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THE 8TH WONDER



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

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)

The Feat (February 2019), Rhymes for Children (March 2019)

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“When a tradition gathers
enough strength to go on for
centuries, you don't just turn it
off one day.

– Chinua Achebe

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INTRODUCTION

To honour the material and intangible heritage of humanity through poetry is no easy task. In April, the men and women of the pen chose to deal with the common wealth of Humanity, but also the multi-coloured African treasures – *traditions, bucolic scenes, old legends* -, underscoring the need to protect them, dwelling on the importance of cultivating the past to irrigate the future. They searched for the fundamental components of the continent, so as to offer a global vision of the present day's situation and stakes. They did not fail to issue a global warning: save your habitat and culture, or lose your identity and ultimately your life.

Their poems read like a human patrimony of their own too!

BRIGITTE POIRSON

APRIL 2019 TOP 10 FINALISTS

THE EIGHTH WONDER
Efe-khaese Rinse Desmond

AN EPISTLE TO HUMANITY
Emmanuel Faith

TO BE LIVING IS TO BE WATERED
Oladimeji Adam Adedayo

ISESE
Olajuwon Joseph Olumide

OUR HOUSE IS FALLING
Izuchukwu Saviour Otubelu

LAST FROM THE PAST
Oladimeji Adedolapo Habeeb

PERCEPTION
Charlotte Akello

FOR OURSELVES
Olalekan Michael Ajibola

THE YAM FESTIVAL
Ogedengbe Tolulope Impact

HUMAN HERITAGE (CULTURE)
Kolofo Adejo

THE EIGHTH WONDER

EFE-KHAESE RINSE DESMOND (APRIL 2019 WINNER)



Desmond is an essayist, poet and story teller. He is passionate about animal and societal welfare and the value of true feminism. He was the first runner-up at the African Poetry Contest 2017 and was recently shortlisted for the Chronicles Short Fiction Prize 2018.

Mend your wings and visit the temple of humanity's history!

Inhale:

There you find in mummified archives the leprous flesh of our selective race.

Stroke your fingers across the pages of what we once called home.

Exhale:

You see eyes that watered the still mass of dead sons and daughters;

You see mouldy maggots that spring from festured wounds

To rule our quarters;

You see hallowed giants haunting the pockets of the hapless,

And the workaday man searching for the daily bread, returning helpless.

Within the thick stripes of decay,

You are aroused by a song which causes your eyes to sore,

A song we sing to pass down our African heritage.

And if you are keen and see past what is seen,

You find within humanity's decaying mould

A beating heart, an aging peace,

Held in place by the rib cage of communal treasures

Beyond the dark past and smoky future!
You see the strings of Ijele hopping alongside the sounds of reggae,
Calling out to the dance steps of Gule Wamkulu...

But while we trace the lines of slave chains upon our father's necks,
We deny ourselves from gracing Iqhiya
Made by hands we describe as sad...hands that salted the seas
Of Argungu, turned into an annual playground of excitement;
We fail to see the kneading of offspring by the feet of Osun
renditions,
And we forget, amongst the treasures of our common pot,
That if we tell these tales like poetic dirges,
We fail to teach the history of our heritage...the eighth wonder.

Glossary:

<i>Ijele:</i>	<i>a Masquerade of the Igbo people of Nigeria</i>
<i>Iqhiya:</i>	<i>a type of traditional beadwork of the Xhosa people of South Africa</i>
<i>Gule Wamkulu:</i>	<i>a dance step from Malawi</i>
<i>Argungu:</i>	<i>a town in Kebbi state, Nigeria, where a four-day fishing festival is held annually.</i>
<i>Osun:</i>	<i>a deity, or a goddess in the Ifá and Yoruba religions</i>

AN EPISTLE TO HUMANITY

EMMANUEL FAITH

I grew up where the sun set with folklores
And dinners were garnished with melodious tales,
Where holidays whirled with smart games indoors
With fabulous palm wine as in-between cocktails.

Why did we let foreign exposure
And imitation erode our captivating culture?

Olumo stands tall, a mighty mountain,
A mesmerizing monument that needs no announcement ;
Erin Ijesha waterfalls and Ikogosi fountain
Cascade hot and cold water in simultaneous movement.

The adventures we seek across borders
Is here within us, dear sisters and brothers.

The walls of Benin were unfaltering forte
Like Kano's guarding, shielding and protecting from evil.
Are they now not faded glory? Who carries the fault
Of treasures now truncated and values embezzled?

We polish the planks for a pillory of misery
If we do not guard the mystery of our history.

The world is a planet of pristine potpourri
With titillating tribes from pulsating places,
Bedazzling beauties in variegated variety
And glamorous gorgeousness on resplendent faces.

We are all lovely fruits from the roots of tradition.
Guard yours, lest they go into extinction.

We are all glistening gold,
With scintillating stories untold.
Tell yours beautifully,
An Epistle to Humanity.

TO BE LIVING IS TO BE WATERED

OLADIMEJI ADAM ADEDAYO

Come, let's wear our lips in contagious laughter,
As if we were the audience of an acclaimed clown.
Let's bear on our faces not a fragment of frown,
As we ensky water, the coinage of the celestial crafter.

Come, let's constellate into a cluster like the stars,
And mist our eyes in infectious mirth and merriment,
For settled is water on our earth like palm-wine's sediment
In running rivers and blue beds - tiding like tossing monsters.

Come, let's chant the common wealth of all creatures,
Laying on tap, like net, all over the face of the earth,
With whose fluently flowing flesh we foster our breath!
A generic heritage it is, with thankful features.

Let's extol this treasure, every mortal and critter.
Let's glorify our waters for their animated patina
Jelled by bonny mermaids sporting beyond our retina,
Making all wights well-off with the wealth of water.

Come, let's corral our cores and smarts,
Let's disremember our disparate sorts and histories;
Let's unlearn our contradicting myths and mysteries,
And recall that from blood and water every soul starts.

Let's cleanse our soils that have been war-tarred,
Let's push the pestilent prejudice off our souls' brink.
Come, let's drink from these waters, let's drink!
For certain, to be living is to be watered.

ISESE

OLAJUWON JOSEPH OLUMIDE

(the elder of all rites on this dark soil)

When from thunder's mouth an axe of lightning
saunters into the land to shred our rooted Iroko,
as the fogs of confusion beset our ancestral sky,
we flee into the pantheon of Ifa, seeking succour.

Let Opele hit the shore and enigma will go nude.
Sacrificiation vindicates, so that we pour libations
to Ifa, the custodian of all wisdom and foretelling.
Ise se is the elder of all religions on this dark soil.

Call not Ifa a hypocrite, neither Esu a robber.
A toddler, versed in the obeisance of hand-rinsing,
dines with the elders, living a mantra of longevity:
"no danger-herald at forest, but the hoots of quails."

A hunter touches the soft spot of Ogun
with a blood offering of Aguntan bolojo
and emerges from the heart of the forest
with Erinlakatabu dragged on the shore of defeat.

Akanmu in diaspora, hear the nostalgic percussion
of Gangan muttering the festive lyrics from home
your father once dazzled men with, in acrobatic steps,
as the native feet of Egungun run amok on our land...

in the lost soul, the tie of the language with which natives
ask after one another's health at each morning wake,
in the scorned, deserted Agbada and Fila Abeti Aja
that carve a true identity for Oduduwa's scions...

...tears of our progenitors stream over the yond,
weeping the departure of their scions starving their gods.

OUR HOUSE IS FALLING

IZUCHUKWU SAVIOUR OTUBELU

Our house is falling!
The house our fathers took years to build,
We pulled down its roof with our own hands
When we offered strangers a handshake on our native lands.
Now our identity lies underground- spilled!

Our house is falling!
My mother named me 'Ifeoluwa'
But my 'civilized' tongue preferred 'Clement'.
I pride myself in the mastery of the white man's accent,
But my tongue trembles at the sound of Yoruba.

Our house is falling!
Europeanization has handcuffed our hearts with fetters.
We frown at our Masquerade festivals - we say they're fetish -
Yet we think Halloween is a moment to cherish.
Our prized cultures are now embers of a dying fire.

Our house is falling!
We have shaped our lives to suit alien taste.
Home-made foo-foo feels like sawdust and ashes
But with fork and knife we relish foreign dishes.
Our agelong birth right now has a broken waist.

Our house is falling!
The law mandates us to wear suit and tie.
Perhaps we don't look good in our agbada and aso-oke !
We followed strange footsteps to lead our culture astray.
These hurtful memories I recollect with a sigh.

We need to patch up these fragments of our heritage,

Lest posterity hoist a strange flag when they come of age!

LAST FROM THE PAST

OLADIMEJI ADEDOLAPO HABEEB

(Common wealth - Common penury)

This place is just like a portion in mercury:
Marooned is love - the ancient killer of social penury,
Whose unwanted fugitive used to be an OK'd heritage,
Whose lair now lies aloof like God's hermitage,
Whose unscholarly art used to be a protean tongue,
Without which our world is stinky like cow's dung.
A black and a white are of the same history and culture,
If love isn't tarrying in ruins like leftovers of vulture.

Tradition is an esoterica! Religion is an esoterica!
Pigment is an esoterica! Tongue is an esoterica!
From which bias soars like swarms of harmattan.
We're hungry of humaneness like days in Ramadan,
For a keen kin is humanity with love's common wealth,
Whose universal tongue used to chime our history and birth.
Until now, love had survived every century,
With a common wealth - now common penury.

This novel place is as heated as a blast furnace,
For a good geste here is as deep as its surface:
Laughing or snarling? Even confused are teeth,
And so severed serpents graze on stretches of heath;
Serpents whose sapience had long fled their ambiances,
Whose souls, racist ghouls now, haul hate to their saliences,
While the common wealth of humanity remains lost,
Somewhere around their frigid soul - cold with frost.

Let's reawaken this treasure, to chime our slimed clime!
If this isn't telling, consider Okara's "Once upon a time."

PERCEPTION

CHARLOTTE AKELLO

From the moment of birth when we leave the girth...
Blank minds are treated to a revision of vision,
Excision of humanity to welcome division,
Minds clouded into an illusion even before circumcision,
To the impression of a certain subdivision.

One skin colour is now of valour;
To be tan is a wrong turn of nature.
Even with education, colour is still a limitation...
It's an imitation, an irritation.
Dragging skins on kilns as if it made sense...
Forcing people to change colour and fight the range,
As if there was a trace of race in blood.

Inscribed with tribes on our foreheads,
We are forced to bribe unless we belong to a certain tribe.
We imbibe how we describe those who are not of us...
Tongues are now throngs one will favour,
While the other, we would rather devour.
We are scribes for tribes whose origin we know not of...

We are woven into a certain legion of religion:
Heads bowed, believers kowtowed.
Those with different deeds are weeded out.
We don't tire to talk of a certain fire.
Hell is now a preacher's tale;
His attitude is now on the multitude;
For where people are in heaps, you reap.

We pass through institutions that change our intuition,
Changing our sight to the so-called light,

Light that brightens not people, but creates a rip in between,
And in cocoons,
We dance to lost tunes.

FOR OURSELVES

OLALEKAN MICHAEL AJIBOLA

Ever-flowing streams of wonder
Are the loves we share.
The pains we for ourselves bear
Are like evergreen leaves in summer.

The burdens we for ourselves lift,
Stories we tell, games we enjoy,
We will wholly say are "the humane gift".
As they erase whips of pain and ships of worries, they also destroy.

The noble paths we keep to pace,
The old rugged routes we embrace,
The golden heritages of our fathers we never misplace,
The aromas of hope we savour, for ourselves draw grace.

The beauteous, boundless affinity
Which glues us firmly in spite of ethnicity,
As fresh and innocent as a Virgin's nudity,
Those soft-hearted seeds sown in our sanity,
The peace winds of faith blustering in our incredibility
Are all for ourselves the common wealth of humanity.

THE YAM FESTIVAL

OGEDENGBE TOLUPOE IMPACT

Blow the trumpets and beat the gongs!
Let them sound across forests and hills!
Gather the singers in lively throngs!
Let their voices echo beyond the seas!

Send a message to the neighbouring lords,
And tell them it's time to tie the knots.
Run to the villages with seven gods,
And tell them to bring their virgin pots.

Invoke the sleeping spirits of our land
With broken kola nuts and incantations.
Tell the master of drums and his band
To stir up the rhythms of traditions.

Proclaim it with the native tongues,
The annual festival at the village square.
Sing the new yams new songs,
For the time of celebration is here.

The season of planting has gone,
And it is time to harvest into our fold.
The day of celebration is the dawn
For us to revere the totems of old.

The yam festival is a cultural heritage
That draws fingers for a communal meal,
And this annual event opens a new page
In history books with great commercial deal.

HUMAN HERITAGE (CULTURE)

KOLOFO ADEJO

"Miss Amina's Questionnaire":

What's the cock's business in a nest?

Are unripe mangoes now the sweetest?

How ready for work is a baby donkey?

How saucy is a two weeks' old turkey?

Daddy, are these naira notes worth my innocence?

Is this the only ladder to scale poverty's fence?

Mom, would you be gagged by the fierceness of this culture?

Would a hen fearfully offer her chicks to the hawk's puncture?

Why gleefully patent this naive waist to a groin older than grandpa?

Why heartlessly give my poor child "a fellow child" to call mother?

At thirteen what does a play-programmed girl like me know?

Am I not still being schooled on how to manage my maiden flow?

Did I hear that short clergy say, "It's the will of Allah"?

What's "holy" in grandpa's dancing behind my scanty bra?

Isn't the government supposed to proof my right?

Shouldn't morality and sanity champion this fight?

What happens to my choices, my dreams, my glee?

From these hell's headquarters, will I ever be free?

When I age and Cupid's arrow drags me to my age mate's bed,

Won't this blind, judgemental world see an adulteress to stone dead?

What's the cock's business in a nest?

Are unripe mangoes now the sweetest?

How ready for work is a baby donkey?

How saucy is a two weeks' old turkey?

Urgently, I seek rational answers to these and more,

As I howl with my triplets on the floor.

At thirteen, what does a play-programmed girl like me know?

Am I not still being schooled on how to manage my maiden flow?

WHEN

WOLI BUKOLA KAFILAH

When
the patterns of the Fulani bride
embroidered with dark-stained feet,
blessed with henna leaves,
truly become the fascination of the Igbo man,
When
the Hausa fellow
sees the fairies that dance in the ofi(wrapper) of a Yoruba woman,
that the beads that adorn her hands
are nothing but stories of the strength
her ancestors have blessed her with,
when
The Yoruba woman sees
that blessings are not meant for one
and the palm oil of the Igbo man truly
is a manna from above
- with the rich herbs and sweet vegetables
she knows that goodness lies beyond her own pot -,
when
Man embraces the songs of other tribes,
knowing wisdom is a river that flows
across all men,
when
we break bread beneath the dark sky
as the stars witness the birth of a family,
Only then will we as a Nation rise.

SELF-DESTRUCTION

ADETOYESE ABAYOMI ODEKUNBI

Do you not hear
the screams of trees being cut?
Do you not see the dangling branches
begging you to stop?
Do you not smell the blood of freshly cut trees?

You!
Yes, you!!
with muscular biceps and plastic goggles,
swinging the blade of your ravenous machine
across the forest in terror,
do you not know
you render many homeless?
or do you think you are the favorite
of all mother Nature's children?
Today,
the squirrels will be scattered.
A nest of eight
will be smashed to the ground.
Even the monkeys
will be forced to crawl.

You fell the trees to print pages,
yet still lack in knowledge.
Your plunder is your blunder!
Do you not know
that the human race
is gradually racing to its end?

IN OUR LITTLE COMMUNITY

TITUS ADEOLU ADEKUNLE

In our little community,
everyone knows everybody.
All tribes lived in harmony
and religions without enmity.

Muhammad broke his fast at our home,
joyfully cracking the chicken bone
before his father returned from the farm -
bearing a bush rat for us on one arm.

We played football on the road
and Boubacar stopped all the goals.
We played in the rain despite the cold,
stripped off clothes and bathed our saintly souls.

Ada was Ade's best friend,
to care for and to defend.
Then we came of age,
and things began to change.

Ade now knows he cannot marry Ada
because Mama says "no to omo Nna."
Boubacar no longer stays in goal.
For his cattle, we fear he could shoot a gun or the ball at us.

In our little community, everyone knows everybody.
But trusted friends have turned threats.
Our little community now harbours several sizeable ships of paranoia.
Really, nobody knows anybody.

Meanwhile, Muhammad is no longer welcome at our home.

We fear the same arm that brought bush rat the other day
could come bearing arms to do us harm someday.

PREVENTION AND NOT INVENTIONS

TOSIN ADESOKAN

My language , my life.
Nowadays it has become a strife.
My branches are now its enemies
Whenever they hear the cries of their black mummies.

They came to us and took away our crown,
Tendered to us the foreign mace.
Wake up and stop being a clown!
Black is my colour , why the white face ?

The great vehicle of speech is now highly prohibited.
The problems are ours because you and I contributed.
Great vehicle , who will rescue you from dying?
Why chain our own and keep the others flying?

Our identity , we have sold.
No blanket when we are feeling cold.
What will you say when you are back to the cradle
When you replaced the lamp with the candle ?

OUR HIDDEN (H)IDENTITIES

AKINRINADE FUNMINIYI ISAAC

Like strengths of six strong soldiers combined into one,
Like hundreds of rivers flowed into one,
Like thousands of mountains rolled into one,
Our knowingly unknown treasures are one!

...

Do you know?
Of our country's maiden museum in the west —
The first that strongly stands out among the rest?
The Esie is a centre of heritage,
With thousands of carved figures from past ages!

...

Do you know?
Of the tongues planted on our motherland,
With over 250 languages reaped on the land,
Of sweet songs that send sorrows down the drain
When one hopelessly walks along the lane?

...

Do you know?
Of literary gods that hold our A(R)Tmosphere,
Those who make the PA(R)Thway straight and clear,
Of folklores and truthful tales told at night,
The memorable mo(on)ment that ends the day's plight?

...

Do you know?
Of our native wears that make us unique,
The homemade wears not bought from boutique?
Of our skin color that glows like the yellow sun,
The dazzling black color that makes us one.?

...

Read not only the lines of this page,
But thirst for more of our hidden heritage.

THE BLACK PILGRIMAGE

AJIBADE GABRIEL OLAOLUWA

Is this like a widow's pain?
Or lamentation on a lustful voyage?
I'll curb your tears with memories lullaby,
Heritage of dudes from the West region.
Uncle "will I ever become white?"
Ra-da-bi- Rabbi Ra-da...
Smokes puffing from a black hairy skinny tall man's tommy,
His red eyes turning more often in their sockets
With anacondas, scorpions and blunted blades,
Facing a mirror in his god-awful chest,
He spoke with his gods and rain fell.
But he died of cancer after the bountiful millet harvest.
Months later, a massacre was to happen,
But the merciful magician - their saviour - was "far gone".
Woman traders from all isles came together,
Naked, with sacred facial paintings.
"This is our grievances! our Millet! Our Heritage,
our Common-Wealth!
We'll feed you with many grains!
Never kill the black on the soil!"
They spoke to their gods and rain fell!
Fertility, like the genesis!
No more war!
They had an oak tree where they worshipped.
Uncle, "can I also go to west?" "No"
Only historians travel with their pens.

THE DRUMMER KING

ABIADÉ SHERIFFDEEN FOLARANMI

Beasts do have voices too.
Their voices sing from tombs, and put dancing shoes to work

My forefathers hunted beasts for feasts.
They made music from skins of dead beasts.
They eased tensions by pulling tension cords and flogging
drumheads.
They bubbled out melodies and resurrected dead gatherings.

My forefather was a king, but his hands never stopped aching,
Unless he caressed the curve of the drum stick.

My king was the master, his music was the piece.
We had a palace of masterpiece

Words visited London in a ferry and tickled the Queen's fancy,
Elizabeth threw the Royal band out of view in 1965.
Her majesty took a walk with suave African royalty.
My king's drum completed the triangle!
Oba Laoye midwifed artistic bubbles at Buckingham.

My king manhandled animal skin,
And made Oliver Twist out of audience, always coming for more!

Oba Laoye was not an artist, he was the art!
The drummer king, the teacher king, the Kentucky colonel!

My king traveled the world with his drum
And left his prints on the maps and in university books.

My forefather raised the drumming bar, he took our art to the world.

Oba Laoye left his throne in Ede to entertain the Almighty in 1975
Uncle Wale and co. embraced the drums.

Modern music reminds me of my forefathers.
They created voice and music from the skins of dead beasts!

I WISH I WERE NOT HUMAN

PAUL ABIOLA OKU-OLA

I wish I were not human.
Maybe a lion, the king of the jungle,
And I shall squall not
When many are robed for the journey below.

Maybe a camel,
With an immense reservoir,
And the hunger or thirst of others
Shall lace not my eyes with tears.

Or a hawk
That hovers in the sky,
And the tears of a mother
Shall be my joy and pride.

I wish to be a louse.
I shall be immune to the sorrow
And pain of others.
...Their agony shall be my glory.

I wish I were anything
But human.

RELICS OF YESTERYEARS

NDIFREKE GEORGE UDO

When the god of fertility of Osun
descended down Idanre hills into Old Oyo,
and sunset from the Sukur Cultural landscape
which told the time from days of yore
never rose again on the ancient walls of Kano,
and the Alok Ikom Monoliths lost its moss
to the heavy sweep of western erosion,
she cried the Gurara waterfalls.

History is an immortal being
breathing through the lungs of cultural relics
on the face of the Ivory Masks of Benin
bedding under the very roof of Mary Slessor's house,
but no root holds the canopy of nowadays,
after we relinquished the gong for the hoot
and silenced the echo of nature from the
Oshogbo Sacred Grove with foreign dawn.

Until we prettify ourselves with aprons
sewn with national colours and figs
stretched from our brown earth
and dance the ukwata with the same aged grace,
shaking our waists with traditional wriggles
to the blare of flute, gongon and kakaki,
we will be but vagabonds evaporating on the
street of time... to load the western ozone.

God forbid!

LANGUAGE WE ALL SPEAK

OLAEWE DAVID OPEYEMI

We are men of different colours,
Of diverse tongues and dialects
Domiciled across various loci on mother Earth,
With distinct and numerous cultures
like the sand on the sea shore,
But all from the same ancestry.

Diverse as we are,
We are plagued by mutual human afflictions,
For hunger has no language,
Lack of shelter no colour
And ailments no culture.
Earthquakes and floods, all natives of no land,
Form a united army against our existence.

But there is a language spoken in all lands and understood by all men:
The language of love,
the act of compassion to ourselves.
That is the debt we owe each other.
Like glue, it binds us all in unity,
And it is a sure weapon of peace.
More than anything else,
It preserves our race,
Our common heritage.

MY COUNTRY

OKUNOLA PEACE

Sing sweet lyrics to the mortal realm,
That they may hearken and listen.
To our tune of a thousand voices,
Of handsome men and lovely women.

We grow crops on soft and fertile ground,
And our harvests are large and big.
We sow sweet fruits of varieties
And our reaps are great, and abound.

The lofty trees in our clustered farms
Depict our strength and unity.
The water we drink from our palms
Reflect our integrity and strong will.

Black is the color of our smooth skin,
Black as the skin of a raven.
White is the color of our teeth,
White as the winter's snow in a glen.

The labor of our cumbersome hands
Creates colorful robes and baskets.
Green is the raiment of our land,
That covers Earth like a second skin.

DANCING DAFFODILS

BETIKU AYOKUNLE SAMUEL

Where I live, dawn arrives,
heralded by the call of a singing rooster.
Somewhere in the distance, earthen pots
brush against earthen pots, but nothing
catches the fancy of the ears like the voices
of the maiden bearers moving to the streams;
their sonorous songs pierce through the chill
of dawn, borne by the whizzing breeze.
Amidst the symphony of voices, a gossip is heard:
The maidens will dance at noon
in the village square.

Noon arrives, bearing on its wings the sounds of
talking drums (captivating rhythms born
from the union of flesh and wood).
These enchanting rhythms turn the square
into the centre of a mystic display:
a breath-taking sight in the centre of the square—
Maidens with ebony skins glistening in the sun,
twisting, whirling and springing to the sounds
of drums and songs.

The surrounding crowd is lost in the magic
of their leaps and twists, hypnotized till eventide
comes to set them free.

At night, a man is seen in the company of his friends;
he has found for himself a rose among
the dancing daffodils of the village square.

A CLIME WEARING THE CROWN

AKOR AGADA NATHANIEL

The day I fell was not when I ate the forbidden fruit.
It was when the ill wind castrated my conscience before the truth,
Severing me from the soil that held me to my root,
Making me a hermit worse off than a broken tooth.

The nostalgic flame grew in my eyes,
Burning with sublime memories of this paradise
Lying somewhere within the Benue isles
Where bond flows beyond blood ties.

Show me ten thousand thrilling treasures!
I will show you one that truly allures,
A clime wearing the crown of diverse cultures
Smiling in the sun of her appealing features.

Our forefathers conquered the beasts in the forest,
Converting that forest into a fortress from the west,
Flowing with rivers of fresh milk bubbling beneath her breast,
A home with heaven's landscape for everyone to invest.

Kukogho, please, let's go to Otukpo, the lion's heartbeat,
The dwelling place for warriors of no mean feat,
The sanctuary housing the Agabaidu in its sacred seat,
An abode known for serving starving souls food with meat!

There, we shall see Ojadike, the masquerade of fire,
Clothed in his customary black and red attire,
Singing Idibia's Oyi with the voices of an ancestral choir,
Rending the air like a pregnant smoke scampering from a burning tyre!

BIRTH AND SUCCESSION

ANNA OJEMMA SUBERU

Bubbles and colourful dreams,
life will bring.
Don't shut your eyes, little being,
fill the halls with your screams.

Let not your childhood years
be filled with fear.
You too possess a shear
to rid this world of evils snare.

I will not always be with you
here and there,
But you, my child,
have so much to share.

Let not the aged ones
keep you clothed in miseries smear.
You, dear child,
have chased away despair.

You must stay merry
and of good cheer.
You, my child,
have so much to share.

MOONLIGHT

KINGSLEY DOMINIC

A girl travelled the length of the oceans
In search of potions.
She wanted to be a nurse,
Then she grew into a market woman with a purse.

She got married to an iroko
That stood taller than the sun,
A darkened pottery of clay
Who honed the wind like flowers in a bouquet.

In between the earth and the sky,
She found a portion of the mythical chi.
She ground the herb and made tea:
The iroko fell at the scent and became a sea.

Then she took the remaining powder
and climbed the moon with a pestle.
Each night she pounds his favorite meal of chowder.
She is now aged and a pest too.

As mum rubs in the last gel of cream,
She completes her story,
That the ancient Ovia in the moon sprinkles her black powder
Into the eyes of all who look too long into the night's moon.

TRANSHUMANCE

ABDULBASIT YUSUFF

His seven-year-old son gives his cane a twirl
and calls the mooing cows to order:
“nkok! nkok! nkok!”

The nomad – a ‘noppiire’ on his head -
watches, legs outstretched, affront the ‘bukkaru’.
The milk maid, his wife,
gently pulls the nose of her girl child
to make it long and pointy.
The cowries fastened to her cornrows dance
when she moves, and the henna tattoos
on her buttered skin glisten in the golden sunset.
The nomad takes a gulp of the ‘kossam’,
wincing at its familiar sourness.
His youngest son, Gidado, traces the cracks
on his soles – some deep like crevices.
His sole is a map and his soul a museum
of cities he’s made ‘wuru’ out of:
The plateaus of Jos and Adamawa,
The southern lands and their colorful ‘bubas’,
The belly where waters meet in Lokoja.
His gaze travels now, first to his son,
who must soon learn the ‘palaaku’,
and then to the pregnant sky.
The wind brings the smell of a change in season
and the clouds form in his eyes.
He knows another journey beckons.

FREEDOM IS WHITE'

AYODELE HABIBLLAH AYOOLAAYOOLA

The color of freedom is white.
How can your rights see the light if your body is dark?

A criminal act it is to wear the wrong color.
Two count charges against the black man
Who is stuck to poverty.
Money does add brightness to the skin.

Three against those who stand like trees in their motherland
-the unlucky ones who can't tryanna be wanna-
Their better brothers will dish them the hate they were given
Served hot, with a little extra by the side for every homeboy.

The headlines talk about one color every day,
Same stories, different names,
Same bodies, different ways.
Be sure to let the hoodie cover your skin whole.
Everyone now knows most guns are painted black.
And never turn your face against the badge:
You know your smile looks like a Kalashnikov 1947.

Hate is the wealth common to humanity.
They give.
We take.

Then we pass it round too.
It is why I'll never write with a black pen
Before close friends start to think I'm a resurrection of a dude from
the 90's,
Before close friends start to think he's back to lead the pack,
Before close friends fire one bullet to my head and five to the chest.

TO A FELLOW WAYFARER

DAHUNSI OLABODE

This city gives no place for love
and loyalty is not for humans.
Still you will wonder how girls like us,
who carry war inside our skin,
find a way to grow flowers and etch smile on our lips.

This city is a bustling bazaar,
a museum of tragedies,
a library of elegies.
Still you will wonder how boys like us
carry our tears to become liquid of love.

This is a city where my Grandma's face
is wrinkled with tears, hiding histories,
her scarf stained with a bloody soil
that can only be found in Zamfara.
Still you will wonder how she cried blood
without filling it with revenge.

Even when our eyes are a sea of pain,
we only learn how to repay hatred with love,
how to let anger dissolve into peace.
This is how we heal ourselves.

Just like Christ on his way to Golgotha,
we offer ourselves as a living sacrifice.

THE SUPPLIANT

AFIAH OBENEWAA

Ignore not the pleading streaks
that map a course across the borders of our face!
Let their intended intention be met.

Hidden in cloaked depths
is a deadly desire.
Furnished on the outside are traded rumors.
Provider! We heard of your unclenched fists
that firmly grasp the dreary and let go
the sought-after.

Overlook our rain-soaked hair.
We stumble breathless to your shrine,
Our solace... Our anchor.
Swallow up our offered desires
and our sacrificed wants.

We, the women of our motherland
have come with a single desire:
"Snatch from the jaws of misery
our sisters trapped in loveless embraces."

Let them fulfillment find
as an anchor for souls cast adrift.
we are them,
they are us.
Save one. Save
all".

A MAIDEN & A CALABASH; OUR HERITAGE

BAYOWA AYOMIDE MICHEAL

Twisted twice, like strangled necks under sacks,
knock-throat, nodding like hags, we smile through realizations,
flash on eerie figures and strain our backs
to record more arithmetic of imaginations.

The blood of our ancestors in us
is now a repository of multicolored footprints,
golden, enclosed words on dusty papyrus
inscribed in a language of Anglo-drums, feet, and specks of dust.

The little girl I held in my hand becomes a cowry
filtering half-light of the last dawn where a woman
becomes a river that fills the vase of our history.
A drop of her tear is a skin rip on a cooking pan.

A town crier
Yells her eulogy in a gong.
Everyman's tongue is cursive loops.
Mothers breasts sing before the rising sun a mourning song.
Other women sell their waist-beads and pots.
Jungles quiver at the hide-and-seek of anglers.
As if cursed with famine, every mouth chews her name,
Yemoja Yemoja!! Yemoja!!!

The blood of our ancestors in us
is now a howl of mosaic seashells in monuments.
A piercing in the air is a maiden with a calabash in the head
and cowries around her wrist and ankles.

We say to ourselves 'history is not finished'
because the tears of a woman are a river, our origin.

Dear Reader,

Thank you for reading THE 8TH WONDER.

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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