

Four Poems by Ernest Alima

This poetic effort in English made by Mr Ernest Alima merits special mention.

He was born and educated in East Cameroon and some of his poems in French have appeared in *Abbia* and in other Reviews in France.

In september 1964, with only a smattering of English, he left to teach French in the B. T. T. C. at Soppo, in West Cameroon.

The poems that we publish here, which he wrote after one year of intensive effort in English deserve the attention of those who are interested in the advancement of bilingualism in the Federal Republic of Cameroon.

THE EDITOR

L'effort poétique tenté en anglais par Ernest Alima mérite une attention particulière.

Ernest Alima est né au Cameroun Oriental où il a fait ses études. Certains de ses poèmes en français ont déjà paru dans *Abbia* et dans d'autres revues françaises.

En septembre 1964, alors qu'il n'avait que quelques notions de la langue anglaise, Ernest Alima partit pour le Cameroun Occidental où il enseigne actuellement le français à l'École Normale d'Instituteurs de Soppo.

Les poèmes que nous publions dans ces pages, et que Ernest Alima a composés après une année d'effort intensif en anglais, méritent de retenir l'attention de ceux qui s'intéressent au progrès du bilinguisme dans la République Fédérale du Cameroun.

L'ÉDITEUR

Anguish

To be ejected
Like a black sheep
From our own bit of land
From the land
Where
Had been buried
My navel string
And where
My late mother
Takes her rest for ever
Under the peaceful shade
of the singing mango-tree
What a terrible thing!
Good Heavens!
O Thou my God
My source
And my mouth
Let that not happen...

(Barr, May 7, 1965)

(Whispers from the unknown)
in preparation.

Miss Martin's Portrait¹

Green face
Which has crossed
Without dread
The anger and the cruelty of the seas...
Skin tanned
By the tropical rains of sun...
Voice soft, as soft as
The sea breeze at Victoria...
Red lips where blooms all the time
The white flower of the smile...
Bountiful heart full of juvenile jazz
Which has accepted to lend a hand
To my Africa...
Hard hands
Gnawed by the fangs of the chalk
And which fill with the sweet water of science
Unceasingly
My brothers' heads.

(Barr, June 11, 1965)

(Whispers from the Unknown)
In preparation.

1. Miss Martin at present teaching English in the R.T.C., Suva, is a member of the "Peace Corps".

My shout

*My shout is not a shout
It is strength
It is light
It is thunder
It is Mount Buea in eruption*

*My shout is not a shout...
It is against you and for you
Against me and for me
It is against what you dare to say
Against what you dare to do
Against your blindness
Against your deafness*

*My shout is
Eyes
Ears
Staff
Thanks to it you will see
Thanks to it you will hear
Thanks to it you will walk*

*Step
by
Step
Without faltering...
My shout is black as the night of my skin
Red as the sap of my veins
Sharp as hungry teeth
Hot as an orphan's tears...*

*My shout is not a shout
It is dynamite in the heart of the rock...*

(Buea, February 12th, 1965)

Extract from "Alone night and Day" in preparation.

I am sad brother¹

*I am sad, brother,
Oh! how sad I am!
I went to the town,
I met a fellow townsman,
A former bosom friend,
I said to him: "Good morning friend"
And they threatened me:
My friend had become a prefect.
I met another one,
I said to him: "Good morning friend"
And they threatened me:
He too had now some titles,
I am sad brother
Oh! how sad I am!
But never more will they threaten me
I have decided to greet no one
With the lips anymore
That's why I stroll cap in hand,
How sad it is, brother, how sad it is!*

Translated from French
by Ernest Alima

¹ This poem was recited by a singer of the Mvet during the Mvet festival which was held at the French Cultural Centre in Yaoundé, in October 1964.

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