

THE Quills

ISSUE 4

OCTOBER 2019



WAVES

THE QUILLS

A publication of Writers Connect (WRICON)

*Issue 4
Waves
October, 2019*

The Quills started out as a quarterly publication in 2016 by Writers Connect, a literary establishment in Nigeria. We have however transitioned from a quarterly journal to annual journal starting from 2020 being a resolution of the Board Team of Writers Connect after the yearlong publication hiatus.

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Editor's Note

"To make a quill pen, you first had to catch your bird." -Anonymous

This is the first publication after this journal was restyled as "The Quills" from the old name WriCon Quarterly Journal which has always been thematic collections of literary pieces. Also, after Issue 5 henceforward, The Quills will be an annual publication and will also be free of theme – we want to read varieties and give entrants the freedom to explore at every point in time.

On "The Quills," it's the name for bird feathers and used as pen as far back as the Dark Ages, when it replaced the hollow reeds the Romans used. Goose, swan and crow quills were mostly used. Thomas Jefferson bred special geese to keep himself in writing implements. The trick then was to bury the feathers in hot, dry sand to harden the points, after which it was time to get your penknife out: the better the cut, the finer the script. Back then, Britain imported twenty-seven million quills a year from Russia alone. The usage of quill pen lasted for about 1,500 years but by the middle of the nineteenth century, steel nibs ousted the trusty quill. Then, in the twentieth, along came the fountain pen, the ball point, the fiber point, the roller ball, the gel-point that we have today.

On "Waves" – the theme – you are free to call it what first greets your mind at its mention, it is actually whatever you intuit from its observation. Call it the series of ridges that move across the surface of an ocean; call it an emotion erupting in the minds of patriotic citizens; call it the movement of hands signaling to integration into its tumultuous land; call it anything, for it is whatever it is.

So in this issue, be ready to take tours to places across the globe – places that reek of terror and violence; places whose stars form the shape of peace and serenity; places that are rather toppled with merriments and pleasure, places of solitude and candour, not forgetting loneliness and tears amidst grieving hearts. These among others are explored by a number of stellar pieces it contains which include two essays, five creative nonfictions, three fictions, one interview, three literary reviews, ten visual arts, five haibun and twenty-one poems.

Quickly, introduced into The Quills through this issue are haiku related works which includes haibun, haiku sequence and haiga under the "Haiku Form" segment and a segment tagged "Interview and Review." However, for the Haiku Forms segment, we have haibun only for this issue. These changes are there to offer an open arm for all form of intellectual artistries that are given less attention.

Without mincing words, this issue is a potpourri of literary and intellectual recipes.

Read. Enjoy. A. Digest.

Taofeek Ayeyemi (Aswagaawy)
Editor-in-Chief

Barnabas I. Adélékè

ÀGÌDÍMÁLÀJÀ

Emma, my six-year old brother, has just returned from playing with his new friends. After gulping down a glass of water, he turned to Father and exclaimed.

“Daddy! I can now spell and write any word in Yorùbá.”

Father stood up abruptly and walked into his room to fetch some writing materials.

“Can you write the word Àgìdímálàjà?” Father asked, as soon as he reappeared.

Emma nodded his head confidently, collected the chalk and slate from Father's hands and set out to work.

*spring deepens . . .
more frogs rippling
the pond*

NUMBER TAGS

I pay the bike man and walk across the lawn to the entrance of the small specialist hospital. As usual, people are already gathered at the door. The farmer with callused hands, the pauper dressed almost in rags, the rich guy speaking English with a British accent, the mother who's brought her young son, a daughter who's brought her aged father – all afflicted with some eye illness. I, too, have come from the neighbouring state and arrived far earlier than the other times I came to see the ophthalmologist. We all come early – earlier than the hospital's opening hour to pick number tags the hospital would have left for us. The hospital attends to forty people each consulting day and I had arrived early enough to pick 17 and 23 in my earlier visits. But today a crowd larger than usual greets my eyes. I glance around to check if I had missed my way.

“È kú àárò,” I greet, bowing.

“Káàárò o,” a number of them chorus a reply.

I ask for where the number tags are.

“Ó ti tán. All's picked.”

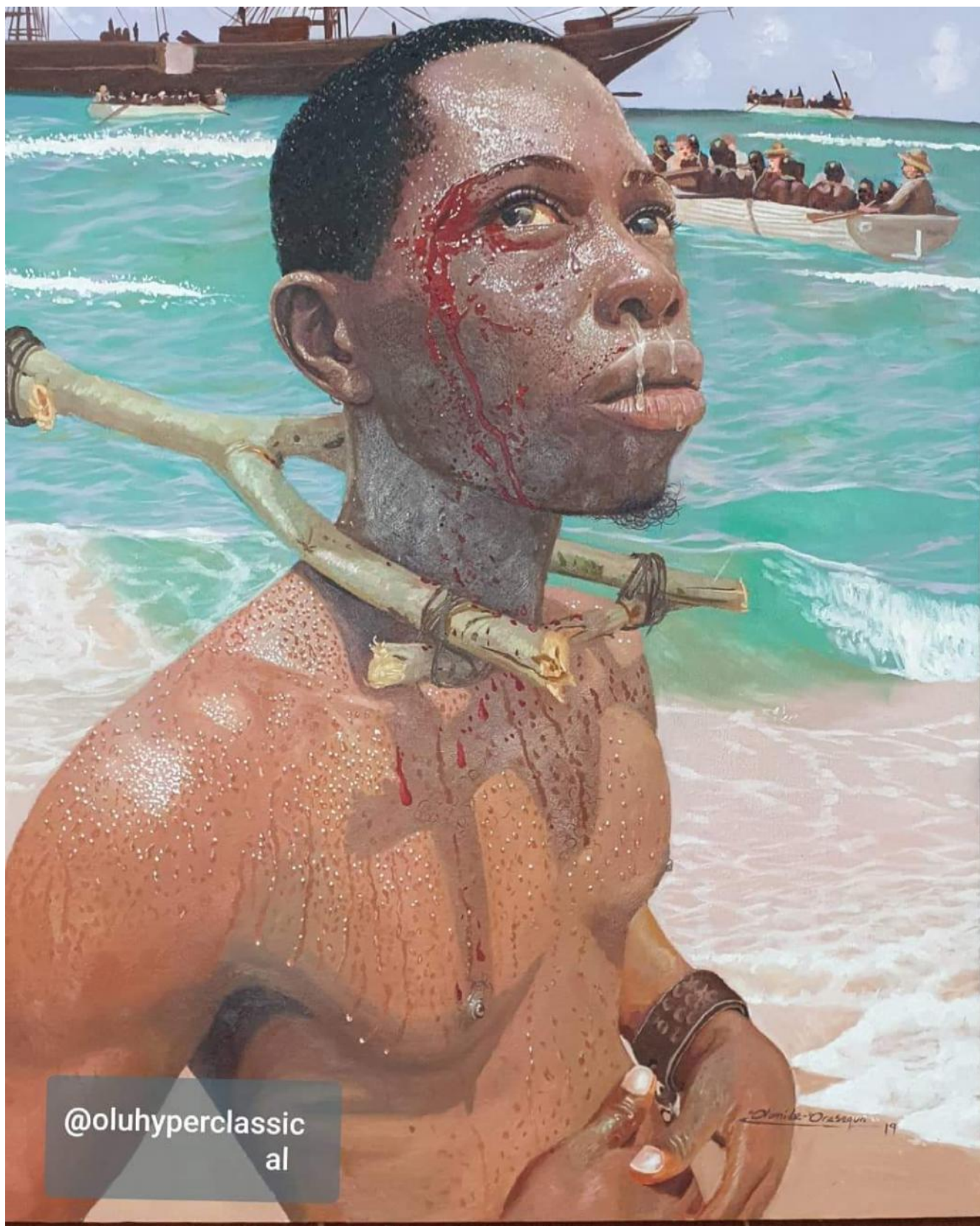
I check my watch. It's barely 6:35 AM.

“All the forty slots for today, you mean?” I want to be sure I heard them right.

“Yes son. All forty slots.” An elderly woman replies.

*the Sahara
expanding to grasslands –
November wind*

Olumide Oresegun



@oluhyperclassical



oluhyperclassical

Chinua Ezenwa-Ohaeto

The fire burns out and the story father told

draws sleep into my eyes. After sleep, I've come to believe in simplicity; I've come to agree that I'm a catalyst within time. Show me how to massage love onto my shoulders. Here, there're so many sad stories; so many broken things: broken lives, broken dreams, broken policies. And the light here is too heavy, heavy enough to even stay on a child's palm. The earth spins and everything I know remains the same. I touch the scar at the back of my leg and a dog barks into my childhood. There are wounds that take forever to heal: imagine a widow or a widower; imagine a country at war, or a child abandoned at the border. In the night I feel the cold of the day and the remnants of its memories filing into my bones. I have spoken so much to people through poems that I wonder if they listen anymore, if they even care how I carry my light. My friend calls and says that the darkness over this place is turning heavy even for the moon. And I become more shattered than an overripped pawpaw that fell from its tree.

The Things Missing After Translating Home

You have learnt so many things by reading Taiye Ojo, Nome Patrick Emeka,

Jeremiah O-Agbaakin, especially how they have made metaphors so immediate

like the hairs in the armpits. Over the years, you have walked miles in recording experiences and it's sad that most of them come out reversed.

You know: like how home beats you hot at the heels, pushing you and pushing you, and saying that you are something sour. As sour as the bible sees sin. And when you speak, about how the geckos die in one evening of pointing bad, your words turn out as echoes.

No one listens. No one wants to listen. You keep speaking still, and twitter has

to vomit on your name. You fold into yourself like an Armadillo. Trying to match hope into your bones, marrows and arteries. Then you leave home.

you leave home because of its hotness, of its fires and bombs and thug-ery and thefts.

Home turns back and screams into your dreams and poems.

But you don't know how to help what never wanted to be helped?

How can you live in a place that spits molten on your head?

You close your eyes and essays stand at your dreams gate.

So you open your eyes and read again: Taiye, Nome, Agbaakin and Shire.

You want to have, to re-know what you have never lost: a home.

Ahmadu Usman Ode (PoetiQue)

BODY BAGS EVERYWHERE

I.

Why do we prefer mourning
Howling over ye this morning?
Is it really real that the world
Requires no diplomacy but sword?
Labile is this chaos that is strange.
Since mother earth needs a change.

Another corpse is in trance,
None is ready to halt the waves
Deadly tunes, to, python dance.

Wacko voices led us here,
A road that leads to nowhere.
Vaccinators we are to whirls and waves
Exuding worries, exuding pains
Slopping towards poisoning grains.

II.

Wars wear glad rag
Parading the streets
Where chaos sleeps like
Untouched *kunu* in a gourd.
It stirred it and now
It evolves round
The lithosphere.

Rohingya drinks the
Blood that we sprinkled.
Nigeria watch the Python dancing
To the tunes from far Borno.

When will all these cease?
Who will save our homes?

Ikpe Comfort (Beatitude)

HANGMEN ALSO DIE

If Papa was to choose between the deep blue sea and Mama, I know he would have chosen the deep blue sea. I was 15 years old when for the first time I saw Mama poured hot water on Papa's leg because he had stood his ground that it was Mama's duty to cook for the family. Papa had drastically danced to the tune of the hot water and howled in pain.

I had mistakenly opened the toilet door without knocking as the custom of our home demands and saw Papa sat on the water closet with his trousers still on. He was weeping bitterly and silently and had ordered me not to tell anyone. That night, I refused to eat and pretended as if I was fast asleep.

After school hours the next day, Coker; my younger brother and I had gladly returned from school. But as we moved nearer to our compound, we heard a low cry and when we walked in, I sighted Papa first. He was on his knees with his two hands up, carrying a cemented block. I immediately covered Coker's eyes and took him out, telling him there was something scary he shouldn't see, else he won't be able to sleep well at night. I gave him my school bag and ordered him to wait for me in the next compound.

"Where are you going to?" He enquired.

"Just wait for me, I will be back soon." That wasn't the rightful answer, I knew.

I headed straight to the police station and when I entered, I had seen on the blue painted wall, boldly inscribed: POLICE IS YOUR FRIEND. I greeted the man I saw at the counter and told him I wanted to make a report.

"You? Report?" He asked simultaneously.

"Yes."

"Say wetin?" He eagerly asked.

"My mother tortures my father and..." I stopped because his look looked puzzled.

"Where is your father?" He asked after recovering from his short shock.

"At home."

"Write your statement here" He brought out a foolscap. I wanted to tell him that I didn't know how to write a statement, but I refused. Then I wrote: "MY MOTHER TORTURES MY FATHER", boldly. I stopped writing because I didn't know what to write again and my hands were beginning to shake.

"It's all right", the officer began. "Bring it."

I handed the paper to him and was about to leave when I added; "I will bring him here tomorrow."

I lured Papa to the station the next day, telling him my school bag was seized by a police officer for crossing their lawn. Papa's topic had already been discussed before we got to the station because as we entered, all eyes were on us. When I told the officer I saw the day before that that was Papa, a police woman had bursted into an uncontrollable laughter.

"So, na you your wife dey beat for house?" She managed to say and continued with her heavy laughter. Others joined in except the officer I had met on the first day. I later realized that he had same issue.

"No one is talking about how we men suffer in the hands of our wives", he later told Papa.

When we were left alone, Papa looked ashamed or confused.

"I had only wanted to help." I began.

"I know", Papa said and looked away. "I know, Beatrice." He repeated.

"I saw Papa cried this morning. He was kneeling and apologizing to Mama for something I really don't know." Coker began.

I was shocked but had to pretend.

"Oh! Maybe he was joking."

"No!" Coker said firmly. "Today makes it the second time."

I held him and sat him on a low fence adjacent to our house and say: "I do see him too." I saw the surprise on his face and wanted to surprise him the more. "Today is the sixth time I have caught him cry." I paused, but added without thinking or maybe I intentionally added; "because of Mama." I stopped talking. Silence hung in the air but I was eager to break it. "He told me that men also cry, that no matter what, hangmen also die."

John Chizoba Vincent

THE YOUTH AND THE COUNTRY: UNEMPLOYMENT

The problem of unemployment has gone viral over the years in our country. It has been one of the major problems that this country has suffered and still suffering. A greater percentage of the youth are unemployed, and those who are supposed to resign from their various departments in the government sector has failed to do so because they believe that there are blank spaces in the world beyond where they work. They are afraid of the payment of their pension by the government; therefore, they occupy the space made for the youths. They fail to resign rather they employ personal assistants who will be doing the work while they relax collecting the money, and then they pay peanuts to the PAs. It breaks the heart seeing a full grown man who also doubles as a graduate roaming the street of Lagos, Abuja, PH and some other major cities in Nigeria. They roam about with their certificates, properly dressed with their designer shirts moving from one firm to another seeking for employment. They could be offered a job of fifty thousand naira which cannot hold their body and soul together but they have no option than to manage it.

It is disheartening seeing graduates on the street searching for their dream job without knowing that all those job opportunities promised are but a mirage. They do not really exist in this side of the world and the world to come. Firms will still abuse young graduates; they will still look for people with 10 years' experiences and those with 20 years' experiences to employ. And this comes to mind: if they seek for only those that have these experiences, what happens to those fresh graduates from our universities? Where would they fit in in the labour market? How would they get their own experiences after the so called NYSC scheme and those abnormal theories taught in our schools? Where? The fact that the government could not generate or build a number of firms that can help tackle these issues of unemployment is itself, unheard of. How then can we combat it and make it a tale of the past?

I was a victim of this job hunt when I graduated from the university so as my brothers and sisters and, some of my friends. I trekked from Oshodi to Ikotun searching for jobs, from Ikotun to Ikeja under the hot blazing sun submitting CV. After submitting your credentials to these firms, they

would promise to get back to you but at the end of the day, you won't see their calls and your C.V remains on their desks. These are the plights of our brothers in the street of Lagos and other parts of Nigeria. You won't blame these firms because they might be trying to balance their paper work minding the number of people they can pay. How would they pay you if they employ you? How would they restrict or lay off those old women and men on their list?

I have worked in a factory owned by Indians where Nigerians are beaten. They don't correct you your mistakes, make any mistake and you are beaten by the supervisor who happens to be an Indian. He would hit you with iron steel and nobody will talk. Other Nigerians would keep quiet because no one wants to be sacked. I worked there for just a month and I left because of the beatings and the way they treated us in our own country. I believed that those things can and would never happen in India no matter how much you're paying to their government as tax. You won't dare lay your hands on any of their citizens without them fighting you back but here in Nigeria, the government won't do anything even if the issue is reported to the appropriate head; they won't. You spent four years in the university, another one year serving your father land and the rest of other years, you spend it hunting for job in the streets. The government of the day ends up calling you lazy, saying you have no future or dream. When will things get better?

A lot of these problems have made many to think that the easiest way to make it in life is the so called *Yahoo* and sport betting. And some others think that going abroad is the best way to make money and live a better life. They learn to break themselves, cure themselves and dream beyond a faithless investment which will later hurt them in life. We try endlessly to find some reasonable facts to back it up. If the composite issue remains the order of the day, this shows that our government has failed us entirely. We have lost all we stand for as a country. If these little things cannot be handled by the government, I wonder what the future of this country will look like in days to come. Our ultimate goal as people should be how to savage these situations, create a nation whose goal is to generate and uplift its youths because they are the future and the leaders of tomorrow.

Nigerian youths are faced with the identical dilemma of surmounting many hurdles of growing up to be responsible citizens, and leaving up to the billing of being 'leaders of tomorrow' as constantly mouthed by

successive governments. The former may be termed natural, while the latter can easily be classified as mad.

If we as people fail to retract our footsteps as to show these youths the right routes to follow, it would be extremely difficult to convince any right-thinking member of the youth in the society that the resolution is not a plot to encourage government to get away with molesting the pride and future of these youths. Arguably, we are globally aware that we own the world as leaders of tomorrow. We should find a way of giving confidence to those who look up to us as their leaders, not abandoning them to rot in misconception of the future. We have failed to understand that life without the youths is as useless as life without breath. How we manage the consequences that implies in this fate remains our ultimate goal that should be driven with ultimate believe. We should let our lives reflects our actions. Let's create a position for these young ones that would stand in when tomorrow comes and we are no more on the surface of the earth to bear witnesses to those things that we did. These younger ones would be here on earth to follow our leads or rather stand to defend those legacies we have built. The youths are our tomorrow, the curators of our blueprints.

THE YOUTH AND THE COUNTRY: INSECURITY.

You can be killed in the church, you can be killed in the mosque, you can be killed walking on the street, you can be killed in your house, you can be killed tending to community matters; a mad trailer driver in Lagos road can decide in his heart to run his trailer over your head and go free with it. A police man can decide to blow off your head and label you a Robber and still, he will go free for his crime. SARS can arrest you and if you fail to settle them they would label you a thief and anywhere you find yourself the next day is a result of your noncompliance. Anything can happen to you in this country as a youth, as a mother, as a father, and nobody. I mean nobody will bother themselves about it, not even the law enforcement agencies. Perhaps it is time we start being careful with what and how we move in this lawless country where nobody is a friend to anybody. The youth should at least be more careful with whatsoever they do because the nation reeks of injustice and insecurities. This is the tale of our beloved country; of our men and women, of our youths and our children. Everything is messed. No one is safe here. Your house is no longer safe for you, the street is not hundred percent safe and the market place, safety is not guaranteed either. The police will harass you in every step you take, the kidnapers, the ritualists, the military, the politicians. Prior to my time in school, the most dangerous people I dreaded were the cultists. They were everywhere watching your steps.

I have always long to live in a country where if not for everything being safe, eighty to ninety percent of things should be. I always long to live in a country where I won't be walking in the street and hold my heart in my stomach like everything is about to clash or rather like everything is against me. I have always long to live in a country where I can easily come out to vote in an election without anyone harassing me or without being afraid of losing my own life. I have always long to live in a country where I can walk freely without anyone questioning how my hair is styled, or because of the cloth I'm putting on. But it is not really possible in this side of the world. Here in my country, many things have fallen apart and we are more like snakes, each one on their own without bothering on what will happen to the next. SARS apprehends you in the night and accuse you of being a Yahoo boy and there is nothing you can do about that even with your Identity Card. Nothing is working, everything seems loose. We are afraid of the Boko Haram, Fulani herdsmen, the Police, SARS and many others who are supposed to be our defense. The Police can decide to raid

(when they need money) as early as 7am in an area where nothing has happened and innocent people will be arrested for doing nothing.

One of my friends was sometimes arrested one night putting on boxers. He only went outside to buy soap to take his bath. The truth of the matter was that he just returned from work that night around eight o'clock and he dropped his bag and removed his clothes. He only went outside with his boxers on; he was not with his phone. When we could not find him after an hour, we began to panic. Two hours later, we ran down to a nearby police station. We informed the DPO in charge about our missing friend. He informed us that there was a raid in that area like three hours ago and we should go inside and check if our friend was not among those arrested. The DPO called one of the sergeants to take us through. Lo and behold we saw this guy in one of the cells. He was in tears. He had not eaten anything food since he left his office on the island for the mainland. He was arrested for nothing. He was innocent of whatsoever he was accused of. Remember not everybody you see in the prison are guilty of the crimes they were alleged. Most people are innocent, majority of them are. Nigerian Policemen can kill you because of a petty amount requested as bribe. Some of these SARS men can label you a thief once you don't meet up with their demand. There is no security here in Nigeria especially among the Youths. I have witnessed a custom man slaughtered a youth because he was fighting for his right. No job security, no family security, no life security and no financial security, injustice everywhere, insecurities have become the order of the day.

Remember the Benue killings, remember the Jos, Kaduna and Kano killings, remember the Ozubulum killings; those people were actually slaughtered in the Church. They woke up in the morning, prepared themselves, ate, wore their shoes, wore their clothes, but never prepared for death but they died anyway right there in the Church where they went to worship their God. Is that not insanity? Meanwhile our leaders said and do nothing about it. Remember the election killings; remember the one in Rivers, Kaduna, Kano, Borno and many other places. Remember the nineteen years old boy that went out to vote but met his death, is this not insanity and psychosis on the part of our country? Have you ever seen children of politicians queuing in a polling unit to vote for their fathers to retain their offices? The answer is no. The reason is that their fathers knew how insecure these places are and so, they would never allow their children to go out there to vote. There is no security here, there is no one

that will ever fight for you when you are fighting for your rights but you will likely see when you are fighting against another person's right.

I could remember sometimes ago, January 2019 precisely, my phone was stolen and I don't really know how the person hacked and broke into my phone and he transferred all the money I had in my account to his own account. I was depressed. I went to my Bank and they said they don't have any business with me again since the transfer has lasted for like three days. They printed my account statement and advised me to go the Zenith Bank where the money was transferred to. I went to Zenith Bank where the money was transferred for a detail of the person because I had his name and his account number on the Statement of Account GTBank printed for me. Their customer care said I should return to my bank and tell them to write to them. I went back to my bank and my bank said they have no business again with me. I went from pillar to post without any result to show for the efforts. I didn't even mention that I went to the Police and after writing my report they said I have to pay for their paper and their biro I used to write after which they will tell me how much I was going to drop for them to run the case. For like two weeks, Police did nothing. One SARS I met in the bank who promised to help me, after paying him ten thousand naira, he disappeared. After all, I decided to let go of the money because The Igbos have a saying that: Nkiruka- that is the one in front is greater.

I could remember one sunny afternoon in the street of Aba, 2004 precisely; when a boy was killed by a bullet we didn't know who shot it or where it came from. He was sent to go and buy Maggi by his mother. Nobody could find who shot the bullet. He was wasted, just like that. Even when some Policemen came to investigate in that area after some minutes, there was nothing they could lay hold on. However, as a youth living in Nigeria, just be careful on how you go about your daily activities, how you make your movements and how you relate with people around you. Master your environments and be conscious of the environment you find yourself every time. Nobody is your friend when you are in trouble and nobody will likely be a friend to someone arrested as a criminal. Protect yourself first, protect your relations and those close to you because none of those above will ever come to your rescue when there is trouble, you will only sail your own ship and pilot your airplane when the time comes.





Jide Badmus

SKINSONG

(after Niyi Osundare)

On the 1st of September 2019, Nigerians came under xenophobic attack in Pretoria, Johannesburg & surrounding areas.

This chest has embraced dust
where memories used to nest

before kleptomaniac winds
whisked them to foreign lands.

It is yet night
& this tongue of dawn hasn't tasted light.

We've become poisoned seeds – boil
on skin – no-one wants us on their soil.

But the enemy now wears our skin –
the monster we fight now is within.

JESUS IS AN EXCLAMATION

where I live, emergency
service is on life support –

the fireman's truck tank is empty
& the ICU needs blood & electricity.

perhaps that's why we have learnt to
call on Jesus when in distress

or in shock or bemused,
because ours is a land of absurdities

& our mouths are yet to find
a more fitting exclamation.

Taofeek Ayeyemi (Aswagaawy)

FINDING THE LOST GIRLS

A Review of Charlotte Akello's "LOST GIRLS" by Taofeek Ayeyemi (Aswagaawy)

Girlhood in a traditional African context is characterized by inferior connotations, greeted with stereotypes and other related discriminatory gizmos. This influences the way they are treated which further influences their growth, mental health and well-being. Common examples of such treatments are childhood forced marriages or child brides, deprivation from formal education, child labour, particularly sex work among others.

However in the modern world, where rights of women and children are crusaded and enforced by many legal instruments - consequently translating into the contemporary emergence of feminism, these degrading treatments have drastically reduced.

But then, there are things that will never change about and around girlhood: precautionary reactions towards girls as they interact with opposite sex, strange treatment as they reach adolescence and puberty, among others. And some of these latter acts are exerted towards them out of love.

But (lost) girls do not want these? They want freedom, an absolute one. They want to grow without any sense of restriction or limitation. They want to be treated like the boys. They want to sit down anyhow and not to be cautioned to sit right; they want to talk about menstrual circle as if it's nothing special. They want to dress in a way that no one queries and not to be judged by how it makes them appear.

In "My Mother's Daughter" under the subtheme of 'Family,' we read: *"She puts on shoes that lift her high, / Tight trousers or skirts above the thigh, / Walks with an unrehearsed staccato / attracting all kind of species of eyes / to her open "nothing left to imagine" body." Pg. 18*

Who then are lost girls? They are, according to Charlotte *"The girls whose minds linger in the night" [Pg. 2], "Girls who wear fear on their skins, and silence on their lips" [Pg. 25]*

What do these mean? This chapbook collection "Lost Girls" of nineteen poems broken into four themes of 'Home,' 'Family,' 'Lost girls' and 'War,' reveals the meaning in a crystal language. It evokes environmental impact and influence on nations and societal growth in a way that specifically portrays the life of African girls (even boys) as it resonates with girl child matter globally.

Under "Home," the author defines the sanctity of home amidst the basic purpose it serves, irrespective of its size or architecture (or lack of it) as a 'crevice' symbolizing 'tranquility' and 'identity.'

The suchness of these attributes can be discovered through the close examination of the life of oysters, snails, tortoise and other animals that carry their homes about. Its importance is further underscored in the lives of birds, especially weaverbirds, as a vast majority of them take homebuilding a basic in their lifestyle. The Yorùbá also emphasizes it when they say "*kò sí kékeré akàn tí kǐn nílé lórí,*" that is "There is no crab, however small, that doesn't have its own house."

These implications and more are what the author explores under the theme of home. While introducing us into this section, the author, while also invoking the basic theme, says "*I want to tie home around my neck / and walk away.*"

In "Family," we see what happens in the confines of every family through the eyes of a girl as she narrates clearly every event. In essence, a home without family is a mere roof, such home gets lost. How do you know a home is lost? You'll discover that in "Signs of a Lost Home."

But then, in "About last Night," we read "*I hoped to get grip of tales that mother used to say to keep me warm, / But I'm lost in this one tale, / One where she weaves her lips into a basket / and allows words to become water.*" **Pg. 17**

Also in "My Mother's Daughter," she tells us what the family expects of the girls and trying to impose it on them in every possible occasions (as a way of helping them preserve Africa's culture and heritage): "*My grandmother's granddaughter stays in the backyard / treating visitors to the aroma of the stew, / She bows low as she greets, / Her knees greeting the ground.*" **Pg. 18**

We read further: "*She doesn't look at men in the eyes; / Her skirts sweep the floor onto which her feet rests; / Her head is covered with a black piece of cloth.*" **Pg. 19.**

Under "Lost Girls," the author narrates to us various events of lost in relation to young and growing girls. As you read this subdivision, look for "A Girl Lost on the Runway," "How Girls Like Me Are Born" And "How We Got Lost." And "Portraits" helps make the concept a walk in the park.

Whereas, to find the lost girls is to place one's feet on their path, see what they see, feel what they feel and have a taste of their experience. But God forbid we get lost trying to find them. We need not say "Amen" because it's possible. Recall any rescue mission movie you've watched where hundreds of armies are deployed to a location to save only one person but, unfortunately, all of them died save one who returned home with the rescued; such could be the case of finding lost girls.

The author warns:

*"To girls like me,
May you learn to find yourselves,
And to those who strive to find us,
May you never get lost
in our darkness." Pg. 5*

But then, lost girls are not stray girls. They're only finding their voices, and needs to be assisted in this. They also need to be found, because to find them is to find a balanced society.

In "War" the author explores the various horrific and bitter sceneries of war. Talk of violence. Talk of violation and abuse. Talk of rape, even by those who come in the name humanitarian service. Talk of how girls lost their lovers to war, and vice versa and its resultant effect. She puts the effect of war simply: *"Our girls became mothers / to children with nameless fathers." Pg. 29*

Truly, war may be the absence of peace, however, it is never the absence of love. This is because there is Love in War and the poet share with us how to love in war:

*"This is how mother taught me to love –
Amidst flying bullets [sending people home]
Smear your face with shear butter;
Don't talk!
Let your eyes scribble love . . ."*

I cannot totally scratch the pages of this book to reveal the message of the poems, you need to pick your shoes and let your mind go with you to discover more. But quickly, take note that the poems are delicately woven, terrifically narrated, poignant and potent in their depth and should be munched in small bits, gradually too. They are like micro nutrients - needed by human system, but in smaller quantity; the excess of which will be detrimental to one's life and health.

Imagery is the crux of poetry, depth and metaphor are its beauties, the images created in this chapbook are vivid - pushing readers into imaginative reasoning as a result of transcendental mental pictures that show that the poet do not only write the chapbook out of passion but with blazing dynamites of emotion - the debris of which are littered through the book. "Lost Girls" is an adventure and I extend a two-hands-up gesture to the lady poet.

Oni Tomiwa

SALMHAT

I have always known that of all things possible, the probability of having an affair with Salmhat seems to be in the permanent zero. (Although she fits into each and every specifications for the woman of my dreams.)

But there is this divide that I do not have the courage to cross yet, this colourful hijab on her head. She is a devout Moslem and I am a pastor's son. I guess some dreams will never stop being dreams. I can't fight for her.

"Will you make me happy if we date?" She had asked one evening.

I knew the answer would never meet her expectations at a good turn. I only smiled and held her hands.

recording

bird tweets on a cell phone . . .

winter solitude

Jamiu Toyeeb Aremu (Maitre Jammy)

REVIVING THE TRUE AFRICAN LITERATURE: METHOD AND METHODOLOGY

(Being a presentation delivered at Writers Connect weekly lecture)

Africans of the past are known for concentrated fantasies, deep thoughts, proverbs, epigrams, oral traditions, and in general, figurative use of words. It is no more a rumour that the grandeur in African Literature is disappearing with every breath. Many literati have one time or the other, discussed African Literature. So, I will not be the first person discussing the important topic.

Let me start by saying that: there is a discrepancy between English Literature & Literature in English and African Literature & Literature in Africa. In order to appreciate the above, it is pertinent to ask what exactly the opposite of African Literature is.

More likely, you might have been told it is Non-African Literature but I would like to say unequivocally that, that is not totally right and perhaps, one-eyed. Non-African countries should be any other parts of the world which is not Africa. Is Asia Africa? No, why are Asia and other parts excluding Europe not part of the Non-African Literature? Don't these parts of the world have their own Literatures? Of course, they do. But, the works of William Blake, T.S Eliot, William Morris, John Donne, Spencer, John Fletcher and other English poets works are what we mention when we talk about Non-African Literature in schools.

All these men are from England, none is from Saudi Arabia or China or Israel. So, the opposite of African Literature as far as my argument is concerned, is European Literature not Non-African Literature. But, I will refer to it as English Literature because most African prosaists, poets or playwrights write in English language.

Back to the differences I pointed out earlier, English Literature refers to the styles, languages, uses of imagery and types of works of the European writers which include: letters, diaries, dramas, poetries and other genres which are written largely by European writers from Scotland, Wales, Ireland as well as writers from British empires, while Literature in English

refers to the products of any imaginative and creative writings in English language.

On the other hand, African Literature **should be**, just as its brother, English Literature, defined as the styles, languages, uses of imagery, and types of works which include: mime, myth, folktales, poetries, storytelling, proverbs, which are the products of African writers from Algeria, Nigeria, Ghana, and other geographical parts of Africa. There were of course, great oral traditions back then before the evolution of what is referred to as African Literature now - epics of Malinke, the narratives of Olaudah Equiano and works of D. A Fagunwa, etc.

While Literature in Africa refers to the products of African imaginative and/or creative writings in African languages, sadly speaking, we do not have or we have but few African Literature works; I mean, the African Literature is never true or real because modern African Literature is contrary to the definition given above.

African Literatures are said to be born in the educational systems imposed by colonialists with styles, types, forms drawn from English existing Literature rather from existing or creative African traditions and styles/forms. What we wrongfully refer to African Literature is not but any of genres of Literature that is written by a writer from Africa even if the work does not have any African traditions or styles or forms.

Even having underscored the fact that there is no African Literature (or else, we want to limit our definition of African Literature to works by African writers, which I think, is not completely a correct definition of what true African Literature should be), some erudite men will still want to argue this simple fact. Actually, the real truth is, there is not yet true Africanism in Literature, Literature is only in Africa.

Now, let us take some steps to defend the above assertion. The encyclopaedists define European Literature or Western Literature as **“The Literature written in the context of Western in the languages of Europe.”**

The question now is: why is African Literature not written in the context of African languages? Or why is the true African Literature not popular except when they are written in the white man's language?

My argument is that the true Literature of a particular continent/country/tribe comes from its peoples' culture which language is one of the greatest parts. No language, no Literature; I mean, no real Literature.

Having been able to establish what Real African Literature is, it is imperative to discuss what most people consider as African Literature. Generally African Literature is **“The body of traditionally spoken or written Literature in Africa which are basically moulded on Western languages and their style of writing by African writers.”**

There are about fifty four countries in Africa among which speak: Arabic, Portuguese, Swahili, French, English. Since we are discussing in English, I shall focus more on the Anglophone African countries - those whose writers speak and write in English language.

It is not ideal if we discuss African Literature and never mention African Literati. Casley Hayford, one of the African nationalists is said to be the first man who wrote Novel in English language. He was from Ghana. Also Herbert Isaac Ernest of South Africa wrote *Cetshwayo*, a drama work. Ngugi wa Thiong'o from Kenya, Cyprian Ekwensi from Nigeria, Leopold Sedar Senghor from Senegal and many others. These and many more are all great pioneered writers who are known as African Literature writers.

These are the great men who birthed what we refer to the real African Literature. And since then, African Literature has been growing both in quantity and recognition because as much as we can see today, there are thousands of African works which appear in Western academic curricula and even worldwide. Europeans had started to begin to enjoy fresh real traditional African cultures which were characteristics of our pioneered writers' works.

These writers' intellectuality and undeniable understanding of their traditions are the reasons some of them were and are acknowledged regionally and internationally. A brilliant Nigerian, Wole Soyinka was awarded the Nobel Laureate Prize in 1986 and Albert Camus from Algeria won a prize in 1957 too. There was also Noma Award which was normally presented to African outstanding work of the year published in Africa.

The glory now is almost being lost. And that is why the African Literature needs urgent revival from you and me. The problems are with Modern African Literature which you and I are included. The major reasons for

dwindling of African Literature glory are not really farfetched. They include the following:

- (1) *The Pioneered African Writers' Themes and Modern African Themes are Different*
- (2) *Use of Language*
- (3) *Ignorance of the African cultures, traditions and customs*

(1) The Pioneered African Writers' Themes and Modern African Themes are Different

Back then, their major themes were:

- i. ***Clashes Between African and European Cultures:*** This is just as it is apparent in *"Anvil And Hammer"* by Kofi Awoonor from Ghana or *"Piano And Drums"* by Gabriel Okara from Nigeria.
- ii. ***Colonialism/Blunt words to the Colonialists:*** If we read *"Expelled"* by Jared Angira from Kenya, we will see this.
- iii. ***Individualism and Society:*** Often time, the Pioneered African writers discuss this theme. For example, *"Rejoice"* by Gladys or *"Myopia"* by Sly Cheney Coker Bluni from Sierra Leone.
- iv. ***Corruption:*** They also discussed back then, every form of corruption in their works; ranging from leadership mismanagement, poverty, sex discrimination and other social problems, things happening in their immediate environs. Unfortunately, corruption remains a major issue in Africa today. If we read *"Homeless Not Hopeless"*, *"Ambassadors of Poverty"*, *"Headlines"*, *"Vagabonds"*, *"My Lord, Tell me Where to Keep your Bribe?"*; all works which are from different Nigerian writers, you'll find corruption the significant subject matter.
- v. ***African Beauty:*** If you read *"Black Woman"* by Leopold Sedar Senghor from Senegal and *"Abiku"* by both JP Clark and Wole Soyinka from Nigeria, also *"Stanley Meets Mutesa"* by David Rubadiri from Malawi, you'll find this theme.

These mentioned themes and many other themes are what 21st century or emerging African writers scrap out from their oeuvre. All we read now is a bunch of love works and erotic poems or birthday poems. So sadly, no wonder why we are being shunned by readers.

To revive the Real African Literature, we must put more realistic themes in our works just as the pioneered African Literature writers had done in their time. This is ours!

(2) Use of Language

Modern African writers are too European without substance. The pioneered African writers are exceptionally good with the use of English. They understand both English and African languages and apply them skillfully in their writings. However, some of the new African writers do not take pains in learning the rules of English. They have forgotten that the only tool to be a good writer is the knowledge of the rules of the language used.

(3) Ignorance of the African cultures, traditions and customs.

In fact, some African emerging writers do not understand their own language, let alone their real culture. But, the pioneered African writers are very vast in their mothers' tongues, the folktales of the indigenous African state. This was apparently seen in many of their works. For examples: *"Story of An African Farm"* by Olive Shreiner, *"How The Leopard Got His Claws"* by Chinua Achebe. See also the works of Amma Darko (Ghana), Buchi Emecheta (Nigeria) among others.

Their real imageries and descriptiveness are from their immediate environs. Not making references to that which is far from imagery. Not mentioning English names in their works because they believed, they were not writing for any Mr Bonnet or Miss Cat, they were writing for Iya Aremu, Ade, Fofu, Ige, except for sarcastic effect.

In fact, some of the young African writers are afraid to give indigenous names to the title of their works, reasons that are best known to them. The question is; if an African writer cannot present his story/poetry with an African background/imagery in such a way that an African reader would appreciate and comprehend the beauties in African Literature, how could an alien comprehend and appreciate the real African Literature?

So, the question now is: *How do we Revive the True African Literature?*

The question is about the method and methodology to be applied in order to revive the true African Literature. I humbly suggest the following:

African Writers Are Readers

When one reads, one learns a great deal of ideas that could be adapted in one's oeuvre. When you read, you write, when you write, you read. People say that there is no story that has not been told but I say that there are a lot of stories which have not been told in our own style, in the indigenous African style. Ola Rotimi's *"The Gods Are not to Blame"* is said to be an adaptation of *"Oedipus Rex"* written by a Greek writer, Sophocles. Femi Osofisan is also said to have adapted *"Trojan Women"* written by a Greek writer, Euripides in his work, *"Women of Owu."* These writers have not plagiarized Greek writers' works, what they have done is to rewrite the story in the African style because of the similitude in experience. Perhaps, that is why *Niyi Osundare*, a brilliant Nigerian poet submitted paradoxically in Lagos Book & Art Festival 2017 edition, that: "Every writer is a thief, but we steal with permission." This gives the impression that as an emerging writer, we have to read other great writers' works and learn the art of writing from them.

Also, *"Abiku"* is written by two different poets, *Wole Soyinka* and *John Pepper Clark*, yet their styles, message, perceptions and approaches to the poem are different. Therefore, reading should help writers to channel the creative energy in telling or writing any story from one's personal experience in such a convincing way.

Ability to Compare the Two Systems and Place them Side by Side in Writing

One undeniable factor that makes the early African writers stand out in creativity is the ability to place the two cultures side by side in their writings – the full understanding of the duo. Creating a unique and authentic African literary tradition would mean the use of the White man's language, which would be modified considerably in order to bear the weight of African aesthetics. To borrow some wisdom from his autobiography titled *"There Was A Country,"* Chinua Achebe wrote: *"Finding that inner creative spark required introspection, deep personal scrutiny, and connection, And this was not something anybody could really teach me."*

To reemphasize that, he comments clearly about the Professor who said his essay for a competition lacked form; *"Understandably, I wanted to find out more about what the Professor meant by form. It seemed to me that here was some secret competence that I needed to be taught. But when then I applied some pressure on this Professor to explain to me that form was, it was clear that she was not prepared - that she could not explain to me. And it dawned on me that despite her excellent mind and background she was not capable of teaching across cultures, from her English to mine. It was in these circumstances that I was moved to put down on paper the story that became "Things Fall Apart".*

The Aim/Role of an African Writer

A person who does not have a destination, would see everywhere as a bus stop. Some of us were not aware of the task before us when we took up the writing career, nor do we have a clue of what we are up against. Some people took up writing because of fame, wealth, my-friend-is-a-writer syndrome or studying Literature in school, etc. But, does being a writer guarantee fame or wealth? Some of the widely known African writers began writing believing not in their skills. But, they kept on writing because writing is a moral obligation to them, it is a means of voicing out for Africa, correcting moral decadence, displaying African beauties, settling social, political, ethnic and religious disputes, educating and entertaining readers, tackling issues like imperialism, gender discrimination, irresponsible parenthood, neocolonialism, war, racism, etc. If the society is morally sick, the writer's obligation is to point it out. These are what they write about; hence, they are "protest writers."

African Writers Are Representatives

Just like the legislators, writers are representatives/ambassadors of the people; the voice of the voiceless. It is recommended that a body of literary works should be developed with high possible quality that would oppose the negative discourses in some of the western novels we encounter in the course of our reading. Let us try to rewrite our own story by writing back to the West. We should try to reshape the dialogue between colonizers and the colonized and affirm that no peacock is taller than others except if it stands on ridges.

Ololade Akinlabi (Ige)

KADUNA

In the hallowed minute of time,

Our men were slayed.

Those left living were idly occupied;

Either embalming their pains or counting

The heads on the palms of death.

In an hour later when the imbalance legs of time chimed

Our women conversed with their legs,

Curbed their breasts and tossed around, harried.

What more could have transpired?

Another inferno in Kaduna,

It roared and rolled into the mind of atmospheric wind

Making all heads to run behind their fears.

Those counting heads forgot numbers,

Undertakers grumped of shoulders twinges;

Cemeteries nauseated, ready to vomit the dead.

A pendulum of curfew was reverberated

For ears that can hear to hearken-

At the exhaust of these cut-few hours,

We shall carry home our dead who are more than few.

Yusuph Maryam Oyindamola

LOST TREASURE

I have a weight of tears on my face,
But not as heavy as the one on their's.
Doubling onto me and taking over my conscience,
I could feel their intense pain.

The street turned their homes,
They need not a place to bury riches,
all they ask for is a place to lay low when it's dark,
And a helping hand to make them smile again.

Despite the whirl and waves around the world,
Our leaders fold their hands and watch them cry,
As they tear into pieces running here and there,
Making a sad echo yet they are not heard.

I can't but ask where we lost the treasure,
We've neglected the impact of peace in our society,
Until we trace back our steps, we'll continue to be
our brothers' killer instead of being our brother's keeper.

Lustrous محمد

YOUR CRAFTS

Beautiful art crafts
are often amazing,
However, more amazing is the start
of such a seemingly complex piece.

Like a fabric
woven from threads of different colours
twined and lined
to knit patterns and beauty.

Such piece goes on
to speak to the world
and may outlive the artist
who orchestrated it.

White hands were used
to knit and weave
from threads of prejudice
to sell to the world loathing

The eyes, hands and even the hearts
that bought the comely devilry
soon draw bloods and feed vultures
for the serenity of the countryside matters not.

Tell the weaver
his bloods won't be spared
when the ideas of his pieces
get imprinted.

Mobola Oluwapelumi M.O.S.S

ALAGEMO

What's happened to love?
It's cold, buried in man's gropes
What's happened to the world?

The earth has turned
to ocean of wars, a crimson
laced with hopes drowned

Whose head now wears the crown?
That's not captain's leg in his boot
and see dangling shoulders in royal gown

What again is the color of this soil?
reminds me again this is paint not blood?
A golden brown sparkling at dusk

I heard too Alagemo unlaced
his dancing shoes. The square
is cleared for Python waist

But how do we tame this storm
and glimpse what lies on
it other sides, peace or war?

Alagemo: a masquerade in ijebu-land, Nigeria.

Ibikunle Aishah Adekemi

RED WAR

I could hear the sea sailing soft
Spread out wide but still together
I heard the creaking smell of a gun
Divide the waters
But it wasn't the parable of Moses

It was a tale of a river
A river, flowing red
Was this a Polaroid screen across my face
Or the reality which I faced
Peace had become history

Unlike the immortality of a rock
It shreds individuals into cells

Once upon a time the light shone
It shone, blindingly
Just like a power outage
The world was plunged into darkness
Cries of helpless drenched souls
Drenched in subtle misery

Streaks of light breaking through
Red must prevail
Like the shape of the heart
Bringing smiles to crooked lips
And mend broken souls

Aishat Oredola

ALONE AND LONELY

His passing-out-parade, some years ago, was of a certificate collection, posing for the camera, and exchanging wide grins with people who had fought and won this 'one year service to the country' battle, not a parade at all. He was on his thirtieth push-up when images of her formed in his mind – incandescent, elegant and spontaneous – and he stopped.

Alone in the one room, Dele found it soothing to grab her framed glass photo from his bedside, found it therapeutic to fling it like a discus, the throw was swift and the glass smashed on the wall facing him from a distance.

Why didn't he get rid of that eon ago? If he had, it wouldn't have drained him of all his energy and optimism, now he wouldn't be leaving the house. Dele fell on his knees, slammed his fists on the tiles before his eyes grew red in rage. He saw it coming but how she ended up still had the effect of acid corrosively eating up his skin, consuming his flesh and leaving him with nothing. He tried hard to prevent all of that, but she was always, always too forward and blind with enthusiasm for anything she craved.

She was clad in khaki and boots, grinning for several selfies before handing her phone to one of the girls she giggled with to take a group photo. Just to his left, he heard the shrill voices, but moved away gently. Why approach a lady when you had nothing in your bank account? No hope for a good job? No parents to show her off to? No savings from the NYSC Program because you had to exhaust it all by all means? No hope for a better tomorrow because you knew no one, had no connections, were starving and the sun was eating every layer of your skin by the minute that all you wanted was to go back to the compact one room accommodation you shared with your friend? Dele let out a guffaw in a bid to console himself for the blunt thoughts sinking into his mind. He laughed so hard that this girl actually walked up to him.

"Hello! Can you kindly help me and my friends?" Her hand was outstretched, her palm waving an iPhone 8 and he knew she was indeed not in his league. "We just want some shots and all of us have to be in it this time."

"Sure." He took the phone from her and miraculously became a skilled photographer, advising the girls to change their positions, and smile more. "Thank you so much." She was bubbling with excitement, her friends gathered around to view the shots.

"It was nothing." Dele started to walk away when the girl gave him a look of amusement and stood akimbo. Her friends dispersed, knowing she needed this moment. "Really? You do favours for free?" Nearly a scream.

Dele smirked and shrugged. "I'm a nice guy."

"Well I want Mr. Nice guy's phone number. Can I have it?"

Now, Dele was peeling his clothes off until all he had on were his briefs. Why did he give her his number? Maybe his being would've still been intact.

Her name? Cassie, and everyone knew Cassie. You had to be a stale social media person to not know Cassie with over two hundred thousand valid followers on Instagram, Cassie who had thousands of retweets and likes on her every tweet. @Cassie_Osiew, Cassie aka Casserole. Cassie, the social media influencer, feminist, activist, comedian, award winning personality and super young boss lady. When Dele had said he didn't know her, she was intrigued with his type that she wanted to be his friend.

Dele brought out her true self, the self social media never saw – unfiltered and raw. She told, showed him bits of herself until he had a full image and froze on realizing how two faced and what a catfish she was. Cassandra Osinachi Anekwe was born in poverty and hadn't got rid of the stench. She lived in a place no better than his but had her way of having food in topnotch restaurants, owning designer clothes, bags and shoes. Her pidgin was as good as her mimicked British English. She surprised him.

"Abeg help me pass that fried fish tail, no be me bring am? You wan chop my tail join the head you don destroy?"

"See Cassie fighting for fish o! I go take your photo, post am for Insta, tag you ehn, make your followers know say inside life, plenty dey happen."

"You no fit! Pass me fish tail jare! My garri still plenty, you come dey talk say See Cassie, no be packaging? Make your head straight o Obinna. Una two know me o!"

Dele had laughed his intestines out on witnessing the argument between Cassie and his friend, Obinna. The three usually had fun eating together, Cassie bringing food to share and lots of gist, but Dele had had it when he grew afraid for her. Her movements were dangerous. All the hotels in Lagos and Abuja, Cassie knew. It was from one random man to politician to music artiste to actor and Dele couldn't bare it.

When Jobless Cassie, at 24 moved from the one room she shared with some friends to a three bedroom apartment, he bared his mind. She listened with awe before raising her voice at him. The 5ft4 lady with a body quite matured for her stature had hurled all sorts of obscenities at Dele.

"I feed you Dele. I provide all the fucking things you need. Yet you ask me to quit my way of life? So fucking what if I jump from man to man? If you were man enough and call yourself my friend, maybe I wouldn't be a classy Instagram celeb and desperate whore at the same damn time."

Dele knew the country was bad for youths, so bad that the few friends he had, Obinna with Babajide, fled to South Africa illegally, just to survive. Tunji - his neighbour - left for the United States on scholarship for his Masters, and Kayode was planning on leaving too. He did have a job now as a kind man he once worked for in his service year let him a car he registered for Uber. So Dele was an Uber driver and earned some money but had to deliver most of it to the man.

Cassie was growing daily on social media, her status changed with every blink he took but he knew she had to quit. Cassie had shut him out, so he busied himself getting updates of her life from her tweets and pictures.

@Cassie_Osiee: Haters are saying I staged my own kidnap? How?? How o??? Do you know the stress my father went through before settling the kidnappers? The ransom he had to pay? If the country had any security I wouldn't have been kidnapped. Thank you all for raising money for me to console me, showing love and support as usual. I'm okay now, safe at home with my family. #CasseroleIsBack #Casserole #Gratitude

Dele scoffed. Cassie's parents were in Enugu and they had little or nothing. She moved to Lagos with her aunt, who is managing too. The same day she tweeted this, she had shunned him on phone. So many lies.

@Cassie_Osiee: My personal assistant just told me she needs a two-day break from work because she has an audition for a reality TV show. She too wants to be big. Should we tell her? LOL! #Casserole #CassieOnADaily

@Cassie_Osiee: Thank you guys for your votes! I'm now in the final stage and I need y'all now to win this! #SocialMediaInfluencerOfTheYear #SocialMediaInfluencer #CassieOnADaily

@Cassie_Osiee: So people ask why a young, beautiful girl like me is single. Truth is I am happy, I am independent and successful. I don't need a man. Why do I need one? Men are scum. Period. #CasseroleSaysSo #CassieOnADaily

@Cassie_Osiee: So people are clawing at me for supporting the woman who stabbed her husband. I am not supporting a murderer! The man isn't dead yet!!! He's in a hospital!!! I'm just saying women should fight for themselves and stop being useless tools in a marriage. Don't let men use you. Have some dignity! Fight back! #CassieOnADaily

@Cassie_Osiee: Some fans got me a gift for my 25th birthday yesterday at Escape Club! - A freaking Range Rover in my favourite colour! Thank you guys! Keep being you. I Stan all my amazing followers. I love y'all & remember that no man is above you ladies. You rule your fucking world! #CassieOnADaily

Dele was worried for Cassie. The country was messing everyone's head up - graduates, working class men/women, even undergrads but Cassie was messing herself up. He dialed her number but it rang severally and she didn't pick up. He decided to go see her where she now lived, on the Island. He put off his Internet connection to avoid disturbance from the Uber App and drove straight to her place, banged on the gate leading to her apartment. Cassie was home but didn't come down to see him. He called several times but she ignored. As he was about to leave, she emerged in denim shorts and a hoody.

"Cassandra."

"Why do you want to see a prostitute?"

"I didn't mean it that way Cassie. I really care about you."

She rolled her eyes and let him in. Dele had asked how she was doing but her thumbs tapped away on her phone screen and she answered in monologues.

"Anyway...Cassandra, Obinna asked of you. He's now in South Africa."

"Really?" She beamed. "Let me have his number! That nigga!"

Dele called out his digits and paused, anxiety overwhelming him.

"Obi!!! Hustler hustler. Chai Naija sha. Everyone just dey run." It worked. The mention of Obinna reminded her of days they used to be together, talking freely. "So, what's up with you?"

"I'm okay. I'm an Uber driver now."

"Not bad."

"Thanks."

She got a call and cut it immediately. "Nuisance." Her hands brushed her weave. "Why did you come? Tell me the truth?"

"I came to check up on you. I had a feeling you were lonely."

"Too bad. I'm not. In fact I'm expecting someone in a few minutes and wouldn't want you here. So kindly leave."

"Cass--"

"I can read it in your eyes. You think I'm nuts, you know all my secrets so you think I need help. News flash, I don't. Leave before I scream. What do you want from me?"

What Dele wanted was to discuss with her the issues of the nation – Unemployment, The rate of emigration, Crime, Politics, Fake pastors, Cyber fraud and he knew she was intelligent, would dissect every issue well – just like they used to, with Obinna.

One of his passengers in the past few weeks was hurrying for an interview but was pessimistic about it. He said he knew they wouldn't choose him anyway since he had no connection. He had read in the newspapers that the number of online fraudsters increased daily, and armed robbers were everywhere. Ritualists were the same people you'd see as friends, lovers, strangers. Dele wanted to reassure her he was there, tell her the grave consequences of prostitution, help her out of her way of life, so she could start anew. Even in the chaos of the country, he held some principles.

Watching Cassie turn out to be one of the youths damaging the future of the nation faster by ruining their lives was devastating because funnily, he liked her regardless of her ways. She was intelligent. She had potential to be better and yes, the country was putting out the light of several youths but he wanted to be there, be her backbone and show her one can be successful without selling one's self but Cassandra loved the fast track.

"I just want to be here."

"Dele, leave!" She pointed to the door.

"I have no other friends Cassie. Don't send me away please."

"Oh you want to have a taste of what others are tasting abi? You want to get down with me too?"

He scowled. This was what unnerved him, her insecurity guised as confidence and bluntness. "Stop it!"

"Then fucking get out. I don't need you. You're all the same. All of you, the same."

Dele left, his head raised high but spirit crushed at what she said. One less busy day, he opened his Twitter – an app he wouldn't have known how to use if Cassandra hadn't let him in on it – to check the latest trends in Nigeria.

#Xenophobia - 13K Tweets
#BigBroNaija - 10K Tweets
#PoliticalBrouhaha - 8K Tweets
#Buhari - 7K Tweets
#Islamophobia - 5K Tweets
#CassieSexTape - 4.7K Tweets
#CNA - 3.8K Tweets

When Dele's eyes fell on #CassieSexTape his brain froze but he tapped immediately. The tweets were wild, about Cassie. For a moment he hoped it wasn't Cassandra - his Cassandra.

He didn't think, just grabbed the keys and drove to her place and tried her line but her phone was switched off. The main gate was opened but the door to her apartment was locked so he banged furiously. When he didn't get an answer, he panicked so hard that he thought the worst had happened. He knew Cassie wouldn't leave the house, just like that. Yes, she was used to clubbing on Fridays and partying on Saturday nights and outings with several men on other nights but in the day time, Cassie was almost always home.

"I knew it'd be you Dele." Cassie, a shadow of herself opened up in Yoga pants and a sweatshirt. "What do you want?"

"Thank God you're okay! Can I come in?"

"What do you want?"

Her eyes were puffy from too much crying, he knew but there was no need going back and forth with Cassandra.

"I saw the trend, I swear I didn't watch the tape but had to check on you and your phone is switched off."

"So what if you saw the tape?" She was about to shut the door when he forced his way in.

"Stop doing this! I'm your friend! Talk to me please!"

Cassandra widened her eyes in amusement. "You're my friend yet you judge me? Call me a whore and expect me to be cool around you when you clearly hate what I do to survive in this fucked up country?"

"Yes! Yes Cassie! Because I wanted you to stop this sort of thing. Now, see. You've a bad name. It'll always be Cassie the whore, Cassie's Sex tape, it'll never die down in ages because of how popular you are online and you need a friend now...you do."

Cassie broke down in tears, yelling all sorts of things at Dele like how dare he come to her house to insult her? But she knew she couldn't put up any defense. After minutes of crying and sniffing, she confessed she was embarrassed. "Some guy leaked it and now he's safe. No one knows him but I and the person in question..."

"It's okay. It will be...but Cassie you need a mental health specialist now, you've been through so much. You've to go through this."

Cassandra had hissed and boiled and cursed, said she wasn't insane and didn't need anyone or anything. She cursed the government, country, cursed Dele and walked him out.

Dele picked up the shards of glass resting at the bottom of the wall. It was all over social media – her suicide note. The words would forever haunt him, but not more than his leaving her alone when she was indeed lonely.

He loves me, Dele does, and I am grateful, always would be. This shame is just too weighty to bear. To everyone who liked my tweets, even when I didn't mean them and wanted attention and drama, this is for you. Not everything you see is real. I was a catfish – better get used to the 'past tense'. I was never a social media influencer, I was an ordinary girl, struggling in an ordinary world. I was everything I thought the world wanted. I was exuberant but I was never strong enough. I'll miss everyone but I've to go now. A King would rather die than watch his Kingdom burn in flames.

Love, Cassandra Osinachi Anekwe (At least I didn't lie about my name.)

No! No, Cassandra was wrong. A King would not stand the sight of his kingdom burning in flames but would, in anger, build another. He wished he didn't leave that day. It was the same day she gulped Sniper.

Dele was still picking the shards when he got a call from Babajide.
"Hello?"

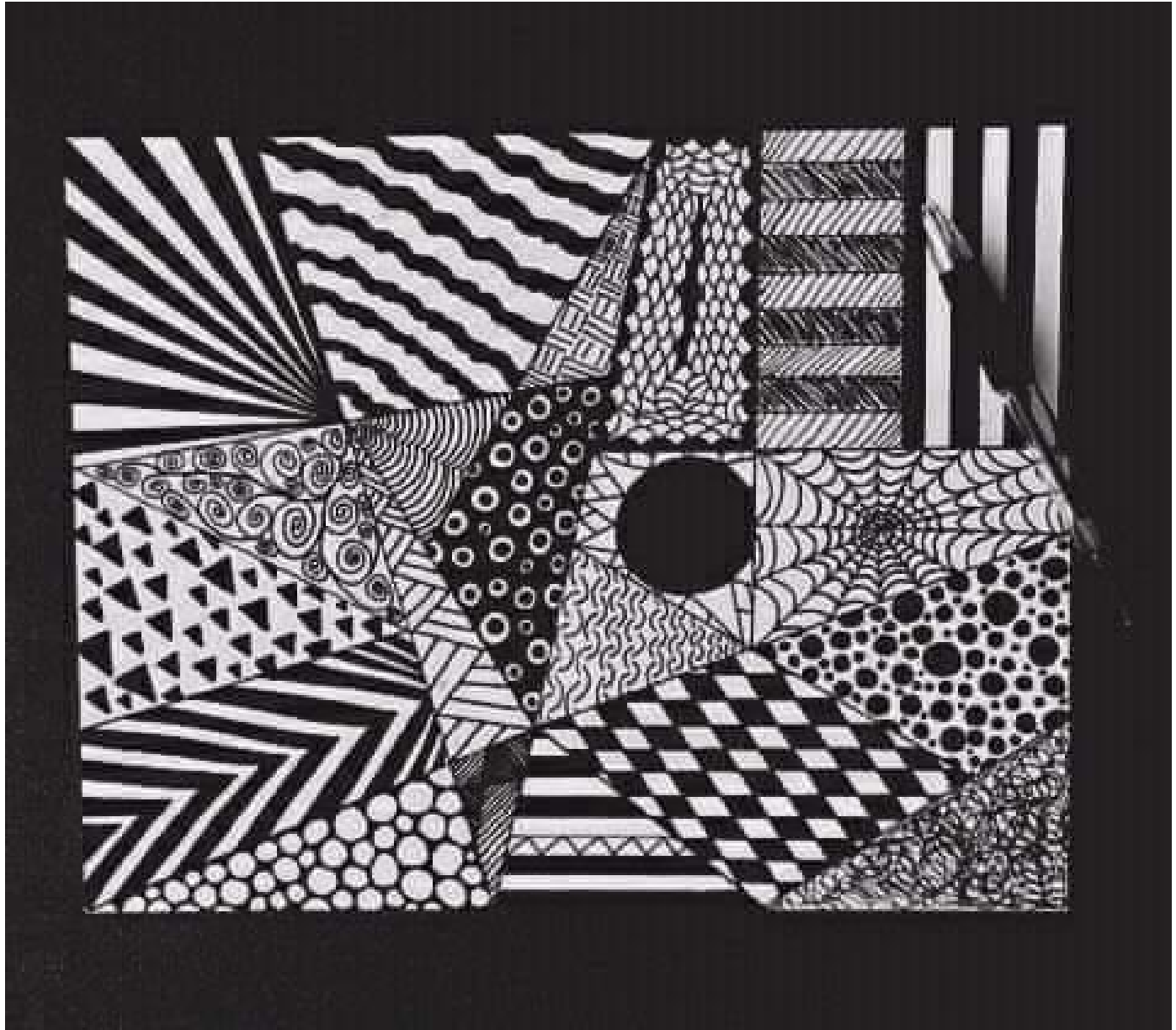
"Dele! Dele! bad news! Bad news!" Babajide was panting on the other end of the line.

"What?" Dele pierced himself absentmindedly. "What happened?"

"There was a raid in the market today where I and Obinna work. I got lucky! Very lucky! The South Africans...They've killed him Dele. They've killed Obinna."

Dele dropped the hand holding the phone and bit his bottom lip till it bled.

Bilihadyhart Taofeeqah (Khayr_Aade)



Kofi Acquah

— Night Inside The Sun —

The globe is smoked to darkness

no light until the Highest

there is a fire in the corner

it is poked

Blood oozes is like a mantra

under hungry tongues — inside angry eyes

..

Houseflies came whirling

it is not well — they refused the artist

& the sun died under her soot

when the charcoal

armed a half combust

..

for last night

was written

in a powdered diary

OUTERLORDS

.
I have touched a servant's skin in outer locks

.
I break the night like a thief: into her bench
I walk my index finger like a snail: through her spinal trench
–O' outer laws,
I seize her waist in my thumbs: at twelve

.
Spirits split halves within words
The flesh sits and flex
The soul sits and reflects
The Outer Lords take the rest: in flesh

Taiwo D. Oshinubi

WE SHALL OVERCOME

We might be made to go astray
By their imperil'tongue;
And being fizzled out to wander
Like a wanderer
Under the hand of a callous wolf
We Shall Overcome!

We seem to be doom and austere;
Subjected to an excruciating agony
And gnawing in exacerbated sore
We Shall Overcome

Even when we're slain to pain
Our blood shall echo for vengeance
And our souls shall thirst for war
We shall overcome

Our generation shall be curse;
When our voice remained restrained
Our voice we raise in unity;
To sabotage their wiles
And send night for day to be appreciated
We Shall Overcome!

Pelumi Oguns

HOW MANY DO WE COUNT?

When the waves help wave the waving flag
 And the whirls help wheel the wheeling steels,
 Unrest will arrest the peace and pieces the pisces;
 The species that breed on the bread of the sea.

How many do we count of the teeth of dragon fish?
 How many do we intend to name of the legs of centipede?
 Of the uproar, tumult and turbulence in the sea,
 How many do we count?

Surge have swept many off balance,
 Flurry and fury may never cease to flush.

Swoosh and goosh won't stop to persist,
 Hurly-burly and topsy-turvy may become norms,
 Let the sea remain still for the earth is ours.

Fifty years and still counting;
 Filthy ears are still doubting,
 Of the news we heard and read,
 "We" as one entity, need to embrace humanity.

Recession wages war using stormy waves,
 Secession combat peace using ethnic bigotry,
 Corruption lingers and eats deep into justice's marrow
 Let's adjust our sail and appease the wind.

Soon, the flag of victory will be flapped,
 The song of victory will be sang,
 For there is no sea without waves and whirls but season differs,
 Make today's waves become history as we await another...

Charlotte Akello

IF YOU LOVE SOMETHING ENOUGH, YOU CAN ALWAYS GET TIME FOR IT

(Interview Session with Charlotte Akello, An Ugandan Poet)

To begin with, we will like to know some things about you; your background, growing up, why and how you became a writer and how long.

I am Charlotte Akello, I write poetry and short stories. I am from Lira, Uganda. Growing up, I spend most of my life in a boarding school and the holidays at my parent's home. There isn't much to say except that there were lots of reading material and I think that's what sparked my creativity. I liked reading the books and getting lost in them (I still do) so I decided to create my own world-write. I can't really point a day I started writing but it was around 2011 when I realized that what I was doing was writing.

What writing style do you find easy to pull out, and how do you work and what inspires your work?

I do poetry mostly so I'd say my favorite style is freestyle. I don't like being limited by rules. I write anywhere and everywhere so I have no formula to how I work. I'm inspired by the books I read, people I meet and what's going on, basically anything inspires me; even a butterfly on a sunny day or death.

How many works (poetry, prose or play) have you written so far, and have you any published book?

I can't count my works, though poetry must be in thousands or more, I have a few pieces of prose and I've never written a play. I don't find it appealing to write. I wrote *lost girls*, a poetry chapbook that I published for free on my blog. I'm yet to publish a book though I'm not in a rush.

Where have your works been published and what are the contests you've won?

My first short story, *Odokonyero* was published by Writivism. A few of my poems have appear in print in Femrite and Lantern meet anthologies(both Ugandan) I have also been published by writer's space Africa, Kalahari Review and Praxis review on online platforms. I was shortlisted for Babishai Haiku competition in 2017, and long listed for Writivism fiction prize 2018, but I'm yet to win an award.

What are the basic themes you muse on and what project(s) are you working on at the present?

I'm more drawn towards identity and currently, that's what I'm working on.

How do you relax? What do you like to read in your free time and How do you find or make time to write?

I read novels, anything I lay my hands on basically. Currently I'm reading tail of the blue bird by Nii Ayikwei Parkes. I think if you love something enough, you can always get time for it. That's what writing is to me. I don't have to draw a timetable for it but I do it.

Who are your favorite authors and what led to the favoritism?

Wow, I love Warsan Shire because I relate with her poetry.

What is the hardest thing about writing and what are the challenges you've faced as a writer?

Editing, it just takes more time than writing and so I tend to procrastinate it. On Challenges: I guess we still have limited people who support writers and so people tend to give up easily.

What could you point out as your achievement so far as a writer?

My biggest achievement is keeping on the writing, despite the turbulence.

Some poems are said to be bad or lack quality. What do you think makes a great poetry?

Imagery makes a good poem although personally I'm drawn to deep poems.

If your to pick three contemporary writers in your circle whose works inspire you the most, who would they be?

Warsan Shire, Rupi Kaur, I think. I don't think I have met a third one.

Aside from being a writer, what other career would you settle for?

Well . . .

I'm a student of medicine and surgery.

What are your ambitions for your writing career? And generally (your life at large), where do you see yourself in 5 years time?

I want to be a published writer by then, and a medical doctor.

What is your favorite motivational phrase and What advice would you give to aspiring writers, emerging writers and the established writers at large?

The thing is, don't stop writing. It may not yield anything now but just keep it up.

Secondly, don't shy from criticism.

How can readers discover more about you and read more of your work?

I have a blog @ charlotteakello.wordpress.com where I have my old pieces. My newer pieces are still going through the sieve. Also, one may google Charlotte Akello anytime, I'm sure they'll see my works.

Thank you for your time.





shalomike01@gmail.com



Taofeek Ayeyemi (Aswagaawy)

RARITY

Returning from my 'Place of Primary Assignment (PPA),' I lie on the sofa, and log in to Facebook. The first post I see is a picture of a white snail. I scroll down, the next few posts are also the same picture of the albino snail. It seems the friends were seeing it for the first time and, amazed, felt like sharing the enigma with their friends. Surprised too, the friends are also sharing it. Even some posted it to ask for what it's called. Now, my News Feed is all about the albino snail.

I'm rather surprised at their "wowing" reactions because, having spent my postsecondary school years at a new site in Iyesi, Ota, Ogun State, I've seen it a number of times, during snail hunting – where we go out into the thickets in search of snails in the midnight. It was during one of this seasonal expenditure that I first saw a white snail.

In my first encounter with it, I was amused, and amazed too. But while my colleagues were hesitant to pick it, I walked closer to it, picked it, dropped it in my hunting sack and moved on.

rainstorm end . . .
bamboo branches touching
our heads

On getting to the other part of the bush where our Master (a Muslim cleric) was hunting, I showed the snail to him and asked if it was *Ilákòşẹ*. "No," he replied, "This is not *Ilákòşẹ*. *Ilákòşẹ* has a very long and pointed bottom, with the normal black flesh of snails."

He dipped his hand in his sack and showed me an *Ilákòşẹ*. "Wow! What a unique shape," I said.

"Yes," he reacted. "And don't mistake it for *Işáwùrù*, hope you know that?" He asked.

"Yes, I know *Işáwùrù*," I answered. "It is a round and almost circular snail that is found in the riverine areas. Its flesh is more muscular. We can't find it in a place like this," I added.

"Correct. So this white type of snail is called '*Igbín Oṣà*' or '*Igbín Funfun*.' It is used by the *Ifá* Priests in worshipping *Ọbàtálá* (the *Ifá* god), and for other related rituals. And whenever it is found, people hardly eat it, they rather take it to the *Ifá* Priests as a gift. And some even sell it to them. And because of its rarity, the priests won't hesitate to buy it."

"Oh. Wow!" I exclaimed, "So this is the *Igbín Funfun*? I used to think of *Igbín Funfun* as one with white shell. I never imagined it is its flesh that is white. *Allahu Akbar*," I said, to which he responds "*Allahu Akbar Kabeeran. FatabarakAllahu ahsanul khaliqin*" meaning "Allah is the greatest. And glory be to Allah, the best Creator."

"But what if we have *Igbín Funfun* in the shape of *Ilákòṣẹ*, what will that one be called?" I asked.

He laughed. "Well, let's see one first. We'll then ask the Elders for what it's called."

"Could it be *Ilákòfun*?" I maintained a straight face. He chuckled, shaking his head.

*after rain . . .
flying termites circling
the lightbulbs*

NEVER FORGET

I flounder into an eatery for breakfast – call it a brunch because the noon has already grown grey beards. I ordered for sèmó, to be served with 'native soup' and a fish, believing a plate will cost between ₦500 and ₦600, considering the setting of the eatery. In other eateries of lower standard setting, a plate of such food goes for ₦300.

"Sir, a plate costs ₦1,700," said the chief attendant.

A stream of shock shivers down my spine and intestine. I tremble and almost disappear. I begin thinking of how to dodge the order and walk out gentlemanly. Then, suddenly, another attendant said from behind, "The lady over there said she'll pay for your order."

I look backward, there are three ladies sitting together at a table. I had briefly said 'Hi' to them as I was entering. A prophet is not needed to say that my stomach just manufactured a hundred butterflies. I leave the desk to go sit at a table close to them. I thank them with a large smile. "That's how guys used to pay for us while serving in Maiduguri, Bornu" says one of them. "So let the ladies pay for yours today," another adds. We laugh.

It's my fourth month in Port Harcourt, Rivers State for the National Youth Service Corps: an annual scheme for fresh graduates to serve the nation.

An attendant places my food on the table. The ladies are done eating and picking their bags in readiness to leave. As they rise to leave, the third lady who didn't say anything handed a ₦500 note to me and say "Use this for your T-fare." I become speechless and smilingly thank them as if I am not so flabbergasted by an inch.

I finish my food, rise and walk out. At the entrance, I say to myself "Aswagaawy! Never forget."

*yellow sun –
a stray bird cooing
by the rainwater*

SHEHU, Abdus-Salam Aladodo

BATHED BY FIRE

There is a company in darkness, a company in solitude, a company in isolation. We live in dark times, dark trying times, really dark. The enemy within is formidable than the enemy at reach. Roofs are death traps than roads, thoughts are venomous than deeds. Humans are becoming bitterer each day and the toxicity is on public display. The media graces our eyesight with disturbing news; death tolls, suicide rates, rape assaults, murder cases.

Citizens carve out misdeeds and fashion evils against strangers, friends and associates. Innocent women are stripped of their chastity, unsuspecting ones are robbed of their valuables, and the house of God becomes a place where scriptures of whims and volition are recited to ears of erring adherents.

We've heard, read and seen bizarre tales of men who bundled strangers to unknown places at gun points, men who took their daughters to bed under the watch of the full moon, men who gulped calabashes of blood and tore flesh of partners in the quest for quick-money. Tales of men who trade arms, legs, breasts, tongues, private areas, and souls in exchange for fame; and we wonder if they ever had any.

Days ago, heaven looked on and left men to their own fate. The guardian angels watched as men unleashed the evils running through their veins. Days ago, the son of an Imam was lured away from the mosque, tied up, and made to bathe in fire, made to burn like a witch at the stake.

What could have been the sins of a thirteen-year-old? What could have been his shortfalls? Could it have been that his burning at the stake was because he believed in 'The Exalted in Might and Praiseworthy One? How many enemies could he have gathered that he deserved to die a gruesome death while screaming his path to the world beyond? How much anger is the one who burned him consumed by? How much hatred?

The questions remain unanswered. And as we pray for the deceased, we will remember him for the innocent mind that he was, we will sing praises of how he was dutiful to his Lord, write lines of how his mother grieved and his father whimpered when they found out what had happen to him. It is true that death is the destroyer or hopes and desires. It is true that death is the harbinger of sorrow. It is also true that nothing lasts forever. Not us. Not our beloved ones. Not our dreams. Not the life. For life is but sugarcane.

Anifowoshe Ibrahim (Ibankhan)

map

my last love was a map
his skin wide open
while his smile dug into me
i think i punctured my skin for him
i think i folded him into whole
i think i was the name of every city in there

until he pronounced them
in ways that broke me:
he called Palestine without the second
he called Syria like his tongue was
a shooting range
and these names began to
flow somewhere else
weightless than ever before.

Korede Kakaaki

a poem named after war

1967-1970:

this poem is for mayhem that teaches us to dip
our head beneath our hands when death flies on air,

this poem is for gunshots that swallowed the lullaby at the
brink of a mother's tongue as she sat by the bonfire rekindling
the stars with desire, this is for her lyrics that never made it home,

this poem is for hands raising placard singing songs
of home that breaks home, for the coat that has been torn from
the arms of unity & for boys that lives their dreams in their dreams

2000s-date:

this is for benue, for the littered heap of numbed bodies,
for chibok & the other chi, for an haven bereft of harmony,
for girls snatched from schools & their dreams

this is for mubi, for unfound boys, for a place devoid of
peace, for mothers held by shackles of remembrance,
for men limping with sad memories

this is for kanuri, abubakar & gowon, for triggers-happy
men that kill their brother for religious ecstasy,
for lives tossed like dice at the table of havoc

this is for my country incommunicado to tranquility, for the
slumber she is subjected to by the sedative pills of ignorance...

Mohammed Shamsu-deen (MS Deen)

GODS OF GLOOM

Shreds of human beings
Invade by buzzing beings
Carcasses puff grenade gas
In battles of bomb-blasts
Shrills of departing souls
Gushing from woe bowls
Swords slice sobbing souls
New knives on infant corn-poles
Drawn dooms dark the days
From folded curtains of dismays

Then men hope on palms
Some run without arms
Widows wail with wards
Treading streets of waywards

Terrorists soaked in ignorance
Numb hearts off tolerance
Enthuse through calous conscience!

Anifowoshe Ibrahim (Ibankhan)

BIRD BY BIRD, UNFEATHERING WRITING

(Being a presentation delivered at Writers Connect weekly lecture)

When I was contacted to take this lecture, I thought about a lot of things which stemmed from the reality that serious writing for me started from here, Writers Connect.

So where to begin?

It's a deep blue-coloured day on the surface of the clouds. I sit, curled in my wooden chair, head down, trying to find something profound to say with the ensuing threat of the rain. I am not sure I would succeed but I'm sure I would say something. I am not sure it would be profound, but I'm sure someone will say "nice".

Nice?

That's the thing about praises, they're niceties. Do they say the truth? Are they objective? Are they real? Do they say the mind of the reader? Answer that question. That impatient, bland, ordinary, condescending, four letters word.

Thunder cracks behind my window and there's a sudden jerk of fear in my heart. I reach for the pen hanging oppressively from my stationery cup. Days have passed with no writing done and I'm afraid of my culpability.

Culpability

Talk about a bird, but ensure you're not boring. That's how you become culpable: for wasting the time of your reader. That 5mins they would spent watching Lasisi-Elenu making mockery of poetry. No, a bird does not fly. A bird lifts slowly in unison with the body language of the wind. No, a bird doesn't perch on a tree. A bird settles into the architecture of branches as trees are misted by the dim tincture of the hues in the sky. But a bird never learns the way of the sky the day it's born. Flapping the wings is hard, defying gravity is harder.

So what's the explanation of all these, you may ask. It's simple. They're the summaries of everything I want us un-feathering tonight.

1. The writing life is private. Not full of praise until it's done.
2. Praises, rejections, criticisms.
3. The importance of learning as a writer. The importance of style. The importance of reading and writing and how not to be boring when doing it.

1. The writing life is private. Not full of praises until it is done.

A. Now, on this, my opening words are going to be something very simple. Never be another writer. You have to know that to write, you have to be yourself. No, not that you can't imitate. Not that you can't learn the style of others. But, you must steal (learn) in such a way that the thief becomes the owner. That no police can see.

William Zinsser in his authoritative book, "On Writing Well," noted; *"Ultimately, the product that any writer has to sell is not the subject being written about, but who he or she is. I often find myself reading with interest about a topic I never thought would interest me - some scientific quest, perhaps. What holds me is the enthusiasm of the writer for his field. How was he drawn into it? What emotional baggage did he bring along? How did it change his life?"*

B. You must know that no one cares about your writing. Not even that friend that says "my friend is the writer of that article". Try asking them what they loved most, they would have forgotten. The thing about writing is that you can be the writer now, and the one who hates to write the next minute. Why? There's so much going on up and in there. So many emotions and thoughts. And you may get exhausted sometimes. So what must you do? Write when you hate it the most. Write when you're most happy you're a writer. Write when there is nothing to write about. Write when there are too many things to say.

C. No rule to writing. Writing is a private life. I'm here, sitting, typing this message and none of you will judge me until you read it. So, trust your guts. There are so many things to not say right, so why be afraid? Say it wrong and learn to say it right, then teach others how to say it wrongly-right.

2. Praises, rejections, criticisms.

A. Praises:

I will like to raise this issue first as it's what most writers base our writing on. Nice, Wow, Amazing, Hmmmm, those are the catchy words for the impersonal appreciation of our works. Truly, they may be sincere, but you can't live for them. A writer must understand that the real truth about moving and getting better is not how much their works get hmn or nice, it's about the process of seeing yourself grow.

B. Rejections:

As a matter of fact, I have been rejected by some literary magazines 5 times. I met the editor at an event and we laughed about it. Rejections are ultimately part of growing as a writer. You can't know it all. What your friends gave a thumbs up, some editors will consider woeful, bad, and incorrect. Your work is subjective. Not entirely in your control as soon as you send it out. We all should cultivate the habit of sending our works to real literary magazines, online or print. Not just Facebook, Twitter, or WhatsApp.

Stephen King said he attaches his rejection mails to his board, as they are testaments of how far he has grown. When I get rejected, I write 3 new pieces.

C. Criticisms:

If unconstructive, it can be really bad for a writer. It may put us down, considering the sweat put into every word. But criticisms are also the cornerstones of better writing. When a writer takes to criticisms of works, they understand the intricacies of writing better. You must understand that your work is subjective to any reader. So, what they say is their opinion. You don't owe them the obligation to accept it, you only owe yourself the obligation to improve when you see a positive criticism. Not doing that, will be hypocritical and retrogressive to your growth.

3. The importance of learning as a writer. The importance of style. The importance of reading and writing, and how not to be boring when doing it.

Writing, like I said, is a process. It's a progression or regression. Or float in-between, sometimes. But to learn to flap your wings, you must understand that writing goes beyond sitting down to actually write.

Something that says a lot about writing is our understanding of style, sounds, words, languages, thematic expressions, pacing, figures of speech, research, genre, imagery, relatability, currency, etc. Good writing is a byproduct of learning, unlearning, relearning, and a constant improvement towards the impossibility of perfectionism. Here you are, sitting, writing about a boy. You must understand that the only way you have successfully written is to make your reader be interested in the boy. If your reader isn't interested, you just shot yourself in the leg. Make them see the boy in themselves. Make the boy roll tyre in pants and hopefully they will smile in recognition.

Don't clutter your work too much with adjectives, clutters, and language that seems correct but are just far overreaching. There are too many clutters in our memo, the corporation reports, the business letters, the notice from the bank explaining its latest "simplified" statement? What members of an insurance or medical plan can decipher, the brochure explaining his costs and benefits? What a father or mother can put together a child's toy from the instructions on the box? Our tendency is to inflate and thereby sound important. The airline pilot who announces that he is presently experiencing considerable precipitation wouldn't think of saying it may rain. The sentence is too simple, there must be something wrong with it.

Who is this elusive creature, the reader? The reader is someone with an attention span of about 30 seconds, a person assailed by many forces competing for attention. At one time, those forces were relatively few: newspapers, magazines, radio, spouses, children, phone. Today they also include Facebook, e-mail, the Internet, the phone, a pool, a lawn, and that most potent of competitors, sleep. You must understand that you must learn the art of grabbing the attention of the reader in that first 30 seconds.

So how do you do all these?

Read.

Read.

Read.

Workshops.

Literary events.

Campaigns.

Competitions.

Write.

Write.

There are so many books to read as a writer. So many that I can't list many now. But I can give a list later.

With all said and done, consume your way to success. You must create. No matter the amount of books you read, you're not a writer. You must write to be called one.

So, final words, I'm done.

Akinwale Philip Peace

INTRICACIES: THE NATURE OF MAN AND HIS EMOTIONS

Dear reader, we exist in a society where a number of people refuse to heal. Whereas, even a streak of light does not allow darkness the luxury of overwhelming a space.

1.

Every human is in a right shape of mind to consider that which plagues him. It is hence a deliberate effort to sieve the antithesis between the real and the imaginary. A man's perfect state of mind opens the door to further reflections on his past and his present, be it real or imaginary: the affairs of which guides his tomorrow, which a man in his perfect mind nurtures with great hope, (also imaginary). It is a greater pain and sadness when the hoped for does not yield good fruition. Hence, pain which man feels for the things which he seeks for existence is natural. A life without pain is such without purpose; such that he does not seek anything and he conversely feels boredom; a dominant feature of such existence. If a man is without purpose, he is bored; which also adds to his pain which are most times self-inflicted on the alarm at life's absurdities. Hence, pain, which is felt, is a result of man's physical affiliation and relationships; desires; anxiety; toils and purpose. All these orchestrate a haven to which man seek to escape the sea of 'inevitable' *excruciating* pain his mortal body brings. Pain itself is a purpose which must be fulfilled.

Hitherto, the stance of taking one's life due to the physical pain existence inflicts is incontestable. A man has an undeniable access to his life, and can cease it at will. However, religion and morality condemn this. It is with extreme severity that the society tags these suicidal persons as weaklings and cowards. The deniable act of courage evokes pity and concern while it evokes anger and indifference to some persons. In reality, the concern on people folding themselves into a leaf of sadness which makes them little and unimportant to themselves – while they are held in high esteem by others – is a feeling achieved by imaginary fears for the past; the extreme reflection on the present and the concern and desire of a nonexistent future which man seeks to shape. That which we all seek to define. Complexities built man, and pain which everyone feels is a feature of it. However, people who inflict pain on other peoples are not exempted from the absurdities of their lives. As they find purpose in the pain of others, that

which gives them pain to achieve. To be suicidal, proscribed by law, is only natural, when clearly understood. Because humans depressed thoughts are tied to emotions which he never settled when he lived them.

2.

We must trace the origin of what a man feels, (pardon the bias) to understand that which bedevils him. By consideration of a man's past, absolutely a shocking and verily thinkable one, a man is made to worry about the present and subsequently the future. Man demands to be healed, even when he does not say it. One who ails, loves it, sometimes, wants it, but truly wants to end it without discontinuing existence. This which a victim himself does not know he does but do. When a depressed person visits a therapist, his pain takes the most part of him versus his urgent needs to be healed. It must be understood that only the depressed, or suicidal can heal himself. He knows that which he can do to stop imagining uncertainties, or what was never real, which has brought him to his present state.

The past haunts like the chasing of the clock, but that which is taken for one thing is believed to be another until man unravels the contrary truth. Besides, a man can write himself his truth, for the sake of living. Thus, when one is strong enough to heal, he begins to see where to start the process from. He begins to trace the genesis and recapture the moments of his loss, his betrayal, his denial and his tentative cessation from existence. He would see the need to cry, and mourn and lay by a river, or see the rain pour, or see his life get struck by thunder or drenched by the fleeting of the rain. A man who is ready to heal needs to revisit that which haunts him for the purpose of re-living it. As it is certain that time cannot be changed, but that who seeks healing can change stories. The reality is that emotions dominate man, we feel, and then we believe even that which we've created; even that which is not real, nor meant to be brought into memory.

A man who wills to heal knows the origin of his issue, he hence halt projecting his unreal stories. His stories which could be imaginary, evoked by fear, has so far plagued his existence singlehandedly. Our poor stories make us heavy and very, very heavy with gloom and despondency (a feasible feature of the complexities by which man is built) needs to be rewritten. Man cares for these stories that stay with him, and even when he wills to let go, they refuse. Because he hasn't settled the past which comes to him over and over again. Healing is a thing of the mind, which some

people do not understand. A therapist can only help the man's thinking, he does not alert and shield the mind of its dull thoughts. He that wishes to heal does this. Our mind tells us intriguing stories, we hold on to them and we tell them into reality. I will not however shy away from the factuality of some emotions. True emotion is one which man needs to settle scores with so as to maintain a rugged mental health.

Only you, however, can lay down in your gloom and realize where it chokes you more, and where you have to help yourself escape. Only you can cry your tears, feel them burn through you; only you can mourn your loss and embrace yourself within and without, creating a thick skin for yourself, that which only total healing can effectuate. You will need courage to help yourself, you will need the time and space and you will need to end the thought of your insecurities, a valuable exchange for your courage.

3.

Hopelessness, a feature of your effort, erodes you and turns you intangible. And you can think of your intangibility as without love and without ears. The world may appear as no place for you. But you can always create another world for yourself. Man's creation is to create things. And only that who observes himself can create the things that works for him. Everything and everyone will not suite a man, in so much does little do. You hence, need to create a world for yourself, a world where you will not bother about who listens to you. You can create a world to contain yourself. A world where you need not feel condemned, even when you are - condemned by those outside your world. - it is the ability of humans to select that which he absorbs, his ability stretches to voluntarily ignore that which he seeks no affiliation. Pain, which however, is a dominant feature of man's existence must be cherished. Happiness will come as interludes, pain must be absorbed to become familiar; without which, that which we do not attract will continue to attract us, and may eventually overwhelm us if we do not recognize it.

Sometimes, it isn't about our strength, it is how much we're vulnerable too. We have to feel what discomfort truly is before we can shield ourselves from it.

Akinwale Peace Akindayo (Philip Peace)

Living with the two part of us

is admitting that we're besieged by our thought;
 The air wears us shrouds to the other world.
 Imagination is a battle field
 Peace as free as the air pours;
 It is a two way thing:
 First, you're happy as a child,
 Innocent. ignorant of the world
 And every real thing in the Eden garden.
 Life is a tender flower holding
 life to its root
 Your head conceives life like
 a sculptor // like an artist.
 Living is in every picture
 you paint. — a fantasy
 so close that God knows you want to live.
 Second, it comes as a dream
 in an shrouded night
 Everything is dark as shutting the eye
 You alone walk in the dark
 and every other thing you name
 appears, they're alien — friendly,
 Rough perching on your skin
 You're far away but you remain with them
 You feel everything you call dissonant
 Everything you call horror
 You feel everything you call a nightmare;
 Every odd feeling is a natural gift.
 Your devil launches a missile
 You are a crusade;
 you must be acquainted with yourself
 before reality dawns on your withered lids.
 You're a crusade. You're a crusade.
 You did not come here to know peace.

Taofeek Ayeyemi (Aswagaawy)

BEYOND THE TWO SIDES OF A COIN, A REVIEW OF PHILIP PEACE'S "LIVING WITH THE TWO PARTS OF US" BY TAOFEEK AYEYEMI (ASWAGAAWY)

Life in itself is an adventure, the journey is not always easy, the roads are usually rough and tough. This poet thus displays against our faces the mirror of life with his poem that there are two sides to a coin, and so is to life. Magically however, he makes us see that we need to see beyond the two sides of a coin for no one is talking about the edge of the coin which is a great part of it, for without the edge, with what will you toss the coin, or on what strength will the coin roll?

Thus, he displays life to be of the good, the bad, then the ugly; morning, night, then afternoon; the past, the present, then the future; this world, the other world, then the world in between. In bringing to fore the three parts or ways of life, the poet says *"It is a two way thing: / First, you're happy as a child..."* Then he says *"Second, it comes as a dream/ in a shrouded night..."* Thirdly, as intuited by me, he says *"You are a crusade; / you must be acquainted with yourself/ before reality dawns on your withered lids."*

But man often forgets life is usually in two ways, not to talk of thinking of the third part. We're always engrossed with the life we live in our head – entangled in the web of our imagination. And when we come back to life, we discovered we've been in fantasy and we return to finish the war we left behind. But then, it is worthy of note that this masturbation with our imagination doesn't end with our childhood, we carry it into youth, then eld. To this, the poet says *"Imagination is a battle field."* He further buttressed that *"Your head conceives life like / a sculptor // like an artist / Living is in every picture / you paint. – a fantasy / so close that God knows you want to live."*

In my progenitor's language, the word for life is "Ayé." This word doesn't have a root word or etymology. We call life by that name because that's what we met people calling it. But a wise man have interpreted life by flexing his brain on the word "yé" meaning "to understand" to mean, I his postulation, *"Nkan tí kò yé èyàn ni à ní pè láyé"* that is *"What goes beyond man's understanding is what is called life."* In short, life is enigmatic.

As such, life is simply to be lived the way it approaches us and the only way to be in peace with life and ourselves is to accept life the way it is, that is, knowing that life will not be a bed of rose, there are thorns in between. And whenever we're pierced with the thorns, we should live, not only when we taste the nectar or smell the fragrance of the rose. Shamz Tebrizi, the master of my poetry Master – Jalaludeen Rumi, in his own words said *"It is easy to be thankful when all is well. But A Sufi (mystic) is thankful not only for what he has been given, but also for all he has been denied."* To this end, the poet closes the poem with the very essence and says *"You're a crusade. You're a crusade./ You did not come here to know peace."*

Philip Peace is a poet I've watched grow with poetic mastery. And I've seen him experimented various styles and it seems he's settling with this present style which to me is a tasteful and tasty one. In today's literary world, poetic license and/or avant-garde has made poets display their poetic insanity & deftness in various ways. The use of forward slash (/) used to be for reviewers but poets are using it today directly in their poems. Philip also peeped into that world but just in a glance in his poem. Well, it's also one of the beauties of poetry.

The beautiful use of poetic devices in the poem is highly commendable. It's a pride and astonishment to poesy. He employs imagery, symbolism, simile, metaphor, personification et al. And these devices helped drove home the message intended. I can point out some as follows:

Imagery: "Life is a tender flower holding/ life to its root,"

Symbolism & Allegory: "...ignorant of the world/ And every real thing in the Eden garden."

Personification: "The air wears us shrouds to the other world."

Metaphor: "Imagination is a battle field"

These are just to indicate but few of the poetic devices employed by the poet. There's however a forgivable typo in the lines *"Second, it comes as a dream/ in an shrouded night."* The article should be "a." At this juncture, I can only tell the poet keep writing, the world waits to have more.

Yusuf Olanrewaju (Yusful)

"LIVING WITH THE TWO PARTS OF US" BY AKINWALE PHILIP PEACE, REVIEWED BY YUSUF OLANREWAJU

Often times we live in dilemma of what is our existence really have to be, we search for where the earth links us to, how we truly have to live and find ourselves lost in who we truly meant to be. Here is a poem dissecting our fantasy of existence with forceps of reality. We are human not meant to drift in the dissonant of things live registered in us as horror and what we seem to have found home in and thought of them as peace. Life is beyond what our environment perforated into our mind, as the poet creatively painted it; *"living is in every picture you paint – a fantasy so close that God knows you want to live."*

When a poet explores the theme of existentialism, you as a reader would expect the writer takes you to an unimaginable land where life truly has its name to itself you never imagined to be taken through the slippery edge of your opinion where ironically, you are the truth you seek to know, this is what the author of this work served us with, a provocative question we do not want to accept the answer lies within us, even when we assume we do not have the answer to it, we still carry it on as it lingers in our heart

*"...it comes as a dream in a shrouded night
Everything is dark as shutting the eye"...*

You need not to imagine this before you know it's something that had always stay with you but you've never consciously taken the time to feel the world in the reality of having your eyes closed and see who is truly walking the earth with you. We prefer to stay in the obvious opinion that we are not alone while, when we take ourselves off the shore of that thought and be real enough we would understand what the poet said:

*"you alone walk in the dark
and every other thing you name appears_
they are alien - friendly, rough perching on your skin
you're far away but you remain with them"*

I do not know when we began to realize we've come of age, sometimes I think there's no particular threshold to define leaving a childhood age to adulthood because, the mind can only conceive what we created in it, and pretend to act as if it is the way we feel it is. Sometimes I imagine a kid acting like an adult and everyone acknowledged it, that the kid action is as

someone fully grown to swallow the world and, in contrary an adult acting as if he's been trapped in being a child and we began to question his length of existence. This poem doesn't want us to be too lost in what is before us and seem not there; "*...you feel everything you call dissonant / everything you call horror / you feel everything you call nightmare / every odd feeling is a natural gift.*"

We as human have been wired to be homely with what we believe, we found ourselves comfortable with what majority perceive as what it is, even when it is not, we find it difficult to be acquainted with our mind and all it whispers to us, perhaps we are deaf to the truth within that we find true existence outside the shore of ourselves. We seek happiness from other who also seek same from us, we all failed to blow our ember into flame, the writer wittily posed it to us maybe we would taste it as raw and swallow it, or spit it away and feel all will be well.

*"your devil launches a missile
you are a crusade;
you must be acquainted with yourself
before reality dawns on your withered lids."*

"You're a crusade" is to make a grand concerted effort toward some purportedly worthy cause of your existence outside opinion of others. And if you haven't conceive that "you did not come here to know peace"

A poem is meant to leave you with many answers than questions and here is one of the kind. It let you carry yourself into places unwanted and still feel comfortable and relieved. The writer has really shown a long time of self thought and development, originality and truth. The poetic devices deployed are calculated attempt and aptly used. Though while no one would question a poet's poetic license, we can still ask why we must carry punctuations in our thoughts. Imagery is the beauty of poems; the poet has mastered his art of metaphoric illustration of thought blended with rhetoric that bleeds our heart.

As I believe there's no bad poem or good poem, it's how the reader conceive the message, but a good poem has no hidden place, as good with a reader so as it is with others. This is a good poem to read over and over again.



Olamide Santos

ACROSS THE WALL

Once I lived in an enclosed space
Guarded by very high walls
Crowned with spikes and barbs

Surrounded by unknown neighbours
We never talk or visit or hang out
Just an occasional 'hello' when we see

On some mornings I would wake
Or return home from daily toils
To see trash from across the wall

At first I took it with fate
Till I began to retaliate
Sending my own trash to their side of the wall

So now we exchange trash
Three on the sides two adjacent
And me in the middle

But I ask myself now
Will it not be better if we had no walls?
And one man's trash was everyone's concern.

Then I wouldn't have to write this poem
Complaining about all this trash
From the other side of my wall

THIS IS NOT A POEM

I woke up to the howls of the yellow and black beasts
Dared to stand but retreated as the cold wet greeted my feet
The beautiful night opened up emptying its gut
Exposing unseen gates of rot and rust that adorn my modernized hut

This is not a poem

It is a story of the memory of a proem

Time and chance happens to them all

I remember the reverends many alter calls

What is most painful is not the fall

But getting up and moving on

The dreadful playback of an avoidable commotion

Why did we take that path?

This not a poem about my country

But the freedom fighters have lied

And sold us back into slavery

They stood with clenched fist

Chanting mad songs of unwritten dreams

I write this as a reminder

So like that song

We don't keep on falling in and out of

Deceptions and stories about a greater tomorrow

When just yesterday my hut was a mansion

No this is not a poem

It is a reminder of how bad

Sweet dreams and beautiful thoughts can end

Agunbiade Kehinde Adeshina

FATHERS GO TO EAST

Violence, war and awful stench of blood
Universe stained with blood from hungry swords
And every foetus prefers to be left unborn
To coming to the world and get burnt

Fathers go to East
Mothers hare to West
They know nowhere to meet
Becoming inhabitable is the earth.

Sucklings and mothers hare
Refugees here and there
I call on to the father Lord
To halt the shedding of innocent blood.

Jesutofunmi Fekoya (Jemma)

MARCH 18TH.

The day Balogun's life changed. The day life whirled him around and disaster waved its hand in his face and slapped him.

Today was March 18th, twelve years after that incident. Balogun was facing a crowd gathered around someone or something. It was quite similar to that day that changed his life, except that at that time, he was a confused little boy with tears streaming down his face.

In his mind, that day didn't start with his mum waking him up and getting him ready for school or his mum forcing him to eat breakfast. That was a daily routine he went through sleepily. For him, that day actually started when his mum escorted him to his dad's car and waved at him as his dad drove away. That woke him up from his half conscious state. For the first time in a long time, his dad was taking him to school. His mum had always taken him to school because his father left very early everyday and so Balogun was surprised when he realized it was his dad taking him to school this time.

"What of mum?" he had asked.

"She's not feeling too well. She needs to rest. Aren't you happy I'm taking you to school?"

Balogun nodded. He was beyond happy. His dad was dressed in his fitting police uniform and he couldn't wait to show him off to his classmates. Balogun had always loved his father's job and the commanding way his dad spoke. His father was always dressed neatly and it was the reason Balogun was always neatly dressed instead of dressing the way his classmates did, with untucked shirts and flying collars.

As they drove to school, Balogun sang along with his dad to the music playing on the radio. It was something the whole family did whenever they were driving to church on Sunday. Balogun couldn't keep the grin off his face, until they got caught in traffic. He frowned as he looked at the cars lined up in front of them.

His dad turned down the volume of the radio. "What's going on here?" he thought aloud.

Balogun leaned forward to take a look. He couldn't see much but there seemed to be a crowd of some sort blocking the road.

"Dad, see," he said, pointing to a police van he had spotted.

"Yeah, I see it. Stay in the car and lock the doors. Let me find out what's going on."

Balogun watched his dad get out of the car and move towards the crowd. He was confident that the road would be free in a few minutes. His dad was always stopping to control traffic whenever he could so Balogun was used to it. But a few minutes turned to ten and his father had not come back. If anything, the crowd had become more rowdy.

He opened the door and stood up—his head was barely passing the top of the car—to see what was going on. That was when he saw the police van drive off very quickly. It looked like the back window had been smashed. "Dad!" he whispered, jumping down from the car and racing towards the crowd. "Dad! Dad!" he called but there was no sign of his dad anywhere. Perhaps, somehow, he knew something was wrong because tears suddenly started falling from his eyes. "Dad!" he croaked.

With the crowd pressing around him, he could barely see anything, yet he tried to surge forward. He was being pushed around and the screams around him were getting louder but the only thing on his mind was finding his father.

Some time had passed before the crowd began to thin out. Balogun pushed through, fresh tears replacing the ones already drying on his cheeks. He had only pushed through for a few seconds before he saw his dad. He was laying on the floor, his clothes torn and dirtied. His whole head and face was covered with blood and there seemed to be a huge gash on his head pouring out more blood. He was still alive though, Balogun could tell from the look in his eyes when their eyes met. His father moved slightly, as if trying to tell him to go.

"Dad," he whispered in shock and took a step forward instead.

Just then, a man rushed past him carrying a large stick. Balogun barely had time to understand what was happening before the stick came down, crushing his father's head and his little heart.

The crowd roared in delight. No one noticed the little boy screaming with tears rolling down his cheeks.

Everything after that happened in a blur. Someone saw him and took him to his school, after recognizing his school uniform. The events after that were flashes. Mostly of him crying in his mother's arms after the school took him home.

The next day, newspaper headlines read: Corrupt policemen killed by angry riot. It stated that some policemen had been attacked after their attempt to forcefully collect bribe had led to a fatal accident. Balogun wanted to tell everyone that his father wasn't corrupt, he was a good policeman who just wanted to help clear traffic, but no matter how much he screamed it in the air, it didn't change the fact that his father had been murdered and then accused falsely. He was never among the corrupt policemen.

His mum never recovered from that incident and neither did he. A child watching the brutal murder of his father wasn't something he wished on anyone. Year after year, he wondered if his father would have been alive if things had gone differently. What if the crowd had focused more on helping the accident victims than attacking the policemen? What if they hadn't taken justice into their hands?

However, those what ifs couldn't change what had happened. Balogun had to live with that nightmare playing in his mind everyday. He had to remain strong like his father who had been good despite the bad surrounding him.

Now, twelve years after that incident, Balogun was faced with another angry crowd. From the little he had heard, the crowd were melting out jungle justice to the child who had stolen from someone. For a moment, he thought of walking away and forgetting about it. After all, it was because his father had tried to help that he had been killed. But Balogun knew that he couldn't walk away. He was the true son of his father.

He took a deep breath and prayed, hoping that what he was about to do would not cost him his life. The voice of someone screaming broke through the haze of the frenzied crowd. It took a few seconds for the words, "Police! Police! Police is coming" to sink in. When it did, the crowd scattered in confusion as more people echoed the words. No one seemed to realize it was Balogun who had started it. The little moment of confusion was what the little boy being beaten needed to get out of there. Balogun followed after him, trying not to draw attention to himself. He pursued him for a few minutes before he managed to catch him. A good grip on his arm was enough to bring the boy to a stop. He whirled around to look at him, his eyes wide in fear.

"Please, sir. Please--"

"What did you steal?" Balogun asked, interrupting him. When he saw how scared the boy looked, he lowered his voice. "I'm not going to hurt you. I just want to know what you took."

The boy glanced at his clenched fingers and Balogun frowned. He couldn't believe the boy had still kept whatever he had stolen, despite the attack on him.

"What is it?" he asked softly.

The boy slowly opened his hands and Balogun stared at it in shock. His grip on the boy's arm slipped away.

"I was hungry," the boy whispered.

But Balogun wasn't really focused on him. Even when the boy slipped away a few moments later, he let him go. All that went through his mind was how the little boy would have lost his life because of a handful of garri. His mind whirled with the thoughts of how a bright future would have been cut off like that. The thought of how bloodthirsty people were and how they ended up killing innocent people or people who didn't deserve death baffled him. How did they survive knowing they were murderers themselves?

As he walked away, he wondered when people would first think before they acted, when they would act more human and less savage. Innocent lives were being taken everyday, bright futures were being cut short every minute. Maybe if people left justice for the law, things would have been better, his father would have been alive, that incident would not have left him scarred.

Jimoh Rahmah

HOW DO YOU LIVE IN A WORLD THAT RESENTS YOU?

How do you live in a world that resents you, stomps past you to show you you're nothing? Detests your colour, body and voice? A world that howls like a lion into your ears, that success ain't for you, no not for your type because your type succeeds only in the kitchen, making chicken stews with a baby strapped to your flattened back.

Mother tells you; 'My Daudas are the dearest to me, you're just a female, you don't belong here, you should respect your younger brother, he's a man and you are just a woman.' Mother becomes your murderer, slashing you with words, that kills slowly like sips of a sniper!

How do you live in a world where you are told to dress to kill, to gain attentions of real suitors but instead your dress is addressed lustful eyes skimming down and up until your lustrous dress is torn and drips of red from that closure in between your laps? Sometimes, you don't even have to dress to kill before they pounce on you like a lion on its prey.

You live with the fear of a next day, perhaps another whirlwind or a sandstorm, or heart-quakes from the man you were betrothed to. Maybe, this time you'd be whipped like a stubborn cow with the hide of a sheepskin. So how do you live without the fear of life more pungent than of death, when you know not what tomorrow awaits?

How do you not calmly cross your legs, cup your hands as you look out through the glass door you're enclosed in, without thinking of piercing your heart with a piece of the glass your life is caged in? You smack in fury to break down the glass, no don't! Of course, you're strong and a survivor, instead smack down the glass door that allows you see yet not feel, then fly, like a bird, into the skies, up into the world that you're born to fly in.

Daudas: Male children



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Anifowoshe Ibrahim (Ibankhan) is a law student at the University of Lagos. His works have been published in The Quills, Observer, Visual Poetry, Kalahari Review, African Writers and elsewhere. He is the first Runner-up in the Youth 4 Global Goals essay competition and Winner Ramadan Literary Contest (2019). When he isn't reading cases and sections, he writes poetry. When he isn't doing both, he begs the words in his head to keep quiet.

Barnabas Adeleke loves nature and literature. He is also an amateur photographer and pencil artist, living in Nigeria.

Chinua Ezenwa-Ohaeto (@ChinuaEzenwa) is from Owerri-Nkworji in Nkwerre, Imo state, Nigeria and grew up between Germany and Nigeria. He has won the Association Of Nigerian Author's Literary Award for Mazariyya Ana Teen Poetry Prize, 2009; Speak to the Heart Inc. Poetry Competition, 2016. He became a runner-up in Etisalat Prize for Literature, Flash fiction, 2014. He won the Castello di Duino Poesia Prize for an unpublished poem, 2018 which took him to Italy. He was the recipient of New Hampshire Institute of Art's 2018 Writing Award, and also the recipient of New Hampshire Institute of Art's 2018 scholarship to MFA Program. Some of his works have appeared in Lunaris Review, AFREADA, Rush Magazine, Kalahari Review, Palette, Knicknackery, Praxismagazine, Bakwa Magazine, Strange Horizons, One, Ake Review, Crannòg magazine and elsewhere.

Ibikunle Aishah Adekemi is a new word seeking for the next, a white garment longing for a dye.

Ikpe Comfort fondly called Beatitude is a Literary Writer who hails from Akwa Ibom. She was the second runner-up in the Writing2Writers Competition in the year 2017. She is a writer in the day, a reader at night.

Jamiu, Toyeeb Aremu also known as Maitre Jammy is a poet and literary enthusiast.

Jesutofunmi Fekoya is an award winning writer and a published author. She has been writing since she was little but began professionally writing in 2017. She goes by the penname Jemma and has won and been shortlisted for several writing competitions, a few of which include second place winner of Campus Writing Challenge 2018; 1st runner up of League of Wordsmiths 2018; longlisted for Quramo Writers Prize 2018. She is an ambassador at Fresh Writers community, assistant editor for W4J network and a Law Student at University of Lagos. You can read up to 7 of her books for FREE on Wattpad @ <http://www.wattpad.com/user/JEMMA7>

Jide Badmus is an electrical engineer, inspired by beauty and destruction; he believes that things in ruins were once beautiful. Jide explores themes around sensuality and healing. His literary philosophy is wrapped around ambiguity and brevity. He is the author of *There is a Storm in my Head*, *Scripture*, and *Paper Planes in the Rain*; curator of *Vowels Under Duress* and *Coffee* poetry anthologies. Badmus writes from Lagos, Nigeria. You can reach him on twitter @bardmus, IG @instajhide, & email jidebadmus@gmail.com

John Chizoba Vincent is a poet, Author, Cinematographer and filmmaker. His works have appeared on African Writer, Tuck Magazine, Gaze, naijastories, Praxis Magazine, Black Boy Review and forthcoming in *Brittle Papers*. His writings have featured in many anthologies both home and abroad. He has five books published to his credit which includes *Good Mama*, *Hard times*, *Letter From Home*, *For Boys Of Tomorrow*. He lives in Lagos where he writes.

Kofi Acquah is a Poet/Writer, author of 'Sound of The Tsetse Drum' and co–author of 'Palm Leaves' and a coach in 'The Village Thinkers'— an Afro-Creative Center in Ghana. His works have appeared in *Bodies & Scars*, *The Nalubalee Review*, *Best New African Poets Anthology*, *A New Ulster journal*, *The XXI Century World Literature*, *India* (2016), *Voices of Humanity*, USA; *Tuck Magazine* among others. He was shortlisted in the poetry category for the maiden edition of the Ghana Writers Awards, 2016, Shortlisted in the Poetry category for the 2018 African Writers Awards held in Abuja-Nigeria, *Delegates* in the 2015 American Poetry Marathon. You can reach him @_kofiacquah

Korede Kakaaki is a young Nigerian poet hoping to break waves someday, he explores the theme of depression, grief, absence, boyhood, godhood. He's the First Runner-up, *Inkspired* 2019. He hopes to find himself someday.

Lustrous محمد writes from Lagos. He's a lover of art and loves to explore the world of creativity

Mobola Oluwapelumi M.O.S.S is an ardent lover of creativity, who believes that there's so much love in the art.

Mohammed Shamsu-deen, born in Tamale the capital of Northern Region, Ghana, had his basic education at Sakasaka Cluster of schools. He completed Visual Art in Tamale Secondary School. MS Deen, (his pen name) is now a professional classroom teacher certified by Bagabaga College of Education in Tamale.

Oguntuase Oluwapelumi who prefers to be called Pelumi Oguns a.k.a Pelumzy_Pan is a poet, prose and play writer who often get inspired by music and sudden muse. He is a self acclaimed poseur of positivism, architect of great inks, noiseless and making sense.

Olamide Santos is the co-founder of Earthlight International and CEO of Saint June, a diplomat-in-training, youth development capacity facilitator and environmentalist. He has a degree in international relations and a diploma in Business Administration. he is a YALI alumnus, a swimming medalist, writer and poet, with two e-book to his credit: "Rhythm and Poetry, Mind of a Poem" and "Masquerades and Puppeteers". He lives in Lagos with his family.

Ololade Akinlabi Ige is a young Nigerian poet, a graduate of OAU. He hails from Ibadan. He was a nominee for Nigeria Writers Award 2017 and a two time winner of Poet in Nigeria 10-day poetry Challenge. He emerged as second runner up in Youth Shades international poetry contest in 2017. He was shortlisted for Albert Jungan poetry prize same year. He won the last edition of Ken Egba Poetry prize organized by PIN.

Oni Tomiwa is a lover of poetry. A lover of every form of art and an amateur nature photographer. He resides and writes in Osogbo, Osun State. His poems and essays have appeared in both prints and journals. A football lover.

Oresegun Olumide is a Nigerian hyper-realistic artist who received media attention in 2016 globally after he posted some of his oil on canvas paintings on Facebook which apparently has no competition whatsoever with any in the world. The hyper-realism of his works has been recognized by CNN, EFCC among many international organizations. Born in Ikorodu, Lagos, Olumide's love for drawing and painting started when he was 4. He is an alumnus of Yaba College of Technology, Yaba, Lagos where he graduated with a distinction in Fine Art. He cites Pablo Picasso and Michelangelo di Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni as his role models. Olumide started painting professionally in 2005. His drawing and painting are inspired by his environment, mostly using water as the principal theme of his works. Olumide currently owns an art studio, Reality Edge Studio, in Ikorodu where he showcases his works and exhibitions.

Rahma O. Jimoh is a budding poet and student of the department of mass communication, Olabisi Onabanjo University. Some of her works have been published in The Mamba, African Writers on IG and other online literary journals like Wricon

Quarterly, the SPIC anthology (si(gh)lent nights). She is the second runner -up of the poesy writers contest 2019, joint winner of the PIN 10-day poetry contest and shortlist of BPCC May 2019. She is Rahma Oluwaremilekun Jimoh on FB and @Dynamic_Rahma on IG. She can be contacted via dynamicremmy@gmail.com

Shehu Abdus-Salam Aladodo is a Writer, Entrepreneur, and a Theologian who believes in the infallible creed and not in fallible ideologies or convictions. His works has been featured and are forthcoming in several publications and platforms. He is a father to many cats, and tweets @dodo_leleyi

S.A. Ibrahim is a weirdo photography enthusiast, writer and editor. He enjoys reading good poetry. He is a foodie, a game lover and the lead photographer at 'BRYMOGRAPHY'. He has some of his works in a few journals while some are anthologized.

Taofeek Ayeyemi fondly called Aswagaawy is a Nigerian lawyer and writer. His works are featured and/or forthcoming in Tuck Magazine, The Quills, Cicada's Cry, Akitsu Quarterly, Stardust Haiku, Modern Haiku, Failed Haiku, Frogpond, Cattails, Seashores, Presence, The Mamba and elsewhere. He won the PoeticWednesday Poetry Contest, 2018; First Runner-up Okigbo Poetry Prize (2016) and Honorable Mention Prize in the 1st Morioka International Haiku Contest, 2019 among others.

Taiwo Damilola Oshinubi popularly known as DEprestige is a poet and essayist, a 300L student of the prestigious premier university of education, Tai solarin University of Education.

Yusuph Maryam Oyindamola is a writer who wishes her words travel the world over.

Call For Submission

THE QUILLS - ISSUE 5 - NEXUS

The Quills is the official publication of **Writers Connect** at its fourth issue. For **Issue 5**, we look out for works that address the theme "Nexus." By this, we mean the world is one, that we are streams that source from one ocean. So think of tackling discrimination of all kinds – racial, religious, gender among others. Think of unity, oneness, peace et al. Send your works – ones that slimly fit into the theme, ones that are not too far from it and ones that are not too close to it.

DEADLINE: 5th of November, 2019

SUBMISSION EMAIL: writersconnect1@gmail.com

GUIDELINES:

Poems should not be more than 25 lines, excluding the title.

Fiction & Nonfiction should be between 450 – 1000 words. Haibun and haiku sequence (renga) are accepted under this category as nonfiction.

Essays, Reviews & Interviews should be between 750 – 1500 words. (Interviews should contain the Bio of the interviewer and the interviewed. Also Review should contain the Bio of the Reviewer and author(s) of the reviewed works.

Visual Arts should not be more than three works. Visual Arts include but not limited to Drawing, painting, sketches and photography. The Editors will select from the artworks the Book Cover Art. Haiga are accepted only if the author of the haiku is also the owner of the artworks.

No entrant should submit more than 1 work for each category (except virtual art where maximum of three works is accepted)

In the subject of your mail, enter the category with the journal name and Issue. E.g "Nonfiction, Issue 5 The Quills"

PS:

-One person can enter for all the categories but should be submitted separately.

-Submit your works with a short Bio of not more than 70 words, including your nationality and email address

-All submissions must be the original works of the entrants, unpublished and not under consideration elsewhere

-All works should be in the body of the mail, no attachment. However, where there's a special format for your work that warrants such, kindly state it in the cover letter. If not, any works with attachment and no reason for same will be deleted outrightly.

WRITERS C  NNECT
.....bridging bounds between bards

