

Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma

Our love is here to stay

Author(s): Nii Ayikwei Parkes

Source: *World Literature Today*, Vol. 85, No. 2 (March/April 2011), p. 27

Published by: Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41060097>

Accessed: 09-01-2018 10:20 UTC

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *World Literature Today*

Two Poems

Nii Ayikwei Parkes

Our love is here to stay

Clouds gather under a blue moon,
like trouble brewing as strange fruit
continues to swing – keeping time –
while Columbia turntables refuse to spin
the song; is vinyl too black, too flash to be
sleeved in white prisons? The answer lies

like white gardenia petals on a bruise
too subtle to separate from wind; like
a trumpet caught in the ill wind of a jet's
prejudice in the company of clouds – a
rumble in a jungle of noise, the forgotten b-
side that holds its breath. Trouble brewing.

There's nothing random about rain;
It clears the sky's throat for the sun's shrill
voice; the white hanky is for black sweat.

They'll all laugh when I say it, whisper
as though I'm making whoopee with Communist
ideals. They'll laugh like they laughed
when Louis appeared coal-sketched on screen,
years before he lifted the smoke and called
Eisenhower a spade, said let's call the whole

Soviet thing off, as sweetly as he sang *that song*
with Ella — and there's silence where the applause
should be; because it's OK when the needle hits
the dark flesh of wax and causes blue screams,
but when the tip hits the dark flesh of a woman
and she wails for justice; shooting off ideas

as she reloads stimulants, suddenly music is
treble trouble. And everybody knows
that the calm comes before the clouds . . .

There's nothing random about rain; so blow
Louis, blow from cheek to cheek, blow
under a blanket of blue until you get a kick
from a laughing Ella and switch the tone
so swift // so hot // so dark
that the only bright thing will be the spotlight

of struggle illuminating a girl in Baltimore,
learning as time goes by that life isn't a fine
romance, love, but your soul won't desert you;
like the note can't leave the music, like
the shadows can't leave the darkness.
The secret is to listen; to the slow creeping

embrace of the trumpet's protest, the percussive
defiance of the piano's syncopation, the indrawn
breaths when the song learns the body that sings it.



Nii Ayikwei Parkes is a Ghanaian novelist, editor, sociocultural commentator, and poet. A 2007 recipient of Ghana's national ACRA award for poetry and literary advocacy, he has held visiting positions at the University of Southampton and California State University. Parkes's books include *ballast: a remix* (shortlisted for the Michael Marks Award), the recent *The Makings of You* (Peepal Tree) and his debut novel, *Tail of the Blue Bird* (forthcoming in the United States in 2011), which was shortlisted for the 2010 Commonwealth Prize (see *WLT*, Jan. 2010, 68).

As a performer, Parkes is known for his versatility on stage and his love for jazzy collaborations. He has performed on major stages like the Royal Festival Hall in London, Java in Paris, and Paradiso in Amsterdam as well as at festivals such as the 2005 London Jazz Festival. In 2002 he completed a sellout six-week tour of the United States and recorded the spoken-word CD *Incredible Blues*, which includes collaborations with Randolph Matthews and Kumar Raghunathan.