

How Do I Love Thee:

Elizabeth Barrett Browning,
Queen Latifah,
Toni Braxton,
The Braxtons,
and
Pierre-Damien
Mvuyekure



Photo by Alamy

How do I love thee, let me count the ways-
Elizabeth Barrett Browning,
How do I love thee
Let me count the ways-Queen Latifah,
"How Do I Love Thee"
How many ways I love you,
let me count the ways-Toni Braxton,
"How Many Ways"

You can see how many ways I can love you
Let me count the ways-The Braxtons,
"So Many Ways"
Like Elizabeth Barrett Browning
to Robert Browning,
I shall "love thee to the depth
and breadth and height"
Roho yanjye ishobora gushyikira
iyo undi kure y'amaso.
"My soul can reach,
when feeling out of sight."
- Pierre-Damien Mvuyekure,
"I Shall But Love Thee Better After Death"

In "Developing Diaspora Literacy and MARASA Consciousness," the late VèVè Clark defines Diaspora Literacy as the "ability to understand and/or interpret the multilayered meanings of stories, words, and other folk sayings within any given community of the African diaspora." For example, Kendrick Lamar's "To Pimp A Butterfly" begins in Jamaica with a song and ends in Nigeria

and Oakland. Meanwhile, there are references to The Blacker the Berry, a Harlem Renaissance novel, 2Pac's "Keep Ya Head Up," Nelson Mandela, the Zulu and Xhosa people. Similarly, Queen Latifah, Toni Braxton, The Braxtons, and Pierre-Damien Mvuyekure reclaim Elizabeth Barrett Browning, one of the best poet of the Victorian age and a better poet than Robert Browning, her husband, to whom she dedicated Sonnets From The Portuguese, five years after Frederick Douglass published The Narrative of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written By Himself. That is, they know that Elizabeth Barrett Browning has African ancestry by way of Jamaican plantations. What is more, she wrote "The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point" and "A Curse for a Nation."

While Queen Latifah, Toni Braxton, and The Braxtons remix Elizabeth Barrett Browning's via Hip-Hop and R & B, Pop-shall we also say, Blues, Ragtime, Jazz -Pierre-Damien Mvuyekure poetically borrows from the poem into his own



**Poet Pierre-Damien
Mvuyekure**

Dr. Pierre-Damien Mvuyekure teaches English, American, Multicultural, Post-Colonial, and African American literatures in the Department of Languages and Literatures. He is the author of Lamentations on the Rwandan Genocide 2nd Edition, The "Dark Heathenism" of the American Novelist Ishmael Reed: African Voodoo as American Literary Hoodoo, Lamentations on the Rwandan Genocide, World Eras Volume 10: West African Kingdoms, 500-1590, A Casebook Study of Ishmael Reed's Yellow Back Radio Broke-Down and several articles.
pierre.mvuyekure@uni.edu

blues poem. Dr. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. has called this "Unmotivated Signifying Revision." That is, there is no playing the dozens on the Italian/Petrarchan Sonneteer Matriarch.

Here are two stanzas from "I Shall But Love Thee Better After Death,"

Uwanjye, because thy left me and
Be/come some/body else's,

Uwanjye, kubera ko wansize ukaba Uwo/
Undi,

I've got I shall but love thee
better after death blues.

No more ma-baby's-gone-from-me blues.

Like Elizabeth Barrett Browning,
"heavy of heart"

I shall no longer bear. Nor will
Sorrow "after sorrow" sink my soul.

No longer shall I beg you to
Love "me-wilt thou? Open thy heart wide
And fold within, the wet wings of thy dove."
Proudly I shall proclaim, "My love, my own"
Nzigamba nti, Rukundo rwanjye, uri Uwanjye.

Finally, Noteworthy is the fact that Wakako Yamauchi, a Japanese American playwright also could not help but give a nod to another woman writer in her The Music Lessons, a play that explores American Orientalism and Japanese immigration in the 1930s. To portray the romantic relationship between Aki and Kaoru, Yamauchi uses 4 sonnets from Sonnets from the Portuguese 𐄂