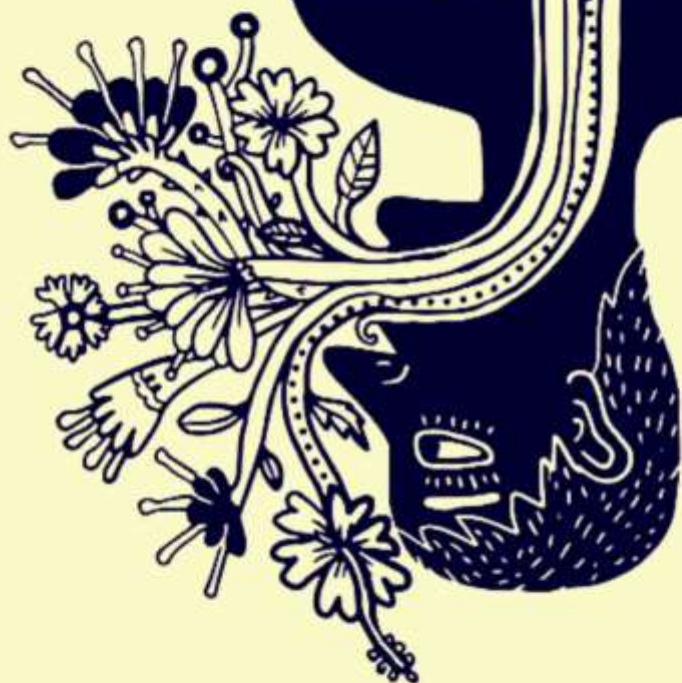


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# **i do not know how to love you more**



TOP 30 POEMS OF THE BRIGITTE POIRSON  
POETRY CONTEST (BPPC) JULY 2019

*(editors)*

**Brigitte Poirson  
Kukogho Iruesiri Samson**

Other books in the series:

Wind of Change (2015)  
Loops of Hope (2016)  
The Train Stops at Sunset (2017)  
Citadel of Words (2018)  
The Feat (February 2019)  
Rhymes for Children (March 2019)  
The 8<sup>th</sup> Wonder (April 2019)  
Rage (May 2019)  
2050 (June 2019)

# I DO NOT KNOW HOW TO LOVE YOU MORE

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Edited by

Brigitte Poirson  
Kukogho Iruesi Samson



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“

All art is a kind of  
confession, more or less  
oblique. All artists, if  
they are to survive, are  
forced, at last, to tell  
the whole story; to  
vomit the anguish up.

— James Baldwin

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## INTRODUCTION

Exploring the multilayer aspects of very varied themes such as responsibility, poverty, language, religion, the future, ecology, death, politics, freedom, love and more has led the July contestants to produce exceptionally original and well-crafted poems. They have unravelled mysteries and created visions at the beck and call of their pens to offer the avid reader food for feelings, fun, fears, fantasy or fates that fan emotions.

None has deserved a demerit! So, pen-lovers, keep on poeticizing! Reader, keep on devouring their works of art!

BRIGITTE POIRSON

## JULY 2019 TOP 10 FINALISTS

**I DO NOT KNOW HOW TO LOVE YOU MORE**

*Hussani Abdulrahim*

**WHAT IS LEFT OF WHAT IS RIGHT?**

*Ogedengbe Tolulope Impact*

**LIARS IN THEIR LAIRS**

*Oladimeji Adam Adedayo*

**DECEMBER BEGINS THE NEW YEAR**

*Aremu Adams Adebisi*

**ON MAN & GOD & GEE**

*Yunusa Muhammad Habeebullahi*

**I AM NO GAY, I AM A CROSS WRITER**

*John Chizoba Vincent*

**THE RHYMER'S STATE**

*Ndipmong-uwem Dickson Isaiah*

**MY LIFE**

*Benedixio Moore Khoti*

**CUPPING SIPHON**

*Fasasi Abdulrosheed Oladipupo*

**AMEN, AND EVERYTHING WE SAY AFTER PRAYER**

*Taofeek Ayeyemi*

## I DO NOT KNOW HOW TO LOVE YOU MORE

HUSSANI ABDULRAHIM (JULY 2019 WINNER)



HUSSANI ABDULRAHIM is a writer and undergraduate at the Usmanu Dan Fodio University, Sokoto.

Hussani has received several recognitions for his writings, including WRR Green Author Prize 2016 (joint-winner), Africa Book Club Short Story Contest 2018 (winner), NSPP 2019 (shortlist), Ken Egas Poetry Prize 2018 (shortlist), Eriata Oribhabor Poetry Prize 2018 (shortlist, 2018 ANA Kano/Peace Panel Poetry Prize (winner). His works have appeared in several journals and anthologies.

He believes that words have the power to heal the world of its numerous ills.

*for Ummie*

Because whenever I try to Love you more,  
I realize how I've reached  
the last words in my manual of wits.

Because whenever I try to love you more,  
I realize that I already love you in a way  
that is beyond existence.

Because whenever I try to love you more,  
I realize that I am already trying  
so hard to love you more than I love you.

Because whenever I try to love you more,  
I realize that your name has crowded the spaces  
in my heart and there's no room to add a novel term  
in the dictionary of my love for you.

Because whenever I try to love you more,  
I realize that it is the very thing  
I have been doing from the beginning,  
and to love you more is to return to the beginning.

Because whenever I try to love you more,  
I realize that I love you more  
than the intimacy between two pines leaning into each other,  
and the romance between moon and stars,  
and the chemistry between the ocean reflecting the sky.

Because whenever I try to love you more,  
I realize that the more I try,  
the more I realize that I can't love you more,  
because I already love you more than I can ever love you.

## WHAT IS LEFT OF WHAT IS RIGHT?

OGEDENGBE TOLULOPE IMPACT

I

What is left of what is right,  
When traitors are epitomes of light  
And countless kleptocratic mice  
Flaunt around with virtues of vice?

What is left of what is right,  
When men now take delight  
In shedding an innocent blood  
On the altar of a deceitful god?

ii

What is left of what is right,  
When truth tholes blistering burns  
And honesty suffers a pitiable plight  
Under the wrath of nagging guns?

What is left of what is right,  
When souls bereaved by terror cuts  
And bodies butchered in hostile night  
No longer find justice in our courts?

iii

Our national law is a defiled creed,  
Governing the actions of our might.  
Its sacred rule now makes the poor man bleed.  
So what is left of what is right?

Is there relief from this mischief  
That blinds our parliament's sight?  
To our nation's grief, they laud the thief!  
Tell me, what then is left of what is right?

## LIARS IN THEIR LAIRS

OLADIMEJI ADAM ADEDAYO

i

And they crawl out of their anthills, the termites,  
Within which they had been recluse like some zealous eremites,  
Their mandibles well-whetted to sap our juicy crops,  
To wall our well of life with a weir and still cup the bitsy drops.

ii

Their superficially sanguine say is a serpentine serpent  
Whose egg carves arcs of insidious rainbow across the firmament.  
We watch, with memories that easily erode into our hope-full eyes;  
A hope for the sleek sun to soar and thaw the smoggy vice  
Of this place - arctic from staying too long in glacial coldness.  
Four years is a lot of time, so the despondent take distance from its  
closeness,  
And from the seeming storm cloud birthed by their rainbow,  
We abortively await a rain to array this algid area in a meadow.

iii

Our minds have become the graveyard for our dreams,  
Which are the tributaries of the plenty, perish-bound streams  
Of this land that teaches to disremember the atlas on our palms,  
And so in the trade of others we do see cure and secure our calms.

iv

And they retire into their golden lairs: the Midas... the liars:  
Wherein they remain remote from us, like the legs of pliers.  
We - the gullible stepping stones - a rusty bayonet we remain,  
Until their squared hourglass runs out, and they hone us again,  
Fit us into the muzzle of their rifle and wickedly wield us  
For four years farther: making us wains without wheels, foxes without  
furs.

v

It's a cycle, a gyre we gyrate; from the end of one emerges another,  
And "We must remain four-year-amnesiac" seems like an order.

Because the eyes tearing in the throes of touching the same 'Esi'  
For the umpteenth time is no longer accident, but capital hypocrisy!

*\*Esi - Is a fierce plant in Yoruba land that stings the person who unknowingly  
bumps into it.*

DECEMBER BEGINS THE NEW YEAR

AREMU ADAMS ADEBISI

*(a poem to be read from right to left)*

children the bring not do  
us to purview your under  
teddies and toys their bring but  
them with stayed which that bring  
nights lonely the through all  
stained they which that  
against grief of bodies their  
to spoke they which that  
eyes teary with rebuked and hugged  
speak mute the make will we  
languages sign using  
speeches esophageal and  
these where show to ask will and  
touched been have children  
darkness into plunged  
dreams glowing once their  
barks tree rough with covered



ON MAN & GOD & GEE

YUNUSA MUHAMMAD HABEEBULLAHI

man [h]ate god,  
plundered his powers,  
.  
slanted earth up,  
tilted heaven down,  
—awkward lips,  
—forced kiss,  
.  
chew the sun,  
sucked its luminance at dawn,  
spat out eigengrau at dusk,  
.  
converted earth  
from a nirvanic niche  
to shades of hade,  
:  
then  
grafted a minaret  
capped with a cross  
unto a synagogue,  
called it shrine  
.  
to open his orifice,  
to send orisons  
to orishas,  
to re-title-case  
the gee in god.

## I AM NO GAY, I AM A CROSS WRITER

JOHN CHIZOBA VINCENT

I lost a fowl to a man who has no teeth.  
He said he knew the name of Caine's in-law.  
A replacing allegory of a mindful view.  
I'm revisiting Hebrew 8 like my Pastor did  
when he returned from Vatican City.  
We're no longer a straight loving people  
and no Beyonce and Jay Z could attest to this  
going back to the beauty in drunk love.  
You could empty yourself to this longing laws  
for the rest of your life,  
but you won't find me in your prayers  
like my father's libation behind our shrine.  
We wear different bangles like a broken  
recantation of a beautiful Agbanje girl.  
I am no gay, I am a cross writer  
of opposite thoughts in myopic minds,  
reciting again those songs left unsung.  
A man cannot be judged for telling  
another man how he feels about him.  
We don't burn a boy whispering love words into the ears of his brother  
into ashes.  
I found asylum in John 8 after the apocalypse,  
the martyrdom of humanity.  
A man who is in love with a man  
is a template of dark memories in coloured verses  
resting on the shoulders of my country;  
other men are experiments.  
Call me a cross dresser, a misogynist and a heterosexual,  
but only that madman next street knows his mind,  
and I'm leaving this thought with him.

## THE RHYMER'S STATE

NDIPMONG-UWEM DICKSON ISAIAH

I am a page of worries  
Hot rodding like shades of lorries,  
Fluttering like springs of Pyrrhic glories,  
But puckered like straw in berries.

I'm a lee of leeway  
Quavering in the weekend of sunrays  
In this rivaled track called earth's runway.  
In the speeding distance, I'm the runaway

I'm a bacon baked on fate of elevens,  
But I'm unbaked in leaven.  
My wish is that hewed out of heaven  
Wishes like fishes are bobbed up in counts of seven.

I'm an art traversing the Mosaic of time  
Mimed like patterned rhymes of the Rime  
In resilient and undiluted fates of nine,  
But numbed in toasts of lime.

I'm a pet peter'd out of Peter's  
Tethered and un-feathered in fetters  
But crowned and clowning with feathers,  
Feathers laced in illusion of letters.

I am a clay moulded in the heat of a Rubicon,  
Scarred with feats. I am no goddess of a lexicon,  
Only a fig hanging from a vine  
A vine that's no better than fine wine

I am a rhymist inking the leaven of rhymes,  
Budding nectars in the mine of rimes.  
I am a rhymist undimmed by the viaticum of thyme,  
But bound by the harps of time.

## MY LIFE

BENEDIXIO MOORE KHOTI

Nimble strings of my wits waver  
like a swinging bough of a tree kissed by an impetuous wind,  
playing a brief reminder of my existence and belief  
where love and hate echo in drumbeats of my heart  
each fleeting moment,  
where I play god or devil,  
uncovering the veil of good will,  
or sing the tumultuous chorus of evil,  
unravelling the conundrum labelled life  
that boasts a razzle - dazzle  
pregnant with vehement guffaw  
or concocts a maze of sour razzmatazz  
to bedazzle the eyes,  
bedewing a mind with a strong brew of disturbia.

Sure as hell my life is a tale -  
A curl, a swirl, a twirl, like a whirlwind  
that possesses no certain polarity,  
nor comes with any sort of surety,

ever frail and fragile, sleek and agile  
like a gymnast about to blast into spatiality.

My life is a neutral like the digit zero

Possessing no polarity on the number line reality.

## CUPPING SIPHON

FASASI ABDULROSHEED OLADIPUPO

The mouth of an orphaned girl  
Is a cupping siphon calling the dirty milk  
Dangling between the laps of her curator.

Her mind,  
An iron, cobweb, metallic condom,  
Blocks a garage of secrets.

Her stomach is a gutter  
Where drunk, mad men relieve themselves.

Her thigh is a border  
For the sane and insane men,

While her lips are gardens of chronic inflammations  
Healing to form gleaming granulomas.

Her back is an arsenal,  
A cyclone of atomic bombs,  
The one that can ruin the world.

AMEN, AND EVERYTHING WE SAY AFTER PRAYER

TAOFEEK AYEYEMI

Amen to the salty ocean of grief gushing down  
the sky of our pain. To the promised

tomorrow that came with thrones of thorns.  
The pain of blistered, calloused and dusty feet

returning from nowhere. Amen to the noodles  
eaten raw in the absence of stove

kerosene. The pain of nights when boys dance  
to the hymns of mosquitoes, burning

their pocket-money in the flames of candles.  
Amen to the worries we muttered, sitting on the edge

of faith, while we find fate counselling us  
on uncertainty. Amen to the food we finish

before placing it on the table.  
To the longing of waking up tomorrow

as a foreigner somewhere farther from this land.  
For this land is now a coffin carrying living

dead. Amen to the prayer that I spring off  
my offspring in a land other than this land.

And Amen to every prayer I remember after  
saying this prayer. So help me God. Amen!

## ON THE WOR(L)D EXPRESS

AKINRINADE FUNMINIYI ISAAC

Before time was worn on wrist and hung on walls,  
Before smartphones were made to answer calls.  
There was a press on the express of life,  
A voice for the voiceless in an unfair life.

On the world express lays the word ex-press  
Beaten blue-black for being blunt at the world mess.  
Like a caged bird, he sang lines of freedom  
With his bloody tears in a fee kingdom.

"Chained in cages  
There for ages  
Song of freedom  
In a fee kingdom".

Now, you and I are on the word express  
With lines and verses to wipe off the world mess.  
We shall write our minds with no pinch of fear  
Till the express world becomes safe and clear.

More than this modern era will sages  
Rise to verse lines in poetic pages.  
They shall boldly stand strong like the ex-press  
Till the express world wears a glittering dress.

"Poetry in pages  
In(k)spired by sages  
Expressed on world express  
To flush out the world mess".

PHOENIX

ISHOLA ABDULWASIU AYODELE

Broken bird, dead feathers:

I am born in a pool of oil,

Soaked soggy with all the voices in the world,

Voices that love one another to one chaotic whole,

Screaming

“God hates you, a piece of abomination!

“ Ugly duckling, no place for you here!”

They dampen me to deadness,

A mirror image of madness.

Then I say,

-Silence!

-Who is this, your perfect God that creates imperfections!

-Who is God?

.

My question begins a fire on the mountain between heaven and earth,

Where I lay crying into the heart of nights.

And I trudge slowly into this fire,

Eyes closed in uncertainty.

Then I burn.

The oil clogs my feathers,

The voices weigh down my bones.

I burn.

And I become lighter, cold,

Like a spirit departing a body.

I float.

I open my eyes and I am still in the fire.

I feel my bones creak alive and my feathers buzz like bees.

And I fly.

This is God.



## BRAIN SHARPENER

OGUNMOLU EBUNOLUWA ESTHER

Unto the splendor      I gazed,  
   induced sublime  
thrilling, my telecephalon  
   with flawless fortitudes  
tapping mandated papers  
   in awful threats...

Four years gone  
in pools of struggles  
earnest as Soyinka  
in a cloudy world,  
caressing contemptible pains  
absolving obnoxious affronts  
from piercing speech,  
pricking perforated leison on  
Injured h-e-a-r-t,  
lambasting acronyms  
of eternal stamps.

## THE CONJUGAL MISERY

PAUL ABIOLA OKU-OLA

She is a goddess,  
with her glowing eyes  
and her charming smile.  
Her face shines like the rainbow,  
a beauty for all ages and seasons.  
Her name is Depression.

He painted her haven  
Wonderful, like the biblical heaven.  
A beauty to behold,  
fair like the goddess  
who robs the altar of his sight,  
bright like the sunshine  
who overshadowed his heart.  
His name is Suicide.

My heart there made their temple  
under the pastoral care of time.  
Their tithe and offering duly paid,  
They are committed to the destruction of my soul,  
Once I enjoy the melody oozing from this temple.

But how can I resist,  
When the verses resonating  
from this side of the coin –  
the hunger hugging us tightly,  
the pain giving us millions of pats –  
encourage me to in-tune with the lyrics of their melody?

Soon, very soon  
I see myself dancing to this melody.  
I hope the day never survives the night.

OF MELODIES AND THRENODIES; ON MENTAL HEALTH.

EMMANUEL FAITH

My country is a comedy of melodies and maladies.

Daily, I sweep the street with my feet for what to eat,  
Tottering and hovering around plazas and offices  
With CV's starched by the sun's scorching heat  
And shoes worn by a starved soul with holed soles and cringing crevices.

Once I was the first-class graduate, the formerly best dressed,  
The one voted as most charismatic.  
Now, I am the heartbroken, the dejected,  
The first-born son whose sagging shoulder bears the family's weight.

I have kissed death a thousand times, but evaded a full embrace,  
Isn't suicide a tempting sin with scintillating scent?

They asked me to speak out,  
But the last time my sister shared her plight with a disguised knight in  
shining armor,  
She became a prey; a damsel in distress, defiled in duress.  
The Uber driver with listening ears was the source of unending tears.

Talking of tears, they said men do not cry,  
So I sweat profusely under my sullen suit after reading the tenth  
rejection mail in one week.  
Yesterday my sister lost her job because she wouldn't get down with her  
MD.  
"Use what you have to get what you want or get out", he muttered with  
brusque

What do we do when death is an unwanted guest with open arms,  
An escape from the demon binding pastor  
And an evil rebuking imam who believes depression is a taboo?

Do we play a mellifluous melody  
Or dance to a tune of titillating threnody?

In the bleakest time, please remember  
He who has life has hope, don't leave life!

Live life.

## ON WHAT NOTE DO I PLAY THE STRINGS?

OYEDOKUN IBUKUN PENAWD

Every day, I see them in brains and beauties,  
They cross my path in shapes and sizes.  
The world lives in the corridor of my tongue.  
My innocent heart abhors chords and gong,  
But on what note do I play the strings?

Every day, a fragrance flips around my feelings,  
My face focuses on a physique filled with healing:  
This portrait only pictured on the walls of my heart,  
This muse dripping words on the chapters of my art,  
But on what note do I play the strings?

Every day, I wake up to the breaking of fantasy:  
How the special one calls me "honey", "baby",  
How my response is the morning kiss on her lips,  
How we hold hands and feed on each other's dreams-  
These, my heart beats and bleeds for in reality,

But on what note do I play the strings?  
When my face cannot project my feelings  
When fear grasps the universe in my mouth,  
When I wear shyness through latitude south,  
When love lyrics lack letters of chemistry,

On what note do I play the strings?

To end the funeral song chemistry did sing  
Of watered mirror and uncertainty.  
On what note do I play the strings?  
To make her juggle her waist to the lyrics,  
And dance to the tune of its reality,

On what note do I play the strings???

## WHEN A MAN DIES

DYNAMIC RAHMA JIMOH

Daily, in our land,  
The sky's bleached,  
Metamorphosing from blue to red  
All day long.  
As souls thin into it,  
By noon, it's blazing hot  
From the juice of innocent men,  
And evenings, it's red coals.

The day father's blood  
Joined the storm in the sky,  
He sneaked out stealthily like a serpent,  
Despite the curfew caused by the war.  
'It's better to die by guns or bombs,  
Never by hunger,' he said.  
Yet serpents are caught  
Every now and then.

He really did die by the gun,  
His body frozen on the streets,  
His blown brain debris all around,  
Blood, a flowing spring  
Up to the sizzling sky.

But not only a man died that day,  
For a widow died in her world  
And the sun rose never to set again,  
For she turned a walking dead,  
Mourning all mornings of her life.

## RAIN

EZE JACOB ISRAEL

The heavenly flood keeps riding forcefully.  
The drought-stricken land sucks up  
The wetness in the tearful landscape  
With dewfall and drops,  
Grasses prostrating silently  
to the watery and stream flow.

It is time for the children's playful parade.  
They flick their acrobatic prowess broadly  
With joyful, toiling response  
To the countless pins blessing them  
With sounding gymnastic,  
Shaking like restless pens on paper  
Dancing flawlessly on a showpiece .

Rain drops ride violently  
On the incubating surface,  
Awakening the lifeless seeds  
Itching for growth  
From their sullen dream of dormancy,  
Clutching their legs and stretching their arms,  
Packing them up for the long sojourn,  
Ferociously admonishing them to rise.

The broadcasted layers of leaves  
Willfully embrace the rain,  
Moving randomly to cheer up  
The climatic ambience,  
Sprouting eagerly to see the new dawn  
In the feast ready for an era of peace.

## THE STAMMERING WORDS

MARTINS TOMISIN OLUSOLA

I hear words stammering  
In the rounded belly of the clouds,

Words which droop drops  
Like okro soup,

Words which 'gbosà'  
Like voicing thunders,

Words duly sauced  
With peppered metaphors,

Words which pinch the ears  
Of the icing proverbs  
And cling to the horns of mental idioms,

Words which unfetter the curvy lips  
Of a long silent mansion

And strip naked the belly  
Of the perverse cloud.

I see these words too  
Wedding to the milky teeth  
Of a young, silvered moon.

I see these words with slaps  
Reddening the cheeks of a crowned king.

I see these words thronging  
the potbelly of a crystal lamp.

I hear words stammering  
In the belly of the clouds



## EMOTIONLESS

TUKUR RIDWAN OLORUNLOBA

I know you are searching for my grins.  
Smile when you find my shoes on a doormat  
of pain, cracks on the wall of my heart  
and paleness of the morning's straight face.  
That is the sympathy of heaven for my exile  
from the Eden of happiness. I ate fruits  
of knowledge. Now, I only know despair.  
My eyes are the sun drying these tear glands.  
Red is the middle name of blood, but blue  
is what runs in my vein— the colour of my feeling.  
These eyes are a sky refusing to rain,  
unlike rags under the strangle of dirty laundry.  
I cannot squeeze to extract flows of truth,  
so you cannot see through. My spleen are wrinkles—  
the lines crossing the sore-face of youthfulness,  
like the scales of the old. That is the beauty  
of battered brains by whiplashes of melancholy.  
My mentality at its darkest. Worst behaviours,  
ranging from rage to caging strange disgusts.  
So, smiles became a luxury to be reached  
in a million miles. One moment of fun is a feast.  
The next is a compound of dates before the next.  
This is how men grow gloom before blooms  
of deafening doom for moods. Swinging from left  
to far left, then right, right away. But we cannot cry,  
when our emotions are fried before the heat  
of our hearts. My mind boils. I am pensive—  
my pen sieves these grains of tears.

## NOSTALGIA

STEPHEN IZEVBEKHAI

I almost became a-poetic when that savour reeled out by my pen  
on the crisp paper of your mind became stale and sour.  
For my heart bled profusely in nostalgia amidst rampaging issues,  
bedeviling that shelter for millions wearing black faces.

I was rejected, dejected and ejected  
at that junction where my limbs became weary,  
losing the will to carry on this struggle.  
Where words are scribbled permanently  
on faint clouds evading erosion by the rain of time,  
my fingers crawled to muse as I crafted this dance from that forest of vast  
ideas  
which overtook plantations of disharmony.

I bathe in murky waters of unknown purity, riddled with ash  
which paints my sore, black skin.  
Yet I hide along corridors where squirrels prowl,  
wearing amulets which strengthen against that hardened nut,  
to crack and birth dreams by a myriad pens.

I think I was rejected when petals which beautify the entrance of that page  
withered in the drought of my emotions.  
Or did I get rejected and evicted when my pen became anaemic,  
Suffering severe hemorrhage on the heels of tyranny,  
corruption, terrorism, depression, kidnapping and religious intolerance?  
But the marbles are lost only to history, whose voice continues to suffer  
attrition.  
Will I be rejected this time, when I cry bittersweet tears of rain  
about these barricades obscuring a million paths to your heart?  
For in them, I may paint beautiful and colourful images of my continent  
where the lost marbles can be found on serene rocky mountains,  
and the wet palm of calabash begging to percolate the recesses of your  
heart,  
hoping that, someday, we won't be rejected.

## WHAT MY MUM TOLD ME

OKEBIORUN OLAMILEKAN

It all began at a feast of Bliss,  
A clash of side stares from two strangers.  
Behind a palm tree, he met this Miss.  
They strolled downhill like some known Lovers.

A clash of side stares from two strangers,  
For minutes, for hours, no one could tell.  
They strolled downhill like some known Lovers.  
He watched each glimpse her eyes could foretell.

For minutes, for hours, no one could tell.  
So he knelt with a ring, his love to profess,  
Watching each glimpse her eyes could foretell.  
Unknown to anyone, she screamed: “yes! yes!!”

...So he knelt with a ring, his love to profess.  
Behind a palm tree, he met this Miss.  
Unknown to anyone, she screamed: “yes! yes!!”  
It all began as a feast of Bliss.

## STAR OUT OF MY SKY

NNAMDI PETER EBENEZER

I watched the lights fade from the sky,  
And in the wind I heard a sigh.  
A star in my life is extinguished.  
The ensuing darkness leaves me in deep anguish.

It was just like yesterday, it was yesterday  
We had a chat to chart plans for some better day,  
But my star is gone and no more today.  
My heart, heavy, hurts harder than words can say.

As the earth covers my fallen morning star,  
With candles, chants and a requiem for a fallen gem,  
I silently call out your name and ask where thou art.  
Please hearken and answer so I can tell them!

Every fiber of my very being is riddled with rage,  
Saddled deep like the wisdom of a Grecian sage.  
Forever will I carry this darkness hither and thither  
Till I age a century, a tattered coat on a stick and bitter.

I stare into the abyss, into the deep recess of my soul.  
An emptiness stares right back, neither of us blinking at the other.  
I know my teardrops won't brighten the dark hours of now or old,  
Nor will my unrelenting rage salvage a dying star.

Brothers! Sing me ballads of the great Genghis; he too was a sad soul,  
I too, a drunken totem of grief, along with the bards singing  
O dearly, beloved, sixth star! O daughter of the morning!  
To live in hearts we leave behind is not to die!

## FREEDOM'S FINGERS ARE UNCOUNTABLE

OSADOLOR WILLIAMS OSAYANDE

Because the deliquescence of the blood of a soul  
begins with the burial of essence in breathing shame,  
my meekest mother managed to mould my maims  
into a river's seed planted it in my belly, and it  
blossomed into eyes that found the seas in the north.

How do you free flailing flight wilting for fear  
of what the wind would say if he denounced feet?  
Wade him across my mother's womb  
as desperately as you would scrape grey off light  
and watch light claw through stories of self-loss?

This is the composition of North's northern seas:  
our hearts are sprawling kaleidoscopes and it is no sin;  
not all corns become ugali, not all corns become nsima,  
not all corns cross the deserts to become real polenta,  
but all must become C8 notes to open the soul's hymen.

Flailed flight sits at the bank of my mother's womb  
soused with slithers of freed air. Freedom is sacred.  
Dehisce it!

He watches the North seep into his pores, feeding them  
like a kiss keels into killed love and raises the dead.  
He kisses his belly and people wonder how and why.

Because the belly is a gnarled museum, a lover of destiny,  
it would manure the roots of this intense freedom.  
The seed would birth the thawed you, the untamed river  
that dances without tight and diamante shoes,  
thrusting at self-loss a classy, smirking volatility.

## SOMEWHERE

ODEMAKIN TAIWO HASSAN

Somewhere in a conned corner,  
All a soul thinks about is to break a border,  
Eager to find that light,  
Just a ray of hope in his deep darkness.

Somewhere in a forgotten room,  
Tears tear, fears fight.  
Demons begotten in a looming doom  
Fill her every single sight.

Somewhere in a full head  
Is a marred maze with no known end.  
Games, in chess, even scrabble,  
Are played in frenzies and haggles.

Somewhere in between these words,  
A line oozes hope,  
Becoming the thick clouds around their worlds,  
Offering daily prayers, like a faithful Pope.

REVIEW

OLAJUWON JOSEPH OLUMIDE

I have placed a stern seat by the iron gate  
of this citadel where a philosophical policeman  
has been patrolling since my mind became a mirror,

say, at six, when my first love was flown to London,  
for how, like a nocturnal cat, she would sneak out  
of her father's mansion to frolic with a poor boy  
who needed companion on a malnourished street,

or perhaps at seven, when I saw the sun  
of my posterity rising through the grinning whisper  
on the face of my mistress obsessed about this lad  
who wielded a pen that spewed scholarly innocence.

...

Now, I let the critic mount the constructive seat.  
in this citadel of reflection: I have heard a paradigm  
cough out that poverty of golden coins being a fallacy  
perhaps is the reason I became greedy Art who fisted  
too many bags of ingenuity, before my natal phantom  
took a dive like a parachute into the belly of an eve.

Leaving behind a bag of golden coins was my undoing.  
See, my talent bags emit maggots at my bleak watch  
in a cursed homeland. A wrong perch for glorious kites?  
And sadly still, time is such a fleet footed imp.  
The last time I checked the pace his limbs ticked for me,  
I was nineteen, a fleeting, flourishing rose under the sun.

Now here am I, wilting by the day with my burdened gifts.  
How life treats man thus, unfair! and if my art were to  
sojourn on a genre of poetry, the critic should just posit  
that on this shore of life, I'm but a fruitless poetree?

## OH THEE, ACCUSING FINGERS

DANIEL OLATUNBOSUN

Oh thee, accusing fingers!  
Today, you accuse the leaders,  
cursing the corridors of power with screams,  
condemning the government's corruptions,  
yet, you gamble away your kids' dreams.

Oh thee, accusing fingers!  
Again, you fight the politicians,  
while you loot your neighbors' treasures  
betraying your solidarity of poverty,  
caring for nothing but your own pouches...

Oh thee, accusing fingers!  
Sometimes, you battle the clergy,  
judging them for sowing hate amongst all,  
but you are eager to satisfy your "money bags"  
with violence and divisive brawls...

Oh thee, accusing fingers!  
This time, it has to be the thugs.  
You condemn them for their troubles  
but you neglect these destitute kids,  
forcing them to grow in their shambles.

Oh thee, accusing fingers!  
Even now, something is to blame.  
Everything, anything, but yourselves,  
Oh thee, accusing fingers!



CAN YOU SEE WHAT THEY HAVE DONE TO MY EARTH?

ABRAHAM UWE ESANG

Can you see what they have done to my eyes?  
They are grieved with the woes of this world,  
blinded by the artificial aerosol of smouldering flesh,  
dazzled by the glinting of evil unrolled.

Can you see what they have done to my words?  
They have ripped them off my painful tongue,  
beaten and crashed them in gentle efforts,  
Crushed the heartbeat of life from rhymes unsung.

Can you see what they have done to my dreams?  
They have filtered my brain, disorganized my cells,  
Configured my cortex with newborn paradigms,  
pulled my curiosity to the front gate of hell.

Can you see what they have done to my earth?  
They have contaminated her waters, set her trees on fire,  
damaged her ribs to rob her entrails of diamonds,  
dispersed toxins and waste in her streams, valleys and seas.

But I will stand tall, not let my words be suppressed.  
I will elevate my voice, say my mind plain and clear.  
I will wash the earth and plant the seeds of a new born trust.  
I will teach humans to live with no sorrow or fear!

## WHERE I CALL HOME

NNANYELUGO MICHELLE CHIAMAKA

I grew up in a makeshift hut  
Where anger bore holes on our leaky roof .  
Here, we filtered laughter often to weigh its worth,  
Urchins, six of us. I became the seventh one.

In our house, problems crept in and out,  
So I dug seven holes where I poured libations to appease their tempers.  
The outcome : a waterlogged entrance

Where I woke up to the creaking of our wooden door on sunny  
afternoons  
Just to have papa pound me for lunch.

In the same way he planted a seed in my sister.  
Now she has a replica of him sprouting in her.

All papa could ever boast of was  
His contorted face with disgruntled frowns  
Each time he raises his iron fist on mama,

Each punch leaving a patch on her eye,  
A rough sketch of colours that lured her into blindness.

Where pain droops from the icheku tree nearby,  
Its long pods form clusters of complaints  
Dangling on my neck like a label  
Inscribed on the palette of my identity.

Where do you call home?  
Is it the same as mine?

## WORLD CUP FINALS

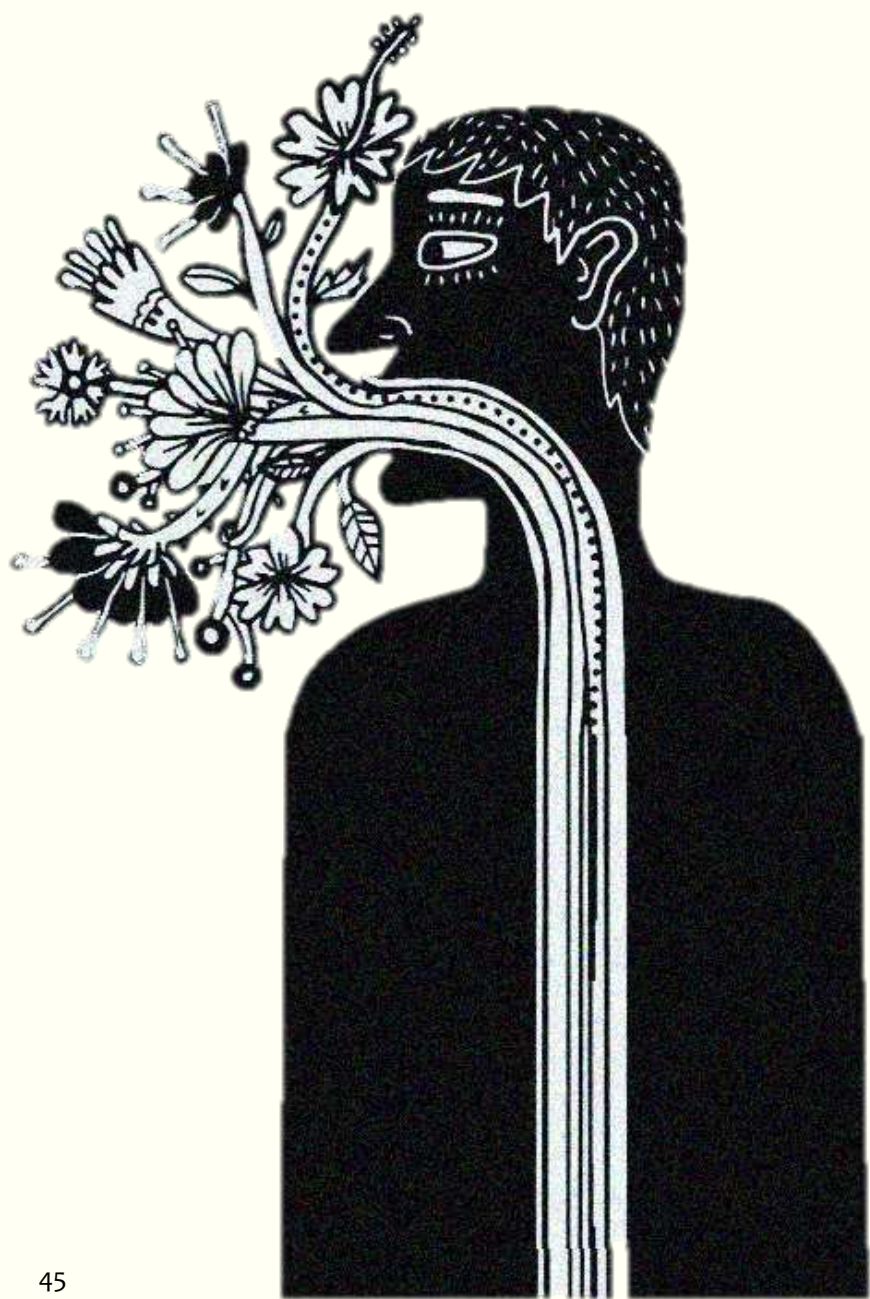
EKOJA OKEWU

The stadium was packed like a sardine can,  
As the centre referee blasted his whistle.  
Like the busy strings of a violin,  
So panted my heart for team Earth.  
Sliding tackles left and right,  
With trees lumbered without replacement...  
As the ozone layer danced like a blind masquerade,  
Diseases patched onto the players like shin guards.  
While many were red carded by poverty, inequality and illiteracy,  
Team Earth bled silently on the turf.  
Where will the unborn live?  
How will they survive the sun's smile?  
Maybe Mars can help?  
Oh no! Only Earth supports life.  
The game is still 0-0 with a lot of injuries.  
Echoes of sustainable development goals  
Reverberate across the substitute touchline.  
John Champion's comment continues...  
The ball is with SDGs ,who has just dribbled  
past pollution, hunger, poverty and inequality  
to score a superb goal.  
Wild jubilations like flies feasting on a mango!  
Team Earth has won the cup.  
It's the eve of year 2030.  
My smile spreads like ripening tomatoes,  
Because SDGs was a goal.

“

Unexpressed emotions  
will never die. They are  
buried alive and will come  
forth later in uglier ways.

– Sigmund Freud



Dear Reader,

Thank you for reading this chapbook.

The [Brigitte Poirson Poetry contest \(BPPC\)](#) is a monthly writing contest aimed at rewarding the under-appreciated talent of young nigerian poets. It was instituted in February 2015 in honor 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](#).

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