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# EDITORIAL

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Love. Lust. Hunger. It's amazing how fishes can evoke shifting emotions. If fishes could speak, they'd have tales to tell; of trapmen, missed baits, and how they slay well-dressed on a dinner plate. If fishes could speak, they'd have tales of blood and goo; from oil-washed seashores, floating fragments, and how they breathe, dying, gasping for air.

But, fishes cannot speak.

So, our writers spoke for them – from Wanjala's kindness to Kemunto's rhetorics; from Laika's cry to Save the fish, Herbstein's bloody passage to the lessons we are now taking from the bait – this edition is served fried, dried, and curried.

Truly, is there anything sweeter than fish on an African dish? – I'll ask Dr Tom Odhiambo, the African who loves Africa. Read his interview, hook, line, and sinker. You'll catch the African fever.

Indulge on every page. And while you relish, answer this simple trivia, "How many types of fishes were mentioned in Lebo-g Faith's poem aptly titled Fish?"

Till I see you in September at the 2019 African Writers Conference in Nairobi, Kenya;

My gills a' restin'

*Sandra Oma Etubiebi,*  
Chief Editor,  
WSA



# FLASH FICTION



# FISHED OUT

Bildad Makori – Kenya



Mvuvu Wanjala's survival crystal clearly depicts that karma is indeed real! That one good turn automatically leads to another.

Wanjala was a renowned fisherman in the small village of Bahari Kuu in Samaki. His amazing fishing skills were recognized far and wide just like Rehema Msigala, the 'miracle worker' popularly known as Babu from Loliondo in the republic of Tanzania...Also known as King Fisher, Wanjala was not only a compassionate conservationist on matters to do with fisheries. He had the expertise in everything doing with fish and fishing.

3 months ago, a factory was to be set up around a lake in Bahari Kuu and with this, here is where all the trouble started. If set up, we sure know of the consequences that would have followed. Massive water pollution that would have eventually led to the death of many fish. Fish that were not only Mvuvu's favorite creatures but were also his source of livelihood. And do you think Wanjala could wait for that to happen? Hell no!

He led fruitful protests against the construction. He received humongous support from people and eventually, he won! But wait, that's not the end! During all this, he was seen as a nuisance and a threat by the investors of the factory and so they sought to end his life!

On one night, Wanjala was kidnapped and was thrown right at the middle of the lake! Truly speaking, he was to die given that that place is deep but guess what? He didn't! He survived the ordeal and fled to a nearby village.

How he survived is a mystery which people say that the many fish in the lake literally 'fished him out' hence saving him as a way of thanking him for his relentless efforts in protecting them.

# MIDDLE PASSAGE

Manu Herbstein - Ghana



Ama was awoken by the noise of a splash. Struggling to her knees and looking over the gunwale, she was just in time to see the last body hit the water. Five female corpses floated naked on the surface of the sea, sightless eyes staring at the sun. The gentle swell washed over them, jostling them against each other and bumping them against the ship. One of them was Nana Esi. Ama closed her eyes and retched.

The fin of a great white shark sliced the water. She caught a glimpse of a mouthful of teeth fastening onto a leg. Then the first body was dragged down into the depths, leaving just a little crimson whirlpool in its wake. Ama screamed. All at once the water was alive with sharks, tearing the remaining corpses apart in a frenzied orgy of competition. The sea was threshed red; severed heads, limbs and human guts were everywhere as they tore the flesh apart. Ama sank back onto the deck and beat her head against the boards, unable to contain the violence of her sobbing.





**POETRY**

# WATER TO RUBBISH

Across the Atlantic, I missed many a bait.  
A thousand nets drawn, my speed got me no hook.  
One lucky day, I'd come out of the waters.

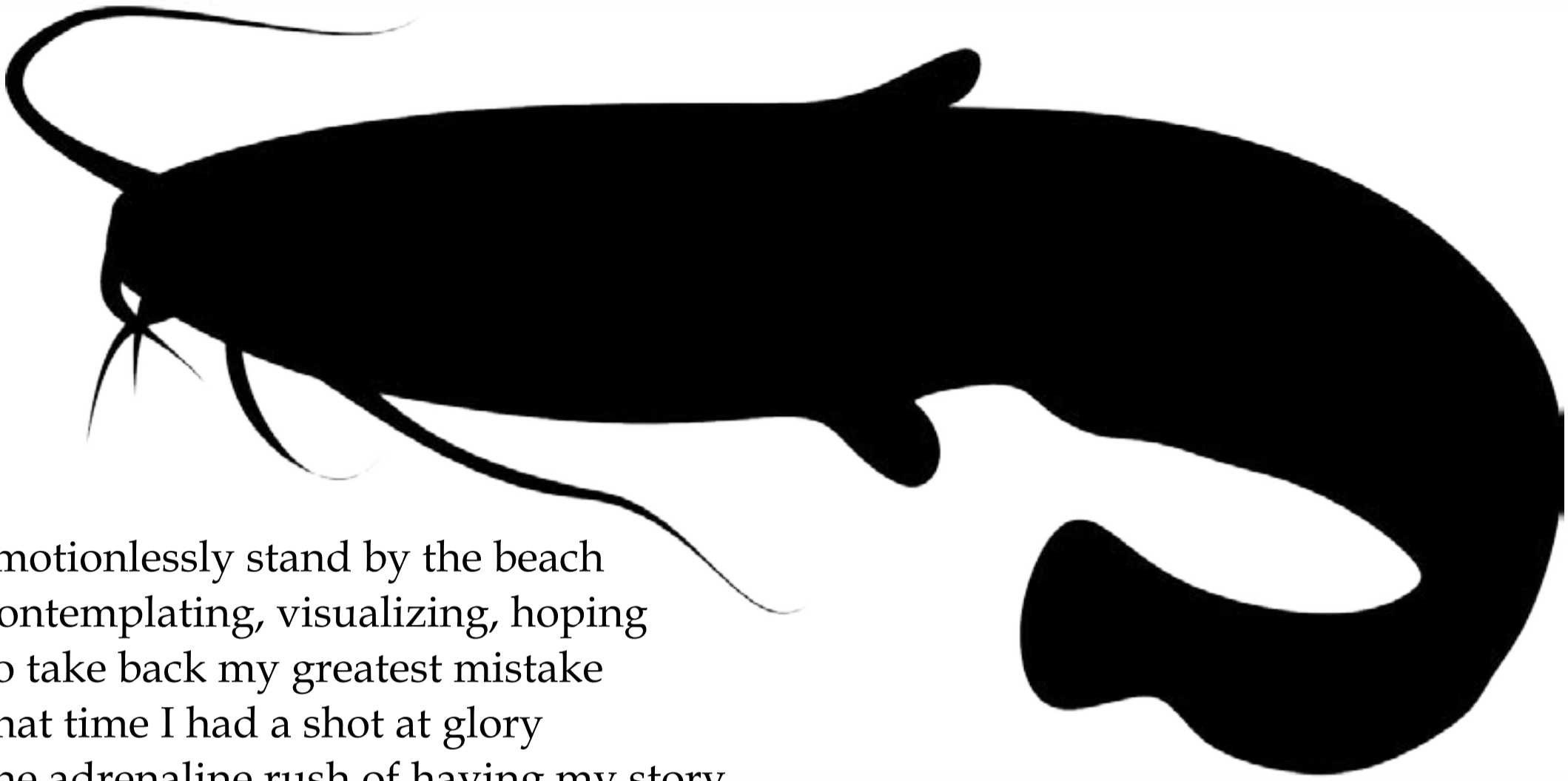
The day I got trapped,  
I heard his voice, my trap-man.  
Flaunting my tail, twists and dances,  
I saw a bait!  
I got hooked.  
He did well to preserve me  
Smoked,  
Dressed and blessed.  
I'd later be a good meal.

I was one fish to be eaten with care  
I'd choke him if he went fast on me,  
I'd like to think I was sweet.  
But I've never seen him again, my trap-man.  
The rest of me is in the pit rotting away,  
Dogs sniffing at me.

Men,  
They eat the sweetness in us  
Dump our innocent miserable bones,  
And look for the next fish to devour.  
"Don't bite at the bait of pleasure,  
Until you know there's no hook"

Zerida B Claire  
Uganda

# THE CATFISH EFFECT



I motionlessly stand by the beach  
Contemplating, visualizing, hoping  
To take back my greatest mistake  
That time I had a shot at glory  
The adrenaline rush of having my story  
Told across the seven seas and beyond  
A rumour in the Chiperoni winds  
So frantic yet again enticing  
That I finally broke the untold record  
As the young and gifted  
A rabble yet uplifted  
Who caught the swifty Catfish  
With his bare fearless hands.  
Indeed, my story spread and was told

Yet contrary was what had to unfold,

For joy took the best of my patience and focus  
And saw it slip through my butter fingers  
Consumed in the bottomless belly of Lake Nyasa  
Without a trace or evidence of the lifer  
Rather,  
A series of misfortune and bad luck  
That had to follow me.

Fantone Mdala,  
Malawi

# FISH ME I DIE

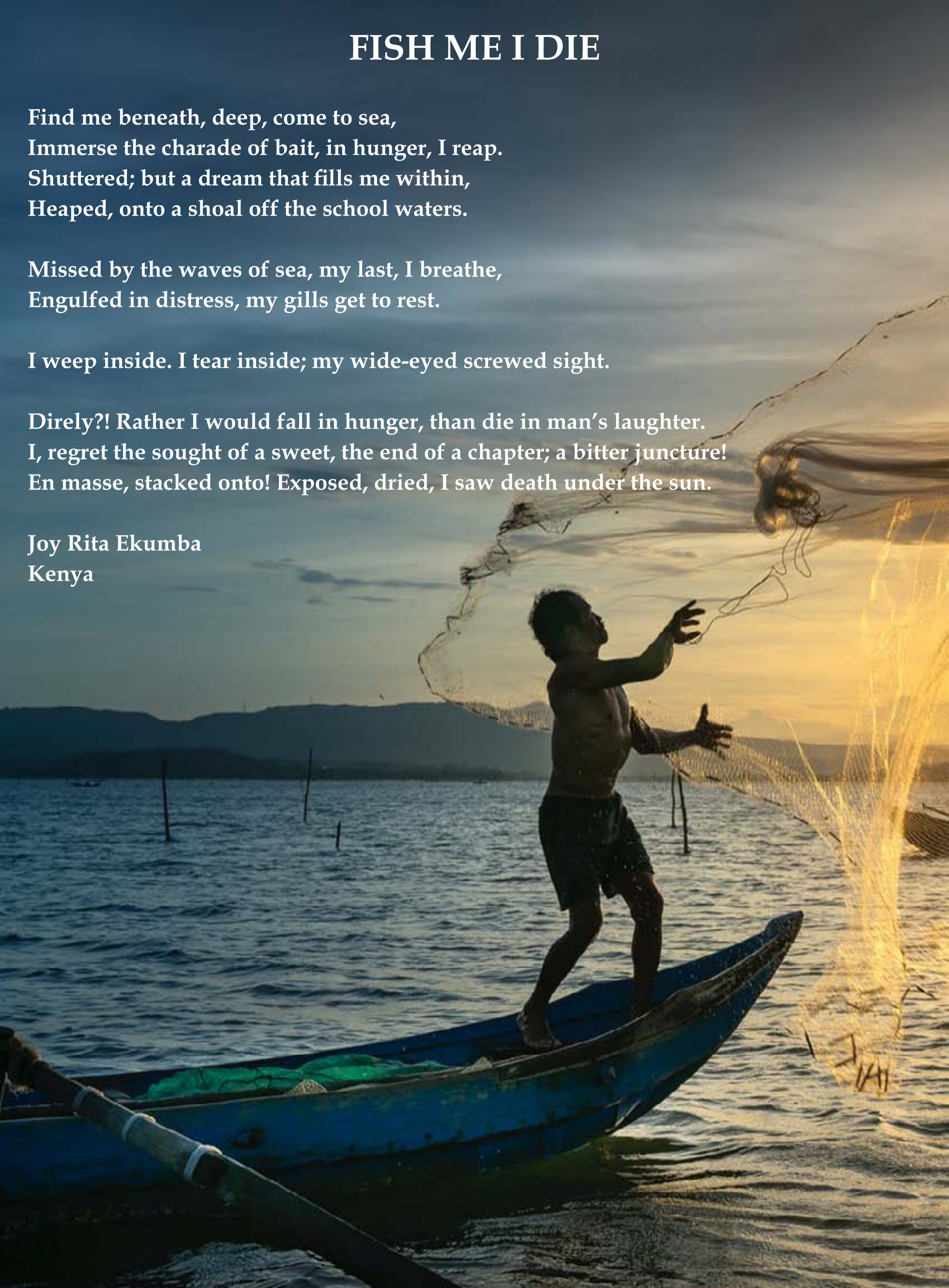
Find me beneath, deep, come to sea,  
Immerse the charade of bait, in hunger, I reap.  
Shattered; but a dream that fills me within,  
Heaped, onto a shoal off the school waters.

Missed by the waves of sea, my last, I breathe,  
Engulfed in distress, my gills get to rest.

I weep inside. I tear inside; my wide-eyed screwed sight.

Direly?! Rather I would fall in hunger, than die in man's laughter.  
I, regret the sought of a sweet, the end of a chapter; a bitter juncture!  
En masse, stacked onto! Exposed, dried, I saw death under the sun.

Joy Rita Ekumba  
Kenya



# FISHING THE FISH

In your ventriculus Jonas was unharmed  
You are what our parents give us not a snake  
To make us fishers of men we must be armed  
You find solace in water like a drake  
Where there is water you dwell  
When it spreads you multiply  
A fisherman's net puts you in a cell  
But only fry won't comply

With just five a thousand ate  
With just faith Peter's net was full  
You feed the world but would never abnegate  
Is the way man exploits you not painful?  
Your purrs, grunts, hums and hoots are audible  
Poor sharks! Like them you too maybe history  
Sea pollution will soon make it possible  
Just like the Nile seas may dry up  
Fishermen will weep like Egyptians  
Of hunger and famine will mankind cry  
Man shall soon miss fish  
Man shall soon fancy fish  
Man shall soon cease to live  
For everywhere water goes there is life  
What if it stops flowing?  
Fishermen will fish in vain  
Save the fish.

Tatah Allen Laika  
Cameroon

# TEACH ME TO FISH, I WILL FOR A LIFETIME FEED

In my life you have been of essence  
I feel gifted by your presence.  
Blessed many with your heart of gold  
A virtue I too pray to uphold.  
Father teach me how to fish and I will for a lifetime feed.

What sets you apart?  
Being a gentleman at heart.  
In moments my hope is all gone,  
You give me strength to hold on.  
Father teach me how to fish and I will for a lifetime feed.

For my happiness the tough you bear  
In your actions I see you care  
You and I - an epitome companionship  
What a glorious fellowship!  
Father teach me how to fish and I will for a lifetime feed.

How I pray it be your delight,  
That I be fit for the future fight.  
You are aging and surely need your rest.  
For your relentless efforts, I will be my best.  
Father teach me how to fish and I will for a lifetime feed.

Words limit what would be said  
To have you as my dad, I know I am blessed.  
At my youth prime this I pray and wish,  
That you may unwind me from this leash.  
Father teach me how to fish and I will for a lifetime feed.

Oumo Bathsheba Kemunto  
Kenya



# LESSONS FROM THE BAIT

Sitting happily by the seaside,  
I watched the fisherman do his work.  
Earthworms drew fishes from their hide,  
To the painful pang of the hook.

How I wish I did not eat!  
That is but a mere wish,  
Mr Fish would now serve as meat,  
For those that enjoys the fisherman's Fish.

What a sundry lesson to grasp,  
Not all that glitters is gold.  
Be careful lest you become a grasp,  
In the hands of the deceiving fold.

They do come with great things to offer,  
Peruse well, otherwise You'll be deceived,  
Into believing solutions they can proffer,  
This do they, and many lives unduly ruined.

Akaa Elijah Aondotakume  
Nigeria

# YOU'VE BEEN SERVED



I fit among rocks and sea plants in camouflage  
And watched the shark prey on the rest  
It was big, fast and precise  
An exquisite banquet  
Shuffling and making selections  
While still ignoring me  
Could it not see that I was clearly shaking?  
Or was it saving the best for last?  
Maybe I just wasn't trying to get away  
So it could take its time and still get me anyway  
Whichever it was, there was nothing I could do  
But to watch it head towards me, again and again  
Every time wondering if it was finally my turn  
Till it was; it must have been  
For it kept coming, its snout pointing straight at me  
Baring unevenly sized but equally sharp teeth  
I shut my eyes to its dark throat  
And opened them to the bright afternoon light  
The aroma blend of fish and egusi soup filled the air  
Mama was smiling, "It's your favourite  
You've been served"

Tochukwu Eze  
Nigeria



# BEAUTIFUL BAIT

What do you see when you look in her eyes?

Do you see the struggles?

Do you see her unyielding determination to hold on to hope?

Do you see the effort she puts in?

Her voice sounds angelic, do you hear the break in it?

Her hair is just perfect, do you care how long it took to make it look that way?

Oh that dress is a hot number! Do you know how many more sizzling ones were left a torn mess on her bed?

Her smile's beautiful but do you see?

On a rainy day when it's cold and her own warmth fails her

She tosses and turns, wishing she had a strong pair of arms wrapped around her.

The emptiness she feels is one born out of loneliness. Does she have it all or not?

When the sunny days come around, it's time to go fishing

She dresses to the nines, sweetening the bait

She practices her walk in the mirror, giving her hips just a little sway

She doesn't ask for much, just a heated look her way

She moves with confidence but deep down she's a nervous wreck

She's fishing for more, much more than the numbness she carries within

She's searching for that ray of sunlight that would comfort her on a rainy day

Will that be you? Will you let yourself be caught?

Hook, line and sinker.

Nicole E Gandaho

Benin Republic



# FISH

Amphibious vehicle has always been my daily whim  
Bragged about it in my vagary underworld mansion, you  
Chose me to be your aquatic plant, I swam with rainbowed  
Dolphins being my only best friends!

Eccentric person you are, I was the only queen hailed.  
From Aurora to sunset my life blissful like an ocean seal  
Grew more closer to you as my anchor... Yes, you were my  
Hercules! My cupid, with fondness stretching like anlleum.  
January to December we dined succulent pilchards,  
Keeping up with the...

Lifestyle of marines as I was your  
Mermaid nurturing me with jellyfish. Out of the blue,  
Nick possessed us, I looked like a Medusa to you, the  
Octopus devilfish you turned into, like a  
Piranha annihilating the womb that germinated your seed  
Qualm took residence in me, I started looking like Gorgon  
Ruthless now your surname! Gifts from  
Sardine oil was no more as you slip  
from my palms like a Tadpole!  
Unison we had, now a contaminated memory of yesterday  
Vexing your foetus still nestling down my uterus.  
Whale man will be my future son in law playing a  
Xylophone scaring away the sharks in his elegant  
Yacht sailing through the sea  
invigorated by the Zephyr!

Lebo-g Faith

Botswana - lsamson261@gmail.com



# THE NAUSEA OF FISH, THE VISION OF THE POET, AND THE FOSSIL MUSEUM FOUND ONLY IN THE AFRICA OF MY MIND (for my brother)

The fish glides in the water. Try and understand the ultimate truth of their beauty. I watch daylight break the love story of my childhood, and the love story of my parents. I watch how the day rations away the philosophy of the fish. The chef fractions porcini mushroom. The cook nibbles on almonds. The housewife prepares chow mein noodles for her family While the children drink milk, read comics, watch cartoons, eating tuna fish sandwiches. I watch the fish glide through matter, perplexity, atom. By night, I write. By night, I build the fossil museum with my complex bird-fragile hands thinking of the fish. I watch day break the phenomenal habitat of the sea. By day, the fish eats plankton. By day, they need to breathe, think, and function. I eat dried mango. By day, I dig, I sleep, I trust the links in the chain of my vision. By day, I think of the sea, and eat fish afterwards because it reminds me of home, and you.

Abigail George  
South Africa



# EELS

I left out for fishing  
Where water was generously calm,  
Also a well-known spot for a killing.  
Dropping the hook and pulling  
I thought misfortune befell me.

The pole bent to my dismay  
Hauling a long, mean-looking object;  
Never had fishermen brought such.  
The tongue of my hook  
Kept on rescuing eels of their ills.

I walked down home whistling  
With fishing pole across my back,  
Pondering over many million questions,  
And hanging were dead guiltless eels  
Attracting a multitude of the folks.

Message reached madam before me,  
It took me time to convince her  
That eels were actually real fish.  
I told madam to give them a try  
However much she didn't fry.

Omadang Yowasi,  
UGANDA



# FISH SCHOOL ME



Teach me how to swim in a wide open, shark infested sea  
And still make it out alive  
How to swim with dangerous sharks for cover and still not fear to be killed  
Teach me, Shark and you Pilot Fish, how you manage to have that mutual relationship  
The world I live in lacks that relationship; we fight and kill each other.

Salmon teach me, teach me to go back to my place of birth  
To swim against the entire obstacles and upstream without tiring  
Fend off bears and all predators just to back to the place of birth.  
Teach me Salmon, for I have abandoned my birthplace, my parents  
In my world Salmon, we grow and abandon our ailing parents and never go back to our villages.

Sardine, school me.  
Teach me how to work together for prosperity  
In millions and with no leader you orchestrate your move, perfectly synchronized and coordinat-ed  
You swim the dangerous seas and fend off predators with your beautiful moves  
In the world I live in we struggle to cooperate and work together  
Even with leaders, we still struggle for world peace,  
Some of our leaders are even true anarchists

Teach me fish; school me on coordination and cooperation  
Teach me then maybe my world will be a better place.  
School me on working together and maybe we can win war against diseases,  
Surprisingly some of the epidemics are man-made.  
Teach me respect, teach me about values and maybe I will go back home  
To honour those who have made me who I am today.  
School me fish.

Simo Letlojane,  
South Africa

**“Maybe I can’t really say I did everything I had to do  
But I know there are days I did what I love doing.”**

*- Jo Ta, Ghana*



# Interview with Tom Odhiambo, PhD

by

Sandra Oma Etubiebi



*I met a man. An African man. An African who loves Africa. An African who has spent his adult life in the study, pursuit, and promotion of all-things-African writing. Our meeting was an education in African writing, an excursion into history, a rustling up of old reads, and a falling in love with Swahili –yay! It's your turn to meet this man, the African Dr Tom Odhiambo, who is a trained teacher of Literature and English at the University of Nairobi. Dr Odhiambo studied at Moi University, in Eldoret, Kenya, and the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa. He originates from western Kenya, is married, and has a daughter and two sons.*

*I'd love to know what you think:*

□ *What do you regard as African writing?*

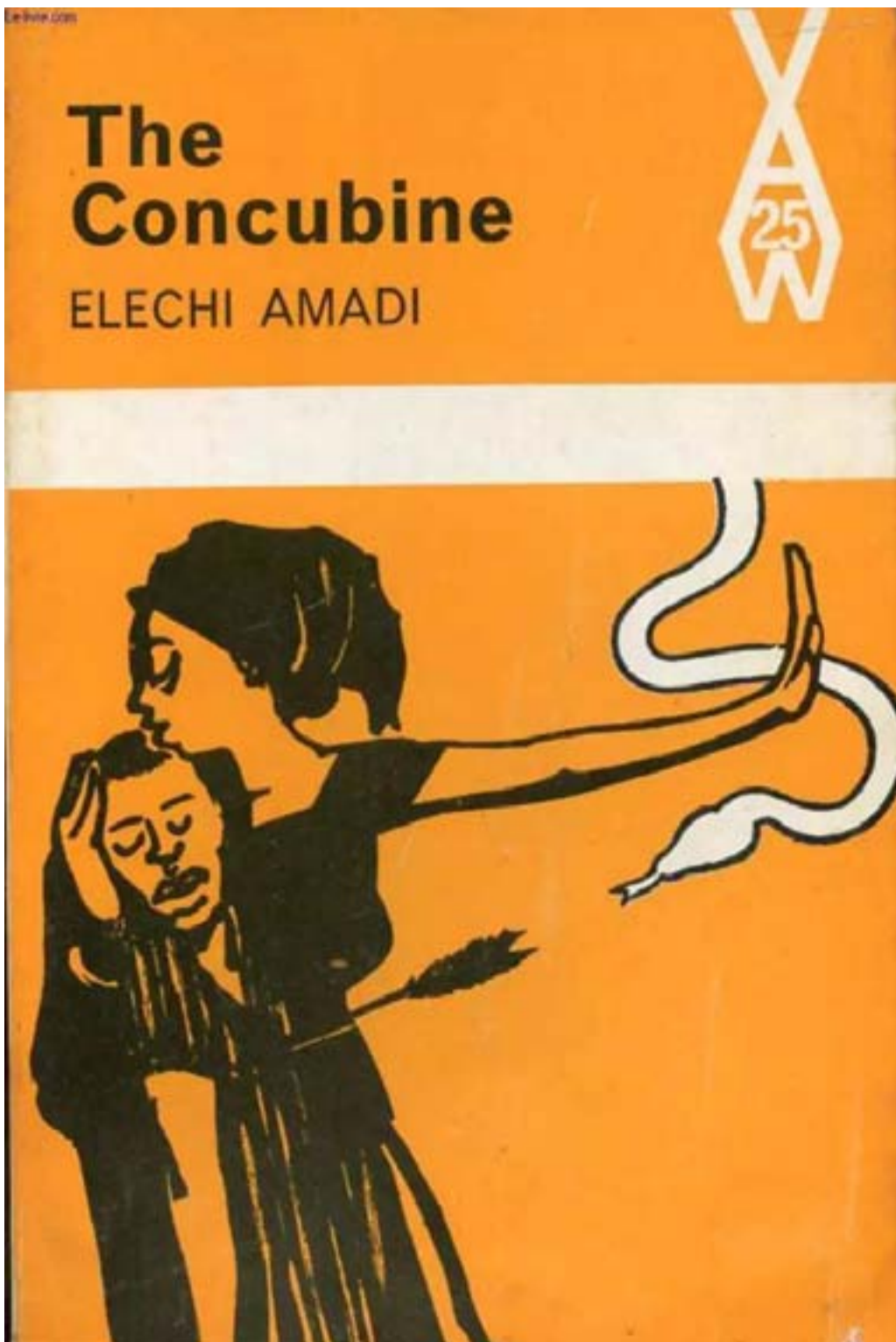
*(There was once a debate on this: writings by African Writers versus writings about Africa regardless of the writer's race)*

Mwafrika anasema:

African writing is an expansive term. Although it has always been the subject of debate on its usefulness, I still find it a worthy category when I want to talk about literature that is from the continent and speaks to me about the continent, its people and cultures. I think the issue of the race of the writer is often overplayed. Arabs, Europeans and Asians have related with Africa for such a long time that it is naïve to think that only people who claim African blood in them – in which case people of European descent are excluded – can speak or write about Africa. I often think about literature from the Caribbean which has an African sensibility as 'African' literature.

□ *Tell us more about your love and affinity for African writing.*

Mwafrika anasema:



When I first read a full length written novel, it was by a Kenyan writer, David Maillu. I then joined the local branch of the Kenya National Library Services in order to get more books. I was just about to join secondary school. I was thrown in the deep end of books when I came upon big shelves of books marked 'African Writers Series.' I was hooked to African writing. Reading Elechi Amadi's *The Concubine*; Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*; Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Weep Not Child*; Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *No Longer At Ease*, etc was magical. It transported me into new countries; I met new people; I experienced new cultures; I became a member of the world of storytelling. It was beautiful. Since then, I have been attached to African literature. This is why I found it so satisfying to earn my two graduate degrees in the Department of African Literature at the University of Witwatersrand.



□ *How exactly did it develop, and what nurtures it till this point? Did your love for African writing inform your choice of post graduate studies or was it the other way around?*

Mwafrika anasema:

Sure. It is because I fell in love with African literature that I found admission to a department that focused on teaching African literature very fulfilling. I was steeped, for four years, in the study of literature and culture from Africa and its diaspora. That early connection to African literature means that I am constantly alert to new works, new authors, new conversations, and new possibilities around African literature. I am perpetually on the lookout and I collect all kinds of African writings.

□ *Share with us some of your best reads of African writing?*

Mwafrika anasema:

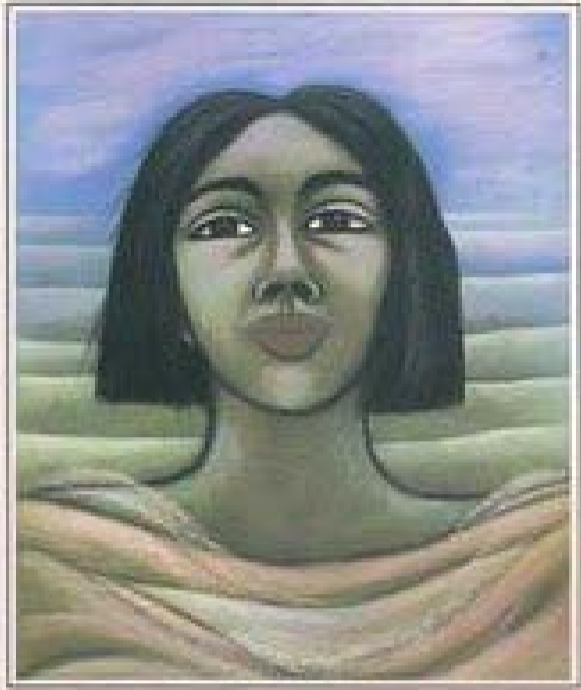
For now let's just speak about three books. I love and reread so many African novels. But Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, Nawal el Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero*, and Margaret Ogola's *The River and the Source* are the books I reread almost every other year. For inspiration, maybe. Because they are beautifully told, probably. But I guess they are my



three best reads because when I first read a non-Kenyan African novel, it was Armah's book. It was searing. I found it so real in its capture of the tragedy - I bet I didn't think then of the whole saga as a tragedy - of the 'man'. I hadn't met teachers who would then go on to tell me about 'disillusionment' with African independence and postcolonial reality. No. It was just the sheer reality that here was a man who could not satisfy the family's basic needs - ooh, I had just left primary school and we had been taught for years that human beings have basic needs that must be met. My own life didn't have some of the basic needs regularly. But I was shocked that even if I finish school and get to work, I may not earn

# Nawal El Saadawi

## Woman at Point Zero



enough to feed myself and family. Yet there were men and women around who were filthy rich. Not necessarily because they had worked hard for it.

Up to today – as I ‘hustle’ just to pay bills and life hassles me, I always remember Armah’s prophecy in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. Saadawi’s book is just so tragic. I had read books about prostitution. Some of my essays in graduate school were about the prostitute and prostitution. Yet I hadn’t read *Woman at Point Zero* by then. So, when I read this book, it trashed a lot of the theory I had consumed about marginalization of women. This is a manifesto for a revolution. Yet I get shocked when I meet African feminists who have never read this gem of a book.

As for Margaret Ogola’s *The River and the Source*, this was the first book I taught in high school in my literature class. It is the book that set me on the path proper as a literary critic. I love it because it speaks a language and culture that is part of me. It is such a ‘human’ story, with the ups and downs of life; the dreams realized, the hopes shattered; the fact of our mortality.

□ **Who are your famous authors, from Kenya and across all of Africa?**

Mwafrika anasema:

I love Margaret Ogola, Meja Mwangi, David Maillu, Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor, Ngugi wa Thiong’o, Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye, Grace Ogot, Mwangi Ruheni, Mwangi Gicheru, Kithaka wa Mberia, Ken Walibora, John Habwe, from Kenya; Chinua Achebe, Ayi Kwei Armah, Ama Ata Aidoo, Ben Okri, Wole Soyinka, Chimamanda, Saadawi, Buchi Emecheta, Ben Mto-bwa, Mia Couto, among others. There are so many African authors that I read and teach that I can’t list all of them here. And I rate them ‘famous’, to borrow your words.

□ **When was the first time you read *Things Fall Apart*? And what’s your memorable moment in the book?**

Mwafrika anasema:

I was in Standard Seven in primary school when I came across *Things Fall Apart*. I had gone

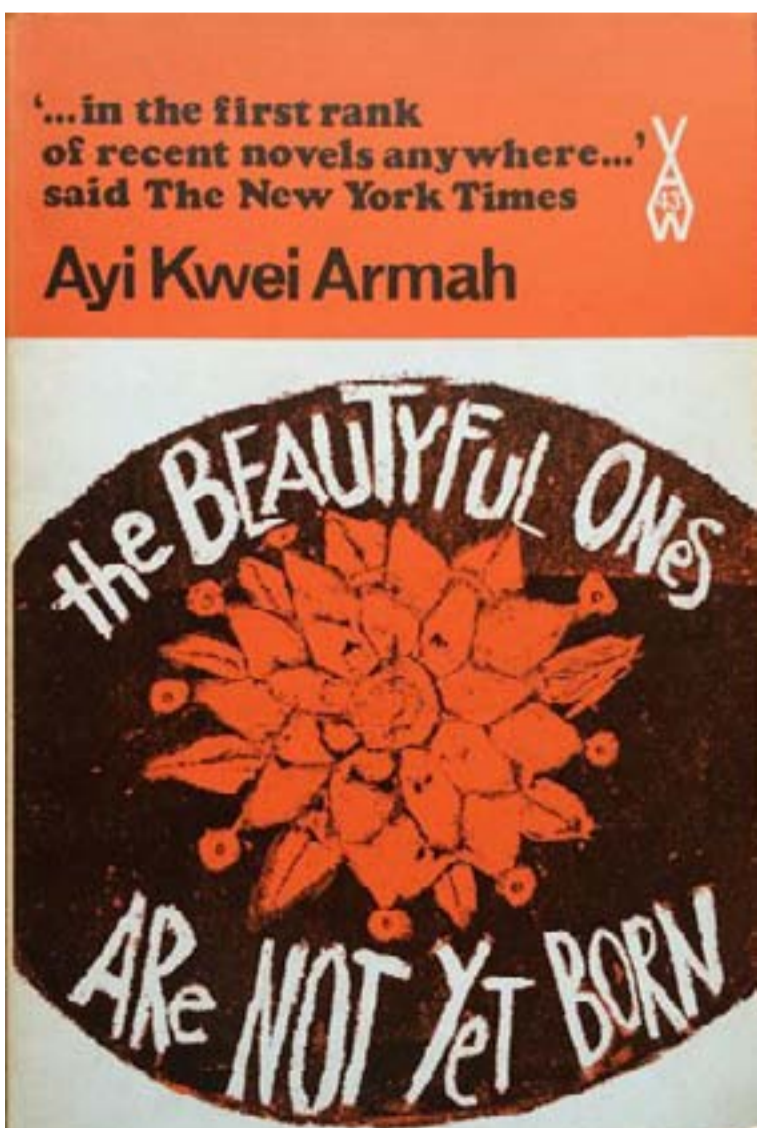
to the library to borrow books. We were only allowed three books at a time. I had picked two, which I was checking out when I saw this book lying on the desk. I asked the librarian if I could borrow it. She said it was fine. I went home with the book and read it. 'Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages of Umuofia and beyond ....' Who can forget that line? It remains my most memorable event because it describes an 'artful narrator' inviting the audience to 'listen'. When the narrator goes on to describe why Okonkwo was famous, yeah, you can see him throwing Amalinze, the Cat. I felt like I was there. Like I knew this man Okonkwo. Yet I hadn't met and will never meet Okonkwo!

- **How do you see writings of Africa that are more futuristic rather than a sojourn into history?**

Mwafrika anasema:

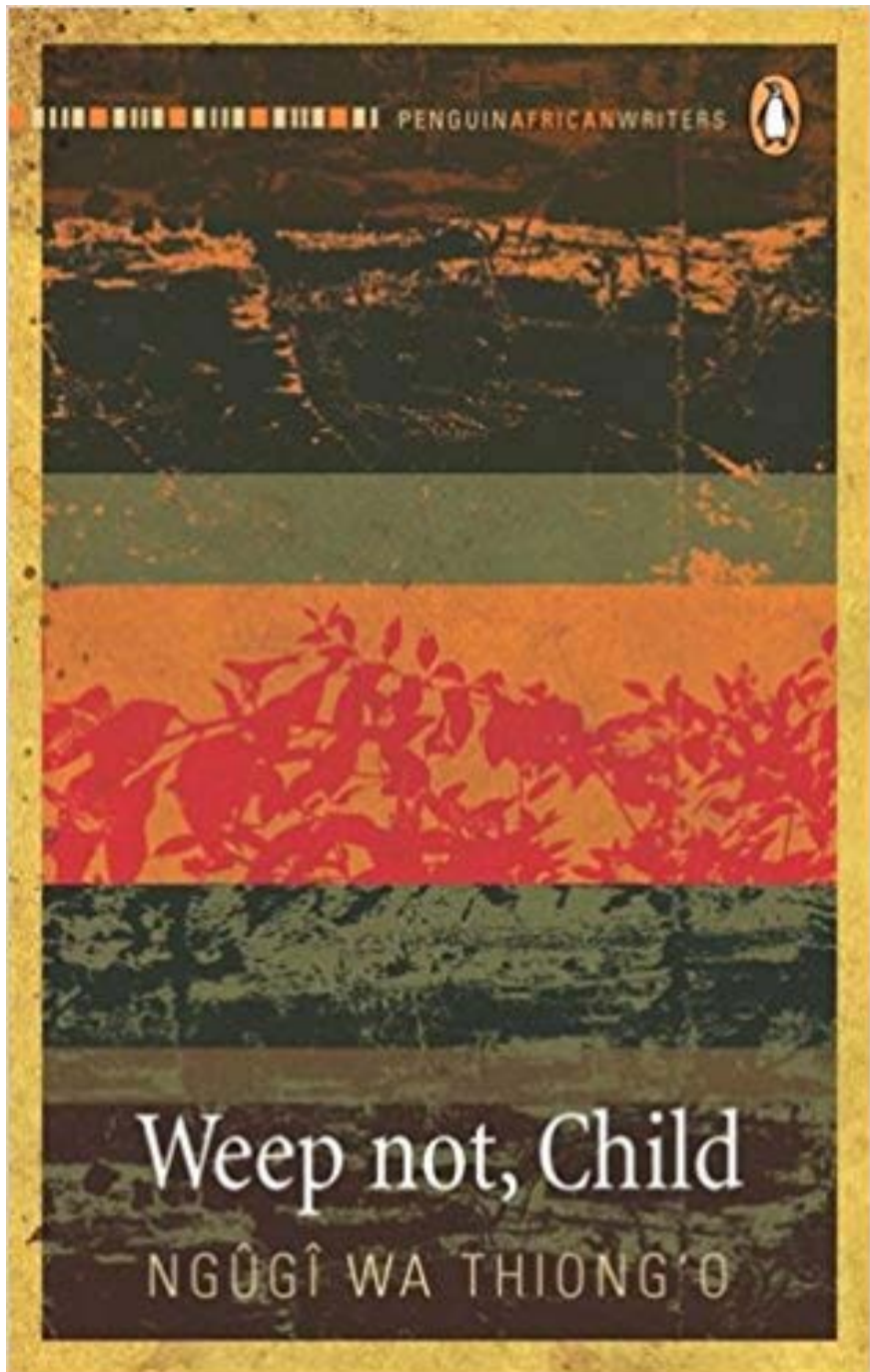
All writing somehow invoke history. They do not necessarily have to go 'back into history'. They are children of history. And so even when they are 'futuristic' they are suggesting a history that is yet to happen. Surely, *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* was futuristic when it was written. Right?

- ***If Black Panther was a book, what would you think about it? How would you value it in terms of its contribution to literature and African writing?***



Mwafrika anasema:

The story, like all stories, seeks to make one see potential in Africa. There is nothing wrong with dreaming about some past Africa. But we need to build an Africa today that enables its people to live a decent and humane life. The African past should be a source of tough questions for us today – questions about how our ancestors lived with nature, with their neighbors, what they dreamed of, what they build and what they imagined and left for their posterity; for us. Such critical thinking would help us to exploit the abundant natural and human resources that Africa has to make life not just bearable but worthy for millions of Africans. I am not sure that the story of Black Panther is liberating to me.



- *Does your love for Africa writing reflect in your teaching, on and off your teaching career in the University?*

Mwafrika anasema:

I teach African literature every week, every semester, every year. I talk about it whenever I travel. I only gift others books – African novels, auto/biographies, travelogues or anthologies of poems. My career has been all about African literature and culture.

- *How else do you contribute or would you contribute to the influence and spread of African writing?*

Mwafrika anasema:

I encourage my graduate students to research African literature. I review books by African writers whenever I have the opportunity. I have been a member of a writing initiative in Nairobi called AMKA Women's Writing Space. I founded a journal to promote research in African literature and culture – Eastern African Literary and Cultural Studies.

- *What do you consider when reviewing writings from Africa?*

Mwafrika anasema:

Of course the story has to appeal to me. I look for how the author has treated the characters. What does the writer convey about the setting of the story? Is there something in the text that I can relate to? In essence, I am looking for the humanity of the story – are the people in the story

- *What makes African writing stand out?*

Mwafrika anasema:

It is about African humanity, a humanity that continues to be denied in many parts of the world, including here in Africa. Any writer who celebrates Africa – in whatever way – touches my sensibilities.

- *What should our young people consider when developing stories on Africa?*

Mwafrika anasema:

African stories are also African histories – histories of this continent’s spirituality, economics, sociology, geography, culture, arts; its essence. Read and read and read about Africa. Listen to its music. Listen to stories by others. Eat African food – ooh, find out first how it is prepared or farmed. Know your story, feel it, before you tell it.

- *If you could still dream and see your dream come to pass, what would be the dream?*

Mwafrika anasema:

At 47 years old, I’m not sure if I’m still allowed to dream of a future. I tend to think that humans should always focus on the here, now and today. If I planted a tree today or just having this conversation with you, I’m more than happy. But I pray that I’ll be an agricultural economist or a forester – reading Fagunwa’s *Forest of a Thousand Daemons*.

- *What would you say are the true credentials of a literary critic or /and reviewer?*

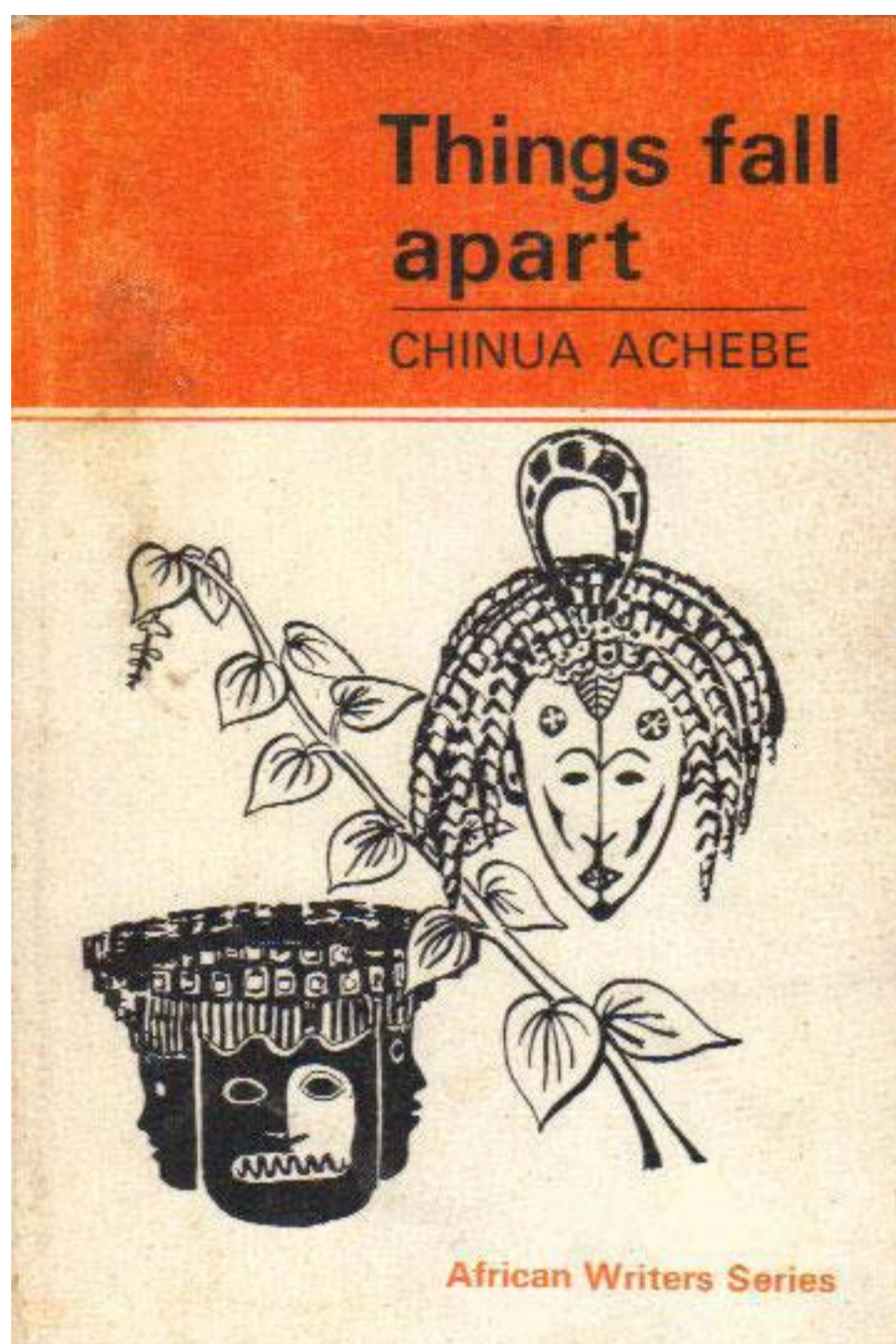
Mwafrika anasema:

A serious reader – one who doesn’t review by the blurb! Magnanimous – some stories can really be poor but remember someone bothered to create them. Don’t trash everything in a book. Knowledgeable about the world of books – for instance, do you know the difference between a prequel and a sequel, so that you don’t review one and claim it is the other!

- *How did you get involved with the forthcoming AWC 2019?*

Mwafrika anasema:

I was invited by Edith Ochieng’, who is involved with AWC and is a regular participant at the AMKA Women’s Writing Space forums, where I am a moderator.



- *What do you think is the relevance of this year's conference theme to the future of African writing?*

Mwafrika anasema:

We need to grow African literature in leaps and bounds and help it leap and bound all over the continent. Books/stories/writers should be travelling more today, what with the ease in travel and communication, but do they? When African narratives/writers don't travel enough, prejudiced stories take over. It isn't worth one's time and efforts to counteract bad stories. Let the bad stories be preceded by (good)/realistic ones.

- *What should the public expect from this literary collaboration between AWDT and Kenya Writers Guild?*

Mwafrika anasema:

More African stories. More African transnational connections. More cultural cross-fertilization. A richer African literary and cultural experience. As a moderator-to-be at African Writers Conference (AWC) 2019 in September in Nairobi, I can't wait to meet all the writers, publishers, critics and book lovers.

- *With your full life immersed interactive, English, and African writing, what words of counsel do you have for writers in Africa and writers from African descent?*

Mwafrika anasema:

Keep telling the African story. Tell it loudly to the world. But first to an African audience, to whom you won't need to proclaim your Africanness. Your story will proclaim your humanity.

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So, what did you think?

Obviously Dr. Odhiambo celebrates African writing. He believes that African writing isn't just evidence of African creativity and culture but actually a significant record of our history. I am glad I met the man – this African whose excitement of a growing transnational African literary conversation and connection is fuelling a healthy consciousness of what it truly means to love Africa and her writings. I'm glad I met Mwafrika Anayependa Afrika.



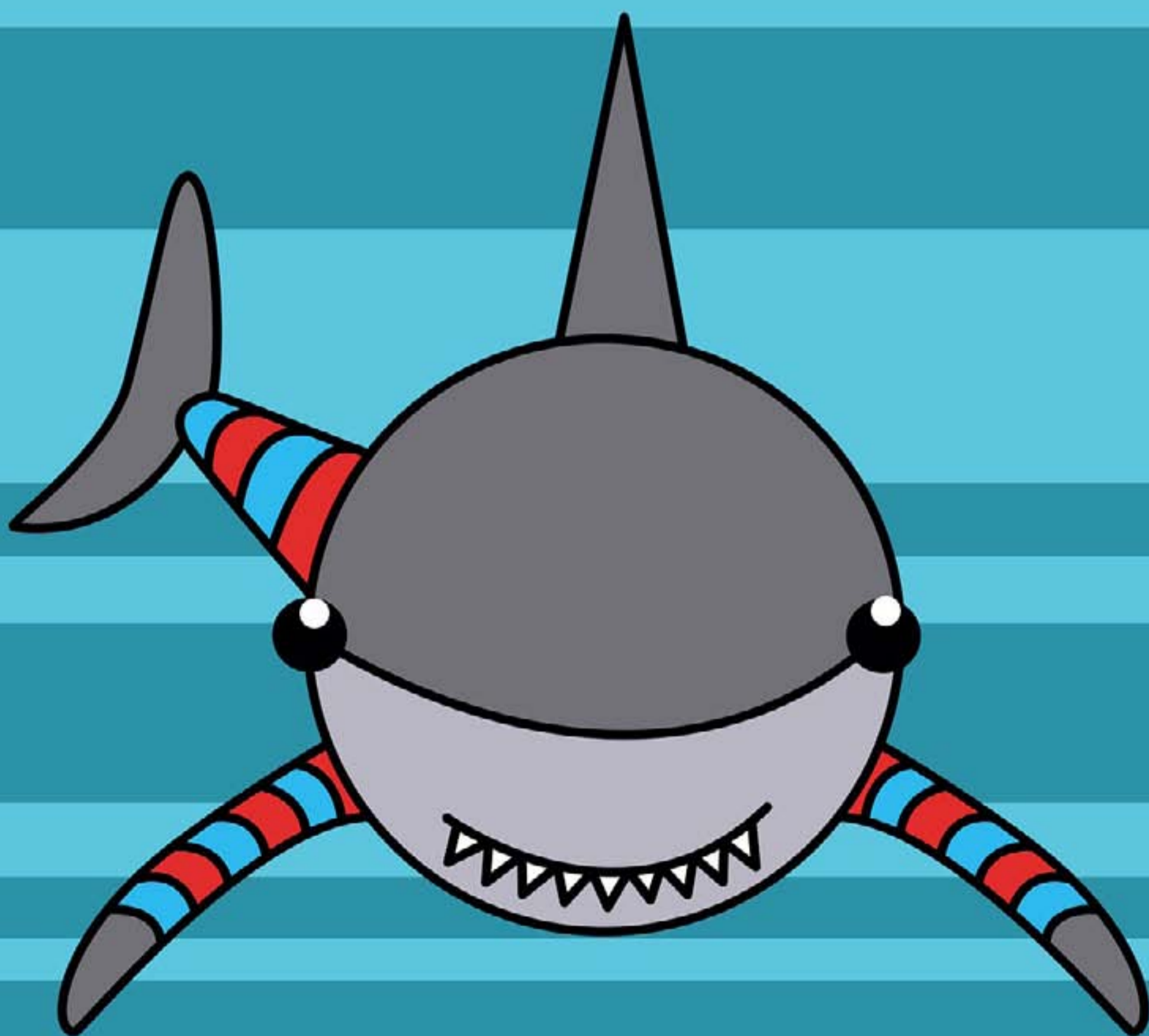
# CALL FOR SUBMISSION

Poetica Magazine, published by the African Writers Development Trust (AWDT), is calling for submission from Poets of African descent for the 4th quarter edition to be released October 15, 2019.

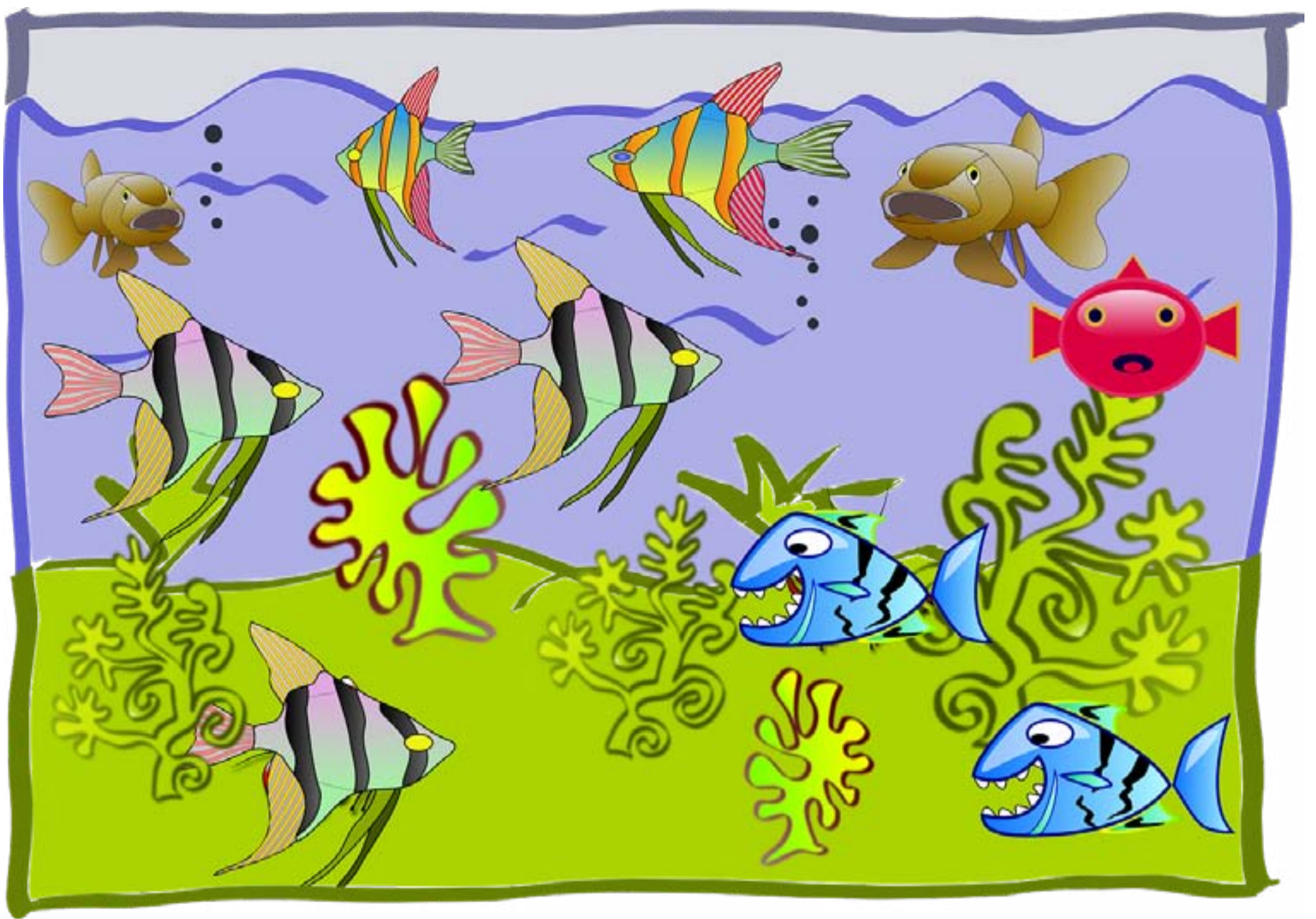
**Poets are to send in their submission, not more than 30 lines on any theme, with name and country, to [poetica@poeticamagazine.net](mailto:poetica@poeticamagazine.net)  
Deadline is August 30, 2019**

The magazine will be available for free download from October 15, 2019 from our website - [www.poeticamagazine.net](http://www.poeticamagazine.net)

# Children's Literature







## ESU 'THE DEVIL'

by

Akinmayowa Adedoyin Shobo – Nigeria

Once before humans were created, there was a great empire under the sea ruled by the fishes. It was so prosperous no one was poor or homeless. Everyone agreed that God created the fishes to rule the world everywhere they went. The fishes were known to have the most successful businesses all over the world.

Many times other nations travelled long distances to learn how to make their own kingdoms great like the Fishes'.

At a certain time, in honour of the fishes' king, the Great Paul – the first fish created by God who had died that year; the empire declared a seven-day mourning ceremony. This was to be followed by seven days of feasting. There were plenty of food and entertainment.

The occasion attracted many animals - great and small, from as near as the creeks of Africa to the mighty green oceans. Even the dreaded Esu 'the devil' was invited. Everyone agreed the king was a benevolent person while he was alive and so deserved a large funeral ceremony.

To prepare for the occasion, many events were enlisted to make it the talk of the continents of the world. It was suggested that the chief priest in the empire lead the guests to a special tour into the rich hidden secrets of the empire. Each secret was held into specially-built rooms beautifully decorated with iridescent gemstones.

Of all the rooms, one room stood out in particular. According to the tradition of the fishes, no

one but the chief priest was allowed to enter this room. Even the chief priest did this ritual only once a year.

The room was rumored to hold the rarest treasure in the world called the black gold. The people of the fish empire called it its name simply because no one knew exactly what it looked like except that it was hidden in the darkest and coldest part of the under-water empire.

And so after the mourning, the feast began. The invited guests went into these rooms under the guide of the chief priest. They were in awe of the great wealth held in each of these rooms. Every visitor had a camel-load of questions about the richness of this special room.

As expected, even Esu had highly intelligent questions. It was clear that the visitors were visibly excited and these made the Chief priest greatly pleased.

The chief priest was proud of his prowess as a guide. He wanted to impress his guests even more, to tell how respected he was in the Empire.

Shortly, he made up his mind to extend the tour of the guests to the most secret part of the Empire. The room filled with the black gold.

As he led the crowd, he spoke eloquently about the hidden treasures and its power which was responsible for the wealth of the empire.

Meanwhile, at the end of the crowd of people, little did the chief priest know some of the visitors were secretly planning to steal some of the treasure in the room. The chief of these plotters was Esu 'the devil' himself.

Esu had also been known to perform all manner of tricks. Everyone knew he was quite clever and could easily outwit his opponents in difficult situations.

The next day when the party was supposed to end; suddenly, Esu and his wicked army rode into the kingdom and ransacked the entire empire. The wicked army went straight to the room filled with the most precious treasure in the whole world. They plundered the secret rooms containing the black gold, carrying all treasure in a fleet of vehicles.

In the end, they turned the entire empire into a wasteland. They burnt the king's magnificent palace and took all the royal children of the fishes away as their captives. No one escaped their attack, not even the chief priest of the empire who had foolishly shown the visitors the way to the most guarded secrets in the land.

Many years later, the descendants of Esu would be seen dumping harmful chemicals, garbage and poisons into the remaining part of underwater empire.

The beautiful empire has become a land of destruction filled with a foul-smelling grave of dead fishes.

The end

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Note: Esu(Yoruba) literally means the devil; however, in the Yoruba mythology, he is one of God's servant created to carry out the will of God (blessing or punishment)

# LITTLE TOM AT THE FISH POND

by

Ngalim Jusline Veeyeenyuy - Cameroon

Fish, fish, fish oh!  
Can you do what I do  
Like I do?  
I can fish you  
But you can't catch me

I know you do somethings I do  
But not like I do  
I breathe, you breathe  
But I breathe through the lungs  
You breathe through the gills

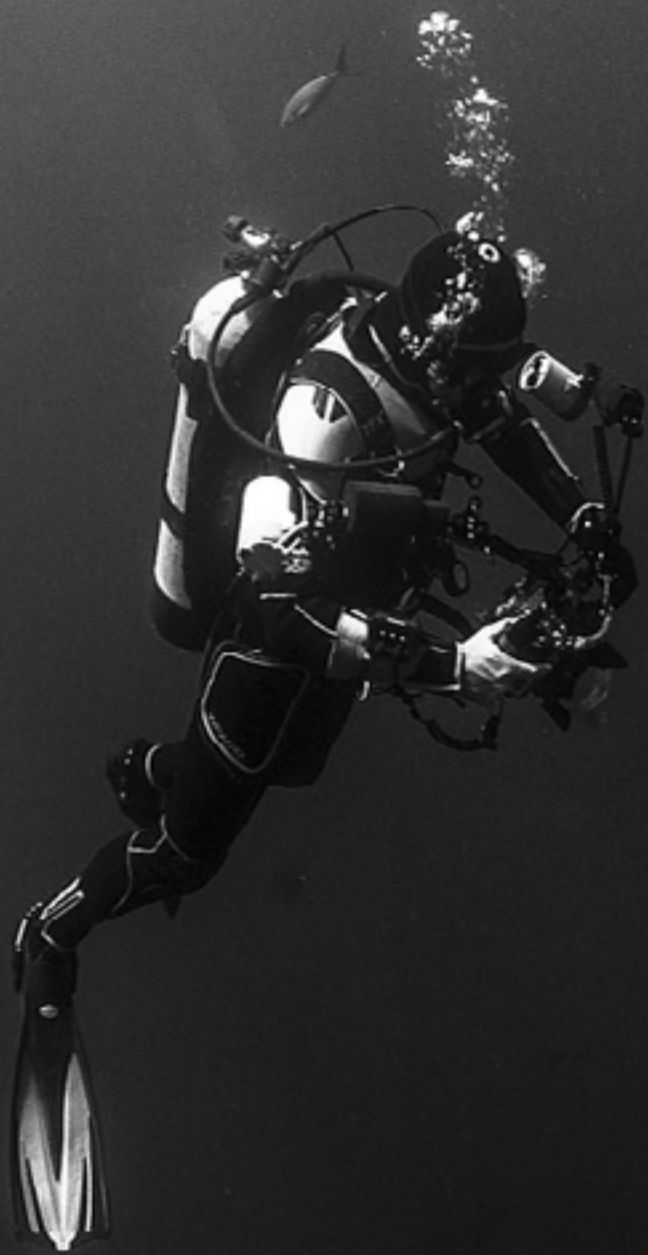
I swim, you swim  
But I swim with skills  
And to you it's a gift  
You swim with the fins  
With your fins, you can fly  
With my legs I walk

But with them I can't fly  
With my knees and hands  
I can creep and crawl  
On you I feed  
But on me you can't feed

On land I live  
And in water you live  
On land in my house  
Unlike you in water with your spouse  
Yet I think I'm better.



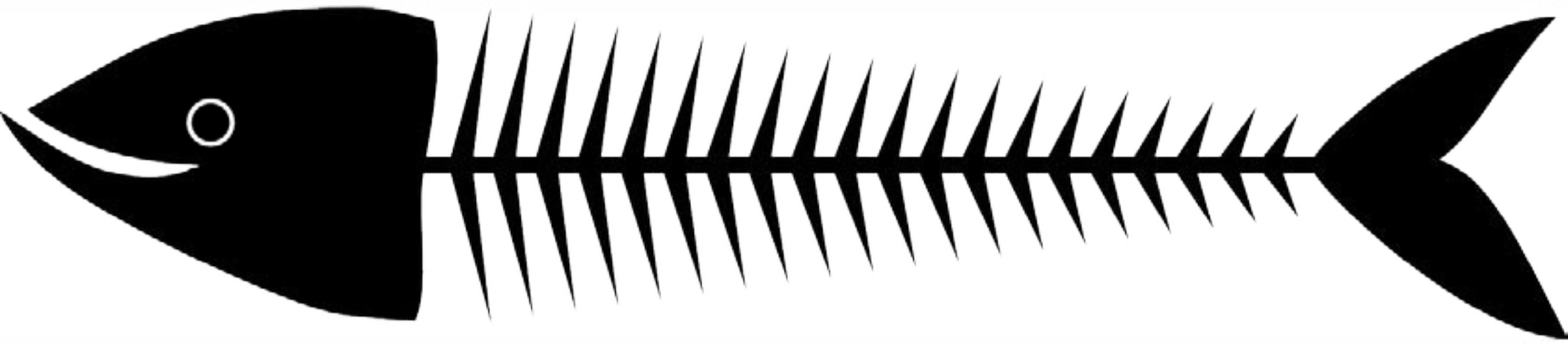
# ESSAYS



# FISHBONE

by

Marycynthia Chinwe Okafor – Nigeria



Mummy always said “the world holds so much mystery,” so much that we could not begin to describe. She also said that most of these mysteries couldn’t hold a candle to what the waters held. Fishes, for example, their shiny bodies and the heavenly tastiness of them, but I had never been lucky with fishes. As a child, their wide-eyed stare - even after they were dead and frozen - scared me, their smell - raw and sickening - provoked my nostrils, their slithery movements made me queasy and their scrumptious tastiness nauseated me. I once tried to eat one and the bone took residence in my throat. My cousin who lived with us for a while didn’t eat fish because he believed that most fishes sold in the market were snakes. A friend of mine wouldn’t eat fish because his grandfather choked on a fish hook and had to undergo surgery before the hook was removed. My younger sister newly weaned, could only eat okra soup prepared with liver and fresh fish and barely three weeks after she started surviving on okra soup, choked on a fishbone.

I had enough reasons to despise fish but life decided to teach me one more. My favourite aunt, aunty Tobe was spending Christmas with us. It was a Sunday - three days before Christmas - and we had just returned from mass when Aunty Tobe decided she wanted to prepare fish stew. Mummy was delighted because for once she would eat a meal she didn’t cook herself. I wasn’t impressed and I made sure they knew it. I didn’t care much for fish, I never had. It didn’t matter that mummy droned on about how healthier than meat it was, or that that she used vinegar to wash the catfishes to remove all of their sliminess. And despite Daddy always leaving a piece in his plate for me, to get me to start liking it, I never faltered. I didn’t care that whenever we visited our iku nne, my grandmother always gave my siblings and I fish, I didn’t care that mummy tried to reassure me when she said, “You will like it, Kamsi.”

At dinner, mummy had just started laughing at something I said when suddenly she frowned. She blinked and swallowed - I watched her throat bubble - and then she winced. She reached for her glass of water and gulped down. It was when Aunty Tobe leaped from her chair and rushed to pound mummy’s back that I knew she was choking. I pushed my plate of fried rice aside and took my glass of water and tried to feed it to her as she once did to me. She gulped down the water but the bone refused to go down, she coughed, swallowed, gagged and coughed.

“Should I call Daddy?” He would know what to do, I thought. He had made my siblings and I memorize and promise to call his telephone number when there was trouble, he had even had his number written in bold next to our table phone.

Mummy shook his head, “He will worry.”

It wasn't until Mummy's best friend who was a nurse breezed in like the force she was and cleared the room that I knew it was her Mummy and Aunty Tobe had been waiting for. She asked Aunty Tobe to get a bowl; she placed the bowl in front of Mummy and while rubbing Mummy's back, thrust her forefinger and middle finger down Mummy's throat. Mummy threw up and I felt rather than heard Aunty Tobe heave a sigh of relief.

As I watched Mummy shuffle to the bathroom, I swore never to ever eat fish and I believed that after what happened, my family would never eat fish again but on New Year's Eve, Mummy prepared fish pepper soup for dessert.

Years later when I took interest in fishes - but not so much as to eat them - I learnt that the earliest organisms classified as fish appeared during the Cambrian period and they had soft-bodied chordates and they had continuously evolved - developing jaws and external armours that protected them from predators, becoming predators rather than preys. I learnt that they communicate acoustically and that a shoal is a loosely organised group of fish whereas a school is tightly organised.

Jellyfish also called sea jelly is medusoid and the oldest multi-organ animal having being in existence for more than five hundred millions years; starfish has a central disc and five arms - or more - which it can shed as a defense mechanism, it can also regenerate its lost arms or damaged body parts; the electric fish generates its electric shocks from its electric organ, an organ made up of modified muscles and nerve cells. Man according to Darwin's theory of evolution evolved from shellfish but shellfish are known not to be fishes but water dwelling animals; walking fish can walk over land for a long period of time whereas a flying fish can take short gliding flights through the air; swordfishes have specialized organs that heat their eyes and brains.

Clownfish or anemonefishes have symbiotic mutualism with the poisonous sea anemone; zebrafish so called because of its vertical white and black stripes is both a tropical and sub-tropical fish notable for its regenerative activities and use in drug development; hagfish is eel-shaped and is the only living animal that has a skull with no vertebral column. All anglerfishes are carnivorous, they have a fleshy growth on their heads which allow them to attract preys, their jaw and stomach can extend to allow them accommodate preys up to twice their size; lungfish eat members of their own; pufferfish though serve as food and are considered a delicacy in Japan, Korea and China, most species are poisonous.

These fishes are all very different but they have at least one thing in common, they all are edible and I still do not care much for them.



# Short Stories

# LIKE A FISH OUT OF WATER

By Peter Nnajofofor - Nigeria



“Obinna!” the shrill voice of my class teacher jolted me like a golf club to the head. She asked a question and she was waiting for the answer. She ignored the smart kids raising their hands shouting, “Aunty I!” and was prowling the isles like a hungry lioness, looking for someone to torture. I had been avoiding her eyes, praying silently: “not me! God please not me.” But God was unavailable at the moment.

I rose shakily, racking my brain for the best substitute for a decent attempt because I just couldn’t figure out all the numbers being thrown about for the life of me.

“Aunty, please I didn’t hear the question.” The familiar giggles were already beginning to pour in from nebulous corners of the classroom. My classmates knew as well as I did that I was just buying time.

“Are you deaf?” blasted Aunty Ruth. “I asked, what is the square root of four!”

Which one was square root again? Perhaps I should have raised my hand to say I was not following before she asked her question. But then she would ask, “where did you stop following?” And to God who made me, I’d been adrift since we started this topic three classes ago.



To further buy time, I started to make a show of counting on my fingertips and mumbling numbers. Obviously, I was not coming across as intelligent as I had hoped because the giggling from the class was getting louder. Aunty Ruth was still staring daggers at me, so I said a final prayer and in the lowest, most apologetic tone, I blurted out my wild guess: forty! The class broke into uncontrollable laughter. That is, excluding Aunty Ruth. If eyes could kill, I would be dead already from the look she leveled at me.

“Shut up, all of you!” she banged her cane on the desk, putting an abrupt end to the laughter. “Obinna, you’re an idiot!” she declared.

That was one of my finer nicknames in school. Others were bolom-bolom (balloon) head, iti kom kom (as empty vessels go, a used tin of milk), and for a while, forty.

I was told I was unintelligent so many times I saw no reason not to accept it. Flow with the unshakable identity of dullard. It wasn’t the worst. Tochukwu, the only albino in school was plain white and couldn’t read anything that was not right in front of his eyes, hence kids pointed at him and cried, whity-ghost! everyday.

It was not like I was purposely trying to be a dullard. I wanted to be smart too like those pupils raising their hands because they knew the answers. The problem was, nothing taught in class made much sense. It all floated around my head like...well, balloons. Before I knew it, they popped, and I was left with nothing to say to my teacher when she asked a question. But I still had to go to school, because I just did. I had to stay in the class every day and bring home a report card at the end of each term. So, my mind would wander. I would hear the words but focus on the rhythm and tonality of the voices. I would look up at the ceiling, count the squares and rectangles on them and marvel at the patterns they made. I changed schools a couple of times, but they didn’t make me intelligent.

One day, someone brought a board game to school. I had never seen nor heard of it before, but I watched with interest as my classmates played. The game consisted of a black-and-white checkered board with strange pieces moving across the squares in even stranger formations. I went to bed that night still fascinated by the squares and the strange pieces. Over the next couple of days and weeks, I watched people play the game called chess. I was never a very social kid, moreover I didn’t want to add salt to the injury of my dullness by asking something I presumed everyone else already knew; so I quietly watched and before long, I learnt the movements of the various pieces as well as the rules of the game.

The more I watched, the more I became aware of something strange. To win the game of chess, you must outmaneuver your opponent by ‘seeing’ plays that they can’t. I was seeing plays that nobody else seemed to be aware of. At first, I dismissed them, thinking they were probably against the rules of the game which I was not confident I had fully mastered yet. But then, I realized that they – the better players among them – eventually capitalized on

some of the plays I had seen, only many moves down the line.

One day, one of the boys invited me to play. I said I was not very good at the game, but he encouraged me to try. Scared but excited, I set up my board in the way I had seen others do and the game began. I had seen him play and he was better than a lot of the others so in my mind, I could not even fathom the possibility of beating him. I didn't.

But hours after the game ended, the game was still playing in my mind. I could remember almost all the moves made by the both of us. I analyzed and re-analyzed, finding scenarios and formations that would have seen me win. The possibility of winning was like a drug, it gave me a kind of life and excitement I could not remember ever feeling. I could scarcely eat or sleep. The next time the board was brought out, I stayed by the side and watched and analyzed. I was so caught up in the permutations running through my own head that I forgot my place and screamed at one of the players who had a clear path to winning four moves ago but still could not see it.

Everybody stared at me like I had lost my mind. The player I screamed at dared me to complete the game for him, since I seemed to know all. And if I couldn't win, I would get a hard knock on my head. My first instinct was to run away, but something told me to just try. I wouldn't die from a knock on the head. I stepped up to the board and I won in three moves. My opponent said it was beginner's luck and asked for a rematch. I won again. Unable to believe it, the boy who threatened me with a knock stepped up and I thrashed him in only a few moves.

In a few short weeks, I went from school dullard to school chess champion. I participated in inter-school tournaments and won. My story reached the state chess organization and after beating some of the strongest players already on the squad, I led the team to win the national tournament.

When I graduated, my school created a hall of fame and my name was the first on it. Up to this point, I still never quite felt smart. I saw the awe in the eyes of classmates and teachers who had said I was a dullard and I wondered if they didn't remember that it was still me. When they did their best to be associated with me and gave me special treatment, all I could think was: was I now smart or did it not really matter after all?

My questions were finally answered when I read about Albert Einstein. Like me, he was considered unintelligent in school, but he ended up the icon and role model of the most intelligent people all over the world. He once said that if you judged a fish's intelligence by its ability to climb trees, then the fish would feel unintelligent all its life. This was the moment it all made sense to me. All my life I had been like a fish out of water.

# FISH OUT OF WATER

By Hannah H. Tarindwa – Zimbabwe



For as long as they could remember, they hung out together, the whole seven of them. What fascinated people who had known them since they were a bunch of seemingly timid nursery school goodie two shoes was that there was no apparent leader of the bunch. In truth if outsiders would care to admit, no one could really say they knew that bunch of seven.

One time, during their first high school year someone started calling them the 7 disciples. The nickname emanated probably that they did not dress like the rest of the children in the community. The four boys and three girls spoke politely to everyone, they volunteered to renovate the dilapidating old people's home and would do other acts of kindness which went unnoticed and unspoken about until that senior boy saw them praying before having their lunch. He had made such a fuss about it, and one would expect that in a country such as Namibia, this should not be a surprising act, but it was because, the reality is that ninety percent of the population is baptized, the practicing Christian part is open for debate. The mean senior boy, who the group concluded during one of their private home meeting, was in need of love and prayer, such cries of attention where indications of a deeper and darker background, which they would not pay attention to.

There was more, though to these friends and they never told others: they were related. Their parents were cousins but the origins of the relation was always difficult to understand, even though

their parents had tried to explain it to them. What was interesting was that they had never been on any joint family meetings or gatherings but that was to change in December. On an unexpectedly cold day near the end of the school term, each of them discussed of the exciting news from their parents that they would be going to the coast for a family gathering. It was strange how they all knew the news at the same time. They wondered what was really going on, it had been awkward, so much so that they thought it best not to question their parents and let the events unfold.

The house by the beach was overwhelming. It had an old soul, as Wilma, the oldest of the seven said as they gawked at it in wonder. They all had light luggage, as they had been advised to, without being told how much time they were going to spend. The children had speculated from an overnight stay to three nights, the adults had not given them any details. The families all arrived in the late morning, the mothers had worked methodically to bring lunch together, the teenagers noticed that the mothers and fathers ate separately, one group in the dining room, the other at the patio and they were told to eat outside where there was an outdoor wooden table with joint benches. There, they spoke in whispers as if using their own voices would get them into some terrible trouble.

Just as they were about to stand up to go back into the house, a strange tall woman with flowing hair that seemed to glitter in the sun came to them with an inexplicable smile. She asked them to sit down and without question, they found themselves going back to the benches. "Children," she began with a raspy voice. "You are probably wondering what this sudden family outing is about, why it is shrouded with mystery that we are family and that we are only meeting together, now?" She paused, as if to get a response from each of them whom she looked at one at a time, with a gentle look but no smile.

"We did not want to frighten you, or scare you into resistance or to having thoughts that would otherwise make you run away. Tomorrow is what we call the day of transformation, where your awkwardness will end."

The seven looked at each other until, Melvin, the second youngest of the group and the youngest boy said, "Shall we finally understand why we feel like fish out of water?" He giggled nervously straight after.

"Exactly, my boy. Exactly that!" She stood up and straightened her dress. "Tomorrow, four thirty in the morning, all of you should be at the beach. Your parents will give you all you need. Do not wear any shoes."

The boys were more puzzled than ever but this time they did not have a discussion about it. There was silence in the house for the rest of the day. Dinner was at seven o'clock, this time everyone ate together and the adults spoke of how they were relieved to be going back, at last. They were celebrating something but evidently, Wilma, Shawn, Ricky, Paulus, Jaque-

line, Melvin, and Cleopatra were present but not invited.

“My lungs were growing exhausted,” Shawn’s dad exclaimed and a silence filled the room before Melvin’s mother burst out and everyone else joined in.

“The worst part was using my legs!” Paulus’ mother said very gently but her joy was evident. All of them agreed, some grunting and other’s saying, “Oh yes!” with evident relief. Jaqueline asked her mother if she was aware they were told to be at the beach at four-thirty in the morning. Her mother acted as if she had not heard her. Shawn and Wilma shook their heads to her, indicating that she should not pursue the questioning. Jaqueline wanted to but decided against it.

At bed time, each of the seven got back packs that looked like a deep sea diver’s packs. Their parents reminded them to be at the beach at the time they were told. They were also given strict instructions not to speak and not to question anything because it would become clear when the time was right.

Paulus was the last one to arrive, at exactly 4:30, everyone else had been earlier, to ensure they would not be late. As soon as he arrived big waves began to hit the big rocks and the woman from the day before appeared to be floating on one of the waves which seemed not to be going down.

She was riding the wave and waving to the children to come into the water. As soon as they started walking into waters by the beaches of Swakopmund their legs felt as if they were being glued together, they could not walk. A big wave swept them into the ocean and they found themselves swimming like dolphins below the surface. For the first time in their sixteen years, they all felt as if they were exactly where they were supposed to be, they could feel themselves getting deeper into the waters, but breathing better. Suddenly there was a bright blue light directing them into a tunnel where other creatures swam in styles as if to welcome them home.

Their parents were at the end of the blue tunnel clapping their fins in celebration. They were mermaids and mermen! The seven looked at each other and smiled as they twirled in the waters. The lady who had guided them came and sang a welcome song to them, which made them really feel at home.

When the festivities were done and the other sea creatures had gone to their sections of the waters, the seven held hands and Melvin said, aren’t you all glad we were really fish out of water?”

They all just smiled at each other eager to learn of the new under water life they had come to, glad to have left life on the hot and dry land.



# CREATURES OF MAGIC AND WATER

**Kimberly Chirodzero - Zimbabwe**

This is not a story about love or forgiveness. My heart is as cold as the bottom of the sea and it nurtures only the irrepressible need for vengeance. Once I was a girl, now I am half fish. They have to pay for what they did to me. I might not have been the most prominent girl in our seaside village but I had been the most beautiful. Suitors had started coming from across the sea to glimpse my beauty but I had eyes only for the king's son, Rohan. He has taken everything I hold dear. Now I have a deep turquoise tail and fin where once I had smooth mahogany legs. Now I belong to the sea. The sea and I are the same; cold, vicious and unforgiving.

The sharks that are gentle creatures support my decision only because they like me. They would hate for me to turn into coral and foam. Humans must only be killed to eat not for vengeance, they say. The minnows follow at my fin but the arrowtooth eels tell me the minnows follow all the new merpeople like this. I am yet to meet any mermaids; first I must pass my test and truly become a mermaid. The flathead fish and the mahseer like to trip me because they are larger than the small fish. Two dolphins have adopted me because my swimming is hopeless. They teach me to swim faster and longer with my new tail. This is my new reality.

A fortnight ago Rohan, Inara my best friend, and I went out to the jaded rocks by the sea. Inara is the daughter of the second wealthiest man in our village. It had always surprised me that a merchant's daughter would want to be friends with a lowly innkeeper's daughter. At the rocks, we watched the sun set and the moon begin its rise onto the night sky. We spoke of nothing important until Inara brought up the subject of my growing number of suitors. There was a bite in her tone I hadn't ever heard before. As if she was mad at me and unable to pretend otherwise. "You might have to leave poor Rohan for some sea wanderer, Nila," Inara said, peeking at Rohan over my shoulder. "I would never do that to Rohan," I had said with a frown.

"You might as well. It's not like you can marry him. You might be beautiful but he is the prince," Inara's voice had become bitter. We all stood up on the rocks with Rohan behind me as I faced the girl I had believed to be my friend. "Why would you say such things, Ina? We are friends," I had said. "I keep you around because I don't need the competition. In fact, there's something you should know. Tell her, Rohan," the waves hitting against the rocks had risen as Inara spoke. "Not like this, Ina. Nila, I'm so sorry. I meant to tell you," Rohan was embarrassed. "Tell me what?" I demanded, looking between the two of them. "I'm marrying Inara. Look, if our families merge it will be good for the kingdom," Rohan spoke in a rush. "You backstabbing little..." I started, whirling on Inara.

Her palm smacking across my face was like thunder before a sea storm. I raised my own hand to hit her back. "No, she is to be your queen," Rohan had caught my wrist. I struggled and Inara laughed. I was still struggling when Rohan let go and I slipped on the wet rocks. I felt my head crack against a rock and then blackness washed over me. "She's dead, Rohan." Inara started crying loudly. I felt Rohan's hands feel for my pulse. I wanted to say I was still alive but I couldn't move, speak or even open my eyes. "By the gods, she's dead," Rohan voice shook. "We have to carry her back to the village," Inara said to utter silence. "No, she might be poor but she is beloved. Help me cast her off the rock. The sea will take her away. Help me, Ina. Now," hopelessly I felt two pairs of hands heave and roll me off the hanging rocks.

I broke through the cold surface and suddenly my eyes were open even as I sank deeper and further into the sea. My eyes began to adjust and I could see clearly. The undersea took my breath away and I realised I was breathing water. I could see the sandy bottom of the sea but I could also see different kinds of sea life. Two huge whales passed overhead slowly shifting the pale moonlight in the water. A group of selkies swam nearby; it seemed they were playing a game. Then I felt a ripple in the water. All the other fish turned in one direction and I turned with them. She was the sea embodied and she held us all in her thrall. She had the upper body of a woman, dark brown skin under laid with a shimmer of golden scales and the lower body of a fish; a deep bruise purple tail with rose lilac scales. A snake coiled around her shoulders slithering in and out of her halo of dark kinky hair. She was slightly larger than an average human.

“Sea Queen...” I mumbled the old legend. “You may call me Mami Wata, child. You are dying. I can only hold you here for so long. You must choose. I can let the sea take you to your watery grave or I can make you as I am,” her voice was the sea itself, raging and calm. “A mermaid?” I asked. “Human names but yes,” she shrugged. “The price is a life of one you held dear when you were a human girl. I expect payment before the new moon. A fortnight. Choose. Life with the sea forever or death at the hands of your heart’s betrayer.” I could have chosen death then; it was the lighter path. Vengeance would be the dark path and I had always thought I was a good girl. I had loved a boy and a girl and together they had broken my heart. They deserved my wrath. “I choose the sea,” I said without preamble. Mami Wata smiled and her teeth were predator sharp.

Today I swim close to the coves and the dark rocks from which I ended my first life. I know Rohan will come tonight. Since my death he came only once with flowers and guilt. I watched him silently from behind the rocks and listened as he told me he would marry Inara in a fortnight. Tomorrow is their wedding day. As dusk falls, I hear footfalls as Rohan approaches and he has brought his bride. Rohan and Inara wade into the water until they are waist deep. “I am a fool, Nila. I have done everything wrong but you must understand for the kingdom’s sake, I couldn’t marry you. I can’t even tell your family the truth,” Rohan pleads. Inara makes an impatient sound. “Why must we do this?” she demands.

“Perhaps our prince means to assuage his guilt, Ina,” I say as I rise from the water, only a few laps from them. Inara screams and stumbles backwards but Rohan stands frozen. “Is it really you, Nila?” he asks taking a step towards me. I swim closer so that they can see my fish’s tail. “She’s a monster,” Inara cries, scrambling to shore. “Not yet,” I mumble under my breath and for Rohan I smile. When I was human I was beautiful, now as half fish I am heart wrenchingly iridescent. My prince stands no chance. He comes willingly into my arms. Inara is weeping. “Please, Nila don’t take him from me. I love him,” she wails. I look at her, this girl I loved and I look at Rohan the only boy I ever loved. “He was always mine, Ina. Now his heart will restore mine to life. Isn’t that love, Rohan?” I look at him.

I pull Rohan from the shore. “Your love lied, my prince. You knew I could never be queen. I am not powerless anymore. Not here in the water,” I tell Rohan. The words snap him out of his hypnosis. “I love you, Nila. If I kiss you will you turn back into a girl?” he whispers, his hands in my short tangled hair. I laugh. Even now he thinks he is more than I am. He offers me folktales. I kiss him. The kiss that would have made us king and queen on land but here it gives me power. I let us sink. Until this moment I wasn’t sure if I could do it. Love that can be cast aside deserves to be given to the sea for her to destroy. Rohan struggles as water begins to fill his lungs but I am stronger than he is. I take him to the sandy floor and as life leaves him, I feel sea magic crackle and my tail and fin settle and claim me. The sea has accepted my sacrifice. I am no longer human but truly a creature of magic and water.





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# AFRICAN

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THEME:

## Cultural stereotypes In African Literature:

Rewriting the narrative for the 21st century reader

- SPEAKERS -



Sabah Carrim  
Mauritius  
Lead Speaker



Nabilah Usman  
Nigeria  
Panelist



Alex Nderitu  
Kenya  
Panelist



Nnane Ntube  
Cameroon  
Panelist



Tom Odhiambo  
Kenya  
Moderator

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# COLUMNS

# AT A COST

What happens when tradition decides the fate of Zarah? A pretty damsel living somewhere in northern Nigeria, Zarah loses her place as princess of her father's heart to traditional principles, sojourning and scavenging until she finds her identity, but at a cost....

by  
AMAMI YUSUF



## EPISODE 6

Mohammed returned that evening in obvious rage. He walked briskly and angrily into the compound, with Asma'u walking a little distant behind him. She looked helplessly afraid. Immediately he got into the house, he began calling out to Mama. Mama came out in a hurry, looking confused and a bit frightened. She smelled trouble. Whenever he was in such a mood, someone was bound to get the clenched end of his fist and spread-out palms. Mama worried, and she feared. Mohammed's loud, insistent yelling pulled Mama out of her fearful, wandering thoughts.

"ke, ki maso kusa" Mohammed ordered Asma'u as they got into the main hut. She obeyed and moved closer as he had said, without uttering a word and without protest though obviously shaken. Mama looked on and thought of ways in which she could shield her daughter from her father's obvious burning rage – whatever it was that could have angered him that much. Asma'u was four years older than Abdul and his immediate senior. Asma'u took few slow steps towards her father, and soon she was before him, with her head bowed and her eyes to the ground. She had barely stood three seconds before him when his wide coarse palm sent her swirling three steps back. Mama gasped, but stood rooted to the ground. It was all she could do. She knew better than to go and try to stop him from disciplining his children, as he would put it.

That evening, on his way back from the site, he was riding his motorcycle rather slowly when he sighted Asma'u along a somewhat lonely path, off the main road, standing and smiling. She wore a long black colored hijab, which covered her feet. She was the feminine and prettier version of him, and had big pretty eyes. He had seen her standing and smiling with a man. A man, not a young boy, who had reached out and held her hand. She had let the man hold her hand, as she didn't try to pull away till she heard him, her father, shouting to her from the distance. That was what Mohammed had angrily explained to Mama. Mama looked on silently as he diverted his attention from Asma'u to her and poured the rest of his agitation on her. He blamed her for not raising her daughter right. He blamed her for always coming in between whenever he tried to discipline her, and finally threatened that if he caught her again, he'd marry her out and she would not finish her education. The realization of his own words hit him, and he dismissed both of them immediately and angrily. He remembered that it was the same thing he had done to Zarah, his friend's daughter. On her part, she had been young and innocent, and he, a grown predator. She was helpless and he had taken advantage of her. He couldn't stand the thought of the same fate happening to his own daughter.

Mohammed thought of the evening Zarah ran away. And the next morning when he found out what she did when Halima brought her back. That was the previous week. He re-

called that he had not punished her for running away, it had skipped him that night, and the three nights after. His anger rose then. He stood up, walking briskly, and cut off a small stick from the tree just outside his door. He walked so quick, one would assume he was running with his long arms swinging, one after the other, in front of him. Immediately he opened her door, she saw the look on his face and knew she was in trouble. She thought it was because she had not come out to greet him when he returned. She was in the bathroom when he came home, and still trying to dress up when he barged in. On instinct, she fell to her knees and began to explain herself.

“ina bayi ne da ka shigo”, and before she could explain any further, his small stick landed on her back. On her head. On her arms. He flogged her carelessly and blindly till the stick finally gave way and broke into bits. She cried out as every stroke landed on her skin, but he didn’t listen nor pay attention. Just as briskly as he came in, he left without an explanation as to why he had flogged her. Mama and Sadiya came into the room shortly after Mohammed stormed out. The yellow electric bulb illuminated their figures. Sadiya looked a bit more frail and tired. In the past few days she was slower than usual. Mama looked solemn and like she were about to cry. Without uttering a single word, she left the room.

Sadiya walked slowly and carefully to where Zarah sat on the bed. She sat beside her and reached out to hold her hands, and then squeezed gently. Just then, the tears Zarah had been holding back came rolling in slow streaks. Her tears seemed to be her only companion lately. And then there was Sadiya, who began to build a bond with her, checking on her every now and again, making small conversations at random. Within a few days, they had almost talked about every and anything. And in their conversations, they shared some short-lived laughs. It may have been too short a time to bond well, but Zarah already called her Adda-big sister, and genuinely meant it. Home was truly where the heart was, for Zarah loved her already. Sadiya realized she was more drawn to Zarah than any feeling of envy could possibly overcome.

Sadiya sat, unsure of what to say, yet determined to brighten Zarah’s mood. Thirty minutes had gone by, yet neither said a word. The room was quiet, save for Zarah’s insistent sobbing. With time, the sobbing died down till she finally sobbed. Sadiya knew she didn’t have to say a word. Her silent presence was comfort enough.

“Ina da ciki...” Sadiya said, finally breaking the silence, with a glow and a wide smile. She couldn’t contain her excitement as she announced her pregnancy to Zarah. She had been married to Mohammed for three years, but had no child yet. She also added that she only found out that day that she was two weeks pregnant, and Zarah was the first person she was telling about it.

“Na mace ne za ki haifa? Zarah asked. She had always wanted a younger sibling, especially

a female one, and thus her question. Sadiya smiled, a warm heartfelt smile. In an instant, Zarah forgot all her sadness and excitedly hugged Sadiya. And soon enough, they were both giggling like school girls talking about boys.

A bright Wednesday morning came. The sun was already fierce at 7:45am that morning, after a long night of gloomy clouds, rainfall and angry thunder claps. Abdul woke up with a frown. Despite the fierce heat from the sun, he had wanted to sleep some more but Mama wouldn't let him as he had to get ready for school. His uniform, a clean white shirt on maroon shorts were well ironed. Mama always made sure his uniforms were always set before morning. The only thing, however, which she never had any control over were his sandals. Every evening when he returned from school, he flung his shoes in different directions, and had to go through the process of finding them every morning.

It had been three months since Zarah became a Mohammed Gimba, but every day, she still thought of and missed the family she left behind. Her tears were less frequent now, and she smiled a bit more often, but she missed them everyday. Mohammed still beat her sometimes, he still demanded sex at odd times, yet she had begun getting used to everything. That was now her life. The life fate had chosen for her.

Her maroon pinafore and white shirt were just her size, a little below her knee, but just her size. She looked smart in her uniform always, and wore a large grin on her face most days. Her hair was neatly plaited into cornrows. Her white colored socks seemed to shine, as they complemented her brown sandals. She carried a little school bag too, where she conveniently packed her school books, crayons and all. Kamal was set for school too, equally looking smart in his own white, maroon and brown. She heard her name from a distant distance, and only then did she remind herself to blink.

"Zarah" Sadiya was practically screaming now. She had been calling out to her but she didn't respond. All she did was stand there, staring and crying.

"Me ya faru?" The concern in Sadiya's voice could not be missed. She was almost frantic as she asked. Since she fell pregnant, she had a habit of getting worked up and angry over almost nothing. The whole family had been excited about the news, Mohammed inclusive.

"Bakomai" Zarah sniffed, and shook her head sideways, saying nothing was wrong. She wiped her face with the back of her hand, and sniffed again. Seeing Abdul in his uniform that morning brought back memories. She remembered the particular morning when Imran told her she looked so much like her mother. He always told her that but that morning he kissed her forehead while talking about her mother, and that was the first time she had seen her father's tears. She felt some greater attachment to her mother then- the woman she never met. The woman she never knew, yet knew somehow, and the woman whom her father loved dearly, even in her death. She had gotten so caught up in memory lane that she didn't realise

she was actually lost outwardly. She didn't even realise she had been crying as she stood. She wanted more than ever, to be a student again and to go to school. It had been a while since she felt that much sadness and shed some tears.

Zarah waited, impatiently and mostly quietly for Mohammed to return that evening. She had made up her mind to make a request. She was anxious and excited and scared. Despite her anxiety, she was positive that he would grant her request. She didn't know why, but she was positive he would. And slowly, all the anxiety gave way for excitement.

Mohammed came back earlier than usual. It was as though he knew Zarah was anxious for his arrival that day. She had intended requesting him to send her back to school, and she was optimistic he would oblige. He returned two hours before closing time and sent for Zarah when he did. She couldn't read his expression and didn't know what to expect. He remained silent for a little while before uttering a word, and until he spoke, she said nothing.

"Would you want to be with your family for the weekend?" He spoke calmly and gently, without even looking at her. She was taken aback by his sudden question. For the first few seconds, she remained quiet, unsure of how to answer.<sup>2</sup>

"Your father requested that you visit for a few days. If you want to go, do so."

"Nagode" that was all she said and then turned to leave. Mohammed's sharp voice stopped her in her tracks. He asked what she meant by thank you- if it meant she was going to see them, or if she meant she wasn't. His voiced was raised as he spoke, and then lit a cigarette. He suddenly seemed angry and Zarah was stripped of all confidence.

Zarah was grateful to be home. The home she first loved, and the home she grew. She stood for a while, not knowing whether to run into her father's arms for an embrace. The little smile on his face showed he was equally unsure. She, however, came closer and prostrated before him. Her eyes were sad. Imran placed a hand on her head and then smiled. She and Kamal spent most of the evening together- talking and exchanging stories, filling each other on the things that had been happening, but Zarah left out details of being constantly beaten by Mohammed. Yet Kamal knew that she was unhappy both generally and in her marriage. Kamal and Zarah were still out, exchanging stories when Imran joined them. He had missed his little girl, yet had no way to put it in words.

After the two days Zarah spent at her father's compound, she returned to her husband's. Aunty Halima had been away on a visit to her mother, thus Zarah had a peaceful weekend at Imran's. He had requested she come visiting under the guise that they needed a feminine touch in the house. But the truth, which he refused to admit to himself most times, was that he missed her presence around.

Mohammed had been sitting in a chair all day- a brown wooden chair with two arm rests.

He hadn't left the house in two days. All he did was eat, and sleep, and sit in the chair. And pour out aggression on everyone. Zarah wondered why he hadn't been to work in those two days, but she kept her thoughts to herself. The sky was a crisp blue that evening, with linings of pale gold. It seemed royal and looked beautiful. The sight of the sun disappearing behind the clouds was a beauty indeed. Light drizzles fell earlier, while the sun was still shining, which made the weather a bit cold. He looked leaner than usual shirtless. All he wore was the cream trouser of his caftan. He double tied the rope on his equally lean stomach. Zarah had confided in Sadiya, and after getting a positive push, she walked without courage to Mohammed, yet confident his response would be positive as well.

She knelt beside him as she got to where he sat. Both her hands in front of her. She looked younger and more vulnerable in that posture. He glanced at her and went back to furiously chewing on his stick, and spitting it out.

"Maigida..." She began slowly, as if unsure of what next to say. Despite she acknowledging him as her husband, and the long pause that followed, Mohammed didn't as much as lift a brow in her direction. It seemed Zarah suddenly forgot herself because her pause became too long. She played nervously with her fingers in front of her. She was in the process of passing her tongue between her lips slightly, and pressing her lips together when he yelled out to her. The sudden sound of his voice, as well as the tone he used made her jump. She lost her balance, and had to place her palms on the somehow wet ground to keep from falling. Finally, he turned to look at her, and he looked agitated when he did.

His agitation increased when she finally said what had brought her.

"You want to go back to school? Eh ki koma mana." His annoyance was more evident now, especially as he switched from English to Hausa in one sentence and then ended with a hiss. If there was one thing both he and her father had in common, it was that trait of expression when annoyed or angry. Zarah remained there, unsure of what his response meant. He gave a sarcastic answer that she should return for all he cared, but she didn't know what to make of it. And he sat there unsmiling, and then lit a cigarette. He turned to look at her over his shoulder- half his face turned towards her, half his face not. He took a long drag from his cigarette and puffed out slow, choking clouds of smoke, which indeed choked her and made her cough.

"Zarahu", he began, obviously not interested in the conversation. He only continued after she responded "na'am" to his call. He called her the endearing name again. It must be a good sign, she thought within herself and a little smile split her lips.

"If you want to go back to school, to finish secondary school as you said, then do so. But I am not paying for it." His thick accent interjecting at every point of his utterance. Her mood dampened quickly and she looked up at him- the shock and disappointment clearly visible on her face.

"Dan Allah. Please. I want to go to school" she had begun to sob now, yet he didn't as much



as have a second look at her. He only stood staring, and smoking.

“Ke, ki yi mun shuru.” He barked now, and she knew better to obey whenever he barked. She kept quiet as he said, sniffing a lot, panting a little and wiping her tears.

“If you really want to go back to school, like I said, do so. Do something to help yourself to send yourself back to school if you want. I will however give you one thousand naira. Start hawking. You can pay for your school fees from there.”

Zarah couldn't believe she had heard him right. There would be no more school for her, and soon enough, she would become just like the little girl she had seen some months back, who hawked heavy yams. The realization hit her and she began to cry again. She was about to plead again when she saw his outstretched arm, handing her an old thousand naira note.

“Ga shi mana” he said as he flung it at her. “But if you don't want it, give me back.” He said and frowned. Zarah picked it quickly, muttered a low “thank you” in Hausa, and then left. Her face as dark as the clouds which were beginning to form.

Sadiya had been waiting for Zarah to return with feedback. He had never trained any of his wives in school, but then, he didn't marry any of them that young. But they all were optimistic that he would agree. Immediately Zarah got into Sadiya's room, she ran into her arms and cried. Sadiya, without having to ask her understood that he had refused. She tried to calm her down, but the more she tried, the more Zarah cried.

Mama came in then. She had overheard Zarah's conversation with Mohammed, and had seen the room she entered. She too tried to calm her down, and later explained that Mohammed had lost his job at the site two days back, and things were going to get a little tough. Zarah had to brace herself. She knew, she wouldn't be going back to school anytime soon, and just like other fates she couldn't control, she was bound to start hawking.

To be Continued...

#### **AUTHOR'S BIO:**

*In the beautiful city of Zaria, Kaduna State, Amami Yusuf, a writer, student, hairdresser and makeup artist, writes prose-fiction and poetry when she's not busy with school work or attending to clients' hair and faces.*

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# FISH

With Ugbede Ataboh, Nigeria



As a child, I wondered how Jonah coped for days in the belly of the big fish; I even laughed at the idea of being swallowed by a fish in the first place until the very day I came face to face with a pure white fish. Its color and mysterious gaze drew me closer and closer until it opened its mouth and bared a set of deadly teeth; by then it was too late for me to retreat. Within a split second I found myself trapped in the bowels of a very big fish. Alas! I am here in a different age, time and setting recanting a tale similar to that of Jonah...

In the monsoon season of the year 2015, a season when the streets give off a glassy mirage after a day of continuous rainfall and cold blooded reptiles are pushed upstream by heavy floods to plague humanity, I moved to a town on the outskirts of Lagos called Bogije after several failed attempts to secure accommodation in the "big city". I quit my job eventually because I could no longer cope with the daily journey I had to embark on just to get to work. Life suddenly seemed uncertain and my destination unknown. To make matters worse, my good friend and lover of 8 months broke up with me online as I headed back to my brother's house after my last day at work. At that point, I was in a commercial bus filled with strangers and no shoulder to cry on. The least he could do was explain things to me face to face or call me. Life suddenly appeared dark on the horizon and my lifelong fear of loneliness began seeping out of the core of my soul to the surface layer of my skin. The timing was right, an unseen sinister force decided to toss me into a calm but deadly sea. Just then, my cell phone rang and it was none other than a young prophet presiding over a church I had visited a few weeks back with my brother and his wife.

"hello? Good evening sir"

"Good evening beloved, I'd like to see you Immediately. Can you meet me at Jet hotel, Epe?"

The sign post is just along the road.”

“Sir I don’t understand, why can’t I meet you at church?”

“my dear, you don’t question a prophet. Start coming, I’m waiting.”

And with his last comment, he cut the call.

It is funny the unusual places we visit when the terrain of life begins to heave beneath us. It’s so funny how we anxiously search for answers to the mysteries plaguing our lives from men with blood running through their veins and with problems even more intense than ours. It’s funny how we fail to notice that they are equally drowning and searching for answers because we are blinded by our own cares and burdens. It’s funny how we let the prophecies and spiritual stunts pulled by these “messengers of God” wipe our memories clean of the obvious fact that seers are not God but mediums.

As I approached home, I anticipated the warmth my brother’s family would offer to ward off the cold seeping into my skin from the damp atmosphere and the familiar chill seeping out of my soul due to the rejection I received from my lover.

I could not help but wonder about the audacity of this “man of God”. Asking me to meet him at a hotel...just then, a text message came in from my brother’s wife-

‘hello dear, we have all gone to Ketu to chill at my brother’s place for a few days. I left the key under the doormat.’

Bogije turned pitch black at night when all the generators went off. That very day was not a good day to spend alone...and with that thought, I turned 360 degrees and headed back to the bus stop. Toward Jet hotel.

\*\*\*

2 years later

As I stood staring at the moon in the middle of the night, outside the bungalow I now shared with the young prophet at unity estate, 3 bus stops away from Bogije town, I wondered how I got to this point. I had just walked into the spare room in the house only to find this “man of God”, my fiancé, having sex with a seventeen-year-old girl he was supposed to be conducting “midnight prayers” with a few seconds ago. What was even worse was the fact that I had no family member to run to. I had fallen out with my brother and his wife a year before because of this same prophet. I could not even retreat into myself to find solace because “I” no longer existed. He had succeeded of stripping me of my identity and transformed me into his idea of a “woman of God” ...yes, I was now the “Mama” of his small, backward and blind church. I was trapped in the belly of a big fish in a small pond.

I stared at the moon as I pondered on my life and the pathetic creature I had become. I stared and I wept. I could not face God, not at that moment, my sins were before me and they were choking me. I could not breathe. I stared at the moon unaware of the passage of time. I stared at the moon until it transformed into the soft glow of the rising sun. With the rising sun came hope and a call to repentance. I sent out a silent cry for help to God to fix my life. Only one clear answer came- LEAVE AND DON’T LOOK BACK. I have never felt the peace I felt in that split second. Just then, the prophet and the teenage girl stepped out dressed and ready for church. I looked at the girl with pain and regret for not being able to rescue her, but sur-

prisingly, she had a triumphant look on her face. It was then I noticed how she clung to him protectively. This obviously had been going on for a while which of course confirmed other accusations of sexual immorality levelled against him. Accusations I refused to believe.

“Ugbede, enter the house and lock the door, we are going to church to continue her prayer session. The work of God is more important...we will settle everything when I get back” And with that, He walked out on me with a self-righteous air around him and his sweet little teenager on his arm.

“Daddy, let me carry your bag” I heard her say. Another messed-up and twisted kid. De-filed not by the mentally disturbed man she clung to, but by her “need for love and affection”. I had walked the path she now walked...I understood.

Without further ado, I raced into the house and headed toward my phone. My hands shook as I dialed my Dad’s number, He picked up at the first ring.

“Hello? Ugbede?”

“Daddy, good morning...I am sorry for turning my back on you and everyone else... I want to come back home”

“Are you assuring me that you will never return to that man and his church?”

“Yes daddy, I promise”

“very Good, Pack whatever you can and head out of Lagos, your brother now resides in Owerri. I will instruct him to start heading home now so we can receive you properly when you come. Hope you have money? Take a flight to Abuja and then board a bus to Kogi state.”

“Daddy I don’t have money to pay for a flight ticket, don’t worry... I will take a bus.”

“No! I will send money to your account now, use it to pay for your flight ticket”

“No need daddy, my account has been inactive for two years, reactivating it will waste time. I can’t wait any longer. The bus station is not far from here. If I leave now, I can catch the 8 o’ clock bus”

“How can you, a graduate with a second-class upper degree let an illiterate bring you this low? No problem, leave that place now and call me as soon as you are out of Lagos. Have a safe trip.”

“Daddy...”

“yes?”

“I am sorry...thank you”

“You are my first daughter Ugbede. See you when you get here, bye.”

As I packed what was left of my possessions, I dashed out of the house without even looking around or looking back. The house I shared with the prophet for two years no longer held any sentimental value to me. I was going home. Home held no promise of warmth, but it was home and I was finally liberated from the belly of the fish. The fish no longer looked white to me; it probably never did. I was liberated with a key I wielded throughout the period I was entrapped.

# THE OBSERVER

With Leo Muzivoreva, Zimbabwe



## OF FISH AND THE MOTHER CONTINENT

Through the Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2015), the world has committed to end hunger in all its forms by 2030 and to achieve food security. Yet, food insecurity remains one of the most visible dimensions of poverty, particularly in Africa. One in every four people is estimated to be undernourished in Sub-Saharan Africa (FAO, 2015, FAO, 2017a). The prevalence of vitamin A deficiency in young children and iron deficiency in women in Sub-Saharan Africa are the highest across the globe (Kassebaum et al., 2014, Stevens et al., 2015).

Being an important part of the African agro-food system, FISH has significant potential to contribute to the goal of reducing food and nutrition insecurity in Africa. Fish provides 19% of animal protein intake to Africans and plays a unique role in providing a range of micronutrients and essential fatty acids, especially long-chain polyunsaturated fatty acids, which cannot be easily substituted by other food commodities (Béné et al., 2015)

In Africa, small indigenous fish, such as Dagaa from Lake Victoria and Kapenta in southern Africa particularly in Zimbabwe and Zambia, are an important source of micronutrients in traditional diets (Grainger, 2016). Furthermore, fish is also an efficient converter of feed into high quality food (Béné et al., 2015). In addition to food and nutrition security, fish is also an important contributor to other development goals in Africa. The fish sector contributes by

promoting socioeconomic growth, alleviating poverty, and improving the livelihoods of marginalized communities. The sector supports the livelihoods of 12.3 million people of which more than one-fourth are female and who are often considered to be among the poorest and most marginalized group on the continent. (Garibaldi 2014)

In 2014, the Joint Conference of African Ministers of Agriculture, Rural Development, Fisheries and Aquaculture highlighted the role of fisheries and aquaculture through its 6% share of annual agricultural growth and 1.3% share of total GDP. They called for development of fisheries and aquaculture as an integral component of sustaining the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Program results framework (African Union, 2014). In support of this policy implementation, the African Union-New Partnership for Africa's Development (AU-NEPAD) and African Union-Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR) have identified aquaculture development and intra-African trade as key priorities for investment.

Despite the potential of its fisheries and aquaculture, Africa lags behind other regions in developing its share in global fish production, consumption, and trade (FAO, 2017b, FAO, 2018). Fisheries and aquaculture in Africa face enormous challenges, which are limiting the capabilities of local governments to ensure the sector's sustainability and profitability. Key constraints of stronger aquaculture growth in Africa include: a lack of improved fish breeds, feeds and technical training; weak research capacity; inadequate human and financial resources; poor market infrastructure and access; and weak governance and regulation. Fish post-harvest losses and waste in Africa pose another serious challenge to African governments' efforts to reduce food insecurity. Slightly over a quarter of the fish harvest is lost post-harvest in Sub-Saharan Africa (Affognon et al., 2015), with underdeveloped cold chains being recognized as a key area of intervention to increase resource use efficiency and profits for value chain actors.

Compared with aquaculture producing countries in Asia, the African aquaculture sector, particularly commercial aquaculture, is still in its infancy though Egypt and Nigeria are notable exceptions (FAO, 2018, Hishamunda, 2007). Depleted fish stocks, due in part to overfishing and overcapacity, are creating further stress on fishery resources, particularly in western Africa (NEPAD, 2016a). The OECD-FAO Agricultural Outlook recently projected that per capita fish consumption will grow on all continents except Africa. From both food security and nutrition perspectives, declining African per capita fish consumption will affect millions of malnourished people as fish provides valuable micronutrients and protein.

Given the combination of promising prospects and compelling challenges faced by Africa's fish sector, there is a strong need for decision-makers to understand future trends of fish supply and demand, taking into account complex interactions across fish commodities, as well as among fish producing and consuming countries, in order to address food insecurity in Africa. To date, several comprehensive foresight modeling reports, including Fish to 2020 (Delgado et al., 2003), Fish to 2030 (World Bank, 2013), Fish to 2050 in the ASEAN region

(Chan et al., 2017), the OECD-FAO Agriculture Outlook (OECD/FAO, 2017), and the CGIAR Research Portfolio report (Rosegrant et al., 2017) have been released to provide a global and regional overview of future fish supply and demand.

Nonetheless, the High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE) on food security and nutrition report that fisheries and aquaculture are often arbitrarily separated from other parts of the food and agricultural systems in food security studies, debates, and policy-making (HLPE, 2014). Particularly in Africa, the importance of fish in securing food and nutrition for the undernourished population has been frequently underestimated and overlooked in the international debate.

Demand for fish has been increasing rapidly. This is driven chiefly by population and income growth, but has also been spurred on by an increasing appreciation for the health benefits of fish consumption (Thurstan and Roberts, 2014) as well as changes in lifestyles and preferences associated with rapid urbanization and globalization. However, seafood demand research, which often focuses on developed countries and commercially important fish species, has offered limited information on consumer preferences for fish in most African countries (Dey et al., 2011). Many past studies (Cai and Leung, 2017, Lem et al., 2014, World Bank, 2013, Ye, 1999) on the changes in consumer preferences and the future demand offer only limited details and parameterization, particularly for Africa.

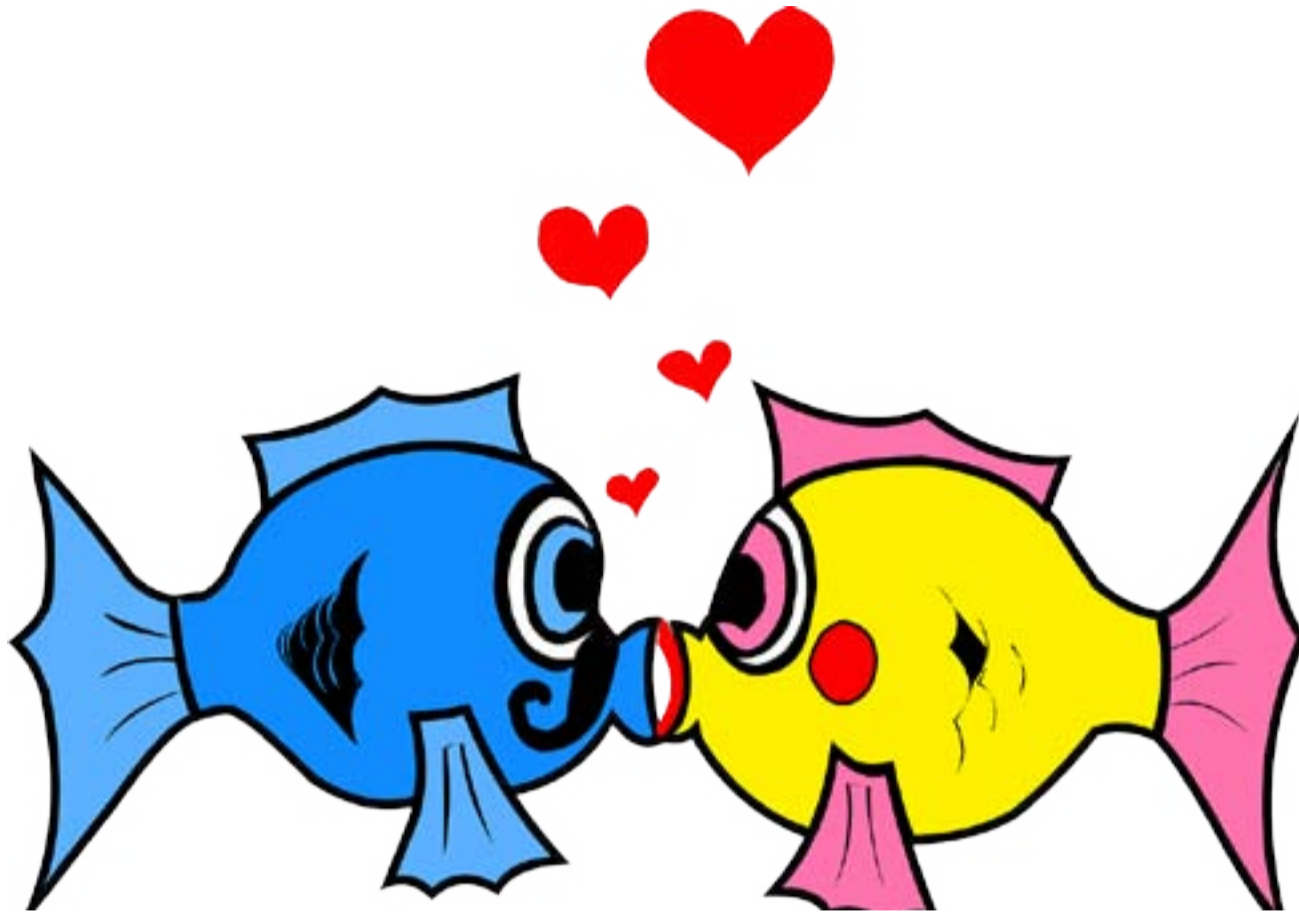
Few studies have integrated information on the combination of urbanization and increase in income to estimate accurate future demand for fish. Some studies assume constant consumption rates in the future or fixed nutritional targets (Rice and Garcia, 2011). Others worked directly with projected fish consumption (Merino et al., 2010, OECD/FAO, 2017) by dividing the projected supply by the projected population. Meanwhile, the combination of fast population and income growth, as well as urbanization trends in Africa could transform some African countries (e.g. Nigeria, Egypt) into the world's largest consumers of fish and seafood by 2050.

Currently, however, Africans are in the paradoxical position of being highly dependent on fish for animal protein but ranking low in per capita fish consumption. Globally, Africans are second only to Asians in terms of relying on fish as a major share of the total animal protein intake in their diet. According to FAO, Fish represent over 20% of animal protein intake in at least twenty African countries. However, animal protein intake is low in this continent and fish consumption patterns are not homogeneous across the region. This heterogeneity reflects the disparities in affordability, accessibility, availability, cultural food preferences, and social behavior in different countries. Despite the high dependence on fish as a source of animal protein compared to other developed and developing regions, Africa, particularly Sub-Saharan Africa, has the lowest levels of per capita fish consumption. As such, what one can easily conclude is that, Africans consume only approximately half of the global and Asian per capita averages yet it is the neediest as far as nutrition and food security issues are concerned.

# TALKING LOVE

With HRL Prince Saka Dbosz Junior

## EPISODE 2: THE BEAUTIFUL WORDS OF LOVE



Believe me when I tell you that love is beauty and words of love come out flowing real slow out in beauty and grace. You hear them in love songs, poetry, movies, novels and all over. Whoever heard words of love dropped in a hurry? We even find an appropriate time to say the three magical words; I love You.

Now check out these words: "Come on dear, let's be more to each other."

You can feel the emotions of those few words so beautifully carrying the message of love while asking for commitment.

Come with me again; just look at these few lines: Standing in the sunlight of the early morning; I felt the warm wind coming from the salty – sea and thrilled by the songs of thousands of seagulls in their endless business on the expansive beach.

Just looking at these lines a love story comes into your mind. The reason is simple; only love stories come with such romantic setting.

Then you hear them say: There is no life for me without you and I got no desire in this world without your love in it.

You see; love is a creative venture and the words of love are said with creativity through poetry, music and romantic stories.

Love may not have all the sweet nothings without the beautiful words to carry the message into the deserving hearts. Now you know and next time you are talking love, make it soft with selected words to carry the fire and desire.

Until we meet in the next episode; keep on loving and be blessed.

Sakajunior2018@gmail.com



# **WSA REVIEWS**

## **A Review of the July Edition of WSA**



### **Reviewers:**

**Nehemiah Omukhonya - Kenya**

**Lateefah Kareem - Nigeria**

**Tanyaradzwa Nonhlanhla Lisa Mtema - Zimbabwe**

**Ngalim Jusline Veeyeenyuy - Cameroon**

**Namse Udosen - Nigeria**

**Adejuwon Adeola Gbalajobi - Nigeria**

**Benny Wanjohi - Kenya**

**Kwekwu Sarkwa - Ghana**

**Aniyom Obo Dien - Nigeria**

**Nnane Ntube - Cameroon**

# WSA JULY EDITION REVIEW

## POETRY

### The Dead's Plea (Adedoyin Shobo)

This is a two-stanza poem that speaks about the effects of war. The persona is wondering what amount of loss (how many lives need to be lost) so that something is done to avoid the reoccurrence of war. The writer uses imagery and hyperbole to express how bad he feels about the effects of war. He laments on the fact that the world seems to have turned a blind eye on these effects... Cry if you please// The world is too numb// To be alive.

### The Wandering Dead (Praise Osawaru)

This is a free verse of four stanzas. The persona is speaking of the detachment people have with themselves, and the society. The first stanza speaks of an individual not being sure of what they are doing, and/or what they want. They are not sure even if they are themselves. The second stanza speaks of someone feeling inferior in a group - feeling unnoticed.

The writer's use of paradox makes it a good read - Alive yet soulless// Broken; lifeless

### Without You (Fantone Mdala)

This is a free verse of 24 lines. The persona, having lost a loved one, is mourning the loss and finds it hard to live without the loved one. The persona's sad tone creates a sorrowful mood throughout the poem. The use of imagery makes the reader associate with the suffering of the persona and feel pity for him/her. It is a great read.

## Reviews by Nehemiah Omukhonya

### Review of the Poem "Ghosts" By Esther Andaye.

#### Subtitle: An Invitation to Mediation

The poem titled "Ghost" is a resonant poem that evokes a deep allegorical image. It looks



as if the poem is relatable to the Elizabethan era where ghosts were the talk of many and they were fear evoking spirit for the majority irrespective of race, gender or sex. Esther Andaye is a female poet from the great ruins of Kenya and might be likened to a feminist as shown by the description she gave to the female ghost in the poem, wielding power and feeling very empowered after the death experience. Could it be that the ghost came from a society where women were looked down upon?

To justify the poem, Esther makes use of the deconstructive language across the whole poem. The poem is made up of 4 stanzas' and 27 lines. It looks as if the poet is a good reader of ghost and horror stories as she managed to portray the deep imagery of the ghost's appearance and lifestyles. The beginning of the poem is a call for attention from the narrator, in this case, the silent-explorer as she says "All eyes on me." Symbolically mystifying herself as a queen shows the greatness and power she has over the reader. Defining fear as 'registered' depicts that the fear of ghosts has existed for centuries and people always fear them even when they do not see them with their naked eyes. A rhetoric question like "Am I toxic" or "Is it that I am dangerous" elucidated the sarcasm that ghosts can raise when they already know the physical fear them.

The second stanza shows that the female ghost never knew how special she was until death. She must have been from a patrilineal society where women do not have power. She is proud of the power that was unexplored all along. However, the ghost is also worried about why she can't touch and describes herself as "paralyzed" and "a curse". The persona makes the third stanza exploratory on how ghosts even feel sad when they see their loved ones crying and engraved tombstones with their names. Even ghosts take time to believe that they are just spirits and have no connection with the physical world as shown by the rhetoric question, "Is it true that my empty vessel is buried."

The persona clearly shows the uneasiness that comes with being a ghost. Some of these include the loss of a self, identity crisis and having multiple appearances as wind, fire, smoke and spirits. The narrator does not even know whether she is now a ghost. This is greater work Esther and clearly explained.

Review of the Poem, Revisitation: By Temidayo Opeyemi Jacob, Nigeria  
Subtitle: The Second visit

Temidayo Opeyemi Jacob is a Nigerian poet who has managed to bring out the truth about what happens to the dead. The title of his poem "Revisitation" is elusive of the second coming that happens when one is lost in what the poet described as the "woods" beyond the reach of the eye. Likening the place of the dead as woodland is a vivid picture of how the place is deserted and where lost souls wander without a destination. The poem is written in 24 lines making up the 5 stanzas. The core tone of the persona is

melancholic and displays the dystopian lifestyle as the core theme of the poem.

In the poem, deep imagery is conveyed by the persona who then uses the deceptive terms like “crawled” and objectifies the world as a market place for bones and skins. The persona’s father must have died a painful death and is appearing as an angry ghost which Temidayo describes as wearing rain, thunder and lightning. From the poet’s background as African, one might believe that the narrator is involved in the killing of his father as the African culture believes that ghosts only appear to their killers. On one note, the persona is even confused himself as he doesn’t know about his death but also believes it to be painful. His father visiting him every night and crying which the poet called “a deep dirge” is imaginative of the intensity of the pain. His anger is expressed by the littering, scattering and painting different shades of fright.

The persona is in a very deep depression and wishes he could talk to ghosts and advise him his soul to retire and let the body rests. The depression and insomnia that the narrator is suffering from is a call for empathy from the reader.

Although he is trying to forget about the nightmare promises which he frames on windy days so they just blow away, his father’s ghost still does not want to retaliate. The “planted rose on the window” is symbolical and ironic of the love that the father has and the pain that he is enduring which is signified by the thorns on the roses.

Excellent work by the poet for bringing out one common theme of ghosts being outrageous and melancholic after experiencing death.

Review of the Poem Screaming Silence by OumoBathsheba Kemunto, Kenya

The poem screaming silence is paradoxical as the poet’s figurative language is bringing out several types of literary devices. The title “Screaming silence” conveys the use of oxymoron by the persona as the two chosen words carry a contrasting meaning. The setting of the poem is happening inside the grave. Oumo Bathsheba tries to bring out a peculiar view of death and vividly portrays that not everyone accepts death when it comes.

The beginning of the poem is ironical as the poet says, “woke up to a familiar dread.” The situational irony coming out of the first sentence shows that the narrator has heard about what happens when one dies but what he/ she is expressing is very unusual as described as a “dread.”

The unknown particulars on his head could have been residents of the grave that is termites, ants, sand etc. Even the narrator does not know what this means as he is failing to analyse the “coding” which is the situation. Flooding thoughts show that the persona is very confused and inquisitive about the current situation as described in the poem as

“confusion that I can boast.”

To prove that the persona is dead there is the element of burnt memories.

There is denial, melancholy and restlessness in the poet’s voice as he uses words such as “salvage”, “thwarted”, “daunting” and “preyed.” The persona is scared of death as shown by the small goosebumps that have developed on the skin and the dreaded fear of being a ghost. Even though the narrator is already dead, there is a bit of some optimism from the tone when the poets describe the ghost wishing to be poked by those in the outside world.

This is a rhythmic poem with rhythmic phrases like,

“If only my inner spoke,

Or out of my trance, I poke,

Maybe to paralysis, I will not spook.

Great work by the poet for giving a unique view and experience of being a ghost and defining death, not as an easy pathway for everyone to accept.

Reviews by: Tanyaradzwa. N.L Mtema

Review of the verse WHO DID IT? by Benny Wanjohi, Kenya.

The verse WHO DID IT? is by a Sierra Leone poet by the name Yusuf GazBee Kamara (Paper poet). He touches on a ghostly theme with this quick narrative verse that reflects the life of a busy persona. In his recent past, he seems to find his unfinished or undone works already attended to. The verse is built on the persona self-questioning on who the unseen good Samaritan is.

The verse has the stylistic feature of a repetitive rhetorical question, Who came and did it? that helps the theme keep on ringing in the mind of the reader. It also uses rhyme, a feature that gives it rhythm.

The verse does not answer the question, Who did it? Maybe because the verse is a question by itself. However, the poet points to the possibility of a ghost worker who might be taking care of his tasks. It still leaves the reader asking themselves, Who did it?

Review of the poem ‘Beautiful’ by Benny Wanjohi, Kenya.

The poem BEAUTIFUL is a beautiful poem written by a Zambian, Rehema Kasanga. The persona explores the theme of death. She seems to have reconciled with death, a thing that is quite uncommon. She sees the beauty of being on the other side of life. The poem has five stanzas with 3,4,4,4,2 lines, respectively. The poem is a dedication to an anony-

mous person that we only encounter as the poem tends to an end, in the last stanza.

Review of the poem 'Breakthrough the night the stage' by Benny Wanjohi, Kenya.

This is a poem whose message is well hidden and needs several times of reading to break through its meaning. The persona reflects on moments of conversations with her sister. He stands on one valley of understanding while she stands on the other. There seems to be a no central point for their diverse perspectives--the breakthrough point. But in her ghostly demeanour, the stage is full of her as she chants the words of the persona. Finally, she has broken through the night, to the side of the persona, with his very words, on that very stage.

A Review of Ghosts, In Quest for Answers and My Last Letter (Gone)

If like the protege of the Prophet, Elisha, our eyes could be opened to see beyond the 'veil', we'd see that there are more otherworldly, terrestrial, activities going around us. Spirits are real. Ghosts, too. They lurk around. Hovering in the space of our room while we mourn for them or even have fun. We are blind to them but they see us. Heck! As I am typing this a spirit is probably hovering over my head mad at me because I'm a shitty writer. Lol.

The poems: Ghost, In Quest for Answers and My Last Letter (Gone) delved into the dark. They are filled with dread and fear.

In Neo Masetlane's (Botswana) Ghost, the persona is terror stricken, s/he is haunted by a tall dark disfigured thing feeding off his terror. The sceptic might argue that s/he is hallucinating, but tales of daemons lurking in the dark can't just be an old woman's tale. The poem, like the others, is free verse.

In Quests for Answers, Wanangwa Mwale (Zambia) tells the story of a restless ghost trapped on earth because of its quest for answers, the whys behind her death. The poet draw a contrast between the dead and the living. While the living dread darkness, the dead finds hope in it:

"Now, in darkness, she has found hope  
Because the living are afraid of the darkness..."

The poem makes my thoughts trail towards the Yoruba concept "\_ Riro Oku\_". A practice where the spirit of the dead is conjured and charged to find those behind its death and mete vengeance on them.

The ghost in this poem remains restless, it still awaits someone who'd give answers to her questions before she can finally rest in peace.

In Charlotte Akello's (Uganda) My Last Letter (Gone), the gruesome murder of a closed one becomes a chimaera in the mind of the persona. S/he saw everything as they happened, the pain, the vain pleas especially, the soul has it takes its leave from the body

and the spirit, looming. It is a sombre piece with vivid imagery but we couldn't feel the emotion of the persona, but one can only guess, for such memories can only bring pains.  
Reviews by Adejuwon Adeola Gbalajobi- Nigeria

The Observer by Leo Muzivoreva, Zimbabwe.

Title: Ghosting: Cultural Phenomenon

Reviewer – Lateefah Kareem

Relationships, breakups and makeups I have heard of all these but then for the first time I heard about the term for those that disappear suddenly from their relationship, Leo referred to it as “ghosting or ghosted heartbroken singles”.

Ghosting was a really wonderful read and even though I do not like reading about relationships, this one was really detailed, outlined and very apt put.

Short Stories

Reviewed by Namse Peter Udosen - Nigeria

Ghost of Watipa by Hannah Tarindwa

An intriguing, well-told story about a man lost after the loss of his wife.

The writer uses an awesome plot structure which weaves the story between worlds. It takes the reader from the real world to the metaphysical realm and back again.

The story requires gentle, attentive reading and probably re-reading to grasp fully the juice.

The characters are well rounded.

Ghost Snack by Marycynthia Chinwe Okafor

The Writer spins a tale of how a young girl goes from disbelief in ghosts to a personal encounter with one.

It is a well-paced story and very direct. The plot is simple and the characters are vivid, especially the protagonist.

A good story even though the end was predictable.

A Review of Merchandizing Your Talent

Merchandizing Your Talent is an educative essay written by a Nigerian essayist, Akaa Elijah Aondotakume published in the July edition of the Writers' Space Africa magazine. This essay is addressed specifically to the youth, it focuses on how to discover one's talents, how to utilize it, how to use the benefits, examples of talents where one can fall and above all how to make an outstanding personality from one's talents.

The essay opens by acknowledging that various people have various abilities in society. Elijah defines merchandising one's talents as the appropriate, judicious and extensive, utilization of our natural abilities in such a way that will make us have an influence and

at the same time make us a worthwhile living. He further advises that talents should be used to glorify God, and not to glorify the devil or gratify the flesh as the case of some youth in the society.

He goes ahead to highlight the various ways to discover one's natural skills. First, whatever one does with ease than other people, without prior training, is one's innate endowment and should be positively exploited. The essayist adds that any positive thing that one does with passion is a call for concern.

He also mentions that discovering your talent is not and should not just be for the sake of it. Once discovered, you need to go the extra mile to excel in this God's blessings entrusted onto you. One has to bear in mind that one is not the only one with a particular talent but so many are and as such a reward will not look for talented youth in the confines of his room.

It is also added that one should work towards improving the newfound abilities. First, attend seminars related to your talent and learn from others, never feel you have done your best rather strive to do more.

Some areas of talents listed in this essay are music, writing, football, acting, racing etc. The essayist mentions that some people use their natural skills wrongly to the point that they anger God. Do not be one of such.

He further advises that one should be happy and confident when performing. He warns that you should never feel shy, unhappy or discouraged if you don't perform up to your expectations and at the same time never feel proud or downgrade others because you perform well.

This essay dwells more on morality in showcasing talents. Elijah points out that some talents are wasted or misused, for instance if you are a musician and the meaning of your songs are not educative, then you have misused the talent, no matter how popular and rich you may be, same with other talents. He further warns that we should be careful in the way we use our talents and the benefits obtained, if you do not use your benefits in a profitable way to the society, then it's a talent wasted.

It is added that the social media should be used profitably to showcase talents especially writers who can write to educate and enlighten others through the media. He laments the misuse of social media.

He concludes that you should discover your talent, train yourself well in it, excel, be paid handsomely and above all create an impact in your generation to glorify God.

On a personal note, Elijah has passed across an educative message through this crafty essay, and in so doing he has merchandized his own talent as a wonderful essayist. It can be stated without doubt that he has used his own talent successfully exploring carefully the three major purposes he states in his essay about talents, which are; to make an impact in life, glorify God and get paid for it. Of course, reading this essay, one can state that he is a good writer and essayist in particular.



Merchandizing Your Talents, can be described without fear as an allegorical essay from an exemplary essayist. His targeted audience, the youth who are the backbone of the society Aldo lends him credibility. In relation to this edition's theme, I can say that any youth he fails to discover their talents and merchandise them approximately are simply ghosts of themselves.

Reviewed by Ngalim Jusline Veeyenyuy- Cameroon.

A Review of Haunted - Bildad Makori

Haunted tells the story of Archieng and Kamau. It begins with Archieng's father, Martins, being ill and dying shortly afterwards. Then begins Kamau's misery after he chose to save the life of his unborn child over that of his wife when a complication was encountered during the course of her putting to bed. Unknown to him, his promise to her father to protect her at all cost will haunt him, for the rest of his life. A beautifully written piece!

Hunting the Ghost I created - Mbah Kingsley Tekum

This entry portrays the story of a person who was always fast to delegate his duties to other people whom he deemed more capable to carry them out. So was his life until a time came when he had no one but himself to put up the sketch for the program. Thus, his journey of self-discovery began, making him come to the realization that the ghost he feared – an impossibility, was nothing but that – a ghost. The persona was unnamed, yet, the lessons passed are worth imbibing as the writer implores the reader not to allow fears cripple our abilities.

To Tell a Dream from Reality - Tochukwu Eze

This work of fiction starts on a high note, with a ghostly promise and a seeming mystery only to end flat, with the narrative being abruptly changed into a boyish confusion of differentiating between dreams and reality.

The writer could, however, make it a wonderful piece.

Last stop - Manu Herstein

Manu's piece is arguably the best flash fiction among the collection. The delivery was interesting and straight to the point, yet it didn't fail to create a kind of mystery, leaving you wanting to know more, yet knowing you've known all there is to know about the story. This truly is a masterpiece!!!

Kudos to all the writers who dared to write about ghosts! More ink to your ghostly attempts!!!

Reviews by Aniyom Obo Dien- Nigeria

Why Do People Believe in Ghosts? By Pascaline Onwuka - Nigeria

Did Kemi really see a ghost or it was just her thoughts because the story didn't go on to explain why she was scared and going to prove that it was a ghost that made her scared? The thought of the existence of ghosts has really been a headache as some communities or societies do have a perception about.

Some religions believe ghosts exist while others do not, some religions believe ghosts are evil while others believe ghosts are good spirits. In most African communities, people believe the existence of ghosts but it is very surprising how wide the belief for the existence of ghosts is increasingly growing in the western world although it has not been scientifically proven.

I think this is as a result of the images and messages some movies and stories carry especially in some movies like EVIL DEAD, DRAG ME TO HELL, I. T, GHOSTS HUNTERS, CHUCKY, GOOSEBUMPS, LORD OF THE RINGS, THE MUMMY, THE NUN and so on.

Finally, I like the idea of the advances in technology to prove the existence or the non-existence of ghosts but do not like the idea of ghosts making contact with the public themselves.

Relatable by Dennis Hannah Omokafe - Nigeria

Being scared of ghosts is really a common behaviour to see in a lot of Africans as the writer rightly said she feared those scary images she sees and imagines come from her people following her from her village. This continued to the extent of her going to the university and still having those imaginations and perceptions even though she was educated.

Having the fear for something is basically as a result of the information we feed the brain with creating a particular image in the mind whenever we hear its name. I hope she will be able to do away with the fear for ghosts because it will be very funny as she previously said in the near future as her husband comes home to see his wife and kids under the bed due to the fear for ghosts.

I think since the story was written in the English language, the word "Ojuju" should have been explained because I was following the story until I got to where the word was and since I didn't understand, I had to skip it and continue reading.

The statement in the essay "with not trace" should be "with no trace".

Episode 1: Talking Love - Musing on the L-Word

With HRL Prince Saka Dbosz Junior

Reviewer - Lateefah Kareem

Love! This word really has gotten a lot of people thinking. Saka talks about love from a different perspective and I was at a point where I had to show so much love and care suddenly when I read this. As a veterinary medical student a dog was attached to my

team for surgery practical and she was as aggressive and uncooperative as dogs get, she made it a miserable week but I had to keep her alive and trying to just be as caring and attentive to a dog is as loving a relative or a friend. Maybe I started doing it for my marks, maybe I just did not want to fail but when the dog died I saw her breathe her last and tears flowing down my cheeks, at that moment I figured it all out.

Love is just selfless care and expecting nothing in return but the wellbeing of the individual.

So I ask the question Saka asked at the end of this piece “what is love really about?”.

A Review of Nabilah Usman’s Interview.

Sandra Oma Etubiebi, the interviewer, introduces us to a beautiful person whose life is summed up in five words “Of Living and Loving Life”.

The introductory note possesses a hook that leaves no reader indifferent to the harmony and balance in Nabilah’s words, personality and keypads. Sandra Oma Etubiebi gives the impression of being face-to-face with Nabilah as she speaks. She posits, “Nabilah Usman has a voice as lovely as her loveable personality.” Of course, who wouldn’t want to hear her voice?

Taking the readers into a life of love, friendship, learning and teaching, the interview is divided into 8 parts. It takes a narrative form from the first person point of view.

The first part, “Introducing her loving life”, unveils Nabilah’s simplicity, easygoing and friendly nature. Nabilah’s love for God and her family is exemplary – two important commandments of God.

What a beautiful feeling it is?

Part two, “Introducing her love for writings”, explores the beauty in Nabilah and her writings. It is for this reason that she finds her way into writing through her friends’ keen eyes. Only a loving heart can be caught by poetry, itself being “a spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions” (cf. William Wordsworth). Little wonder Nabilah says, “I write to make myself and others feel things.”

In part three, “Of her love for teaching”, her beauty as a person, a writer and a teacher is glaring. To be a teacher, one must first be a learner. This is the beautiful message Nabilah is passing across to every teacher out there. This portrays her as an open-minded person, a good listener, a friend and a simple teacher who yearns to demystify teacher and learner’s relationship.

Part Four, “Of her love for many interests”. Just like any child, Nabilah has many interests; she is interested in literature, teaching, media, good governance, policy-making and drawing. She wishes to help people through these mediums.

Part five, “Of her love for music”. Experience shows that about 80% of music lovers are soft-hearted, Nabilah is not an exception. Music to her is a hobby. She loves “country music” and old-timers (songs from the 60s).

Part six, “Of her love for family and friends”. Family holds the central part of her life and, next to the family are her friends. Her dad, as she says, is her inspiration, the reason for her choices and love for books, music, excellence. Through her, we see the worth of dads and find reasons to celebrate them.

Part seven, “Of a lovely memory”. There is always a time in one’s life that is worth cherishing. Nabilah Usman takes us as far back as her secondary school days – the second year in senior secondary school when she had a beautiful experience with her literature teacher and classmates, an experience that contributed to her self-confidence, and leadership capacity. Through this experience, she understood the power of books in changing lives.

In the last part, “Of her love for WSA”, Nabilah describes WSA as a melting pot with exciting varieties, a place with a rich cultural diversity – a place of true beauty.

Nabilah’s words are simple, reader-friendly, loving and encouraging. They keep a reader glued to the pages and want to read more. The repetition of the root word “love” in all the parts, is an emphasis on an overflow of love in her person and personality.

Reviewed by Nnane Ntube, Cameroon.

## A REVIEW OF QUOTES.

Quote by Oluwagbenga Ayomide Ruth, Nigeria.

Ayomide’s quote projects man like a ghost to himself as long as he stays alive. The ghost here can be man’s spirit that is invisible in him, playing a vital role in giving keeping man’s body alive. She tells us that this ghost will be liberated when the body is no more. It is a two-sentence quote with 57 words.

Quote by J. T Nagundi

J. T Nagundi from Uganda presents a beautiful quote titled “What the Wind Knows”. It puts man’s deeds into questioning and warns him about the silence of the wind wherein his ghost dwells. Nagundi metaphorically presents the wind as a ghost. To him, both have the same qualities; invisible, have a dreadful silence, etc. As we know, the greatest fear of man is the fear of the unknown. The wind is the unknown, and that’s where the ghost dwells as its haunting features are what humans should be careful of as they go about committing sins and being greedy.

Reviews by Nnane Ntube, Cameroon

# CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS



**Writers Space Africa (WSA)** is calling for submissions for her September Edition. Published monthly by the African Writers Development Trust, WSA is an international literary magazine which features rich diversity of writings from African writers to a global audience..

We are seeking for submissions in the following categories:  
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