Queer Diasporic Forms: A Conversation with Logan February

Logan February[1]

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The following interview with poet and artist Logan February is part of a special issue on "Queering Postcolonial Worlds," which explores the overlaps and intersections between queer studies and postcolonial studies, particularly as they emerge in contemporary global anglophone literature. The conversation took place on May 3, 2024, in Münster, Germany and is a continuation of a dialogue that began with a public reading and discussion of Logan's poetry on April 30, 2024, at the University of Münster. During the reading, we explored topics such as translation, queer representation, family, and spirituality. Our questions center around Logan's poetry collection *Mental Voodoo*, which was published in 2024 by Engeler Verlag in a bilingual English/German format, probing the ways poetry can be a form for representing and giving shape to queer diasporic themes. Logan's responses touch on their experiences in Nigeria, the United States, and most recently, in Berlin, Germany, as a literature fellow at the DAAD Artists-in-Residence program.

[1] Logan February, born 1999 in Anambra, Nigeria, is a poet, essayist, singer, songwriter, and LGBTQ activist. Their poetry has been published in numerous literary magazines, in three chapbooks: *How to Cook a Ghost* (2017), *Painted Blue with Saltwater* (2018), and *Garland* (2019), as well as in the poetry collections *In the Nude* (2019) and, most recently, *Mental Voodoo* (2024), a bilingual English-German anthology published by Engeler Verlag. February's work has been translated into Spanish, Italian, Dutch, and now German. They are the recipient of the 2020 Future Awards Africa Prize for Literature as well as fellowships from the Cave Canem Foundation and Literarisches Colloquium Berlin.

Rita Maricocchi: How did you come to write poetry? Why poetry?

Logan February: I started poetry as a reader, firstly, and a reader of everything. I loved stories, but I felt like the things that I was working through were not narrative. They were experiential, and poetry became a way of articulating them, and also a private language for myself that I could lament in, or dream in, or anything like that. Over time it became something I started to realize is a voice as well, and then it became a question of how this voice could be put to use.

Dorit Neumann: Your poetry has been published in numerous literary magazines, in three chapbooks: *How to Cook a Ghost* (2017), *Painted Blue with Saltwater* (2018), and *Garlands* (2019), in the poetry collection *In the Nude* (2019) with Ouida Poetry, and most recently in the anthology *Mental Voodoo* (2024) with Engeler Verlag. Can you tell us a bit more about *Mental Voodoo*, especially how this project came about and what it was like putting this anthology together?

LF: The anthology is a bilingual collection of selected poems and a few new ones from over the years, which are all translated by Christian Filips. The book started when Christian curated the Poetica Festival in 2023 at the University of Cologne and worked with Peter Dietze, who is at the Literarisches Colloquium Berlin, to translate a few of my poems. I met with Christian at the festival, and we just kind of developed a relationship and kept talking. There was no real plan until Christian had more translations of my poems, and then we started to talk about doing a book. Then Christian's publisher, Urs Engeler, established an imprint under Engeler Verlag dedicated to decolonial poetics, Poesie Dekolonie, which became a home for this bilingual collection.

RM: It is really striking that the first line of the first poem of the collection, "Stillbirth, Yemọja" begins with "In Yorùbá, there's no translation / for mismatch and no word for membrane" (6). I am intrigued about how this makes a comment on untranslatability at the outset of the anthology, which as you have just talked about has a bilingual format. Thinking about this tension between untranslatable/translatable that remains present throughout the entire collection, what is your relationship to language and how much of a role does translating between languages and cultural contexts play in the creative process for you?

LF: Language is a curious thing to me, especially on the subjective plane. There is the language that we speak, and there is the language we make ethics out of. Our words mean things and so on, but then from a psychological perspective, there is this nebulousness in, not what the word means, but what a person means when they make an utterance. I'm very interested in what people say, or how people speak in different contexts, like code-switching, and like you said, in this international, cosmopolitan era of my life, I am moving in different places and picking up language, a taste for language, and a distaste for certain kinds of language as well. I grew up in between English and Yorùbá, but I haven't been around the speaking of Yorùbá much since I moved from Nigeria. So while I retain a firm *sense* of Yorùbá, certain elements like the *sound* of it become more ethereal. I find I rely more upon the ontology, the epistemology, the proverbial concepts that I can interface through while I think in English. The languages work as undercurrents of each other.

In terms of translation, it has become very interesting to me to think about world literatures and how I am edified by works of literature that are from completely different languages. I started to translate from Yorùbá into English, and in the book, I also translate this same opening poem into Yorùbá because I was trying to answer that question: *is there really no translation, can I find a translation*? When I wrote the poem originally, the translation was a conceptual in-between space of identity. But as an actual literary practice, translation becomes an interesting exercise and a kind of destabilization of what it means to be the author of a piece. I find this can make the identity more consciously porous, which is interesting.

RM: As a related question, I was wondering about how in the opening poem you translated into Yorùbá as "Òkú Ọmọ Bíbí, Yemọja," there are a lot of words that are left untranslated when it was translated back into German as "Tot Born Bíbí, Yemọja." Was that a creative decision between you and Christian in that you said these words can't be translated from English into Yorùbá and then now into German?

LF: Christian and I thought we were already playing this translation game, and wondered if we could push it a bit further to see how the text might break down or enter into a kind of afterlife, continuing to fade into a different form of being. We worked together and he left some words untranslated; in this version it's not "In Yorùbá" anymore, but "Auf Deutsch," which is then questioning the translatability between Yorùbá and

German, but also localized within each language. We decided on some words, but I was the one who suggested what words might be less translatable because of syntactic structure, depth of tonal meaning or with the sound of the poem. It was a collaborative process, which has been part of the fun in exploring these translations.

DN: The special issue that this interview is a part of is entitled "Queering Postcolonial Worlds" and it proposes to explore the representation of queer and postcolonial subjectivities in cultural production. The articles primarily engage with such representations in novels and film. Given that you yourself work with a variety of media, how do you think about the relationship between form and queer expression or queer representation? Are there particular affordances of certain media for representing queerness in your eyes?

LF: Thinking about poetry and teaching poetry in a basic way, form is essential. One thing I thought about while teaching this, or that I framed through the words of Ben Okri from his book, *A Time for New Dreams*, was the dichotomy of form and spirit; the idea that the form of the poem should work to encapsulate the spirit of the poem. Thinking in terms of queer expression also, we have arrived into a world where there are many set forms for a limited idea of what human expression can be, such as a traditional novel or a strict Western poetic tradition, and so on. Our querying comes into it then to break the spirit out of the form and imagine a new form, mutating the form itself, mutating the tradition from within rather than by colonial imagination. One of the values I find in poetry is that it opens up, or creates a sense of possibility to take you somewhere you haven't gone, in a kind of mental algorithm as opposed to a narrative, which can surprise you in many ways, but is still recursive or gives representations of things you already recognize. Poetry is a queer form in that sense where it allows you to make something unexpected and possibly even new. I think the second part of the question was...

DN: The second part was: Are there particular affordances to certain media for representing queerness?

LF: Representing queerness, I don't know… I feel like queerness is this wide polyphony. There is no certain representation of it, but thinking again about language, I consider what the voice specifically evokes. There is a

voice in the written poem, there is also the voice of the speaking poet, or a speaker, in general. When we talk about queer voices, that sound in general, orality, gives me a sense of queer life, like a kind of spirit, again, not being limited to a set form. The voice here is a metaphor for all kinds of forms; I simply believe that art is queer in its truest form, and it is up to whoever creates to speak from truth.

DN: Thinking about themes of fluidity in your work, as well as for example the reference to Yemọja in the title of the opening poem, I was wondering what role water plays for you and in your poetry, because it seems to be a recurring element. During our earlier conversation you spoke about this dual deity or god/goddess, Yemọja, and how she changes gender, if I got it correctly, when going from shallow to deep water, so I was really curious if you could tell us a bit more about that as well.

LF: Most of what I care for in my work, consciously or unconsciously, is a kind of shape shifting, opposing a fixed nature. Or, if it is fixed then it still retains something up its sleeve that isn't all that it seems. This is one of the aspects where water becomes interesting to me. There's also something about water that invokes ancestry: it goes in long lines, it can lead to a basin that is like a collective, but it can also be the body that divides pieces of land or territories. Water is very spiritual, but also physically essential. Then there are the mystical qualities, the idea of water being the source of all life, from evolution, everything springing from water. I lean into this spiritual, mystical sense to accompany its emotional symbolism in thinking about grief, too. In my chapbook called *Painted Blue with Saltwater*, I was looking at this overlap of the water that the body produces as tears, and the water of the sea, wondering how they speak to each other.

Speaking of Yemọja, what I have referred to is a sense of the plurality of the deity, which is not a person, not a character, but an emanation of the divine, of natural force and phenomena. When we think of the sea, we think of Yemọja, because Yemọja means "the mother of the fish," which is a maternal aspect. But when we think of Olókun, we think of "the owner of the sea," and some have interpreted this as a distinct masculine divinity. Because of that, some myths read them as consorts to each other; in the stories, Yemọja is the wife or the sister of Olókun. My interpretation is that they are one and the same, variant aspects of the same self in mutable manifestations. That is also the nature and mystery of the water. It is the gift that reflects sunlight and aquatic life, but in that

sea there are places we do not go. We are not welcome in some totally dark unknowns, all within the same body. I understand Yemọja as an essence not fundamentally fixed in gender, as most of the orisha of course are not, with Olókun representing a masculine aspect of their roles.

RM: Now that we're speaking of other texts and stories which influence your work, we wanted to ask you about the intertexts in the anthology. There are a number of poems that reference other texts, for example, in the poem "Monument" there's a footnote highlighting how you are in conversation with Maggie Nelson's *Bluets* (36), or there is of course "Ars Poetica with Àṣẹ," or even the poem "Beloved" being in conversation with Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. We also had to think of Billy-Ray Belcourt's *A History of My Brief Body* while reading, in which Belcourt writes about feeling like a mannequin (25). This resonated as an intertext for us in relation to your Mannequin cycle, which we'll come to later. Whose work or what kinds of literature and art do you open dialogue with in your poetry? And how does that come about in your process?

LF: These are not things that are so consciously forged, unless for some reason I'm possessed by a long-standing idea to dig into something. *Bluets*, for instance, is a book that really touched me, and a book with quite a queer perspective. Thinking about this idea of a monument, and stone, and color, I thought of blue, and then *Bluets* came to mind. Sometimes there is that idea to write your own thing, and there is, at other times, something appealing in consciously making the reference to someone else's work. In this case, that felt right. A lot of things come from what I read, usually lines from poems that can be the jumping point for something else I compose, and music is also quite important to me, lyrically, rhythmically, melodically.

I have recently been very inspired by the work of Emahoy Tsegué-Maryam Guèbrou, an Ethiopian nun and composer. She grew up around the time of Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia and so a lot of her work meditates on the notions of motherland and what causes distance from it, how to maintain a relationship either with the motherland or with oneself, or the self one leaves behind. Emahoy's compositions speak to me a lot more lately. One of her most famous pieces is called "The Song of Abayi" or "Homesickness"; it's a very beautiful piece. So yes, music comes through often, and recently, things like moving image and performance art, as well. I'm currently interested in Marina Abramović, more so in her earlier works when she was working a lot with pain, and her period of

collaboration with Ulay. But it's all about finding inspiration, which can be anywhere. Sometimes a line on a Wikipedia page ends up being interesting to work with. That's how poetry works for me: you have these tiny little links and before you know it a chain begins to form. Usually this happens without you having set out to make one in the first place.

DN: I love how you just did this gesture of making a chain that's gesturing to this craft, this creation really that poetry is.

LF: Pulling on the chain of meaning, I guess. I say that writing a poem is like finding the first few meters of a rope, then I have to actually reach into the dark, not really knowing what I'm grasping at, trying to draw out the rest of it.

RM: There is a particular cycle of poems in your anthology titled "Portraits of the Mannequin," which uses the figure of the mannequin to imagine interactions and conversations with different people. It was really interesting what you were sharing in our earlier conversation about how you came to the idea of working with the concept of the mannequin, which offers a certain sense of anonymity, performance, or even non-identity. Could you talk a bit more about how the voices of the mannequin shift in this cycle of poems and about what inspired that?

LF: I said earlier that sometimes I become very obsessed with a concept; well, not in the concept being the work itself, but a kind of spark that eventually gives frame to the linguistic essence. I spent a lot of time thinking about physical relationships to gender, and how mannequins are gendered and not gendered all at once. The mannequin started out extending the queer metaphor of the closet, what it means to be covered, to be proper and to serve the purpose of existing to wear these layers. I was interested in the possibility of refusing such a role. The original manuscript is called "Mannequin in the Nude" which represented rebellion against purpose. What is a naked mannequin useful for, what can it wear, what or who does it represent? It became a field of projection, quite quickly, in which I could create a cast of characters.

It was also a way of externalizing, saying things one needs to say, but also things one needs to hear. Creating this dialogue—even as a one-sided discourse, with the actual cultural situation still set in silence and not

speaking about queer life, and hierarchies not allowing for true expression—was a way of gaining some agency, to say, "No, this is what you say to me, even if not exactly in these words, this is what you imply I am, this is the language that you have left me with." This was language from people working in mental health care for young people in Nigeria, from people in the family, from people in religious settings, from people in the queer community when forming community or relationships is attempted. The poems are an attempt at conversation, reaching out to communicate in some way, but trying to still maintain control of what is said; an attempt to be powerful but also create safety. Fundamentally, it is a game of projection, not so much to project myself into the mannequin so it speaks for me, but rather a way to find out—and maybe this is why the idea of the voodoo doll came up—if, in this given portrait, the mannequin represents the doctor, what voice does this speaker use? And when it becomes a new portrait, a new pose of the mannequin, how does that voice shift? What links them? These curiosities are how the sonnet cycle came to be.

DN: It actually fits really well that you come back to the topic of form and how that ties in with the notion of the mannequin because we found there are several interesting formal aspects in your poems worth elaborating on. For example, the poems about the mannequin are composed as a cycle of sonnets, where the last line of each poem becomes the first line of the next poem in the cycle. There is also the poem "Corpus Vile," which can be read in two different ways or two different directions, kind of like a grid. So, our question would be: How did you come to these formal decisions when composing the poems?

LF: I am usually more interested in the sentence level, in the sound and the strangeness of syntax. But sometimes the form does a lot of work, sometimes it is a conceptual problem. With a poem like "Corpus Vile," you have a question of fragmented identity between the mother and the speaker, or the child, and then the idea that in this disconnect, the speaker has to mother themself. Thus, the two split sides, and the third narrative when you actually read across that gap. This contrapuntal form works like a kind of algorithm, especially if I want it to feel natural. For me, this can create a moment when I really listen to the poem that is calling to be written. And again, it gives a satisfaction of focusing on the micro level, each line, each word, how it all works and how each unit can serve a multivalent purpose.

The sonnet cycle was again like creating a chain, assembling a sealed sequence. I think it partly gives the mannequin a magical quality: it begins again at the end of its transformations. It swallows its own tail somehow. Since it is an eight-poem sequence, it was useful to choose a form that they would all adhere to, giving some unifying quality to all the different voices. It is also a way of furnishing the chaos with some structure. The challenge of form is in the context it creates, where possibilities of *how* to write are limited, and yet there somehow is more possibility of *what* to write within these limited tools you have to work with, you just have to be more decisive. But there is always potential, too, in approaching a form and then deciding to break it. I think every poet makes their relationship to how much they use form or adhere to forms and, possibly, that relationship also changes over time.

RM: There are a number of familial figures in the collection that you are in conversation with, or as you were talking with in the Mannequin section, that take on these different roles in the conversation. Sections five and six of the collection are entitled "Mothers" and "Fathers" and family and familial attachments resonate throughout your work. Given that alternative formations of family and kinship play a role in queer contexts, how do you think about the notion of family and do you see your poetry as part of these processes of renegotiating family and kinship for yourself or in your work?

LF: Your word "renegotiating" is fitting, especially for my early work and first book. There is a strong sense of estrangement and alienation when you are a queer young person in Nigeria, belonging to a family and yet having this situation that is just all your problem; you can't talk about it, and if you do, it is with fear of how it might be handled or reacted to. I was sensitive to that status quo and the clear line of what is and is not talked about. There is some need for chaos and for things to be destabilized, because in this alienated young queer person's life there is so much internalized instability that can be destructive if they are left alone with it. Part of what I learned over the years of writing my first book was to invite the family into the chaos. This is already a problem although it shouldn't be, but then if it is a problem, it should not be a problem for me alone. The family's responsibility is such that this should be everybody's problem. Some people wrongly regard queerness as some kind of sickness, but even if it was a sickness, a queer youth should not be left to manage it alone.

On renegotiation: in Yorùbá culture, and I think Nigerian culture in general, there is a kind of age- or power-based hierarchy in which many people are not allowed to say a lot of things. So, in this space, my poetry became concerned with the use of the voice and how we manage to say what is censored. A lot of those things apply personally but they are also the stories of the friends that I was meeting when I was in university. Most families in this postcolonial context of Nigeria are religious in either a Christian or an Islamic way and, as young people who maybe don't fit into such settings or are questioning, they come to feel both estranged from their spirituality and from their families. In that sense, poetry becomes a form of family making and creating new language. But part of what that language is saying is also just that our families are kind of fucked, they fucked us up, or fucked with us. Now what can we make of that?

It is also about humanizing and understanding the context out of which the family comes to be. A lot of my first book is also about grief, so there is a desire to understand the kinds of events that change the structure of the family and affect its history to come. There is the fragmentation from the queer dilemma, but there are other situations that change the family unit itself, which can also be subject to this culture of silence and not talked about. It is all about what forms identity, about being in this space between belonging and not belonging, desiring to be part of the collective, but also needing to love and protect oneself in order to do that. I was encouraged to write more about the family because, of course, we must approach these social issues from the political perspective, but there is a Yorùbá saying, "ilé ni a ti'ń kẹ́ṣọ̀ọ́ ròde," that *our public values actually begin at home*. If I can't go anywhere in the world to be safe, I should at least be able to go home. And if I can't, then it is a problem worth trying to talk about.

DN: That reminds me of the key feminist idea that the private is political; it starts from the home, so we shouldn't separate the private or the personal, the home from the political…

LF: I think about this a lot, and I question the value, or the point, of writing from an interior place, and then offering that to the public. If truth is essential, subjective experience must be very important. Partly because we get to know more about other people, but, also, we get to know how much similarity there is, even with quite different details, in how we experience what happens to us. I also believe in quiet revolutions, personal revolutions. Remaking the world starts with remaking one's

perception of the world. I don't know how much faith I have in a whole-new-world kind of feeling, but I think that if you change, your life can change. We can be modeled and built like the world is built, but we are mostly built to fit a model of the world. At least there is a possibility, then, to rebuild yourself, and perhaps that is where the personal becomes political.

DN: Two of the articles in our special issue engage directly with the question of religion or faith in postcolonial African diasporic contexts and how this intersects with queerness—one article is about Francesca Ekwuyasi's *Butter Honey Pig Bread* and Akwaeke Emezi's "Who is Like God" and another about Paul Mendez's *Rainbow Milk*. Religious motifs, particularly references to Christianity, can also be found throughout *Mental Voodoo*. In the interview at the end of your anthology you state "I see religion as the most functional and self-sustaining tool of post-colonialism in Nigeria" (210). Can you say more about this intersection of religion, queerness and postcolonial legacies in Nigeria and how this informs your work?

LF: Yorùbá is an oral tradition, and one of the earliest Yorùbá texts written in Latin script, as far as I know, was a translation of the Bible. So, the language and lexicon were being framed around biblical, Christian ideas as early as the 19th century. This becomes the basis for how many people experience their language, interpret their gods and recognize their culture. They no longer have an alternative perspective that has been preserved. I think it is not just an erasure but a palimpsest, a writing-over, this installation of Christian norms. I speak mostly of Christianity, based on the context I grew up within; Christianity can be held so closely to identity. Many people have ambivalent feelings about the nation, being Nigerian but not always loving Nigeria … but they no doubt love their Christian identity. They then say that queerness is un-African but what is most often implied are religious concerns of sin and normalcy. They don't have a clear divide between religious and cultural identities, so the accusation of "un-African" identity only reflects a lack of history. They might say we never had this before, and queerness is contrary to what God supposedly made man and woman for. People seem to have forgotten that this is not where our story began, that we came from a time when there was no handbook of laws attributed to God, no Ten Commandments or Jesus Christ. Other worldviews are also considering African spiritualities as inherently queer or two-spirited, with elements that bridge or cross the boundaries of what

we call physical embodiment, gender, and metaphysics. And we see that these are already in indigenous African ontologies.

The conflation of African-ness with Christianity remains very much sustained, with contemporary anti-LGBTQ+ laws still being religiously sponsored by neocolonial influence. There are many conservative groups, a lot of them coming from the US, who are actively campaigning for criminalization of queer rights in Africa or stopping the rights from being granted.[2] Ultimately, I find that colonial religious identity is profoundly ingrained and is already an automatic programming. It creates an immediate cognitive dissonance to say, "Well, the Bible is great, but let's set it aside for a moment; let's talk about queer *people*, just people and the rights they deserve." Some people cannot do this, as Nigerians. Having grown up surrounded by Christianity, all these rules and biblical ideas, it's inevitable that I approach them somehow in my work. I think this is relatable to many people because in the newer generation there are more people who feel similarly estranged. So, there is also an important generational divide. The generation holding power in Nigeria is not quite the generation that is growing more conscious, tolerant and just.

RM: In preparing this special issue, we read Sara Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology*, in which she writes "queer orientations are those that put within reach bodies that have been made unreachable by the lines of conventional genealogy. Queer orientations might be those that don't line up, which by seeing the world slantwise allow other objects to come into view" (107). This got us thinking about how to queer and to be queer are ways of orienting oneself slantwise within larger, hegemonic frameworks, such as heteronormativity or white supremacy. Does this notion of queer orientation speak to you and your work in any way?

LF: Yes, it does. There is this idea that queerness and queer orientation are already there, ways of being in the world that, to some extent, force people to confront difference and rethink: "Yes, this is how things work, but how come this person does not fit that design?" and "Do we have to force them into fitting?" It provokes a response, so there is something about queering that is always remaking the world, creating something unexpected.

[2] This is not singular to Nigeria, but is part of a larger pattern of influence stemming from the dyad of U.S. neocolonialism and Christian Evangelical movements. See, for example, McEwan 2023.

I like this word, *slantwise*, because it's also something that's said in poetry, about not writing one's experiences literally but rather writing them slant. In this way, we dispense with obvious meaning and create room to know something else. Thinking about it, maybe presenting a slant perspective of society is what a lot of queer workers, artists and thinkers do – allowing us to see other dimensions to the reality we already live in. But the programming is really excellent work and it takes a lot to shake us out of those settings and really make us see a different world. Since queer people have not always been favored by the system we are programmed into, we are able to see its flaws and glitches, all from the outside looking in. So the world that we see is a bit more slant, almost by default. The more we consider queerness in relation to identity, to who one is and where they belong, we really start to see the lines and the slants. The work is about creating possibilities to voice out these slants. It begins with some voices in the dark calling out, "Hey, does anyone else see the same world I do?" And in time, communities, maybe even movements, come to be.

DN: In reading your collection, the interplay between life and death seems to reappear in different places. Especially thinking about the notion of stillbirth, which is central in the first poem and first section, the question would be how this dichotomy between birth and death or beginning and ending came to inform the collection.

LF: Birth and death, beginning and ending, are very potent concepts. Both are doors into or from the unknown: the beginning of life, the end of life, what is life? At best, these existential thoughts are enjoyable, also giving me a sense of perspective regarding time. There is the time in which we are alive, but there is infinitely much more time that came before us and that will come after. The little narrative period between our birth and death in which everything happens … it is all-consuming, yet so small in the scheme of things. There is a comforting hopelessness to it, and a mystery, the eventual joy of questions without answer. If there is a curiosity about reincarnation cycles in my writing, the interesting aspect is re-experiencing life because the point of doing it over and over is to learn. There is something about dying and being born that is about learning and refining our essences, but it is all bound up with forgetting. In Yorùbá cosmology it is said that we actually know everything, we have the transcripts of our lives and we make informed choices before beginning the next round. But once we enter into life we do not remember what we chose or why. It poses a question about the purpose of living and about who we are. In thinking

about forgetting and these reincarnation cycles, I also think about political structures and how, if forgetting is allowed, the same things recur, reincarnating with little transformation until we realize a transcendent memory and really try to connect with what the past means.

In terms of personal births and deaths, I have been feeling that my recent move to Germany is a second degree of removal from my life in Nigeria. I feel it at once as a void of something dead or having been let go, and a space for new experiences to find life and expression. In my first twenty-one years, living in Nigeria, my experiences and fixations orbited the queer African condition in Nigeria, my Christian upbringing, psychological dynamics and so on. Coming out of that, my thinking now includes postcolonial and diasporic perspectives, as I live through what it means to be queer abroad, and to not really have a route, or roots. I see a much bigger picture now. I have new questions, and I think there is life in new questions.

DN: Are there beginnings that creating this collection, *Mental Voodoo*, has opened up for you?

LF: The book comes with the idea that my poems are readable in yet another language. To take it back to translation, it is a crossing of borders not just physically, but of my subjectivity and the voice of my mind. Even where the physical self cannot reach, there are more people who can read this language now, and still experience the work that I've made. It is a kind of beginning, a reincarnation in language.

DN: I think that rounds it up perfectly.

LF: Thank you. I enjoyed this.

RM: Thank you.

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