



A PANDEMIC OF POETRY

TOP 40 POEMS OF THE *BRIGITTE
POIRSON POETRY CONTEST 2020*

Edited By
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)

A PANDEMIC OF POETRY

TOP 40 POEMS OF THE BRIGITTE
POIRSON POETRY CONTEST (BPPC)
FEBRUARY TO SEPTEMBER 2020

Edited by
Brigitte Poirson
Kukogho Iruesi Samson

Copyright ©2020 Words Rhymes & Rhythm

All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced, distributed, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, electrostatic, magnetic tape, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without prior written permission from the Publisher or Author.

For information about permission to reproduce selections from this chapbook, please write to publishing@authorpedia.net

Cover design: Grafreaks

Published in Nigeria by:
Words Rhymes & Rhythm
Authorpedia Publishers
Abuja | Lagos | Ibadan
08169027757, 08060109295
www.authorpedia.net



CONTENTS

FOREWORD	x
INTRODUCTION.....	xii
FEBRUARY/MARCH WINNERS	15
FOR WHAT ARE SELF- BORNE SCARS?	16
Ibe Obasiota Ben, 1 ST PRIZE WINNER	16
WHEN SAGES PREACH	17
Oladimeji Adam Adedayo, 2 ND PRIZE WINNER.....	17
THE TRUE MEANING OF AMITY	18
Ogedengbe Tolulope Impact, 3 RD PRIZE WINNER..	18
IF	19
Izuchukwu Saviour Otubelu	19
FRIENDSHIP, LIKE THIS	20
James Taiwo Abel Adesitimi	20
TWO DISTANT FRIENDS	21
Debasish Mishra	21
CLOVEN HEARTS WITH A DEEP RED	22
Osadolor Williams Osayande.....	22
BEST-TEA FOREVER	23
Akinrinade Funminiyi Isaac.....	23
YOU AND ME	24
Towoju, Victor Olushola	24
WHO CAN FIND A TRUE FRIEND.....	25

Akor Agada Nathaniel.....	25
APRIL/MAY WINNERS	27
SEVEN FLOWERS OF GRATITUDE?	28
Osadolor Williams Osayande, 1 ST PRIZE WINNER. 28	
LETTER TO THE BALL WITH SPIKES	29
Fortune Ben, 2 ND PRIZE WINNER.....	29
THE DUOPOLY	30
Oladimeji Adam Adedayo, 3 RD PRIZE WINNER.....	30
WINNING WARS WITH WORDS	31
Akor Agada Nathaniel.....	31
FIERCE BREEZE OF DISEASE.....	32
Ogedengbe Tolulope Impact.....	32
LOCKDOWN.....	33
Ukpanyang Kingsley Ayi	33
THE MIGHTY MOLE	34
Afolabi Oluwatobiloba John	34
PROPHYLAXIS	35
Inalegwu Omapada Alifa.....	35
ECHOES FROM THE DIARY OF COVID-19	36
Adedamola Jones Adedayo	36
UNACCUSTOMED	37
Divine Inyang Titus	37
JUNE/JULY WINNERS	39
ODE TO MOTHER TONGUE.....	40

Olowo Qudus Opeyemi, 1 st Prize Winner	40
TONGUELESS	41
Ude Vivian Chidimma, 2 nd Prize Winner	41
TONGUE OF MOTHER.....	42
Abah Abah Oyagaba, 3 rd Prize Winner.....	42
TONGUE OF TALES.....	43
Kwaghkule Jacob Aondonengen	43
SOME ENGLISH CONSONANTS ON MY TONGUE	44
Olaitan Junaid	44
A POEM TO SET YOUR TONGUE FREE.....	45
Peter Columba Itanka.....	45
HOME IN SHAMBLES	47
Wale Olaogun	47
BACK TO ROOT	49
Nnadi Samuel	49
MOTHER TONGUE	51
Goto Emmanuel	51
MY TONGUE, MY ORIGIN	52
Ayobami Kayode Tijani Ah'mad	52
AUGUST/SEPTEMBER WINNERS.....	55
TOWARDS A BEAUTIFUL BECOMING	56
Martins Deep, 1 st Prize Winner.....	56
THE ART OF BURNING	57
Jamiu Ahmed, 2 nd Prize Winner.....	57

WHERE DO DEAD DREAMS LIVE?	58
Ojo Adewale Iyanda, 3 rd Prize Winner	58
WHEN AN ASYMMETRIC ANIMAL BECOMES THE EARTH	59
Oladimeji Adam Adedayo	59
STYX'S CYCLE.....	60
Ayodele Ayooluwatomiwa Rachel.....	60
OF THINGS TOO HEAVY FOR ONE BODY TO CARRY ALONE	61
Sabur Adedokun.....	61
MAN CAST INTO THE IMAGE OF FIRE.....	62
Ibikunle Aisha.....	62
WHERE WE GO WHEN WE FALL ASLEEP	63
Adeniran Joseph	63
WHO I AM.....	64
Akor Agada Nathaniel.....	64
EPITHALAMIIUM FOR THE WATER SPIRIT BRIDE	65
Husani Abdulrahmin.....	65

FOREWORD

In the darkness of this dystopian year, our thoughts, covided be 2020, keep commuting between SARS-Cov-2 (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, corona virus 2) and the SARS (Special Anti-Robbery Squad) crisis in Nigeria, along with various outbreaks of savagery around the earth . 2020, the circular year, constantly revolves around its spiked balls of infection and destruction, rotating on pandemics caused by biological and societal viruses.

Although these problems have compromised the publication of this anthology, which cannot be printed this year, those brutal scourges can hardly get the better of the vitality of poets. The violations of their cells and selves spur their poetic volition. And the conflation of ideas and feelings produce conflagrations of words. “I burn by the combustion of my own nature”, Heinrich Heine once confided to the paper. The poets in this anthology have ignited the language from their fires and pyres to cast out the demons of this year and spread the burning spirit of healing.

Recharging their souls on poetry, the writers have wafted poems in the wind and left it disseminate their seminal gushes of words and gashes of dreams. Poetry, too, is a virus infecting brains. No matter what, its concretions of words have the capacity to contaminate an unlimited number of minds and hearts. Is the whole world not kneaded with poetry? As Gustave Flaubert noticed, “there is not a particle of life which does not bear poetry within it.” Poetry is consubstantial with the creation. There’s no escaping its propagation. The only vaccine lies...in holding the pen, or holding a book.

Robert Frost, in a ground-breaking statement, has elucidated the poetic process: “Poetry is when an emotion

has found its thought and the thought has found words". Verbalizing what swarms in the conscious and in the unconscious is one of the ultimate human experiences. The poorer the language, the less complex the thought, the less lucid the mind, the more irrational the actions and reactions. But poetry offers the possibility to structure our inner selves and conquer greater mastery over natural and human ills towards greater freedom.

Beware, 2020. These poets are not mere word-scribblers. They also speak in tongues to manifest the spirits of Africa. Pandemic year, you have granted yourself the right to confine humans, to muffle them as persons and citizens. But poetry is an act of citizenship. You have endeavoured to block humanity, down to its very capacity to think. But the emotional conceptualization which is the trademark of poetry can hardly be contained. Words will keep proliferating of their own accord consistently and uncontrollably to spread strength and awareness. The symptoms are easy to detect: creativity, a sense of the absurd, a craving for language accuracy, for freedom and happiness. It propagates a rival viral load of affection. Beware, 2020. These muffled heads and sterilized fingers hold poetic needles to instill injections of poesy into the world. The only cure to the pandemics of disease and violence that wreak havoc everywhere today is to be found in a pandemic of poetry!

Brigitte Poirson
December 2020

INTRODUCTION

A Pandemia of Poetry is a collection of forty testimonies from the BPPC poets in a most challenging year. With over half of the poems written during the period of Corona Virus lockdown in Nigeria, this anthology gives you a peep into how much creativity manages to shine in the darkest periods.

In between the outpouring of love and kisses in February and March, a pandemic came to strike asunder the people and things we hold dear. With the world seeming to come to an end, these believers in poetry take refuge in her, and from her armoury, fire a salvo of poetry at the marauding pandemic. As such, seven flowers of gratitude, of healing, and of a new lease of life is leased to many of us, including our own dear matron Brigitte Poirson who survived the virus without medical assistance.

In June/July, the poets travelled back to their roots and paid homage to the truest element of their identity —their mother tongue. This is in realization of the truth that "nothing can define a place, a culture, the human spirit better than the ingenious genius of a mother tongue." Writing in eight Nigerian languages, they warn us of the danger of losing our gums to what Nnamdi Samuel refers to as "sore whitening", while chewing on the white man's tongue.

In the August/ September edition which gave entrants the freedom to express themselves beyond themes, the featured poets make extensive use of their poetic license in the expression of issues surrounding their "beautiful becoming".

A Pandemia of Poetry is an appreciation of the most important aspects of life. The Poets speak in languages as

friendly as a friend's. From the fellowship their words provide in the theme of friendship, to the healthy hands they hold out to us in the midst of a pandemic and the efforts they have made in speaking to us in the "language of our genes", these poets show us that poetry can be touched, felt and lived.

It is also noteworthy that the increase in the contest's prize money helped to increase the number, as well as the quality of the entries. As a young writer puts it in a private message, "this gives me hope that the art we create is still very much appreciated".

As we look forward to a better post-2020, let us take with us this lesson from *A Pandemia of Poetry*: that no matter how sickening things may become, poetry has a therapeutic value. If symptoms persist, we can administer poetry.

Ebubechukwu Bruno Nwagbo
Librarian, Literary Administrator and Broadcaster

FEBRUARY/MARCH THEME: FRIENDSHIP

FEBRUARY/MARCH WINNERS

IBE OBASIOTA BEN is a Nigerian graduate in English and Literary Studies of the University of Calabar. She has won the African Writers' Award 2018 (Flash fiction category). She is also a gender critic and sometimes an editor.



OLADIMEDI ADAM ADEDAYO is a Nigerian writer from Okuku, Osun State. He was shortlisted for Ken Egbas Poetry Prize in 2018 and Albert Jungers Poetry Prize (AJPP) in 2019.



OGEDENGBE TOLULOPE IMPACT is a Nigerian poet and chemical engineer. Tolulope's works have been published in *Duane Poetree*, *Pangolin Review*, *Words Rhymes & Rhythms*, *Parousia Magazine*, *Subsaharan Magazine* and elsewhere. His poem was shortlisted for the 7th Korea-Nigeria Poetry Feast, 2017. He is currently a postgraduate student of petroleum engineering.



FOR WHAT ARE SELF- BORNE SCARS?

IBE OBASIOTA BEN, 1ST PRIZE WINNER

In the eye of a twilight,
A girl is erased from a suicide note.
This is how another girl
Catches her breath between her palms
And makes it into an elixir.

There is a scar on her body that stretches into mine.
There are parts of her that live inside me,
And there are memories of us
That rankshift into resilience,
On days when home is a wave
Pushing us in and out of our bodies,
When grief is yet another paradox,
When there are apertures in our souls.

We meet often on days like these
Because parts of us need exorcism,
Because we too need soothing voices
To help us exfoliate.

Many times I have uncoupled my body
To keep census of the parts that are not mine.
I have drowned myself,
Yet reappeared in the amniotic waters of another's mouth.
Whole.

Bodies are things that can be transfused for a healing.

WHEN SAGES PREACH

OLADIMEJI ADAM ADEDAYO, 2ND PRIZE WINNER

Heed! When, through stenchy vents, sages preach from empathy
For early kinsmen who have purely fallen victims of betrayal
That "the price of friendship is largely paid by the defrayal
Through the fortune of one to the other hanger-on of a 2nd party."

Heed! When, through stenchy vents, sages preach from wisdom
That "when, like a glutton's belly, thy pocket brims with luck,
All around thy backyard in treacherous ambushade foes lurk,
While sly frenemies leech thee within like a starving tapeworm."

Heed! When, through stenchy vents, sages preach from experience
That "when, like pilgrims do the Kaaba, friends spiral thy orbit.
Do not be gulled by their guileful gregariousness of a gambit,
For they have zeroed in on thee because of thy open opulence."

Heed! when, through stenchy vents, sages preach from insight
That "that comrade of thine remains unworthy of thy trust,
Until his fraternization validates the rectitude of its thrust
At the meekest suggestion of trouble, not to mention its sight."

Heed! When, through stenchy vents, sages preach from
momentums
Of early instances of hearty ligatures of cordiality
That "friendship rarely comes at a price of keen loyalty.
Friendship seldom fails to melt at the face of conundrums."

So when sages gnash you a kolanut, let thy fists clench!
But when, through stenchy vents, sages preach
That "like a housefly, perch not heavily on friendship's bough",
Take to their words like an Ijebu man takes to his dear dough.

THE TRUE MEANING OF AMITY

OGEDENGBE TOLULOPE IMPACT, 3RD PRIZE WINNER

Friends are fine figures of humane humans,
Of beautiful beings and pretty partisans.
At will, they offer helping hands
To save souls on shores of sinking sands.

Friends are butterflies - the eyes of compassion
Spilling sparkles of sympathy with genuine intention.
With zeal, they sow seeds of commitments
And give gifts of time and meaningful moments.

True friends do not act in pretence
Or wear tongues of pretentious prudence.
They speak worthy words with graceful smile,
And provide supporting shoulders with no guile.

Shouldn't we form a firm alliance beyond borders,
Crossing paths of peaceful pact in endless wonders
And becoming proud partners and friendly family
Who hold hearty hands even in terrific tragedy?

As humans, let us find the treasure of pure partnership
In the depths of friendship and mutual relationship,
That the world may know the true meaning of amity
And heed the clarion call to selfless humanity.

IF

IZUCHUKWU SAVIOUR OTUBELU

If I had eyes at the back of my head,
I'd walk through forests without turning back.
If I could cuddle myself alone in bed,
I'd sleep all through a lifetime like an amnesiac.

If I could grow a garden with a single rose,
You'd find rose gardens wherever you look.
If I could spend all day watching water flows,
I wouldn't go searching for answers in an empty book.

If I could just walk in without turning the doorknob,
I'd be in five different places all at a time.
If I could whisper consolations to myself each time I sob,
I wouldn't be sitting here writing this endless rhyme.

If my eyes could see through the darkness of daytime,
I wouldn't be lying here on these blocks of stone.
If there were no hilltops left for me to climb,
I wouldn't be needing a friend to call my own.

If just one person can make up the world,
The world will be a beautiful place with just you.
If we can dream dreams and watch our dreams unfurl,
Then maybe the sky will be any colour but blue.

If we both swim from the boat towards the shores,
We will get to the finish line before noon.
If you climb my shoulders and I climb yours,
We can reach out our hands and touch the moon!

FRIENDSHIP, LIKE THIS

JAMES TAIWO ABEL ADESITIMI

Friendship like this is hard to find:
Unrelated hearts now are like a snail and its shell.
They walk together happily hand in hand.
Friendship like this is hard to find!

Ajala's sweat often accelerates the speed
Of Okonkwo's vehicle of successes so well
His fishes of fortune thrived in Okonkwo's pond,
When a fox's river denied them a haven where to dwell.

Friendship like this is hard to find:
Unrelated hearts now are like a snail and its shell.
Both are balms to each other's life's unavoidable wound.
Friendship like this is hard to find!

They are to one another as raincoats in the rain.
Never do they for once opt for a betrayal's warmth,
But only strive in concord to stab 'collective' pain,
As they journey on the world's progressive path.

Friendship like this is hard to find:
Unrelated hearts are now walking together as one
And the glory of their unison shines bright like the sun.
Friendship like this is hard to find!

TWO DISTANT FRIENDS

DEBASISH MISHRA

The moon is stale—
Sure signs of sleeplessness—
And the stars smoulder,
Casting their dull spears
Like refracted lines of memory.

I carry pigments of the raw earth
Behind my soiled fingernails,
Which I have probably amassed
During the dogged digging
Of the coffin for my love.

The moon and I,
We both are the same:
Two monosyllabic witnesses,
Two distant friends.

The moon flaunts
My sordid fingernails
And I become stale
As the night progresses.

We are two fused into one,
A coin perhaps, a page.
I melt with the moon
And dissolve in the lurid darkness
At the crack of dawn.

Sometimes, light is darkness
And darkness is light!
I will probably return
When the moon comes back
As the creamy relic of my lost love.

CLOVEN HEARTS WITH A DEEP RED

OSADOLOR WILLIAMS OSAYANDE

Thrust your relics of trust into my soul's open throat.
Two of us, we've been waiting on uncertain certainty's might
Like light searching for warmth and warmth searching for light.

And didn't the dear spirits knead our needs on our hearts,
When our naked eyes locked, our unsheathed hearts collided,
When we knew for sure that friendship is arrogance chided?

We humbled our inner chains and held our hands tightly
With such intensity that two people became the sun's world
Wearing the bight of joy serrated with jaunty pain unfurled.

There's testosterone in the mountains murmuring our names,
Genuine oestrogen in the clouds our budding red to unmake.
Sanballat would legitimize their lust our intimacy to shake.

Thunders with pheromones dense as the essence of fetuses
Have found their way to the loins of heavily, hirsute lightning.
Tobiah would wed them too with an ocean of palm-wine and gin.

But if we bravely brand our names in the hold of our hands,
Become friends traipsed into brothers traipsed into oneness,
No born or unborn evil would steal the red of our sweetness.

BEST-TEA FOREVER

AKINRINADE FUNMINIYI ISAAC

Oh, black bird, bring back momentous moments
Of glee and spree laid in the nest of the past!
Oh, black bird, bring back momentous moments
Of the walks, talks, and blast before the blast!

Every night, I listen to the voice of the black bird.
It reminds me of your melodious voice.
Every night, I carry your thoughts to bed.
Your early demise leaves me with no choice.

I search for you in every wind I see.
I wish the whirlwind could gather your remains
And reshape you from your dispersed debris.
I yearn to (be)hold your beauteous body again.

I miss the day we built bridges with wet sand.
I miss the day we bathed in the rain.
I miss the day we walked miles holding hands.
I miss the day we parted not to see again.

You are the best thing God briefly gave me.
You are the best tea I sipped to calm my cold spine.
I raise a glass to the air in sad glee
In memory of you intertwined with mine.

Oh, black bird, bring back momentous moments
Of glee and spree laid in the nest of the past!
Oh, black bird, bring back momentous moments
Of the walks, talks, and blast before the blast!

YOU AND ME

TOWOJU, VICTOR OLUSHOLA

In lowering lights and dying luminance,
when darkness enters and fills your eyes,
I'll hold your hands and pull you close,
walk with you till the sun comes by your side.

When you've walked a thousand miles
and your feet can't hold your body any more,
when your soul is tired and weary,
I'll be your strength, I'll carry you home.

When I'm lost and far from home
and sadness and tears fill your place in my heart,
when happiness is a sky away from my ground,
I know I'll be your prayers. I'll be your wish.

As long as it's you and I, it's enough.
For oceans are nought but a spray of nothingness
and mountains are nought but stones,
but you and I are everything that should be everything.

WHO CAN FIND A TRUE FRIEND

AKOR AGADA NATHANIEL

Broken beings are bound to blend,
When they find God in a friend
On whom their weak world will completely depend.

Please, pal, ask the pious reverend,
Whose running thoughts I cannot apprehend,
Like the tiger tearing through that last bend:

Who can find a true friend,
A hand that is quick to lend
When the wise find it foolish to spend?

Who can find a true friend,
An advanced book so easy to comprehend,
Whose pressured pages lack the propensity to pretend?

Who can find a true friend,
A ladder for lowly lives to ascend
And a staircase for stranded souls to descend?

Who can find that true friend
Whose love lingers like an evolving trend,
Holding forth for you till the very end?

Who can find a true friend,
A soul moistened to make amends,
And a head with no heart to offend?

Who can find a true friend,
A priceless treasure for you to defend
Even if countless cows you have to tend?

Who can find this true friend,
A beacon with which no darkness can contend,
Whose enduring light eclipses that of a legend?

APRIL/MAY THEME: COVID-19

APRIL/MAY WINNERS

OSADOLOR WILLIAMS OSAYANDE is a Nigerian storyteller, poet and essayist whose literary works seek to humanize through the elevation of consciousness. Osadolor was longlisted for the 2018 Babishai Niwe Poetry Award. His works have appeared on the African Writer, 1888 Center and Origami. He enjoys reading Maya Angelou, Gbenga Adesina, Warsan Shire and Chinua Achebe.



FORTUNE BEN is a Nigerian poet, calligrapher, singer, and girl child advocate. He was the President of the Press Club in his school. Fortune is a certified instructor with LEDS Writes organization and a member of Kings Homes Charity organization. He lives by the mantra, "a life without vision is a life full of friction".



OLADIMEDI ADAM ADEDAYO is a Nigerian writer from Okuku, Osun State. Oladimeji was shortlisted for Ken Egbas Poetry Prize in 2018, the Albert Jungers Poetry Prize (AJPP) in 2019, and emerged first-runner-up of the Brigitte Poirson Poetry Contest (February/March 2020). He takes special pleasure in the works of writers like Chinua Achebe, Amos Tutuola, and Lesley Nneka Arimah.



SEVEN FLOWERS OF GRATITUDE?

OSADOLOR WILLIAMS OSAYANDE, 1ST PRIZE WINNER

We throw calabashes on cowries.
The lungs and the wind have stopped making ungloved love.
The wind's loins are sorrowed with harrows of crowns,
And like sour suns in sash, his lovers take him in, horrid.

We throw calabashes on cowries.
Lungs and graves hold the ends of accordions and push.
Friends patch friends with charred parches of intimacy,
Our faces and hands like racing mambas and mongooses.

We throw cowries into a calabash.
Lungs and graves hold the ends of accordions and pull.
Everybody's body becomes a war between life and crowns.
Our faces and hands intimate the spits to oceanic rehash.

We throw cowries into a calabash.
CNN and NTA peel their tongues to taste baptized news,
As charred men, women, breathe, live greenly again,
As hugs twin kisses after Methuselabs of distance's gash.

We make a calabash kiss cowries.
Our legs walk on tomorrow's head with ginger pride.
The lungs and the wind are globes of ungloved love.
Seven flowers of gratitude shower out of our nostrils!

LETTER TO THE BALL WITH SPIKES

FORTUNE BEN, 2ND PRIZE WINNER

Dear Corona virus, I trust thou art pleased
With thine already caused devastation,
As thou hast left crumbled and ceased
The normalcy of all and sundry in every nation.

Thy disastrous outbreak hath two sides.
So, I write to condemn and commend thee respectively.
Thou hast taken us on dangerous rides.
I hope thou will reason with me as I begin purposefully.

Terribly, thy disease hath taken many to hospital.
Population is decreasing, people are dying
And thou hast left everyone in a state that is truly critical.
World economies are crumbling; we feel the end is coming.

Social gatherings are banned; schools are shut down.
Empty promises, pessimistic thoughts right in front of our eyes,
A seemingly never-ending lockdown: we stay at home now.
Hunger maketh fun of us; hardship is on the rise.

Commendably, thine endemic pandemic hath reinvigorated us,
As each thinketh differently positively.
Many meditate; some pray against the virus.
Thou hast reshaped our thinking and broadened our horizons
amazingly.

Sweetheart, thine effect hath brought out talents in people.
My friends have turned writers and motivational speakers.
Thou hast honed each person's skill in double.
We have learnt the essence of paying our dues, which we now do.

Thou art appreciated and blamed for thine impact,
But we desperately yearn for thine absence.
Christ Over Viruses and Infectious Diseases: a true fact.
That's why we look to Him to prove the essence of His existence.

THE DUOPOLY

OLADIMEJI ADAM ADEDAYO, 3RD PRIZE WINNER

In the tempestuous temper of our darling fatherland,
The holy killer, like a serpent's slough, sheds
The fleshy folds of fat formed from his good old times,
As his viral lieutenant, like Saturn, runs rings around our orb,
Like the prophesied arrival of Gog and Magog.

In the tempestuous temper of our darling cradle,
Stay-home has unclothed us into naked house arrest,
As the pathogenic locusts in our locus of power
Are the tongues enforcing that which they won't subsidize,
Are the barricades barring us from building in God's shrines
While favouring frolic festivities in potbellied shrines of devil.

In the tempestuous temper of our dear motherland,
Retailers lever their merchandises to higher rungs,
Amping up the angry appetite of our python of an earth,
Like a chick flaunting its flesh before a famished falcon.

In the tempestuous temper of our beloved homeland,
A dark room's ceiling fan groans like a creaking door
From holding the weight of a swinging carcass
Which used to be inhabited by an Okada-man
Who, yesterday, couldn't repurchase his motorcycle
From the expropriating custody of our men in black.

But how else does one snuff out these two pestilent pests:
One, a coroner oppugning us over the death of honesty,
The other setting our derailed train back to its scriptural track?
How else, if not for all tongues to chorally crave condonation
From the broad bringer of this sweeping duopoly
Of the famed coronavirus and an unsung coroner virus?

WINNING WARS WITH WORDS

AKOR AGADA NATHANIEL

War is when people die and fortunes fall.
Covid 19 has cunningly navigated through thick walls,
Setting nations on fire against Nature's angry call.

Corona gave birth to children somewhere in Wuhan,
But we celebrated a naming ceremony in our clan
Amidst arrows from fevers on earth's frying pan.

Lost in the midst of restless married seas,
Of roaring waters deaf to our panting pleas,
Our world went ballistic with this corona breeze.

In this Covid wind we saw our ears.
The twin year plucked fruits full of fears,
Closing the curtain of hope for helpless tears.

Social distancing melted our bonds like cheeses,
As eyebrows always rise every time a soul sneezes.
Our personalities became oranges too dry to squeeze.

Misery really fed fat from our famished memories,
Hissing at the faces of our re-incarnating histories
Of survival and breath-taking stories of past victories.

We left Wuhan to carry her Covid cross,
Not knowing that corona would come for us
And make us tales of costly, tragic loss.

See how we became leaves cursing the wind
Whose intentions were to open our fragile minds
To the love we carelessly left behind!

A major threat anywhere is a threat everywhere!
Divinity dares humanity to break this brutal spear
By winning wars with words wherever we are.

FIERCE BREEZE OF DISEASE

OGEDENGBE TOLULOPE IMPACT

(A triple triolet)

Oh, fierce breeze of disease, please cease!
Please cease to seize lives in our land!
Cease now, oh, fierce breeze of disease!
Oh, fierce breeze of disease, please cease!

Won't you cease to trouble our seas
With force that sways mast off its stand?
Oh, fierce breeze of disease, please cease!
Please cease to seize lives in our land!

Oh, fierce breeze of disease, please cease!
Please cease to seize lives in our land,
That our children may smile with ease
Oh, fierce breeze of disease, please cease!

You have blown off our stand of bliss
And shattered dreams on our grand strand.
Oh, fierce breeze of disease, please cease!
Please cease to seize lives in our land.

Oh, fierce breeze of disease, please cease!
Please cease to seize lives in our land,
That we may walk around in peace!
Oh, fierce breeze of disease, please cease!

Won't you cease to fell men like leaves
And cover their bodies with sand?
Oh, fierce breeze of disease, please cease!
Please cease to seize lives in our land!

LOCKDOWN

UKPANYANG KINGSLEY AYI

Home is not home without the freedom to leave.
The lockdown has overstayed its welcome.
Every day feels like wearing the same old clothes
worn out by the worries
of a waning world.

Someone left the air open
and the virus closed in on us,
kneading us with the yeast of panic,
as faces become figures whose bodies
burn like ovens.

Politicians cower in the health rubble they built,
as the people fret with corroded hope.
Medics wear their lives like masks on their faces
—disposable and dispensable—,
charging at death with tools for their own graves,
while science suffers from prolonged labour without delivery.

Like fish trapped in a glass tank,
my thoughts bubble out in sighs, when I wonder
how a country choked by the asthma of corruption
will survive the smothering pangs of this pandemic...

THE MIGHTY MOLE

AFOLABI OLUWATOBILOBA JOHN

The mole that terrifies the forest king
With her many tiny feet round her body,
Her arsenal of artillery woven in a mass of ball,
Causes an upheaval all around the globe.

An august visitor, she visits all.
Both rich and poor tremble at her call,
For her knock on one's door-girth
Is an invitation to the earth beneath.

Just yesterday, we holidayed in Rome,
But today, our home is our dome,
An asylum to save us from the visitor
Whose knock sends jitters like a rotor.

In the land of the whites and blacks,
Everyone marvels at the mighty mole
Who sends old and young down the pole.

To save the world yesterday,
Missiles, tanks and guns were weapons.
Today, masks, gloves and meters away
Are our resistance to his numerous cons.

When death locks its tiny horn
And stings in the balloon of lungs,
Lives slip into the abyss of no return
And birds bid humans farewell in songs.

A thousand dirges are the world's new pop.
Yet the world as a whole won't give up,
For in the unity of our division
We will conquer in isolation.

PROPHYLAXIS

INALEGWU OMAPADA ALIFA

In nearly every length and breadth of the land,
as I traverse it to every nook and cranny,
I hear sentimental melodies of gyration
screaming of prophetic prophylaxis
and gasping in pneumonic breaths.

With voices full of charisma!
Voices full of eloquence!!
Voices full of grace and panache!!!
I listen to the gulping gullible
through a season of palliatives and deaths.

The bells are calling us
to come and be filled with a miraculous extravaganza.
Come, the poor and rambunctious,
since you like our hilarious demonstrations,
like sheep without a shepherd
roaming from street to street in search of a remedy!

ECHOES FROM THE DIARY OF COVID-19

ADEDAMOLA JONES ADEDAYO

Maybe Nature became intoxicated
With wine from the breweries of sanity,
Not knowing that some maniacal virus would be implicated
In the mutinous act of quelling the pride of humanity.

Ever since,
our existence has been reshuffled into an interim framework,
In which gregarious roads are sentenced to solitary confinements
And our stomachs unfriend erstwhile routine rations earned from
hard work
To be protégés of a hunger empowered by daily resentments.

The media gradually become civil to melodies
Of unrest and thefts anchored with strategies
And rising death counts which stimulate muffled dirges.

Fragile promises of palliatives suffix our patience
In a time when malnutrition feeds the poor,
A time when goodwill from some lofty stage befriends an audience
In paradoxes of giveaways which exempt many more.

Some say science is the genesis of these troubled tasks,
But lungs bear the consequences of lamentations
Under strange revelations of gloves and facemasks
That may or may not be met with ethereal limitations.

Or could this nightmare be God's little way
Of rediscovering humanity's forsworn pathway,
A reminder that ahead lies a dream, a fathomable leeway?

UNACCUSTOMED

DIVINE INYANG TITUS

Unaccustomed to presence, the inner chambers labor to adjust
To the weight of many restive bodies in faux sleep.
Unaccustomed to absence, the streets wear a look
Of distal surprise mixed with cold, bland scorn.
Unaccustomed to us, there are not many ways we know
To stir the feet of a conversation
When the phone batteries blink the last of their wakefulness.

Unaccustomed, they say they hear the hours yawning
Like hungry ghosts swallowing time.
Yet, there are many who do not believe—unaccustomed—
That it may require more faith than a lamb's
To fear for lonely deaths lurking in a warm handshake,
In a place where the music of a missile
Rings more familiar than a lofty nursery rhyme.

Unaccustomed, the house portals
Between the auras of home and a rancid zoo!
Child smells his finger for the millionth time – unaccustomed
To the sluggish breath of necessary alcohol,
And the face struggles to unlearn the worship of fingers.

Unaccustomed, agile bodies disapprove
Of the superior protection of loafing a lung,
As there is a turmoil waiting always in the common man's maw
Growing upon the last meal, like a breed of saprophytes.

Unaccustomed too—a ravaging darkness dares--
That our very skins must learn to feel each other's daunted pulses
Without the archaic rudiment of touch.

JUNE/JULY THEME: MOTHER TONGUE

JUNE/JULY WINNERS

OLOWO QUDUS OPEYEMI is a young poet and a spoken word artist. 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-year 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 the former President of the university's students' Writers' League. Abah won the BPPC in September 2017..



ODE TO MOTHER TONGUE

Olowo Qudus Opeyemi, 1st Prize Winner

My tongue-tail yawps 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 (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 iyeye; 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 tẹ̀mì tẹ̀mì

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 Niger's 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 agbach
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 KỌ́NSÓNÁNTÌ ÈDÈ GẸẸSÌ LÓRÍ AHỌN MI
o ní láti na ahọ́n rẹ kọ́já àwọ́n òkun láti mú ọ̀rọ̀ kan —
ó jẹ̀ èdè ìgbàlà— a ti kọ́ láti kà àtì gbígbàdúrà pẹ̀lú rẹ.
Nígbàkúgbà tí ahọ́n mi bá ṣubú sínú Fí, bíí ní Fànákúlà,
mọ̀ pé í tùmọ̀ sí láti sọ Fí, bíí ní Fànákúlà— ẹ̀ ìbáwí mi; ahọ́n
mi kan
mo tu èémí púpọ̀ sí ayé sí ààyè láàrín àwọ́n íńsísòdòsì mi láti sọ
TH-ink
nígbàkan, sí sọ pé ZE-bra ẹ̀ ìdọ́gba ìpalára ti ara ẹ̀ni—
Ó kan lára bíí ìyókù tí ìgbésí ayé ń jáde kúrò nínú ara mi.
ní ọ̀dún kan, a gba ọ̀jọ̀ kan kúrò láti wọ̀ awò mìíràn,
hó awò gidi kúrò lórí ahọ́n wa láti sọ àwọ́n itàn wa – o jẹ̀ ọ̀jọ̀
àṣà
Kíni à ń sìn nígbà gbogbo tí kíí bá ẹ̀ àwọ́n iyá wa?
Sùgbọ́n, wòó! ọ̀rọ̀ wọ́n ti wà ń rí sínú adágún tí pètẹ̀pètẹ̀
àtí pé wọ́n kò béèrè púpọ̀ jùlọ̀ tí wọ́n bá sọ pé a kọ̀ wọ́n
bíí sọ́néétì lórí àwọ́n 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 ndiofóke, nte nkediañade idem kpoñ;
Ke ndikop etok-etok, ke nditañ nkpiñe-nkpiñe.

Mkpa suk ntuaq unek nnó ikwó mmón 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
lái fi eérú bojú,*

*Lati kọ bí wọn
ti n kọrin ìdákẹrọrọ*

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

*Ẹnu wa tó kún fún
orin ìrìnkèrìndò*

*Bẹ̀ẹ̀ni wọn sin èjìkà
òkọ̀ọ̀kan wa sínú ìpèlẹ̀ dúdú*

Èyí ni ìtàn ilú tí ó
parun l'ójiṣi bí i odi Jéṣíkò

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 toluemo,
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 every day, like a diminutive gnome's tears, I let this river flow.

Translation (Yoruba Language)

AHỌN MI, ORÍSUN MI

ahọ́n mì, orísun m (my tongue, my origin).

Ẹ́fọ́ etídò kò fẹ́ àṣẹ láti ọ̀dọ ọ̀jò láti wù.

Ahọ́n mi jẹ́ egbin tí kò kín n pa ilà rẹ́ rẹ́,

*kódà kí ọ̀ṣùpá ran ẹ̀kùn tí ó n rìn l'álẹ́ lówọ́ láti bù kún ẹ̀wà
kólokòlo ara rẹ́.*

Ọ̀rọ́ tí ó n jáde l'ẹ̀nu mi jẹ́ òkúta iyebíye láàrin òkúta lásán.

Ìyá mi sọ̀rọ́ kẹ́lẹ́kẹ́lẹ́ sími l'etí ọ̀tún -

*"omọ mi, èdè rẹ́ dà gẹ́gẹ́ bí orí igún n gún tí ó pá - ẹ̀bùn ni láti
ọ̀run."*

Ìlú mi fì itọ́ rẹ́ sími ní ọ̀nà ọ̀fun - odò ayérayé ni à n pèé.

*Ọ̀jọ́ tí mo bá pàdánù láti ẹ̀se irántí odò yí á sì d'ẹ̀rù ba igbé ayé
mi - orísun mi ni.*

*Fún idí èyí ni gbogbo ọ̀jọ́, bí ẹ̀kún egbére, mo máa n jẹ́ kí odò
yí sà.*

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER THEME: EXPRESS
YOURSELF

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER WINNERS

Martins Deep is a Nigerian poet, photographer and author of [A Sheaf of Whispering Leaves, a poetry chapbook](#). He is passionate about documenting muffled stories of the African experience in his poetry and visual art. His works have appeared in several Nigerian and international literary platforms.



JAMIU AHMED is a Lagos based Nigerian writer and blogger. He has several works featured on digital literary platforms. His writings have also performed well in competitions organised by Poets in Nigeria (PIN) and Word Rhymes and Rhythm.



OJO ADEWALE IYANDA is a Nigerian poet, a native of Oshogbo, Osun State. He studied Applied Chemistry at The Polytechnic, Ibadan. His writings have appeared on several platforms.



TOWARDS A BEAUTIFUL BECOMING

Martins Deep, 1st Prize Winner

I want to bleed acrylic onto the palette of hope.
I want to watch her paint on the pall of fear
the imagery of me as a boy lengthening his tongue to trap
eavesdrops
to dull the aftertaste of his stepmom's acrid breast milk.

I want to inhale songs of giant shrikes
Against the crows echoing endless dirges in my chest.
Their sentence: death by impalement on thorns
that grew from the soil
where I sowed seeds of tears and sweat.

I want to exhale songs of nightingales from my ribcage
to burst into songs on my lips and hair.
For the enanga in their beaks
pluck strings disentangled from this noose dangling down my ceiling
fan.

I want to stand on the headstone of doubt
and stretch towards father's god
to shred the veil over his face,
to wash scales off my eyes, as I dance in this August rain,
so I can find his fingerprints on the script of life.

I want to weep acrylic onto the palette of joy
and on the fog before me, watch her paint me
in the fragile body of a girl sucking illumination from her wounds
to light up every household lamp.

THE ART OF BURNING

Jamio Ahmed, 2nd Prize Winner

Yesterday, father got lost in his father's shadow.
Today, I'm tracing father's path down to the foundry.

In starless nights aflame with only fireworks,
unwilling logs blazing inside the hearthstone,
my dreams are cinders; oxygen kept them alive.

To shield the dying flame from Life's windy bluff,
I swallow the fragments of the smouldering coal.
I read "How to escape fire" with a twined tongue.
My ardor fumes from the chimney like smoke
and becomes 'bon voyage' prayers billowing up.
How do I leave home, while fiery fire flares
on the roof without burning the whole city?

Under the skin-tearing rays of the raging sun,
I trudge down into the belly of Ladipo-Lagos:
where missing men melt metals for mad men,
where boys' brittle bones crackle in the furnace.

Father's words become a hammer hitting my skull:
"Man must be steel with high tensile strength."
Maybe life is for the metals with staple fibre jacket
and living is for boys burning as fuel in base-burners,
as incense of a cedar tree dying to give light and aura.

I enter the hearth to melt into a titanium dragon.
Now I stutter and exhale fire after every volatile word,
coals burn inside me, while I walk in an invisible smoke.
Like a ticking bomb, Home awaits the blow-up news.
Survival is an art for lone boys burning into iron gods.

WHERE DO DEAD DREAMS LIVE?

Ojo Adewale Iyanda, 3rd Prize Winner

This is the song of the morning
I will sing with a hoarse voice,
With pregnant eyes and desert lips,
Till my mouth is painted with silence.

This is a dance of pleasant confusion.
I found myself wallowing in the billows of worries.
How can I start a journey
From the point of unlike routes that repel?

My heart beats the drum of pondered thoughts
To hear the sound of truths and echoes of mystery.
I want to know where dead dreams live.
Maybe there is a mortuary in the soul of their carrier.

This is my conclusion:
Dreams can cash in their chips,
But dead dreams don't die.
They stay behind as ruins,
As onerous medals sashed around the neck
Of men living in a regret painted with green and white.

They are without graves, walking to and fro.
Dead dreams are leaders armed with a constitution in the capital
And everything we have done wrong.

They will endure till we sing them into oblivion
With spirited voice and holistic action,
Till we understand living dreams won't come forth
If they don't hear the voice of the truth and the beat of freedom.

WHEN AN ASYMMETRIC ANIMAL BECOMES THE EARTH

OLADIMEJI ADAM ADEDAYO

1

We find ourselves blanched of all colorations,
Like a coven of chromatophore-less chameleons,
At the tail of the civil coin, milling in millions
And nodding to the flogging of our fatal rations!

2

Perhaps, like a ballistic obedience to gravity,
We have landed on this anal insulated cemetery
Of a side---of this earth's disproportional symmetry---
By a prior toss; however, we adhere like wall to graffiti.

3

We feel we are furls of 'gardened' buds, peering at the vale,
Clenched as Scrooge's fist ... Plastic as metals.
We feel we bear colours of fanning out our petals,
Brave in cast and coloration, like a courting peacock's tail.

4

We feel we bear colours of translating our dreams
Of pollens into fruits, through the brininess
Of our oceanic guttation. We feel we bear the finesse
To sail the mean meanders of this vale's devious streams!

5

But when an asymmetric animal becomes the earth---
A denervated Mater---reined by the carriers
Of an evil infection, we soon catch the barrier
Rifting it unevenly, like a diaphragm, into Life and Death!

6

And so, we find ourselves 'secluded' on Death's side,
Where our etiolated shoots bend away---like the Hebrew
When their human compass went askew---
From being robbed of the welkin's eye. Yet, we abide!

7

For we are incalculable caterpillars growing into gossamer
butterflies,
Or into the leaden fabrics of calloused moths, as agog
As would come the radial incursion of Gog and Magog!

STYX'S CYCLE

AYODELE AYOOLOWATOMIWA RACHEL

A pale moon's wink foreruns endless doom.
Desperation is its core, in looming gloom.

Doom seeds Gaia; she births such heirloom;
Out comes the first, bursting with a bound
To strike his gurgling kin to a yawning wound.
Its first step, in seconds, mars all around.
Its mission - confusion dished - with distress does abound.
Its names: Chaos and Mayhem and Hound.

Doom gaze roves. Hellstar is the new breeding ground.
Her offspring, a loon. Its stalk, Earth's bane.
A mangled mutt on mangled limbs lain.
Skillfully, it drives man insane,
Corrupting souls for a mediocre gain.
Its names: Sin and Whore and Cain.

Doom finds in Lilith balsam for pain;
And like punch drunk, Echo obsesses.
In her masochistic ways it prowls.
A fiend they make. Gluttonous, its victims it flairs,
Shiny, enticing, and gobbles its preys.
Its names: Envy and Ichor and Sloth.

Soon Doom flees, then sights Eva in white caul.
It coos, a maiden to woo.
Her valiant heart is dressed in horror's hue.
Her will smartens its core strong and true.
Her progenies in tow, her victory will ensue.
Eva's offspring, they hoped to screw.

Beware mortals, the hour is nigh.

OF THINGS TOO HEAVY FOR ONE BODY TO CARRY ALONE

SABUR ADEDOKUN

And of the things that are too heavy for one body to carry alone
is loss, too heavy for one city to cradle to chest; loss, a swamp
too muddy for one country to call their own without sinking too
deep
for the first alphabet to cross the border to other places.

So, can we call the names of all brothers and sisters
to ask for a share of their loss, to call this a new kind of feasting,
to dice this grief into cubes so little that each guest at the table
can swallow them like a bitter pills, and that is the end?

Can we read the names of brothers and sisters who drown at sea
as if the sea is our own, as if the salt stings our eye the same,
as if the country they are running from is a place at the core of our
heart,
as if it is our grandmother who stays back home and prays?

Can we say that a noose around the neck of one man is a chain
that locks all our necks together? Can we all stick our bodies
together
to wait for death when he pushes the stool off?
Can we call his death our death? Can we say his story is ours too?

Rabbee, all the children that came to face their killers,
can we say we are their fathers now? Can we listen for their scream?
Can we say that our children would scream the same way, then fall
silent the same? Can we own the scream and the silence that follows
it?

Can we move beyond putting ourselves in people's shoes?
But rather let the shoe be our own too?

MAN CAST INTO THE IMAGE OF FIRE

IBIKUNLE AISHA

His voice is the roaring fire
Spewing from a dragon's mouth,
Sizzling your slender soul.
His voice is the crackle of fireworks
Illuminating the light living within.

His touch is a fire brand
Searing scars on your skin.
His touch is warmth wafting from the fireplace,
Painting fiery butterflies on your skin.

His gaze is a smoldering flame
Caressing the contours of curvy maidens.
His gaze is a lingering spark of love
Living in the wideness of his stare
Where you find a home.

His dreams are infernos.
A blazing, brash, bush fire.
His dreams are embers
Waning, a withering, wispy thing.

A man is liquid metal cast
Into the image of a fire.
A man is conflagration on a leash
in all its gory glory.

WHERE WE GO WHEN WE FALL ASLEEP

ADENIRAN JOSEPH

we go there, from here
to nowhere, from somewhere, we lift there
to somewhere, after here, back then, from here
we carry our guts there, from here, to there
as we trace back our hands to nowhere, with this
dream, from here, to there, while there, we crash
into pieces of little imperfection; from there, we run
to somewhere, still there, mother said, we are off, from there
father said, we are off-alive here, but we are still breathing
from there, sounding like drums hitting towards the marketplace
we are still here vibrating to the rhythm of mother's shout, from
there we place our hands on our chest, from here, naming bodies,
from here, when we sleep: we go somewhere, from there, it ends
here—nowhere.

WHO I AM

AKOR AGADA NATHANIEL

I prefer speaking out instead of eating silence as a balance diet.
It is time to beat overgrown babies that backbite
With words from a pen that refuses to be quiet.
The path of the contrite is constructed with laterite.
I have nothing to do with the holiness of a hypocrite,
Because I always look inward to break my granite.

My name is Agada, the David who killed that bear
When Cowards drank deadly chemicals, ending their existence in
fear.
Shouting my worth for the world to hear
Is an incantation for any foe threatening with a spear.
My desire is to impregnate every itching ear
For enchanted eyes to shed no single tear.

Balak's bounties can never buy me like Balaam,
Because I see myself as a living Adam,
A blessing like the Kainji dam.
Callous critics may bleat like a crying ram,
The world may call me William or Mallam,
I am fulfilled to know who I am.

My Pen ministers to warring men playing with knives.
Let it be recorded in the archives,
For tomorrow to buzz tales like beehives,
How a mortal man came to save lives,
Sticking words in the anus of time that still thrives
On human beings, until they reach afterlives.

EPITHALAMIUM FOR THE WATER SPIRIT BRIDE

HUSANI ABDULRAHMIN

Were the tears and dirges of mourners chrysanthemums
hailing on your lush coiffure and lilac laurels
leaguings at your feet, while you headed to the harmony room
with the souls you stole?

Were whimpers of mothers a feverish buzz of talking drums,
as you went to the sacred ground of marital vows
via a retinue of tilapia-toothed vassals who eagerly offered
their throats to veil the blade of your glory?

Are you the offspring of Oba and Osun's fallout advancing
their mission into tributaries where mothers, who whisper
your name behind closed doors like a dreaded rebel — a mark
of terror in the hearts of tendrils who autograph earth with first
footprints – long, with outstretched arms, to groom their
incursions?

Is the Creole of love in the water-world deception
a coded migraine-tongue, while the stampede of mournful voices
wrecks havoc in the medullae of men?

Were you the mastermind of shipwrecks of vessels
to whom black backs were sold to rhythms of clanking chains
after washing bloody hands at the attenuation well,
as a spite spat on the green greed of cursed souls?

Were the clashing currents, after the deluge, your loving hands
pulling the boys we lost underneath to floating castles
bejewelled with corals, oyster shells and shark teeth?

You, who've tied knots with these souls, what more
do you want with sloughs of boys whose mothers
now cork sleep in bottled vigils of tears and grief?

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 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 ENTRIES ON OUR WEBSITE](#). We receive fiction (short stories), poetry and non-fiction (essays on writing, book reviews, and interviews with other witters, etc.).

If you enjoyed teasing this chapbook, do not forget to share the download link with your friends. You can also [get other free chapbooks HERE](#).

We also welcome comments. Email info@wrr.ng.

Thank you.



Are you looking for quality publishing services in Nigeria? Try Authorpedia Publishers, the publishing imprint of Words Rhymes & Rhythm Publishers. We are a young publishing and educational company involved in the discovery, development, and promotion of young literary talents.

As publishers, we provide affordable and customizable Assisted-Authorship Publishing (AAP) services to independent authors. To us, publishing for a client is not just printing a book and delivering it. We stay with the author from conception to production.

We organize several prestigious writing competitions and youth-targeted programmes like the YouthNgage Project, Green Author Prize (GAP), the monthly Brigitte Poirson Poetry Prize (BPPC), the Albert Jungers Poetry Prize (AJPP), the Eriata Oribhabor Poetry Prize (EOPP) and an annual literary festival – FEAST OF WORDS.

We are ready to assist your authorship goals. Visit [AUTHORPEDIA.NET/PUBLISHING/](https://authorpedia.net/publishing/) to get started. Or email us at publishing@authorpedia.net.