

Ama: A Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade

By Manu Herbstein

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Winner of the 2002 Commonwealth Prize for Best First Book. Thrust into a foreign land, passed from owner to owner, stripped of her identity. This is the life of Nandzi, who was given the name Ama, a name strange to her and her tribal culture. A life of struggle and resignation, bondage and freedom, passion and indifference, intense love and remorseless hate. Though forced into desperation, Ama never lets her soul be consumed by fear. While the stories of individual slaves have been blurred into one mass, Ama's story personifies the experience of eighteenth-century Africans in an unforgettable way. Her entrancing story of defiance and spiritual fire starts from the day she is brutally seized, raped, and enslaved, and ends with her breathing the pure air of freedom. *Ama* is a deeply engrossing and colorful novel, packed with violence, sex, and action. The resilience of her spirit will grip readers from the first page to the last of Manu Herbstein's spellbinding novel.

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Editorial Review

Review

In *Ama*, Herbstein creates a work of literature that celebrates the resilience of human beings while denouncing the inscrutable nature of their cruelty... This is story telling on a grand scale, literally and metaphorically. The novel spans a geographical frame that reaches from Africa to America, depicting in closely observed detail also the horrors of the Middle Passage. An epic of the slave trade, *Ama* offers a carefully imagined examination of the failings of humanity when possessed by greed and a desire for power and influence. Herbstein is especially good at evoking the mood of the time, the mind frame of slaves and slavers, and the political and economic conditions that made slavery possible. Tony Simoes da Silva, University of Wollongong, Australia in the African Review of Books. *Ama* is a sweeping story of Africans caught up in the Atlantic slave trade. Crafted by Manu Herbstein, a native South African who has been a long time resident of Ghana, the book is more carefully researched than some more widely acclaimed novels dealing with Africans in the Diaspora. This book is fast-paced and moving from Ghana and the Futa Jalon to the European coastal forts and the plantations of the Americas, it captures both the horror and complexity of slave trade, which uprooted Africans from many cultures and diverse backgrounds. Christopher R. Decorse, Syracuse University, International Journal of African Historical Studies By casting a female protagonist, Herbstein invites the reader to 'see' the particular nature of women's oppression. *Ama*'s experience shows that gender, race and class are not distinct realms of experience, existing in isolation from each other. Rather they come into existence in and through relation to each other as overlapping discourses and interlocking systems that determine the degree to which male domination and privilege can be asserted. *Ama*'s journey allows us to read the complexities and contradictions of the time, where all classes, free and slave, women and men, black, white and mulatto are in some way interrelated in a dynamic that results from relations of power. Shereen Essof, *The Voice of the Turtle* An engrossing and powerful story of a woman of courage, intelligence, and strength, *Ama* is not for children, for the squeamish, or for those who demand political correctness in their history. *Ama*'s author tries to depict the Atlantic slave trade as it was, making no concession to modern revisionism; readers will look in vain for stereotypes in *Ama*'s pages. Herbstein does an admirable job of bringing a strange, harsh world to life. India Edghill, *The Historical Novels Review* If I have to decide to save three books from a sinking ship, *Ama* would unquestionably be one of them...The storyline is beautifully written and well plotted, taking you in a journey inside the African world, where you will be stunned by the untold stories about its culture and history, and you will be moved by the fateful events that *Ama* had experienced. Ali Hammoud, *The Cube*, Lebanon Nandzi, alias *Ama* alias Pamela, who lives in a Ghanaian hamlet, is affianced as a child to a man several decades older than her; she is barely into the teens when, abducted by a rival tribe Dagomba, is raped and sold off to the Asante tribe, which in turn sells her off to the Dutch. Thus begins a saga that matches Alex Haley's *Roots* in its sweep and outmatches it in irony and poignancy. Unlike *Roots*' male protagonist, Kunta Kinte (kidnapped in Africa, ends up in USA), *Ama* (kidnapped in Africa, ends up in Brazil) never gives up her fight for dignity. This well-researched novel focuses on how Africans enslaved, exploited and sold off fellow Africans to westerners. *Ama*'s life becomes the metaphor for Africa's degradation. There is a soul-sapping scene wherein enslaved women sing this dirge: "We, too, have died and yet we live still/We are as walking corpses/Hear our voice/Hear our lamentation ..." The Tribune, India

From the Publisher

COMMONWEALTH WRITERS PRIZE 2002 ANNOUNCES REGIONAL WINNERS

Atonement by Ian McEwan and *The Pickup* by Nadine Gordimer are among the books shortlisted for the 2002 Commonwealth Writers' Prize.

Four international judging panels met to award the Best Book and Best First Book for their region - covering Africa, the Caribbean & Canada, Eurasia, and South East Asia & the South Pacific. These eight books are now shortlisted for the overall Best Book and Best First Book prizes. A distinguished pan-Commonwealth panel of judges will meet in Edinburgh in April to select the final winners for the 2002 Commonwealth Writers Prize.

Regional winners for the 2002 Commonwealth Writers Prize include:

BEST FIRST BOOK

Africa: Manu Herstein - Ama A Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade (South African)(e-reads, USA)

The Commonwealth Writers Prize, established in 1987, is sponsored by the Commonwealth Foundation and administered by Booktrust.

The final pan-Commonwealth judging panel will be made up of the Chairpersons of each regional jury and chaired by The Rt. Rev. Richard Holloway, former Bishop of Edinburgh and current Chairman of Scottish Book Trust. The panel will meet in Edinburgh as part of a five-day programme hosted by Scottish Book Trust and the Commonwealth Foundation. The overall winners of the 2002 Commonwealth Writers Prize will be announced on 24 April 2002.

From the Author

It has many primary and secondary texts dealing with the history of the times, peoples and societies (Konkomba, Dagomba, Asante, Fanti, Dutch, English, Portuguese), the Middle Passage, Capitalism and Slavery, Brazil in the late eighteenth century, African culture and religion in the Americas and resistance to slavery.

The site also considers contemporary issues which arise out of the experience of the Slave Trade, such as Racism and Reparations, the teaching of the Slave Trade in American schools and the debate over the extent of African participation in the Slave Trade.

The Web site should be a useful resource for readers who wish to test the authenticity of Ama's story.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Quincy Eddy:

Why don't make it to become your habit? Right now, try to ready your time to do the important act, like looking for your favorite publication and reading a reserve. Beside you can solve your long lasting problem; you can add your knowledge by the publication entitled Ama: A Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade. Try to face the book Ama: A Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade as your close friend. It means that it can to become your friend when you feel alone and beside that course make you smarter than before. Yeah, it is very fortunated to suit your needs. The book makes you a lot more confidence because you can know everything by the book. So , let's make new experience along with knowledge with this book.

Joyce Bullock:

Have you spare time for any day? What do you do when you have more or little spare time? Yes, you can

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Karina McDermott:

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Cherie Fidler:

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