



WSA
Writers Space Africa
Empowering African Writers

PROGRESS

A History of Writing

Mimi Machakaire
Zimbabwe

The Road

Joseph Katsala
Malawi



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Editor's Note

To want to progress is innate for us as human beings. It's uncommon to want to stay in the same place/condition/environment, unless you've reached the top of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

Progress can be motivated by ambition, unrealised dreams, love or even fear. What it takes to progress, though, is a whole other story. Progress requires you to get out of your comfort zone, to be in a space that is sometimes uncertain and how many people are willing to do that?

Late Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw wrote, "Progress is impossible without change, and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything." Therein lies the secret to progress. Our array of articles, poetry and the children's story unearth this theme of Progress even further.

Please, enjoy!

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The World Within

Mercy Juma
Kenya

Progress sometimes comes disguised as misery; the unwanted balm of the soul that gives off a stench of unworthiness, pain and emotions that may make us want to end it all and go to this place that Christians call heaven. It casts upon us a pit of darkness which we are thrown into. It is a pit that is bottomless and we keep falling deeper and deeper. The more we try to grope at the sides and clutch onto something, misery's walls become slimy and we slide off. Some of us give up and resign to our fate but a few of us, see life testing us through this illusion and thus transcend this bleak appearance. The question now becomes, whom do you choose to be? It is the latter person's attitude that fuels progress.

From birth, your spirit (a perpetual light that never

goes off) is cast upon darkness with the candle torch given to the soul as its guide. The soul has the blueprint. It has the map to the maze upon which you have found yourself and you have a choice to refer to it or not. When we shut this guiding torch from our realm, then the illusion (voiced as ego) becomes our reality and as a result, misery, which is ego's close ally, comes holding its hand. The torment then begins.

Why are we cast into darkness you may ask? Why not be born knowing everything? Why not be

born knowing that we are the light? Why does it have to disguise itself or only announce its presence to the soul, the part of us that many scoffs at mostly because religion has left a bad taste in our mouths? The soul is your highest self and it is the guiding spirit. We are here to evolve into our highest beings. We are here to experience what we can only conceptualize in spirit form. Confused? Let me explain. We are born with light. We are born whole but it is hidden from view because we are to evolve. This evolution is otherwise known as progress.



At the spirit level, we are perfect. At the physical level, we seem imperfect just as we were designed to be. One of life's purpose is to evolve or progress so that the physical realises itself as the perfection of the spirit or in other words, life's purpose is for the physical self to match the perfection of the spirit self. Psychology's term for this is self-actualisation. The spirit self knows how this is done but most of us have shut out this part of ourselves and resigned to believe that progress in the human aspect is in acquiring riches or gaining power. This view is dipped in the ocean of ego's realm which I have already described as an illusion and with it comes matching misery, ready to dip its fangs on whatever victims ego holds as captive. As with anything in life, progress begins with a series of tests, but they are tests bathed in love and acceptance that keep cheering you on. When you pass the test at one level, you progress to the next set of experience. When you keep going through a similar

set of experiences, again and again, it is mostly an indication that you have not passed that test yet and life is trying to help you remember something. Something that will elevate you to the next level. Something else, there is no end to how high you can go. The development is sort of circular. Think of your life as you drawing a circle and that once the circle is complete, then you have realised your highest self physically. There will be no beginning and no end. There will only be phases and a continuation of what is as life supposed to be.

How do we evolve or progress? First, you need to realise that you are a three-part being made up of the mind, body and soul. Some might call this the physical, the non-physical and the metaphysical self. Some might call it the "Id", the ego and the superego or the conscious, the subconscious and the superconscious. Some might call it, ether, matter and energy. In the African

sense, we have known it as God, the spirit world of the ancestors who have died and now live in another dimension which we honour through practices such as libation, and the present world in which we live.

There is a dance of existence within this three-part being with the spirit being the lead dancer. When we are led by the soul then we are introduced to the world of infinite intelligence from which wisdom and knowledge transcend all knowledge as we know it presently. From it have come insight, sparks of inspiration whose fruits we eat today through the wheels of world invention and civilization that we now enjoy. These fruits were once idea seeds that took root in the minds of the brilliant minds that bore them through desire, which then took root as dominant thoughts. The thoughts were given a plan through the power of imagination and acted upon with the spirit of persistence up until they became realized in humanity's world.

Progress comes when we are in tune with this realm of the spirit where infinite intellect resides. It comes from knowing who we are at our core. By this, I do not mean what we are, and whatever labels we have been given from birth starting with our names. By knowing who we are, we are once again in touch with our wholeness at birth, and we are introduced to the world of the spirit, which is way deeper than most of us are able to comprehend in our physical states. When I ask myself, "Who am I? Why am I here? What is my purpose?" then I begin to retrace my steps and gain access to the

torch that is to guide me through this life maze. I gain access to the map. I start becoming the original self I was to become, and bless the world with the original gifts that only I can give it! This is the core of progress and evolution.

In this space, misery simply becomes a friend whom I sit with and ask, "I can see that you have knocked on my doors again. What are you here to teach me dear one?" From then I open myself to my soul's voice and listen to what it is it has to say. In this space, I realize that essentially life is for me and never against me. I realize

that each moment is a blessing, for the soul is here to guide and help me through my evolution. The experiences that present themselves in my life are not good or bad. They simply are. I am the one who gives them meaning through perception, liking some and deciding to call them good, while disliking others because they are unpleasant and deciding to call it misery.

We are one energy. Within each is a torch and inside that realm is infinite intelligence. Access to this world is what entails the process of evolution.



AFRICAN
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2021



In the State of Impasse; A Panorama of Development

Comfort Nyati SDB
Zimbabwe



During my first week in high school, the word photosynthesis sounded very foreign and too complex for me to grasp. It was a vocabulary that perplexed students from school to home and vice versa, and I was not an exception until later when I learnt to appreciate the entire process of photosynthesis. The Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc. states that during photosynthesis, light energy is captured and used to convert water, carbon dioxide, and minerals into oxygen. From this process the unwritten theme is change, transformation and growth. The presence of these conditions enhances the growth of a plant. Should one of these fail, the ultimate result will be stunted growth.

In Psychology, discussing the subject of human

development addresses these issues by understanding constancy and change of experiences from conception through adulthood. Hence, in defining progress we are faced with a habitual dilemma; this is because the very word does not refer to one particular perspective on social, emotional and physical betterment. Instead, as accorded by the distinguished scholar (Pearson, 1992) Progress is a hybrid term for a myriad of strategies adopted for socio-economic and environmental transformation.

Without hesitation, let us navigate to Zimbabwe, a country whose objectives in gaining independence was to start afresh and move ahead with one focal point, development. This implied nurturing our own land which was retained through

ancestral perseverance, and most of all, enjoy the aftermath of independence. Economic development stood as the principal objective right after the liberation struggle. Thus, to boost the construction of infrastructure, road networks, education, health facilities, and create employment opportunities, to mention a few; consequently, to exhibit a holistic epitome of progress.

In his article Development in Zimbabwe: Strategy and Tactics, Michael Bratton pointed that soon after independence, the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (known as ZANU PF) government of Prime Minister Robert Mugabe committed itself to redressing the severe social inequalities of the past, at least at the outset to reach its goals through a prudent rather than doctrinal approach.

It is an irony to realise imperialism as the only known development era per se. Those we thought of as our oppressors were the ones who were the liberators in the then Southern Rhodesia, whereas the acclaimed liberators degenerated progress and became the oppressors of their own. The development of the nation is recognised in the low-class citizens being able to acquire and access all basic necessities like food, health services and education. Unfortunately, today people are scrabbling like becks in search of these basic necessities.

In simple terms, there is an arrested development. The term 'arrested development' has had multiple meanings for over 200 years. In the field of medicine, the term was first used, circa 1835–1836, to mean a stoppage of physical development; the term continues to flourish in the same way in many disciplines including literature. However, in the

parameters of this article, it entails the static and detained economic development of the country in question. It has been exactly forty years from 1980 to 2020 and this period echoes the Old Testament tale of the exodus of the Israelites, who journeyed for forty years to the Promised Land. Despite the unfriendly circumstances encountered on the way, they eventually triumphed. Could this be equated to the case of Zimbabwe, with its four decades under one tyrannical rule? It is despotic because the supposed development was confiscated and detained.

It can be argued, that there is a particular amount of growth that every being

experiences. The problem is picked when growth ceases to be at the expense of a declining growth; this we term as retrogressive progress. We may not deny the fact that development is constantly at play in Zimbabwe, but we can deny the assertion that it is progressive. It is a development clouded by drawbacks; hence considered as retrogressive-progress. A development where we see the expansion of crises. Interestingly, in March 2020, BBC reported a youth of Kadoma who illustrated a sarcastic demonstration by planting banana trees and bathing in potholes as a protest for bad roads and appeal to the government for good road networks.



Zimbabwe, as a landlocked nation, is one of those that hold an inspiring history in Africa due to a highly reputable education system, a gracious tourism industry and a bounty mineral treasure. It is undeniable that African archives rate the country as one of those blessed with phenomenal wonders that can hinder a foreign sightseer from turning back home. However, it is mesmerising to postulate one of its tragic growing wonders – the economical regression. In such a republic, progressive progress can blossom if only the country undergoes the process of civil photosynthesis. Thus, the duties of legitimate leaders should assume necessary conditions for transformation while citizens play the role of a plant that is ready to be photosynthesized.





African Writers
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OCTOBER 2021



A History of Writing

Mimi Machakaire
Zimbabwe

INTRODUCTION

This paper describes the history of writing, dating as far back as 3400 BC. We all have questions about our ability to write, and so easily. Meanwhile, it was taught to us the same way we were taught to speak, walk, and eat among others, as functional human beings. But, how did it all begin? Who were the first writers and what was the first piece of literature? There are of course many theories to this and I will try to uncover some of the mysteries and documented examples of the first known evidence of the art of writing.

The Urban Dictionary defines writing as 'a medium of human communication which involves the representation of a language with symbols.' Writing systems are not exactly human languages (with the debatable exception of computer languages); rather, they are a means of rendering a language into a form that can be reconstructed by other

humans separated by time or space. Let's begin with discussing the first pieces of Literature.

THE FIRST PIECES OF LITERATURE

We all have read a lot of literature and have deciphered overtime, different types of literature including their structure and various themes, but what was the first known piece of writing documented in history?

As with the wheel, cities and law codes, the earliest examples of written literature appear to have originated from ancient Mesopotamia. According to The Sumerian civilisation, writing was first developed around 3400 B.C. which began as markings on clay tablets in a script known as Cuneiform. It was recorded that their texts usually consisted of economic and administrative documents, but only till the third millennium B.C. Cuneiform can further be

described as a system of writing used in the ancient Middle East. The name, a coinage from Latin and Middle French roots meaning 'wedge-shaped,' has been the modern designation from the early 18th century onward. Cuneiform was the most widespread and historically significant writing system in the ancient Middle East.

Furthermore, the Sumerian scribes were also known to copy down essays, hymns, poetry and myths. Two of their oldest known literary works are the Kesh Temple Hymn and the Instructions of Shuruppak, both of which exist in written versions dating to around 2500 B.C. The former is an ancient ode to the Kesh temple and the deities that inhabited it, while the latter is a piece of 'wisdom literature' that takes the form of sagely advice supposedly handed down from the Sumerian king Shuruppak to his son, Ziusudra.

One of Shuruppak's proverbs warns the boy not to "pass judgment when you drink beer." Another counsels that "a loving heart maintains a family; a hateful heart destroys a family."

While Shuruppak's fatherly wisdom is one of the most ancient examples of written literature, history's oldest known fictional story is probably the Epic of Gilgamesh, which is a mythic poem that first appeared as early as the third millennium B.C. The adventure-filled tale centers on a Sumerian king named Gilgamesh who is described as being one-third man and two-thirds god. Over the course of twelve clay tablets' worth of text, he goes on a classic hero's journey that sees him slay monsters, rub elbows with the gods and search for the key to immortality—all with predictably tragic results.

The Epic of Gilgamesh started out as a series of Sumerian poems and tales dating back to 2100 B.C., but the most complete version was written around the 12th century B.C. by the Babylonians. The story was

later lost to history after 600 B.C., until the mid-19th century when archaeologists finally unearthed a copy near the Iraqi city of Mosul. Since then, scholars have hailed the 4,000-year-old epic as a foundational text in world literature. There's probably more history that can be detailed but for now let us ask ourselves what the original purpose of writing was.

WRITING AND ITS PURPOSE

Initially, writing was the physical manifestation of a spoken language. It is thought that human beings developed language circa 35,000 BCE as evidenced by cave paintings from the period of the Cro-Magnon Man (circa 50,000-30,000 BCE) which appear to express concepts concerning daily life. These images suggest a language because, in some instances, they seem to tell a story (say, of a hunting expedition in which specific events occurred) rather than being simply pictures of animals and people.

Written language, however, does not emerge until its invention in Sumer, southern Mesopotamia, circa 3500 -

3000 BCE. This early writing was called cuneiform and consisted of making specific marks in wet clay with a reed implement. The writing system of the Egyptians was already in use before the rise of the Early Dynastic Period (circa 3150 BCE) and is thought to have developed from Mesopotamian cuneiform (though this theory is disputed) and came to be known as hieroglyphics.

The phoenetic writing systems of the Greeks ('phoenetic' from the Greek phonein - 'to speak clearly'), and later the Romans, came from Phoenicia.

The Phoenician writing system, though quite different from that of Mesopotamia, still owes its development to the Sumerians and their advances in the written word. Independent of the Near East or Europe, writing was developed in Mesoamerica by the Maya c. 250 CE with some evidence suggesting a date as early as 500 BCE and, also independently, by the Chinese. We'll now consider who the first known writers were.



THE FIRST KNOWN WRITERS

With the rise of the cities in Mesopotamia and the need for resources which were lacking in the region, long-distance trade developed and, with it, the need to be able to communicate across the expanses between cities or regions. Some history also describe that the earliest form of writing was pictographs – symbols which represented objects – and served to aid in remembering such things as which parcels of grain had gone to which destination or how many sheep were needed for events like sacrifices in the temples.

These pictographs were impressed onto wet clay which was then dried, and these became official records of commerce. As beer was a very

popular beverage in ancient Mesopotamia, many of the earliest records extant have to do with the sale of beer. For example, with pictographs, one could tell how many jars or vats of beer were involved in a transaction but not necessarily what that transaction meant.

In order to express concepts more complex than financial transactions or lists of items, a more elaborate writing system was required, and this was developed in the Sumerian city of Uruk circa 3200 BCE. Pictograms, though still in use, gave way to phonograms – symbols which represented sounds – and those sounds were the spoken language of the people of Sumer. Additionally, one had only static images in pictographs showing objects like sheep and temples. With the

development of phonograms, one had a dynamic means of conveying motion to or from a location. Furthermore, whereas in earlier writing (known as proto-cuneiform) one was restricted to lists of things, a writer could now indicate what the significance of those things might be.

CONCLUSION

Since its inception, writing has served to communicate the thoughts and feelings of individuals, their culture, collective history, and experiences with the human condition; and to preserve those experiences for future generations. We may not know the levels writing systems could develop into, but it will continue to serve its purpose and allow for societies to grow in different and creative ways.




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Space-Poet

Hoof for Hoof, Paw for Paw

Benita Magopane
Botswana



Once upon a time, animals of every kind from the beasts of the land to the critters and all the creepy crawlies, were gathered together from every corner of the earth for the very first time in one place, the great ark (Noah's ark). The great flood sent by God had destroyed every living thing except a male and female of each species and Noah and his family. It was their temporary home while they waited for the great waters of the flood to dry up, but one day a commotion broke out.

Listen up!" said a cat to all the animals, "From now on, the captain of this Ark is me! What I say goes, and hey Hilda," he eyed the dairy cow, "If I want milk, you must give me...." His voice trailed away into a nervous whisper as a gorilla walked towards him and started laughing. "I like you little kitty," the gorilla said with a laugh-ridden voice, "but this Ark and all of you," he

turned round to look at all the animals with a sharp glare, "belong to me, Big G." Suddenly a hoof poked him, it was Martha the donkey and she said, "Over my carcass!"

"Well, well, would you look at that?" said Hilda the cow to the donkey, "I simply can't believe God saved a stubborn old donkey like you Martha?" "Well best believe it Hilda. It is she that stands before you now. So, how did a wicked creature such as yourself find favour in God's eyes?"

"You took the words right out of my mouth Martha," snorted a pig, "How were two wicked creatures such as yourselves not wiped out of existence? Surely, if donkeys and cows got saved, the pigs ought to finally fly?" "If it were up to me!" A voice boomed, and all animals turned to an elephant standing at the far back grooming himself, "All of you should have been wiped out, ka-boom! This world belongs to elephants. The rest of you are useless."



"I am the only true king here!" big lion roared and every animal except the elephant went silent with fear.

"The king who will eat all of us you mean," Zebra shouted hiding behind the elephant. And so it was, that animals

hoof, paw for paw and hoof for hoof.

"Everyone quiet!" hooted Ruphas the owl perched on top

of the giraffe, "You know how we will live happily ever after,

after this flood?" He smirked, "When we have killed our worst

As soon as Ruphas saw that the crowd was getting even more violent, he spoke once more saying, "Peace citizens!"

The crowd went silent and he continued, "Look at yourselves. If you can be united to do bad, can't you be united to do good



argued bitterly between each other, insisting that God had made a mistake to have saved those that they did not like. They were almost at war, ready to wipe each other out of existence themselves, paw against paw and hoof against

enemy, the snakes!" At once everyone paid attention and resembled a united front.

"He's right," said Tooth the goat, and everyone shouted in agreement, some in the crowd chanting, "Where are they? Kill them!"

also? Did God save us only for us to kill each other? You ought to be ashamed of yourselves!"

All the animals murmured against themselves in shame. They agreed the way forward is not by killing each other. God saved them for a purpose.

The Road

Joseph Katsala
Malawi



Sometimes I feel like stopping
In the middle of the road
Disturb traffic and make a scene
But am the only person on this road
And this road is nothing but a footpath.

I've walked on years
Everyone I met was travelling alone
No one seems to know where the path
leads
But I keep walking and hoping
That I arrive at a familiar place
I've never been before
And find myself.

I take every step-in faith
Though I can't see the cut line
I know I've come so far
Surely the vision I hold
Will one day be reality.

Sometimes I fear for my arrival
That the destination I crave might just be
Strange than the fiction I escaped from
Even so, this gruesome road
Has been worth the travel.



Care Not

Oyoo Jack
Kenya



Cut down all the trees
Don't plant more, we need no forests,
Don't use bins, bin your dirt anywhere
Poach the parks, we need not white rhinos.

Loot all the resources,
I know you don't care of the next vocals
Bribe them courts,
Officers offer them a royal pardon.

Lead the fuel
Let's kill the ozone layer and scorch to
death!
Dump all wastes in the rivers and lakes
They can barely do a thing.

Puff your weed, do more of tobaccos; it is
your lungs!
Drink and drive, no life matters, not even
yours

Kill us, kill all of us!

Ravish all the ladies and young girls of
earth
Tell them to abort, it's healthy
Take more pills; you got a metallic womb.

Plunder the public funds, only your
welfare matters
Let's preserve disunity, racism and terror
attacks...
Maybe you will enjoy hell.

It's true that you know the truth; then do
the most Right.
Unity, best welfare and ecosystem we all
need
Gender equality, love and we must
uphold.

As a Girl, You Can

Owoeye Olajumoke
Nigeria



... only make your dreams into apparition
by scribbling them on kitchen utensils
or painting them on an apron with a brush
dipped into oil spilled from a cooking pot

with voice sewn on the hem of your dress
you whisper your ideas to walls
render numbers to children,
then sit and watch the world wade
through

the high feathered crown of Dr. Ngozi

Okonjo Iweala
and oath of office of President Samia
Suluhu Hassan
has illuminated a girl's kismet
setting a new definition of a girl child
in the dictionary of gender and ability.

building up the dreams of girls
beyond the door of their eyes
and now as a girl, you can
metamorphize your dreams from cocoon
into butterfly
flap your beautiful wings and attain any
height on the world's ladder.

Tomorrow

Neemah Komba
Tanzania

You are always looking back,
retracing the steps of your mother looking
for traps,
still in fight or flight,
waging the same war as your father.

You carry their sins on your back
like scarred tissue,
you gut yourself with a machete,
dig into your flesh,
searching for healing beneath the pus,
you think tomorrow lies there.

Stop looking for yourself inside scars,
you were planted long before the decay;
you sprout from the darkness
to carry their buried light,
you are free.

Unlade their burden on your back,
stretch your hands into the unknown,

Taste what lies beyond.



A Rising Nation

Magak Nickson
Kenya



At the hill foot, walking on the thorns as if
not to be heard

I hear most hate songs swallowing tranquil
voices of peace

I love to see a nation at ease, ceased
from endless politics

I dream of a rising nation cured from its
abraded bruises.

I cheer this long walk of running days
edited by prevailing peace

Arranged by nationalist ceasefire, wiping
cries of yesterday

Resiliently strong in adversaries of disease,
poverty and hunger.

Sounds of hope bellowed Kenya's sky,

ringing great aspirations.

I love to see tables turn, my people shake
shackles of despair

Nobody should cry again because of
selfish displacement

To birth reconciliation, from bare feet to
silver shoes,

Cow dung floors tilled, mud walls piped,
water and electricity.

Step by Step

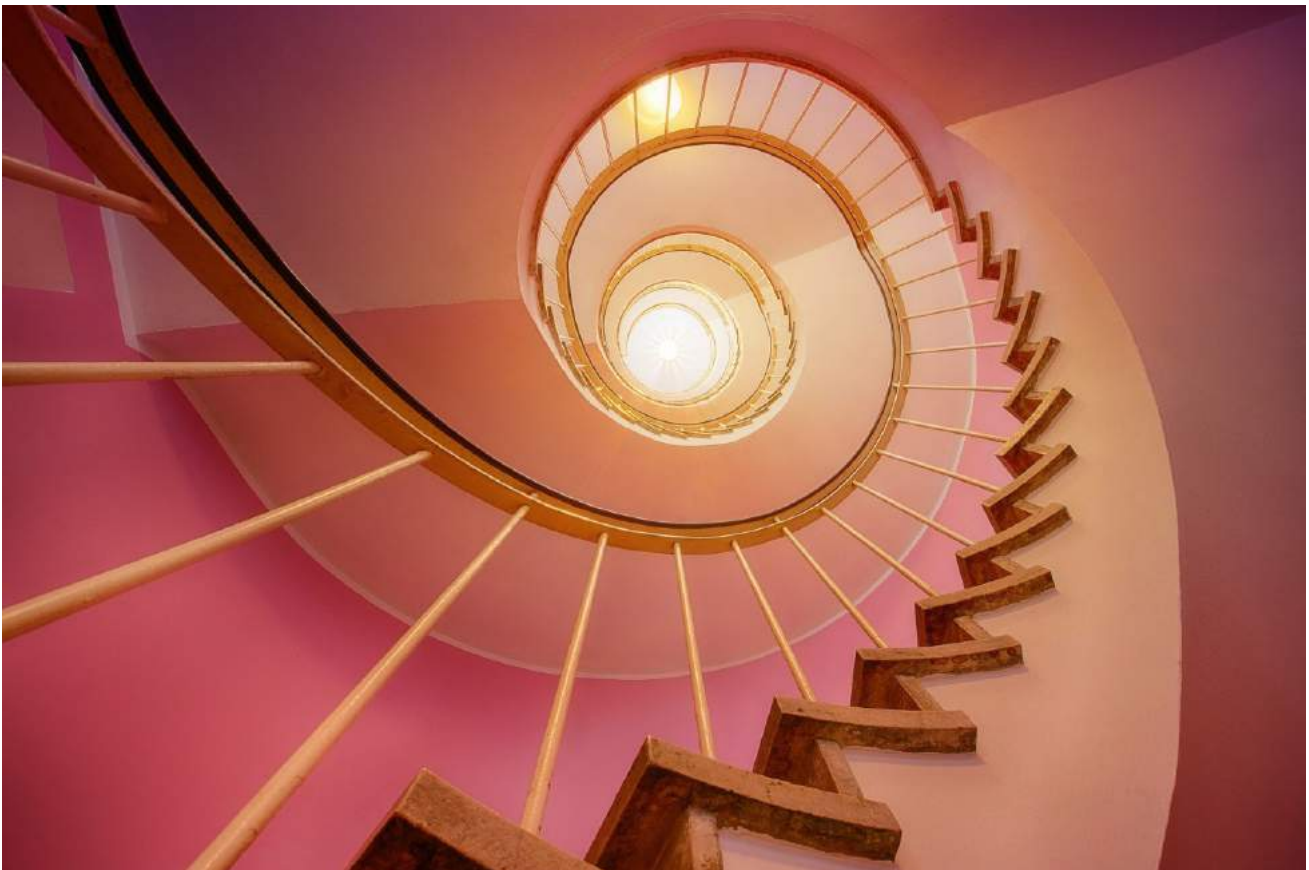
Masego Olefile
Botswana

Like a web stuck between walls-
Walls I built over the years.
Like a bird needing its nest
I thought it's what's best.
With every blade of grass
Weaving a trap for myself.
I wanted to win so bad
Every fail made me mad
In the end I was sad.

To be better than everyone
And outshine my peers
I fermented pressure
Till I was full with regret

Broken and empty.
A fall too many then....

Step by step
I broke the walls
Like a chick hatching.
I embraced freedom
Married contention
Gave birth to patience
I still fall but....
I see progress.



The Ridge We Mount

Fanwell Ndhlovu
Zambia



There is power within us all;
To solemnly author the new chapter.
Love becomes our greatest call,
Bordering life through joy and laughter.

The bright sun rays specks from the east;
Underneath the shade does not fade.
Slowly we brave the whole belly of the
beast;
The future, today we have made.

This is the creation of just redemption.
We feared at its inception.
Our lives shall blossom like a flower,
History is made with every clocking hour..

We are less or not perfect,
But if we can truly work together;
Paramour and tranquility we select.
To aid our conduct no matter the weather!

The ridge we mount,
If only we dare to handle our moves with
care.
Progress in every count so paramount;
With harmony dwelling everywhere.

United we ought to be tied,
Through love, the common goals abide.
So we remain undefeated and victorious;
Our hymn of remarkable pride; glorious.

Hope

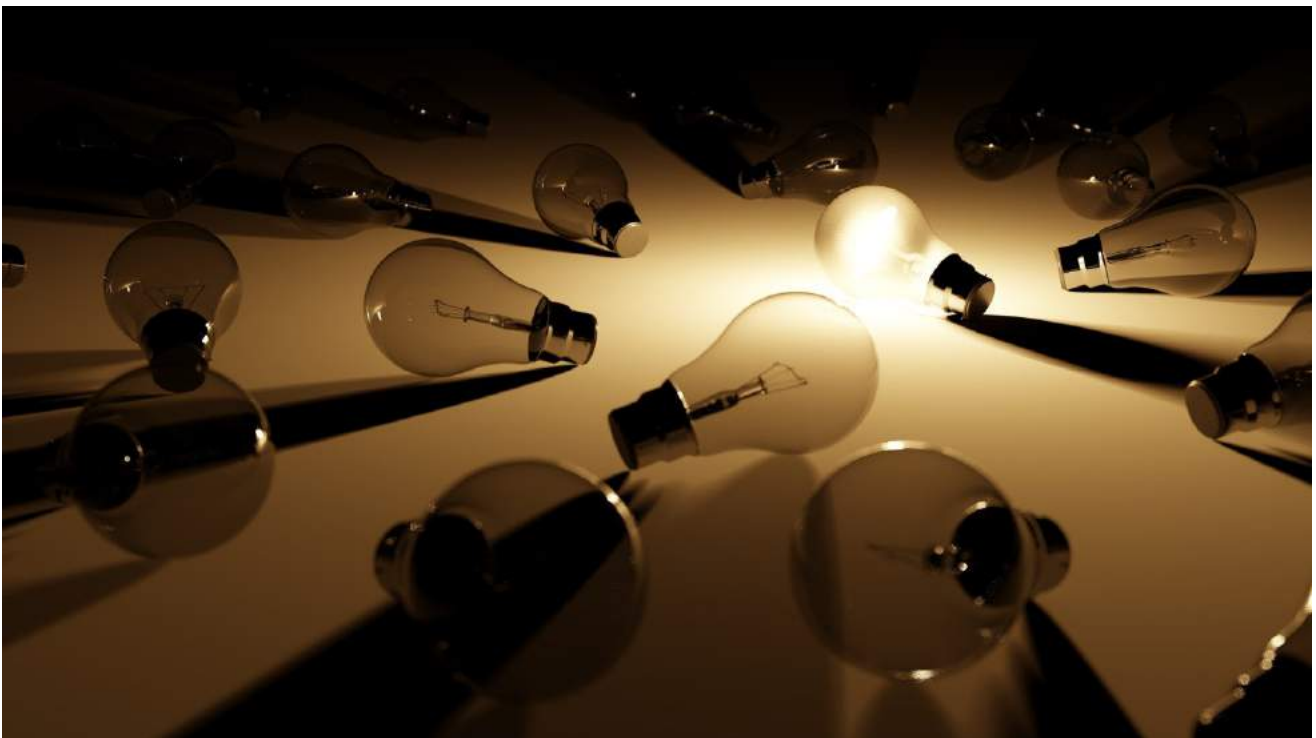
Obongofon Etuk
Nigeria

On the sea of progress,
let me sail ashore,
to the bank where success was birthed.

Thou wind of goodwill,
toss me o'er abroad,
plant me in the garden of laughter.

By the morn, come dear sunshine,
Light my path and glitter my heart,
make me thy own reflection.

Lead me on, lead me on,
Day to day and night to night,
to my own Canaan where milk and honey shall
flow.





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Genre: Short Story

Title: Misery

Writer: Ezeliora Ndidiamaka, Nigeria

Reviewer: Yolanda Kuei P. Macuei, South Sudan

■ ■ Not even a divine sin deserves to be served through a brutal partner in life, let alone human immorality or none at all." In other words, settling down in marriage for life is a genuine choice informed by happiness, both mental and physical; not an obligation to whatsoever there is as manly or womanly in holiness to owe it. You either stay in while it works or call it a day when it fails. Otherwise, the repercussions will be a full package of "Misery" with red flowing streams of bloody shades.

To all readers, pay attention! Whether single, searching, married or not even thinking about it. As you read through this striking and educative narrative titled 'Misery' by Ezeliora Ndidiamaka, you will be compelled to a habit of creating and focusing on entry and exit doors always. It is a smoothly written, melancholic short story with reality-check lessons and survival tactics for when danger has reached the alarming emergency point or too late in the intensive care unit (ICU); hence, leading to the mortuary and straight to the grave. Yes, that's exactly where your imaginations will lead you as a reader and a reflective person.

With no hesitation, one feels sympathetic towards the main victims, 'Ada' and her innocent Aunt; the most affected ones until death. The persona will mentally bring you to terms and reach the quickest decision with your current life situations when you picture the image of uncle Sam (husband to Ada's Aunt); the villain character as the abusive husband, drunk, sexual exploiter, rapist, child abuser, heartless murderer and a devil's incarnate.

'Misery' is the true definition of a miserable life under the hell roof of Uncle Sam as the befitting representative of Gender Based Violence (GBV) which resulted to the painful death of his silent and naive wife, whose only solace witness was a journal safely in the hands of her niece, who in turn at last narrowly escaped through a mini window to survive death after being sexually abused and beaten till she lost consciousness. Surely, one would miss a lifetime lesson for not reading 'Misery' and if you're lucky enough to read, you will accept that absolutely nothing is worth dying for.

Genre: Article

Title: Misery, The Silent Killer

Writer: Rawat Luqmaan, South Africa

Reviewer: Joseph Oduro, Ghana

The unpleasant attribute of misery, leaves individuals subscribing to trauma and discomfort. The afflicted is bequeathed with luck if their misery is that of physical displeasure since it is subject to fade away with time. It is quite the opposite when an individual is countenanced with discomfort that threatens their psychological and emotional health.

The writer unveils the concepts and ideologies of psychology that succumb to the malleability of the human mind. These differing shapes of our minds' form, result from our experiences both consciously and unconsciously. The intense impact of these experiences on our lives request a long and demanding healing process. Unlike physical pain whose diagnosis and prescriptions are straight forward, emotional and psychological distress are relative and need a comprehensive approach in eliminating them. Therefore, the writer advises that comparison as an approach to mental healing, is a wrong turn and may have adverse consequences on the individual.

Optimism has always served as the substrate for the growth of disappointments and trauma that threaten our mental health. Hopes built on the fulcrums of comparison is hazardous and detrimental. We should approach the world from our own perceptions, subject them to reality and set simple achievable goals for ourselves. It is then only, can we alleviate ourselves from lack of self-esteem that leads to mental distress, emotional displeasure, and hence misery.

Genre: Flash Fiction

Title: The Colours of My Skin

Writer: Kegbu Mgbe, Nigeria

Reviewer: Marjorie Moono Simuyuni, Zambia

Mgbe's work, 'Colours of my Skin', is not the easiest piece of fiction to interpret. It becomes even less easy to one who lives in a place where homosexuality is a vice. "The privilege of normalcy, to be among the larger group humanity acknowledges. To be heterosexual, to be intelligent, to be pretty. My flesh will never enjoy the warmth of this light." This should give the story away right away, but what follows gets the reader thrown off their pedestal for a while. The opening lines impress on the reader that the narrator is female. It is the word pretty that especially leads one to think so. But when the narrator speaks of the man she's in a supposed romantic affair with, the narrator says, 'I rebuked myself at first; what sort of man loves another?' Now the reader begins to wonder; is the narrator really female? Why is there a man loving another man here when 'she' has already implied she is female, and is involved with a male?

The storyteller adds, 'But when I felt my skin, I became addicted to me and the wholeness that accompanied existing in my own flesh.' That makes the reader ask; is their masturbation taking place here? But we go on to find this affair is still on, and the two go to the market together. What does the market symbolise? It being a public place, where whoever does whatever, are they going there together just for the benefit of onlookers? This man is said to not be ashamed of himself. Is he supposed to be ashamed? Of what? 'She', the narrator, says he danced with her through the darkness and showed her little rays of light. What does that mean?

Just when the reader thinks their love will be a happily-ever-after, the reader finds that the story closes with the narrator attending a church wedding of her man, with another woman. 'She' explains, '... the person he vowed to in a flowing white dress rather than a silver suit like he had always claimed it would be.' While being romantically involved with the narrator, did the man admit it was for show? That who he really wanted was a fellow man? But why has he married a woman? These questions take one back to the opening sentences of the story to confirm what they may be assuming.

What's the thrust of this flash fiction? Clearly, it's been cleverly written. Is the writer depicting the misery of homosexuals who live where homosexuality is forbidden? Are they (characters of the story) with the opposite sex just to be accepted by their families and society? The narrator has made it clear they will never enjoy the light of heterosexuality. Seeing as they had an opportunity, which they did not seem to want to see through, have they resigned themselves to misery? Never to be with the gender they want but never to please society by being with the gender they don't want? Either way, one is left wondering how many people in real life are married to the gender they don't really desire, like the man in the story. Are they as unashamed about their double standards as he? Or like the protagonist, have they chosen a different strand of misery? This story is an eye-opener, a glimpse into the world we may never live in and the misery we will never feel, which may be the ultimate reality of someone out there.

Genre: Children's Literature

Title: When I Grow Up

Writer: Temani Nkalolang, Botswana

Reviewer: Funmi Richards, Nigeria

■ ■ According to global estimates, roughly 10% of pregnant women and 13% of new mothers suffer from mental disorders mainly depression, with developing countries being affected even to a greater extent with up to 15.6% and 19.8% respectively." — World Health Organisation

My thought when I realised I had gotten through to the last word of this piece was, 'Why did it end?' This piece should have a place in UN Women or UNICEF's archives. It tells a personal story of Ujeura and gives a sample of the impact of postpartum disorder on children.

The character development is rich and takes the reader through the misery inflicted though unintended on Ujeura because of his mom's condition. It also takes us through how this affects the child while revealing the need for knowledge among families and communities in order to help people adjust or overcome postpartum conditions or support them through the challenges. Unsurprisingly, the character development also underscores how a child's aspirations can sometimes be a reflection of the challenges they face.

The story underlies the sample workings of a child's mind and how they understand a problem, think of a solution and believe they can solve it. So straight and narrow! It is often difficult to talk about authentic issues or challenges with children because we always want to protect that childlike spirit. So, I think the author, did brilliantly putting together an issue of this magnitude to children in the form of literature. I do hope this masterpiece is told again in varying forms and possibly extended into full length book.

Genre: Poetry

Title: A Search for a Betterlife

Writer: Sukuram Avi-Nash, South Africa

Reviewer: Comfort Nyati, Zimbabwe

The vibe in the poem "A Search for a Better Life" is too vibrant to pass without turning stones. It is that kind of a poem that has the prowess to arouse tears in the eyes of the reader. It is too vocal to go unnoticed its ambient of suffering and dire poverty or affliction. The audience is taken through a circumstance seasoned with displeasure, great unhappiness and emotional distress. Hence, the persona is in a state of want, yearning for brighter days. The principal theme of misery evolves in the entire poem, although in L1- "She did not choose this life , L4- "Hers was a rocky start" and the last stanza culminates with a miserable big bang.

The piece brings into awareness the predicament of a girlchild, typically from an African ancestry who inherits a miserable life as justified by the squatter camp which she called home. It was a home that denied her any possible comfort one would love to enjoy when at home, on the contrary, it provided uncondusive conditions of hunger, malnutrition and sleeping on a bedless floor.

This life's flaws have entangled the personae to find herself coiled with the tragedy of losing her virginity as an adolescent after being raped and this denied her the youthful bliss, instead it resulted to a baby giving birth to a baby. Actually, one would conclude that suffering and the personae were alike, for instance she suffered moral decadence in the society as desperation led her into the business of prostitution. Curtailed with the agonies of life, one learns that misery lodges where bad omen strikes. As demonstrated in the entire piece that exposes the repercussions of unemployment, sickness and starvation. Thereby the end result is to submit to the wretchedness of life. In such instance, it is doubtless to entertain thoughts of a cursed destiny with such kind of a dysfunctional life purpose.

Atmosphere: cold, unbearable, tormenting.

Attitude: Awe, contemplative

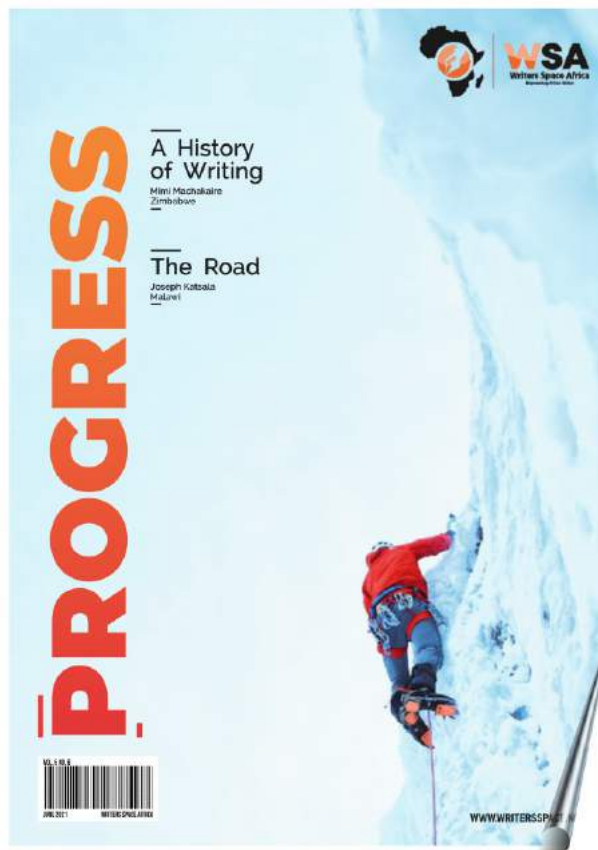
Overriding Themes: melancholy, mourning, heroism, depression

Tone: Bitter, gloomy, grim

Diction: detailed, narrative, simple to grasp.



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