familiar, at home, and magic. And all was just a matter of finding him. I looked and as I looked, I found that I’d caught his eye. I suppose we had, by some magic, ensnared each other.