

Gedigte / Poems

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Rubriek vir skeppende werk

Litera is 'n rubriek vir die publikasie van skeppende werk in al die tale wat gewoonlik in *Literator* gebruik word. Die Redaksie wil daarmee 'n geïntegreerde beeld skep van die verskeidenheid nuwe skryfwerk wat Suid-Afrikaanse skrywers kan bied.

'n Kontantprys word toegeken aan die beste bydraes wat in die loop van 'n jaar gepubliseer word. Skrywers word daarom uitgenooi om korter skeppende werk voor te lê vir plasing in hierdie rubriek. Dit kan gedigte of kortverhale wees, maar drama- of romanfragmente en eksperimentele tekste is ook welkom.

'n Elektroniese kopie van elke bydrae moet voorgelê word. Die naam en adres van die insender moet regs bo-aan die eerste blad vermeld word. **Verstrek ook 'n telefoonnommer, faksnommer en e-posadres waar u bereik kan word.** Elektroniese bydraes kan gestuur word aan Susan.Lourens@nwu.ac.za

Bydraes kan ook gepos word aan die Burohoof, *Literator*, Personeelbussie 251, Buro vir Wetenskaplike Tydskrifte, Privaatsak X6001, POTCHEFSTROOM 2520.

Section for creative writing

Litera is a section for the publication of creative writing in all the languages that *Literator* usually caters for. Through this section the Editorial Board wants to present an integrated image of the diversity of new writing by South Africans.

A cash prize will be awarded for the best contributions published in a specific year. Writers are therefore invited to submit shorter creative work for publication in this section. Poems and short stories are welcome, but also plays and novel fragments and experimental texts.

An electronic version of each contribution should be submitted. The name and address of the author should appear at the top right of the first page. **Please include a telephone number, a fax number and an e-mail address where you can be contacted.** Electronic submissions can be send to Susan.Lourens@nwu.ac.za

Contributions can also be mailed to the Head of the Bureau, *Literator*, Staff Box 251, Bureau for Scholarly Journals, Private Bag X6001, POTCHEFSTROOM 2520.

Reglement: Litera-pryse vir kreatiewe skryfkuns

Die Redaksie van *Literator* ken jaarliks twee pryse toe vir die beste bydraes vir 'n kalenderjaar in die rubriek "Litera". Hierdie pryse sal bekend staan as die Litera-pryse vir kreatiewe skryfkuns.

Twee pryse word toegeken, een vir skrywers wat reeds 'n bundel in die betrokke genre gepubliseer het, en een vir skrywers wat nog nie 'n bundel gepubliseer het nie (dit wil sê wat as debutante beskou word).

Die Redaksie bepaal aan wie die pryse toegeken word, maar die Redaksie kan buitebeoordelaars gebruik om met die beoordeling behulpsaam te wees. Die beslissings van die Redaksie is finaal en geen korrespondensie sal daarvoor gevoer word nie.

Die Redaksie behou hom die reg voor om vir 'n spesifieke jaar of vir 'n spesifieke kategorie nie 'n prys toe te ken nie, of om 'n prys onder verskillende skrywers te verdeel.

Die name van die skrywers aan wie die pryse toegeken is, sal bekendgemaak word in die eerste uitgawe van *Literator* van die daaropvolgende kalenderjaar.

Rules: Litera prizes for creative writing

The Editorial Board of *Literator* yearly awards two prizes for the best contributions for a calendar year in the section “Litera”. These prizes will be known as the Litera prizes for creative writing.

Two prizes will be awarded, one for writers who have already published a collection in the genre concerned, and one for writers who have not yet published a collection (that is, who are regarded as making their *début*).

The Editorial Board determines to whom the prizes will be awarded, and it may appoint external judges to help with the evaluation of contributions. The decisions of the Editorial Board are final and no correspondence on this matter will be entered into.

The Editorial Board reserves the right to make no award for a particular year or in a particular category, or to divide a prize among different authors.

The names of the authors to whom the awards have been made, will be published in the first issue of *Literator* of the subsequent calendar year.



Chris Mann

The comrades marathon

in memoriam Victor Clapham

Well Vic, I wonder what you'd make of this,
I mean the flag-hung square, the jostling crowds,
a helicopter clattering through the dark,
runners in their thousands, massed down the street,
and someone famous being interviewed
in a bright white glare on the steps of City Hall

I wish you could be here, right here with us,
dressed in your baggy shorts and tennis shoes,
smelling the wintergreen, the nervous sweat
and feeling strange pricklings in your skin
as speakers boom the anthem down the street
that shifts the day from normal into epic time.

Look at the scaffolding, the tents, the bins,
the marshals with clipboards and yellow bibs.
They do this for nothing, year after year.
It's a bit like a local Olympics now,
all sorts of money-scheming hangers-on
but still, somehow, decency on a podium.

Isn't it much, much bigger than you thought?
At times I've wondered what was in your mind
when back home from the war to end all wars
you'd sit in the hot iron cab of your train
swabbing your neck and chest with cotton waste
and slowly swigging a bottle of cold sweet tea.

Tell me, didn't it churn you up inside –
watching each day across the shunting yard
the salesmen on the platform in white shirts,
the women in high-heels and fancy hats
saying goodbye with a kiss and a wave

as if their dads and uncles hadn't died at all?

Didn't you really hate it when young blokes
with slicked-back hair in the Railways Hotel
would turn away from you, beer-mug in hand,
and switch the talk to Saturday's races
the moment you even mentioned the war
and passing round the hat for a memorial?

That must have got to you, as if your pals
who'd marched their youth along this street
in row on row of boots and bayonets,
on their way north to mud and death in France,
weren't even worth a few words in a bar.
Is that why you dreamed us into this marathon?

Well Vic, each year, out of that dream emerge
not just the rugby types you started with,
that group of balding friends in boxing vests
trotting off down a farm road with a laugh,
but men and women of all sorts and shapes,
the black, the blonde, the bronze of our humanity.

Does hope, a marathon of hope like this,
you make me ask, remind the heart of grace?
Look, Vic, at what you got going with joy,
a huge, jostling ritual of human decency
whose runners set off down a cheering street
then toil across the landscape of South Africa.

[Author's note: the comrades marathon is the
world's oldest and largest ultra-marathon.]

Chris Mann

To J ... among the galaxies

Some claim that in the bulging foam-walls of the galaxies
through which our mantled speck of magma spins its way
the spuming flows of matter, time and energy are one.

I thought the proof of this would be beyond my science,
abstracted from the raw ideas, the rough truths we live by
and cooled into the bloodless universe that numbers make.

But when you raise your dark green slip above your head
and softly gleaming in the windowed starlight come to bed
you passion me to see what makes those numbers breathe.

For matter, time and energy are here, and now, and us,
and inter-fused by love, as these our yearning bodies are.

A poem to Christ near Winchester

How glad I was, how calm and full of peace
to find your spirit present when I woke.
It was, I think, a moment in and out of time,
for though I heard no voice and saw no face
I knew at once that it was you, right there,
because I felt so loved and so complete.

Did I who cared too much for worldly things,
who'd fled from grace so many times before,
expect, or should I better say, presume
the bliss I felt would last throughout the day?
Ah no, my mentor, friend and sacred shade,
you'd come, I knew, to bless and then to guide.

The dawn-steeped sky above the window-sill
began to open out a huge and airy space.
I heard, far off, the sound of shouts in fields,
the tiny din of tractors on the move.
All seemed beyond and yet within your reach
as I, still steeped with you, drowsed back to sleep.

You'd gone, as I expected, when I woke,

you'd vanished in the sanctum in the mind
where music, prayer and art are made and stored
with future-shaping memories like yours.
That's why, I think, I swung a wooden gate
and walked a lane in search of gifts for you.

How much I loved the green-leafed apple boughs,
the lichen grey as moth-wings on a wall,
the mosses mushroom-plump in dripping nooks!
Was this, I thought, the gift you'd value most,
that even worm-casts and the tracks of snails
now seemed to me life's art-work in a shrine?

I halted then, and walked back down the lane,
and saw – sailing through the morning mist
as if through time, your long-hulled ship of stone.
That's when I knew my sturdiest gift for you
would be to raise, in phrase on measured phrase,
the small cathedral of a faith-built poem,
made in and out of words, and love, and time.

Genna Gardini

First generation

Where I am from we do not measure relation in corpuscles.

That is why I love you more than I know how to tell you
and I tell you all the time

about the tiny Canadian
demonstrating the sting of the felt mantis –
He mouths it into your puppet's pursed ear,
oh, Jesus,
your mother and your father and your brother,
your Nonna who soiled her gingham dress,
in glee, by the pronutro pool at the old house,
in Zimbabwe – One day I, also, will realize
I am a grown woman
being chased by a monkey, and wee.

Bone memories speak a language of marrow, fried.
We were made for the government school,
the horse-prowled Benoni farm lands,
an Uncle's seven-eleven down by the train tracks.
Are you scared you're a coloured
and not Portuguese?
he asks,
and I can't stop laughing.

She told me that I grew in her heart
instead of under it,
and I imagined myself squashed in that cavity,
sucking on a cardial chord, like a slikkie,
more than blood, more than fat,
I am made of these white moments,
healthy as cells, with their new-mattress walls bolstered
by decades of cutlery and jars, the lazy susan
we spun to Durban and Cape Town and back,
a roulette I won, every time.

Genna Gardini

For Laura (who is four)

We have drawn a picture of you, together.

My little, my white plaster cast
unfloured,
a first year installation, a story you read before doodoo,
watching her glass-eye watch you,
the chink-wall of channels, shuffling.
She will not sleep,
has to tell you about each item in her toybox.
I love it! that tiny chest, straining towards things,
I love it.

This is my one hair (what happened to the rest?
They burned it in the fires, you shrug,
but before I can ask)
and this is my dress (I know, I helped with that part.
Yes, you did, grudgingly)
and this my winky.

Ah, fat oblong.
I took you for a slipper.

She still expects you in the cubicle,
that small hot hand, limp and protesting in yours,
the resigned murmur of "Uppies" when
there are too many spikes in this hanging basket of a yard,
being big, being useful.

You sure you have a winky?
Ja, I do.

I see a circle on the sternum, untoured.
S'that, baba? It's where I got bitened.
Hey?

We only change the sheets
for when you dream of your small mouse
trapped in the parrot's cage
and wake up, missing!
This talcum powder give, this springy.

She tries again –
You know, you know when the wolf bitened me?
You know when the wolf and the ghost bitened me?,
peels a bandage from my finger,
sits it on the sketch's collarbone.

Owie? I hazard.
Owie. She confirms.

Adri Breed

Sneeu in Afrika

“Krrt-krrek-krrt-krrek”
raas die pitte om haar enkels
en die skulpe om haar nek.
Haar voete trap-trap ritmies
op die yswit moddergrond.
Haar swaar boude swaai stadig
heen en weer rond.
“As dit pap reën moet jy skeep.”
neurie sy in klankige taal.
“Ja, skeep!” skreeu ’n berg-aap
ver weg in die vaal.
“Skeep, skeep, skeep, skeep ...”
raas ’n loopvoël en hol in die bos.
“As dit pap reën moet jy skeep.”
beaam sy uit volle bors.
“Skeeeeeep!” roep die grys voël
in die soetdoringboom.
“Sssssskeep” sis ’n adder
vanuit ’n klip se soom.
“Ek sal skeep!” skrik sy vir hom
en skeep dan haar houers vol
van alles rondom.

4 Haikoes

Herfs

taai akkerblare
lê op die pad, en jy sien
die boom se are

Winter

wit warm asem
wat stomend stroom deur my serp
word koue wasem

Lente

ek pluk vol sakke
uitspattige pienk bloeisels
op grysbruin takke

Somer

vrugte hang geelbont
swaar en lomp rond in bome
en vrot op die grond

h. le r. slabbert

Helen Keller (geb. 1880)
(3 Portrette)

I. dors

Hoe moes jy nie
in dié briljante krullekop
in die duister donker
dieptes van afgeslotenheid
áfpriem tot dié karige
bodem van klank en sin,
dóer aan die begin
– dié heilige, onuitspreeklike
tetragram: W-A-T-E

II. annie sullivan (*Mrs Macy*)

Jy't haar slegs as “teacher”
geken: dié half-blinde
engeling, eensame enkeling
wat met hand en hart
én geopende verstand
op die lei van jou lewe
sou skryf
(sy, eintlik nog adolessent
en sónder handboek:)
het in jou steenkool
God-se-glans gaan soek)

III. roem

... en toe jy uiteindelik
voor presidente staan,
ongehoorde woorde
kon a-r-t-i-k-u-leer
en ándere inspireer:
dié God
van wie jy ewe-beeld was
– waar sou jy Hom
“in the scheme of things”
(wou) inpas

Elizabeth Joss

Mother, I yearn for you to relish

Mother cannot ingest
precious, life-giving water
her skin sallow and dull
her eyes watery and red
she threatens to kill herself
as her sister and brother did

when she skips, she heaves from deep down
lungs chocolate-black
sticky yellow cupboards
tear-worn ash

Mother cannot ingest
art books, literature, diversion
A holiday I furnish her with
A massage I deliver her –
She threatens to deny herself
as her sister and brother did

mother cannot ingest
the lightness of my situation
she is too busily swallowing her load