

A full moon is reflected in a body of water. A dark silhouette of a tree branch with leaves is in the foreground, partially obscuring the moon. The text "BEYOND THE VEIL OF WALLS" is written in a white, hand-drawn, outlined font across the middle of the image.

BEYOND THE VEIL OF WALLS

TOP 20 POEMS OF THE ERIATA
ORIBHABOR POETRY PRIZE 2020

Other books in the EOPP Chapbook series:

- *I Burn Incense Before I Sleep* (2018)
- *Exorcism* (2019)



BEYOND THE VEIL OF WALLS

TOP 20 POEMS OF THE ERIATA
ORIBHABOR POETRY PRIZE 2020

Edited by: **Kukogho Iruesiri Samson**

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ERIATA ORIBHABOR POETRY PRIZE

Eriata Oribhabor Poetry Prize (EOPP) is an annual literary prize instituted in November 2012 by Words Rhymes & Rhythm Publishers in partnership with prominent Nigerian literary promoter Sir Eriata Oribhabor. The Prize exists to redirect attention to Nigerian poetry encourage young Nigerian poets to use their craft as a tool for social change.

EOPP finds its purpose in the belief that poetry and the arts are agents of social change that must be routinely encouraged. Over the years, the contest has become the leading platform for the discovery, encouragement, and celebration of poets in Nigeria.

Past winners of the Prize include Nwakanma Chika (2012), Madu Chisom Kingdavid (2013), Darlington Ekene Ogugua (2014), Ajise Vincent (2015), Frank Eze (2016), Mesioye Johnson (2017), Chinua Ezenwa-Ohaeto (2018), [David Chimeremeze Okafor](#) (2019) and [Ayokunle Samuel Betiku](#) (2020).

THE SPONSOR: ERIATA ORIBHABOR

Eriata Oribhabor is a poet, essayist, editor, social commentator, a former Chairman, Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA), Abuja, CEO/Publisher at *Something For Everybody Ventures* (SFEV), and President of Poets In Nigeria (PIN) Initiative.

A renowned Nigerian literary promoter, Oribhabor has authored several books including *Beautiful Poisons*, *Crossroads and The Rubicon*, *Eriata on Marble*, *Shifting Rides of Poetikness*, *Random Thoughts on Poetry*, *Walking Truths* and *That Beautiful Picture*.

In concert with members of Poets in Nigeria Initiative, he organizes several literary initiatives events within and outside Nigeria, chief of which include Festival Poetry Calabar; Nigerian Students Poetry Prize and ArtHub Lagos, Food Poetry Prize.



His literary activism has earned him the title of 'MERCHANT OF POETRY'. He encourages young writers to develop their potentials towards achieving their dreams and enjoys discussions on topical issues, traveling, tours and adventures.

EOPP 2020 JUDGES' PROFILES



S. SU'EDDIE VERSHIMA AGEMA is a husband and father, an editor and development worker. He is the team Leader at SEVHAGE Publishers and Literary Movement as well as Convener, Benue Book and Arts Festival. Among other awards, he won the Association of Nigerian Authors' Prize for Poetry (2014) and Mandela Day Short Story Prize (2016), was nominated for the Abubakar Gimba Prize for Short Stories (2015), the Wole Soyinka Prize for African Literature (2018) and the ANA Prize for Children's Literature (2019).

.....
FUNKE AWODIYA is an author, a medical sociologist, poet, social campaigner, social entrepreneur, and sickle cell advocate. She is a foundation member of Poets In Nigeria (PIN), member, Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA). She has published two poetry collections: "The Farmer's Daughter" and "Woman of a Woman". Funke writes from Ijaye - Ojokoro, Lagos, Nigeria.



.....
KOLADE OLANREWAJU FREEDOM is a poet, editor, publisher, digital media strategist and author of 'The Light Bearer, a collection of poems published in 2013. His works have appeared on several platforms including the ANA Review (2015 & 2016), The Year of the Poet (2015 & 2018), AFAS Review, The Guardian Newspaper, Pulse.NG and elsewhere.

.....
JIDE BADMUS is inspired by beauty and destruction; he believes that things in ruins were once beautiful. He is the author of There is a Storm in my Head, Scripture, Paper Planes in the Rain; and Paradox of Little Fires.



EOPP 2020 HONOUR ROLL

Ayokunle Samuel Betiku

Osho Tunde

Yvonne Nezianya

Tukur Ridwan

Ehi-Kowochio Ogwiji

Idio Phebe Ehikowoicho

Nnadi Samuel Ifeanyi

Abdulbaseet Yusuff

Olaitan Universe (2)

Offor, Wisdom Ogbonna

Ebuka Evans

Oluwatosin Ayobami

Shedrack Opeyemi Akanbi

Chisom Charles Nnanna

Blessing Omeiza Ojo

Rahma O. Jimoh

Aiyejinna Abraham O. (2)

Pamilerin Jacob

BEYOND THE VEIL OF WALLS

AYOKUNLE SAMUEL BETIKU, WINNER EOPP 2020

I drink a full moon and a glass of water
from my porch and watch the street emptying

behind the doors. Soon, only the trees and houses
will stretch their dark shifting shapes on the road

and nothing will prod the air save the dogs,
the frogs and crickets. But what goes

on beyond the veil of walls in this city
where daylight means everything
but a melody? *Borno* returns to me
as shrouded souls sown into the earth,

seeds that will only grow as wind
and wound. Somebody will have to bear

the weight of loss. Say a mother mourning
her son. Say she receives the sun with eyebags

dressed in kohl. I think of Leah Sharibu
and other girls abducted like her: little planets

losing their centripetal hold on the conscience
of this system. Picture a space in time

where broken fathers and mothers return
with hands full of holes to pick the traces

of lost daughters. Tonight, a man will sit

on a cold floor and cry like a baby, surrounded

by bottles of alcohol. He will curse a country
and a group of bandits who made ghosts

of his wife and children while his life slowly
takes the shape of a wrecked van left to rust

in his backyard. Is it a sin, dear God, to be
a lily draping this valley like the rain-

bow drapes the clouds? What do we even mean
when we say we love a place and it strips us

of existence? How the night often fails to answer
the questions the day brings. How the burning sighs

often outlive the candlelights. And yet, all my life,
what steps out when the moon sheds its silver skin

is a song holding paradise to its mouth
like a promise, through every door that opens here

into the first light of dawn.

***Ayokunle** is a Nigerian writer from the city of
Ondo, South-West Nigeria. His works have
appeared or are forthcoming in journals and
anthologies, including Kalahari Review,
African Writer, Lunar Review, Ngiga Review,
Praxis, Libretto, Kreative Diadem, Shallow Tales
Review, Pandemic Publications & elsewhere.*



SEARCHING THROUGH THE HEAVENS

OSHO TUNDE, 1ST RUNNER-UP, EOPP 2020

-- after reading Chinua

And there is no space left in my head
to hold more wounded names,
more dreams silenced in their very mornings,
more pieces of a falling home.
Cult clash, a boy, on his way from God's house, cut down by a stray
bullet.

A man, snuffed out by a mob for stealing a loaf of agege bread.

Here, culture says a woman stays, even if he is a war.

A woman's face, filled with mountains created by her man's fists.

A lonely room, three overripe men forced their ways into a thirteen
year old girl.

On the street, officer's bullet found home within a boy's body
for lifting the placard of his tears.

A keke driver, wasted like unearned income for refusing to grace an
officer's palm.

Last week, forty farmers or more, erased from the face of the
earth. Leah, forgotten in the lair of nightmares.

Nowhere in this land is safe,

I am always on the run.

The newspaper in my hand keeps running over with abducted hopes.

With burnt smiles.

With still waters.

And like prayers, Sehinde, a graduate waits at the gate of what
they called tomorrow, still not becoming.

A knife, the strike, always cutting Peter an undergraduate, out of school for eternity.

Umoh, a barber, mourning his business, a victim of unrepentant darkness.

Ugo, my friend, still crying for her mother lying in the hands of a dead hospital.

An auto crash, people swallowed by death constructed by my government.

What is development to a body headed by parasites?

Here the sky is so fickle like a politician's tongue:
it will rain or shine, we do not know.

And here I am, searching through the heavens with the hope that one day, I will count more birds than bullets, more fireworks than bomb blasts.

More truths than deceptions. More smiling faces.

I will find justice embracing so many bruised names.

I will find a people broken by tongue, bound by love, as they take the united stride to light.



DEATHLESS EYES

YVONNE NEZIANYA, 2ND RUNNER-UP, EOPP 2020

Before my grandmother exhaled her last breath
and left this country with a smile, she summoned
every living being birthed from her womb and
their generations to a feast. It was her Christmas
tradition; to bring the drops of water remaining,
hoping to create a sea in the middle of a desert.
Once, she held my shoulders with hands that
shook like earthquakes and said,
*be a town crier who announces peace when
our country is at war.* On the day her body
became the earth, mommy stood in front of a crowd
and spoke of the days of Biafra when grandmother
gave salt to children whose bodies had become
fragile sticks how she sang lullabies to soldiers
who fought wars in their sleeps how although
she pronounced *honesty* in Igbo, her English
never left her mouth without being coated in the truths
sitting on her tongue. Now, when this country
becomes an ocean with waves I cannot surf
and fish becomes lifeless bodies whose family
never mourned - for they were not found,
I remember/ that grandmother lived underwater
for decades. But in death, her face still carried
a genuine smile. And in her deathless eyes,
hope lived.

A BOY AS A LANDSCAPE OF HIS COUNTRY

TUKUR RIDWAN

this ink is the trail of my heart, fading with my lyrics.
it tells of a boy's gloom in a country of broken dreams
and disrupted rounds of sleep. we know which songs
to make with the tre(m)ble of bullets and the bass of bombs.
the sopranos of our sisters' screams under bandits' laps.
peace of mind dance into the sky with smokes.
if there is no sleep for the wicked, then why
am I awake in the middle of a rumbled sea?
what kind of tide is washing away my country off the map?
some of my brothers have run into the arks
of Europe and America— this landmass
is a growing tempest— a test for apocalypse.
but before I evaporate into thin air like the stench
of a patriot's fart, fill your breath with the leftovers
of my imported cologne— my footprints of poesy—
the poetry of my dying flames make the best of this fire.
prepare your feast in my tribute while I live,
so if I do not die, you would honour me like Madiba.
I am a wood that must not mutate into ashes without
feeling your touch of water— fuel me back to life before
I surrender to the spines of our heroes' futile labour.
we always belong in the past too soon like
a young female pilot— first of her kind in our military
and I have a pact with the future, but not when
I am hanging by the broken ropes of a country
on a cliff—
I hope to not fall...



MAKURDI

IDIO PHEBE EHIKOWOICHO

Help! my city is lost at sea
and without a compass
she drowns by flood
Yet she dies of thirst
She sits by the Benue river
Yet she is dry
Her voice blares
above the tantrums of the wind
she shrinks from it sounds
Yet she can't speak
she talks all the time
Yet she is dumb
Her youth show strength
as they spill
one another's blood
Yet herdsmen defeat her
Her aged speak ancient wisdom
Yet she is weak
Tell the lighthouse keepers
To guide her back home
Tell the orators
To sing her voice clear
Tell her youth and aged
To henceforth guard her turf with bravery

CAMO CULTURE

NNADI SAMUEL IFEANYI

your hunt for response sheathes logorrhoe into untreated lips,
battering gums to chirps on Rae Bloodfield:
a backwash of gunned spouse.

we're less of our own breath, for the loaded now.
even a match triggers hell to our brainbox—
decelerating, to undo the steel arson on loved ones.
our adroit teens; running into unscrupulous magazines on
nameplates.

I'm survived by loss, & young dead.
sometimes, the idea of what badge hot chases grief
lifts a bullet to my stomach like poised ambergris,
dished from a good view of stoked camos I barely outlive.

gravity had no hand, till it whisks a sinless child,
puzzled at his thorough innocence— like he is unbecoming not to have
done crime.
there is more to Black Marias than the wailing of each mother.

the corporals are sworn sergeants, after a gunfight with armless
civilians.
how handicapped we've tamed blood & lethal bullets, incited by the
degree of dreads,
or Rasta man at false light.

our kind tweets lettered pheromones for global reinforcement.

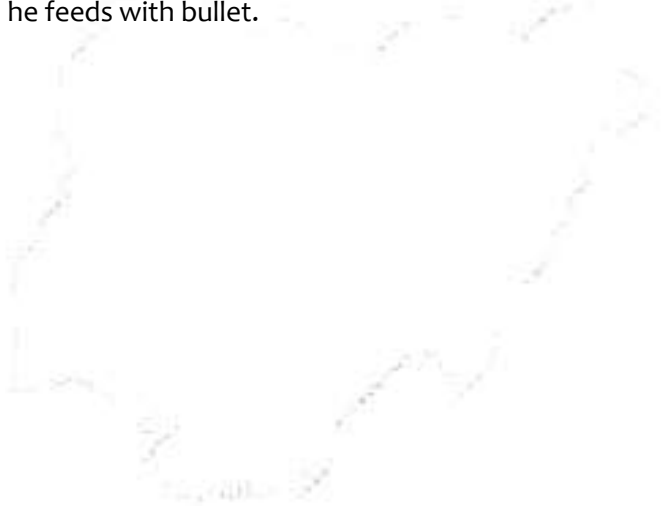
I backspace my hangman here, thumbing my won't to an open air.
I won't lock my wrist,

won't vent my grief on bereft brother in some corked way.

my rage is a stubborn child— clenched fist like this cop, stabbing at
rough pace.

grief kills better than gunmen,
grants our rights to heartburns & renewed ulcer,
& indefinite silence mistaken for near-death.

whatever does not end this way, soils the next cop.
ropes him into some cerecloth,
stiff with wound stripes on hunch arm:
the animal he feeds with bullet.



SLAUGHTERHOUSE

ABDULBASEET YUSUFF

Charts show Lake Chad might vanish into the earth
in the near future & geography teachers

would point to the atlas, to that spot on the map
that clings to this country like an ear

& tell students that it used to be blue, & a million
mouths suckled its benevolent breasts –

cattle clamping on its right teat, farmers fastened to the left –
until they drew blood

We have machetes for hands & we hold hell in them
Whatever we touch, we raze, or disembowel

A whale was dragged ashore like a market pickpocket
in Bayelsa. The men, fevered by hunger,

& bellicose, hacked its great belly with a chainsaw
that has slain many mahoganies and iroko

We butcher whale for banquet, slaughter tree for fuel,
& pelt peregrine falcon for sport

When sun starts to gulp rivers, precipitation passes precipice
& the earth must embrace onslaught

Fishermen scavenge the sun's gullet for the tilapia that
eludes their nets

Plunder is today's order. How porous is the border!
Spiders spin relics on the yawning shelves of museums

My father told me monkeys once swung tree to tree,
chattering, watching children eat clay

What shall I tell my children when the trees are losing
branches and the roots are shrivelling in thirst?



CATHARSIS OF DIFFERENT HANDS HOLDING THE PLACARDS

OLAITAN UNIVERSE

Hands that scatter dawn
like grains,
like sunset.

Hands that return to rest
at the sides reluctantly.

Hands that cut tenderness
into two clumps,
each large as a grave.

Hands that fill the holes
in every gaping hand
with more holes.

Hands at the naming ceremony
plotting the funerals.
Hands heavy on the supple shoulder
of a glorious child.

Hands that make the clothes
stitch the body
instead of the pains.

Hands that carry
rainbow and storm in equal,
unbalanced measure.

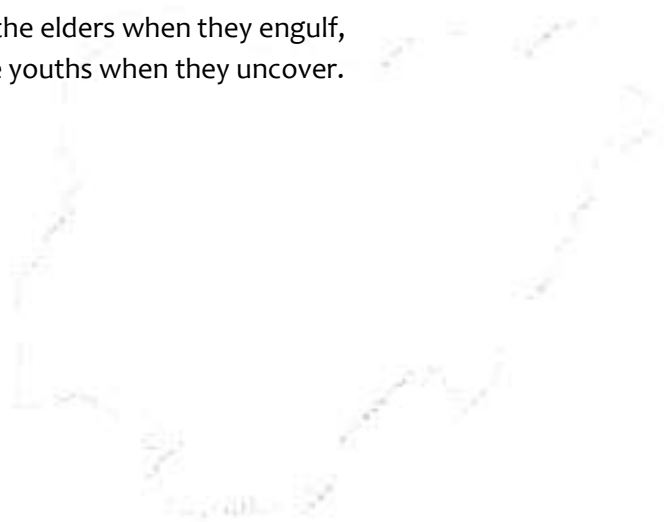
Hands that turn the body,

and as an afterthought,
return the body.

Hands of Kalashnikovs,
wringed with roses
until they bleed thorns.

Hands cathartic.
Hands covert
as the gloves.

Hands of the elders when they engulf,
and of the youths when they uncover.



CORPSE IN A CASKET

OFFOR, WISDOM OGBONNA

Daily, we observe in solemn disharmony
The hourly anniversary of Grandpa's death
Dead anew, every hour, from our blindness
To the festering corpse in an open casket

Truth was no different from the lot of us
Here, we sow our dead in ridges like yam tendrils
A thousand in the plateau, a thousand in the troughs
A thousand mounds as monuments, proud in the sun

We have no duty to Duty, save to bury it
That is the only justice we can afford, scarcely
Conscience, the dream of our nightly fevers

This State, like bolts, strikes and I cower
I am afraid of the light of the sun
Slowly, I have become the corpse in the casket.

AFTER A MASSACRE

EBUKA EVANS

an image of light flashes upon a hallway like ray
piercing a keyhole into a thin room smeared with blood like
the insides of a man i never knew salvation could be
this distant crosses camouflaging as boxes
a trap to hold a man still to show & hide
his corpse from view

an image of light flashes upon a hallway like dew
wondering where it came from or did it
rain last night? sure stiff bodies thrown down a
large grave piles on piles like heaps of sand
and covered in darkness to rot

an image of light flashes upon a highway like truth
& sends a vehicle skidding off the road
into a ditch of bones too hard to lie.

one-hand, one single hand | is a crowd | can't you see? | shuffling
between slaps & waves | one-hand is all you need | to begin a
revolution, to burn, to silence | haven't we all seen the concealment |
of the fist in an outstretched hand? | at least it's obvious the art of
backstabbing | offers you the undersides | of a hand tucked into itself
| schemed in its transparent emptiness | the body is meaningless |
when you know a single hand is its entire symbol | the leaping, the
shivering, the heart-pounding | start from the end of a fingernail | the
individual is a multitude | illusioned is the majority

one-hand, one single hand | can raise a man from the dead | shrouded
| can signal the end of truth | & the pervasion of bitterness | a woman
gives birth to one-hand | & then another & another & another | until
she turns the hundred-handed one | unable to make them all clap | at
the same time | to heal the world, we feed one-hand | replace one-
hand's kalashnikov with a rose | we tend a door with one-hand | that
leads to a door that leads to a door | possibility is the amount of
stealth | & subtlety of the second | not the panel of radical hours | or
the congress of structural days | the second drifts & rambles | comes
up to us stealthily | but before the second, what was? | time is
unmeasured | & so is reason | the individual is a multitude | illusioned
is the majority

one-hand, one single hand | triggers us | conceptualizes our body |
defines what is exclusive in ownership | & art of naming | where i
come from | one-hand snaps fingers to ward off evil | we say mo tàka
òṣì dànù | one-hand snaps fingers to pave way for evil | we say ojú á
tún ra rí | one-hand carries dust from the earth | shoves it in the sky to
prove truth | to prevent misfortune, we move one-hand | in circle
round the occiput of our heads | & snap our fingers | Ọlórún mǎàjẹ |

Ọlọrun máàjẹ | Ọlọrun mú àjẹ | the left hand is one-hand | the left
hand is female | the left is mystery | Ọlọrun mú àjẹ | the left hand
neutralizes, starts & ends a revolution | Ọlọrun mú àjẹ | Ọlọrun mú àjẹ
| the left-hand is those we left | those we are left | a woman is a
multitude | illusioned is the majority.



PERSPECTIVE

OLUWATOSIN AYOBAMI

A moon takes the shape of a bow,
Many children think it's time to play war,
I know adults
Who think the moon takes the shape of a sickle.
Every madman seems to have built his homelessness in the mind of
children-
They would rather go to war than go to work.
I know a country with war rumbling in her walls,
Because her children refuse to see the world wearing a biconvex lens,
Where a part that faces you backs another.
The sages in my hometown know:
While children are busy cutting trees,
They keep quiet,
And watch where it would fall...

Do you wish to know how wise men dream of children?
They see termites wanting to devour stone
And butterflies flapping breezes to fire
Patience drowned in oceans of adrenaline.
Because Silence is a ship overloaded with injustice.
Sometimes, they see Courage speaking amidst Foolhardiness.
But when he advises retreat, no one listens.
Courage knows when to cower and when to rage.
Unlike foolhardiness, which gets futures buried in cold blood.
The truth is, you shouldn't inquire the death of your father,
Unless you can handle a sword,
Until then,
Every other attempt is foolhardiness
And it gets our futures killed in cold blood.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF A WILTING COUNTRY

SHEDRACK OPEYEMI AKANBI

*"Our flag shall be a symbol...
To hand on to our children
A banner without stain"*

(Lines from Nigeria's maiden anthem.)

The etymology of my country
is a fragment of hope and fantasy
pouring inside my ears until they overflow
with her tales.
Its recurring theme is a cry of a ghost
lamentating her lost immunity
to the things that kill a country.
But historians lose their pen &
run out of tongues when we seek
the dates wrapping her alleged epoch of grace.

All I have known is a land closing its eyes
with the sun while the things that kill a country
become the waves of a sea lulling it to sleep.

now, all that swim in our irises
is a country breaking every
dawn with a yawn, willing to float
in the air made of things that smother a country.

now, even now, and now,
my country hits one of its many tragic climaxes:
She seeks refuge on the landing site of a missile. but
before a predictable denouement of a bang,

smoke, & dark clouds,
or a celestial plot twist,
let history forget not the bloodied flag
that held a concert of dirges sung into
a black Tuesday night—



A WORD FOR MY COUNTRY

CHISOM CHARLES NNANNA

Perhaps the best thing about a dream is
that it is just a dream. Or should I tell

you of the woman who brought her dream man
to reality only to wake up and discover he had
traveled back to become only a dream, leaving

her with three little proofs that once he
was real?
Time happened.

Need I go further to state that she became
a criminal for not leaving before
her husband?
Welcome to a blessed culture.

Or perhaps I tell you of the boys who
stood at the thresholds of a promised land,
or the girls who refused to merely dream while

sleeping, only to be attended to, by
AK-47s singing them the kind of lullaby

that sent people into the dream world
permanently? Last week I had a drink of water
and some molecules got stuck

between my teeth, like hard meat.
Knowing the land I

live in I simply took a toothpick and

began picking. In my dreamland there's
a freedom to check this abnormality, in the
real land I'll only become a north magnetic pole

to the south pole loaded in certain revolvers
for wanting to check what shouldn't be.

So please, for tonight, allow me go back
to my dreams in peace. Daddy says
a child should be the

one to take his father to the land
of bliss, not the other way
around. I wish my
country would understand this.

IF I EVER MEET THE PRESIDENT

BLESSING OMEIZA OJO

I'll tell him, in my life, I wrote a love poem first.
That was long ago in the Niger Area of unsmeared grim-blood-grim.
As a naughty boy, I viewed my country as a young maiden
and I see her beauty in the face of an aged woman
plastered with make-ups as cements on a brick going home.
The way my muse is misting into songs of lamentation between
pages,
I could write the epitaph of my unknown country.

I'd remind him our nation's anthem was an inheritance to hide our
bodies
from slavery and everything that wants us badly shelved in a history
book.
I'd tell him how Ene's body hugged a bullet to her heart,
how Tony's tongue tasted coldness for singing this nation aloud.
There, at Lekki, our banner was christened with the blood of a
people,
of dreamers, of believers in one nation and one tongue.

I'd tell him this poem is a page of the chronicles of a river
dousing her people. Every day, water flows out of our body
through the eye of a bullet, yet, the river swells, not desiccated.
Winter is here – and I am afraid there could be no drought
in the land where lilies grow tendrils in the grave dug for a school of
farmers.
There are still tales of hunger hanging in our roof tops.
Look, Heaven journeys farther from the earth:
in what language does a child dialogue with his foreign father?

I'd tell him for fear's sake, that I might become another denied dead
man
or a tender dream stationed before a moving bullet.
I've been chuntering and stuttering words,
an act that means a baby somewhere is learning to speak
to a king skilled at laming tongues or its bearer.

If I ever meet the president, I'll ask him
where the ship is heading, why bullets, machetes
and bombs travel on our bodies faster than vehicles on our roads.
Why the sun rises with palm fronds on her face?

If I ever meet the president, I'll say my courage deserves a hallow –
I need not die in the claws of an eagle for speaking up.
Our mouths are sored enough from the cloud tucking our sun.
Grief sits in this poem as fire burning Gomorrah –
there should be ash, a portrait of what is left of us:
do not pray for this. No, do not pray for our end.

HERE WE AWAIT THE RAINBOW

RAHMA O. JIMOH

nightmares sneak in to hijack our sleep
like hoodlums ripping peace from peaceful protests
& we are left counting imaginary ghosts
on the walls of our dimly lit bedrooms
& other times, we count sad stars
through slightly opened windows
& on days
when the storm hits too hard

we kneel, we bow, we spread our palms to await the rainbow

sleep is a lost wayfarer looking for its home
in our souls

our souls want to jump away
& our skins, tired, would peel away from here
here is a world that sounds like gunshots
here is a
a world that sounds like screams

& stamped on our lips is a known chorus,

"help, they are shooting at us!"

these are the viruses that plague us here
young lives are paused, left at the bosom of their mothers' room
and time ages away with ASUU's long vac
while grey-haired men stomach our father's wealth in Aso rock

here, tears are daily dehydration

our tongues have come to know
& laughter is alien to the curves on our cheeks

here, harmattan is not seasonal
as our lips are dry all year long
& our stomach remains cold and numb

here, is a dungeon that drains our dreams
& poor mothers mourn all of these, with pursed lips
& placid palms,
they kneel they bow
they await the rainbow they do not want to drown in this storm of a
home
with tearful eyes, they await the symbol of hope

yet, here we are
rolling back & forth every night on torn mattresses
here, where we sleep only, to await the rainbow
but a nightmare always sneaks to hijack our sleep

UNTIL EVERY MAN'S BREATH BECOMES AN EXTINGUISHER

AIYEJINNA ABRAHAM O.

The soft feet of fire stamps upon my house,
leaving its footprints on the mouths of metals,
and its grey thumbprint on the bones of woods.

The wind forces a dirge through the gaps of
my teeth and staples it on my dry tongue. As
the thirsty flames lick dry my father's bones,
and wears my mother's hairs as wavering smoke.

If love is a zephyr and hatred – a boisterous
flame; Nigeria – *like Harmattan's leaves* – flutters
in the motion of this flame. One man's tongue
holds a match stick, a woman spits pure petrol.

And until every wood, every metal, is crushed
into the dusts of oblivion; this fire won't stop
stamping. And until every man's breath becomes
an extinguisher, and every woman's saliva – a

long rope of water; this fire won't stop stamping.
This fire won't stop stamping ... stamping.

SOMETHING IS UNDOING THE GREEN

PAMILERIN JACOB

i will be thunder in the kidney of liars

- Remi Raji

We should not have to work
this hard
for a smile. There is a bullet
where allegiance should be.

Point to an afternoon without a dead, black
Nigerian body, & I will show you
where they have hidden it, pushed it
out of history.

Abraham, when he looked
to the stars, beheld
Jimoh & wept,

crept into God
until his faith felt
thick enough to be righteousness.

I do not ask that you believe this
but that you be an instrument of witness.

Something is undoing the green
hue of us. Who

will rebuke the dusk
for shielding
the soldiers?

...the anthem is a grenade
in the mouth:

I have lost count
of the dead: I have mistaken
the moon for the wound's bright
orifice.

Enough martyrs,
I owe nothing to this country
that Jimoh has not already given.

I owe nothing
but vengeance.

If only I could burn
a hole
into the world's scalp
with my prayers,

big enough
to let Jimoh
out of death, out of headlines, out

of poems. I would. We should
not have to work this hard
to stay alive—

Hot, red fury inhabiting
my heart—in this country
the only thing that has my allegiance
is the Harmattan wind.

I WRITE FROM A NORTHERN VILLAGE

AIYEJINNA ABRAHAM O.

The melodies in gunshots are soothing when screens
sing them and colossal speakers echo the choruses.
Where I live, bullets write poems on human bodies – bodies
that end up in reddened shelves made by the hands of a spade.

This morning, my friend – Khadija, became a
grey page holding the alphabets of a dirge. Or
maybe, it was an ode to beauty; her forehead had a –
red-black dot. An Indian-make-up metaphor I guess.

In the evening, I went to death's library. The only sounds
were bird's tweets and the ones I imagined as ghosts'. And
I read volumes of Poems written by the clicks of triggers, I saw
a clichéd envoi on every book: 'REST IN PEACE, AMEN'.

Do not tell me that I've no reason to fear, even the moon
shines black tonight. Do not tell me all/ will be well; this
morning, her long-awaited admission letter arrived.

We have mastered the verses of grief and understood
the despair in hope; for a man that has no hope on whether
he will live the next second, lives in unity with sorrows.

'gba ... gba... gba' – there's a kick on my door.

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