

THE AFRICAN GRIOT

Issue no. 1 | April 2025

REVIEW

GOODBYE, MR. NOBEL?

*Africa seeks its
own mega literary
prize*

LITERARY PRIZES

*Africa's top
literary awards
and where to
apply for them*

NIGERIA TAKES IT!

**HALIRU MUSA WINS THE
ALEXANDER NDERITU PRIZE FOR
WORLD LITERATURE!**

GUYS, GIRLS & MASKS!

*How the Kenya Theatre
Awards burlesque ceremony
went down*

CHIMAMANDA'S NEW NOVEL

Why critics are divided

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EDITORIAL

This being the very first issue of *The African Griot Review*, my first duty is to welcome you – dear readers – to this monthly arts and culture magazine that is designed to acknowledge and promote Africa’s many contributions to global culture.

This month’s issue responds to the theme of ‘Awards/Prizes’. Around the globe, industry accolades are at once exciting and controversial. What prizes are up for grabs for writers and other artists in Africa? We’ll get some insights into that in this issue.

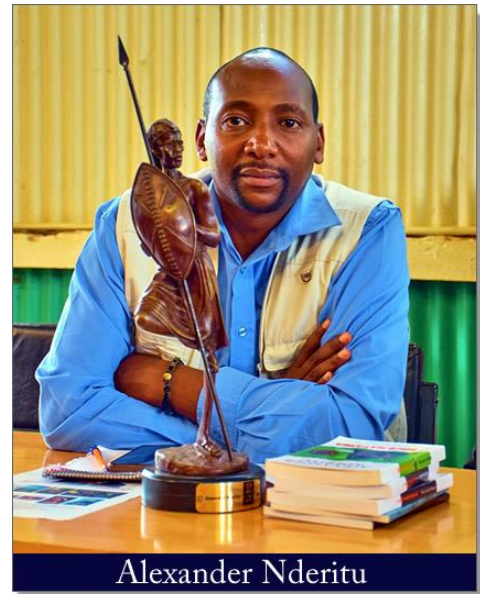
And speaking of awards, the winner of the 2024 Alexander Nderitu Prize for World Literature is revealed in these very pages! Moreover, the winning entry can be read right here, on Page 14.

And that’s not all, we have poetry, non-fiction, the entire Kenya Theatre Awards honour roll (complete with some dazzling images from the award ceremony) and the heads-up on where various opportunities for writers can be found this month.


We do appreciate feedback. Let us know what you think of the contents and what you’d like to see more of in future editions.

We’re also open to receiving content from you, pertaining to arts and culture in Africa and her Diaspora. You may send in articles, poems, artwork, photographs, or short stories or new releases addressed to The Editor. Let us work together to uncover and celebrate the modern-day African griots.

- Alexander Nderitu,
Editor-in-Chief




Alexander Nderitu



Been to a great music concert, stage play, fashion show or other cultural event and you'd like to write a review about it?

The African Griot Review considers reviews on African cultural expression from all over the world. To submit a review for consideration, use the following guidelines: Times New Roman font, double spaced, 800 - 1,500 words.

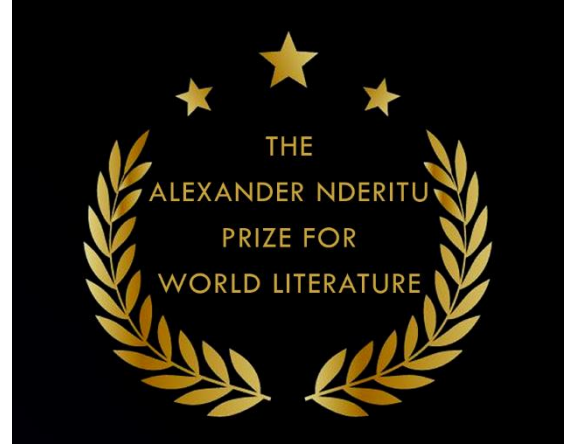
E-mail submissions to:
[submissions\(at\)theafricangriot.com](mailto:submissions(at)theafricangriot.com)



COVER STORY

Nigeria's Haliru Ali Musa Wins the 2024 Alexander Nderitu Prize for World Literature!

We have a winner! After nearly a year of deliberations and re-reading, the Jury of the inaugural Alexander Nderitu Prize for World Literature has chosen Haliru Ali Musa as the winner of the prestigious new literary prize. His beautifully structured and stylishly told story, *The Pregnant Ghost*, beat out 71 entries to emerge victorious. The young Nigerian makes a grand entry into the world of letters, given that he will receive a Kshs 100,000 (USD\$ 770.00) cash injection, a one-year-long online marketing campaign, and have the option of agent representation by an Asian literary agency. The winning story will be published by *The African Griot Review* (Kenya) and later by *The Asian Journal of Literature* (Sri Lanka).



Themed on 'Peace', the short story contest received entries from Nigeria, Kenya, Zambia, The Kingdom of Eswatini, South Sudan, Zimbabwe, Poland, Malawi, The Gambia, Sri Lanka, USA, Botswana and Tanzania. The jurors were **Dr. Paula O. M. Otukile** (Botswana), **Camilla Bauer** (Sweden), **Henry Akubuiro** (Nigeria), **Rupasinghe D. Pramudith** (Sri Lanka), and **Alexander Nderitu** (Kenya). Kenyan poet and critic **Jacob Oketch** also assisted in critiquing the entries.

2024 ALEXANDER NDERITU PRIZE FOR WORLD LITERATURE JURORS



Pramudith Rupasinghe
(Sri Lanka)



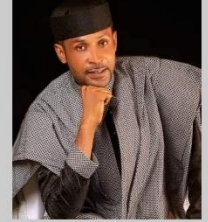
Paula M. Otukile
(Botswana)



Alexander Nderitu
(Kenya)



Camilla Bauer
(Sweden)



Henry Akubuiro
(Nigeria)

The submissions that made it to the longlist of ten were:

- *The Pregnant Ghost* - Haliru Ali Musa (Nigeria)
- *Ethiopian Night* - Evanson Njuki (Kenya)
- *A New Dawn* - Maina Mary Njeri (Kenya)
- *Mortuary* - Ekenedirichukwu Anselm Alita (Nigeria)
- *Call of the Sandy Tombs* - Kaluwe Haangala (Zambia)
- *That Last Kiss* - Erick Kitheka (Kenya)
- *Mama Tekla's Sunset* - J.E.Sibi-Okumu (Kenya)
- *Harmony's Echo* - Maria Kegode (Kenya)

- *Peace* - Buhlebethu Sukoluhle Mpofu (USA/Zimbabwe)
- *Beauty's in a Mark* - Kagira George (Kenya)

Over the couple of months, the longlist was whittled down to a shortlist of five contestants:

- Haliru Ali Musa
- Ekenedirichukwu Anselm Alita
- Kagira George
- Kaluwe Haangala
- J.E.Sibi-Okumu

In the end, Nigeria proved once again that it is the cultural powerhouse of the African continent. Commenting on the international contest, juror Pramudith D. Rupasinghe (a Laureate of the Golden Aster Prize for Global Literature) described the new award scheme as:

'A prize that certainly showcases Africa's emergence in global literary scene...Africa's has always been the cradle for human stories; the continent's wordsmiths have reached the global stage in spite of scarce opportunities. The Alexander Nderitu Prize is more than an award; it's a meeting point where the rich tapestry of African storytelling intersects with the global literary landscape, resulting in a powerful exchange of ideas and perspectives. The 2024 edition showcased the continent's unmatched storytelling prowess, with writers crafting narratives of exceptional depth and complexity. The entries were living witness to how African writers who write in English use it to weave narratives steeped in the painful echoes of colonialism, their words imbued with anger, sorrow, and the fragile hope for a better future; sharing their stories with the world.'

The annual literary prize is named after its founder, Kenyan writer/critic Alexander Nderitu. In 2017, *Business Daily* newspaper named him one of Kenya's 'Top 40 Under 40 Men'. He is the recipient of a Sahitto International Prizes for Literature Jury Award, and a SEVHAGE-Agema Founders' Prize for African Criticism.



'We had real oral tradition in our house. I knew the word "griot" when I was a little boy. A griot is a person in Africa who is charged with keeping the stories of the village. Everyone would tell a griot the stories and they would remember them all so that they could tell future generations. When they got old, they'd tell them to somebody else. And they say in Africa that when a griot died, it was like a library was burnt down. And my mother used to tell me, before I started doing comedy, "You should be a griot". And she'd fill me with every story of Black life - she's educated in African-American Studies - and she'd let me understand the context that I was being raised in. That I was being raised in a hostile environment that I have to tame.' - **From US comedian Dave Chappelle's 2019 Mark Twain Prize acceptance speech**



FEATURE ARTICLES

Goodbye, Mr. Nobel? The Quest for Africa's Own Mega Literary Prize

'My wife thought I deserved it, but I always thought the Nobel a Western prize.' - Naguib Mahfouz (Egypt)

In 2016, the secrecy-shrouded Swedish Academy awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature to American folk/rock singer-songwriter Bob Dylan. This created a storm of controversy that blew across the entire literary world. Jaws dropped in Africa after Ngũgi wa Thiong'o (highly favoured to win over the previous few years) was once again overlooked. In an article for Reuters.com, titled '“Greatest living poet” Bob Dylan Wins Nobel Literature Prize', Johan Sennero and Alistair Scrutton relayed the news thus:

Bob Dylan, regarded as the voice of a generation for his influential songs from the 1960s onwards, has won the Nobel Prize for Literature in a surprise decision that made him the only singer-songwriter to win the award.

The 75-year-old Dylan - who won the prize for 'having created new poetic expressions within the great American song tradition' - now finds himself in the company of Winston Churchill, Thomas Mann and Rudyard Kipling as Nobel laureates.

The announcement was met with gasps in Stockholm's stately Royal Academy Hall, followed - unusually - by some laughter...

Awarding the 8 million Swedish crown (\$930,000) prize, the Swedish Academy said: 'Dylan has the status of an icon. His influence on contemporary music is profound.'

Swedish Academy member Per Wastberg said: 'He is probably the greatest living poet.'...

Over the years, not everyone has agreed that Dylan was a poet of the first order. Novelist Norman Mailer countered: 'If Dylan's a poet, I'm a basketball player.'

Robert Zimmerman (aka Bob Dylan) does have a very poetic/literary style of writing songs. The lyrics of such tunes such as *Romance in Durango*, *The King of Hearts*, *Subterranean Homesick Blues*, *Twitter and the Monkey Man*, *Tangled Up in Blue*, and – one of my absolute favourites – *Shelter From the Storm* would serve well as published poems, and Dylan did once author a book titled *Tarantula*. Barry Fey, a concert promoter who was involved in over 5,000 shows during his legendary music career, once made the following statement in regard to the Grammy-Award-winning artiste:

I never wanted Bob to come out (in public). When I started (in the entertainment business), he was a myth. He was a poet. The greatest writer. I wish he would have just stayed and never come out.

True to his mysterious nature, Dylan took a long time to accept the Nobel win, fueling speculation that he might reject it and thus leave the Academy with egg on their face. Detractors' chief problem with the win was that Dylan's literature was considered a 'by-product' of his musical journey and many people felt that there was no way his 'by-product' could be better or more influential than the life-long efforts of all living writers on the globe. An excerpt from a *Quartz Africa* online article titled 'Africans Will Spur Creativity and Innovation by Celebrating Their Own Excellence', written by Abdi Latif Dahir:

This week, Wole Soyinka, the first African to win the Nobel Prize in literature, said he wanted another award: The Grammy. Speaking at Oxford University, Soyinka was responding to Bob Dylan's recent crowning as the winner of the prestigious literature prize, when he said: 'Since I've written quite a number of songs for my plays, I would like to be nominated for a Grammy.'

To be fair to Soyinka, our attention shouldn't be drawn so much to his flippant remark than on the choice of the award he stated. Africa, a continent of over 1.2 billion people, barely registers globally when it comes to honoring excellence and merit or even acknowledging the role of awards in social, scientific and cultural advancement.

When it comes to Africa 'barely registering globally', no major prize exemplifies that more than the Nobel Prize. Below is a list of the countries that have scooped the highest number of Nobel Prizes in Literature:

- France – 16
- United States of America – 13
- United Kingdom – 11
- Germany – 8
- Sweden - 8

Nobel Prizes have been around for over a century. On 27 November 1895, Alfred Nobel (a Swedish chemist and inventor who developed dynamite in 1867) signed his last will and testament, bequeathing the largest share of his fortune to a series of prizes in Physics, Chemistry, Physiology or Medicine, Literature and Peace – the Nobel Prizes. To date, only five Africans have been awarded the Nobel Prizes in Literature. By contrast, eight Swedish writers have won it. Sweden has a total population of about ten million people. Africa has an estimated population of 1.5 *billion* people. It's hard to argue that Africa has not been overlooked by the Nobel Prize Committee, if not outright discriminated against.

AFRICAN WINNERS OF THE NOBEL PRIZE IN LITERATURE

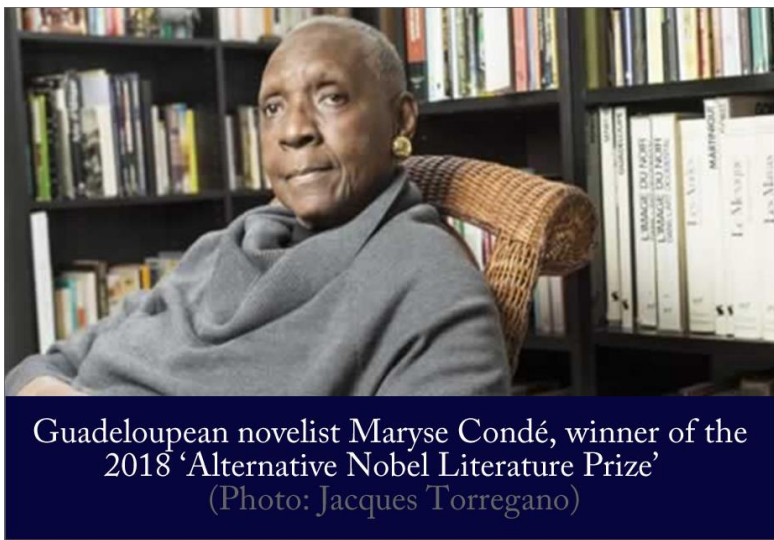
- **Wole Soyinka (Nigeria)** - A playwright, poet, critic and political activist. Awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1986. He also holds an honorary doctorate of letters from Yale University, USA.
- **Naguib Mahfouz (Egypt)** - Awarded the 1988 Nobel Prize in Literature for 'works rich in nuance – now clear-sightedly realistic, now evocatively ambiguous' that have 'formed an Arabian narrative art that applies to all mankind'.
- **Nadine Gordimer (SA)** - Awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1991 for her literary work that 'has been of very great benefit to humanity'.
- **J. M. Coetzee (SA)** – Awarded the 2003 Nobel Prize for Literature. Described as a writer 'who in innumerable guises portrays the surprising involvement of the outsider'. Has also won the Booker Prize for Fiction two times.
- **Abdulrazak Gurnah (TZ)** - Zanzibar-born Abdulrazak Gurnah became the most talked-about writer in the world when he won the 2021 Nobel Prize for Literature, yet he is little known in Tanzania.

In all fairness, the founder of the award set a very general criterion for the literary prize. Alfred Nobel directed that the prize should go to someone who “in the field of literature, produced the most outstanding work in an idealistic direction”. My question is whether the Swedish Academy that is responsible for picking the winners has done a good job of choosing the *most deserving* laureates each year, since its inception in 1901.

This is how the nomination process works. Every year, the Nobel Committee sends out nomination forms to hundreds of individuals and organizations qualified to nominate for the Nobel Prize in Literature. These entities include members of the Swedish Academy, literature academies and societies, professors of literature and language, former Nobel literature laureates, and the presidents of writers’ organizations. The nominees may come from any part of the world. There is no age limit but it is very unlikely that a young writer (say, under 40) would have the body of work that is necessary to make a global body sit up and take notice. Writing careers are hardly roller-coaster rides. The Committee screens the nominations and submits a list for approval by the 18-member Academy. The Committee whittles down the list to 15 – 20 candidates and, after deliberations, five priority candidates. The members of the Academy read and assess the work of the final candidates during the summer. The Nobel Committee also prepares individual reports. The Academy members evaluate and discuss the works and eventually put them to a vote. A candidate must receive more than half of the votes cast. The winner is then announced.

Naturally, controversy is never far from such announcements. On seven occasions, the no winner was announced. While it’s still arguably ‘the world’s most prestigious literature prize’, there are many authors who won it and continued to wallow in obscurity while there are many other nominees who were passed over and continued to flourish and stand the test of time. In the *Wall Street Journal*, Joseph Epstein wrote:

You might not know it, but you and I are members of a club whose fellow members include Leo Tolstoy, Henry James, Anton Chekhov, Mark Twain, Henrik Ibsen, Marcel Proust, James Joyce, Jorge Luis Borges and Vladimir Nabokov. The club is the Non-Winners of the Nobel Prize in Literature. All these authentically great writers, still alive when the prize, initiated in 1901, was being awarded, didnt win it.



more than 32,000 responses from the public, the award eventually went to Maryse Condé ‘whose novels explore slavery and exploitation.’

In 2018, the Nobel Prize for Literature was not awarded at all, following a scandal at the Swedish Academy. Interestingly, another Swedish group calling itself The New Academy took up the mantle, announcing an ‘alternative Nobel Literature Prize’ dubbed ‘The New Academy Prize in Literature’. Described by an article on news website QZ.com as ‘self-organized group of 100 or so volunteers’, they invited nominations from Swedish libraries and then put them to a public vote. They came up with a list of 47 nominees which included Kim Thúy (Vietnam/Canada), Neil Gaiman (UK), Harukami (Japan), Maryse Condé (Guadeloupe), Ngũgi wa Thiong’o (Kenya), Chimamanda Adichie (Nigeria) and Nnedi Okorafor (Nigeria/USA). Based on

The prize has also been criticized for having a bias towards European and American authors. To illustrate, as of 2021, 16 of the then 118 winners were of Scandinavian origin! In 2022, Alex Shephard, a staff writer at *The New Republic*, wrote a lengthy article titled ‘Who Will Win the 2022 Nobel Prize in Literature?’ in which he opined:

For 121 years, the Nobel Prize for literature has sought to honor the best writing in the world, and for 121 years everyone has argued that it has managed to do no such thing...The Swedish Academy, like most groups mostly composed of white, male tenured professors nearing or past retirement age, is lazy. And like those groups it also has an unfortunate predilection to honour people like themselves—in this case dour northern Europeans... Two Americans have won in the past decade—Louise Glück, reasonably, and Bob Dylan, insanely. That’s a lot of Ws for a country whose writers were accused, in 2008, of being “too sensitive to trends in their own mass culture.” The Swedish literary historian and Academy permanent secretary Horace Engdahl’s remarks were controversial and widely derided, though he was probably right about the mass culture thing. In any case, an American isn’t going to win! And if an American were to win, it wouldn’t be fking Stephen King, who like J.K. Rowling is probably better known for his tweets than for his novels but who unlike J.K. Rowling had his books adapted by Stanley Kubrick and Brian DePalma, instead of Chris Columbus and Mike Newell... As is extremely obvious, this column does not take the Nobel Prize in literature very seriously. There are many reasons for this. The first is that literary prizes are inherently pretty ridiculous. The second is that the Nobel Prize is the most ridiculous of all—not only because the most esteemed and famous literary prize in the world is given out by a bunch of scandal-prone Swedish academics but mostly because of that.**

At the unveiling of the 2017 winners of the Mabati-Cornell Kiswahili Prize for African Literature, one of the speakers mentioned several ‘foundations’ run by ‘Big Men’ in Africa and asked what those NGOs do; how they impact their societies. He was of the view that a proper use of their funds would be sponsoring local prizes/awards. Incidentally, the Mabati-Cornell Prize is co-sponsored by Mabati Rolling Mills, a manufacturing concern associated with Kenyan billionaire industrialist and philanthropist Manu Chandaria. Another well-known billionaire philanthropist in Africa is telecoms supremo Mo Ibrahim (Sudan) whose NGO – the Mo Ibrahim Foundation – gifts USD\$ 5 million to retired African presidents deemed to have practiced good governance during their terms. (The most recent award went to Liberia’s Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.) Some reflections from a speech by Mo Ibrahim:

When you say ‘Africa is rising’ or ‘Africa is a basket case’, are you looking at the top performer or the bottom performer? There should be more nuance in the way we talk about Africa. There are 54 countries and therefore 54 stories.

Apart from the USD\$ 5 million that Mo Ibrahim Foundation’s ‘Achievement in African Leadership Award’ offers to former leaders who have promoted good governance, there is a USD\$ 200,000 per year stipend for the rest of their lives. Mo Ibrahim once said:

We need to celebrate success. All the time we talk about failures. We wanted to reward great achievers.

NoViolet Bulawayo won ‘the maiden pan-African Etisalat Prize for Literature’ for her book *We Need New Names*. During her acceptance speech in Nigeria, she said:

We are all aware of the shortage of literary prizes on the continent. Even as African writers have always and consistently produced compelling literature. So, I think it is very significant and important that we have our own prize to speak to the work that is being produced.

Zukiswa Wanner (*Hardly Working*) is an award-winning South African author, curator, editor, and publisher. Her works have been shortlisted for various awards, including the South African Literary Awards and the Commonwealth Writers' Prize. In 2015, she scooped the K Sello Duiker Memorial Literary Award for her novel *London Cape Town Joburg*. In 2014, Wanner was listed among 39 Sub-Saharan African writers aged under 40 deemed to have 'potential and talent to define trends in African literature.' In a Daily Nation newspaper article titled 'Lesson On Literary Festivals And Where Writers Get Inspired', Zukiswa Wanner posited the creation of a local alternative to the Nobel Prize:

These are things that cannot be taught to anyone and certainly not at any literary festival. Most of all, though, literary festivals are a chance for readers to interact with writers they respect and have their copies of those authors' books signed.

The last reason is why I will be attending the Kwani Litfest from the December 1 to 6 next week. You see, I have six unsigned copies of different novels by Nuruddin Farah. I have not fully given up on the possibility that we will set up an African equivalent of the Nobel, call it a Dangote, and when that happens, Farah will hopefully be a winner and my library will be something to behold...

The 'Dangote' referenced above is a Nigerian industrialist widely believed to be the richest Black man alive. According to *Forbes* magazine the cement and oil magnate is:

The richest African, for the seventh year in a row, is Nigerian cement and commodities tycoon Aliko Dangote, with a net worth that Forbes pegs at \$12.2 billion. That's up \$100 million from a year ago. Dangote is looking beyond cement – his most valuable asset – and has been investing in a fertilizer production company and a large oil refinery. Dangote Fertilizer is expected to start operations in the second quarter this year.

In a *Daily Nation* (Kenya) article titled 'CITY GIRL: It Is Time Africa Gets Its Own Version of Nobel', sassy columnist Njoki Chege also proposed the formation of an African alternative to the controversial Nobel. An excerpt:

...Ngũgi stopped writing in English in 1977. He has since written his novels in the Gikuyu language. His books, of course have been translated into different languages, but the original language remains his mother tongue. His reason for this unique decision was simple. He wanted to fulfil every writer's duty to their audiences; to write in an accessible language anyone could understand...It is time we realized we do not need white folks to reassure us and tell us how brilliant and intelligent we are to feel good about ourselves. The first step is to come up with the African version of the Nobel Prize...

I love Bob Dylan but he has not done more 'outstanding work in the field of literature' than Margaret Atwood (Canada), Ngũgi wa Thiong'o (Kenya), Haruki Murakami (Japan) or Arundhati Roy (India). Judging from the shocked reactions of African scribes after the 2016 Nobel Prize for Literature announcement, the general vibe is that 'the world's most famous literary prize' has lost its relevance, especially where Africa is concerned. It looks like the time is ripe for the inhabitants of the second-largest continent to start working towards the creation of a major literary prize of their own. Bye bye, Mr. Nobel! 🐘

'Theoretically, anyone can be nominated. Anyone who writes excellent, outstanding literature. There is no other demand, just quality in the work.'
- Ellen Mattson, member of the Swedish Academy and the Nobel Committee

African Literary Prizes

Founded in 2000, the UK-based **Caine Prize for African Writing** is arguably the greatest African literary prize going, especially in the Anglophone countries. In their own words, ‘The Caine Prize, awarded annually for African creative writing, is named after the late Sir Michael Caine, former Chairman of Booker plc and Chairman of the Booker Prize management committee for nearly 25 years. The Prize is awarded for a short story by an African writer, published in English (whether in Africa or elsewhere), with an indicative length of 3,000 to 15,000 words. An ‘African writer’ will normally be taken to mean someone who was born in Africa, or who is a national of an African country, or whose parents are African, and whose work has reflected that cultural background. The four African winners of the Nobel Prize for Literature, Wole Soyinka, Naguib Mahfouz, Nadine Gordimer and J. M. Coetzee, are Patrons of The Caine Prize. Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne is President of the Council and Jonathan Taylor is the Chairman.’ The stakes: ‘Winning and short-listed authors will be invited to participate in writers’ workshops in Africa, London and elsewhere as resources permit. There is a cash prize of £10,000 for the winning author and a travel award for each of the short-listed candidates (up to five in all). The shortlisted candidates will also receive a Prize of £500.’

South African writer Nadia Davids won the most recent edition of the prize for her short story, *Bridling*, which published in *The Georgia Review* in 2023. Commenting on the winning entry, author Chika Unigwe (Chair of Judges) said: ‘Bridling is an impressive achievement, a triumph of language, storytelling and risk-taking while maintaining a tightly controlled narrative about women who rebel. It embodies the spirit of the Caine Prize, which is to celebrate the richness and diversity of short stories by African writers. That is to say, to challenge the single story of African literature.’ Other recent winners of the prestigious prize include Senegalese writers Mame Bougouma Diene and Woppa Diallo (2023), Kenyan writer Idza Luhumyo (2022), Ethiopian-American writer Meron Hadero (2021), and Nigerian-British writer Irenosen Okjie (2020). More famous winners include Leila Aboulela (2000), Helon Habila (2001) and Binyavanga Wainaina (2022).



The Nigeria Prize for Literature (aka The NLNG Prize for Literature) was established in 2004 and is sponsored by Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas company. Like the Caine Prize, it is registered as a charity. However, while Caine only caters to the short story art form, the Nigeria Prize for Literature rotates between four genres: Prose Fiction, Poetry, Drama, and Children’s Literature in that order; repeating the cycle every four years. Initially, it had a cash reward of USD\$ 20,000 but that has since been increased to USD\$ 100,000, which makes it far and away the richest literary award in Africa. If it was open to all African writers, it would probably be the biggest literary prize on the continent but for now it’s restricted to Nigerians. Past winners of The Nigeria Prize for Literature include Olubunmi Familoni, Obari Gomba, Romeo Oriogun, Adeleke Adeyemi, Jude Idada and Chika Unigwe. A related prize has also been added to the NLNG bouquet: The Nigeria Prize for Literary Criticism, which comes with a USD\$ 10,000 cash reward.

The Brunel International African Poetry Prize was founded in 2012 by British-Nigerian writer Bernardine Evaristo, a Professor of Creative Writing at Brunel University in London. It was a major annual poetry prize of £3,000, aimed at ‘the development, celebration and promotion of poetry from Africa’. Winners included Warsan Shire, Liyou Libsekal, Safia Elhillo, Nick Makoha, Chekwube O. Danladi and Romeo Oriogun. In 2022, the Brunel International African Poetry Prize announced its 10th and final winner. In 2023, the prize was taken on by the African Poetry Book Fund who renamed it the Evaristo Prize for African Poetry, with prize money of \$1500.

The Commonwealth Short Story Prize accepts unpublished short fiction from the 53 member states of the Commonwealth of Nations (formerly the British Empire). Entries may be in English, Bengali, Chinese, Greek, Kiswahili, Malay, Portuguese, Samoan, Tamil and Turkish. According to their website, CommonwealthWriters.org, regional winners receive UK £2,500 and the overall winner receives UK £5,000. Past Commonwealth Prize winners include Efua Traoré, Ellen Banda-Aaku, Philip Nash, Shachi Kaul and Jennifer Moore.

Below is a run-down of other major literary awards for African writers:

The Afritondo Short Story Prize

Eligibility: Black and African writers worldwide.

Prize: The winning entry will receive USD \$1000

Notable Winners: Sabah Carrim (2024), Alex Kadiri (2023), Howard Meh-Buh Maximus (2022), Desta Haile (2021), Jarred Thompson (2020).

Grand Prix Littéraire d'Afrique Noire

Founded: 1965 by the Association Des Écrivains Negro-Africains

Purpose: To honor French-language literature by Black African writers.

Prize: A diploma and variable cash.

Notable Winners: Ahmadou Kourouma (1968), Aminata Sow Fall (1997).

South African Literary Awards (SALA)

Founded: 2005

Categories: 14, including First-Time Published Author, Novel, Poetry, Literary Translation, Children's Literature, and special awards like the K. Sello Duiker Memorial Award (for writers under 40) and the Lifetime Achievement Literary Award (for those over 60).

Prize: A trophy and certificate.

Notable Winners: Zakes Mda (2007), Zukiswa Wanner (2015), Niq Mhlongo (2018).

The Mabati-Cornell Kiswahili Prize for African Literature

Categories: awarded annually for literary works in the Kiswahili language 'across the categories of fiction, poetry, memoir and graphic novels'.

Prize: USD \$5,000–\$15,000 depending on category, publishing

Notable winners: Zainab Alwi Baharoon/Jacob Ngumbau Julius (2018), Dotto Rangimoto/Ali Hilal Ali (2017).

Nommo Awards

Founded: 2016 by the African Speculative Fiction Society

Purpose: To celebrate speculative fiction (sci-fi, fantasy, horror) by Africans.

Categories: Novel, Novella, Short Story, Graphic Novel.

Prize: A trophy (the Nommo statuette) and membership perks; no fixed cash amount.

Notable Winners: Nnedi Okorafor (2018), Tade Thompson (2019).

The Soyinka Prize for Literature in Africa

(Awarded 'every other year')

Categories: Best book written by an African in any literary genre.

Prize: USD \$20,000

Notable Winners: Akin Bello, Sifiso Mzobe, Kopano Matiwa, Nnedi Okorafor, Sefi Atta, Professor Tanure Ojaide, Harriet Anena.

Jomo Kenyatta Prize for Literature

Founded: 1974

Eligibility: Kenyans

Categories: Fiction in English and Kiswahili

Prize: Cash – variable amounts

Notable Winners: Okot P'Bitek, Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor, Meja Mwangi, Wahome Mutahi, Margaret Ogola, Ngumi Kibera, Stanley Gazemba, Nducu Wa Ngugi, Kinyanjui Kombani.

Writers Space Africa Awards

Several separate prizes including African Teen Writers Awards, African Teen Writers Awards, Wakini Kuria Prize for Children's Literature and Wanjohi Prize for African Poetry.

Prize: Cash – variable amounts

Notable Winners: Adrian Nyarko-Boateng, Grace Thuo, Laura Pettie, Gabriel Awuah Mainoo, Sumaiyah Muhammad, Elizabeth Dwamena-Asare

African Literature Association First Book Award

Categories: African literary studies

Prize: USD \$250

Notable Winner: Polo Moji (2024).

Etisalat/9mobile Prize for Literature

Founded: 2013

Purpose: To recognize debut fiction writers across Africa.

Eligibility: First-time authors of novels over 30,000 words, published in English.

Prize: £15,000, a fellowship, and a phone (from the telecom sponsor).

Notable Winners: Fiston Mwanza Mujila (2015), Jowhor Ile (2016).

Sunday Times Literary Awards (South Africa)

Notable Winners: Pumla Dineo Gqola, Nkosinathi Sithole.

Short Story Day Africa

Notable Winner: Sibongile Fisher.

Writivism Award

Notable Winner: Acan Immaculate.

Ghana Writers Awards


Notable Winners: Dr Michael Osei Agyapong, Bawa Sadique Anyame.

McMillan Writers Prize for Africa

Huza Press Prize for Fiction (Rwanda)

Sol Plaatje EU Poetry Award

Gerald Kraak Award

It is worth noting that a few of the above-mentioned award schemes are currently dormant but not necessarily extinct. 

FICTION

The Pregnant Ghost

by Haliru Ali Musa

Two years ago, after a heated argument with my wife, I found myself in an ancient room on one of the islands in Stone Town, face-to-face with a pregnant ghost. The room was part of a two-storey building with a weathered facade that had witnessed countless years. It possessed the quaint charm typical of old structures, boasting several blue-framed windows and a red-tiled roof. In front of the building lay a large, open courtyard paved with stone tiles, where wooden picnic tables and a sprawling tree with expansive branches added a touch of serene beauty.

Prison Island, as it is now called, seemed a fitting name compared to its original name, Kibandiko Island - a name whose meaning eludes me. The new name hints at the reality within: a prison.

Prior to that, my wife and I had traveled to Tanzania, seeking an escape from work and distractions. The trip was meant to rekindle the fading embers of our five-year marriage, with plans to explore all sixteen islands of Zanzibar. We barely managed four - Unguja, Pemba, Chumbe, and Prison Island - before our argument erupted in our hotel room.

At the time, we were staying at the Park Hyatt Hotel, a fair distance from Prison Island. The hotel, a harmonious blend of traditional Zanzibari and colonial influences, featured wooden shutters, arched doorways, and intricate metalwork on the windows.

The entrance had a simple yet inviting design, with steps leading up to a wooden door framed by an arch. Flanking the doorway were two sconces mounted on the wall, casting a warm glow. A sign reading 'Park Hyatt Zanzibar' was displayed to the right of the door, visible even in the night's embrace.

Our room had a neutral color palette, with white walls and light-colored flooring, creating an airy and serene atmosphere. A large four-poster bed with white linens and a wooden frame dominated the space, flanked by bedside tables adorned with decorative lamps. To the right, when facing the door, there was a wooden dresser with a flat-screen TV perched on top. A small table and chair were positioned near the large glass doors that led to a balcony.

The balcony was where the fight happened. That night, after we returned, we took turns in the shower because she needed to confirm our reservations for the next day - or so I thought. She took longer than usual, and it was only when I came out that she dropped the phone. I waited for her to take her shower, staying on the balcony and listening to the ocean's murmurs. The stunning view of the ocean, its blue waters blending into the sky, held my attention as I sipped a cheap can of beer I had bought. It was then that I noticed she was out of the bathroom and back on her phone.

'Who is on the phone?' I asked, stepping back into the room.

She held up her index finger, 'One minute.'

One minute turned into two, then three, and almost an hour while I lost myself in the ocean view. Eventually, she came out to the balcony.

'Baby, I'm sorry, that was my boss.'

'I can't be in the same space with you right now,' I said, turning my face to look at her.

'Wait, honey, it's not what you think,' she said, trying to cuddle me from behind.

'Oh yeah? Indulge me,' I said, pulling away from her grasp. 'Tell me it's not about work.'

She exhaled, as if trying to gather her thoughts. 'It was an emergency.'

'You know this whole vacation was your idea,' I said. 'What happened to getting away from our lives and enjoying the moment, darling?' I called her 'darling,' but it felt flat compared to when we were newlyweds. I think that's what happens when affection fades over time - words meant to be romantic become dull, lose their sweetness, and start to taste like raw egg.

'I know,' she said. 'But the bills are important too, you know. This will be the last time. I promise.'

'You know I once had a job too,' I said, crushing the empty beer can in my hand. 'And I understand how bills work. I took care of them for four years after our marriage.'

'But it's not forthcoming anymore, is it?' she asked. 'And I told you about my dream to go into politics someday. My boss is a direct link.'

I looked somewhat disappointed with her reply and didn't bother trying to hide it. I had lost my job a year ago due to a sudden need to reduce staffing at my workplace - at least, that was what the discharge letter said. The real reason might have been my connection to my former boss, a woman who seemed to harbour a quiet crush on me. When her husband assumed full control of the company after their divorce, he found it necessary to lay me off. How he discovered our tongueless bond, I'll never know. But this is something I never shared with my wife, Merit.

Afterward, Merit and I sort of lost our communication vigor. Or better, let me say I felt very embarrassed around her. Not that she had rubbed my inability to secure a new job in my face - at least not until now. But there seemed to be a giant dinosaur whenever we talked or made love (which I found uninteresting). It was there and not there, a spectre of our deteriorating intimacy. We didn't fight or quarrel; I just stopped contributing money to the household, and she didn't bother asking. It was as if we had wordlessly decided not to table our thoughts and discuss the shift in our home's dynamic. She became the breadwinner, and I made breadcrumbs. There wasn't any better way to describe it.

I didn't want to be the one to talk about it, because, as I mentioned before, it was embarrassing. From having a job that paid a six-figure salary to nothing - it was a steep fall. I had savings, but they were only enough to cover our rent for a year, probably because I used most of it to venture into failed businesses while I still had a job. Although I felt Merit and I needed to talk, I couldn't start the conversation. It was like trying to understand why the pickup box of a vending machine is empty when I didn't put in a coin. It's simply the coin that makes the pickup box fill - either with a snack bar or with both the snack bar and the change. How could any logical person imagine a different result?

This analogy, though mundane, encapsulated my situation perfectly. Without the initial input, there was nothing to retrieve. Starting the conversation about my unemployment felt just as futile, as if the fundamental piece to initiate that dialogue - the courage or perhaps the necessity - was missing. And so, the silence grew, filling the space between us.

But I knew I had to start contributing to our finances, so I focused on the next thing I was good at: storytelling. I submitted three chapters of a story I had been writing on and off for six years to several publishing houses. All rejected it except one, which asked me to send the remaining manuscript by the end of the month. I was getting ready to complete the final edit of the last two chapters on May 14th when Merit suggested we take ten days off for a vacation, to experience quality time away from work and the other constraints in Nigeria.

When her boss kept intruding, it drove me to frustration. Why couldn't he just let us be?

'So your boss is more important than what we are trying to rekindle here?' I said, further squashing whatever air remained in the can of beer I held.

'I didn't say so. Please don't put words in my mouth.'

'Put words in your mouth?' I echoed. 'What are we doing here?'

'We are trying to reconnect,' she said.

‘Then let this moment be for only you and me,’ I said. ‘I have a book I am writing. When I finish, I can bounce back and take over the reins of providing for us full-time.’

‘It is hard,’ she said, pinning her eyes to mine. ‘It is hard.’

‘Don’t you see I am working harder for us?’

‘I am too,’ she said.

‘No, you are working harder for yourself and your boss.’

‘Not that again.’

‘You see, you can’t even stand me criticizing your boss,’ I said. ‘The only time I mentioned it was before my job went south, and it was an innocent joke.’

‘Yeah, I can’t stand it because it’s because of him that we can now put three square meals on our table. How are we sure you becoming an author will take off right away?’

‘You just had to say it, right? You just had to belittle my effort.’

‘I am doing no such thing, and I have done no such thing in the past.’

‘Maybe you don’t need me anymore since everything now revolves around your boss.’

‘I didn’t say that.’

‘You don’t have to. Go back to talking with him on the phone. I won’t be sleeping in the room tonight.’

‘Where will you go?’ she asked.

‘Anywhere but here.’

‘Come on, Silas, you can’t be serious.’

I walked away without looking back, grabbing the remaining pack of beer off the bedside table and slamming the door on my way out. ‘Good! Make sure you don’t come back!’ I heard her scream.

I walked out of the hotel, opened another can of beer, and started walking without much thought about where I was headed. I just needed to clear my head. I found myself on the last boat to Prison Island, hoping that the giant turtles residing there might somehow solve the mystery that has plagued many men’s hearts - what do women really want?

The giant turtles, known as Aldabra tortoises, were brought to Prison Island in the early 20th century. Originally, there were four giant turtles gifted by the Governor of the Seychelles. Over time, their population expanded to a few hundred, but the adult tortoises began to mysteriously disappear. Many believed they were taken to be kept as pets or for their meat. I believe they just grew tired of living in one place. Who wouldn’t, after repeating the same cycle for years? Or maybe animals don’t feel that way. By 1996, only seven tortoises remained on the island.

It was only after the Zanzibari government took measures that the population of giant tortoises began to recover. The animals were placed under strict protection, and a sanctuary was established on the island. There, the adult tortoises were cared for, and the young ones were shielded from birds of prey.

It is said that these tortoises have a lifespan of two-hundred years. Perhaps in those centuries, they have learned the answer to that elusive question. How they will communicate it to me, I don’t know, but with so much beer in my hand, I’m bound to pick up on some non-verbal cue when I’m drunk. People say that in that state, you see things more clearly, without bias in your heart. And yeah, the people who say so are all drunkards. It does, however, have some truth to it.

Maybe during a night session with one of the giant turtles, I will find out why Merit wanted us to come here, away from our lives in Abuja, Nigeria, only to keep talking to her boss. Maybe her complaints that our relationship had grown sour and lacked quality time will make more sense. Because now that we are here, she still broke the one rule we were supposed to keep sacred - no contact with the outside world until we were done.

I remember the first time I realized how much had changed between us. We were sitting on opposite ends of the couch, a gulf of unspoken words and unmet expectations between us. She was scrolling through her phone, probably answering emails from her boss, while I was pretending to be engrossed in a book I'd read a thousand times before. The silence wasn't just uncomfortable; it was suffocating.

One night, I came home late from a futile job hunt and found her asleep on the couch, still in her work clothes, an empty wine glass on the table beside her. I stood there for a moment, just watching her. She looked so tired, so defeated, and I wondered if I looked the same to her. I draped a blanket over her and went to bed alone, the weight of our unspoken words pressing down on me.

Days turned into weeks, and our lives became a series of routines, much like the giant turtles. She left early for work, and I spent my days sending out resumes and avoiding her calls. When she came home, we exchanged pleasantries, but there was no warmth, no connection. We were like two strangers sharing the same space, bound by memories that no longer seemed to matter.

I started to question everything. How did we get here? When did we stop being partners and become mere roommates? The answers eluded me, and the more I searched for them, the more lost I felt. I missed the way she used to look at me, the way her eyes would light up when she talked about her dreams. Now, those dreams seemed to exclude me, and I couldn't entirely blame her. I had become a shadow of the man she married, and the realization cut deeper than I could admit.

One evening, as we sat in our usual silence, she turned to me and said, 'Do you think we're going to be okay?' Her voice was soft, almost a whisper, but it hit me like a thunderclap.

I wanted to tell her that we would be, that we could find our way back to each other, but the words stuck in my throat. Instead, I reached for her hand, hoping that the simple gesture could convey what I couldn't say. She looked at me, her eyes filled with a mix of hope and despair, and I realized that she was just as lost as I was.

We stayed like that for a long time, holding hands in the quiet of our living room, the sound of distant chatter filtering in through the window. It wasn't a solution, but it was a start. And for the first time in a long time, I felt a glimmer of something I thought we had lost: the possibility of us.

All of which, I supposed, would have improved if we had spent quality time on the vacation. But then Merit was quick to mess it up, and it felt like hope had been halted, waiting to disappear like the giant turtles.

We hit the dock at the end and the entrance of Prison Island, and there was only one thing on my mind: seeing the giant turtles. I walked along a long wooden pier that led to the old building, which seemed to be closing for the day. There was no electricity; rather, it was the light from the sky that seemed to merge with the ocean breeze, making me regret not bringing a sweater. It feels awkward to argue with your wife and then take a sweater before you leave. It makes the argument seem more immature, as if you had planned for it to happen.

Needless to say, I didn't really pay attention to the island's electricity when my wife and I arrived in the afternoon. So, I am not sure if the poorly lit environment was due to a sudden electrical fault or if there was simply no working electrical system in place, as the island's operating hours are primarily during the day.

Now, at nightfall, it seemed they couldn't fix the issue. So, I was left at the mercy of the divine light, with an almost empty pack of Bud Light 6-can beer in my hand and my sight set on the reception room, which was shrouded in the same inadequate glow.

I covered the remaining distance to the reception only to find out that I might have been slightly right all along. There was indeed something wrong with the electrical system. Two receptionists stood guard, each with a lantern placed at the doorways.

'Hello, Mister,' one of the two men seated on the cushions of an old three-seater said. 'Why are you here at this time of night?' His face was somewhat expressionless, as if he was trying to keep his composure. He was handsome enough and came across as a pleasant sort of guy, though I hadn't noticed him in the afternoon.

'I am sorry to disturb your peace,' I said. 'I was here in the afternoon with my wife.'

'Oh, you are that man,' the second man said. Although he seemed startled to see me, I definitely saw him in the afternoon; I just couldn't remember exactly where.

'The one whose wife has cat-like eyes. The fair...'

He stopped abruptly, realizing he had misspoken.

But I didn't take it to heart. In fact, what he had described was the first thing almost everybody noticed about her. I am not ashamed to say I married her because of that and, of course, other things, given enough time to think about them.

'Yeah, her,' I said.

The other things I loved about her were her tiny, cold hands, her straight black hair, the way she looked directly into my eyes when she asked a question, and the tremor that crept into her voice after we finished kissing. Each of these details would burrow into my mind, a gentle ache that I couldn't shake.

'But what are you doing out here at this time, in pajamas, sir?' he asked politely, trying to make up for his earlier comment.

'I had a little rift with my wife, so I thought the giant turtles might help,' I said. I didn't know why I said that, but I couldn't take it back. I think the effect of the beer was kicking in. How many had I had? One, two, three, four... I couldn't tell. How long did the boat ride last? I lost track of time.

'Are you drunk?' the first man with the expressionless face asked.

'Come on, I don't think he is,' my wife's admirer said. He stood up, peeped over the slab between us, and saw the remaining pack of beer in my hand. 'I think he is,' he added, his face producing a wicked grin.

'I am not. I just need to talk to them.'

'*Them* as in the giant turtles?' The second man asked. 'They're closed for the night. It would be nice if you went back now. Hopefully, you can catch the last boat off the island and have a sweet make-up cuddle with your wife.'

Then I let my eyes wander past the seater and saw bottles of what I recognized to be alcohol, hurriedly tucked away. A cloth partly covered them, revealing their lack of composure. They probably thought I was the island authority and had rushed to hide the evidence. I suspected they were not supposed to drink on duty.

'I see I'm not the only one drinking here,' I said.

They both grumbled in admission.

'Look, I'm not here to cause any trouble,' I continued. 'I just need five minutes with the turtles, then I can go back to where I came from. Oh shit, I can't. I mean, if you don't mind letting me sleep here tonight - my wife, who should stay out of your mouth, big guy,' I pointed at him, 'isn't expecting me tonight.'

Although his stature contradicted what I had just called him, he was a short, eagle-eyed man, probably in his thirties, with one of the shortest crew cuts I had ever seen.

The first man sighed, rubbing his temples. 'We get it, but you have to understand, it's late, and the turtles need their rest. Spending the night here is not something we encourage, unless you want to spend it in one of the prison rooms.'

The smaller guy grumbled, clearly displeased with what his colleague had said. As much as I wanted to stay firm on seeing the turtles, sleep was creeping in, probably due to the cool breeze blowing around. The fire from the argument had faded away, and all I wanted was to lie down and say adios to my problems for the next couple of hours.

'You know what, just take me to where I can spend the night,' I said. 'Here are the remaining beers as an apology for barging in on you guys while you were enjoying yourselves.'

A light sparked in the second man's eyes that hadn't been there earlier. I couldn't tell if it was because I had abandoned my quest for the giant creatures or because I had offered them my leftover booze. I didn't have the strength to find out. Both possibilities seemed equally existential.

'Follow me,' the first man said, picking up a lantern and pulling a large bundle of keys from his pocket. It was a gesture I found strange. On the wooden pier, it had seemed like they were just closing, but up close, it was clear they were already shut down. I had expected the keys to be locked away somewhere safe. But what did I know? I just wanted to sleep, and I wasn't thinking straight.

I followed him through the courtyard and into the building. He opened the first room, which, unsurprisingly, resembled a prison cell. I hadn't expected it to be clean, despite its old, quaint charm.

The room had a narrow, arched ceiling painted in a dull, light green, with patches of peeling paint clinging to the walls. Near the door stood a solitary wooden chair. Against the right wall, a single metal bed frame held a thin mattress and a threadbare blanket. At the foot of the bed, a small black metal trunk supported another lantern. When he lit it, the worn-out, scuffed floor came into view, revealing patches of dark, chipped paint.

'Sorry, we had an issue with our electricity this evening,' he said.

'You mean this old room had electricity?'

'Not really, but the light from outside usually reflects in here,' he replied.

'Did someone recently inhabit this place?'

'Sometimes my colleague and I spend the night here,' he said, probably reading my thoughts. 'The management knows.'

'Thank you.'

'You're welcome,' he said. 'I thought you might freak out and say you couldn't stay in a room that looked like a prison or was haunted by ghosts. What am I saying? It was designed to be a prison, but I'll spare you the lecture.'

I nodded, feeling a bit foolish for thinking I could spend the night anywhere but my hotel room. He was right; I only knew what the internet said about this place. I never imagined people actually slept in this century-old room. For crying out loud, it was built in 1893. Now I'm going to have PTSD just remembering that fact.

'You're right. It's better you spare me the lecture.'

'If it helps, you don't have to lock the doorknob unless you're feeling really cold,' he said with a faint, almost wistful smile.

'I'll keep that in mind.'

He gave a small wave as he closed the door, the sound of his footsteps gradually fading as he made his way back down to the reception.

I climbed onto the bed, pulling the blanket - surprisingly fresh and comforting - over my body, up to my chin. The night was serene, the only sound the gentle lapping of waves against the shore, a soothing rhythm that seeped through the small, high window on the back wall, casting a faint glow into the stark room. I took a deep breath, letting the cool air fill my lungs, hoping it would clear the clutter from my mind. My eyelids felt heavy, but an inexplicable fear kept them from closing completely.

Then, with a sudden clatter, the young pregnant woman slid the door open and stepped inside.

'Excuse me,' she said in a voice barely above a whisper.

It took me a moment to gather myself, my body suddenly gripped by a chill that seemed to emanate from deep within. I realized then that I hadn't thought to ask the receptionist if there were any other guests in the building.

The pregnant woman closed the door behind her and straightened her clothes, a gesture that seemed both casual and significant.

'I don't know if I can share the room with you for a while,' she said.

'How did you know the door wasn't locked?' I asked. My voice reverberated softly, densely, in the warm room. It sounded almost mythological, not like my own voice but rather like an echo from a distant past.

She didn't seem fazed that I hadn't answered her question and took a seat on the old wooden chair by the door.

'I was stranded without cash and had nowhere to crash, so I met the two gentlemen at the reception and offered them bottles of alcohol to let me stay for the night,' she said. 'Obviously, in the other room,' she added, pointing. 'I hope you don't mind if I stay a bit. I promise I won't be long.'

This was the second time someone seemed to be reading my thoughts that night. And... hold on a second, I don't think when the first receptionist told me that he and his colleague sleep in the prison room, he meant separate rooms.

'Okay, you can stay,' I replied. It wasn't that I didn't find a woman just barging into a room that reeks of ghosts unsettling, but she was visibly pregnant, and her face could be classified as many things but not dangerous.

'Why are you here, in the first place?' I said. 'I mean, in Stone Town?'

'Actually, I had a huge fight with my husband, and he left me,' she said.

'He left you all alone in this condition?'

'Yeah, he died shortly after we fought.'

'Oh my God, I am sorry. I didn't mean to - ' I stammered.

'It's okay, it was quite a long time ago. I would have told anyone about it if they asked me. I just wish I had done better before he passed away.'

'If I may ask, how did he die?' I asked, already feeling a portion of my eyes closing, but my mind wouldn't let it win the fight.

'Our master killed him because he refused to satisfy her needs. And I was sent here to live out the rest of my days.'

'Needs?' I repeated.

'Yeah, needs. She had a lot of requests, all unfit for a married man.'

Our conversation paused at this point. The woman didn't seem like she was joking, which threw me a little off balance. A married woman sleeping in an old prison room, sent to Stone Town Island to live out the rest of her days. Did she have a deadly disease? If she did, Stone Town, a tourist center, is the last place she should have been sent. Although Prison Island was a sanctuary for people with yellow fever, that was a long time ago.

'I need to go now,' she said abruptly. 'Thanks for the company. I feel better.'

'Wait! I hope you can tell me what you would have done better to avoid your husband dying or, presumably, the fight that tore you apart.'

She cleared her throat like it was the most natural thing to do.

'I would have sat down and talked to him peacefully, convinced him to do what our master said,' she said. 'She is our master, after all. What I shouldn't have done was leave him when we had the fight. Maybe that could have stopped his death or my misfortune...I have to go now.'

She vanished before I could fully grasp what she had said. Somehow, I felt that sleeping and waking up in the morning might help me understand, because at that moment, my eyes were beginning to win the battle against my mind. So, before closing my eyes, I made sure to lock the door.

The next morning, I checked out of the prison-like room. At the reception, I encountered only the second man. I thanked him and inquired about his colleague. He explained that the other man had urgently gone to fetch the engineer to fix the electricity problem. I also asked about the young pregnant woman. With a mischievous glint in his eye, he told me there was no one that matched that description. Determined to find the truth, I checked the room she had pointed out the previous day. It was locked, showing no signs of having been occupied.

I decided not to press further. Perhaps I had had too much beer the previous night, and it could very well have been my imagination. Moreover, if I accused them of letting a pregnant woman sleep in one of the prison rooms, things could have taken a bizarre turn. He might even have thought I was insane, especially after my earlier mention of talking to giant turtles. It was also possible that they had snuck her in and out. I didn't want to alert the management, nor did I tell my wife about the mysterious pregnant woman.

Instead, I told my wife that neither her boss nor my temporary unemployment would come between us. I sat her down and said, 'I choose to live peacefully with you and strive to make our life and dreams work as a collective effort.' That's what I did. I edited the last two chapters of my book, which went on to sell a million copies in its first year, birthing my career as a writer. 🐘



***Haliru Ali Musa** is a writer who believes, almost stubbornly, in the power of stories to unsettle the mind. To him, a story isn't worth telling unless it stirs something deep, something uncomfortable. He gravitates towards themes of unrequited love, betrayal, and grief - those intangible threads that bind and unravel human connections. His work often blurs the line between fiction and non-fiction. His words have found a home in Farafina and Akpata Magazine, among other places. He is the inaugural winner of the Alexander Nderitu Prize for World Literature.*

NON-FICTION

Road Trip to Tanzania

By Alexander Nderitu



GIRLS JUST WANNA HAVE FUN: Shenanigans during a brief stop-over en route to Namanga

It begins with a Whatsapp status message by a prolific tour operator called Hezron:

Next trip is to Namanga! No passport or ID necessary for Kenyans, unless you want to go more than 30 kilometres inland. Only Kshs 1,400 per person. Freestyle trip. You can enjoy lunch and swimming in Tanzania. At least you can brag that you've crossed the border!

Hezron posts a lot of such content on Facebook and Twitter, accompanied by celebratory photos from various locales as evidence, but most destinations are local: partying in sun-kissed Mombasa, hiking in mountainous Longonot or the jungle-esque Naivasha that serves as the backdrop for the East African leg of the World Rally Championship. This is the first time I've seen him advertise a trip across our borders. As it happens, I am currently working on a spy novel in which some suspects flee to Namanga, a popular border town on the Tanzanian side to

escape the surveillance of a fictional intelligence service with nefarious designs. Another aspect that intrigues me is the suspiciously low charge. Kshs 1,400 is just slightly over USD\$ 10.00. I DM Hezron, a slender guy apparently in his late twenties, for more information. By which means are we travelling? Are we coming back the same day? How much do I need to put down as a deposit? 'We're going in a *nganya*,' he texts back immediately. '33 passengers only. We return the same day. Kshs 1k deposit.' A *nganya* is a pimped-up minibus usually covered in graffiti-style artwork and blasting music. One more question before I secure my seat using the ubiquitous Kenyan mobile payment system known as M-PESA: What's the date of the road trip? '9 June (2024),' comes the reply. 'Departure at 6:30 AM. Don't be late. We assemble at Archives and then proceed to International Life House where the *nganya* will be waiting.'

A Whatsapp group for the trip is created. Everyone who books a seat is added. The chats are quite animated, even between strangers: 'Who's coming from Kiambu? Anyone from Murang'a? Who would like to sit next to me? Can we share our pics, guys?' The seat-planning unnerves me at first but as I follow the e-socializing, I realize that these trips are low-key dating escapades.

On 8 June, a Saturday, I attend the tenth anniversary celebrations of the Writers Guild Kenya, at the Alliance Française in uptown Nairobi. The commemoration and the subsequent mixer by scribes goes late into the night. A sudden and persistent rain further delays the attendees. I get back to my place at around midnight and make a point of setting my smartphone alarm to 6:00 AM.

I wake up at around 6:30 AM on Sunday morning and my first thoughts are, 'Shoot! I've missed the damn bus!' I still have to travel to Namanga for my research and this is the cheapest ticket. Around here, there's something we call 'African Time'. Banking on this custom, I dress up quickly and dash into the wet, bustling streets. It refers to the annoying tendency of virtually every event to start later than advertised. I call the trip organizer on my phone as I head for the National Archives, a popular meeting point in the nexus of several bus termini. As I suspected, the bus is yet to leave and several passengers are still wrestling with traffic jams even this early in the morning. Nairobi is not known as the New York City of East Africa for nothing.

Just after 7:00 AM, I arrive at the *nganya*. It's a sky-blue minibus with elaborate artwork over the entire body, themed on the Hip-Hop movie, *Straight Outta Compton*. In the black interior, where the majority of people have already taken their seats, there are no less than five flatscreen TVs and several speakers. Hezron gives us a speech. The actual departure time was 7.00 AM, he confesses, to account for African Time. 'There will be one stop on the Kenyan side for shopping as well as getting better acquainted. It's better to do your shopping in Tanzania where things are a bit cheaper. One Kenyan shilling is trading at about twenty Tanzanian shillings. Otherwise, this is a free-style trip without kids: amuse yourselves but don't disturb others. *Raha jipe mwenyewe!* ('Create your own fun!')

We leave the city at 7:14 AM. It's drizzling. I consult Google Maps for our route and estimated travel time. Kenya and Tanzania share a long border (and the famous Serengeti/Maasai Mara wildlife savannah). Diplomatic relations are sibling-like and the use of Kiswahili language is a common factor. From Nairobi to Namanga is three-hour trip. By 7:35 AM, we're hurtling down Mombasa Rd, gospel music playing. Cool, moist wind buffets me through the window. Traffic is light.

At 8:19 AM, we're at Mlolongo, the music having changed to Kiswahili Hip-Hop. At 8:40 we make a stop-over at dusty Kitengela town where we're given fifteen minutes to shop. The weather is still chilly but it's not drizzling. At 9:17, we depart. The passengers are starting to get loud and dance to the music. We pass Isinya at 9:45 AM and arrive in Kajiado at 10:00. A friendly traffic cop inspects the vehicle. Noticing a passenger in a Red Devils jersey, he celebrates Manchester United recently 'taking the cup'. The weather is still cold but not wet. Tissued grey clouds continue to preside over us.

At 10:40 AM, we take a 'health break' at Bisii. 'Utamu wa road trip ni kukojoa kwa msitu!' ('The best part of a road trip is pissing in the bushes!') shouts a male passenger. After the toilet break, we form a circle and get to know each other. Kenyan cellphone networks will not work properly, Hezron informs us, but M-PESA will remain functional. *Muguka/miraa* stimulant herbs will not be allowed to cross the line. We take lots of photos, especially selfies, before resuming. We soon come across another police road check, with officers in camouflage uniforms.

At 11:58 AM, we're on Athi River-Namanga Rd and rowdy passengers are already dancing to *mūgithi* (one-man guitar) music in the aisle. At 12:07 PM, we come across a third police check, in the shadow of Namanga Mountain, which looks like a hill to me. It reminds me of the Hugh Grant film, *The Englishman Who Went Up a Hill and Came Down a Mountain*.

Within minutes, we come across massive roundabout with banner that reads: 'WELCOME TO TANZANIA'. We spend the rest of the day a few kilometres from there; eating, drinking, changing money, partying, shopping, and speaking Kiswahili. Predictably, we stagger back to the bus on African Time.



Arrival at the Kenya/Tanzania frontier

POETRY

Two Poems by Nahida Esmail

The awakening

Gen Zee
Started a revolution
witnessing the real Hunger Games

Eat cake at The Capitol
District 12 undergoing starvation
Mass graves with no names

Encampments, protests
celebrity #blockout – it's all action!
Of imperialism cut the chains

The awakening has begun!
by pissing off the TikTok generation
Reset the button – see justice reign

Mackelmore's Hind's Hall – a banger!
The truth in lyrics like a revelation
It's not complicated for anyone with half a brain!

Adila Hassim and her team
At the ICJ with collected information
What is a genocide – she has to explain

Apolyptic scenes
Destruction of a generation
Student uprising - Freedom Palestine will attain!

©2024 - Nahida Esmail

Dear Palestine

Your soil is being gouged
Olive trees, uprooted
Families displaced, killed
Its a genocide! – that's very clear

We hear your call
We hear your cry for justice
for this massacre to end
Continuing for over half a year!

Know that the world sees
And weeps with you
Know that the world hears you
With you stand the sincere

Allah sees the oppression
Allah hears every cry
Allah will serve justice
But oh! Punishment will be severe

Palestine a land that is blessed
Palestine in every heartbeat
It's Allah's promise
Liberation is near!

©2024 - Nahida Esmail

Nahida Esmail is an award-winning Tanzanian author who has published more than thirty books for children and young adults. She is the chief judge for the Wakini Kuria Award for African Literature (Children's Literature) organized by the African Writers Development Trust. She dabs in poetry and has recently written a number of poems on Palestine. She wishes to see a Free Palestine in her lifetime.

Ode to Agok MaJok

by Adut Loi Akok

Even when your soul caught cold
You found a sun within yourself.
breathing in the hot breeze
whirling with the night winds —
the gods diversely present themselves
Here

Life comes late sometimes
The beginning might be fate.

Isn't it too late to resurrect you?
I was born late,
And my mother would lull me
To sleep with your sad soul's song.

Isn't it too late to bow before
Your grave, in honour of your
existence?
My mother taught me how to raise up
the spirit of fallen heroes from memories,
And how to wash their souls to gleam
in their demise

Agok, your name provokes the moon
for shimmering dimly when
darkness conquered your world.

Last night your song taught me
secret ways of healing myself.
To write sacred poems that scribble
the trace of my scars
as a tribune of gratitude for being
a souvenir of my mother in her days

I will paint your beauty
clear as the melody of your voice.
I will write your history as
It hails from the tribe of glories
From the Nilotes whose name-drop
Resonates with greatness.

You were not a lone broken bird,
But a sister of over ten-some brave Siblings —
Enough to cure the curse
Enough to wipe your tears
Enough to break the silence Enough to restore the smile
And paint the canvas of your
Majestic maidenhood before the
Crack of misfortune
That widowed you before widowhood.

Life comes late sometimes,
The beginning might be fate.

Alas!

One woman dies in Darfur,
One in Bhar el Ghazal
And you— Agok somewhere
In Jonglei— singing aloud your
death growl to spell-off the curse
Upon the next generation of women
craving and fasting for their valentine
flowers.

For love might be a new pathway to
Graves for fateful women of dreams.
Love might have its own beasts
And angels sometimes,
And we might be blind to see its secret claws.

I will design your protest
posters myself
and nail them on the trees and billboards.
All over the palace and shelters of men
that wash their faces with the blood
of their wives' wounds.
Justice for Agok!
Mercy for Agok!



Adut Loi Akok is an award-winning poet and mental health advocate from South Sudan has, thus far, authored two books: *The Beauty Within Us* (Afrogate Publishers, 2023) and *If Only the City Cries* (African Ink Publishers.) His work has been featured on *Brittle Paper*, *Kalahari Review*, *Afritondo* magazine, *Writers Space Africa - Rwanda*, best new African poets and anthologized in *Mental Health Anthology*. Adut is a Mastercard Foundation scholar at the prestigious University of Rwanda pursuing a bachelor's degree in Food Science and Technology.

To submit your own poems for consideration,

e-mail submissions@theafricangriot.com

Entries may be on any subject must not exceed 40 lines in length. Also include your short bio and (optionally) a passport-style photo.

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REGULARS

NEWS

African Scribes to Judge Asian Literary Awards

This year, the Asian Prizes, a division of The Asian Group of Literature, has enlisted no less than three renowned African authors to help judge their Short Story and Poetry categories. The new jurors are **Scholastica Moraa** (Kenya), **Nahida Esmail** (Tanzania) and **Dr. Pusetso Lame** (Botswana).

Scholastica Moraa is an Actuarial Science graduate currently pursuing a Master of Business Administration in Mount Kenya University but has an undeniable passion for poetry and stories. She has published a collection of poems titled *Beautiful Mess* and *Sometimes Love Lives Here* which have been translated into Italian. Her most recent poetry collection, *When Love Says Goodbye*, was recently published by Mvua Press; an imprint of eKitabu. She has co-authored poetry collections titled *Dreams and Demons* and *This Heart of Mine*. She is the 2022 Kendeka Prize for African Literature winner and her work has been featured in reputable magazines such as the *Konch Online Magazine* and *Imbiza*, a South African magazine.

Nahida Esmail is a hugely prolific, award-winning Tanzanian author. She graduated from Goldsmiths College, University of London, with a BSc in Psychology and completed a Master's degree in Child Development with Early Childhood Education at the Institute of Education, University of London. She currently lives in Dar es Salaam and serves as the chief judge of the Wakini Kuria Prize for Children's Literature.

Pusetso Lame is the Managing Director of Poetic-blood Publishers, author of sixteen books and an internationally published poet. She is also the founder and chairperson of the Botswana Literature Awards. The YALI University of South Africa Business and Entrepreneurship graduate has won several awards internationally and locally, most recently as the Pan African Youngest Managing Director. She is currently a national facilitator for Writers Workshop across the country with the Botswana National Library Service and MYSC. In addition, she has been nominated for 'Literary Woman of the Year' in the 2025 Women Achievers Awards. According to the organizers:

'LITERARY WOMAN OF THE YEAR is an award or recognition given to a woman who has made outstanding contributions to the literary world in a given year. This title acknowledges her achievements in writing, publishing, or influencing literature, whether through the release of notable books, promoting literacy, or making significant impacts within the literary community. It celebrates her creativity, talent, and the impact her work has had on readers and the literary field.'



Guys, Girls & Masks: How the Kenya Theatre Awards Burlesque Ceremony Went Down



Some of the attendees pose for a group photo

The official – underline *official* – dress code for the 4th Edition of the Kenya Theatre Awards was ‘Burlesque & Old Skool Fashion’. A poster on their Facebook page described the award ceremony as ‘A Stage for Stars, A Night of Masks.’ And the nominees did not disappoint. As they say in the vernacular, they understood the assignment. The nerves that accompany award ceremonies were hardly visible beneath the loud outfits, elaborate makeup and enough masks to make *The Phantom of the Opera* look tame. As usual, the event was held at the Kenya National Theatre, on the 20th February 2025. It was also streamed live on YouTube.

The ceremony was graced by Ms **Ummi Bashir**, the Principal Secretary State Department for Culture, The Arts And Heritage; and hosted by Brian Aseli and Kerry Kagiri. By the end of the prize-giving-ceremony-cum-masquerade-ball, Chatterbox’s *Lwanda Otero: The Musical* led the winners, with ten awards including Best Musical Theatre Production. *Lwanda*, which was staged at Braeburn Theatre in Nairobi, had a large cast, 12 dancers, 16 original songs, 8 vocalists and a five-piece band. Other big winners were *Too Early for Birds*’ *Tom Mboya*, which scooped four awards, and Igiza Arts Production, which won three. Ann Wanjugu and Tirus Gathwe won Lifetime Achievement Awards while Igiza Arts Production was crowned Theatre Company of The Year.

COMPLETE LIST OF WINNERS

Nairobi Musical Theatre Initiative - World Impact Award

Cosmas Bii - Jury's Special Award

Ann Wanjugu - Lifetime Achievement Award

Tirus Gathwe - Lifetime Achievement Award

Heva Fund - Ushirika Award

ChemiChemi Players - Best Two-hander Production

Igiza Arts Production - Theatre Company of The Year

The Banda School - Best Children's Play

Chatterbox - Best Adaptation

Cynthia Nzuki - Best Breakthrough Female Performer

Sam Ouma - Best Breakthrough Male Performer

Mitch Bushry - Best Costumes Design

Dance Centre Kenya - Best Dance Theatre

Mugambi Nthiga - Best Director

Andu A Mumbi Production - Best Kikwetu Production

Braeburn School – Gitanga Road - Best Learning Institution (Schools)

Kenyatta University - Best Learning Institution (Universities)

Jasper Miedema - Best Lighting Design

Alice Kimanzi - Best Musical score, Arrangement or Adaptation

Chatterbox - Best Musical Theatre Production

Niqq Kerah - Best Musical score, Arrangement or Adaptation

Seth Guya - Best Original Choreography in a Musical/Play

Emma Withill - Best Performance By A Female Actor In A Lead Role In a Musical

Auudi Rowa - Best Performance By A Female Actor In A Supporting Role In a Musical

Agengo Ogone - Best Performance By A Male Actor In A Lead Role In a Musical

Nyakundi Isaboke - Best Performance By A Male Actor In A Supporting Role In a Musical

Ariana Kagotho - Best Performance By A Young Female Actor

Danny Kathungu - Best Performance By A Young Male Actor

Pris Laura Achieng - Best Performance by a Female Actor in a Leading Role (Play)

Nyokabi Macharia - Best Performance by a Female Actor in a Monologue

Muthoni Gathecha - Best Performance by a Female Actor in a Supporting Role (Play)

Daniel Lee Hird - Best Performance by a Male Actor in a Leading Role (Play)

Ngartia Brian - Best Performance by a Male Actor in a Monologue

Eric Chege - Best Performance by a Male Actor in a Supporting Role (Play)

Martin Abuya - Best Performance by a Male Actor in a Monologue

Gathoni Kimuyu - Best Performance by a Male Actor in a Supporting Role (Play)

Nancy Aluoch - Best Set Design

Mike Mbugua - Best Sound Design

Chatterbox - Best Production

Irooto Productions - Best Spoken Word Production

Mercy Wangui - Best Stage Managed Production

Too Early For Birds - Best Story-telling Production

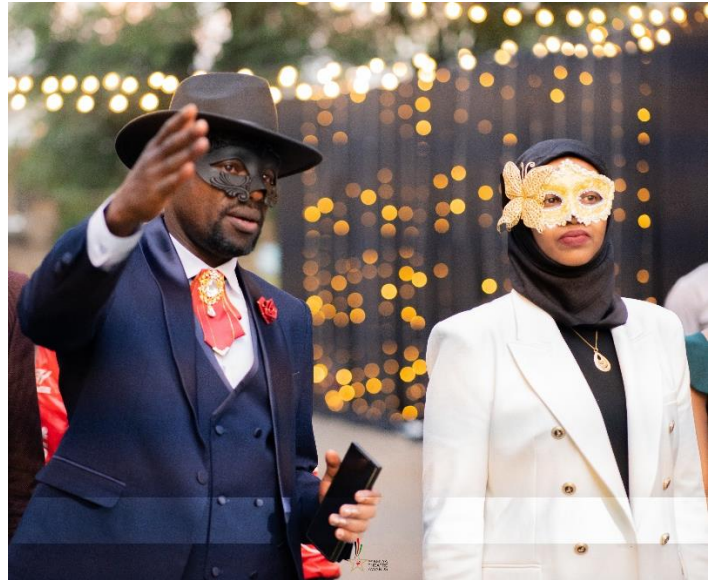
ChemiChemi Players - Best Two-hander Production

Igiza Arts Production - Theatre Company of The Year

Some scenes from the extravaganza, courtesy of the Kenya Theatre Awards (KTA) media team:



Hosts Kerry Kagiri Brian Aseli arrive in style.



RIGHT THIS WAY, MA'AM:

Mike Pundo, Chief Executive Officer at Kenya Cultural Centre, and Ummi Bashir, Principal Secretary of the State Department for Culture, The Arts And Heritage



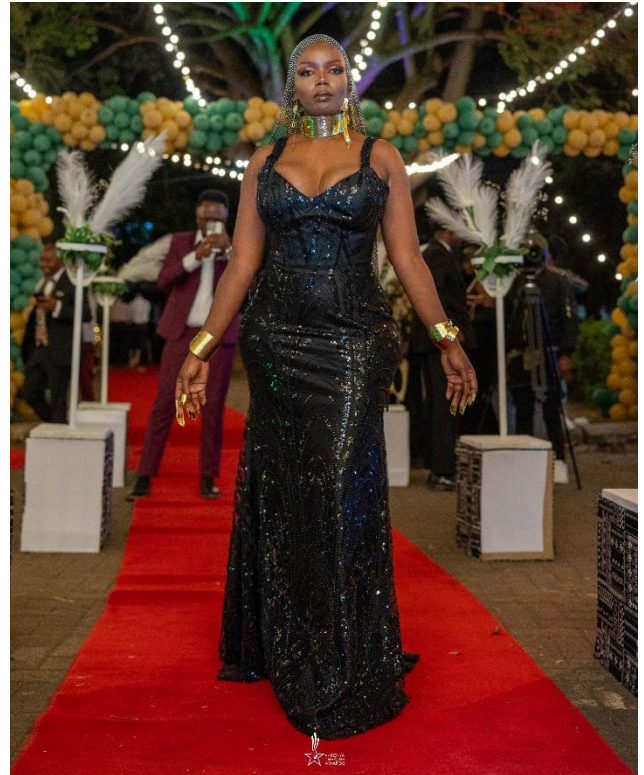
Ballet dancers Benji Mudondo and Chloe Kimmelman



Auudi Rowa (right) receives her trophy for Best Performance By A Female Actor In A Supporting Role In a Musical



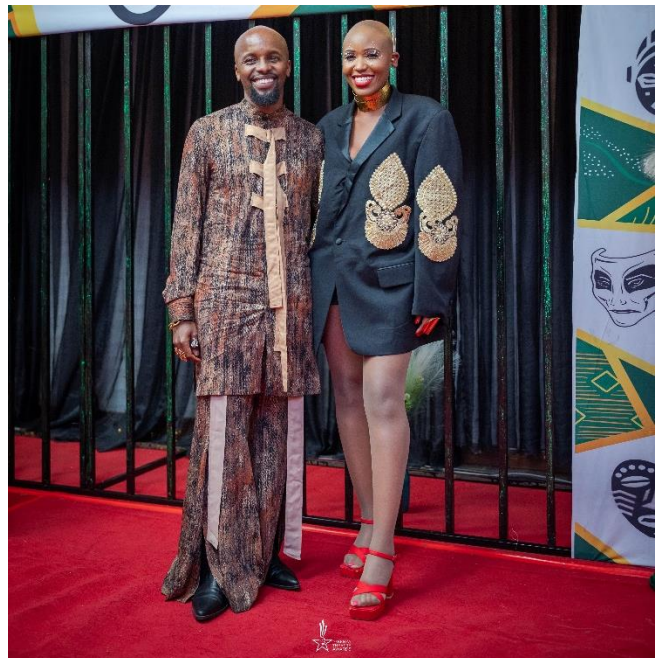
Kevin Kaburo (left), founder of the KTAs, channeling 'The Phantom of the Opera'



Gathoni Kimyu



Steenie Njoroge



Mugambi Nthiga and Nyokabi Macharia

Chimamanda Adichie's New Book Divides Critics

Rarely – if ever - has an African book release been accompanied by the type of hype that has surrounded **Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's** *Dream Count* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2025). Even before its official release, social media was already abuzz with excitement about the work which was billed 'A publishing event ten years in the making.' Bookstores around the world promised potential buyers that they would have the book in stock. It was a 'Most Anticipated Book of 2025' according to *The Washington Post*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Marie Claire*, *Elle*, *Oprah Daily*, *Readers Digest*, *The Seattle Times*, *LitHub*, *The Chicago Review of Books*, BET, and Radio Times. As soon as *Dream Count* hit the market, displaying individual copies on social media became a trend especially in Nigeria. Meanwhile, the author embarked on a promotional tour, with dates in North America and Europe.

She admitted to having suffered from writer's block. 'It's a really frightening place to be, because writing is the thing that gives me meaning,' the US-based Nigerian-born author told BBC's Emma Barnett. 'I'm not sure that it was just entirely physiological but something changed, and I just could not get back into that magical place where I can write fiction.' *Dream Count* is Adichie's most recent major work since *Americanah* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2013).

Posting on Facebook from Germany on March 20 2025, renowned South African writer **Niq Mhlongo** wrote:

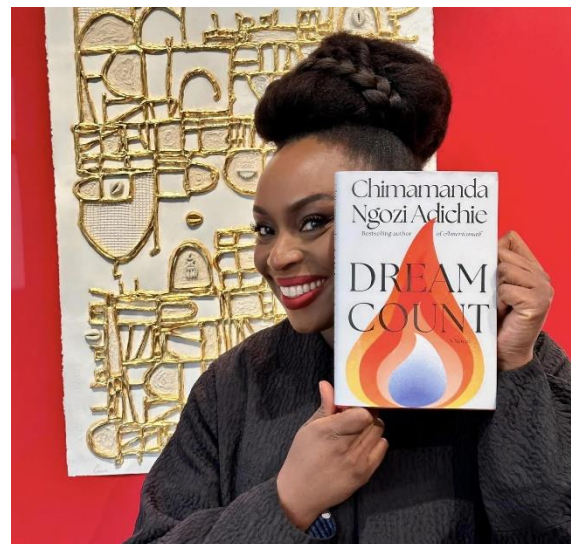
'When I grow up I want to be Chimamanda Ngozi. So, yesterday she came to Berlin and filled a 400-capacity hall, just to launch new book, Dream Count. The tickets were going at 28€. Imagine, just to attend a book launch and not a festival. Demand was so high that the tickets were sold out within 18 hours. That, ladies and gentlemen, didn't include a book. You still had to fork out money to buy her book. A German translation cost 28€ and the English copy cost 22€. The session lasted for almost two hours. No book signing, no photo session, no small talk after that. NOW, ladies and gentlemen that's what I call a very successful author.'

However, this being Chimamanda, controversy wasn't far off. Some critics argued that the book didn't qualify as a 'novel' but was instead a collection of four novellas, one of which had been previously published.

'Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie say di writer's block she experience after she become pregnant with her first child bin dey "terrifying". "Na really a frightening place to dey, becos writing na di tin wey dey give me meaning," di ogbonge Nigerian author, 47, tell BBC Emma Barnett. "I no dey sure say e dey entirely physiological but sometin change, and I just no fit go back into dat magical place wia I fit write fiction.' – BBC News - Pigin

A scalding review published by *Vulture* magazine triggered heated discussions online. Titled 'Don't Call It a Comeback' and written by Sanjena Sathian, the article said, in part:

'Adichie's fourth novel, *Dream Count*, proves that she is still a gifted storyteller, yet her fame has indeed affected her work. *Dream Count* comprises four linked novellas (as well as an epilogue-esque chapter), and each section follows a different woman's, well, dreams...At best, the book presents a *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus* picture of gender relations; at worst, it is a blandly regressive take on progressive Americans, who, in these pages, are two-dimensional caricatures sketched from conservative talking points rather than the fully formed characters one expects to encounter in literary fiction...the new Adichie - the defensive celebrity, the territorial feminist - seems no longer capable of writing such a book.'



Dream Count is available on Amazon (at USD\$ 23.75), and bookstores worldwide.

OPPORTUNITIES

- **CANEX Book Factory Prize for Publishing in Africa.**

Prize: \$20,000 awarded to the winner and \$2,000 distributed to each of the four finalists

Deadline: 30 April 2025

Apply: <https://canex.africa/canex-book-factory>

- **Andrée Blouin Prize 2025**

Prize: USD \$2,000 advance and a publishing contract with Inkani Books.

Deadline: Midnight SAST 30 April 2025

Submit: <https://inkanibooks.co.za/andree-blouin-prize-2025/>

- **The Asian Journal of Literature**

Prize: Publication

Deadline: 30 May 2025

Submit your work to: nadeera.nilupamali@theasianjournalofliterature.org

- **Tejumola Olaniyan Creative Writers-in-Residence Fellowship 2025**

Deadline: April 17

Apply: <https://www.theafricainstitute.org/institute-program/tejumola-olaniyan-creative-writers-fellowship/>

- **Toyin Falola Prize 2025**

Deadline: 15 April 2025

Apply: <https://lunaris.com.ng/TFP-guidelines/>

- **DALRO Can Themba Merit Award**

Deadline: 10 April 2025

Apply: <https://dalro.co.za/CTMA/>

- **African Speculations Fiction Society Nommo Awards 2025**

Deadline: 5 May 2025

<https://www.africansfs.com/nommo-awards/2025-nominations-now-open>

- **Wilbur Smith New Voices Award**

Deadline: 30 April 2025

Apply: <https://www.wilbur-niso-smithfoundation.org/prize/new-voices>

- **Queen Mary Wasafiri New Writing Prize**

Deadline: 30 June 2025

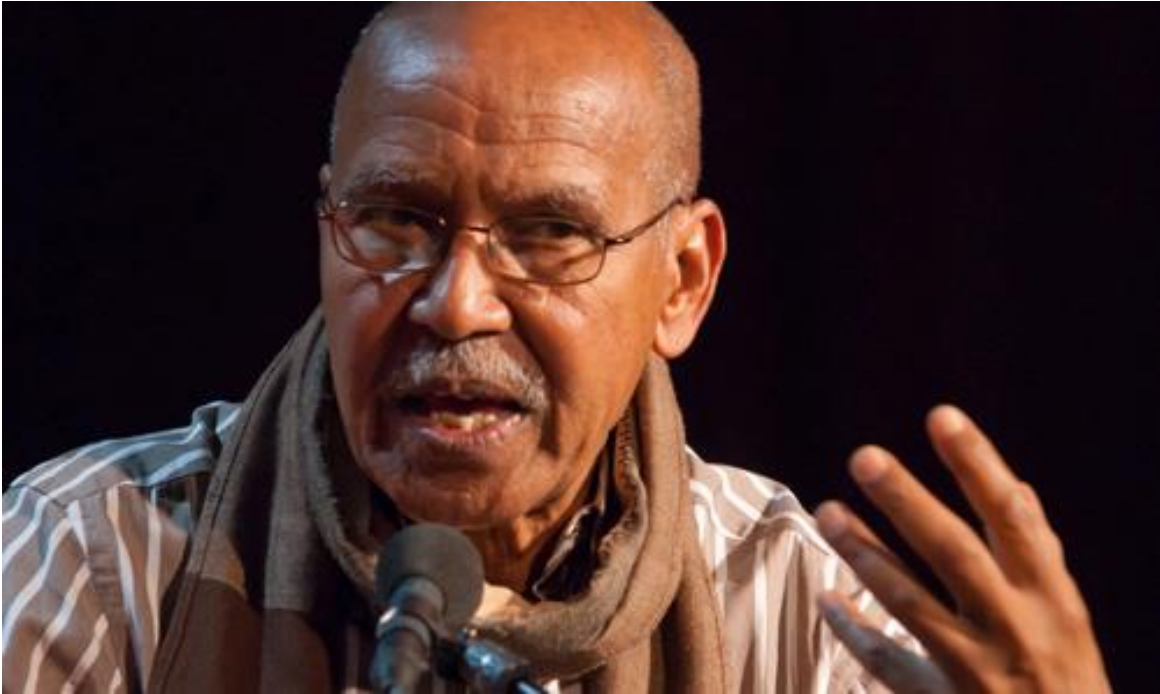
Submit: <https://www.wasafiri.org/news-and-events/2025-queen-mary-wasafiri-new-writing-prize-opens-for-submissions>

- **Le Prix Ibn Khaldoun – Senghor**

Deadline: 30 June 2025

Submit: <https://www.francophonie.org/lancement-prix-traduction-ibn-khaldoun-senghor-2024>

WISDOM OF THE ELDERS



Nurrudin Farah (Photo: boundary2.org)

‘Once you are born Somali, you remain Somali forever. It’s just one of those things...I have, actually, the pride and pleasure to say that I have four passports, and therefore four nationalities, and I could claim any of them any time, any day...I see myself as a Somali and the reason is that I have fought very hard to stay Somali.’ - Nurrudin Farah, exiled Somali writer

‘I would have been a writer anywhere. But in my country, writing meant confronting racism.’ - Nadine Gordimer, South African Nobel Literature Prize winner, in an interview in 1990

**‘For me, the first role of a citizen, even more when one has the power of influence such as in the case of writers, is to take a critical look - a constructive critique, of course - at one’s own country.’
– Nafissatou Dia Diouf, Senegalese-born writer in French**

‘I’m not intelligent. I’m not arrogant. I’m just like the people who read my books. I used to have a jazz club, and I made the cocktails and I made the sandwiches. I didn’t want to become a writer - it just happened.’ - Haruki Murakami, famous Japanese author

‘I have always been part of the proletariat. I lived side by side with the sons of fishermen and smugglers. I was born politicized.’ – Dario Fo, Winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature

‘Medals don’t suit me. I’m not that kind of guy.’ - Heinrich Boll, famous German writer

‘We don’t need any more writers as solitary heroes. We need a heroic writer’s movement: assertive, militant, pugnacious.’- Toni Morrison, Nobel and Pulitzer Prize winner

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