

## Wilderness House Literary Review 15/2

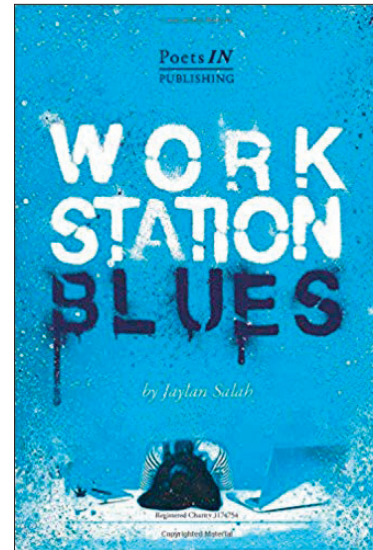
Carol Smallwood  
**Interview of Jaylan Salah**

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[https://www.amazon.com/Workstation-Blues-Jaylan-Salah-ebook/dp/B07YMZVDGL/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?keywords=Jaylan+salah&qid=1582923529&s=books&sr=1-1](https://www.amazon.com/Workstation-Blues-Jaylan-Salah-ebook/dp/B07YMZVDGL/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=Jaylan+salah&qid=1582923529&s=books&sr=1-1)

*Award winning Jaylan Salah is a Writer, Poet, Translator, Content Expert and Film Critic. Workstation Blues is a collection from the cubicle which resonates with white-collar workers worldwide passing the time between meetings and computer screens.*

*The poems blur: monsters are replaced by monitors, flame-throwers by LED lights and swords by client comments. Cristina Deptula, executive editor of Synchronized Chaos Magazine, <http://synchchaos.com> commented: "With energy and spunk, Jaylan Salah celebrates imagination, beauty, and most of all, freedom through her poetry and prose."*



**Smallwood:** What is your educational, literary background and when did you begin to write prose and poetry?

**Salah:** I graduated in the faculty of Pharmacy at a prestigious private university in my hometown Alexandria, Egypt. You see, being a pharmacist and learning all the drugs in the pharmacopeia have nothing to do with literature or poetry, but it all started with school years at Sacred Heart Catholic School when the Sister senior encouraged me to be the next William Wordsworth and my mother told me to write the book I wanted to read.

**Smallwood:** Please share with readers what motivated you to write Workstation Blues? How long did it take you to write it?

**Salah:** A grueling, awful year of being bullied while working at a corporate. I faced multiple difficulties and threatening situations. A tough tooth to pull. I didn't expect the worst when I first applied to the job as a medical copywriter of course. But the experience overall was demanding, abusive and emotionally-draining. I wanted to cope with the toxic work environment so I wrote a poem a day until I had a notebook containing 200 poems. It took me one year to quit the job and have my manuscript ready for publishing.

**Smallwood:** How do you decide if something should be prose or poetry? Please include a published sample of each kind of your writing:

**Salah:** There are texts that you plan before sitting down to write. But others drag you into a mud fight and leave you breathless at the end.

Workstation Blues is the sample of poetry which requires inspiration

## Wilderness House Literary Review 15/2

but the planning and editing processes are heavily sought out. This piece of prose on the other hand, is a real trip:

*<https://theprose.com/post/25099/poof-vagina>*

**Smallwood:** In a poetsin.com interview, you shared: “My first heart-break, pain was so demanding and incomprehensible. The only way with which I overcame its heaviness was through drafting my first short story collection which went to win a major national literary prize.” What was the major national literary prize and what are some awards have you won?

**Salah:** I won 2 major prizes in my home country, the Young Talents National Competition for my short story collection titled “Thus Speaks La Loba” and 2nd place in the Organization of Cultural Palaces Competition for my novel titled Bogart...Play a Classic for Me.

I also won the “Bleed on the Page” Competition for Poetry and Prose organized by [theProse.com](http://theProse.com) for my poem “Poof, Vagina”.

**Smallwood:** Please tell readers about your work as a translator, content expert, film critic:

**Salah:** My translation career started with Goethe Institute where I translated articles, press releases and booklets. I became specialized in film criticism translation from various English and French publications to Arabic through my work with the Jesuits Cultural Center Publication, El Fim, in addition to Cinematograph Online Magazine. My big break came with Cairo International Film Festival when I translated prolific film critic, Mahmoud Abdelshakour’s book, Mohamed Khan: Searching for A Knight. My work as a content creator started in 2017 when I started my fulltime career at medical companies creating, curating, editing and translating content.

**Smallwood:** What do you think of the role of women today?

**Salah:** I think women have a long way to go, especially if they are not White or Western.

**Smallwood:** What are some magazines in which you’ve appeared?

**Salah:** My writings were featured in multiple national and international publications such as Al-Ahram National Newspaper, theProse.com, Synchronized Chaos, Guardian Liberty Voice, Cinematograph, Eye on Cinema, ZEALnyc, Africiné, Elephant Journal, Vague Visages, and Cinema Femme Magazine.

**Smallwood:** Please share something about your love of animals:

**Salah:** I have always had a spirit animal, even way back before I fully understood the concept. My dream job is anything related to the care and rescue of animals; dog trainer, wolf reservation intern, cat hugger. I find myself in the company of animals—dare I say—more than that of humans. I have not known a love beyond my family that is stronger, purer and more earthly than that of my feline, canine and feathered buddies. You can read this to reflect on what I mean: <https://theprose.com/post/26944/we-need-to-talk-about-the-frog>

## Wilderness House Literary Review 15/2

**Smallwood:** Has your writing appeared in audio?

**Salah:** Yes, some of my articles have audio versions:

*<https://soundcloud.com/cinemafemme/third-world-as-we-do-not-know-it-by-jaylan-salah>*

*<https://soundcloud.com/cinemafemme/strong-island-documentary-filmmaking-as-a-coming-of-age-tale-by-jaylan-salah>*

**Smallwood:** What are you working on now and what is your writing schedule?

**Salah:** Currently I am working on a writing project, for which I have not yet decided a description nor a solid genre. The preliminary title is "Zorro", it will be in Arabic and contains 4 main characters; 3 women and the titular male protagonist. I am also preparing my second English poetry collection. My writing schedule is not as you would expect. There is daily writing involved of course but it is not consistent. I do not have a certain time of the day where I am more productive. I also invest heavily in the creation, preparation and research processes which include meditation, self-care and talking to strangers.

**Smallwood:** Please list links for readers to learn more about you:

**Salah:** Interviews with me can be found [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

Carol Smallwood, MLS, MA, Marquis Lifetime Achievement Award recipient, is a literary reader, judge, interviewer; her 13<sup>th</sup> poetry collection is *Thread, Form, and Other Enclosures* (Main Street Rag, 2020)