



WSA
Writers Space Africa
Empowering African Writers

Seasons

Keabetswe Thapelo Ene
Botswana

Beautiful Hearts

Njenga Wanjiru
Kenya

MEMORY

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A photograph of sunlight streaming through the branches of trees, creating a dramatic, golden glow. The sun is positioned in the upper center, with rays of light radiating outwards, filtering through the dark green leaves and branches. The overall atmosphere is warm and ethereal.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

THEME: REVOLUTION

Writers Space Africa, a monthly literary online magazine dedicated to giving literary enthusiasts a platform for their work, welcomes submissions for her March 2021 Edition in the following categories:

- Short Story
- Flash Fiction
- Poetry
- Essays
- Children's Literature

The Submission window is open from January 1st to January 14th.

Response times is typically within 4 to 5 weeks after submission window closes.

We look forward to receiving your best.

To submit, please visit www.writersspace.net/submissions

Editor's Note

There is always a sense of hope, an untold longing for a fresh start, with any new stage in life and with new seasons. It's January, 2021, and we are looking at Memory. We are calling to remembrance what the previous year has meant for us in our little corners of the universe. We recollect individually and collectively.

One of my editors, Temani, put it succinctly that 2020 was a roller-coaster of memories. We were forced to adjust, in small and big ways, to our economies being badly hit, and to lockdowns and the resulting increase in gender-based violence. We were also forced to forge new paths for the creative spirit to thrive in a global pandemic.

Late African American novelist and essayist, James Baldwin, put it this way: "After departure, only invisible things are left, perhaps the life of the world is held together by invisible chains of memory and loss and love. So many things, so many people, depart! And we can only repossess them in our minds".

As we are mindful of the roller-coaster, let's also celebrate the fresh start and hope that is 2021. Our theme for the year for WSA Magazine is 'Revolution' - in all its facets. We invite you to let your voice be heard on this platform; submit your work, read and share this magazine in your networks, and give us your honest feedback because that is the only way we can grow.

Most of all, enjoy this roller-coaster of a read!

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Table Of Contents

Editor's Note	4
Editorial Crew	5
Table of Contents	6
Short Story	7-8
Articles	9-17
Children's Literature	18-19
Flash Fiction	20-21
Wakini First Prize Winner	22-24
Poetry	25-28
Reviews	30-32

Forgetting Jacob

Omoghene Ewoma
Nigeria

Rebecca watched rain droplets patter on her window. The crash of lightning made her cat jump. The poor thing ran towards her and rested its furry body at her feet. Her thoughts went to Jacob, the love of her life. Today made it six years since he decided to leave Nigeria for the United States of America.

The rainy day reminded her of the day he left. Despite the god-awful traffic and the flood that reached her knees, Rebecca made it to the airport just to see her lover one last time. She ran towards him, her clothes dripped, and her shoes squeaked. Jacob covered his face with his hands to hide his grin.

"I'm here! I told you that I would make it."

"You didn't have to do this, Rebecca. We said our goodbyes yesterday at dinner."

"I know, I just had to see you one last time."

"You'll get sick. I can feel it."

Jacob felt her cold forehead. He was a doctor, her very own doctor. He catered for her like she was his favourite child, paying particular attention to all her medical needs. She dreamt of the day that she would marry him and make him hers forever.

The day Jacob left the country was one of the worst days of her life. She was inconsolable for weeks. She made all efforts to cling on to the memories of their time together; every detail was super important to her.

Rebecca yearned for his attention with every passing hour; she rehearsed the epistles he sent her every week, holding on to whatever

they had left. Her birthdays turned into periods of mourning. Even though Jacob compensated his absence with money, Rebecca wanted more.

The thought of Jacob was forever imprinted in her memory. Although he lived miles away, Rebecca incorporated him into her life. She let him in on every detail of her life, from the high moments to the low ones. Every night she knelt by her bed and bowed her head in prayer, begging her Creator to make his career successful.

Rebecca anticipated his return more than she expected the Second Coming. She brought it up in every conversation. His excuses became insurmountable by the day. Two years had passed, and Jacob had no plans to visit his lover.

Rebecca became suspicious. Jacob had begun to forget about her.

"Time is precious. You can't wait for Jacob forever," her mother often told her. Rebecca's friends had the same opinion too. "You are getting old. Dump Jacob before it's too late," they always teased.

After three years, she started seeing other people. He permitted her to have fun but keep herself for him alone. All her relationships failed; they couldn't be with someone who had her heart with another man. Her ties with Jacob made them feel insufficient and insecure like she would never love anyone else. Jacob quickly went from the best thing she ever had to an embargo she carried about.

After four years, she received a phone call on a sunny day in April. Her birthday was two days away. She held the phone to her ear elatedly, waiting to hear his voice that sounded like that of a million angels.

"Rebecca, I have to get married next week."

"This is a funny way to propose Jacob. You know my answer already. Shall I tell my people to make preparations for your coming?"

"I'm not getting married to you, Rebecca. My parents got a girl for me. Her name is Adunni, and she's a doctor."



"How long have you known about this arrangement?"

"We've been courting for three years. I love you, but my mother needs to see her kids before she dies. You know she has ovarian cancer."

Rebecca hung up immediately; she couldn't believe her ears. For three good years of her life, she was

deceived into thinking that they were meant for each other. She had named their four children in vain: Simi, Fola, Tolu and Fade.

She was angry and sad at the same time. Jacob had laid waste to all their memories, caused her to keep herself and then run off with another woman. Rebecca spent the days that followed in silence and sorrow. She hid from the world, shutting herself up in her dark bedroom. Nothing appealed to her anymore. This went on for a long time. Eventually, she recovered and found love again. Once again, she was happy.

Rebecca peered out of her window. The rain had finally stopped. She saw the sun's rays piercing through the clouds, and a rainbow draped the sky. Her cat was asleep now, curled up into a ball, it purred. She closed the curtains and turned on the radio. Jacob's favourite song began to play. Rebecca paused to evaluate her feelings and started to dance. She felt nothing for this man, Jacob had finally been forgotten.

Forever in Our Hearts

Deborah Ikape
Nigeria

What is life without memories; the memory of a family, of a little one been given birth to, the memory of a loved one moving to college, the memory of a pregnancy, even the memory of the death of a loved one; the memories that stem from childhood like the memory of how I used to write stories upon stories during my primary school days before all of that was taken captive by the 'system' and I lost concentration. But, that memory ignited what used to be a talent that was left abandoned and uncultivated.

Memory is the substance that gives us the means by which we draw on our past experiences in order to use this information in the present. It's an intrinsic part of a man's life, an entity that can't be done without.

Memory is that which is held by a human until his death, but

lives on in the hearts of his loved ones. Take a flashback to the night of 20th October, 2020, the Lekki Toll Gate Massacre in the most talked about state in Nigeria; Lagos, the centre of excellence. That place stands as a memorial because of the memory that will live on in our hearts forever, and a thing to be remembered throughout generations as compatriots arose and stood at the forefront demanding good governance and fighting for justice in the most peaceful way you could ever think of. This memory will keep us fighting as a country until it stands as a great nation.

How about the fight against the Apartheid government in South Africa led by Nelson Mandela, which in the Nineties brought about a revolution. We can go on taking trips down



memory lane, with many more historical events that live on in our hearts, and we'll teach them to the younger generation till the world becomes a better place.

How powerful, how vast, how deep our memories can be, they hold so long in our hearts, like cuneiform texts that can't be easily washed away. They may come as tiny bits and pieces that'll eventually coalesce into a whole. Memories can tiptoe or flood themselves into our thoughts and meditations, not making sure they are really noticed but in the long run, they are seen, noticed and paid attention to because they reign in our hearts and minds.

The Place of Poetry in African Society

Plandie Ruzindana and Tom Patrick Nzabonimpa
Rwanda

Introduction

African poetry encompasses the wide variety of traditions arising from Africa's fifty-five countries and from evolving trends within different literary genres. It is a large and complex subject, partly

because of Africa's original linguistic diversity but, primarily because of the devastating effect of slavery and colonisation, which resulted in English, Portuguese and French, as well as Creole or pidgin versions of these European languages, being

spoken and written by Africans across the continent.

When one considers the position of oral poetry in Africa, an obvious element that emerges is that this medium of expression takes the form of a collective activity from time immemorial; it has been expressed at funerals, marriages, child naming and other ceremonies. An instant, collective response is achieved because generally, oral poetry is expressed through a language and an idiom which the entire community understands.

There is much of this collective activity which has been lost throughout the written form. Written poetry is a recent innovation in Africa and one which requires the participants to have acquired reading skills



through the existing educational system. In other words, written poetry has assumed a class form in that it is written for the elite. Consequently, a majority of these people are cut off, partly through the use of English language or any other foreign language and partly through characteristics of obscurity associated with formal education. It is the above artistic development which inspires one into the evaluation of written poetry in its modern context in the communication line between the poet and the public.

According to Prof. Joseph A. Ushie of the University of Uyo in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, "Modern written African poetry has a double heritage- pre-colonial and Western. As in most post-colonial situations, the tilt of our writing should be more towards the pre-colonial African literary heritage as manifested in the song, dirge, folktale, elegy, panegyric or riddle. Essentially, such art was meant for the whole community rather than for a few initiates." This perspective

contextualises the historical, political and indigenous cultural dynamics that shaped both the written and oral forms of literature (orature) of Africa past and present. If African orature depends on the community and social setting, it can be said that ore "grows out of tradition and keeps tradition alive". Present-day spoken-word and performance poetry, with its multidimensional forms of expression incorporating song, story-telling narratives, rhythm, rhyme, verse, movement/dance plus the modern media forms of digital recording, composition and video projection, can be viewed as logical evolutions of the ancient indigenous oral traditions. Since the year 2000, the Internet has also emerged as a publishing channel for the promotion of both written and performed African poetry.

African Poetry In Pre-colonial Era

Poetry as an art form has undergone several phases of evolution from pre-colonial to colonial and then to post-colonial eras in most African

countries. As an example, in the pre-colonial era in Nigeria (the most populated African country and a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual nation), poetry was unwritten. "There existed a thin line between poets and musicians, who composed and rendered poetry in musical form. Poets then published their works in form of renditions at funerals and marriage ceremonies, with themes focused on praising virtues and condemning vices in society." Margaret Busby's 1992 anthology **Daughters of Africa** begins with a selection of traditional African poems, including ancient Egyptian love songs.

During the Colonial Era

While the West bears record of African literature from the period of colonisation and the Slave Trade, particularly of works by Africans using acquired Western languages as their medium of expression, the thriving oral traditions of the time- particularly if in a mother tongue, were not recognised for their artistic value or the richness and significance of their content.

Generated by the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and its opposition, from the 1780s onward, an astonishing and unprecedented array of texts appeared, both pro-and anti-slavery: poems, novels, plays, histories, sermons, speeches, newspaper columns and letters, travelogues, medical treatises, handbills, broadsides, songs, children's books. African authors writing in this period, along with the abolitionists and apologists, raise questions about the relation of British Romanticism to colonialism and slavery. Themes of liberation, independence and *négritude* among Africans in French-controlled territories, began to permeate African literature in the late colonial period between the end of World War I and independence period. Léopold Sédar Senghor published the first anthology of French-language poetry written by Africans in 1948. He was one of the leaders of the *négritude* movement and eventual President of Senegal.

During the Liberation Struggle and Independence Era



It is the political, economic, social and cultural events of a society that shape its literature. In his essay "Homecoming" (1972), Kenyan writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o makes this stance very clear when he writes: Literature does not grow or develop in a vacuum; it is given impetus, shape, direction and even area of concern by the

social, political and economic forces in a particular society. The relationship between creative literature and other forces cannot be ignored especially in Africa, where modern literature has grown against the gory background of European imperialism and its changing manifestations: slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism. Our culture over the last hundred years has developed against the same stunting, dwarfing background.

Many African poets suffered greatly and were compelled to cast aside their artistic vocations in order to be involved in the liberation struggles of their peoples. Christopher Okigbo was killed in the 1960s' Civil War in Nigeria; Mongane Wally Serote was detained under South Africa's Terrorism Act No 83 of 1967; his countryman Arthur Norje committed suicide in London in 1970; Malawi's Jack Mapanje was incarcerated with neither charge nor trial; and in 1995, Ken Saro-Wiwa died by the gallows of the Nigerian junta.

Sam Awa of the University of Lagos' Department of English states, "Moreover, African literature is protest in nature. It comes as a reaction to various forms of injustices meted out on Africans by the colonial masters and later, post-colonial masters."

During the Postcolonial Era

"To have any sense of evolving African poetics, one must be aware of the socio-political significance of literary expression and the ideological character of literary theory."

Most African nations gained their independence in the 1950s and 1960s and with liberation and increased literacy, African literature is written in English, French and Portuguese and traditional African languages. This literature has grown dramatically in quantity and in global recognition. Ali A. Mazrui *et al* mention seven conflicts as themes: the clash between Africa's past and present, between tradition and modernity, between indigenous and foreign, between individualism and

community, between socialism and capitalism, between development and self-reliance and between Africanity and humanity. Other themes in this period include social problems such as corruption, the economic disparities in newly independent countries, and the rights and roles of women. Female writers are, today, far better represented in published African literature than they were prior to independence.

African Poetry Today

Since the 1960s, political, economic, and cultural events have begun to shape African poetry. Gone are the days when the shades of colonialism were an unending preoccupation of African poets. In modern African poetry, works that focus on the healing and purging of the country and families have dominated African poetry. Poets in Africa have faced issues in ways that not only explain how indigenous cultures are absorbed by western standards but also how limiting in vision their

leaders have been.

In January 2000, "Against All Odds: African Languages and Literatures into the 21st Century", the first conference on African languages and literatures ever to be held on African soil, took place, with participants from East, West, North, and Southern Africa and from the diaspora, including writers and scholars from around the world. Delegates examined the state of African languages in literature scholarship, publishing, and education in Africa as well as celebrating the vitality of African languages and literatures.

Poet and editor Kwame Dawes directed the African Poetry Book Fund and produced a series of chapbooks on emerging voices in Africa.

Publications

Over the last two decades, aside from individual collections of poetry by African writers, established literary reviews and journals featuring these poets, a significant number of anthologies of

African poetry have been published, predominantly by university presses around the world and increasingly by African scholars based or associated with these institutions. In his article "The Critical Reception of Modern African Poetry" Oyeniyi Okunoye of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria,

criticises publications such as *Modern Poetry from Africa*, co-edited by Gerald Moore and Ulli Beier (1963), and *A Book of African Verse* by John Reed and Clive Wake (1969), "for operating within a tradition that is pretentious in claiming the African identity for works that do not truly project diverse African experiences".

By contrast, more recent anthologies not only document the evolution of African poetry with greater objectivity and insight but they are bringing to light and ever-expanding range of African

voices. They reflect greater cultural, gender, generational diversity and a widening scope of themes, styles, and ideologies, as well as alternative framing of these works by virtue of their editorial approaches. A few notable anthologies of this kind are *The New African Poetry: An Anthology*, which launched



its fifth edition in 2007, *The New Century of South African Poetry* (ed. Michael Chapman, 2002), *New Poets of West Africa* (ed. Tijan M. Sallah, 1995), *The Trickster's Tongue: An Anthology of Poetry in Translation from Africa* (2007) and *The African Diaspora* by Mark de Brito. Works of literary criticism and academic investigation are equally important in understanding and

appreciating African poetry and *Ideology and Form in African Poetry: Implications for Communication and Coming Home: Poems of Africa*, the works of Emmanuel Ngara are particularly useful in this regard.

Also significantly contributing to this worldwide exposure of African poets, are online platforms and networks showcasing African poetry, such as Writers Space Africa Magazine, Poetry Web International, Badilisha Poetry Radio and International PEN, that give a spotlight to both the written and spoken word forms, established and emerging voices from the African continent.

Poetry has become a useful tool for different African societies during pre-colonial, colonial, postcolonial and even today. Both oral and written poetry has influenced African society politically, socially and economically. It is a treasure worth conserving.

Remembering To Forget

Namse Udosen
Nigeria

I lie in bed and drift into an endless trance. There is no need to get up. I stare blankly at the ceiling. My mind is a VCR, I rewind the tape. Images come rolling on my memory as I reminisce on life before the corona induced staying at home.

Memory is the process of storing and retrieving information about the world around us. Human memory involves the ability to both preserve and recover information we have learned or experienced. In order for memory to be formed, information is converted to a useful form, this is called coding. However, it is not a flawless and straight forward process. A study of cognitive research over the decades shows that the general default is that memories are not accurate, and that's true for all kinds of memories. When we think about retrieving memories, what exactly do we

remember? A large chunk of memory lies outside of our consciousness. A retrieval process allows us to bring them back when needed. That is why sometimes, you think you have forgotten someone's name until the person appears, then bang; the name comes to mind. Memories could be short term or long term. Short term memories last for about thirty seconds. Long term memories are those everlasting moments that sometimes bring tears to eyes or a smile to our lips.

According to the *APA Journal of Psychology*, "Our attempts at retrieving information of our past tend to be very selective. When we think about a time in our history, it has so many components to it. It is not as straight forward as it seems." Research has shown that memories are not stored as exact replicas of reality; rather, they are modified and reconstructed during recall. As a result of how memories are

encoded and stored, memory recall is effectively an on-the-fly reconstruction of elements scattered throughout the brain. Memories are not as organised as we think. We can look at memory as a sort of collage or jigsaw involving different elements stored in disparate parts of the brain linked together by associations and neural networks. We often pick and choose what we remember. The memory recall process involves the brain replaying a pattern of activities that was originally generated in response to a particular event, echoing the brain's perception of the real event.

Memories are not frozen in time, new information and suggestions may become incorporated into old memories over time. It often said that remembering is an act of creative re-imagination.

Hence, people tend to fill in memory gaps with schemas. So when next someone tells you a story about that awesome party she attended last week, note that it is not an actual recreation of the event.

Fredrick Bartlett, a British Professor of experimental psychology, did extensive studies on schema. He wrote that "a schema is a generalisation formed in the mind based on experience. People tend to place past events into existing representations of the world to make memories more coherent. This corroborates the work of the Memory Centre (2019); it was discovered that memory recall appears to be state-dependent to an extent. That, "individuals tend to retrieve information more easily when it has the same emotional content as their current emotional state and when the emotional state at the time of retrieval is similar to the emotional state at the time of coding." Instead of remembering precise details about commonplace occurrences, people use schemas to create frameworks

for typical experiences, which shape their expectations and memories.

It is therefore obvious that personality and environment plays a role in how people recall the past. We cannot also rule out the role of quality of educational experiences. A person who lives in an environment with lots of positive vibes would most like to build up positive schematics of the past. I have some personal experience to test the hypotheses. We have this social media group for my secondary school classmates. It was a military school with drills and beatings. I can say that we all almost had similar experiences as cadets. As a person, I look back at those moments as the source of my strength and resilience in life. Some of my other classmates are even willing to relive those moments. However, many of my classmates see the hard training we went through as abuse. Many regret ever attending school. It is funny that a few still carry grudges against our seniors more than twenty-five years after.

Do the types of schema we build reflect on how we wear our nostalgia?

Nostalgia has to do with a longing for the past. This past could be personal or historical; however, there are two major influences the types of schemes created.

One is an individual's personality or psychological well-being in the first place. If you have two individuals one of whom is happy in their current life and they're emotionally doing just fine. They might go back and remember bad things and then laugh about them and say, 'wow we've come a long way since those days haven't we?' Whereas someone else who is suffering from something like depression or an anxiety disorder may go in the opposite direction. They might go back and think about the past and then let that further sadden them rather than make them happy by comparison with how far they've come.

Personality and psychological mindset are also important to how we recall the past.

Not just the recollection but how we react to the memories recalled. A person who is not psychologically or emotionally balanced is more likely to create negative schemas which would lead to feeling bad about past events.

Another factor is a person's social influences. The people around you play a massive role

in the development of your perception and memory recall. Social influences begin from the family or household a person grows up in. The communities we live in can also influence the type of schemas we create. Toxic environments tend to bring out the worst in people. Toxic environments can exist in homes, schools, places of worship, workplace and any social setting. Environments with people who make you feel small, insecure or bad about yourself can be considered toxic. They often result in mental and emotional stresses

someone from a non-toxic environment.

So, while we are locked down and waking up to a boring routine, some memories sneak back into our minds. The poor in mind feel sad and moan about the situation. They lament all day long on social media and when they manage to go out. Memories become a



in the development of your perception and memory recall. Social influences begin from the family or household a person grows up in. The communities we live in can also influence the type of

and physical manifestation such as increased heartbeat, sweaty palms and dry mouth. So a toxic environment while growing up could breed bad feelings of nostalgia. The opposite could be said of

thing of pain and regrets. They see nothing good about the past, present or future. I get off my bed with a smile on my face; I create beautiful memories as put on my running gear and step into the light of the rising sun.

The Clever Snail

Grace Tendo Katana
Uganda

In a far away land, there lived a Snail among crawling and flying creatures as well as some big animals.

One day, a strong rain came and swept away all their houses together with the food they had stored.

Many animals and all the crawling creatures were displaced since they had no shelter over them neither food to eat. They walked for what seemed like hours in search for something to eat.

Lucky enough, they came across a field of food and gathered as much as they could.

At first, they ate some food so that they gain enough energy to walk back to their land. Some of the bigger animals carried the sticks they needed to build their new homes while the others carried the simpler items.

When they were all set, they began their trek back to their village.

They walked for hours and soon it was dark. One of them scoffed and sneezed like it wanted to say something.

"What is wrong with you, Millipede?" Chipmunk asked.

"I think we're lost!" Millipede said, "and it's already dark. And where is that little Snail?"

The Snail jumped off the back of one of the beavers, "here I am."

"Let us rest here for the night and when it is morning, we shall find our way back," Chipmunk said.

They all agreed and decided to spend the night there.

When it was morning, they began their journey but before they could start moving, the

Snail moved forward and cleared his voice to speak.

"Ahem...!" Snail coughed

"What is it you lazy Snail?" Firrefly asked.

"I made a trail yesterday when we were coming," Snail said.

"So?" Beaver asked.

"We can follow that. It can help us find our way back to our village," he said.

"Why didn't you tell us before?" Chipmunk asked angrily.

"Because you do not always believe me when I say something," said the snail.

"How then are we going to find your trail then?" a puzzled Millipede asked

"Let us look among the trees, I marked them with my sticky saliva, I am very sure we shall find our way back home." Snail said confidently.

At first they were hesitant but then decided to at least try and believe the snail's word.

"But in case you're not telling the truth, you know the outcome!" snared Beaver. And to the Firefly, he commanded;

"Firefly, go on and find that trail then come back and let us know."

After sometime, the firefly came back and told them what he had seen. It led the way and soon they came across the snail's trail. They followed the trail which led them straight to their village.... back to the comfort of their lovely home.

And as soon as they had put

down their luggage, they made a party for having been successful on the mission they had gone to. Also, from there onwards, they never despised the Snail ever again because he proved them that he too was useful on the team.



Seasons

Keabetswe Thapelo Ene
Botswana



“Dan, I am pregnant,” I said hesitantly, twitching my fingers. I knew he wasn’t happy and this was going to jeopardise his whole career but I just had to tell him.

“What do you mean pregnant? You can’t get pregnant, Alice,” he grumbled, pulling me and banged my head against the wall.

For a moment, I lost my



balance and was bleeding but, what was new?

“Get the hell out of my house and get rid of that baby,” he barked.

“I won’t,” I said, but before I knew it, I was knocked down and felt an excruciating pain in my belly. He was kicking me and punching me. I yelled for help, but no one could hear me.



The last thing I remember is a spiked pain in my stomach.

“Earlier this morning...” the television interrupted my thoughts, “Police discovered a body which is believed to be Mr Dan Bucks who had been missing for eight months...”

I looked over the table and saw a knife covered in blood. Holding my baby close, I felt the balm.

Trigger

Temani Nkalolang
Botswana



The click-clack of heels in the corridor. A loud knock on the door, 'bang, bang' and suddenly-

The door crashed in with a deafening crack of thunder, blasting my eardrums. I am on the floor, curled into a fetal position, hands on my ears. Blindfolded by fear I could hear their boots and batons sinking into his soft flesh. Each beating rewarded with my mother's crying and pleading. The click of handcuffs- every sound is reverberating in my head, tearing my mind apart.

A distant voice keeps calling my name, "Ma'am, ma'am..."

I press my hands tight against my ears but the voice gets louder, fading my mother's cries.

"Madam, are you okay? I have been knocking- oh my, you are sweating!"

I open my eyes and she is staring at me, wide-eyed.

"What is it?" I snap at her.

"Yo...your 2 O'clock is here."

She chokes on her words.

She is still staring at me and I realise I am still holding my ears. I ignore my secretary, gather my files and head for the conference room. By the door, I turn to see her still rooted in the same spot.

"Next time you bang on my door again, I will fire you!"

Her jaw drops and I close the door, slowly until it latches, but

I open the door again and look at him on the wall, ever smiling, reassuring, comforting. That was the last time I had seen my father alive, dragged by the police, for a crime he didn't do.

"I love you dad, always." I whisper to myself.

Scared Little Boy

Madeha Ezekiel Malecela
Tanzania

Once upon a time, there was a little girl who was scared. She decided to talk to her grandfather on how to overcome her fears.

"Grandpa, I am scared!" Said the little girl.

"Why?" Her grandfather asked.

"I can't sleep alone at night. I feel like there is a monster under my bed." The little girl replied.

Her grandfather laughed, then asked her "Have you ever heard a tale of a scared little boy?"

"No Grandpa! What happened to him?" The little girl was eager to know.

Her grandfather replied;

One summer bright new morning,
A little boy went out for a walk,
No sooner the sun started shinning,
When something was up for a stalk.

He slowly turned to see,
A mysterious ghost he found,

Like a monster from a sea,
It stood just right behind.

How huge so tall, so dark,
He was caught with so much fear,
He thought the ghost would strike,
He turned and ran from there.

"Couldn't he call out for help?" Asked the little girl.

Her grandfather smiled.

"Let us see if he did." He responded, then proceeded with the tale.

He ran as he trembled screaming out,
Escaping from the ghost so giant,
For help he eagerly sought
But the road was empty and silent.

He then ran out of breath,
Behind a tree he hid,
With fear and chattering teeth,
Praying to be safe he did.

From a distance on a road,
He saw a tall fat woman,
Towards the tree as she approached,
He realized she too had one.

"The ghost was following the fat woman too?" The little girl asked.

"Yes, her ghost looked much bigger than the little boy's." Replied her grandfather, then proceeded with the tale.

Bigger her ghost appeared,
But she walked bravely and fearless,
He kept hiding as he stared,
Scared he felt and helpless.

He wished to get back home,
He cried for Mom and Dad,
What a coward! he thought in shame,
This made him feel so sad.

Then suddenly like a mighty warrior,
In a count of one, two, three,
He said I am not a worrier,
He stepped out from the tree.

"He decided to face the ghost?" The little girl asked.

"Yes, he had only two options. One was to keep on hiding forever. The second option was to take courage and face his fear." Replied her grandfather.

"But the second option could get himself killed grandpa!" She said.

Her grandfather smiled.

"Let us see what happened." He replied, then proceeded with the tale.

He stood to face his fear,
The ghost was right ahead,
He saw it quite so clear,
From feet to the top of its head.

The little boy learned from then,
The ghost was giant by morning,
Smaller it gets by noon,
Fades when the sun is setting.
The little girl smiled.

"Can you tell me now what the little boy was scared of?" Her grandfather asked.

"Yes Grandpa! He was scared of his own shadow," she replied.

“Very good! If he wouldn't have taken a courage to face his fear, he wouldn't have found out what the mysterious giant ghost was,” said her grandfather.

“Thank you for the nice story grandpa. Next time I will be courageous like the little boy,” said the little girl.



Bio

Madeha is an enthusiast who loves exploring the world of literature. Apart from that, he holds a bachelor degree in law and an advanced level certificate in literature and arts in general. One of his goals is to play a part in supporting the growth and maturity of African literature.

Madeha's story is first place winner in the [2020 Wakini Prize for Children's Literature](#).

Beautiful Hearts

Njenga Wanjiru
Kenya

A dose of pain and the slow loss of light,
I am good to write,
Not of pretty things but incongruent scenes
That speak deep.

That beautiful discomfort of a rebel
Without a cause chose her poison,
I haven't forgotten the little miracles
Our hearts had found
Between the lace and the hold-

Or the life that beat underneath the skin,
When we were too close and not enough.
Hopefully I listen with intent
For a paradigm shift that never comes.

Maybe I've always been an outlier of this
world.



The Whispers of Memorial Notes

Oluwatosin Okupa
Nigeria

Do the days of ages past still mumble in my
brain?

Do they echo loud like the squalls of a wailing
child?

As they grow into pyramids of moments
breaking out of monumental cages
meeting eye to eye with the blazing sun
as she sheds a quarter of her glow
into the pockets of their quiet walls.

Do sailed ships of yesterday still wave their
banners

to the lighthouse of today's thoughts?

Do colourless traces born from their voyage
float into the sea of my being?

They do, a million times, they do
with warring whispers that transcend
beyond whimsical beats of time

Sometimes, they gift me bags of sleepless
nights,

Other times, they stock up my mind like beds
of luminous roses

adding fragrance to the bubbles bouncing in
my lines.

The patterns of adventures past, gone
buried alive in a coffin housing unforgettable
tales,

Of days when 'SUWE' showed me the way
through

a cascade of boxes leading to curious
territories,

Of nights when Mr. Monkey Bear sang sweet
lullabies to my itching ears,

Of many and more moments still ringing loud
and clear

like bittersweet sirens rolling out of order.



Within

Ben Sipo Mulilanduba
Zambia

In the dead of night
the sun was absent in sight
but present in soul.



Memories

Samuel Akindipe
Nigeria

A sojourner,
From the future of the past
To the past of the future,
Saucy splendor sweetly sour.

Memories;
Crazy comical cries carrier
Conceiving the dead alive
Manufacturer of happiness
Producer of sadness
Producing both with sweet splendor.

I thought all was gone
Until all came back
Without the sound of a gong,
The happiest and saddest-
Rising like a memo,
The tunes of them rising to a crescendo
Memo rises to reveal memories,
What a stupendous experience it is
All gone to come.





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Genre: Short Story

TITLE: Heaven

Writer: Agboni Christiana, Nigeria

Reviewer: Joseph Oduro, Ghana

Have you ever wondered "WHERE" death will lead us after here? Does life after death really exist? Agboni Christina gives us a hint of the journey to the afterlife in her short story titled Heaven. 'Heaven' presents to us a 19 year old girl reminiscing on her childhood days, where her mother and Sunday school teacher drummed into her ears and those of her friends; the existence of an elegant and peaceful life after the one here on earth. In an enticing manner, they both give them a vivid description of how Heaven and life over there will be like. Despite all the questions that weigh down her young mind about this concept, she yearns to go there with her signboard being her mother.

Most intriguing in the story is how through simple diction, the writer manages to give us a well-knit story with a 'cozy-sound wave' flow despite the obvious uncertainties and doubts as to whether the afterlife even exists, if yes, whether it is just as the story describes or otherwise.

The writer intends to appeal to the subconscious mind and to this, she succeeds. The hospital room scene where the protagonist and her mother have their last conversation before the latter's transition. Such scenes that directly come to contact with our emotions are really important in getting the reader to concentrate and start to look at their own lives in the perspective of death and what lies ahead.

The writer does a good job at sealing off the story with the sentence 'I sit by my mother's bed and watch as she transitions into the afterlife'. It wasn't too scary an ending even though it involved someone dying neither was it a cliffhanger.

Genre: Article

Title: Telling Our Stories Ourselves: The African Identity

Columnist: Namwanja Margaret, Zambia

Review: Namse Udosen, Nigeria

Namwanja gives a panoramic reflection on the African Writers Conference held in Lusaka, Zambia. She takes us on a ride through the activities of the conference. A non-personal time is used in chronologically taking the reader through the events of AWC. It begins with the Writers Mingle. Namwanja takes readers through proceedings concept by concept. She analyzes the conversations around identity and its tons of baggage. She begins with issues discussed as related to physical components of identity and then moves to the physiological where some commentators talked about HIV and other ailments.

As with topics of this nature, the monster of stereotype raises its head.

This is tackled in the second day of the conference. The hybrid one. She gives an overview of participants' definitions of African Identity. She also highlights the fact that most participants seemed to agree that many African writers pandered to Western ideals with the writing.

The article rolls over to the last day of the conference. She describes the activities for the conference and panel discussions. She also announces the winners of the African Writers Awards through the voice of Anthony Onugba.

The article reads like a report of the conference. It is very impersonal. A more personal touch with descriptions of people's faces, voices and mannerisms would have made it a more interesting read especially for fans of creative non-fiction. The article however is a rich source of information about the African Writers Conference.

Genre: Poetry

TITLE: Bridging Panorama

Writer: Simon Ng'uni, Zambia

Reviewer: Nnane Ntube, Cameroon

Afterlife is a large window that opens us to a panoramic view of things seen and unseen. How to zoom in depends on the apparatus used. The quality of the image received depends on the mental framework and mindset. How then do we bridge life when given a second chance and a larger space to sail through?

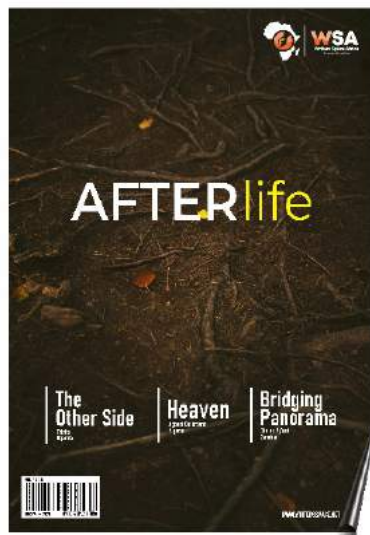
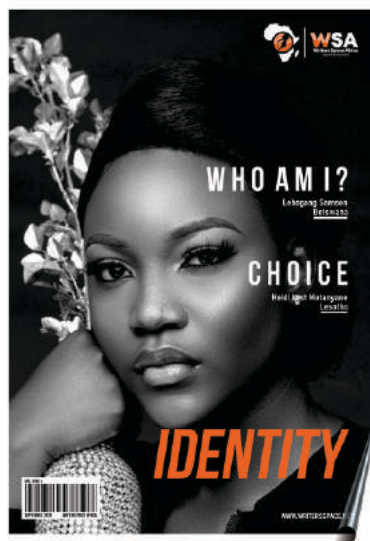
Simon Ng'uni's "Bridging Panorama" paints a picture of a large and vague space full of ambiguity; and the very first meaning he attributes is that "tomorrow never comes." This sets the pace to multiple reflections as the thought of tomorrow is lost in the notion of "voyage" and "time" (S1, L2). How well do we master these terms? The knowledge of "voyage" and "time" is implicitly compared to the knowledge of "good" and "evil" (S2, L2) whose personified nature as created by the poet gives an impression of them being forever there. It is this eminent presence that the poet views as "celestial" (S2, L1). Hence, the idea of a continuous journey – from one frontier to the other, the unquenchable taste of discovery – from wrong to right, right to wrong ("...fruit from rightful tree will be disemboweled and savoured" — an image of the actions of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden where all things evil started). This biblical allusion to the status of right and wrong amplified in words such as "slither" and "crawl" pushes the boundaries of reflections to the understanding of the duration of man's sufferings – eternal?

This unutterable question is a motivation to man's longing for tomorrow even in the face of gloom for "each day is a sunrise [hope] with a new meaning to all of history." But Simon's tomorrow is eclipsed by the loss of time and the loss in time which only knowledge and understanding can bring to lamplight.

"Bridging" is a gerund, a continuous struggle even after all is done and gone. The atmosphere of the poem is very relaxed, the mood is cheerfully gloomy, the tone is polemic and grandiloquent.



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