

## Two Poems by Yonas Admassu

**The Circus**

I once heard a poet say:

"To that which lies on the other side  
of the Great Beyond, one should  
gracefully bow one's head,  
Give It a Name, and let It rest."

To such a Wisdom, I have always been  
a willing captive.

But what kind of wisdom,  
in this our day, do I hear and see,  
which I lack the power to understand;  
this wisdom, so eloquently flaunted,  
so ticklishly grand!

In the once-proud homestead,  
In the now-remote ancestral land;  
Where yesterday's spirits seem  
too embarrassed to tread.

Pray tell, for instance,

why we must jump every time others yell;  
why we must dance every time they sing;  
why we roll, and we fall, and wiggle and flip,  
as at every crack of the trainer's whip;  
why on our heads we stand  
and trample upon the multitude  
that we somehow believe to be below us,  
while turning their shelters into circus tents  
(and declare we have built them palaces!)  
in which we extend our generosity to the beyond,  
generating endless series of clownish performances  
to an equally endless train of curious audiences—  
to whom our existence means nothing or little—  
providing laughter that feeds on our tears.  
And, the Irony of Ironies, why  
but we ourselves offer to foot the bill  
and leave them all the tips.

Thankful That They All Came!

### Mighty High 'n Jivin'

A friend and I went  
 For some libation,  
 After a hard day of toil and sweat,  
 To relax our aching muscles,  
 From the gruelling heat of the day  
 And the unrelenting grip  
 Of the Work Machine,  
 It was friday the thirteenth.

Where we usually went  
 Our throats to wet,  
 And lots of heat to vent  
 They called the moment "attitude adjustment hour."  
 Elsewhere, in adjacent bars and across the street,  
 It was known by its more mundane appellation  
 Of "Happy Hour."  
 But this place we went to  
 On Friday the thirteenth was  
 Cool, conducive and all;  
 Had class, if you know what I mean!  
 Because you went there to adjust

Well, we went, my friend and I,  
 Talked about things and stuff,  
 But above all discoursed on several politics:

*[We cursed apart-hate  
 We fleeced Margaret  
 We hated Ronald  
 Scoffed at George  
 Admired Mikail  
 Celebrated Nelson  
 Expressed apprehension  
 About Europe being united  
 Smelled disaster of the homeland  
 Being disintegrated  
 Supported the intifada  
 With still more on our agenda]*

Nothing unusual, that,  
 For Friday has always been a politicized event.

Now that we adjusted enough  
 We decide not to overstay our welcome  
 In that domain.

So we turned to cultural files  
And remembered pasts  
Under the spell of which  
We recalled our "Lions"  
Whose majesty was enough to scare  
The lion's shit out of the jungle itself.  
And, as the summer sun went down  
And the street lights were too weak  
To keep everything else in sight  
We regretted that we were born idle cats  
Who've lost any use at all for their claws—  
Cats that have long since fallen into  
Strange habits  
Of weekly visits  
To manicure shops,  
Like Heathcliff, Garfield, and MORRIS.  
Relishing our adjustment

We then decided it was a moment  
For several more politics—  
This time, the future—  
For some prospects.  
Boy, were our visions full of light,  
Infinite, glowing, and bright  
Like the Comet itself.  
Intense.  
Unrestrained.

So, we each said how  
We were going to do a lot,  
Once we got the chance.  
How we were going to distribute our knowledge,  
All free of charge,  
To schools and children,  
Peasant and worker,  
And women,  
Though not necessarily in that order;  
To educate the "MASSES"  
Who apparently "suffer" from an "ignorance"  
Of what hit them in the first place.  
Teach and Preach  
Through the written word,  
To tell them what I'm afraid they already know—  
They've been oppressed.

Once this was settled,  
 We prioritized and panoramized  
 Our plans.  
 We could see miracles happenin'  
 A vast dominion openin'  
 Where even mice could bring forth mountains.  
 For what else are visions about.  
 So, we decided, for instance:

*To open a publishing factory  
 In which to turn our myths and tales,  
 Our rituals, superstitions and poetry,  
 Into moving pictures.  
 (like the comics and cartoons here)  
 In order better to communion with the MASSES.  
 Then will do geography and math  
 Do Science and philosophy,  
 Do psychology, and do discourse;  
 Then we 'raise'  
 Their consciousness.*

Neither agreed nor disagreed  
 On this issue, quite a revelation as it seemed.  
 The both of us simply nodded heads  
 To indicate a meating of the minds.

Then remembering  
 That we were overtaxing ourselves,  
 And aware, as the minutes ticked by,  
 Of the need for another adjustment,

*Went some place and did drugs  
 Watched some t.v.  
 Where we saw a commercial  
 About invisible girls on invisible beaches  
 In invisible bikinis riding the tides.  
 We felt mighty good 'n high.  
 About the eventful day we had.*

My friend went to the music machine.  
 I went home and scribbled this.  
 That's all there is to it.

*Friday was indeed a political moment!*