



**WSA**  
Writers Space Africa  
Empowering African Writers

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# OLD SOJAS NEVER DIE

Olasubom Olumofin  
Nigeria

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# THE OBSERVER

Leo Muzivoreva  
Zimbabwe

# DEATH

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

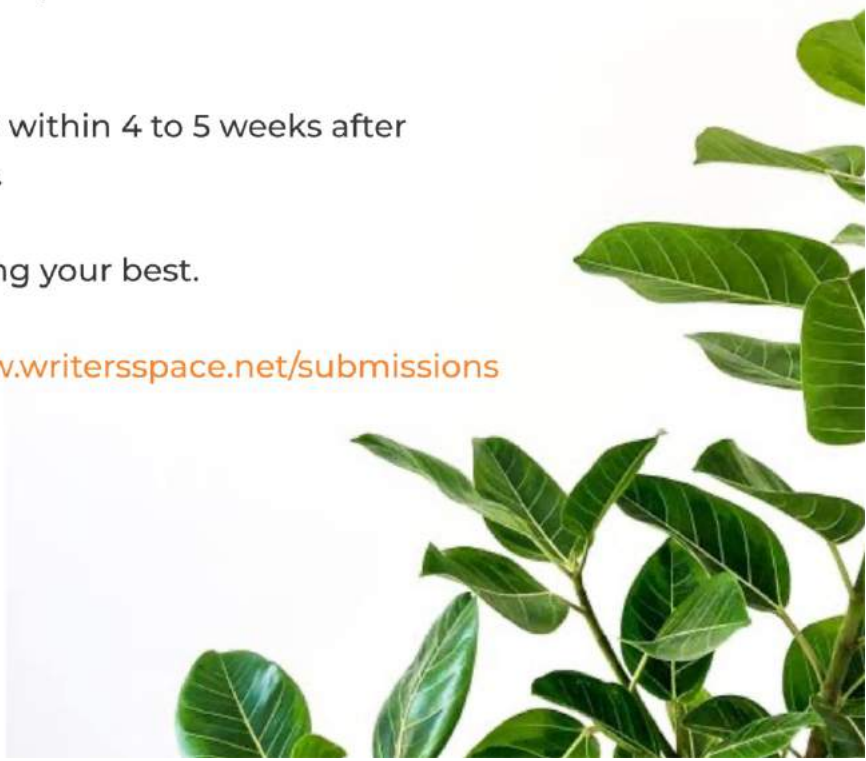
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- Poetry
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- Children's Literature

The Submission windows is open from 1st of November to 14th November.

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](http://www.writersspace.net/submissions)



# EDITOR'S NOTE

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**J**ust how much dying do we do before we truly die? Biologically, we are dying with every breath we take. We all know this, but only in the peripheral. In the immediate, a lot of us see death as that full stop; if you follow language and the rules of punctuation closely, then despite the fact that the symbol is an end, it leaves certain things open to interpretation. For instance, is it the end of a sentence ushering another sentence? Is it the end of a chapter? Is it the end of a book? These are the same questions we ask about life.

The balance of life as it is right now, makes that we cannot exist without death and in death we can find life again – it only depends on how you look at it.

Letters from a Stoic, the ancient, Seneca said “And on the other hand, if death comes near with its summons, even though it be untimely in its arrival, though it cut one off in one's prime, a man has had a taste of all that the longest life can give. Such a man has in great measure come to understand the universe. He knows that honourable things do not depend on time for their growth; but any life must seem short to those who measure its length by pleasure which are empty and for that reason unbounded.”

The writers in this edition of WSA try to measure death in words and in perception. These works by brilliant writers across Africa will either challenge or reinforce your perception of death. After reading, I hope you come away with something new.

Always remember, Ubuntu.

Warm regards,

Nabilah.

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# OLD SOJAS NEVER DIE

Olasubomi Olumofin  
Nigeria



**T**he ghost of the past rose like a spectre from the asphalt – a slow, creaky bus rumbling past the tarred road. The afternoon was hot and breathless, the sun gazing down harshly from its perch in the sky cared little for the comfort of the bodies crawling listlessly over the earth. The few pensive clouds that scudded through the sky held no relief, no promise of rain in their barren breasts. A few vehicles plied the road; the men who rode Okadas had long fled the vengeance of the sky and reclined on benches under trees and houses.

Out of that burning pit of the afternoon, the bus slowly rambled past. Its green coat was long faded and peeled; its glass cracked in the front. One of the windows at the side was broken, and in its place a dirty stretch of nylon fluttered faintly; in all, it was a picture of age and decay – another ghost of the irresolute flow of time, denizen from a time

when the brown dusty earth knew no covering. As if on cue, memories of that not-so-distant past began to run through his mind.

The road was not tarred then. It was still a stretch of brash, undulating earth, filled with grooves and potholes, slick and slippery when it rained and dusty when it did not. He was a schoolboy. Every morning, he began a pilgrimage that took him to the far end of the city where he schooled, a voyage past the very heart of the town; the smooth purr of taxis on the main road, the bustling market, a pattern-less mix of modern and old houses, the towering buildings – few and far between – that were beginning to crop up more, the run of tar where the road took a dip before it rose again and levelled out, the sharp turning, then his school. The journey back home was more interesting. He walked with other classmates, tired from the drudgery of learning in airless

classrooms and the terror of flogging, taking his time to soak up the sounds and sights of the city's expiring breath. The journey back was a shared luxury; the market was still bubbly at that time of the day, and never in the six years he spent at the school did the novelty ever wear off. Their slow, loud drift took them past stores filled with wares, market women calling to passers-by, boys a little older than them that carried goods – electrical odds and ends – on wheelbarrows, Igbo boys that hung rows of pirated movies on wooden racks – they kept discs of pornography tightly bound in black nylon and could tell the furtive, restless gaze of the ones who consumed them – and the thousand odours, the thousand dramas that daily assailed the marketplace.

The daily odyssey slowly reached its terminus between the newspaper stand where they read sports news and sometimes



watched men in rumpled shirts argue loudly about politics, and the post office. Many of his companions preferred to board the blue and yellow taxis at the newspaper stand, but his own journey took him past that, straight to the post office where a line of ugly rickety buses that plied the road to his home waited for passengers. The buses were old, nondescript and wore different colours. In an earlier age, this array of colours might have been beautiful, but the rusty hand of decay had touched one and all of them, and all they had left was the muted grace of age that blends all colours into ordinariness.

The men who rode these buses were like their contraptions; a mix of hues, shapes and ages; their dresses were either loudly outlandish or

that he had come to identify with their trade:

“Okeogba...Okeogba...Okeogba. Okeogba - One! Okeogba - One! Aunty - Okeogba! Bros - Okeogba...”

They joked loudly, bickered, cursed each other in jest - sometimes virulently - and flirted with the women/girls that sold snacks by the road. They wore different clothes, drove different vehicles but were all faces of the same mask. Each man had his private demons to exorcise, wore his laughter on his faces, and kept mute as he saw fit, but this truth defined them all - they were all caught in the sleepy somnolence of the city. The city held everyone under an unyielding hypnosis; it was so unrelenting in its ordinariness that even that became a form of magic.

mutely plain. They kept mute, hands folded on the cheek; or spoke loudly in the baritone

On some afternoons when the bus filled up slowly, one of the drivers could be heard telling stories. He was dark, plump without being fat, and wore a ridiculous face-cap thrust above his face. He had served in the army once - they called him Old Soja - and had tales of the battlefield to recount to eager listeners:

“When we were taken to, I tell you, war is a bad thing o. A bad thing. Eh! If you see the way people die, eh, you will pray that none of your children put on the uniform of a soldier. Ehn? It was every man for himself...every man for himself. If you're shot, you're gone. No second chance for the dead. Ah? Is that why I keep disturbing this Sisi? Don't you know soldiers are womanizers? Once a soldier, always a...”

His bus was green and old like the other vehicles, coughing up fumes that stung the eyes of the home-goers. As it rambled into the street and began its journey over the untarred terrain, Old Soja could be heard in jest, telling a story or joking with a bemused passenger. The bus always stopped to cough up passengers, roughing its way gradually to the last bus-stop.



The boy dropped at one of the stops, eager for whatever meal awaited him at home, while the bus rode into the horizon, raising a cloud of dust like a funeral wreath; Old Soja's expansive laughter lingering even after the rattle of the bus was beginning to fade.

Soon, the buses stopped coming altogether, and this before the road was even tarred. Business simply became unlucrative; people preferred the smooth glide of the taxis to the rattling run of old buses. He never knew where they went to, but knew they would gravitate to another park and continue their flirting and joking. It was only after the road was tarred that he saw Old Soja's bus again, rattling past the street – a ghost on the asphalt.

Will he ever die? That was the question on his mind when he saw that familiar thrust of the cap on the head, the face holding still as if ready to break into that gut-wrenching laughter, the belly swollen with laughter waiting to tear free from his stocky frame; will Old Soja ever die? Surely, he must be the very last of his kind; a generation of veterans who have never left the death-riven battle field, for whom every rise of the

sun is another dawn on blood-soaked plains of the past. For his kind, memory is the only trusted buoy in the changeling waters of the present; they reach a cautious foot out and test the waters, eager for halcyon shores in an ocean of storms, but they learn the world is never so benevolent; quickly, they draw back and cling onto the familiar face of the past. Will Old Soja ever die?

He met Old Soja again on a hazy harmattan day. A commotion in the clogged arteries of the king's market had reduced the traffic of bodies and vehicles on the crowded pathway to a complete standstill. He was on foot, so he could push his way through the thick of bodies till he broke through to the source of the delay.

At one glance, he recognized the veteran storyteller at the heart of the tumult. A shiny car that scattered the glare of light into the hundred eyes that had gathered to watch the spectacle had – in the cramped pathway of the market – hit the old veteran. A push on the accelerator of the vehicle had induced a sudden spurt of speed that hit the walking man and pushed him back a foot – he was enraged. The young man was not careful enough with his

words, and seemed to insinuate that the enraged man had been in the way. The onlookers/mediators tried to calm the semi comic-looking man, who looked like a figure from the dusty wardrobes of the past, down.

“Calm down, it was a mistake” onlookers frustrated by the standstill appealed to him. The other actor in this mild drama had long seen the wisdom in laying claim to all the blame, and by this time also joined the appeal to Old Soja.

“Who do you think you are? You no see road? S'o ya were ni? Are you mad? You think because I am not in my uniform, you can just trample me anyhow? Bloody civilian!” he exploded.

“Okay!!! So he is an old soja!” a voice quipped.

“This one don mad o,” a woman chipped in, “why dem no come carry am away. E go jus die!”

“Old sojas? They never die” a voice rang out in reply.

Soon, the car crept off, driving a wedge into the mill of bodies in its path. Old Soja went the way of the falling sun, a world of stories in the bulge of his belly. Will Old Soja ever die?

# TULA NYONGORO - THE BIRTH OF DIRT



**Akinyi Onyango**  
Kenya

“Uwiii! Mayoo! Bii unee! Come and see! Wololo mayoo! Awuor nyathiwa! Mamayoo!” Awiti K'Opondo, the unofficial village crier screams.

Chief Ochieng' is woken by his wife Domitila Akoth. She sits shaking and pressing her head to the wall. Ochieng' looks at her hazily as he takes a moment to get his bearings right. He hears what sounds like Awiti's voice and more neighbours yelling. Hastily throwing on his clothes, he rushes outside, flinging his gate open just in time to hear his son's name escape Awiti's lips. He sees the raging fire in Otieno's compound and instantly knows he should never have gone into the old widow's house.

The crowd is divided. Half of the group runs toward the Opondo family home where Awiti is screaming. They know by now what the wailing means – Awuor, Opondo's fourth wife, has just died. She had diligently taken

care of her co-wife Ajwang' until she died just the previous week. Shortly after, she had complained of headache and sore throat, then she had a running stomach and started to throw up multiple times



a day. Unfortunately, she had to take care of all the children since two of her co-wives had died the previous month, along with three children and her husband. It was a crisis in the Opondo family and Awuor could not afford to take time off to go to hospital. So she went to the local health centre and bought some over-the-counter antimalarial medication. Nobody had the time to persuade her to see a doctor because she died on the fifth day after the onset of her symptoms.

The other half of the crowd follows the Suna, the self-appointed village disciplinary committee, to Otieno Tula's house. They are a group of rowdy youth wielding pangas – machetes – and torches, shouting something about this being Otieno's fortieth day. Rumour had it that Otieno had been seen visiting Awuor only two days before her symptoms started, and the boys knew exactly what this meant. Otieno had done it again. Upon breaking

Otieno sits on the floor at the centre of the St. Joseph the Worker K'Ondu Catholic Church. He looks around at the carvings of Jesus and Mary around the church, though it's dark so all he sees is their silhouettes. He was awake at midnight, sketching out what would be his next tattoo when he heard the noise. For a moment, he had considered investigating the commotion – he had a penchant for drama – when the crowds got nearer and he made out that they were chanting his name. He had been an outcast in K'Ondu village his whole life, so he wasn't surprised that he had a target on his back. He wasn't surprised either that the village had pinned all the mysterious deaths on him. He was an odd bird with bizarre inclinations. Well... bizarre to them, not to him. He understood himself. He understood that he was chosen. But they didn't, so he fled before they could find and lynch him. Otieno had never known his mother. When he was younger, he begged his father, Chief Ochieng' Taya to tell him more about her, but the administrator kept mum on the subject. Even his grandmother, Mama Rosa, who had raised him and loved him more than anybody else in K'Ondu

village, refused to tell him more about his origins. The villagers whispered. Auma Malando once told Otieno that Ochieng' Taya had sent Otieno's mother away for being a witch, but his grandmother would give no comment.

His name is Otieno Ochieng', but everybody just calls him Otieno Tula. When he was eleven years old, he started staying out late into the night. His grandmother had jokingly named him tula nyongoro – owl – meaning to chastise him, but he soon took to it. One time his step mother had got drunk and told him he was the devil's child because he was conceived in a witch's house. His father had vaguely told him about the old widow's house and the escapades he had in there when he was younger, though Otieno had always sensed that Ochieng' was holding something back. So that day when his step mother said it, he knew it was true; that his father had a torrid affair when he was younger and conceived him in the hut of the woman with bad eyes. Added to his new nickname, Otieno took that as a sign that he was begotten of the other world; that he himself was Death. In the vein of a dramatic

teenager, Otieno Tula went out and bought himself a long black cloak and a dagger to sell the bit. He'd since shed the dramatic cloak, but he still wore dark makeup and collected skeletons for his 'shrine'.

In the past few months, nine people had died in K'Ondu. It had started when Otieno returned from a brief trip and was seen arguing with Opondo's youngest daughter. She fell ill two days later and died within two weeks. Her best friend had followed, then the best friend's mother and five members of Opondo's family including Opondo himself, leading up to Awuor's death. The village took it to mean Tula had cursed the Opondos, presumably because the girl rejected him. Tula took it to mean he had finally come into his own as Death. His Master had instructed him, and he had obeyed. He had diligently cut, bit and burned himself and spent all his time in isolation, and now his time was here. No more temporary highs from the pain; the real thing had arrived. If any of the deceased had gone to hospital, they would have known they had Ebola. They might have been asked if they had travelled overseas recently,

to which they would have answered no, but remembered being in touch with Otieno who had just returned from The Congo. Their families may have been warned against touching the body fluids of the patients, to curb the spread. But they didn't go to hospital, so they thought Otieno had bewitched them.

Now Otieno Tula, or Death, sits in church awaiting his fate. The irony of hiding out in church is not lost on him, but the irony of Death awaiting what will surely be his own demise eludes him. As he shudders to the distant sounds of an angry mob, he wonders how he got here. He wonders why the Master chose him, and why his powers just now started to take effect. A tiny part of him was partly relieved, though, because he felt that he would finally meet with his Master and have his questions answered. Sadly, Otieno too would have solved all his problems with a simple hospital visit. A doctor might have diagnosed him with schizophrenia and depression, which would have explained his conversations with "the Master" and why he coped by injuring himself. They may also have explained that he had contracted



Ebola in The Congo, and although he was asymptomatic, he was highly contagious and should have sought medical attention before interacting with Opondo's daughter and helping them take care of their invalids.

Ochieng' Taya has been rooted to the spot, worried to near death about his son. His thoughts run wild with regrets of ever entering the old widow's house. If he had been wiser in his youth, he wouldn't have made such terrible choices and effectually handed his first son to the devil's claws. He is right to have regrets, though not in the way he thinks. His mistake was not his teenage indiscretions, for his son wasn't truly cursed. His mistake was neglecting Otieno to the point of the boy's mental illness going

unnoticed. He watches helplessly as the villagers bay for his son's blood; the villagers who, in a while, will have taken his innocent son's life. The villagers who, in a few months, will realise that the deaths did not end with Otieno's. They who will eventually seek medical attention and realise that the deaths could have been prevented by proper health care practices; who will realise that they murdered a troubled young man for nothing. But as the Ethiopian proverb goes, regret, like a tail, comes at the end. For now, Otieno waits, Ochieng' waits, and the villagers chant.

## **Announcing Sahifa, a new platform for research, journalism, art and literature, with a strong focus on Eastern African stories.**

Sahifa, a new platform for research, journalism, art and literature, has been launched.

Sahifa is a Swahili word for blank page. The founders believe in the spirit and the possibilities of the blank page for new thought. Named after a 1930s-newsletter published and distributed in Mombasa, the term Sahifa signifies the claims to originality, and hence, universality, of its agenda. Sahifa presents itself as a see-saw, a sharp tool that aims to see the present through eyes that saw the past. It aims to go back and forth in time, commenting on the zeitgeists of the now, but uniting them with the ideas and beliefs that defined specific periods of the past. It is through such labouring that the platform hopes to speculate on the future.

Sahifa seeks to mobilize multiple genres of intellectual practice and storytelling – fiction, illustration, poetry, music, dialogue, essays, film – so as to capture the epistemic complexity and diversity of Africa's lived experiences. The mission is Afro-centric and eclectic. Not rejecting the European canon, but decommissioning it as the dominant model for knowledge production and storytelling about Africa. At Sahifa, Eurocentric epistemic traditions will converse with African ones, but Africa will always be at the centre of the conversation and of the imagination.

Stay tuned for more updates, and for Sahifa's current CALL FOR STORIES that will be published as part of its inaugural issue, 'Futures and Dreams.'

Follow Sahifa now on Twitter: @sahifa\_journal



# LIFE AS WE KNOW IT

**Ugbede Ataboh**  
Nigeria

**T**he general understanding of death is the end of life of an organism or person. For me, death is a pathway to eternity or the beginning of a divine existence because all things must come to an end in the physical realm only to be continued in the afterlife.

Growing up, my Dad never exposed us to the emotional,

activity, we did indoors. My Dad attended all wake keepings and burial ceremonies alone; we never had conversations about them or even talked about his late parents or siblings. I guess it was his own way of shielding us from one of the gory details of life. My siblings and I let him have his way because we thought he knew it all, but little did we know that we needed to be part of these

uncertainty, pain, loneliness and loss that accompanies the demise of a loved one. Indeed, there are some friends in life that stand as pillars or support systems...Ifeoma Ikpelue was that kind of friend to me; even more so because I have never been one to have so many friends. The friends I made along the way, I lost to impatience and lack of wisdom. Ifeoma was a special kind of friend because she never dealt back the nonchalant card I usually dealt her...she always reached out when I ghosted; She always made peace whenever I was ready to trash our friendship and damn all the consequences; She always reassured me with the promises of God whenever I felt like giving up. In truth, I needed her way more than she needed me...thank God she understood this hidden truth and decided to stick around till she drew her last breath.



psychological and physical effect of losing a friend or loved one. The truth is that He never allowed us cultivate relationships with family members and friends. Only the need for education linked us to the outside world...every other

“insignificant” gory details...we needed to see; we needed to feel; we needed to mourn; we needed to understand.

Early this year, I finally understood the feeling of



We met at Queens College (high school) and literally went through our teenage and adult years together. We studied and helped each other through exams; we chased boys and had our hearts broken together; and we struggled through our different career paths together. I lost her to Asthma February this year, and

since then, I have learnt to take life easy and not stress over anything; live for each day and be thankful to God for the precious gift of life; Love freely and expect nothing back; Look after myself and not drown in my work and career goals; take bold steps and damn social, religious and cultural stereotypes; trust God

and no one else.

I remember the day she transitioned to the afterlife after tussling with asthma since her childhood. A message about her demise popped up on my cell phone and I remember the first feeling of

relief accompanied by shame & uncertainty, then loss and grief.

Relief, because she was finally free from the physical and financial burdens that accompanied her endless surgeries and procedures; Shame, because I should not have felt relieved as a result of losing my dear friend; Uncertainty, because I really could not mentally come to terms with her departure; Loss and Grief, because I had lost one of the human pillars of my life to another realm.

For three days, I could not sleep on my bed...I slept right in the middle of the Persian rug in my bedroom because that was the exact spot she lay down to sleep when she came visiting from Lagos last year. She was obese at the time because of the medication she was on...she was dying and I didn't even notice. I noticed she was abnormally fat but I didn't think it was anything serious. She slept on my Persian rug because she felt she was way too fat to share my bed with me...now I wish she shared it with me regardless.

Oh! How I wept alone with no one

to comfort me because everyone I could call was either too busy or out of town. I grieved alone; I wept alone; I mourned alone...I finally understood. As I embraced myself in a tight ball right on that same spot she lay, I felt lost because that was the only way I felt I could connect with her. I could no longer see her, feel her or talk to her. I felt terrible because I had the opportunity to see her in January when I travelled to Lagos on an official assignment, but I didn't because I was too "busy" with work...I wept when I pondered on how shallow I was. I had time to hang out with my colleagues in an exclusive club on the island but I could make out time to head out to the mainland to see my dear childhood friend; after all, we both had many more opportunities to see each other. I was so wrong!

Her older brother was kind enough to save me a space in her obituary booklet, and I poured out my heart...

F a r e w e l l M y B e l o v e d

Others looked at me but you saw m e .

You looked past my rough exterior a n d s a w m e .

You looked past my callous words

a n d s a w m e .  
You looked past my indifference and saw me.

Many times I went Ghost but you s e a r c h e d m e o u t .  
Many times I fell, but you fell just so we could rise together.  
Many times I gave up but you e n c o u r a g e d m e .  
Many times I turned my back on you, but held on from behind.

I wish I could talk with you o n e l a s t t i m e .

I wish I could tell you how much I l o v e y o u .

I wish I could lie beside you and talk aimlessly till midnight.

I wish I had seen you last week when I was in Lagos...how did I get so carried away with work?

Oh! How I miss you...you never judged me for being Me.

Alas! You are with the angels now.

Everything will turn to dust except your precious heart of

G o l d .

Farewell my beloved. lkp4real!!!

Death is a revered escort to the afterlife and he alerts no one of his sudden arrival. Please, try to make each day count and cherish every memory... it just might be the last.



# THE OBSERVER

**Leo Muzivoreva**  
Zimbabwe

**■ ■ OF DEATH, GRIEF AND RECOVERY** I was 11 years old and still in primary school when my dad died suddenly and without warning. Death ruptured the normalcy of my family – which included my mother and two brothers and two sisters – and tossed us roughly and unexpectedly into the arms of a fatherless grief.

My mum tried her best, but she, too, was overcome with grief. In the gaping space between my father's death and my mother's grief, there was a void to fill, a profound loneliness; yet life had to continue. My brothers and sisters needed love, consolation and possibly counselling. Since I was the youngest of the kids, suddenly I had become “a burden”

to my mum and my siblings – a nasty reality check presented itself.

I need to tell you that, in the face of significant loss, we don't “recover” from grief.

Yes, I'm using the royal “we” because you and I are probably all a part of this club.

I also need to tell you that not recovering from grief does not doom you to a life of despair. Let me reassure you, there are millions of people out there, right now, living normal and purposeful lives while also experiencing ongoing grief.

All the things you have heard about getting over grief, going back to normal, and moving on – they are misrepresentations of what it means to love someone who has died. I am sorry, I know us human-people appreciate things like closure and resolution, but this is not how grief goes.



This is not to say that “recovery” does not have a place in grief – it is simply 'what' we are recovering from that needs to be redefined. To “recover” means to return to a normal state of health, mind, or strength; and as many would attest, when someone very significant dies, we never return to a pre-loss “normal”. The loss, the person who died, our grief – they all get integrated into our lives and they profoundly change how we live and experience the world.

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What will, hopefully, return to a general baseline is the level of intense emotion, stress, and distress that a person experiences in the weeks and months following their loss. So perhaps we recover from the intense distress of grief, but we do not recover from the grief itself.

Now you could say that I'm getting caught up in semantics, but sometimes semantics matter. Especially, when trying to describe an experience that, for so many, is unfamiliar and frightening. Grief is one of those experiences you can never fully understand until you actually experience it and, until that time, all a person has to go on is what they have observed and what they have been told.

The words we use to label and describe grief matter and, in

many ways, these words have been getting us into trouble for decades. In the context of grief, words like denial, detachment, unresolved, recovery, and acceptance (to name a few) could be interpreted many different ways and some of these interpretations offer false impressions and false promises.

Interestingly, when many of these words were first used by grief theorists their intent was to help describe grief. I have no doubt that in the contexts in which they were working, these words and their operational definitions were useful and effective. It is when these descriptions reach our broader society without explanation or nuance, or when they are misapplied by those who position themselves as experts that they go terribly awry.

So going back to the beginning, we do not recover from grief after the loss of someone significant. Grief is born when someone significant dies – and as long as that person remains significant – grief will remain.



## SHORTLIST – 2020 AFRICAN WRITERS AWARDS (AWA) AND THE WAKINI KURIA AWARD

On behalf of Writers Space Africa (WSA), Writers Space Africa – Zambia (WSA-Z), and the African Writers Development Trust (AWDT), I present to you the shortlist for both the 2020 African Writers Awards (AWA) and the Wakini Kuria Award for Children's Literature. The winners will be announced on the 3rd and final day of the African Writers Conference on the 7th of November, 2020 in Lusaka. This will be streamed live on our social media handles for those unable to physically attend.

Once again, special thanks to the panel of judges; Sabah Carrim (Mauritius), Henry Joe Sakala (Zambia), Nahida Esmail (Tanzania), Benny Wanjohi (Kenya), and Namse Udosen (Nigeria) for the brilliant work. The shortlist is in no particular order.

### Creative Non-Fiction (\$100)

1. Each Little Win – Oladejo Oluyemisi – Nigeria
2. No Role Models – Angoma-Mzini Thulani – South Africa
3. Requiem for Africa's Creatively Inept – Mpofo Nathaniel – Zimbabwe
4. The Intelligent Thief – Nwabueze Vincent – Nigeria
5. The Task of an African Narrator – Okombo Dismas – Kenya

### Drama (\$100)

1. Jare – Lawrence Abasiama – Nigeria
2. Lost Destiny – Ukaorji Ogbonna – Nigeria
3. True Spots – Ojoro Irene Melissa – Kenya
4. Who Knows Amanda? – Asoloko Gloria Akayi – Nigeria
5. Odessey of The Kankafo – Adinoyi Abdulbasit – Nigeria

### Poetry (\$100)

1. African Beauty (Haiku) – Musyoka Susan – Kenya
2. Her Hair, Her Braids (Blank Verse) – Semir-Nyuiy Terry Kimah – Cameroon
3. Ode to The Blackbird (Haiku) – Duru Nneka Joyce – Nigeria
4. Old and Gold (Pantoum) – Gaygay James – Liberia
5. Who I Am (Pantoum) – Ogedengbe Tolulope Impact – Nigeria

### Wakini Kuria Award for Children's Literature (1st place \$100, 2nd place \$75, and 3rd place \$50)

1. Hessy and The Lost Tooth – Halieo Motanyane – Lesotho
2. Scared Little Boy – Madeha Ezekial Malecela – Tanzania
3. Sophie What Do You Say? Blessing Aliyu Tarfa – Nigeria
4. The Magic Book – Oketunde Judith Oluwatomi – Nigeria
5. The Two Sisters – Leonard Maero W. – Kenya

Best wishes to the shortlisted writers.

Anthony Onugba  
Chief Judge,  
2020 African Writers Awards

# DEATH

**Hellen Owuor**  
Kenya



**N**ana sat at the window sadly, as she looked at the kids who were playing in the street below. They all looked very happy; all she could think of was how much she missed her friend Cate. Cate was a nice girl and had been Nana's friend ever since they had met in kindergarten, years back. She was now no more. She had been ailing for quite some time and just last week, she "went to be with the Lord," that was all Nana was told.

After Cate's passing on, Nana was very detached from everyone and everything. She had many

questions as to why she would never see her best friend again, or why they would never see each other again. She was given permission to take a week off school to help deal with her loss. Her parents did all they could to help her cope. They decided that it was best to take her to her grandmother for some time, where she would be distracted.

The next day, they all set out for Nana's grandma's place. Grandma was so happy to see them and welcomed them warmly. Nana was always delighted to see her grandma because there, she was always treated like a queen, all her

whims attended to. After her parents left, the same sad face came to play. Grandma tried to cheer her to the best of her ability but it was all in vain. For several days now, Nana remained the same, her sadness never ending. One day after lunch, they sat together as they spoke.

"My dear, why are you still sad, don't you like being here?"

"No, grandma, it is not that. I just still miss my friend so much,"

"Oh, in that case my child, worry not," grandma said and smiled.

"Why not?"

“Because your friend will always be with you wherever you go, just like your shadow,”

“How do you know that grandma?” She asked, getting interested.

“I know because my best friend left me too, your grandfather, and he is always with me. He comes to me in a dream often and if not, at night as I look up on a starry night, I can spot his star,”

“So, grandma, does it mean that

when people die they become stars?”

“Yes, my dear child, they do. That way. They will always guide us,”

After this conversation with her grandmother, Nana's attitude changed tremendously. She believed that wherever she went, Cate was always there with her, guiding her, just like the stars that guided the wise men to baby

Jesus on the night he was born. A week later, her parents came to take her home and were impressed with her improvement; in fact, she was the one who told them how Cate became a star in the sky. On most nights when the stars were out, she would sit by her window looking up and naming stars. She already had one named Cate and the other her grandfather,



# PETER AND MARY'S TRAGEDY

**Isabella Ainomugisha**  
Uganda

**O**ne day, Mary and Peter wanted sweets. They were very hungry. They asked their mother for sweets, but all the shops were closed because it was dark.

So, their mother got her recipe book and looked for how to make sweets; the children wanted chocolate-flavoured sweets which were not in her recipe book.

She called a friend on the phone and asked for chocolate sweets recipe. Her friend told her the recipe and she went to find the ingredients in the wild forest. The main ingredient was the sweetest flower in the forest; it was in the middle of the forest.

A long while later, their mother had not returned. Mary slept off while Peter stayed up all night, waiting for his mother to return. In the forest, their mother heard a howling. She got very scared and wanted to go back, but her children were hungry. She had to



find them something to eat. Before she could find the ingredients, a very big wolf came to eat her. Just as it approached, many big animals in the wild forest also came running to her.

Peter was still wondering where their mother was. He thought she could be in trouble since it was dark, but he couldn't go into the forest at dark. In the morning, Peter and Mary were still very worried about their mother when

their father returned from his night's hunt. He wondered where their mother was. They told him she had gone to look for chocolate sweets ingredients in the wild forest.

Their father got so scared. Just as he got out of the house to go to the wild forest, they saw on TV, campers announcing a dead body they had found in the wild forest. It was their mother's body.



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# REST 2.0

**Esther Musembi**  
Kenya



I knew I was dead from the way he looked at me through the over-sanitized looking glass. Dressed in white bulky attire and thick goggles like a man going to the moon, he stomped around and barked orders to his similarly dressed colleagues. In his eyes I was a pesky little thing that had blown up the world, caused untold havoc from

country to country. I deserved to die.

He took the green solution proffered by an unseen hand -his unblinking eyes never leaving my unshapely shape- and put generous drops of the stuff on me. It burned. It hurt so bad I felt my body folding in on itself. I wasn't going to make it. His eyes still watching, I folded in painfully and waited for my demise. My rest.

Because I was just going to rest for a while. Gain my strength and come back stronger. They would not see it coming. I'll come back much much stronger and I will start with him.

Coronavirus was such a palatable name anyway. For when I come back they will be forced to give me a hideous scary name like I deserve. Death would be my name.



# EVERYONE'S FOE

---

**Justina Oyedeji**  
Nigeria

**H**e laughed loud and long as they made their resolutions for the year.

"I am getting that award this year."

"I will finish my book next month."

"I'm coming tops of my class this semester."

He would see how that would be possible.

So he visited each of them, and took them on a journey of no return!

# BE STILL AND LIVE

**Hannah Tarindwa**  
Namibia

**F**or long I indulged them; apologizing for being a burden: an orphan. I wanted to make them proud. It did not mean anything to them and it doesn't mean anything to me, anymore...

Why the hell did I go through that?

The grim reapers silence lingered as if she -yes she- had the answers and yet did not, possibly could not share them with me.

I took in a deep breath and so did she. Weirdly, I thought, "what did we just breathe? Surely it cannot be oxygen, if I am somewhere between death and life."

"No, it is not oxygen," she spoke and her voice sounded like a combination of a choir speaking at once with different voices. It was frightening and interesting all at once. I wanted to hear her again but I was also afraid to. The bringer of death should not speak

to her victims should she? I was awash with questions now that I was a ball of energy in this spirit world with nothing to lose. I was not happy or miserable. I was just curious.

Shouldn't death bring some sort of clarity? Surely this was not the resting in peace which I expected? What was going on?

We moved yet were still, all at once.

"Be still, go live" the sound came again. I understood finally that the stillness being spoken of was not my being which was not in my body, but my thoughts and questions were being commanded to be calm.

I hushed my thoughts and suddenly I was back in my body. Was it a dream? Had I died?

Someone screamed as I opened my eyes.



# HOME

**Ethel Maqeda**  
Zimbabwe

**T**here's nothing like walking through a cemetery on a drizzly Sheffield morning. Here, amongst the grey crumbling gravestones, the moss-laden gargoyles, the weather-beaten angels and the thick clumps of nettles, you realise that grandma's ochre mud-hut with orangey-yellow chevrons hugging its rough brown belly where you were born is no longer home. Neither is the township where your parent's bungalow sat on the edge of the wasteland that was the white people's golf course, where you grew up either.



Number six, The Rembrandt on Fifth Avenue, the first place you lived alone as an adult and bought your first piece of furniture was never home anyway. The city was too big, too frenetic and too prone to erupt and rejecting its own.

Lost amongst the epitaphs of the city's greats from



a bygone era, you realise that home is here, in this city on seven hills, in the stirrings of an understanding of the thing called

British humour, so cutting and one-sided that should it offend then, 'you have a chip on your shoulder'. This is home, where your answer to 'when are you fucking off home, wherever that is?' is, 'next Tuesday,' always. Here, amongst the nettles, the hollies and the wildflowers, you

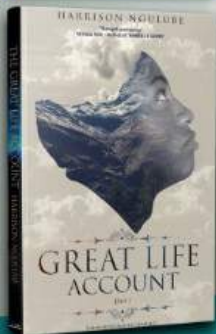
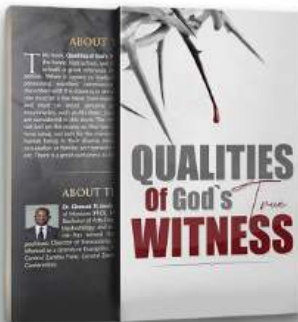


finally accept that you can stop agonising over which friend to ask to send your body back across the Atlantic. You can even see

your epitaph: She tarries here, her discarnate ancestral spirit forever wanders and searches.

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# DEATH WAS HERE

**Martins Deep**  
Nigeria



screeches of wheels, scurrying feet  
towards nowhere, cuss words  
accompanied by bullets.

our bowl of millet spilled  
& father smelt war like it wore  
the husk of a he-goat  
said he, "lead the way home now"  
"where?" I cry. torn  
not knowing a roof aside starry  
skies on cold nights.

i knew only how to cry for alms  
never the yowl at the splattering of  
blood on the ground

i choke, someone fell behind  
i do not feel the hand of father in mine  
i couldn't turn back

looming smoke, siren bellowing  
death was here

burning bodies light up  
a night that doesn't keep out feet  
from groping.

# FILTHY LUCRE

**Tlhobogang Larona**  
Botswana

Trigger pulled  
Triggered trepidation  
Is it me you fooled?  
He wants his ration

Triggered trepidation  
Bullet released  
He wants his ration  
All you relished

Bullet released  
I'm soaked in your blood  
All you relished  
Caused my tears to flood

Filthy lucre he craves  
Is it me you fooled?  
Soon accepted by graves  
Trigger pulled.

# DEATH IS SLEEP

**Trisha  
Uganda**

Death is a mystery  
The returning of man to the elements  
A deep slumber, quiet rest  
The equalizer of all mankind

The returning of man to the elements  
Albeit the unfulfilled dreams and goals  
The equalizer of all mankind  
Rich or poor, thief or king

Albeit the unfulfilled dreams and goals  
When death comes knocking you must heed  
Rich or poor, thief or king  
It's a call you can not ignore

When death comes knocking you must heed  
A deep slumber, quiet rest  
It's a call you can not ignore  
Death is a mystery.

# HE TOOK THE ONE I WED

**Femi Daramola  
Nigeria**



If death be a man, I would challenge him to a brawl,  
Shoulder to shoulder, until he is weak and left to crawl,  
He should be scared, lest he be dethroned and torn to  
shred

I am livid for he has stolen and trod on the one I wed

With his harsh hands he has made my home a sorrow  
My jewel, he has thrown to the wind, with no hope for  
tomorrow

Now, she sleeps beneath the cold grass, a place of no  
class

Lonely, under the rumbling storm, her fragile body en-  
masse.

If tears be a pledge to bring back the one I love,  
The world will flood and the sky will hide above,  
For life is cruel, full of ills and thorns, only the bad can  
strive.

O dark-little-reaper! You've come to take my soul out  
alive?

You're a clunker – you knew you'd lose the fight,  
Your cold hands bite the days of man, before the scary  
scars of nights,

With thy love-hate smile, thou shred my bed!

Take me up beyond the throng of stars, for I'd be glad to  
see the one I wed!

# DEATH

**Peace Ogbemor**  
Nigeria

Dirge tunes, wailings,  
Another one gone, strength failing.  
What's the essence of life?  
To die?  
Why, I ask, is existing just to cry and try?

Dusk and Dawn,  
Rise and Fall,  
We will tell tales of the ones no longer  
here.

They are gone, and we wonder what  
happens there,  
Where is There?  
A place we don't know,  
When we close our eyes, we fear that that  
could be the last.

Beads of sweat break across my face,  
Look in the sky above,  
The stars they say is the dead abode.  
Purple knees,  
Struggling deeds, just to breath  
unknown.  
Cast the body beneath,  
Call to yonder.

We only know they are watching over us,  
No one knows who watches them.  
Death can be peace,  
Death can be grief.

# HEART- BEAT

**Jacob Masenga**  
Zambia



Lub-dub, Lub-dub!  
Time on earth begins with a heartbeat  
Feeble infants, our hearts cry out  
We are like hired men, slaves longing  
for  
The evening shadows  
Our days swifter than a weaver's  
shuttle  
And they end as they began:  
Lub-dub, Lub-dub!



# THE PROCESSION IN BLACK

**Rindap Innocent**  
**Nigeria**

---

Come see the procession in black  
Singing as they walk  
Unswaying as they talk  
A procession all in black.

A monotone of grieving voices  
A coterie of teary faces  
A potpourri of dirges  
Spewing out of grieving hearts.

The squeaking gate  
On a windy afternoon  
Piercing through eerie serenity  
Fluttering wings; scampering afar.

The tall, failing and decomposing  
grasses  
The hodgepodge of scattered epitaphs  
The array of etched eulogies  
Of days, months, years...gone afar.

# POOR VENOM

**Agatha Racheal Akullu**  
**Uganda**

---

Oh death, poor venom!  
How comes you?  
In brief, or in calm?

By my troth, I enjoin!  
When you come;  
Take me not in brief  
Like rushing wind that plucks a leaf  
And drops on land,  
Or like lightening that strikes one  
And in thunder heard,  
Yet in a jot!

When you come, I marry!  
Accost me in calm.  
When under the Odugu tree i warrant.  
With goose pen in hand  
That when you take me, poor venom,  
I die not, and be forgotten hereafter.  
Nay, my carcass in the grave,  
Yet my writings anew,  
So in generations I may breed,  
And in my quietus,  
Write like no man ever did.



# YOU WILL KNOW IT WHEN IT COMES FOR THEM

**Halima Adam**  
**Tanzaia**

---

It is well known and famous  
It is unknown and mysterious  
It is everywhere and anywhere  
You have probably seen it somewhere  
Or that you thought you did

It visits often but talked about less  
It is feared and yet no way to avoid it  
It is the legend and the trend

It takes people from the known to the  
unknown  
From the seen to the unseen  
From joys and happiness to sorrows  
and sadness  
It is sometimes believed to be the giver  
of peace

It makes us question everything  
The worthiness of it all  
The necessity of it all  
Should we quit or keep pushing?

Life and experience might make it seem  
well known to you  
But it is until it gets to one of them  
The ones you term dear to your heart  
And takes them with itself  
That is when you will know it  
That is when you will be able to feel its  
presence  
Because it has finally come for them

**GENRE: SHORT STORY****TITLE: IN THE EYE OF SILENCE****WRITER: OBINNA GABRIELLA, NIGERIA****REVIEWER: YOLANDA KUEI P. MACUEI, SOUTH SUDAN**

■ ■ In the Eye of silence!" As the title entails, it reveals a series of events that occur in the day to day life, where some things eat us up especially when we try to be silent about them, yet they actually hurt us deeply. Silence is not equal to humility. That is, being quiet doesn't mean being humble. Therefore, the writer vividly demonstrates the power of silence as a dangerous weapon in constituting one's feelings and actions; then fate or destiny determines it all.

The writer has obviously struck a chord with the audience. The story is sumptuously narrated in such a way that the readers visualize it and have their minds engulfed in cogitation, like they are experiencing it at that particular moment.

Fate or destiny is the major theme. Twisted as it is; a result of silence because it is the predetermined outcome of every situation. "Whatever fate is, I'm sure she is a sadist; twisted like branches of yam tendrils around a cassava stalk in an unattended farm" this statement indicates the difficulties and consequences of dealing with the unpleasanties silently.

In this case, the writer uses techniques such as similes and metaphors: "with voices raised loud enough to wake the dead," to express her story and draw the readers into deep understanding of the message it conveys.

In addition, the writer refers to Fate as a 'She' to begin the narrative through an old woman 'Nne' who lived alone behind their father's house in Enugu, as an example of the reality fate or destiny Ikenna and Muna are subjected to as orphans of what was meant to be. "Maybe we are fated to be alone and have no home; to stay out at sea without anchor, to have nothing but each other and learn the virtues of long-suffering."

The story is told in the first person point of view; in a historical flash back of a six year old Ikenna and his sister – Muna, who lived through trauma at a very young age in silence as a result of violence and an independence war outbreak; thus reveals the theme of war, 1967. "...too young to understand and too old to leave the memories behind." It relates to Africans' states during the times of struggle for liberation, when many young people were fated never to overcome their fears, such as rape and domestic violence hence culminates into their suffering in the backstage. It's mainly based on a newly independent State, "Biafra" in Nigeria whose independence initially excited the masses.

Rape and domestic violence as other themes are twisted in another theme of death due to incite of silence. Whenever one accumulates all the burdens inside oneself, the result is always harmful to oneself and others.

Whatever is meant to happen will always do but is choosing to see and stay mute, not worse than violence? This tells us to command and let the silent demon "die by fire..."

In a nutshell, the story reminds us of the past experiences, it also urges us to be bold in the eyes of our fears and break the silence. We should be the masters of our own fate however twisted it might be, one should try to do whatever one can do and leave the rest to fate.

This piece of work portrays most of the African countries during the pre and post-independence era where natives were frequently in war with soldiers, children became orphans, soldiers and refugees were subjected to so much pain in vain. Yet, there is virtually nothing they can do about it than to accept to act or live in silence to survive.

The writer has captivated the audience by using phrases that are appealing to all the senses. That is, the use of the African setting that most of us are familiar with. The story ends leaving audience in suspense (in a state of desiring to read more).

In conclusion, we rest what we can't manage in the guidance of fate and polish what we can with our own hands. "Yes we can" Barack Obama. Because the African Identity is fated/destined to always identify their own; even in the eye of silence. Africa, rise from and in silence.

**GENRE: COLUMN**

**TITLE: LIFE AS WE KNOW IT**

**WRITER: UGBEDE ATABOR, NIGERIA**

**REVIEWER: NAMSE UDOSEN, NIGERIA**

**F**ate: The ultimate agency that predetermines the course of events. An event or course of events that will inevitably happen in the future.  
 Destiny: A predetermined state, condition foreordained by the divine or human will.

**Oxford Dictionary (2020)**

The article opens with a bit of vague and contradictory postulations. "I do not believe in fate, but I believe in destiny." Most dictionaries consulted revealed that 'fate' and 'destiny' are synonyms.

In a journey assumed to be by fate, the persona, who is the crux of the story falls in love as a lesson. The narrative of the love story is that of an older woman who falls in love with a man ten years younger. She confesses to savouring the sweet romance for two long weeks. The relationship is laced with quality conversations, movie watching and walks without intimacy (physical I presume). She claims to be deep into the man before she pulled back by the strings of social and cultural conformity.

The writer shares a captivating story of loving and a relationship that knocks of her previous conception of romantic relationships. She however is press ganged (by personal reflection) to reconsider based on what she thinks society expects of her. She lets her fears and social conditioning get a better of her. All is not lost as this provides her with an epiphany of sorts. She discovers that purity and love can be found in romance. She believes that it was her destiny to have loved "Mon amour", but the rest is left to fate. This puts the discerning reader into a conceptual quagmire.

The article is written in a laid back but direct style. The writer deploys common everyday slangs and local lingo that makes it relatable.

I have concerns about the two week romance being a yardstick to determine how romantic relationships can last without physical intimacy (I may be wrong).

In the end this piece gives a perspective that lovers of all ages can glean some guidance from.



**GENRE: CHILDREN'S LITERATURE**

**TITLE: KUBO AND THE BAOBAB TREE**

**WRITER: BERNARD EWHOMAZINO GLORY, NIGERIA**

**REVIEWER: FUNMI RICHARDS, NIGERIA**

**K**UBO AND THE BAOBAB TREE? The first question you would want to ask is 'was it Kubo's fate to be swallowed by the Baobab Tree?' Or was it to be a case of being in the wrong place at the wrong time?

One of the things, life teaches us about fate is that it is usually predestined. Sometimes, it doesn't matter what we do, what we say or our inactions, Que sera, sera. So, predestination is often associated with fate. And in this story, the author uses foreshadowing as a narrative witness to construct rich imagery of an encounter Kubo might have with the Baobab tree if he goes to the stream that evening and all of these occurs in his dream.

However, it's all a dream and conscious fears reflect or manifest in our subconscious, one can argue that Kubo has always been afraid of going to the stream whenever his mother asks him to do so in the evening and that might be why he had such a dream just before his mum woke him up to go to the stream. Also, the author never makes an allusion to Kubo's dreams always coming true, so his dream could be an instance where a child's imaginative fears slip up and cement themselves into his subconscious so that they're no longer just childish fantasies but real-life experiences.

It would have been great to see what happens to Kubo later on, would his mother insist he goes to the stream? Would he go and encounter the scary men and the Baobab tree? Or would he not encounter them and overcome the fear of going to the stream late in the evening and start to count such dreams as mere fantasies?

As children, we dream up fantasies and expect them to come true and play their part in our realities, sometimes fate lends a hand to these fantasies and they come to pass. Other times, it is only a figment of our imaginations and nothing to do with fate but everything to do with fear or just bodily functions like peeing or bedwetting.

All in all, an imaginative and exciting story that would be sure to entertain young children if the story is developed into a series or a collection of Kubo's adventures.

**GENRE: ARTICLE**

**TITLE: ARE OUR CHOICES MEANINGFUL?**

**WRITER: OLUWADAMILOLA YUSUF, NIGERIA**

**REVIEWER: NYATI COMFORT, ZIMBABWE**

**C**hoice is the motherhouse of fate or it could be the other way round. The bottom line is that it always puts us in a dilemma not only to choose but lead a life of meaning, and we are obliged to make a choice in order to fulfil whatever we are destined towards. This destiny as presented in the article can come in two ways; either shed or unshed our life purpose. Although every human prefers to associate with the latter, to unshed our life purpose.

In this article, the writer unreservedly addresses one of the questions that baffles people in every condition of their lives more especially when confined with a crossroad of choices. Thus, choices that hold our future and choices that act as custodians of our destiny. By the very fact of being accorded a rhetorical title, it simply pledges to question the concept of choice in the life of an earthly citizen. This could suggest the writer's mission which can only be fulfilled after gathering possible answers to the question; Are our Choices meaningful?

This ushers the reader to the further invocation of an Aristotelean teaching of human reason. The faculty which enables man to be a perpetual decision maker. To some degree, it contradicts the Hausa belief system of the people of Northern Nigeria who believe in the theory of predestination. Meanwhile for Aristotle, the more an individual makes a choice, he creates his own fate, while for the Hausa people; fate finds its way to a man even if he does nothing to search for it because it is intrinsically endowed in him. Therefore, this illustrates three paradigms in regard to the understanding of fate. The writer proceeds to introduce her audience to the third paradigm, another African philosophical doctrine of the vital force postulated by Placid Temples in his book Bantu Philosophy. The major theme of the book was to emphasize that every human being –an African in this context– has a vital force that is fully in charge to animate his/her wellbeing and ultimately this force determines one's fate.

The conclusion reveals a good amount of braininess in the writer's mind when she rightly states that 'a man's destiny is right in his hands.' Which implies that every choice lies in the guardianship of an individual and the consequence of that choice is what brings meaning out of the choice. With the aforementioned analysis, it still remains an exceptional piece of work which has been enriched with adequate research, good diction and well edited. It is by no chance that it has been accredited with a crown of editor's choice. For it draws one into the depth of the horizon of decision making as the common denominator of fate.



**GENRE: FLASH FICTION**

**TITLE: A TWIST IN FATE**

**WRITER: MARYCYNTHIA OKAFOR, NIGERIA**

**REVIEWER: MAJORY MOONO SIMUYUNI, ZAMBIA**

**A** twist in fate is a story of a barren woman, Ezimma, who has been attempting to conceive for several years but to no avail. It is believed that she traded her fertility for beauty. In a dream she has one night, she pleads with the gods for the ability to conceive and the three fates agree to alter her fate, except it is not without a cost. The child she is to have she will be with but only for a while. She sighs her relief upon waking because she's just escaped that fate. By a stroke of luck, she conceives that morning and is to name her daughter after the Sun god.

Okafor's text is rich for the fact that it can be appreciated on more fronts than one. It is as mythological as it is cultural, as psychological as it could be literal. In this review, we critique her piece from the mythological point of view and the psychoanalytical approach. In mythology, at the centre of life is deities. In this piece of fiction are deities. We see Ezimma sacrificing her fertility to them and returning to them to plead for the twist of her fate. Humans are at the mercy of these supreme beings and the gods decide their fate. The question here though is; was Ezimma dreaming? Psychoanalytically, dreams are a reflection of our reality. The subconscious reveals so much than what we could see in what we call real life for it is not censored, just suppressed. This dream could be said to be a reality of our protagonist. She is barren because she indeed sold her potency!

As soon as she wakes up from the dream, the narrator tells us that she conceives. This comes to prove that the dream may not have been a dream after all. Why do events from the dream continue into her wake unbroken? We are not told of coitus for her conception but she does conceive. Is the child a child of the gods? Probably that's why she's not just to be named after the Sun god but is also to belong to the deities, away from her mother.

The story was artistically weaved, giving the reader a challenge to read between the lines to decipher the meaning. Flash fiction that leaves a reader analyzing is effective fiction and in that department, Okafor succeeded.

However, the title of the story lacks in creativity. A Twist in Fate is a tired title, not just in literary circles but in the movie industry too. For such a brilliant piece of art, a poetic title would have done more justice.

When all is said, however, A Twist of Fate is a masterpiece. It brings out important aspects of covenants. While our fate is something we all should create on our own, Ezimma entrusted hers to the gods in exchange for beauty. Her life is never the same afterwards as we see her misery continuing even into the next generation (that of her daughter). We are perhaps better off creating our fate than entrusting it to supreme beings.

**GENRE: POETRY****TITLE: A SUTRA ABOUT FATE****WRITER: JUWON ADEOLA, NIGERIA****REVIEWER: OMADANG YOWASI, UGANDA**

**H**aving listened to stories of a fortuneteller, one can't read this poem and doesn't doubt those stories from the "wise men." The poem as it reflects in the title suggests the general rules or truths about the unavoidable tip or apex of a life journey.

It's written in couplets of free verse of four stanzas and a tercet, making eleven (11) lines. Short as it is, the poem is full of mysteries and revelations about the human body and its significance in determining the life of a person. Thanks to the fortune tellers who are able to read and interpret the markings or lines in our palms! This is the persona's first sutra which reveals one's eventual journey. The persona believes we (humans) are born with our fate pre-determined in our palms and fate enclosed in our bodies.

However a question arises, are we all destined to our respective fates when we shall all die? According to the poem, the answer is yes. We are driven by dreams in order to achieve whatever lies beyond our immediate reach, but do we all achieve what we chase? No.

There are distractions along the way, which in this case is FATE. It either allows us achieve or spoils our destiny when still on the tracks.

The poem is stylistically divided into two parts by a Volta (turning point). From stanza three onwards, one detects the change from the obvious due to the poet's use of "but."

As we fix our wings to fly and chase our dreams, our "feathers" are prey to "razors."

These feathers on us are the driving forces or spirits of free will that propel us into hard work in order to achieve whatever we want in life and the "razors" are fate itself or sudden distractions like death, mental impairment, and many negative thoughts towards once a brilliant dream.

The poem maintains (we) don't achieve our greatness because (we) don't nurture our dreams. By the time (we) realize we're on the verge of failing, it is at this point we feel we should put former things right. Human nature is beautifully portrayed here. Lateness and dreaming of the past wasted opportunities is part of us. Let's exploit opportunities before it's late for fate doesn't wait.

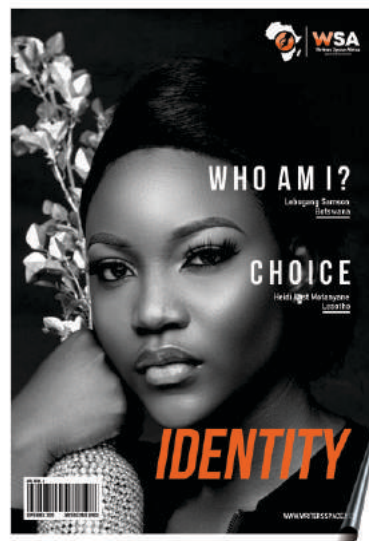
The poet vividly and beautifully employs imagery and symbolism to depict man's continuous drama and fight with fate. He ends with a rhetoric question as to whether we shall go back in time to streamline our wasted chances. The tone is pensive, informative and compliant.

The poem has all the necessary reasons for being the editor's choice.



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