

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'Ecole 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...*

(Buea, May 7, 1965)

(Whispers from the unknown)
in preparation.

*Miss Martin's Portrait*¹

*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.*

(Buea, June 11, 1965)

(Whispers from the Unknown,
In preparation.)

1. Miss Martin at Present teaching English in the B. T. T. C., Soppo, 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)

*I am sad brother*¹

*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 Yaounde, in October 1964.

Je suis triste mon frère...¹

*Je suis triste mon frère
 O ! comme je suis triste !
 Je suis allé en ville,
 J'ai rencontré un compatriote,
 Un ami d'autrefois.
 Je lui ai dit : « Bonjour Ami »
 Et on m'a menacé :
 Mon ami était devenu Préfet.
 J'en ai rencontré un autre,
 Je lui ai dit : « Bonjour ami »
 Et on m'a menacé :
 Lui aussi avait des titres.
 Je suis triste mon frère
 Oh ! comme je suis triste !
 Mais jamais plus on ne m'y reprendra
 J'ai décidé de ne plus saluer personne avec la bouche.
 Voilà pourquoi je me promène le chapeau sous le bras.
 Comme c'est triste, mon frère, comme c'est triste.*

1. Ceci a été dit par un chanteur de Mvet au Centre Culturel Français de Yaoundé lors du Festival du Mvet qui a eu lieu en octobre 1964.

Four Poems by Luma Dikum

The testing

*You test me
Like the strings of my native guitar;
You tease me
Like a woman grinding corn.*

*You search the depths
Of my inner-most parts
And quite unearth
The secrets of my heart.*

*Can I your magic powers restrain
Or nature's best in man disdain?
Everyone in this wide Earth
Is for-ever captive to your spell?*

The dejected

*What are you doing
 At this time I wonder:
 Silent in lonely rooms,
 Wrapped in worldly musing,
 Or deep in studious thought?
 You have time indeed to ponder
 But none to give to him
 Who wrestles with restless whim.*

*Now you are busy
 Too busy to think,
 Hurrying to the kitchen behind,
 Washing the linen you find,
 Till I fear your back
 For want of ease will crack.
 For whole afternoons I fancy
 Your fingers capped with thimble
 As socks with holes you mend,
 And yet for me no thought?*

*Though in a strange land
 My eyes see without my mind
 Which at this time is thine,
 I walk the streets with my shadow
 Imprisoned in thy hollow hand
 Though fairest queen for whom I pine
 And yet I cannot find.*

Bewitching hair

*Weird and tantalizing
Curls of entangling delight
Whose rich, dark lustre
Charms the heart with bewitching might.*

*Weird as the wintry dusk,
Pleasant as a summer's day,
Disarrayed like restless leaves
That crowd and scatter like the wind.*

*When breezes blow and snowflakes drizzle,
Trees stand bare in awful stare,
Then that hair brings mystic cheer
To calm and strengthen the heart within.*

Defeat begone !

*Defeat begone, I no more fear
 What once to me was fear;
 Though once you lurked these halls
 And dogged my faltering steps,
 I no more bow my head in shame
 Nor to the ground my gaze incline.*

*Summer trees now shed their leaves
 Who once derided a fallen name
 And nimbus clouds shower down their dew
 To greet him vanquished in retreat
 Who now holds high his head aloft.*

*These shelves of books in series lie
 And studious girls o'er tables purr
 Are all to me no more a scare
 But friends with whom to live in bliss.*

*Defeat where now thy sneer,
 Where now thy threat'ning scowl?
 'Tis here no more nor e'er shall be,
 For he who wrongly slept in shame
 At Easter rose to die no more.*

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