AN ANTHOLOGY OF THE JUNE-JULY 2022
BRIGITTE POIRSON POETRY CONTEST (BPPC)

A UNIVERSE WHERE U=ME

EDITED BY: BRIGITTE POIRSON
& KUKOGHO IRUESIRI SAMSON

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A UNIVERSE WHERE U=ME

TOP 20 POEMS OF THE
BRIGITTE POIRSON POETRY CONTEST (BPPC)
JUNE / JULY 2022

Edited by
BRIGITTE POIRSON
KUKOGHO IRUESIRI SAMSON

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INTRODUCTION

Our species is wired to seek out what is beyond, and because there is always something new to strive for, we are constantly seeking out new frontiers. Our lives are filled with frontiers, which are areas of new possibilities, especially those that are unfamiliar to us. This is why Maxwell Maltz famously said, *"You may live in an imperfect world, but the frontiers are not closed and the doors are not all shut*."

The poets featured in this chapbook of the June-July 2022 *Brigitte Poirson Poetry Contest (BPPC*) take us on a journey of frontiers in their delicious poems. For *Jewo Oghenetega,* the winner of this edition, *"a universe where "U" [you] = me"* is the new frontier he aspires to. Jewo's *Love & Lingua*, from which this anthology's title comes, is largely aspirational like many of the other poems in this anthology. This speaks to our nature as humans to always look beyond what is already known.

As I invite you to share in the gift of their aspirations, I hope that your own aspirations for new frontiers may take root and blossom.

Kukogho Iruesiri Samson
July 2022

HONOUR ROLL: JUNE / JULY 2022

JEWO OGHENETEGA is a poet, creative writer, and Christian spoken word artist. His works have appeared or are forthcoming in *WSA Magazine, Brittle Paper, PoeticAfrica, Artslounge, Itanile, Mayó, ChristApoet, Spillwords*. Jewo is the winner of the *CreativeNaija Blog's IAMNIGERIA Contest* (writing category), and 2nd runner-up of the BPPC (August/September 2021). He is presently an undergraduate of Medicine and Surgery at Lagos State University.

TESTIMONY ODEY, also known as *Temidayo Testimony Omali Odey*, is a Nigerian teen writer, poet, and artist. Her book, *Uloma* was awarded 1st Runner-up of the *Nigeria Prize for Teen Authors*, and her second novel, *Feathered,* won the *Nigeria Prize for Teen Authors 2022*. Her writings have appeared/are forthcoming in anthologies, websites and magazines such as *Brittle Paper, Salt & Citrus, Voice of Agape (VOA) Teens Magazine, Tilted House Review*, and elsewhere.

OSIEKA OSINIMU ALAO is a writer from Nigeria. His works have appeared or forthcoming in *Lumiere Review, Kreative Diadem, Arts Lounge Magazine, Nanty Greens, Requiem Magazine*, and elsewhere. He is @osiekaosinimu on Twitter & Instagram.

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JUNE / JULY 2022 TOP 10

1. JEWO OGHENETEGA
2. TEMIDAYO TESTIMONY OMALI ODEY
3. OSIEKA OSINIMU ALAO
4. OLUMIDE MANUEL
5. OLAFISOYE-ORAGBADE OLUWATOSIN DAVID
6. INIMFON INYANG
7. ENOBONG ERNEST ENOBONG
8. L.A. OYAGABA ABAH
9. CHUKWUMA-EKE PACELLA
10. OVERCOMER IBITEYE

LOVE & LINGUA

JEWO OGHENETEGA, 1ST PRIZE WINNER

After Dele Farotimi

Picture people walking down tightly packed hallways, on an ordinary day,
donning double-breasted jackets and pockets filled with vowels.
Pronounce "I" and make it mean something more than a pronoun–
redefine its morphology and give it a chance at transmogrification.
Seek an avenue to encapsulate something other than narcissism
on the tip of your tongue, and imagine your vocal cords
purifying the monosyllabic letter [word] of more than one identity.
Let spittle plaster third-person pronouns like adhesive to your lips
so you learn to care a little bit more about humanity than yourself.
Picture a universe folded into itself, with humans holding hands
and the most prominent preposition being: beside.
Pick the vowel "O" with the crucibles of your larynx
and stretch it like taut elastic through the word: looooove
so it lives more in the mouth before being offered as a sacrifice to the wind.
Give it a chance to subsist in long term memory, so it doesn't start to fade
like the forgotten speech patterns of ancient homo sapiens.
For ages men have struggled to understand the way air romances
the cavernous pathways of your windpipes and births sound.
Some call it something divine; others fragment it to miniature pieces in phonetics.
If truly the essence of the human persona can be encapsulated in
fragile morphemes and syllables, then how come we converse every day,
yet oneness and camaraderie do not seep into speech en route to cold hearts?
Pronounce "U" and let it be more than just an abbreviation of a second-person pronoun
–make an attempt to re-author its aetiology and make it mean: me,
because according to the unwritten clauses and figures of speech,
a universe where "U" [you] = me

will be the best thing that ever happened to mankind
and the greatest gift its conglomeration of languages could ever offer.

A LONGING FOR THE UNREACHABLE

TEMIDAYO TESTIMONY OMALI ODEY, 2ND PRIZE WINNER

I am only but a speck out of the billions - travelling down the harsh road of the Sahara Desert. I'm never satisfied - only energized to crave more and more,
for satisfaction is equal to laziness in my antenna.
When one is satisfied - one does not push the frontiers of our grandfather's farm
that has stood for thousands of years.
One likens the village and its mud houses to the elegance of the mansions and its gold.
So, discontentment is the new rhythm that fills my ears before the rising of the sun,
threatening to engulf the whole essence of my being.
I ask myself, "what is beyond?", damn all the risks and drown myself in the ocean of adventure.
Dissatisfaction is in my DNA, for there is nothing like best - only better.
I shake up all the barriers - greed might become my last name soon
when all is gone and I am only but a corpse six feet under - I worry and wonder:
is there any competition that will send my heart racing in the world beyond?
or would my last state be my best yet?
I have tried to pluck out the feathers in my eyes - that I might truly see life is not a race.
Perhaps it is - but not a competition - only a one-man race.
So I'll keep running,
plunging forward to tear down my barriers with a razor,
pushing the frontiers of our grandfather's farm,
creating, as I become better, new frontiers
And broadening my horizons in this little space I call my own..

DEAR MARX

OSIEKA OSINIMU ALAO, 3RD PRIZE WINNER

eyebrows of the awakening
arched over cruel clouds
of recycled repression,

    days of tepid agitations,
    lamentations constringing tongues,
    stale oxygen in bulb-less rooms,

    days of swallowing stones
    in silence sutured with bland
    advertence of frosty smiles,

groans dispensed from towers
filtering into anonymous tweets,

the tweets, exordia to the streets,
the awakening of puissant winds
evanescing seas of slumber,

    we, meteors of a new age
    shooting to the ghoulish gates,
    holding hands and shaking
    skeleton of world from base,

    thundering the acclivity
    of rogue regimes hovering
    over craniums as cavernous clouds,

we'll bury them in Earth's
rectum where they belong,

we'll go to war in the name
of our country and unbridle

    our bodies from the fetters
    of these oppressors.

NOMAD

OLUMIDE MANUEL

a voyage enters a boy through a crevice
of languages. it is not a dream. an ocean's
horizon is not just an inherent baggage,
but still defines my anxiety against exodus.
every word carved out of my body was made
out of silence, yet silence is not a raw material.
if silence is glass, then I am a walking history
of shards, thorns in the mouth of a mirror seeking
to rob me of my tongue. see, silence is taught
by loss, and loss differentiates into echoes, timely
that every foreignness I make –through silence, loss,
space, fabrics of what glitters, feels foreign and unreal,
but what is broken is broken and it is not my own fault
that the guilt of exile prevails over my anxiety to stay
true to a broken horizon –this coast, a footnote hanging
by the sandy signature of departure. my country disrealized
me into the hand of another. and it is hard. how survival
eats anything you pit against it, which is why foreignness
is a hard glass to break –a boy voyages with a shard
of language, and in one of the dreams, someone calls him
a nomad, he smiles, wide as the ocean, wide
as the loss renaming itself in him.

HOW TO DRESS A POEM INTO A HERO

OLAFISOYE-ORAGBADE OLUWATOSIN DAVID

tell me how a poem becomes a hero;
the lyrics are a marriage of beauty
and a beast - a euphemism for pain.

this poem,
like a dancing blade salivating at the taste of flesh,
learns to be seeds, stretching into thick skin.

so a poem becomes a butterfly
in the belly,
a word becomes a thought,
an idea,
a belief,
a movement,
a change,
a frontier.
a black skin becomes human,
freedom is no longer a fairytale.
a woman becomes human,
her rights the same as the male
a black life matters,
a hashtag becomes a town crier, too noisy to ignore.
justice becomes a delicacy,
the aroma of a meal well cooked.
and thus,
a poem becomes a hero.

TO BREAKTHROUGH AND BEYOND

INIMFON INYANG

"Look as far as you can see in every direction—north and south, east and west. I am giving all this land, as far as you can see, to you..."
Genesis 13:14-15.

Every night, I steal the sky with my eyes wherever it sprouts a star to make energy for the morrow. Each twilight sparrow on the wind's crest, a recipe for resolve. Each moonlit turf, a call to patience.
This world tells me I can never grow enough tentacles for all I desire and there are things too distant to be considered, yet every dream of mine conspires with the earth to root itself deeper, deeper...
A wormhole of wishes poisons my belly with longing, creeps to my core like the moss-kissed fence in my backyard.
Some days, I liberate it through any available medium or choke it with frizzy-haired promise or stanzas sauted in a pan of sizzling metaphors.
This poem is a home for the dreams that linger like twitches on the eyelids of Time.
Whenever I meander through uncharted courses and affliction beckons my surrender, I wrap my delicate portions in a blanket of Possomwood. If a thorn prints itself on the parts left uncovered, I sew a golden tapestry right there.
What is a wound if not art in blood? (ITALICS)
I write this as feathers fall off every facade, as impossibility fades into oblivion and all around me is clarity.
Tonight, I come across water and touch heaven on its face, finally. Here, where my fingers can reach, I ripple the clouds, I storm the orb out of balance. I break every fathomable boundary and
forge new frontiers.
The Book says as far as I can see...
see,
see the multitude of marvels
just waiting.

INCANTATIONS FOR TIMES LIKE THIS

ENOBONG ERNEST ENOBONG

like water, I come
today, when homeland is a courtyard of rocks.
Tungsten-armed, I come.
Lord, fatherland is molten magma.
I come
rooted
as mountain;
fatherland is a nest of windstorms.
Will the skylark not sing in a field of carcasses,
and beautifully?
Can a daffodil not sprout on a wasteland?
You can pluck the hands of a clock,
you can muffle the crow of a cock,
but who can stop the rising sun?

THE CALL OF OMADA

L.A. OYAGABA ABAH

How nature knocks at your door, Omada:
The call that caps you up
Like the figments of daydreams
Of the children on the street where hunger hovers,
Who are in the name of Allah seeking daily meal
And in the name of Allah showering blessings on donors
And in the name of Allah hoping for the coming of paradise!

How brave you are, Omada
To open up to the call of nature,
But not to bend low to carry the load of sorry;
And your many years of carrying the yoke of anemia
Never dragged you to the graveyard of sorrow –of giving-up!

How did you cross the borderline, Omada
With the course of nature on your head –crying monthly for blood,
With the prayer points of crossing age eighteen with breath of life,
With sorry as compliment: pity as the normal feel from friends and foes,
With ears wide open for when the final call of nature comes to you?

THAT THERE IS LIFE AFTER THIS BODY/BORDER'

CHUKWUMA-EKE PACELLA

There is ____a___ black sky hovering over my polity
(another) (our)
& that is why I burn our hearts and count
(we) (mop)
our brother's tears with ink hoping/waiting
(countrymen) (willing)
to escort its flames above the dark clouds
(fire)
praying mother into its flesh. Last night
(a country)
I saw a bridge/god/future beckoning me
(mirrored) (us)
to cross this border//body just like how father
(every dead man)
did the night patriotic bullets escorted his/their
(shattered)
forehead into the shadow. You see, this poem
(grave)
is ____ a boy painting migration with another
(not)
country's skin. the one I would
(every broken body)
merge into my vessel with legs & breath
(their)
as cowries for bargain at the border of this country
(hell).

DIE TO LIVE

OVERCOMER IBITEYE

I watch you toss and turn in columns of dust. Knee-deep in effluvial composite.
You are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses, and the sky, a stigma of stars, offers no escape.
You stretch your hands to space,
seeking solitude from constellations,
only to get rejection letters.
The gravediggers are relentless,
shoveling sand and gravel into your eyeballs and ash-strewn lips
until your face loses every semblance to Adam.
Minutes roll into hours and every tick makes me wonder about what happens next.
Will you become a fossil to be found by our great-great-grandchildren
or will you refract into something immortal?
And if we ever meet again, will you still recognize me?
I have heard that there are creatures in the underworld
who scripture your memories into tablets
and confine them to Ziploc bags.
I wouldn't want your life to be converted to garbage,
so tell me, would you bypass that realm and go straight to heaven?
Do not offer me hope as salve for my pain.

Or maybe, you can offer a little.

CAN WE FREEZE TIME?

UDE VIVIAN CHIDIMM

The hand of the clock rouses again.
My aching back stiffens in the harmattan.
With the next bell comes the death of lines.
Deadlines are autocratic and time is treacherous,
Once upon a sun still and ubiquitous.
Oh, Umpire of time, may the ebb and flow cease!
Freeze time as I beat my deadlines in peace!

The hand of the clock stirs again.
Where she rouses to, I do not know.
How can a thing race so swift hands on-ly?
When she hauls again my thesis turns in
And my womb closes, my feet wobbly.
Another move and my teeth will fall off.
Once upon a time, did the sun not stand still?
This time, Maker of time, freeze my time.
Freeze my eggs whilst about it without a dime
as I gather my laurels in laze till my fill.

Can you freeze time for strike action
So children graduate in perfection
And age will not be their inhibition?
For when the job is for twenty fine and below,
What happens to those whose midnight candles
exceed the norm because the leaders care-less?
Seeking the mouth of an old woman,
You swear she never suckled a mother's breasts,
So freeze time lest our heads ache in pressure,
And may lateness become extinct.

SAIL TO THE BAR.

ADEBOWALE RAPHAEL OMOLASOYE

They say the bar scars,
That it beats one's brains out
And makes one eat his dust...

Couldn't afford to lose trail and fail hereon;
Didn't want to be poured out and gulped
Carelessly like a cheap wine.
Ergo, I rose and stamped.

As a minor, I toddled into this train.
With grown tendons, now I pull my socks up.
I run, I sweat, I perch;
I kick, I swink, I bounce.

Black and white, the grand hue of the market;
Gown and toupee, the palatial robe of the tide.
From knits of giant voices inked on leaves,
They seek and find; they mould and set.

They set the gavel to bang the sound block;
In the dock, bloody hands are nailed.

To flip a million leaves of quilled prints
And shake the temple with my quaking voice,
I hold the sword against the bad guys –
My set piece for this bar shot.

Though the chain is dragged,
The time remains now.

ARROWS OF FAITH

PETER COLUMBA ITANKA

Like Columbus sailing down the Atlantic in his small ship; then sinking...
Till he struck, serendipitously, at a mighty rock: America;
Like Armstrong's feet, wielding warmth from the fire of ambition,
Landing on the velvet floor of the honey moon;.
Like Three Wise Men, bearing gifts, and trudging from a Far East
To meet Christ Jesus in a dingy Inn;
I seek for stars over my cornrows and for rainbows under my feet.
Though your back may beg to break from disbelief and fear,
Stretch, stretch your brittle arms against the dying light.
Arrows of faith, I'll steel them into you;
Your heart will be the quiver.
Though you may wander aimlessly, with no dart of hope received that you start to wonder,
Stretch, stretch your heart till a magma of hope bursts from within.
Though your ears may hear a bucketful of rile laughter,
Though your eyes may betray you,
Though wise men with their whittle wisdom may call you foolish,
Stretch, stretch your palms and pluck off the sun, stitching it into a fitting crown.

THE FRONTIER

OGEDENGBE TOLU IMPACT

There is this true story I was told
Of a young man who set out bold,
Trod the path of success with zeal
And made good deals with his skill.

This young man at the verge of his prime
Made money with each tick-tocking chime,
Digging deep into the depths of the earth
And raiding its strongest holds for wealth.

Although at birth, he brought no silver spoon
But with strong determination reached for the moon,
Turning his defeats into sweet tunes of feats
And shining forth like starlight dispersing shadows of deceits.

Even when the path was filled with thorns,
This young champ took the bull by the horns
And forged ahead to conquer his dread,
Leaving trails of footprints for others to tread.

This frontier despite his many scars
Rose in quantum leaps to Leo's stars
Today, his statue remains in the fame's hall,
Standing tall like the tower amongst all.

RISING

IFUNANYA JULIET OTTIH

Flatlined by a broken system, here I sit beneath the earth
With dreams arrayed in the grief of prejudiced CGPA.
Just how my strides become deserted!...

Once, in a poem, I was branded a paragon in the palette of
Fictions, a heroine laced in the body of hope.
Not now, as flickers share a drink with obscurity
And with many attempts to mispronounce the efficacy of my essence.

How do I tell the world that this system once
flunked me eighty-two times in four years?
But I still dream of the white sand on the east coast of New York,
An allegiant air surfacing me through the clouds,
Across the walls of Harvard to feast on books
And gather all degrees.
I see possibilities.

I LONG TO SEE A WORLD

OLUWASEGUN OLUSEYI ADESINA

A sex tape gets leaked like a punctured pipe
and mouths become whips lashing the

woman. A man points at her and tells his daughter:
"that's an example of a woman you must

not become." Mr and Mrs show themselves the
exit door and a community of eyes stamps

on Mrs the image of someone who can't
keep her home, the image of someone not

meant to be called 'wife'.

When a boy enters the kitchen, it is to fill the family's
pit of hunger. When a girl does so, it is

to prepare her for marital life. The devil becomes
captured on CCTV when a husband commits

adultery. And to save her marriage from
slay queens, she needs to enter the war room to

wrestle with this devil. But when the table turns,
the husband becomes a roaring thunder and

yells at the devil to pack her loads. I take a
look at all these biases and wonder if

women aren't part of humans created in the
image of God. I don't know much about

God, but I know God isn't someone who scrapes
one side of the hair and leaves the other. I long

to see a world where a man needs no mirror but
a woman to look at himself.

CRIME, HAVING TO REPEAT ITSELF

NNADI SAMUEL

A teenager housed a bullet in his midriff at Pennsylvania, the night before our prom. months after, his brother housed more in every part of his torso.
a coyote teethes on the blood, dragging the animal of his body down the crumbled stairwell. somewhere, a bench of ghost concludes:
'if an officer flags a car in motion, you strike the pedal down to a neighbourhood.
there's something about witness that terrifies them'. surveillance cameras,
the listening dog lonely as a sadist. the gun says my body lacks the spark to cause a controversy, no matter how I polish my immediate hands or accent.
no matter how often I wear my name with the purpose of not living through
the next minute. the urge– to be creative with dying.
our roof hoards the last shoot of hail. summer came, erasing one-third of the tortured ice. the frozen perimeter of our cottage, ratted out by heat– the way
it warms up to a mortgage. the snow keeps mounting like white debts.
we retain the roof, even as heat stalks a ruptured part.
I praise the other spot for its resilience, for being wide enough to harbour life
in this dying summer. I overstate, when I say one-third.
I never took a liking to figures, never took amnesia seriously.
so, I forgot the fine detail of all our frozen food melted by heat.
gambling never spurs me. the only risk I can barely afford is myself.
but, I bet summer wiped out the ice– carefully, without trace.
As the month passed an officer erased a part our surname, at the slightest provocation.
I need history to repeat itself, for this poem to sparkle.
gaslight me with a loaded controversy.

DEATH, BE THY HOPE

ẸNÌÌTÀN ABDULTAWAB

While ye bask
In the sync of summer
Ye see a cluster of laurels
Chanting songs of victory.
Ye, let death be thy hope.

While ye wallow
In the wells of winter
A surge of hiccups
Billow in your face.
Ye, let death be your hope.

Ye are able
Like a full grown camel
But ye shall soon fold
As soft as a wool.
Ye, let death be your hope.

Ye, let death be your hope
For he is the balm
That soothes ye
From the false of life
And the trail of vanity.

Sing songs of death
And lie in his bosom.

MOUNTAIN RANGE

ONYEDIKACHI CHINEDU

Reap new seeds
to bury in the clammy loam–
what stays
of it? On the slab, here,
the ewe is slaughtered.
Pots and skillets,
on a makeshift kiln,
cook to soften
the meat.

A rumbustious evening
approves the feast;
populating the backyard,
the music's a notch
propagating laterally
with the mountain range.

Each year we cross
the arc of the frontier, it reappears,
brushed and clean,
and when we don't find
our footprints the next year–
absence like bits of starch–
the skin beetles and silverfish
feed slowly, making holes,
a gradual erasure.

THRENODY OF A BOY

FADAIRO TESLEEM

In this poem, I uncloak the
Griefs that lurk inside of
My heart. That's to say,
I have built an empire of solace,
Somewhere I'd always return to.

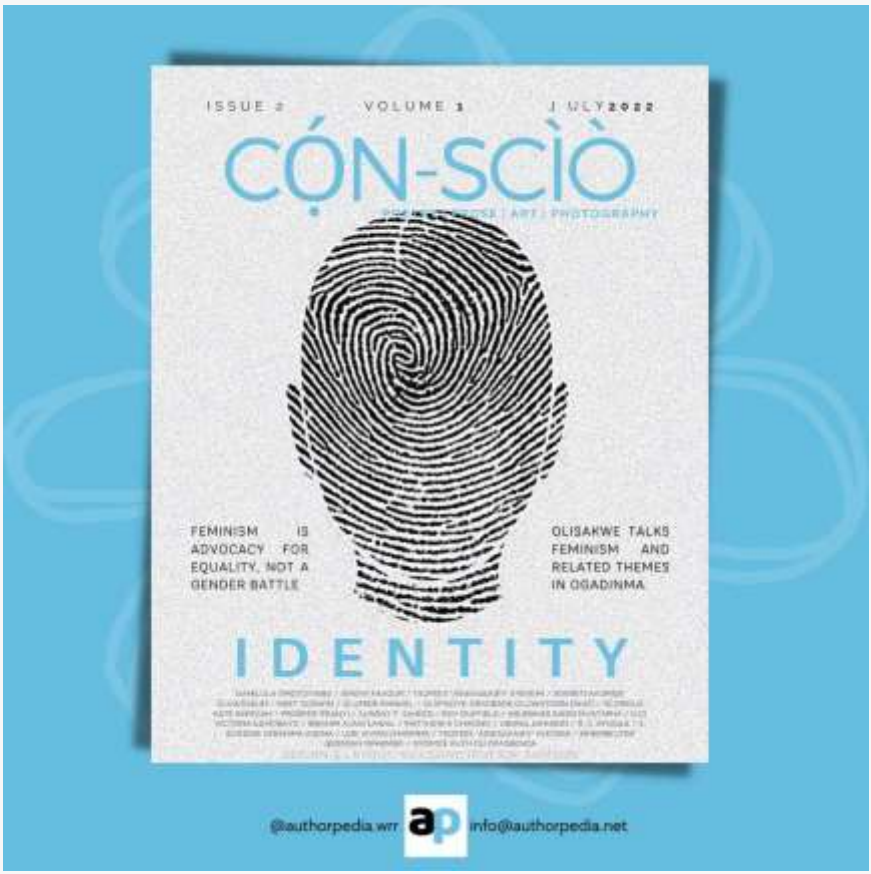
At the Mention of things owned and
Discarded, memories of my
Father's parting words would
Always smuggle itself in.

Father would -at nights- weigh
My name on his sagged lips
"s-o-on, life's n-n-ee-ver
gg-o-ing to be s-m-o-o-th."
Like me, everyone must feel the agony
Of losing their loved ones to death.

Scientists say the worst kind of
Feeling humans can perceive
Is the sensation of their skin
Burning. I I say: second to this,
Is the anguish of seeing one's
Father being laid to rest.

These days, I am becoming more
And more of a coffin of woe.
To say nothing drives joy
Ahead of me. Look, this is
Another way of burying one's
Anguish beneath blurry verses.

We are excited to share the latest issue of our CỌ́N-SCÌÒ MAGAZINE, July 2022 — 'IDENTITY' with you. Published by @consciomag x @authorpedia, it is a literary gift!



DOWNLOAD

Dear Reader,

Thank you for reading this chapbook.

The monthly Brigitte Poirson Poetry Contest (BPPC) is a writing contest aimed at rewarding the under-appreciated talent of young Nigerian poets. It was instituted in February 2015 in honour of Brigitte Poirson, a French poet, editor, and lecturer, who has over the years worked assiduously to promote and support of African poetry. You too can be a part of the BPPC initiative by entering your poems for any of the monthly editions.

Also note that any writer can have their works published on our platforms by simply submitting your entries on our website https://www.wrr.ng/submit/. We receive fiction (short stories), poetry and non-fiction (essays on writing, book reviews, and interviews with other witters, etc.).

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