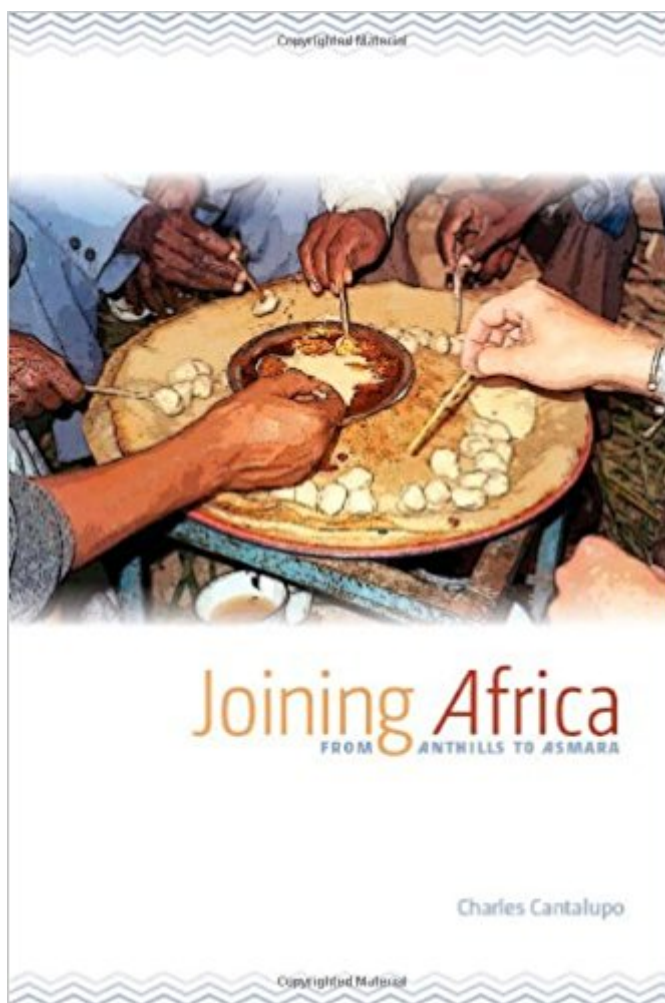


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Joining Africa: From Anthills To Asmara



Synopsis

This eye-opening personal history tells the story of an American college professor's twenty-year engagement with a thriving Africa rarely encountered by Western visitors, including an extraordinary connection to poets across the continent. At once adventurous, spiritual, political, dreamlike, and humorous, *Joining Africa* is a unique documentary of a journey through the continent, including an intense five-year encounter with economically struggling but culturally fertile Eritrea. The Africa presented here is neither a postcolonial study nor an exotic tourist destination. It is rich with the voices of its people, whose languages, Cantalupo argues, have greater potential to effect change than any NGO or high-profile celebrity. In vibrant prose, Cantalupo's book extends a stirring invitation to reevaluate how we engage—both individually and collectively—with this remarkable part of the world.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“*Joining Africa* is the expansive, expressive, and arresting story of one man's journey into the heart and soul of the African poetry tradition. Cantalupo opens the way into a world few of us will ever visit, bringing the beauty, pain, and power of language fully alive on the page.” Dinty W. Moore, author of *Between Panic & Desire* “This is a beautiful and moving account of how an ‘American white guy’ from Orange, New Jersey got wrapped up in Africa and became the public voice of the once invisible literature of Eritrea. It is an unforgettable account of the other Africa—a place of hope, of longing, and redemption.” Simon Gikandi, Robert Schirmer Professor of English, Princeton University “Every artist inevitably comes up against—and then must

triumph over his most abject and revelatory moments. Charles Cantalupo has done it in *Joining Africa*. All-encompassing, all-embracing, and capacious, this is his *Gesamtkunstwerk*, an obsessive, retrospective journey that builds upon the author's lifelong ethnographic and literary preoccupations. The book literally stands for what the author believes in, and grateful readers revel in the gift. Neil Baldwin, author of *Legends of the Plumed Serpent: Biography of a Mexican God*

Charles Cantalupo is Distinguished Professor of English, Comparative Literature, and African Studies at Penn State University, Schuylkill.

This is a lovely, heartfelt, scrupulously honest book that, while focused on the vibrant, striving Africa our media ignore (until tragedy strikes), ranges in its settings from generations of wrenching change--wistfully recounted--in northern New Jersey's hard streets (Springsteen-with-spaghetti meets black activism) to the resilient spirit of African writers and poets who are determined to create in their own languages in their reborn states. But all of poet Charles Cantalupo's many journeys into what emerges as an African "Heart of Brightness" reveal not only a life-affirming "hidden" Africa (hidden only because we choose not to see it), but the inspiring evolution of a white American fighting to help his fellow word-wizards without the least condescension. Ultimately, it's Cantalupo's integrity (as man and writer) and open sensibility that make this book work so well. He brings to bear a poet's eye and ear for the details that spark life up from the page, and his paragraphs truly do transport you to the war-weathered art-deco treasures of Asmara, to the raw highlands and thorn-spiked deserts, through first encounters with an Africa that can, indeed, seem "other" to the unprepared visitor, to a genuine understanding and profound emotional bond with an Africa at once particular and universal. So...this is a book of finely described physical journeys, but also of a good man's spiritual journey. It is, simply, a wonderful book about life.

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