ODE TO MOTHER TONGUE

Top 20 poems of the Brigitte Poirson Poetry Contest (BPPC) June/July 2020.

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)
Vortices of Verses (2019)

AN ODE TO MOTHER TONGUE

TOP 20 POEMS OF THE
BRIGITTE POIRSON POETRY CONTEST (BPPC)
JUNE/JULY 2020

Edited by
BRIGITTE POIRSON
KUKOGHO IRUESIRI SAMSON

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INTRODUCTION

What can define a place, a culture, the human spirit better than the ingenious genius of a mother tongue? Our mother tongues are our most precious assets, a personal AND global inalienable wealth.

The July/August 2020 edition was planned as a very special one: to highlight the importance of the original languages of our communities.

Quite regrettably, no less that NINETEEN excellent poets failed to read the guidelines and, therefore, failed to offer a sample of their poetry in their mother tongues as required! Many even forgot to indicate which mother tongue they were using! Others omitted accents!

I also balance between rejoicing that up to eight languages were represented and stating that only eight appeared in the contest...

Anyway, the pieces that made it to the winning list remain a very good serving.

Nevertheless, please, always READ THE GUIDELINES!

Brigitte Poirson
July 2020

APRIL/MAY WINNERS

OLOWO QUDUS OPEYEMI is a young poet and a spoken word artiste. He is presently a second-year student of Sociology at the Federal University of Ilorin (UNILORIN), Kwara State. He is a member of the Unilorin Elites, a student-writers' group based in the university.

UDE VIVIAN CHIDIMMA is a 24-years old Nigerian poet from Abia State. She is a graduate of English Language and Literature who loves poetry but writes mostly for her personal consumption. She resides in Imo State..

ABAH ABAH OYAGABA is a Nigerian poet and English Language/Literature teacher from Benue state. He is a graduate of Benue State University and former President of the unversity's students' Writers' League. Abah won the BPPC in September 2017..

ODE TO MOTHER TONGUE

Olowo Qudus Opeyemi, 1st Prize Winner

My tongue-tail yaups the lingual tale of my primogenitors
like the squalls of a screeching and screaming saxophone,
tell my phantries to mount my meek mouth
with the memories of my mother tongue that led
my lips to the lyrics of my kith and kin languages
and englut my pharynx with the volting vocal vibes of 'Oodua'.
If I bite the dust; indite me ethereal epitaphs in 'Yoruba'!

With mother tongue, I will pay tributes to the three beldames
that harbour in the sacred woodlet of my hamlet.
With mother tongue, I will trap the thin air
with fluxes of fervent fire flowing faultlessly freely,
for mother tongue is a diplomatic piece of peace.
(Translation to the Yoruba native language)

Translation (Yoruba Language):

IBA FUN EDE ABINIBI
iru ahon mi pariwo itan ede awon babanla mi
bi ti ariwo fere tin pariwo
só fun awon iran mi ko gbe ènu mi tutu
Pelu ohun iranti ti ede ahon iya mi
Iyen yori awon èdé mi si awon oro awon èdé iran mi
ko si dun onafun mi pelu adun-ede 'Oodua'
bi ba déni iyepe; èdé Yoruba nikefi yin sare mi

Pelu èdé iya mi; ma yin awon ajé meta
to n gbe ninu Igbó mimo osha ninu abùle mi
pelu èdé iya mi; ma mu atégun tinri
pelu iná nlá ti n fo tèmi tèmi
nitori pe èdé iya —je nkan ti joba ibaje

TONGUELESS

Ude Vivian Chidimma, 2nd Prize Winner

Ola what sound your first ears filter
To the sounds of the Elizabethans
Or to the rhythm of Eris progeny
Or the sonority of Nigers creole
Or perhaps to the hands of prosody!

But these canals remain sealed,
The buccal and auditory canals,
From the uterus to realms untold,
Like 4th of July to the slaves,
Mother tongue to the tongueless
Whose drink and ring lobes from birth are terminated.

Translation (Igbo Language):

Ola kedu uda nti gi nuru mbu
Uda ndi Ezenwanyi England
Ka obu nke ndi nna anyi Eri
Ka obu agwaragwa ndi Nigeria
Ka obu mmeghari aka

Mana uzo onu na nti gbachiri agbachi
Bido n'omumu gi ruo n'onwu
Otu ndi odibo America gbo si huta mbosi nwere onwe ha
Ka ndi na-enweghi ire si ahuta asusu mbu..

TONGUE OF MOTHER

Abah Abah Oyagaba, 3rd Prize Winner

Tongue of mother,
Sing to me again the old, old song
That runs down my throat smoothly
And moves through my veins to my brain
Then connects to my legs the fitness of aja dance.

Tongue of mother,
Tell me not:
That your tongue has been twisted or blistered,
That your tongue can no longer carry the song.

Sing to me the old, old song,
So that I can dance the dance of father
Without dancing off the beats.

Translation (Idoma Language):

IGLENYI K'ENE
Iglenyi k'ene
Gw'ije gam kpo e, ije nenche nnche a
En o kwinya g' ol'oko kum a
En o yebeyi g'ili gum g'aje okoto kum a
Che k' olekwu b'ikpo kum ile k'eje k'aja

Iglenyi k'ene
Aka gam leya no:
K'iglenyi k' ano l'kogo kogo amang ko lemi no
K'iglenyi k' ano ga gw'ije a glamang no

Gw'ije gam kpo e, ije nenche nnche a
Che k'um jije k' ada
Che k'um jije abi no.

TONGUE OF TALES

Kwaghkule Jacob Aondonengen

When dusk resurrects from dawn,
The moon migrates into its visibility,
Moving slowly from the unknown,
Tiptoeing like a thief of hidden identity,
While we yearn for the moonlight
Like a fighting Knight in a darkened night.

When civilization our tongues knew not
And tailless tales sweetened our ears,
In anticipation we prayed for the moonlight.
Then, our eyes knew not even happy tears.
But our tongue is poisoned by globalization
As it is buried for the sake of acculturation.

Translation (Tiv Language):
TIV KA NOMBOUGH U KWAGH HII
Er tough va mgboom u ilen yo
Wer moo u vaan ape a nenge ami yo
Van beelee ken ape se fe ga,
Zenden inja er ormbaiv u i fe un ga nahan
Kpa isarem yase yo lu u nengen a iwanger
Er or shoja u nongon ityav ken utugh nahan.
Shien u mbugh u ase nombough wase lu a fa ga la
Man kwaghhii u kulen ga kpa nyoho ato ase la
Se kenghen iwanger a msen u eren je
Shien la; ashe ase fa mliam ma msaaniyol kpa ga.
Kpa nombough wase vihi sha mzamber u ashe abugh
Er i ii u sha mzough u zwa wase a zwa igen yo.

SOME ENGLISH CONSONANTS ON MY TONGUE

Olaitan Junaid

You have to stretch your tongue across the seas to catch a word –
it is the language of salvation – we've learnt to read and pray with it.
Whenever my tongue falls into F, as in Fernacular,
know that I mean to say V, as in Vernacular – blame me not; my tongue aches.
I lose too much breath to the space between my incisors to say TH-ink.
Sometimes, saying ZE-bra equates self-harm –
it feels like the rest of life quivers out of my body.
In a year, we take a day off wearing another skin,
peel fine flesh from our lips and tell our stories – it's cultural day.
What do we worship always, if not our mothers?
But, see! Their words are drowning in a pool of mud
and they do not ask too much if they say we write them
like a sonnet on our tongues.

Translation (Yoruba Language):

DÍẸ NÍNÚ ÀWỌN KỌŃSÓNÁNTÌ ÈDÈ GẸẸSÌ LÓRÍ AHỌN MI
o ní láti na ahọ́n rẹ kọjá àwọn òkun láti mú ọ̀rọ̀ kan —
ó jẹ́ èdè ìgbàlà— a ti kọ́ láti kà àti gbígbàdúrà pẹ̀lú rẹ̀.
Nígbàkúgbà tí ahọ́n mi bá ṣubú sínú Fí, bíí ní Fànákúlà,
mọ̀ pé í túmọ̀ sí láti sọ Fí, bíí ní Fànákúlà— ṣe ìbáwí mi; ahọ́n mi kan
mo tu èémí púpọ̀ sí ayé sí ààyè lááríń àwọn íńsísọ̀ọ̀sì mi láti sọ TH-ink
nígbàkan, sísọ pé ZE-bra ṣe ìdọ́gba ìpalára ti ara ẹni—
Ó kan lára bíí ìyókù tí ìgbésí ayé ń jáde kúrò nínú ara mi.
ní ọdún kan, a gba ọjọ́ kan kúrò láti wọ awọ mìíràn,
hó awọ gidi kúrò lórí ahọ́n wa láti sọ àwọn ìtàn wa – o jẹ́ ọjọ́ àṣà
Kíni à ń sìn nígbà gbogbo tí kìí bá ṣe àwọn ìyá wa?
Sùgbọ́n, wòó! ọ̀rọ̀ wọ́n ti wà ń rì sínú adágún ti pẹ̀tẹ̀pẹ̀tẹ̀
àti pé wọ́n kò béèrè púpò jùlọ tí wọ́n bá sọ pé a kọ wọ́n
bíí sónéétìì lórí àwọn ahọ́n wa.

A POEM TO SET YOUR TONGUE FREE

Peter Columba Itanka

This poem would have been woven with every alphabet in it tallowed
With voices I had once known, but shielded myself from.
From listening far too little. And saying far too small.

I should have danced more to the milk tune, paid more attention at carnivals,
Caressed the palms of the seamstress who stitches tongues; I should have learnt
From certain familiar tongues: the grumbling sounds of the night thunder, the rustle in the rain,
The chattering of ceramic plates on wet floor- how every tongue breaks free.

Perhaps this poem will cheer me up with a thousand ounces of dreams
Filled with albums of words I can now replace without looking over my shoulder
Or mourning them in queer italics; as Akara replaces Bean Cake; as Okoneyo, the Night;
As Ndap, the Dreams of a man.

Translation (Efik Language):

IKWÓ NGWED SIBI NÓ EDEME UBÓKÓ

Mma gwed ikwó ngwed emi, akpade se njed uked alphabet
Ke ujo ikó ke ndioñóke, nte nkediañade idem kpoñ;
Ke ndikop etok-etok, ke nditañ nkpiñe-nkpiñe.

Mkpa suk ntuak unek nnó ikwó mmóñ eba ami, kpaña utoñ ke usen mboho unek,
Mfiók ubók agwo akum-afoñ ase kumo edeme asin agwo ke idem;
Mkpa kpep nkpo
Nto mme udioño ujo : Ke ngwa-gwad ujo ikañ-edim okoneyo, ke ujo mfañ ke edim,
Ke ujo usan utó-ubomo asuanade ke ndedeñ isoñ- Idak uked edeme anie ubokó.

Nnusuk-idaha, ikwó nkwed emi anannó mien inem nne ediwak mbire ndap,
Ajógóke nne ekama-ngwed ikó ndise mmekem mkpuñó ubono mkpo, idé
Se esese edem mme ndiseme ke italics; nte Akara ke ntie akara mbakara; okoneyo ke ntie
okoneyo mbakara; Ndap ke ntie ndap agwo.

HOME IN SHAMBLES

Wale Olaogun

Since our burnt home
left no ashes on the sand of earth,

we've learned how to
sing the anthem of silence,

because no song is more danceable
than the rhythm of dirge,

our lips, prettily painted
with the lyrics of threnody

and our shoulders humbly confined
within the walls of a black garment.

This is the story of a home
which bricks fell like Jericho.

Translation (Yorùbá Language):

GBÍGBÉ NÍNÚ ÌPÒRURU
Nígbà tí orírun wa ti jóná
láì fi eérú bojú,

Lati kọ́ bí wọ́n
ti ń kọrin ìdákẹ́rọ́rọ́

Torí kò sí orin
tó dùn-ún jó bí i orin arò

Ẹnu wa tó kún fún
orin ìrìnkèrindò

Bẹẹ̀ni wọ́n sin èjìká

ọ̀kọ̀ọ̀kan wa sínú ìpèlé dúdú

Èyí ni ìtàn ìlú tí ó
parun l'ójijì bí i odi Jérịíkò

BACK TO ROOT

Nnadi Samuel

My mother preserves her lung with a neat thirst for dialects.
Each time words trip off her tongue, it threads anew,
dressing its way into our curtain chest.

We breathe through it,
and hang them in our prayer books when the verses aren't enough.
We soften the noise from her lips, till it comes clean as buttered bone.

Once, my brother chewed through it and lost his gums to a sore whitening
poured into his cheek as liquid hate for a clan.
He bled, adjusting his taste to the ancient feel of words.

My father stirs in his sleep, blaming himself for nothing.
He groped my back, squeezed my arms till they held a train ticket,
and said here to lead you all back to your root.

Translation (Igbo Language)

IDUGHE GI NU'LÓ

Nné m né dozie akpá nkuume ya na asusu di ócha.
ngbo nile ókwu sité ni re ya da pu, óna di cha ohoru,
wé na ba na' akpaobi anyi.

anyi na kuru ume ni ime ya,
wé ne kóme ya ni'me akwukwo nsó anyi ngbé amaokwu nó ni'mé ya ezuru oke.
anyi na nro mkpotú si na egbugberé anu ya puta,
ruo mgbé o puta ra ka nmanú okpukpu.

otu mgbé, nwanne m nwoke ta rá ime ya wé gbúbie anyiri ezé ya na onya ocha,
wurú nonu ya dika mmiri iró o wére gbásara umunna ya.
obará gbára nonú ya mgbé ómeghari uto mkpuruokwu ya.

mpá m kpalitei ni'me ura ya, na ta onyé maká ihé ne wé isi.
ómeturu azú m aká, piakota mkpata úkwu m nro mgbé aká m jiri akuko njem,
wé kwu si ihe o nyere mu wù ihe nile idughe m ruo ulo anyi.

MOTHER TONGUE

Goto Emmanuel

Aiii izon! When I was leaping in my mother's globe,
Longitudinal wave travelled far to wave me in the globe,
Screeching like a bird in the nest.

Nature taught us our mother's tongue,
But it was mastered without test,
Though cutting the tongue is simple as ABC.

When the strangers stormed the land,
The aging asked the strong to cut their tongues
And opened the strangers' minds.

Dad asked, and answered, "If not thy tongue, what defines you?
Your tongue is your priority."

Translation (Izon Language):

YIN IBE AMA
Aiii izon! Ee eyin akpomi emo zerei timi kirimi,
Eferu zou bou eni akpo la,
Ofini ke fiye minibira, uni wari o,

Akpo mi woyin ibe ko wo tolumo,
Wo ibe mi na, dadi kpofa oturuo,
Ta, beleu mi pele mi kurogha ABIDI bira.

Iguni abu ma bo ama mi lakirimi,
Okusu abu ma gba ko kala abu ma dia, ona beleu ma Pele
Baifio, iguni abu ma ikiyou ma fini.

Dau bitei, baifio esikoromotei, " beleu mia seigha, teike igbakou akpodigha ma?
Ini peleu mi iyela emi."

MY TONGUE, MY ORIGIN

Ayobami Kayode Tijani Ah'mad

The vegetable that grows around the waterside seeks no validation from the rain for its growth.
My tongue is a zebra that changes its lines not,
even when the moon helps in beautifying the spots of a night crawling leopard.
The words that roll out of my mouth are gems amidst stones.
My mother whispered into my right ear:
"My child, your language is a vulture's bald head; it's a gift from heaven."
My hometown left its saliva deep down my throat - it's called river of life.
A day without me remembering this river threatens my existence - it's my origin.
So everyday, like a diminutive gnome's tears, I let this river flow.

Translation (Yoruba Language)

AHỌN MI, ORÍSUN MI
ahọ́n mi, orísun m(my tongue, my origin).
Ẹ́fọ́ etídò kò fẹ́ àṣẹ làti ọ̀dọ̀ òjò láti wù.
Ahọ́n mi jẹ́ egbin tí kò kín ń pa ilà rẹ̀ rẹ́,
kódà kí òṣùpá ran ẹ̀kùn tí ó ń rìn l'álẹ́ lọ́wọ́ láti bù kún ẹ̀wà kólokòlo ara rẹ̀.
Ọ̀rọ̀ tí ó ń jáde l'ẹ́nu mi jẹ́ òkúta iyebíye láàrin òkúta lásán.
Ìyá mi sọ̀rọ̀ kẹ́lẹ́kẹ́lẹ́ símí l'étí òtún -
"ọmọ mi, èdè rẹ dà gẹ́gẹ́ bíi orí igúnnugún tí ó pá - ẹ̀bùn ni láti ọ̀run."
Ìlú mi fi itọ rẹ̀ símí ní ọ̀nà ọ̀fun - odò ayérayé ni à ń pèé.
Ọjọ́ tí mo bá pàdánù láti ṣe ìrántí odò yìí á sì d'ẹ́rù ba ìgbé ayé mi - orísun mi ni.
Fún ìdí èyí ni gbogbo ọjọ́, bí ẹ̀kún egbére, mo máa ń jẹ́ kí odò yìí sàn.

MY MOTHER'S TONGUE

Olajide Gbenga Emmanuel

My Mother's tongue- the pillar of noesis.
What a miracle!
She carves out pragmatic foundations at my sight
Before splitting monstrous mountains in syntax.

Mountains that shrank life out of my expressions,
During those years I dared not mount mysterious morphemes.

A must, on a safari: I salivate for her saffron robes
That painted my lifestyle with her inkful hues.
And she gives me warmth in the frost of uncertainty.

Now she teaches me how to split those mountains,
And out of it, flows watery wisdom for a drink.

Translation (Yoruba Language):

EDE IYAA MI
Ede iyaa mi ni- opomulero ero ogbon.
Ohun agba iyanu ni!
O si fín awopoko ipinle oye ka ojùú mi,
Ki o to wo awon oke nla ninu siseda ede.

Awon oke nla ti n fun emi jade lat inu a won eya oro mi
Nigba igbiyanju mo ko lati dan gigun aramonda ege oro lasa.

Okon dondon, lilo irin ajo ehanna, mo poungbe wiwa ewu aso saffroni re lo,
Mosi kun igbesi aye mi pelu irufe tadáwà orisiriisi awo to rewa,
Pelu aso ala re tin mumi mooru ninu otútù tàbítàbí.

Nisiisiiyi, o n ko mi bi a tin pin awon oke nla
Eyiti lat inu re wa, nsan fun omi ogbon fun mi mu.

HERITAGE

Ojo Adewale Iyanda

Counsel the headhunter man-child
Not to journey the path of cold war
By whipping dark symphonic beats
Into the rhythm of my mother's tongue.

Mother's tongue is an alabaster jar of deodorized vocals
Making my pride wallow in the billows of culture.
As I sniff the halo of its fragrance
My heart parties as it cuddles its cozy undertones.

Tongue encrypted with the wit of keen dialect
Has been my tribe guard of honor.
I pay crescendo homage to my heritage.

Translation (Yoruba Language):

OHUN-INI

E kilo fun omo ode
ko ma rin ni ipado ogun adakeja
Nipase lilu iro ti ko dara
Si inu alujo ede abinibi mi.

Ede abinibi mi je kolobo to kun fun ohun didun
O si nje ko o ri mi wu ninu gbogan asa mi.
Bi mo de gborun adun re
Okan mi yo, o si nko ni panpa mora.

Ahon to kun fun oniruru Ede
Lo je ohun iwuri fun eya mi,
Mo gbe osuba rabata fun ohun-ini mi.

IDENTITY SYNTAX

Bayowa Ayomide Micheal

A child has more than two language baptisms
after its olive wobbles sentences and spits bubbles.
My mother's tongue is the same subway to Pennsylvania.
Bad English was a suitcase she came with to diaspora.
If the U.S missiles get missing, they will be between her canines.
Her peninsula is belted to the root of her family tree.
Pearls of wisdom are traditional black rubbers melting her hairstyle.
Most times, I get nauseous from the hastes of migrating train lights
and whirlpool turns to the directions of exile compasses.
The whiteness of everything is a monarchy glove claim of my teardrops.
My mother does not need a dentist to respell me my identity,
"Nigga is a honey wrap every human wants to tongue."

Translation (Yoruba Language):

SYNTAX IDANIMO
Ọmọdé ni dię sii ju awọn iribomi ti ede meji
lẹhin awọn gbolohun ọrọ irunu ati awọn eepo fifa.
Ede iya mi ję ọkọ-irin alaja kanna si Pennsylvania.
Gęęsi ti ko dara ję aṣọ ti won mu dani lo si ilu ajeji.
Ti awọn ohun ija oloro ilu oyinbo ba sonu, wọn yoo wa laarin aja Maami.
Ahọn Maami wa ni dide si gbongbo igi ẹbi wọn.
Awọn okuta oniye ję ọgbọn dudu ti aṣa ti yo ọna irundidalara wọn.
Nigbagbogbo, iyara ti ṣiṣan awọn imọlę ọkọ oju irin ṣe mi ni rirun
ati yiyipada ajakęgun si awọn itọnisọna ti awọn kọnsi ti igbekun.
Awọn funfun ti ohun gbogbo ję ẹtọ ibọwọ ijọba mongo ti omijé mi.
Iya mi ko nilo ọjọgbọn ehin lati fun mi ni idanimọ mi,
"Ijuwe eniyan dudu ję oyin ti gbogbo eniyan fę tọwo."

I SPEAK WHAT I LIVE

Yusuf Muyibat

There are stains of blood in the cloud.
Our mirror doesn't reflect us, a different being reincarnated.

We shouted our names, for an image was moulded on our behalf,
So when it is called, everyone hears, even the deaf.

I speak what I live!
I am the refined being mounted on a pure gate.

Even when dirt is plastered on our faces,
We glow, for we are everywhere and can't be defined by a phase.

I am called Oyiza, my brother Onipe, fathered by character.
Have you visited my home where true nature hovers?

Do you know my culture? My mother tongue defines it all.
This is why I speak my person: it makes me stand tall and never fall.

Translation (Ebira Language):

ANYI'ANYÀ INI EGUHI

Evi eyi oyì norey, oza'irenyi otu eheni

Ya'a nowu hierehayi, aguvika, ashoza yirenyi doyiresu
Aguvi asihiy, abozoza owu ati ogu'tò

Maaki simivi
Emavi oza`okumi`okumi anayi`nozey oboro

Adakakudo kuwa' eyi
Yãchenyi chényi aguvi ka, ya`dengwu

Ahimi Oyiza, enebeni ami vór Onipe. Ebira omayi ni

Wàheyi ekurami da? Oni igoreyi isanatu hinani.

Waye isa'oziete ayi ? Ka'ekurami Ovi'Ebira ami ni?
Aguvavo Maka'Ebira mi ni. Omekama jeytere dasimi hiedu

MOTHER TONGUE

Salawudeen Sukurat Oluwadamilola

Her tongue, not imprisoned by her teeth,
Yet woven beautifully,gives personal identity.
In its confinements,emotions and thoughts twirl.
In its gaze,pride and confidence glow.
Her tongue is not suspended in her mouth,
But an embodiment of cultural identities.
In it a connection without strings wades;
In its infusion,respect,ethics and values lock.
Oh, mother tongue,
The handless with a warm embrace,
The tongueless with a flaming kiss!
No legs, yet impactful!

Translation (Yoruba Language):

AHÓN RE KÒ SÍ NÍ ÀTÌMÓLÉ NIPA EYÍN RÈ.
Síbè, tí a hun ni dídáára,tó fun ni ìdánimó ara eni.
Nínú àkámó ni edùn ati ìrònú nyí
Ní ojú rè ní ìgbéraga àti ìgboyà n póndèdè
Ahón rè kò dádúró ní enu rè ri
Síbè, ó jé àsà ìdánimò
Nínu rè, ní ìsopò tí kò lókùn wa
Nìnu ìdàpò, ìbòwò, èyà ati iye ntì
Èdè abínibí oooo
Tí kò lówó, pèlu ìfé tó gbóná
Tí kò láhón, pèlu ìfenukò onítara
Kò lésè, síbè, ó kó ipa tó lágbára.

VERNACULA

Precious Afolabi Ayomide

Our tongues were tied,
But Mama's was not.
"I don't let them speak vernacular" she would say,
And her eyes would glitter with pride.

Our tongues were tied,
Because Mama would say "Hush!
Vernacular is bad".
But in 'Vernacular' she forbade us.

Our tongues were tied,
But only within the glaring watch of Mama.
When we didn't sit with her beside the flickering kerosene lamp,
Our Mother Tongue became ours.

Translation (Yoruba Language):

AWA KO LEE SO ORO,
Sugbon Iya wa le gbeborun.
"Mi o ję kan s'ede yęn" won a wi,
Óju won a si maa tan pelu itelorun

Awa ko lee so oro,
Tori Iya wa aani " e dakę!"
"Édékédé ko daa"
Édékédé ni won si fi kò wa ni Ijanu.

Awa ko lee so oro,
Ni ibi ti eti iya wa to.
Ti a o ba joko si egbe atupa pelu iya wa,
Ede iya wa a di tiwa.

THE LANGUAGE OF MY GENES

Olaewe David Opeyemi

I can hear the grin on my mum's face
as I swim in the river of her belly.
My ear tunes to her melodious lullabies
As our eyes cross while I rest in the hollow of her palm.
Her gentle rebukes are audible when
my toothless gum presses her nipple defiantly.
There is a language she speaks and I understand,
One that I do not need a slate for:
The language of my genes,
A label on my tongue.

Translation (Yoruba Language):

ÈDÈ ÀDÁMỌ MÍ.
Mo gbọ́ ohùn to n sòrò lójú ìyá mi,
Bí mo ṣe ń wẹ̀ nínú odò inú rẹ̀.
Etí mi sìi ṣí sí orin tó ń kọ fún mi
Bí ojú wa ṣe ṣe mérin bi mo ṣe sùn l'ọ́wọ́ rẹ̀.
Ìbáwí tútù rẹ jinlẹ̀ l'étí mi nígbàtí
èrìgì mí tẹ ọmú rẹ́ laìbìkítà.
Èdè kan wà t'ósọ tosì yémi,
Eyi ti nkò nílò sileeti ìkòwé fún:
Èdè àdámọ́ mi;
Ti ale mọ́mi l'áhọ́n mí l'átọ̀rùn wá.

IDOMA

Inalegwu Omapada Alifa

Filled with ecstatic delight
against the sight of my plight,
I love the flavoury flavor of right.

You are my song and hymn
as I glow and flow in rhyme
with your soulful rhyme and rhythm.

The musical cadence of your words
and the sequoia imagination of your thoughts
ignite my soul beyond my heart's cords.

My heart races to your embrace
with the wings of your grace
trickling high-sounding vibrations beyond a trace.

Translation (Idoma Language):

OTÚ HUM GA-GA.
Ndoka ka'che nomo wien,
ndoka k'otuno h'ache.

Awe ju luungo,
nkuche je ha
oko l'onye.

Eje oje ej'owo
elipu obo
che lo tu hum.

Nkwinya nyo okonu to
elu y'ogu
fyo je ya l'eche.

WORD IS MUD

Babs Ayandayo

Mother forces my sibs to speak in th' whitebro's tongue,
but th' tongue of my lineage was burnt
and now, when grandpa calls, they will run to pick his robe;
when our neighbours curse, they will greet them.

Grandpa said that there is nothing as impure
as totally placing a foreigner's mouth on your tongue.
Our clan contains folks who can spell our civilizations
on their tongues no longer. They've neglected
a better delivery of infants words
broken with th' bite of kolanut and palm wine, beautiful words
that can take you to a river, bathe you in ancestral
birthwaters and make your body a custodian of purified history.

Translation (Yoruba Language):

ỌRỌ JẸ PẸTẸPẸTẸ
Iyami fi agbara mu awon aburo mi lati sọrọ ni ahọn oyinbo.
ṣugbọn ahọn idile mi ti jo
ni bayi nigbati baba agba ba pe, wọn yoo sare lati mu aṣọ rẹ.
tí àwọn aládùúgbò wa bú, wọn yóò kí wọn.

baba agba sọ pe ko si nkankan bi aimọ
bi patapata gbigbe ẹnu alejò si ahọn rẹ
idile wa ni awọn eniya ti o le sọ si awọn ọlaju wa
lori awọn ahọn mo. nwọn ti igbagbe
ifijiṣẹ ti o dara julọ ti awọn ọrọ ọmọ
fọ pẹlu orogbo ati emu; awọn ọrọ lẹwa
iyẹn le mu ọ lọ si odo kan,
wẹ ọ ni baba-nla odo, ibi ati jẹ ki ara rẹ di olutọju ti itan-mimọ

SONG OF A FOREST SAGE

Olajuwon Joseph Olumide

(an adaptation of a Yoruba folk song with a refrained reply of ájá réde jà, after every 'Olú réde o' line called)

Earth and heaven hunt down a bush meat.
Man flaunts his ego of domain; Sky god hints to hand him the key.
Impetuous man feasts on bushmeat and flees into the cloak of aloofness.
Sky god departs; his feet stomp back the air in beat of anger
And the rain becomes once upon a time on earth, now rocky!
Yam tubers sleep like dead logs in the grave of the earth.
Maizes chant famine song like mouth organs dazzling elegiac notes,
And when a suckling fondles sagged breasts his mouth blares in cry.
Does he grasp the lullaby of drought the land sings?
See soulless men gather in parties of looting,
One-sided head shaven to the scalp, holding us in oblivion.
Humanity, let's watch the end game of the scoundrels?

Translation (Yoruba Language):

Call: Olú ré de o // Response: ájá réde jà!
Ilè átí orún pá ékú emó kan (ájá réde jà!)
Ilè lohún làgbà, Olórún lohún legbón (ájá réde jà!)
Ilè bá mekú emó ló, Olórún bá bínú lo sórun (ájá réde jà!)
Lójò bákò, kò rò mó (ájá réde jà!)
Isu bá pánú kutá, agbadó pánú kotó (ájá réde jà!)
Bomode fu nu omu ogbe (ájá réde jà!)
Lóbán páríwó kòtó (ájá réde jà!)
Sómodé foyé sórin, emaá foyé sórin o (ájá réde jà!)
Eyín wá kóra yínjo, pé efé tún ìlú se (ájá réde jà!)
Ewá n fárí apá kán, eyín o rántí awá mó (ájá réde jà!)
Aó ma wò wón lórin o (ájá réde jà!)

The End.

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.

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