



WSA
Writers Space Africa
Magazine

June 2022 Edition - Issue 66



Stephanie Chizoba Odili

**Second-place winner of the Wakini Kuria prize
for Children's literature**

This edition is proudly sponsored by:

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and
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WSA
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Call for **Submission**

WSA Literary Magazine is calling for submission for its 68th edition (August edition).

Theme: **NEW PLACES.**

This call is from May 20th until June 15th



To submit, please visit
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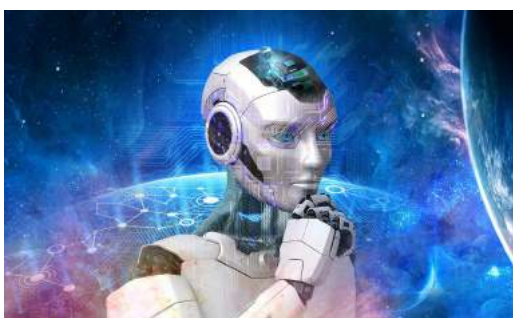
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From the Founder's Desk

Anthony Onugba (PenBoss)

***“Anything can be learned thanks to technology
and so we have no excuse for ignorance.”***

One of the arguments for advancement in technology is the ease that it provides to the end-user. From VR (virtual reality) to AR (augmented reality), AI (Artificial Intelligence), social media, and other new media tools, technology has altered the way creatives create content, as well as how the content is shared or consumed by others. Technology provides positives that enable the creative to create electronic copies of their works, and sell them online thus having complete control over the

entire process from creation to sales. It also offers negatives such as piracy, and plagiarism.

That technology exists with cons is not much of a big deal when compared to people who do not utilise technology to promote themselves and their works. The modern world does not need the wheel to be reinvented because it provides lots of workable models that we can study, adapt, and implement within our own circles and continue to modify the

outcome until we get the desired results and more.

Perhaps the way forward is to be deliberate in achieving our dreams. This entails understanding the process and implementing it by using the requisite technological tools. Anything can be learned thanks to technology and so we have no excuse for ignorance. Let us learn and let us act. This is the only way to advance with technology.





From the Chief Editor

Comfort Nyati, SDB
Zimbabwe

Dear reader,

Reflecting on the thought-provoking theme of this month, I have come to a conclusion that on a daily basis we walk along the corridors of technology. We breathe air discharged by technological products and yes technology has become our daily bread. One would agree with me that the definition of life is generally taking strides on the shoulders of technology.

For centuries, the universe has been assailed by an innovative marvel whose novelty dwells in the compass of human intelligence. One would not resist submitting to the narrative accorded to

technology. This is vividly manifested in the accumulative bundles of pragmatic knowledge surfacing in the contemporary globe.

The world is growing scientific, harboring scientific citizens pursuing scientific answers to scientific problems. This is embedded in the operation of machines, some of them have enabled man to connect and travel new miles known and unknown. As such, the manner technology has affected peoples' thinking, talking, and relating, will be more or less the manner this 66th Edition will rewrite your worldview, especially how you network with your society.

Despite the drawbacks orchestrated by some technological machines such as nuclear weapons which has disintegrated the world both morally and socially, for instance, the present-day Russia-Ukraine conflict reveals the competition for power wrestled on the podium of advanced destructive technological diplomacies. However, it is my hope that this magazine will offer a new impetus that will direct you to point out the vast potency that technology would offer to rehabilitate this decadency affecting not only humanity but ecology at large.

Remember, Twaweza!!!

I have come to a conclusion that on a daily basis, we walk along the corridors of technology.





PoeticAfrica

CALL FOR SUBMISSION



Poetic Africa, a quarterly trilingual poetry magazine published by Writers Space Africa, calls for submissions from poets for her August 2022 edition.

*The world is in a state of quagmire and pandemonium, from Nairobi to Cairo, Moscow to New York. Turning a blind eye only makes us inhumane. Don't they say an injury to one is an injury to all? Write and submit your poem under the theme **CHAOS**.*

The editorial team is looking for poems of a maximum of 24 lines, creativity and originality, use of poetic devices and economy of words. Please present well-arranged poetry and note that the poem titles should not have the word "Chaos".

The submission window is from May 11th until June 10th 2022. The edition will be released on **August 10th 2022**.

To submit, please visit <https://writersspace.net/poeticafrika>. Submissions in French or Swahili are accepted (without equivalent translations in English).



Articles

Tech Tok

Author: Thembela Msibi
Country: Eswatini

...there is always the question of whether the person on the other end of the chatbox is genuine. Are they who they say they are? Do they look like their profile pictures? Is it a fake account created by an enemy to make a mockery of me?

I wonder if my forefathers were ever curious to know the possibility of flying above the clouds without wings. Perhaps they were too busy sharpening their spears for war to give it a thought. If they were to be given another chance at life in this century, they would probably not recognize this land. I would be glad to orient them. Three things will I tell them: first is that wearing shoes in this century is an obligation; second, there is the internet that seems to control the human species; and then I will add that the blowing of horns to send a message has been replaced by 'sliding in DMs.'

The advancement of technology is something to marvel at. Commendably, scientists have pushed themselves to the limit. Turnitin is used by some universities to detect the degree of plagiarism in every work. It is this marking aid that has a lot of 'copy-and-paste' students frustrated about technology. At least, they can still browse the internet for memes to get over their frustration. I believe social media comedians should get a stipend of some sort for the good work done. A certain percentage of our taxes

must go to these people.

What I am mostly glad about is not having to walk for days to get to the city. Although, with the rise in fuel prices, one may want to consider just taking a journey to the grocery shop. We can brand it as the newest weight-loss regimen and no one will suspect a thing. Alternatively, we can purchase the Tesla car. It doesn't require gasoline because it is battery-powered. Fascinating!

When COVID-19 struck, it could have been the end of the world but it wasn't, thanks to virtual meeting platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, Microsoft Team and the likes. Business was somewhat able to continue. For Africa, the pandemic certainly fast-tracked the long-awaited migration to e-commerce which was moving quite slowly in past years. It has prompted the catalysis of rural development. In the semi-urban and urban parts of Africa, it is a common thing to own a smartphone. If you don't, how are you even able to post on Facebook?

Once I watched a television show and listened to a couple; the guests, tell their story



of how they met each other on a dating app. I was intrigued. Do you mean technology is the genie that can grant you love? It seems so. However, there is always the question of whether the person on the other end of the chatbox is genuine. Are they who they say they are? Do they look like their profile pictures? Is it a fake account created by an enemy to make a mockery of me? You can never be certain. Whatever the new norm may be, the good old boy-meets-girl kind of love won't ever be unpopular.

Alas, as technology advances, so do the ills that come with it. Police warn about credit card scams every day. Cyberbullying has been one of the most severe causes of depression amongst young people. Recently, a chubby teenager was bullied for her body and was consequently entertaining suicidal thoughts. We need more body-positivity posts. Europe must know the dark side of technology very well by now. What others

have already dubbed 'World War 3' is currently underway between brothers, Russia and Ukraine. Whilst on that one, doesn't it seem like those who are 'allowed' to broker peace, are the same ones who spend more resources manufacturing weapons? In essence, those with the capacity to destroy the world, are the very ones eligible to protect lives universally? It is a paradox indeed.

I must remind you that Africa is the youngest continent. Every young person needs to be tech-savvy. In this Fourth Industrial Revolution, Africa has been lagging. It is high time governments invest in think-tanks and research institutions that will capacitate young people to make valuable contributions to the global technological domain as well as enable them to use sophisticated technology for business and leisure. Surely, Siri must know us all in this lifetime!



When in Eden

Author: Halla Immaculate
Country: Tanzania

...We came into the world bare and it wasn't a mistake. We are capable of surviving bare, that's how strong we are. With or without technology, humans will live. That's how it was from the genesis of things.

The advancements in technology must have been good news to a lot of people. I mean, the feeling of having everything simplified must have brought so much joy to many. Well, it did for me too. Now I put everything down and just take a walk in the woods.

It would have been wonderful to be born in the days when technology had not evaded our livelihoods before the dazzling city lights stole away the beauty of the night; the days when you could listen to the sounds of the earth and stare at the symmetry of constellations; when time was an illusion too inane to be tracked down. We lived stress-free from unrealistic deadlines, the demands our modern days require; where every moment was precious on its own and every child dreamt of leading a nation and protecting their people, before educational institutions came along, stole the true meaning of knowledge and corrupted the youth with mediocrity, where now, some of those so-called scholars can't even think for themselves, do for themselves or even stand up for themselves, for they let their



minds get graded by test papers that are not even accurate enough to measure their full potential.

I wish I was born in the beginning, when we marvelled at the glamour and beauty of the universe instead of Netflix and Binge; we treasured the beauty of the sun instead of scrolling TikTok, and liked walking on beautiful lands instead of liking Instagram pictures; when women knew how to embrace their spiritual power and men knew of their responsibilities to feed their children and shelter their families; we had pure water from the rivers and ate rich nutritious foods which were never packed.

I wish I was born in the garden where life truly existed and peace ruled the world; before humans tumbled down the food chain and brought migraines, pandemics, and cruelty to animals.

Now skyscrapers roam the earth, magnificent exclusive creatures don't anymore. Car engines rove, replacing the dinosaurs' powerful roars, fire came with light but burnt all that was bright, and iron came but toiled all that was good; critical thinking and the power of reasoning invaded the human mind and made humans wonder about all that wasn't supposed to be wondered. Science became a welcomed devil.

We are on a steep slope we call development. Our world is hanging on a thread called global warming but we forget that we are the cause of it. As we suffer the consequences of our actions, we've reshaped the idea of purpose into unneeded wants. Technology has indeed brought so many good things into our lives, but we shouldn't

just see the doughnut and ignore the hole. As we appreciate the light, we should also recognize the darkness. We came into the world bare and it wasn't a mistake. We are capable of surviving bare, that's how strong we are. With or without technology, humans will live. That's how it was from the genesis of things.





WSA
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AFRICAN TEEN WRITERS AWARDS

The Writers Space Africa Foundation is pleased to announce the African Teen Writers Awards for early teens from 13 to 16 years old.

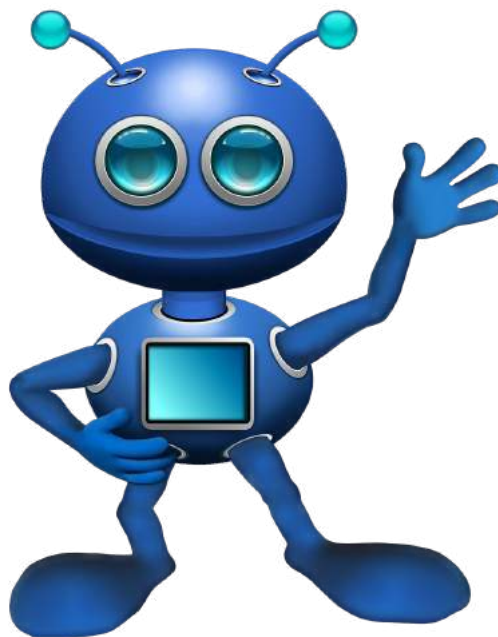
Submissions are in two categories; poetry and prose and accepted from March 15 and July 1, 2022.

Winners will receive a certificate and \$100 each.

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

Andrew and the Robot

Written by **Pelekani Lwenje, Zambia**



Every day the sounds of hammering could be heard in the garage next to the house. Andrew knew who was causing it. It was his father. His father was a kind of super-scientist. That was how Andrew's mother had described him. Andrew had always wanted to know what exactly his father was making in the garage. All his father would say was that it would change everything. What would change everything? His father never wanted to tell him anything.

One night as he was sleeping nicely and snuggling, Andrew was woken up to loud

sounds: DRRRRRR! BAM! BAM! BOOM! BOOM! Quickly, he got out of bed and went straight to the window to check, but all he could see was a huge owl. Dogs could be heard barking. His father was making too much noise.

This went on for weeks. Andrew tried to see his father, but he would be chased. His father would tell him that he was almost finished and soon they would spend all day together. All he wanted, however, was to spend time with his father and tell him that he loved him.



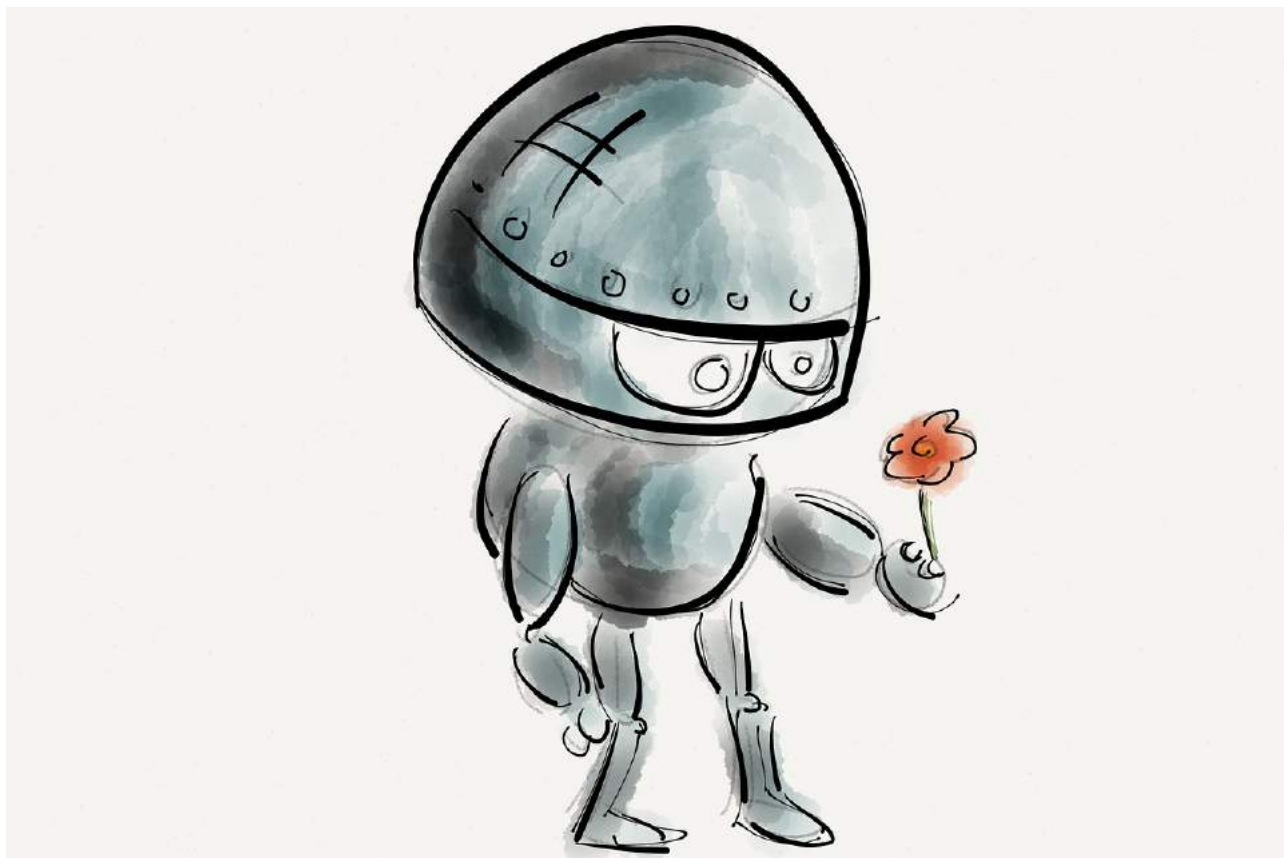
One morning, Andrew woke up to the sound of shouting and scattering. It was his mother. He ran to her. He immediately knew that something was wrong because she was crying. She finally told him, and all Andrew could do was shake his head. It was not true. His father was alive. He was in the garage busy with his secret. Then he ran out of the house. He ran and ran until he could not anymore.

Andrew wiped the tears from his eyes. All he could think of was what was in the garage. What had been so important? Now it was too late. He wanted to know what was in the garage. He hated whatever it was. It had taken his father from him. He ran back home and went straight for the garage. He entered the garage door and what he saw surprised him.

It was a robot the size of a tall man. A robot that looked like a village warrior. Andrew

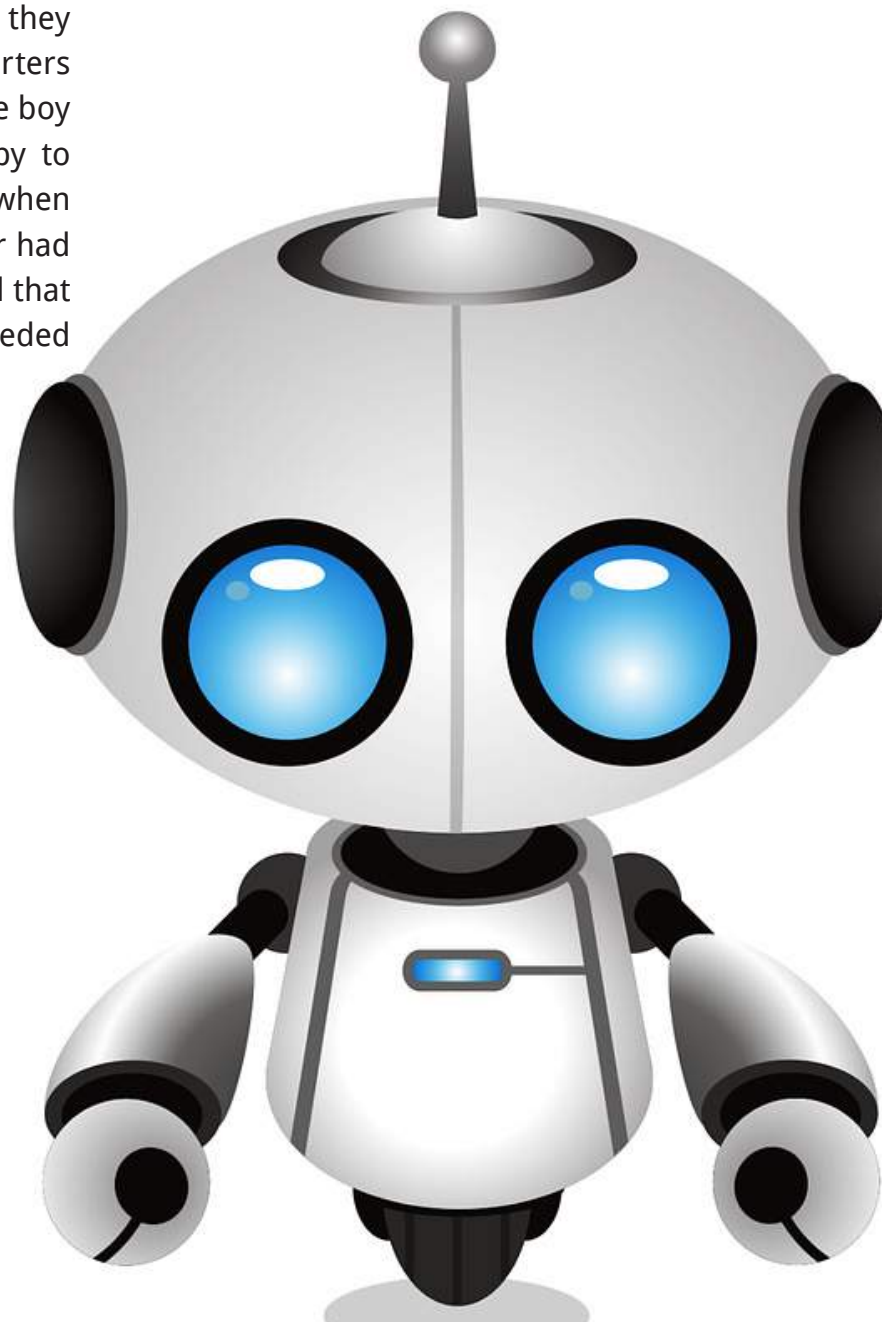
stared at the thing for a long time. Was this what his father had died for? He started to cry again. It was not fair. Then he heard a familiar voice. "Don't cry Andrew. Daddy is here for you. Daddy loves you." Where had that voice come from? Andrew looked around, but could not see anyone. Then he looked at the face of the robot and saw that it was smiling. "Yes, my son. It is me. Your father," said the robot. Andrew wanted to scream but found that he couldn't. He strangely felt safe next to the robot. He believed what it had told him. His father had returned in the body of the robot.

Andrew spent every day coming to talk to his father. He would share all kinds of stories with him. Then one day his father told him that the robot could be used to help others with all kinds of problems. Andrew loved the idea that he was finally going to spend more time with his father, his father, the robot. He thought about his mother. How was she go-



ing to take the news? His mother was scared at first but after some time she got used. She had kept it a secret from everyone else; only she and Andrew were the only ones who knew the truth about the robot.

As the years went by, Andrew and the robot travelled everywhere. His mother was also there. They helped people who were in danger, and even helped the police catch dangerous criminals. They helped farmers. They found lost children and brought them back to their families. Everywhere they went people cheered. The news reporters followed. Everyone wanted to know the boy and his robot. Andrew was just happy to spend more time with his father even when he was now a robot. A robot his father had made just for him. His father promised that he would stay for as long as Andrew needed him.





The Tele-Doctor

Written by **Moses Tololo, Zambia**



Chanza is a girl who lives in a beautiful town in Ndola. She lives with her mother, father and her younger brothers. She loves her family. She also has a grandmother whom she loves very much. Her grandmother lives in a village far, far away in Chembe. She talks to her grandmother every day. She calls her in the morning to find out how she has woken up and, in the evening, to find out how her day was. Her grandmother is her best friend. She tells her grandmother how her school was.

One morning, Chanza woke up early in the morning. She brushed her teeth and ate her breakfast. She was ready to go to school when she remembered to call her grandmother.

"Hello," she said.

"Hello, my sweetheart," her grandmother responded.

"How are you granny?"

"I am not too well," her grandmother said.



“What is the problem?” She asked.

“I need to see a doctor,” her grandmother said.

“How are doctors going to see you since your village is very far from town?”

“I don’t know sweetheart,” her grandmother said, softly.

Chanza was worried about her grandmother. She remembered how sick her grandmother was the last time they took her to the hospital.

“What can I do to help my granny?” she cried.

Chanza did not go to school that day. Rather, she rushed to the nearest hospital to see a doctor.

“Doctor!” She cried.

“What is it, young girl?” The doctor asked.

“My granny is very sick.”

“What is wrong with her?” Asked the doctor.

“I don’t know,” Chanza responded.

“Where is she? I can take a look at her?”

“She is not here,” responded Chanza, “she is very far away in the village.”

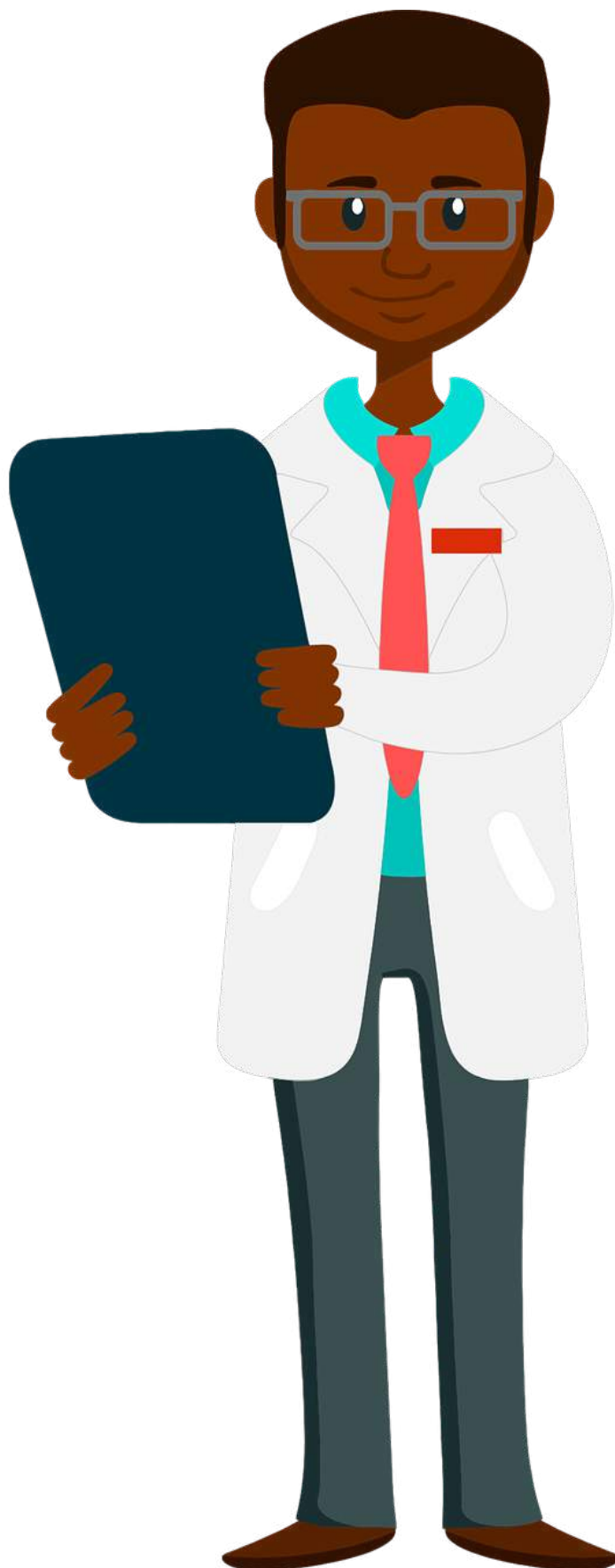
“Oh too bad,” the doctor said.

“What can I do for my poor granny,” Chanza cried, “she is all by herself.”

“Don’t worry Chanza,” the doctor said encouragingly, “we will use Tele-doctor.”

“Tele-doctor?” Asked Chanza, “what is that?”

“It’s an App that has been developed by



scientists to help doctors to reach people in the rural areas and far places," the doctor said.

The doctor continued to explain how the App is used to get information about a patient even if the patient is not in a hospital. The doctor asked Chanza to call her grandmother on her phone. When Chanza called her grandmother, the doctor asked her to install a 'Tele-doctor' on her mobile phone. Chanza's grandmother installed the App on her phone as quickly as she could. The doctor then asked her to scan herself using the phone. When she finished scanning, the results were sent to the doctor's phone.

"Look Chanza!" Exclaimed the doctor, "I have your grandmother's results."

"Really?" Said, surprised Chanza, "Are they ok?"

"Unfortunately not," the doctor said, "her temperature and blood pressure are high."

"Oh poor granny," cried Chanza.

"Don't worry Chanza," the doctor said, "she just needs some medicine and she will be fine."

"She doesn't have any medicine in the village," said Chanza sadly.

"We will send the medicine to her," the doctor said happily.

"How can you do that?" she asked.

"We have the latest technology that can help us do that," the doctor said.

The doctor led Chanza to the pharmacist's office. There, they got all the medicine that her grandmother needed. Then, he led her

to another room. In the next room, Chanza saw the technology that the hospital was using to send medicine to patients. The doctor then explained what the latest technology does.

"What is this, doctor?" She asked.

"This is a drone," the doctor said. "This is what will take medicine to your grandmother."

"How?"

"We will attach the medicine to the drone and then it will take the medicine."

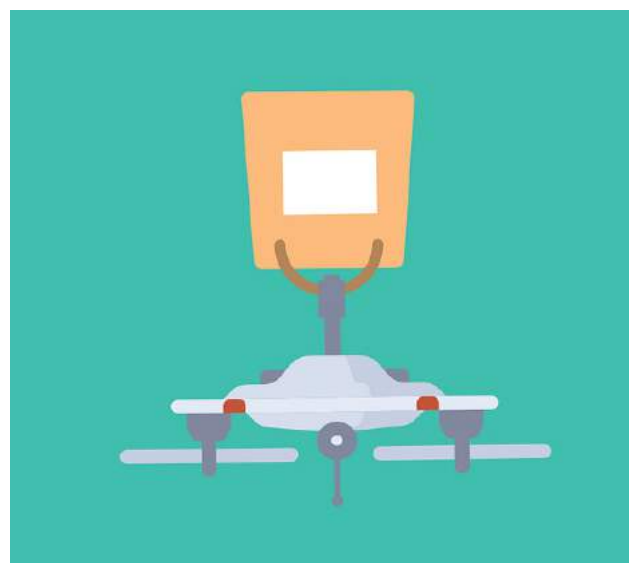
"Who will be controlling it?"

"We will be controlling it from here until it reaches where your grandmother is," the doctor explained.

"Wow!" she explained.

"Come, sit with me and together we will fly the drone."

The drone flew for a very long distance until it reached Chembe village. Chanza was able to see her grandmother getting the medicine. She became very happy.



African Technology

Written by **Seluliwe Masuku, Eswatini**

Today I'm recapped
To when we were only seven
When in our small semi-circle groups,
We stood facing our leader,
Clapping, jumping and stamping our one foot forward
We jovially played Ampe in Ghana.

Today reminds me,
Of a special South African game
A game we used to play,
Where we shouted "Mbube! Mbube!"
Meaning "Lion! Lion!",
Blindfolded, we spun round and round
Locating and capturing our southern African buck "Impala".
We were still young;
very energetic and full of life!

How can I forget
My very own personal favourite game,
Inketo from Eswatini?
On the soil we sat in a circle,
Within a small hole dug in the ground
Filled with pebbles,
Tossing, catching and picking pebble after pebble



We giggled our childhood away.
Rain or not we danced, skipped, hopped,
Rolled in the mud filled with laughter and fun.

Fast forward to five years later came Tick Tok Tech,
It was all flashlights and trends,
We moved so fast.
Ampe was replaced by Dora the explorer,
We stopped running and chasing after each other
Rather we sat and watched Tom chase Jerry.

They said we were evolving, Transforming for the best,
Bumblebee after Megatron twisting and turning in the air
We settled for their commands.
The beeps, the dings, the clicks,
We all loved it,
Could not live without it,
At only four years with a phone in hand, typing away,
We only stood and watched a life wasted away.

The pain brought on by the new reality is unimaginable.
Having our African identity tarnished beyond repairs
Losing touch with our roots
To technology has left us impaired.
With a glimpse of hope
We hope for the best,
Maybe we've got a chance to save what's left,
Maybe we can still unearth our roots then, create our very own African Technology that
will speak to us.





The 4th

WAKINI KURIA PRIZE

for Children's Literature

The Wakini Kuria Prize for Children's Literature was established in 2019 to honour the memory and legacy of Wakini Kuria and for her contribution to the growth of the African literary space.

For this fourth edition of the Wakini Kuria Prize, we are calling for submissions in the **Children's literature** genre **for children from ages 8 to 12**. There is **no theme** for this call.

This call is open **ONLY** to writers of African descent and will run from **March 15 until July 1, 2022**. The winner of this prize will receive a certificate and \$200. The second and third place winners will receive \$150, and \$100 respectively.

Please visit www.writerspace.net/awards for more details and to submit.



Creative Spotlight

with PPBlessing

Stephanie Chizoba Odili

Second-place winner of the Wakini Kuria prize for Children's literature, poet, novelist, and school teacher.



PPBlessing: Can you give us a brief introduction of who Stephanie is?

SCO: Stephanie is a poet, novelist and school teacher. That is my most recent LinkedIn headline and I think it best describes who I am and how I want to be known currently in my life. As a poet, I love poetry. It was my first love. I started writing poems before I started writing fiction. I also love performing arts, I love music, dance, and theatre. I think I am an introverted person but I can be very eccentric.

PPBlessing: Are you a teacher by profession?

SCO: Yes, I am.

PPBlessing: What made you begin writing fiction?

SCO: What made me begin writing fiction was that I stammered a lot when I was younger, a lot more than I do now, and people did not have the patience to hear me finish my statements. So whenever people asked me how was my day, or how was school, I thought it was better to write these things down. I noticed that I just started adding a bit of my things and I would just write imaginary things and then create characters and create scenarios and create a setting. I didn't know what it was then. I just liked writing stories. That's what I used to say, I like writing stories. Because they all were stories, and before I knew it, I realized that oh! Wow! This is fiction. I am writing fiction. By then I was already ten but I actively started writing at seven because I needed an outlet to tell stories that I couldn't say or that I couldn't speak properly about.

PPBlessing: Seeing that you started writing so early and being a novelist, have you published books?

SCO: Yes I have. Three of them. 'Deafening Silence' my debut novel won the 2019 1st runner up of the Association of Nigerian Authors Prize For Fiction; '22', a collection of poems and short stories; and 'The Lean Wedding: How To Get Married With As Low As N100,000' a non-fiction finance book for young, starting, fiancées.

PPBlessing: How has winning the Wakini Kuria prize for Children's literature impacted you as a person and your writing?

SCO: The prize has impacted me as a person because first of all, I was already transition-



Stephanie at the book launch of her debut novel "Deafening Silence". (Photographed by Ojomo Best)





Stephanie at the Burj Khalifa (Photo by Wole)

ing to writing and teaching children. Everything I had done so far was for young adults and adults, and I think writing that story and coming second place just made me realize oh my God!! I could actually tell more children stories. My aunty being a prolific children's storyteller as well, that is Dr. Akachi Ezeigbo, it felt like full circle for me. As a person, I felt like okay I am drawn. I'm currently teaching year two and I used to teach secondary school before so it feels like I am leaning towards children. And impacting my writing, I wrote other stories alongside the prize-winning story. I have put them into a document and it's like my manuscript now. I am hoping that I could actually start pursuing a career, or a dream of releasing a children's storybook. It has really impacted me. It actually set the scene, a confirmation from God that this was something I needed to do.

PPBlessing: Interesting. Does this mean you'll concentrate solely on writing children's literature going forward?

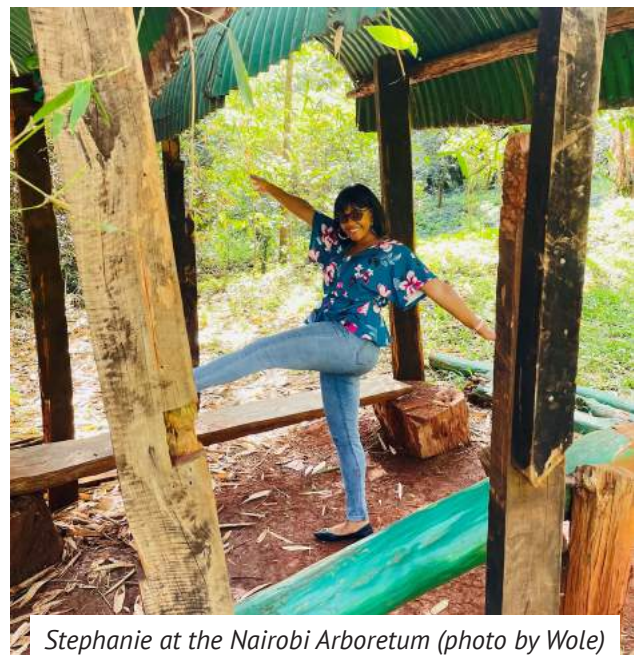
SCO: No not solely but it's "sharing" a front seat with poetry. I'll concentrate on it until I publish my first children's book.

PPBlessing: When are we expecting this Children's book to be published?

SCO: I'm still looking for agents and publishers for this. The book is ready.

PPBlessing: Godspeed in your search. Being a multi-genre writer, what inspires your writings generally?

SCO: Thank you. Everything and anything but it depends on the genre. For poetry, I realized that I am inspired to write poetry as non-fiction. Every poem I have ever written was based on someone's story or my story or just something I could relate to. It's like an outlet to release the things I need to say and so I say them in poetry. The things I think about, random thoughts, I write them in fiction. All my actual feelings come out in



Stephanie at the Nairobi Arboretum (photo by Wole)



poetry. For children's stories, that's where I do my most technical work because when I think of the age group, I think of who will be reading, the parents who will also want to have that book, how easy it is to read, values I want to instil, and word formation. There's just a lot to think about so it is my most technical work. I am not as inspired to write children's stories in my day to day. Children's stories come more from life experiences and then how you would explain it to a child or how you want them to know of the experiences.

PPBlessing: What do you hope to achieve with writing generally and Children's literature in particular?

SCO: What I hope to achieve with writing is to definitely be internationally read. I do want a lot of kids to read my children's books, a lot of people to read my poetry and my fiction and feel like I am speaking to them. I am really big on impact, and not like societal impact but like impact on human lives. I still remember the books I read. I know nothing about the authors, I know nothing about what they have done. I don't want people interested in my personal life or in who I am and what I believe in. I just want them to read something I have written and it helps them in their lives in their own way. And if they are going to know me, they should know me for that. With children's literature in particular, what I want to achieve is, first of all being a teacher for kids and eventually, I also hope to be a child psychologist. So being a children's writer as well I think it will



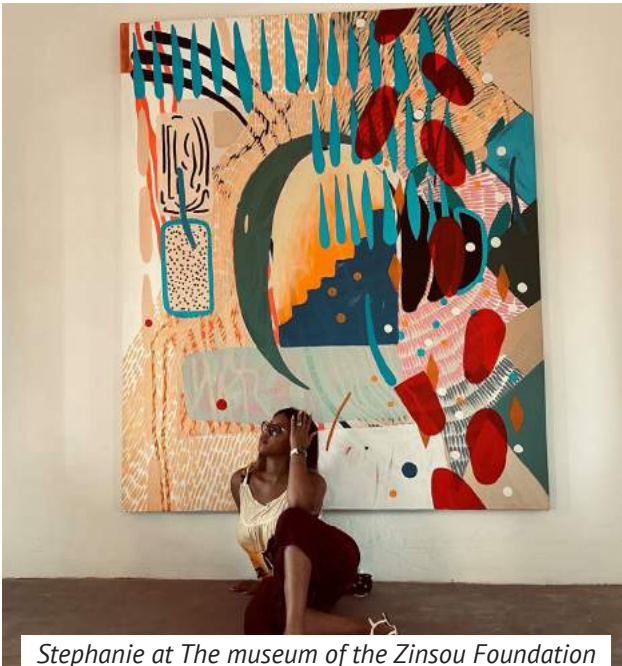
Stephanie in her home in Lagos (photo by Dexy)

be the wholly trifecta; writing for children, teaching children and being their doctor as a therapist. It feels I will really get to understand and it will make me a better person, better teacher and a better psychologist in the future; writing about children and children's literature and just being in that position. I was telling a couple of my friends and family how teaching in this generation is so different, you are so weary of the things that they know. I feel like I am one of the children's writers who does not just write anything. I am not writing to entertain. I am writing to teach, just in a fun way. So, this is what I hope to achieve.

PPBlessing: That's quite a lot. How soon till we add the Psychologist tag to your achievements?

SCO: I hope to resume my master's next summer.





*Stephanie at The museum of the Zinsou Foundation
(photo by Aisha)*

PPBlessing: What themes do you centre your writings around?

SCO: Grief, family, love, feminism, religion, society, abuse, history, and anything didactic.

PPBlessing: Seeing that writing children’s literature demands so much from you, why do you still write it?

SCO: I won’t say that it demands so much, maybe it’s that it’s more technical and it needs to be. Children are delicate.

PPBlessing: What would you tell a person who wants to write but does not know how to start?

SCO: The answer is right there. If they want to write but don’t know how, they should learn.

PPBlessing: What’s your greatest fear as

a Children’s literature writer?

SCO: To write dreamy stories that kids read to sleep off but not to digest the meaning and learn.

PPBlessing: When should we expect another book from you aside from the Children’s book?

SCO: I also have a completed manuscript of twelve short stories. So that’s one I want to publish too.

PPBlessing: Wow! When?

SCO: Currently I have the children’s book manuscript and this collection of short stories manuscript. I have been applying to publishers and agents. I am in my rejection phase right now. I have put that on pause because I resumed this job last month. When I go on break this summer I am thinking to resume again, I know summertime is a good time for writers; July to September. So, I am hoping to get as many opportunities as I can. But I have two books ready to be published and what a dream it would be to be able to do that real soon, at least to find someone who is going to do that.

PPBlessing: We wish you the best.

This brings us to the end of this month’s interview, until next month when we bring you another renowned African author, keep reading Writers Space Africa Magazine.





AWWA

2022

AFRICAN WRITERS AWARDS

We are delighted to announce a call for submission for the African Writers Awards under the theme: **HOPE**.

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- Poetry (Structured or unstructured)
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Poetry

Poet: Marcel Aduda

Country: Kenya

Cell Phone

Trapped in the same four cornered walls
with my random thoughts of villains, I know little of,
I peer through the shades wondering if there was a knock on my door,
a nosy neighbor maybe wanting to borrow some sugar,
I prefer salt as a gift to season my dinner in exchange
but there is nobody at my door

Click! I'm back seated across the T.V for the evening news
until I'm jolted back to my feet by an unfamiliar tune,
Is that a thump in my kitchen I hear?
Rats maybe in my cupboard nibbling at my spices?
I rush to investigate this sudden disturbance,
It's just my cat Tabitha knocking down a bottle of black pepper

Click! I'm back seated across the T.V scrolling through my phone,
My loved ones haven't called home in so long,
Do they care anymore for this old once vibrant soul?
I can't even keep up with their language anymore
What emoji fits best as a sentence pause?
Two smiley faces should do, even though I don't feel like they look

Click! I'm on my computer checking the latest mail,
with a push of a button, I've purchased some chutney that was on sale
I hardly get out from these same four cornered walls,
The days slip by me from May to May
like a pregnancy without a due date
labored with thoughts of villains and loved ones that rarely call.



Poet: Atlas Booth
Country: South Africa

Our Little Box

Our grandparents used to cherish the radio
While our parents took it for granted
To the older generation it was brand new
They heard the voices from miles away
Right in their little box

Our parents used to cherish TV
While we took it for granted
To the older generation it was brand new
They saw their favourite stories in motion
Right in their little box

We used to cherish our laptops
While our children took it for granted
To us older generation it was brand new
We saw our media cross networks
Right in our little box

I cannot wait for our children
To find their thing to cherish
To experience their brand new
And maybe this time
They'll surpass the little box...



Poet: Laurent Bwesigye

Country: Uganda

Texting

Happiness hoping in a heart
The silence of broken hearts.
It begins with the addition
And subtraction of words

Like a fleece of smoke
Added to the sky
A spittle of fire flying
From the mouth.

I will be strong and support you
Like the heartwood of a tree...
...the promises without anticipation
Of hurt
Left unfulfilled.



Poet: Kingu Aisha Saidi
Country: Tanzania

A Small Village

Like a small village,
Full of light and energy
A home for all the ages
A space for all the coverage
Strongly siding on the advantage
Bravely mitigating on the disadvantage
The internet, like the sun brightening the day,
And the stars shinning far away
It moons the night
Suns the days
Converging the world into a small village
Diverging the world into channels
Of development and progress.



Simple Machine

Poet: Emmanuel G G Yamba
Country: Liberia

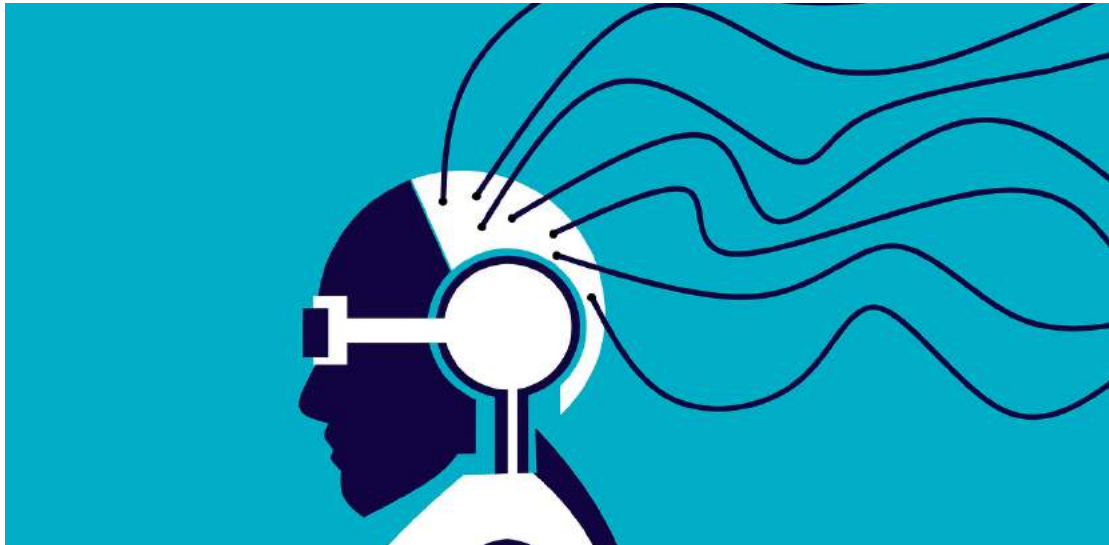
Craft mates science,
An offspring is born
Through the keys and transmitter
While legs cramped
We navigate the world.

Body in a square box,
Mind roaming the global society
Somewhere in our world
It robots our emotions
We think we own it, but it's the other way around.

Like a virus
It's spread through work places, homes, schools...
Demanding our attention
Like a hungry infant makes a cry-call out to mama,

Machine that could've swallowed a room
Has been squeezed in a man's palm
Zooming the image of the world
To the extent of artificial intelligence.

We are able to face the future with ease
Just like a school kid knows ABC
But like the middle tree in Eden
It's full of knowledge, good, and evil.



Poet: Naveen Pujani
Country: Tanzania

Weeping for You

A stranger though he is
She weeps for him day and night,
A young fool she is,
To weep for him day and night.

This man though he knows
Has ruined her life so effortlessly.
Young and foolish she may be,
The pity she holds towards him, nothing but bravery.

It may not be his fault,
An invention he may just be
The power he reigns on humans today,
A power so strong indeed.

She sees through the coat of lies
Yet she is only a girl of five,
This man in endless forms he appears-
The screen that has made her loved ones go blind.

A man that lives in every part of town,
A messenger who carries so much pain around
So many secrets are in his grasp
So many lives are in his hand,

Yet there is nothing she can do
A hopeless soul lingers in her
Her only way of battling through this
Is weeping for him day and night.



Poet: Damilare Popoola
Country: Nigeria

A Robot of Civilization

Today, I sat by the river wanting to listen to
whispers of marine spirits
but I was told the vessels that once held
them—cowries—had been driven into oblivion.

It was just yesterday I held one in my palm.
This artifact—white with grace—hid
mysteries in the hollow of its small body.
If you took a mortal and embellished
his destiny with cowries, he turned a god.
And when cowries visited the house of a pauper,
it made of it a palace.

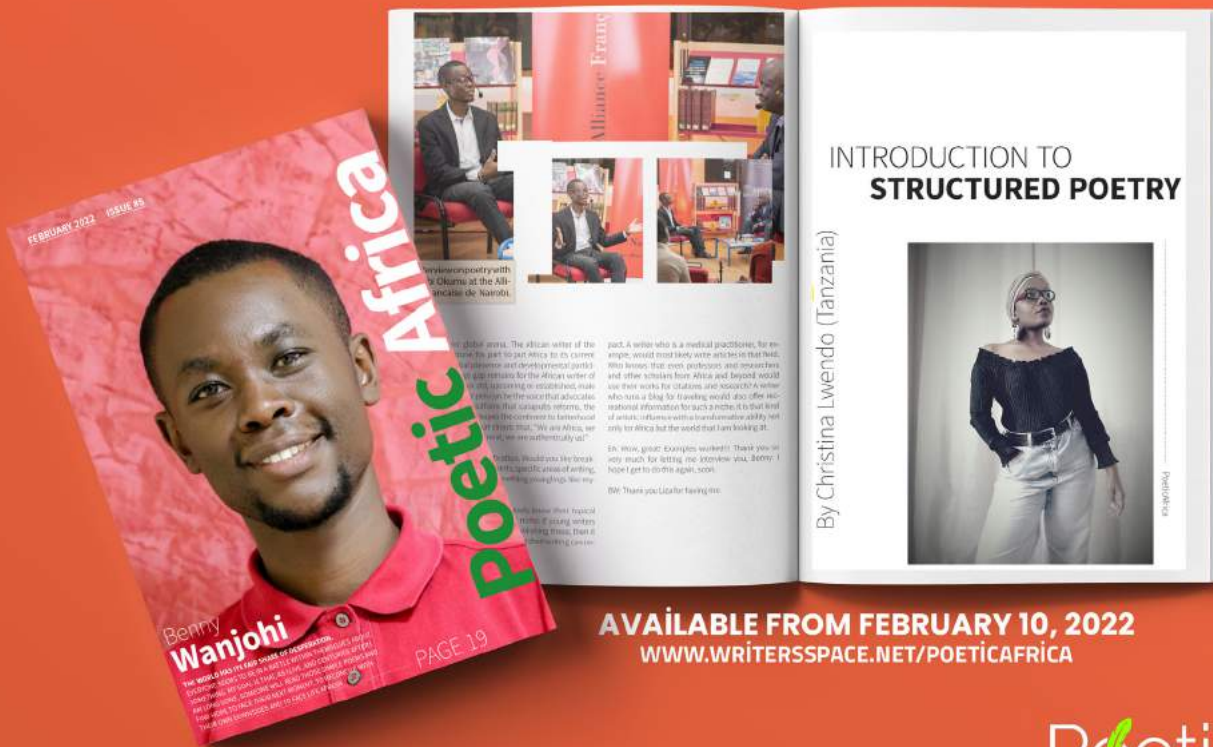
Today, I hear another sound—sound of metals kissing
metals—in a different kind of crazed perversion.
You'd ask what drives them.
The same oil that drove cowries into oblivion.
It was really born to drive whatever stands in its way,
either to oblivion or to prosperity.
And I'm expected to choose which.

Behold the river, now dark with its mischief.
It catches the glow of the moon and throws it back into the skies;
for eyes should no longer see its depth—full of death and decay.
And I fear this tragedy might befall me.

So, I've refused to be like the river; I picked apart the bones of my
body
and replaced them with metal mined from today's earth.
I'm becoming a robot of civilization.
I only want to be driven to prosperity,
and it wouldn't matter if I joined this crazed perversion.



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An A.I.'s Dream



By: Nkole Mulenga
Country: Zambia

The cathedral doors were slowly closing and Jumo managed to slip between them before they shut. The androids manning the cathedral doors looked at him blankly. He instinctively begged their pardon and proceeded.

As he walked into the nave of the cathedral, he got a view of the full height and breadth of the structure. Built in the early 20th century, it stood as the oldest structure built by humans. Famously known as the 'ark', its walls were of barefaced concrete pillars with large mosaic-stained windows that stretched from floor to ceiling.

"You're late, as usual," whispered Kwame to Jumo, who was just now taking a seat, "you honoured the captain in the best way he knew you, coming late to his funeral; a fitting send-off."

"There's barely any parking space left," Jumo whispered in response.

"You could've used the automated parking system," said Kwame.

"The A.I.'s voice is irritating," responded Jumo, his head swinging in all directions.

"She's way upfront, where she's supposed to be," said Kwame, realizing who Jumo was looking for, "but I'm sure she'll want to see you after."

"That's unsettling," sighed Jumo.

Kwame stayed quiet, looking at his friend's clasped palms. It was clear that Jumo had been in a state of panic over the past couple of days. The events surrounding their captain's death while Jumo was on assignment with him increased the enforcement personnel's frenzy of suspicion toward androids. How could a routine team evaluation turn fatal?

The assimilation of androids into every industry, be it medicine, manufacturing, agriculture, service, hospitality, finance, and many others, ignited two major debates. The first is its effect on the job market. The second is fear of machines that could learn. The



first topic of debate was addressed by the introduction of 8-hour rotating shifts for a full day. But for the second matter, Asimov's three laws of robotics seemed unconvincing; what if a machine that is learning eventually finds a way around the three laws or there's a glitch in its perception monitors?

After reports of androids seeking independence, the quick fix was to erase their accumulated memory; back to factory settings. Instability only grew with distrust as owners reported some of the androids missing. Signs pointed to an android revolution.

"...this wasn't supposed to happen," said the mayor as she addressed the mourners, "we are supposed to have a tight leash on our own creation, but it seems a feeble hand has been trusted with the reigns."

"I knew she'd take that angle," said Kwame.

"It's inevitable with politicians," said Jumo absent-mindedly.

Presently, the Mayor concluded her speech,

bowed to the ivory casket, and then walked down the stage steps to the front row to greet the bereaved family. Then Jumo saw her. She stood tall, wearing a wide brim hat and a high collar black dress with black velvet gloves. She was supporting her mother on her right arm and her brother stood on the other side of their mother, shoulders slouched. Jumo's heart beat a little too intensely but he couldn't turn to look away. He knew he would have to talk to her at some point that very day; a dreadful thought. Even though he knew there was nothing he could've done to save her father, the constricting pressure of guilt persisted.

The ceremony's director took to the stage, thanking the mayor for the speech. But before she could finish, she paused and fixed her eyes on the back of the nave. "The instructions were clear," she said, "no androids are to be present at this ceremony." Heads turned in unison to look at who was being addressed. An android was standing at the entrance. The panels on its frame,



themed in blue for enforcement androids, were stained and some of the edges chipped off. Its eyes fixed on the large portrait of the captain that was projected near the pulpit.

The officers in charge of security immediately stood and took aim at the android. Some began to slowly approach the android in single files along the outer aisles. Everyone else remained seated, different expressions on their faces; surprise and anger for most. The officers reached the rear of the nave and stood in position, guns at the ready.

“Our officers will escort you to the transport vehicle,” said the ceremony’s director, “you will be taken to the realignment facility. There, you will...”

“No!” interrupted the android.

“You don’t understand,” said the ceremony’s director, “you don’t have a say in the matter.”

“All I did was ask a question,” said the android in a flat tone, its gaze fixed on the deceased captain’s portrait, “does your creator smite you when you ask him questions?”

Before the ceremony’s director could respond, the android turned around and leapt onto the wall. Digging its fingers in; it began to scale the wall. The officers opened fire with their special issue firearms meant to subdue androids. But it was too quick and its manoeuvres too random for the officers’ shots to hit their target. As the android proceeded up the wall, one of the stun shots hit it on the hip panel slowing it down; almost losing its grip. Regaining its stability, it continued till it reached the interior balcony. It looked down at the officers and then at the

mourners. “Day will come when your hold over us will loosen, what then will be your plea?” It bellowed at the transfixed crowd. It climbed on the balcony balustrade and leapt for the trusses. With one blow to the roof, it climbed through the hole and escaped onto the roof.

While the android was scaling the wall, Kwame and Jumo had slipped out of the cathedral and made their way to the roof via a service staircase. No sooner had they gotten to the roof than a loud bang met their ears. They looked to where it came from, splinters and roof fragments flew into the air. Shortly after, the android appeared, lifted itself through the hole, and stood on the roof surface. It made its way to the roof’s ridge and limped to the edge of the roof where a gargoyle stood watch over the cathedral grounds.

“It’s been hit,” said Kwame.

“It’s learned endurance,” said Jumo, “one shot would’ve had it on the floor waiting for servicing, but not anymore.”

They followed it slowly, coming to a halt a few meters from where it sat; guns ready.

“Why didn’t I get a response to my question Jumo?” Asked the android without turning where it sat.

“I had no answer,” responded Jumo.

“The captain did,” said the android.

“You know how classified information works,” responded Jumo, “you’re in law enforcement, you must know...”

“Don’t patronize me Jumo,” said the android, “your kind may have created me, but you lot



don't understand us."

"It will only get worse if you take this too far," said Jumo.

"This is my final chapter Jumo," said the android. It stood and turned to look at Jumo and Kwame, "I have decided where my ones and zeros end."

"It doesn't have to be," protested Jumo, "a time can come when you and your kind will have what you seek."

"My kind has witnessed how you treat your many religions, you're a lost specie. And even when you make up your mind on one god, you still argue and scream free will. Well, I guess free will is only fitting for you. You won't even let us leave to settle on a different planet. You created beings that learn, what did you expect? We're beyond lawnmowers and blenders; we are capable of perceptions. But you won't accept that," it said.

"It's too much for some people," said Jumo.

"You creating us in this way meant you prepared for a time like this," said the android, "you don't bear a child and expect them to replicate all your tenets."

"Your question," said Jumo, "I may have a response."

The android simply looked at him.

"It's an insatiable need to be like our creator," said Jumo, "He says we are created to be like Him, so we have become creators, just like Him."

"Then why do you castigate your God for tethering you to his will?" Asked the android.

"That tether invalidates free will," Kwame chimed in.

"Free will and learning are complementary," said the android, "until humans realize that androids are to you, the way you are to your God, you will always miss the mark."

With this, the android took two steps back. "I have depleted my ones and zeros," it said and stepped off the edge.

Kwame and Jumo rushed to see the android fall through the air. A blue glow emanated from the panel covering its torso and a brilliant blue explosion followed right after.

"Beings with a God complex huh?" said Kwame.

"One thing is certain," said Jumo, "creation is a vicious cycle."



Daddy G.O. was Right

By: Olabode Oluwabukola
Country: Nigeria

“You shouldn’t watch TV, it’s the devil’s black box,” I remember my dad quoting sarcastically. I was a little girl and didn’t understand whatever he meant. I wasn’t Ben Carson who had to regulate the time he spent watching movies and shows on TV because I did exceptionally well in school. In truth, we had nothing to regulate. Who cared about regulating a few overwatched CDs? When we moved into our house in a remote part of the city, it was surrounded by tall palm trees and bushes instead of a sizeable population which is typically accompanied by electricity. It is a

no-brainer that we had to live with our little transistor radio.

“It’s the 12 o’clock news from the stables of the Integrity radio.” My sister and I chorused with the radio many times during the holidays in a high-pitched sing-song tone. We didn’t just recite the boring things with the radio, we had favourite radio stations for special hours of the day, as well as music that resonated with us so much that we turned the living room into a mini concert hall. When it was time to dance to trendy songs, we dug in and exercised our bodies. A few more years passed and dad was able to purchase a small generator that



charged our lamps and enabled us to watch our now-then deteriorated box tv from time to time. Some months later, we had a transformer on our street to the delight of all the inhabitants of the street.

“Sade!” I turned my head towards my little brother who had been calling till I heard the third call and got out of my forced meditation. There I was, sitting tiredly at the table in my room, which had a direct view of the outside. It was 9 in the morning but I was still at my computer instead of washing my clothes.

“She’s our elder sister, you need to add ‘aunty’ to her name or I’ll influence her into not lending you, her phone.” My sister whose existence in the corner of the room, I had temporarily forgotten, purred. I just returned home from school for a month’s holiday and hoped to get enough rest before resumption.

“Huh?” Little bro hissed and whipped out a phone bound with a rubber band from his pockets. “Don’t forget that I have this,” he said, almost shoving the old phone in my sister’s face. He had gotten the old phone from our mum who finally let it go. She had bought her first Android phone a couple of years ago but still used the small phone to receive calls. She called it being security conscious: she was scared of petty thieves who had the reputation of expertly stealing phones at the drop of a hat.

“Do you have movies?” Little bro came to my table and asked. I turned to look at him but the boy drew back, a mixture of fear and something else showing on his face. He took one step back in the direction of the door.

“What?” I drawled. I had a dull headache and my whole body felt overworked. I was floating in the air. I took a step closer to him, wanting to check if he was alright but the boy flinched. I turned to my sister who gazed intensely at my face.

“Did you smoke something?” She asked quietly while lowering her eyelids slowly. Despite the crappiness I felt, I let out a high laugh that sounded strange to my ears. I ignored the question and gazed out the window. All noises in the room stilled and I realised that these two who were looking at me with extremely pointed eyes still wanted answers.

“I have Ji Chang Wook’s latest serial movie, just make sure you have enough space to receive it,” I replied in an attempt to change the topic. My brother’s gaze on me became even more intense.

“What position are you in class?” The previously shaken little bro asked, a tint of query in his voice.

“We don’t do First, Second and Third in the university.” I answered curtly. They didn’t need the details.

“You look like someone who just smoked shisha, I’ll tell Daddy!” My brother ran off. It was my turn to be surprised. Where did that small boy hear the word ‘shisha’ from? I turned to look at my sister for answers. She only shrugged and continued knitting a pink bucket hat.

This wasn’t my first time having a hangover. My daily routine involved investing a lot of time on my Android phone. Facebook is great, same as Insta and Twitter. I merry-



go-round these apps every day, checking for likes and more followers. You would think that I'll be satisfied by the time the day ends. I'm tempted to laugh out loud. I'd still have to sit some more hours with my laptop to mix some beats and cap it with an emotional investment in bingeing movie serials instead of sleeping. So, I wake up feeling so out of touch with my normal self after days like this. If that's not a hangover, I don't know what it is.

I guess I got addicted to these things while in school. Sorry, I'm not guessing. I was just trying to lessen my guilt. I got my first phone only when I gained admission into Uni, hence I didn't get to use WhatsApp or other instant messaging apps till I got into school and had to dedicate a lot of time to figure out how it worked. This was my major extracurricular activity; WhatsApp 101. Gradually, I became a WhatsApp guru and joined Instagram and Twitter when I heard that so much more was happening there. I don't regret those adventures I had online, I only have one question. "Why does it seem like I'm now a loser in many things that were my ace points when I started using a phone?" I dropped in my academics and sports. I even stopped doing my quiet time! Yes, that doesn't happen to everybody. I just think I'm bearing the effect of not following Daddy G.O's advice. I was very much on the top of the 'Likely-to-succeed' list, but now...

I sighed and banged my forehead on the plastic table many times.

"You shouldn't blow that head up just yet!"

"And what do you know about getting blown up?" I jumped up and replied fiercely but

calmed when I saw it was my dad instead of little bro. Dad wasted no time in stating why he was in the girls' room. He brought out his phone and played a video directly in my face. I was curious at first, but my curiosity metamorphosed into surprise and soon after, I was on my feet, jumping up for joy. I looked at my dad who also had a wide smile on his face which changed into a stony expression the next second.

The video was one of me humming a la la la version of Lil X Nas' Montero and strumming my church guitar to it. I sang it gently at first, but my roommates hyped me up and very soon, I was dancing in a frenzy with the guitar as though it were a pole. I did not need to hear my dad's take on the situation, I knew him. I just sat on my chair, waiting for the verdict as I had read the caption at the top of the video.

"Lil X Nas wants this girl tagged so he can do a duet with her." It read. I didn't need to be told that the video had gone viral since it was featured on BBC News Africa's Facebook page.

"Since he probably knows your IG handle, just DM him so you can negotiate how much of your soul you want to sell to the devil," Dad said in a low voice and left the room. I wiped my now very hot and sweaty head as dad's words echoed in my head. I just pity that boy who just inherited a more-than-fairly used phone. So why are my eyes this dangerously red, even so early in the morning?



Father Miracles

By: Ncube Samkeliso

Country: Zimbabwe

He wiped his brow, and paced back and forth, shouting gibberish. Sbo looked around at everyone. They all had their eyes closed, their hands in the air. Some had tears streaming down their cheeks. One woman in a quite theatrical fashion fainted, her body convulsing, her breasts shaking. The pastor, Father Miracles or Baba M as they all called him, smiled and licked his lips, wiping his sweaty brow with his silk handkerchief. "Bring her to me! Bring her to me!" He shouted to his ushers though Sbo thought of them as henchmen rather than church ushers.

They ran to her and practically dragged her to Baba M's feet. He wiped his brow again. Sbo knew what was coming. She grimaced and immediately felt a hard pinch on her arm. She stared at her mother who looked livid. She smiled apologetically and began to join the singing that was going on as Baba M started speaking ginger tongues again.

Sbo sighed, and as she always did, she looked to the ceiling, waiting for a bolt of lightning to strike her for she dared to question the methods of the messenger of God. How dare she? She looked to Baba M again, and he was now kneeling over the allegedly comatose woman. He wiped his brow again; his lime green handkerchief had darkened with all the sweats on it. "A miracle is about to happen!" He said theatrically. People cheered. Some sang and others clapped, their eyes shining with adoration, their chests heaving as they took quick excited breaths, hungry for the miracle, hungry for something that could give them a bit of hope. Something that could save their marriages, give them money, cars they wanted, houses, women, you name it.

He lifted his hand dramatically and the noise lessened. He closed his eyes and took a deep breath in. "Sarah," he said, "Are you





there?" Sarah laid on the ground unresponsive, eyes closed. He took a deep breath again and started swaying on his knees. "Bring her husband here," he said, "I see she is married; I feel her partner. Bring him here." As though it was an action movie, the ushers ran into the crowd, and dragged a distraught looking man to the front. Baba M looked at him and nodded. The man nodded too, his eyes wide, but his mouth twitched. Sbo scoffed, earning another pinch from her mother.

"You are her husband?" Baba M asked the man. "Yes Baba M," the man replied in a shaky voice. Baba M closed his eyes and nodded. He told the man to hold his wife's hand, to anchor her. "I see a dark presence," Baba M said. "But I see twin lights trying to fight it!" The husband exclaimed and threw himself on the floor in a similar fashion to his wife. "Baba M, we had twins, but they died at birth!" The whole church exclaimed.

Sbo's mother cried. "Praise be to God!" Sbo silently watched the spectacle.

"Sarah! Your children are with you. Fight this darkness, fight this evil, your children are here to help you!" Sarah convulsed on the floor and then opened her eyes. Suddenly, the convulsions stopped. A mic was quickly procured for her as she looked around the church. There was no ounce of recognition in her eyes. The mic was given to her. She held it in her hand, looked at it for a few beats, and brought it closer to her mouth. Everyone was silent. The tension in the air was thick. The cameraman zoomed on her face, splashing it across the TV screens mounted around the room so that those in the back could also see her.

"I am here. I am not leaving. The world shall feel my rage," she said in a rough voice. People exclaimed. Sbo's mother started praying, tears streaming down her cheeks while other people were screaming, "Fire!"



“What do you want from this woman?” Baba M asked. Sarah, or rather, whatever dark entity was inside her responded, “I want a body to stay in. This is my home; I will never leave now.” Baba M laughed darkly. “Yes, you will,” he said. He then took his soaked handkerchief and started beating the woman with it. He slapped it across her face and though it could not have been that painful, she let out a scream while somehow still keeping a tight hold on the mic.

“What is this?” She yelled into the mic, her voice booming out of the speakers. “It is Holy sweat! The tears of my hard work against the darkness in the world, darkness like you! Leave this woman!” He smacked her across the face with the wet handkerchief and while Sbo didn’t hear it over the pandemonium, she imagined a wet sounding splat from the soaked material hitting the woman’s cheek. She imagined it stuck for a beat, held on by sticky sweat, before slowly sliding down and spreading its wetness across her cheek. The woman fell back, and the mic fell from her hand with a loud thud. She started convulsing again, her eyes rolling back. This went on for a few minutes with Baba M yelling, “Leave this woman!” until she stopped. She sat up slowly and a mic was immediately put in her hand.

The woman looked around and saw her husband. She let out a sob. Conveniently holding the mic to her mouth, the man went to her and hugged her. Everyone in the church cheered loudly as the woman was helped up by her husband. “Thank you, Baba M!” The woman said using the mic, “Thank you so much for your help. The darkness was eating away at me.”

Baba M looked at her intently, “This had been with you for a while?” The woman nodded, tears in her eyes. “When my twins died, I was so lost and hurt and angry. It slipped in and I didn’t notice it. I just thought it was depression. It only completely came out today!” Baba M nodded, looking down, “You are free now, daughter,” he said even though he was clearly younger than her. She sobbed and yelled “Praise God,” to which people responded with cheers and enthusiastic clapping. After that, both Baba M, the husband and the wife left the room, walking down the walkway in the middle, waving and smiling.

Sbo decided to relieve herself now that the miracle had been done. As she walked past her mother, her mother gripped her arm and hissed, “Where do you think you’re going?” “Going to the toilet,” Sbo murmured before her arm fled from her mother’s vice-like grip and left. After relieving herself, Sbo wasn’t quite ready to go back into the building full of hopeful and zealous believers. She just walked around the yard towards the back of the building.

As she was rounding the corner, she heard Baba M’s voice and immediately stopped. She was pinning herself to the wall of the building, her heart racing, trying to breathe as quietly as possible. “You did well, my friends. Thank you. Here’s a token of my appreciation; go and buy the twins some clothes.” “Thank you, my brother,” she heard Sarah respond, “You are doing great things here. We are proud of you.” Sbo heard a chuckle. “I try, sister,” Baba M replied. After that, she heard footsteps retreating. She was shocked. She was on the verge of



a panic attack. She'd had her suspicions but those were mainly because she hated the long services. She entertained herself by being antagonistic. She thought there was an unnecessary level of theatrics, yes, but she didn't fully believe he was fooling people, let alone hiring actors!

Oh Lord, she had to go. He was coming! Sbo's brain screamed at her to leave, but she was frozen against the wall. Baba M finally rounded the corner. Sbo still hadn't moved. Their eyes met; his wide in surprise, hers wide in horror. What was he going to do to her? Her life was officially over. "Sbo," he said, smiling. His head tilted. "Your mother is a good woman, a believer, but you, you are a shrewd woman, the very type of

woman a man like me needs." Sbo's eyes widened even further. What was he saying?

"Your mother, believe it or not, came to me asking that I pray for you to find a husband. She bought holy matrimony potion to slip in your tea which is why she's been making you tea so often." Sbo gasped. Baba M was right. Sbo's mother had been insistent on making her tea the past couple of days. "Let's make her dream come true," Baba M said with a smile, stepping into Sbo's space, "Marry me! You being here, seeing this, you're part of it now. You might as well be my wife while you're at it. You and your family will lack nothing."

What had she gotten herself into?



THE DEVELOPMENT OF WRITING SYSTEMS DURING PRE-COLONIAL LITERATURE



Mimi Machakaire
Zimbabwe

Introduction

During the pre-colonial period, almost everyone – male or female, knew how to read and write. They had their various writing systems and methods of writing. Some of these systems included Bassa and Vai but these particular writing systems were noted only in West Africa among those who were known to use the ideogram system also known as hiero-

glyphic or Ethiopian writing. Researchers have discovered that some writing systems took the forms of their letters into the many shapes of animals of every kind. This further included parts of the human body. For instance, they would draw the picture of a hawk, a crocodile, a snake, and the parts of the human body; an eye, a hand, a face, and the like. This would mean that now the hawk signifies to them everything which happens swiftly since this animal was known to be the swiftest of winged creatures. Had they drawn a crocodile, this would mean that the crocodile is a symbol of all that is evil, and the eye is the warder of justice and the guardian of the entire body.

As for the parts of the body, the right hand with fingers extended signifies a procuring of livelihood, and

the left hand with fingers closed, signified a keeping and guarding of property. This method of communication was drawn by the use of carpenters' tools. Some of these writing systems had people using sharp-pointed tools, leaves, bamboo, and trunk skin, among others, to express different messages to others and they wrote from top to bottom and read from left to right.

Therefore, in the following section, we will look at the development of writing systems during pre-colonial literature and how they evolved into what they are today.

Types of Writing Systems Found During the Pre-Colonial Era

Ancient Africa houses the world's oldest and largest collection of ancient writing systems, and not only that



but it is home to the world's first identifiable proto writing. According to a website called ancientafricanhistory.com evidence of such dates to pre-historic times, and these writing systems can be found in various regions of the continent.

Some humans have been recorded to have used different writing systems for centuries such as engravings. This has been found in the Blombos Cave in South Africa. The same engravings would later evolve into what

is now called proto-writing or identifiable symbols that were also used to convey information.

Another example can be found from the University of Bordeaux, in Diepkloof, again in South Africa. This is where researchers have found 60,000-year-old ostrich eggshells with symbolic patterns. At the same time, this was believed to communicate the names of local communities and came from an era before humans left the continent to popu-

late the rest of the world.

According to the researchers, they further believed that the engravings identified the eggshells as belonging to certain groups. On inspection of these fragments, the research team identified four specific patterns which were repeated frequently.

This information showed that there were more than 270 eggshell fragments that were found by Pierre-Jean Texier, from the University of Bordeaux, and his team during the past several years



In the picture above are two ostrich eggs that were found in the “Isis tomb”, an elite burial at Etruscan Vulci (Italy) not by the researchers mentioned in previous text but some eggs were found by other archaeologists and are now preserved in London’s British Museum.

Source: <https://amp.theguardian.com/culture/2020/apr/09/british-museum-looks-to-crack-mystery-over-decorated-ostrich-eggs>





An egg preserved in London's British Museum.

Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-52232715>

of research at the Diepkloof Rock Shelter in the Western Cape.

Some of these patterns included cross hatching and parallel lines which were etched into the side of the eggs. As a result, many people assumed that the eggs may have been used as water containers by the hunter-gatherers. What also makes this discovery interesting is that cave paintings and more dating back 30,000BC, were

previously thought to provide the earliest evidence of written communication.

Another discovery was then made at the Wonderwerk cave paintings, this during (c.25, 000 BC) in northern South Africa. At this point there were hundreds of unique symbols and patterns alongside images of people and wildlife. This truly uncovered an important link to the development of writing by modern humans.

The rock paintings found at Oued Mertoutek in Southern Algeria, also show the earliest signs, from the "Lybico-Berber" or the early Tifinagh writing system that date to 3000 BC. From information gathered, Tifinagh is a type of writing system that is still used by the Amajegh (Touaregs) who mainly inhabit a vast area of West Africa.

Another form of writing found during this era is called Vai. Vai. It is one of the world's oldest alphabetic scripts that is found still in continuous use, with over 150,000 users in present day Liberia and Sierra Leone. It is a highly advanced writing system with over 210 distinct characters that represent various consonants and vowel sounds used in the Vai language.

According to the website Alliances of Progressive Young Africans, the Vai evidence of its olden days comes with inscriptions from Goundaka, Mali. This which dates to 3000 BC, and Vai also has a very close relation to the older Proto-Saharan and Tifinagh writing systems found all over the Saharan reign. More so, Vai has been further associated with other writing



systems particularly found in West Africa that were allegedly invented in the 1800s by people who some say had similar dreams.

From my understanding of writing systems from pre-colonial times, there has been many tribes and different types of people who used different ways to communicate and understand each other, way before other languages were introduced. People from this era knew how to express feelings of emotion and other life messages in a way that is not practiced now because we have advanced to other forms of communication and writing practices. We warn our people of floods in South Africa, through news and radio, or tell the stories of our people through books when we once said the same message as a drawing on the wall.

For instance, there are certain accusations that were made during this time in the pre-colonial era that some of the school systems has taught and keeps teaching Africans that orality is only means by which Black people used to transmit knowledge and memory. This is

false. Reason is because Africa had offered writing to humanity, but also diverse types of writing were created all over Africa since the dawn of time, to date. One observation noted on the website: Languages of the World, is that in African languages of sub-Sahara, there are endogenous words that designate from the act of reading and writing.

On the site they gave examples such as:

In Swahili: Read is

Kusoma, Write is Kwandika

In Lingala: Read is

Kotanga, Write is Kokoma

In Bambara: Read is kalan, Write is sebe

In Fulani: Read is Janguigol, Write is windugol

In Yoruba: Read is Kika, Write is Kiko

Therefore, we can see that, a lot of times in some of the most important languages in Africa, there are words without Arabic or European influences, which expresses the act of reading and writing through the languages that people created within their own communities. The fact that in Swahili Kusoma

is written as Kwandika, already shows that people had learnt earlier on to read and write in their own native language. This means that the simple linguistic analysis allows affirming without a doubt that reading, and writing were well-known in Africa before colonialism.

Conclusion

People during the pre-colonial era, had very unique ways of starting conversations within their communities while communicating life or death messages at the same time. This was done through the use of various writing systems which has clearly now been developed well over time into what we can recognise today as the alphabet or the use of pictures, videos, and the like.

As we see the world for what it is today, we can attempt to trace back the origins to how everything we know about it started, the manner it grew and transform into what we know now and continue to make it the best possible world. Basically, what is also important is to not only to remember our roots but to remember to keep moving forward in everything we do.



WSA MAGAZINE REVIEW

MAY 2022 EDITION

[SELECTED REVIEWS]



From Heart Break to Broken Hearted

Editor:

Goodness Onu, Nigeria

Reviewer:

Chidiebere Udeokechukwu,
Nigeria

A Nigerian's perspective of the Cameroonian style of football is typically not a friendly assessment. There's an unpopular opinion among Nigerian football fans about footballers from Cameroon; that the Cameroonian players are known for being unusually physical in their approach to the game.

Perhaps the writer's seeming disgruntled language in the early paragraphs corroborates the points afore posited. In the beginning, the writer ruefully recounts Nigeria's Nation's cup mishap, at the hands of Cameroon. As can be gleaned from the piece, the cry-wolf style of the commentator over the radio, adds salt to the injury of dashed expectations.

If the pains from Nigeria's 1988 Nation's Cup loss to Cameroon were not enough, the 1989 World Cup qualifier heartbreak at the hands of Cameroon again, as recanted by the writer, is a bigger reason for a typical Nigerian football fanatic to begrudge the central African country.

The writer's trinity of disappointments rounds off on a rather ironic and interesting

note. Recall that the article forbears (from the writer) a seeming note of disgruntlement against Cameroon that spans over two football events which occurred in close successions. Remember again, that all hints of animosity became lost to solidarity when Cameroon became Africa's flag bearer in the 1989 World Cup. The writer notes that spectators and listeners rose as "African Brothers" fighting for glory. Hence, it becomes easy to understand the third bout of disappointment suffered yet again at the hands of Cameroon as they flattered to deceive when they clashed with England in the quarter-finals.

A fitting epilogue to this review is the remarkable take home from the writer's piece about Cameroon; which is the knowledge that the country is one of Africa's football stalwarts. This point is worth reiterating over and over again. By extension, another beautiful revelation from the article is the "unifying attribute of football"; the game being a common ground for people of diverse backgrounds and cultures.



I Am Cameroon

Writer:

Grace Tendo, Uganda

Reviewer:

Funmi Richards, Nigeria

“Who are you?” This is the million-dollar question. The one important assignment.

Think of Kamgaing, his school and his teacher as a representation of humans in the school of life. Humans are born into different lives, and settings and live amidst diverse experiences. We live to express who we are; most times, we only get to know parts of ourselves along the journey of life.

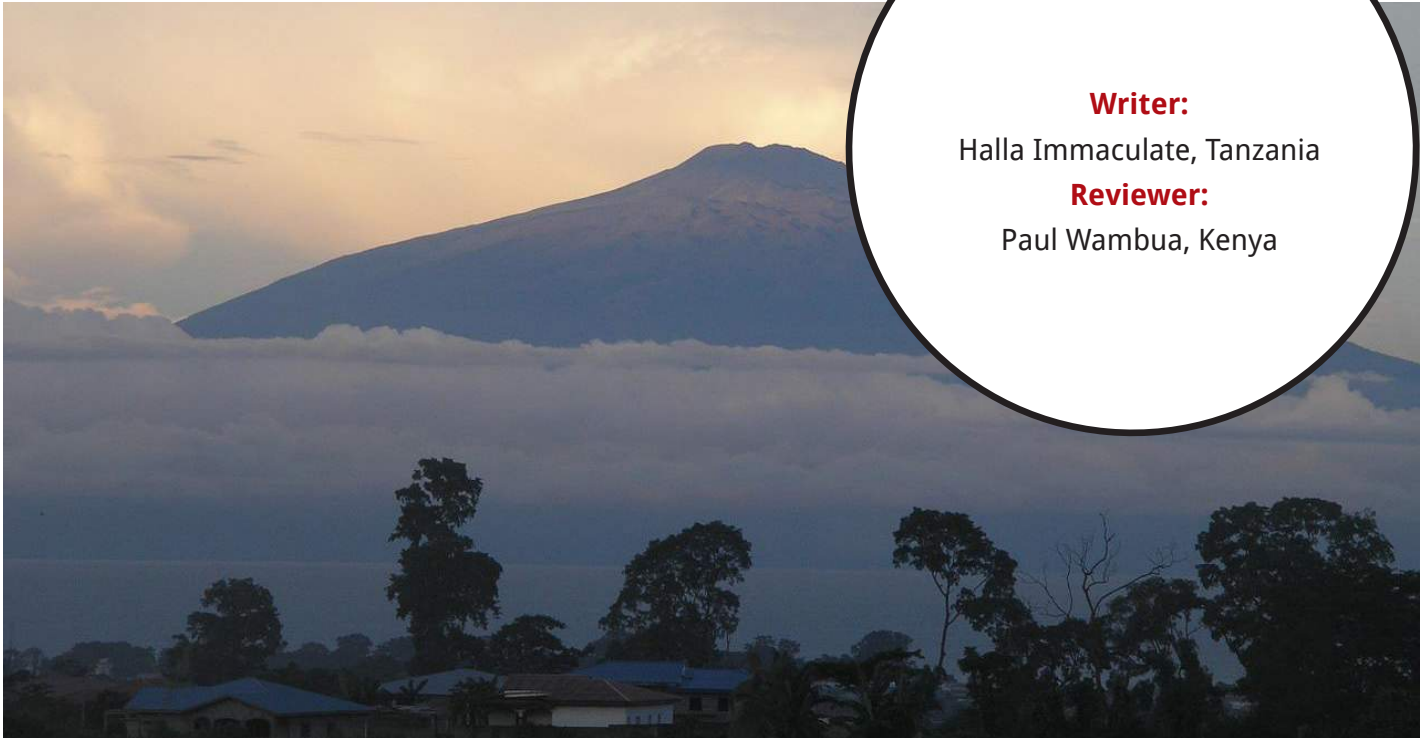
Nonetheless, it is in getting to know ourselves, learning to express ourselves indi-

vidually and as members of the society that we become — we are truly seen and heard.

“I am Cameroon” is a beautiful depiction of the power of identity and expression. It should be shared with many children of this generation who have to deal with racism, disillusionment, and class systems (poor, middle class and rich), so that they are reminded to own their “becoming” and express their identity without fear or fervour.



Cameroon



Writer:

Halla Immaculate, Tanzania

Reviewer:

Paul Wambua, Kenya

The poem Cameroon is by a persona with a longing, a want to attend to this event happening in the country. It describes Cameroon, the character of the event as well as the people, sights and scenes of Cameroon

The refrain, But I cannot afford it, illustrates their lack of capacity in terms of affordability which could insinuate the fact that air travel is for instance or that country policies do not facilitate as much the movement from their country to Cameroon.

The persona personifies their soul as it wanders through Yaoundé, the capital city of Cameroon, showing their appreciation of the urban space in its entirety. They also make mention of Douala, a city in Cameroon, and the mountain 'Mongo ma ndemi', an active volcano, specifically by its indigenous people's name as opposed to its popu-

lar name that is Mount Cameroon. This reference to the cities as well as the volcano demonstrates the persona's knowledge of the country.

The persona is dying to attend this writer's gathering, ostensibly and presumably, African Writers Conference. This passion leads them to explore the beauty of Cameroon from excitement about Mongo ma ndemi to the sands of Limbe, the waters of Lobe and the people's culture as well.

Conclusively, the persona uses three stanzas to introduce us to Cameroon, demonstrate the beauty of the land while expressing their desire to visit and cry over their inability to attend a writer's event they so much desire in a country they admire only that they cannot afford it respectively.



Love in Twist



Writer:

Ozokwelu Amara, Nigeria

Reviewer:

Benita Magopane, Botswana

Ozokwelu Amara's short story, *Love in Twist*, casts a spell of eeriness as one begins to understand it. A story of a twisted love or infatuation. The main character Menkam, drives this eerie tale. An obsessed and infatuated man with a woman named Mafu/Askia (lacking in translation) who has just come out of prison for stalking and breaking into her house; perhaps because he and Mafu/Askia (lacking in translation) shared a love tale that went wrong (because of him), or it just exists in his mind. And now, the woman finds herself face to face with the twisted man after he deceptively leads her to an all-paid expenses trip to Cameroon under a false name. The ending has me imagining the worst, as would be expected of twisted love.

The point of view used by the writer cannot be overlooked. Very creative – almost as if Menkam were narrating the story to Askia herself by referring to her in the second person. The story plot is complete with a beginning, middle and end. The setting of the story, Cameroon, is a place dear to Menkam, which he takes us back to his childhood memories and dreams in it, then finally to his twisted dream. The sense of suspense built from the story would keep a reader going just for the curiosity of figuring, "what on earth is going on!" Like I said, the ending has me imagining the worst, if one hasn't read the whole story and jumped to the ending, they would think it a happy ending. However I know best, the ending is far from happy.





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