



WSA

Writers Space Africa
M a g a z i n e

August 2022 Edition - Issue 68



Nafhago Peter

*Winner of the Wakini Kuria Prize
for Children's Literature (2021)*

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WRITERS SPACE AFRICA

Call for Submission

ABOUT THIS CALL

Writers Space Africa (WSA) Monthly Literary Magazine is calling for submissions for its 70th (October) edition.

We accept Creative Non-Fiction, Children's Literature, Flash Fiction, Poetry, and Short Stories.

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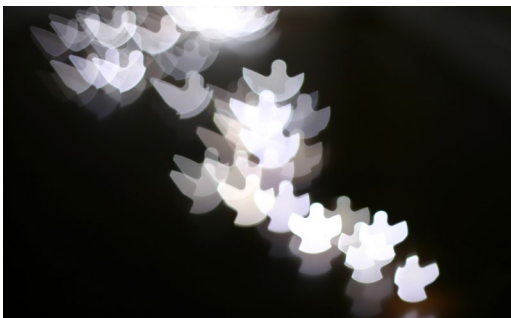
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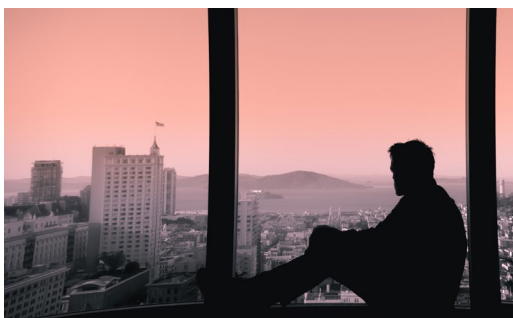
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From the Founder's Desk

Anthony Onugba (PenBoss)

Perhaps, one way that we can better view life is from the perspective of 'newness with value'.

The beauty of a new place lies in the value that we accord to it. We could visit a slum for the first time. It is a new place to us but without value, we never see its beauty but focus our minds only on the garbage and the ugliness. This is in contrast to visiting Addis Ababa for the first time and we focus our minds on the beauty, ignoring to see that there is a bit of ugliness in the midst of the beauty.

A new place enlightens the mind to the realisation of

how diverse, yet unfathomable the Earth really is. It reminds us that there are places that we never really could imagine but they exist and they offer us calm and peace of mind. This is why vacation and travel are good because they create a moment of rest for our weary minds.

Perhaps, one way that we can better view life is from the perspective of 'newness with value'. Let's give value to everything as this would create in us some form of

excitement and a mystery to unravel what could be. We could treat our friendships as 'new'. This is what brings about the excitement. We may have become familiar but there is still something new in us that others do not know and probably do not understand.

Let's be new... Let's be unique... Let's be us!





From the Chief Editor

Comfort Nyati, SDB
Zimbabwe

Dear Reader,

Was there a time you felt a sensation of newness deep within you? There could be a number of things that triggered it. It could have been the thought of experiencing a new place, meeting new people, or seeing something new.

The thought of experiencing a new place can give the impression of travel cost and expenses. However, new places are not all about travelling but rather a thing of the heart.

I think newness lies in the mind. Many simple gestures in our daily activities

can take you to a different place anytime. Taking a walk around your neighborhood, listening to music or reading a book is a perfect getaway. The experience could expose you to new people or things such that you would be inspired to wheel over the question: 'Where else can I go?

I believe authors are the best captains to help us navigate through endless spaces because they possess an exceptional license to empower us to reach new destinations.

So I am hopeful that this

68th Edition will orient you to a multiple-choice of new places footed by a dazzling array of literary genres stretching from creative non-fiction to seasoned poetry scribed with African blood.

As you flip through these pages, I hope it takes you on a journey. Ready for the thrill? Read on!

Remember, Twaweza!!!



Children's Literature

Sheila in Bamako

Written by **Kudzai Mhangwa, Zimbabwe**



Sheila peeped through the aeroplane window and all she could see were puffy clouds. She felt as if she had been flying forever. She did not want the aeroplane to land in Bamako, she wanted it turn around and take her back to Paris to her real home. She saw the birds flying past the plane and thought how lucky they were. They could come and go wherever they pleased with nobody to tell them what do to.

The plane landed in Bamako at sunrise. Sheila's mother was there to pick her up at the airport. Sheila felt like crying. What was she going to like in this strange land? All she knew was her cosy life in Paris. Her mother had accepted a job at a big bank in Bamako and they had moved. As they drove to their new home, Sheila's mother showed her the beautiful skies, the tall trees and people smiling all over the street.



“This is where our ancestors come from,” said her mother, gleefully. Sheila did not care. All she wanted was to go back to Paris to her cosy home and the friends that she knew. She promised she would send her friends letters everyday because she did not want to make any new friends in Bamako.

The next day, Sheila went to her new school. Sheila’s teacher was a very tall man who was very kind to her. He introduced her to a girl called Chloe. Chloe looked so much like her. They could be cousins! Chloe introduced her to her classmates. She met people from Mali, Zimbabwe, China and even France. Everybody was very different and special. Sheila did not know that there were so many different people in the world. They spoke very different languages as they came from different countries around the world. They all wore very different clothes from hers. The colours of their clothes were even more than the colours of the rainbow!

“You are lucky!” Chloe told Sheila, “Today we are having Culture Day and you can see the things that make everyone special.”

Sheila had a delicious lunch that day; they ate a special pie she was told was a recipe from Ireland. Sheila sat and watched the show on the stage. She saw five Indian girls do a special dance wearing special sparkling dresses they called saris. The dancing reminded her of the grace-

ful birds she had seen while she was on the plane. Another girl from America then recited a poem about her ancestors who had been brought to America and had fought hard for their freedom. Chloe told a folktale that they used to tell around the fires before Bamako was even discovered. The last performance was a South African singer who told everyone to stand up. She taught everyone the lyrics of the song and the whole crowd was singing and dancing. Even Sheila was now singing in this different language.

When Sheila got home, all she could think about was writing a letter to her friends back in Paris telling them about the new world she had seen, the different people she had met and the new song she had learned. She was now pleased with the new place she was in and even decided that she would make a few friends.



Lindiwe's Nightmare

Written by **Pelekani Lwenje, Zambia**



As the car drove on the endless road, one passenger was not pleased at all. Lindiwe was not happy that the town she had just left was never going to be seen again. All the friends she had made. It was not fair. Why did they have to move? Why must I have to suffer? I'll never see my friends again. That was how she felt. Her mother had told her that change is sometimes a good thing. Her mother had told her that no matter how hard the change, she would

be happy. Lindiwe did not believe her. She was scared. She was really scared. How was she supposed to tell her mother how she felt?

They had finally reached the new street. Lindiwe felt her heart beating faster. She felt dizzy. She saw a huge lion staring at her. Wait! What!? She shook her head and looked again. There was no lion. It was just an old man on a wheelchair who was



crossing the road. Why did she think she saw a lion? Her father looked back at her. “Are you okay?” He asked. She told him yes, even though she was lying. She took a deep breath and closed her eyes.

The car had finally stopped in front of a black gate. Lindiwe saw a man open the gate for them and thought she saw a black cat sleeping outside the front door. When the car stopped and she came out to check, she saw that there was no cat. Her mother was staring at her. She told her that she was going to love the new place. Lindiwe was not so sure. There was something wrong with this house. She could feel it deep down.

Lindiwe was carrying her bag and moving to get into the room when she heard voices coming from the kitchen. They were calling her name. “Lindiwe. Lindiwe.” She covered her ears. She did not want to hear anymore. Her heart was beating fast again. Thump! Thump! Thump! Her mother entered the room and quickly wrapped her arms around her. “Breathe my baby,” said her mother. “What’s wrong Lindiwe?” Lindiwe shook her head. She did not know how to answer her mother. All she could think about was to go back to their old home. She did not like this new place. “This house wants to eat me. It wants to eat me!”, she shouted. Her mother took a deep breath and gently kissed her cheek. “I know you are upset that we have moved to a new place. New places can be scary.

I’m sorry that you feel that we took you from your friends. You can make new friends here. Your old friends can still visit you. The house is not going to eat you. I promise,” her mother explained. Lindiwe felt a bit safe after listening to her mother.

Lindiwe walked around the house. Everything she had been seeing and hearing was just in her head. She had been so scared about moving to a new place. Her father shared a story with her. He told her that he too used to be scared of new places but after a while, he would be okay. Lindiwe felt happy to have parents that cared for her. The new house did not feel so scary anymore.

As she was removing her clothes from her bags, she heard a ‘meow’. When she turned around, she saw the black cat again. It was on the window and it was busy licking its paws. Lindiwe smiled and slowly approached it. She stroked its back and the cat purred. Lindiwe felt happy. Maybe the new place wasn’t going to be so bad. She now had a new friend.

She went to help her parents with the unpacking. She thought she heard the house call her name again, but this time she ignored it. She looked around the house and placed a finger to her lips. “Shhhhhhhhhhh!” She shooshed the voices away and smiled. She was no longer afraid of the new place.



A New Home



Written by **Moses Tololo, Zambia**



Miyoba looked at the food that he had just picked up. It looked so delicious except for the maggots. The other boy on the other side was also looking at the same food. Both boys were trying to pick the same food.

“What are you looking at?” Miyoba asked the other boy.

“You’ve got what I wanted,” the other boy responded.

“You also pick from here?” Asked Miyoba shockingly.

He had never seen a boy like him in this part of town. He was surprised that such a boy could be picking things from bins. He always thought that boys like him were the



ones throwing things in the bins after getting tired of eating.

“Even people like you pick from bins?” He asked again.

“Am I not a person as well?” The new boy responded.

As the two boys argued on who was to get the food in the bin, a security guard saw them.

“Get out of there!” He shouted, “If I come there, you will all be in trouble.”

The boys just looked at him without moving. The security guard made a move towards the two boys. When the boys saw this, they ran as fast as they could. They ran down Kwacha road towards another mall. They were laughing as they ran. They ran to the bridge and went and sat on the rails. They sat and shared the meal they had just got from the bins.

“My name is Miyoba,” He said as he extended his hand to his new found friend.

“I am Dylan but you can call me Bupe,” said the new boy.

“Bupe, a white boy called Bupe,” chuckled Miyoba.

“Yes, I am Zambian,” Dylan said.

“I have never seen a white boy in the streets, what happened to you?” Miyoba asked.

“I ran away from home,” He responded.

“Why run away from home to live in this bad place?”

“My guardians used to beat me up every day, so I ran away,” he said, “what about you?”

“I came to sell things with my grandmother but she died while we were here,” Miyoba said, “I didn’t know my way back home.”

“We need to find a new home then,” Dylan suggested.

“Yes, but not here in the city,” Miyoba said, “not on the streets.”

“Where can we find a new place?” Dylan asked.

“I heard of a place in Masaiti,” Miyoba said, “my grandmother used to tell me about this beautiful village.”

“A village?”

“Yes, I am told there are no street kids,” Miyoba responded, “every kid is taken care of.”

“You mean they love every kid who is not even their own?” Dylan asked.

“Yes, my grandmother told me that in Africa they treat each other as brothers and sisters.”

“Wow,” Dylan said, “I have never had a nice family.”

“My grandmother said that street kids are only found in the city,” Miyoba said.



“Let’s go,” Dylan said, “I don’t want to be a street kid anymore.”

The two boys set out for the village. They asked people for directions and soon they were on their way. A kind driver gave them a lift on his truck. He dropped them at Fi-wale junction and told them to walk on a narrow path. The boys walked for hours. They were hungry. They sat down under a tree. They were wondering where they would get something to eat. An old woman came towards them. She was carrying some sweet potatoes and groundnuts. She said to them after she saw them.

“My grandchildren help me carry this luggage,” she said to them.

“Yes, grandmother,” they responded.

The boys were happy. No one had ever called them that in the city. They carried and followed her to her home. It was a beautiful place. She lived on a farm house. The farm house was near a beautiful stream. There were trees along the stream. The place looked like paradise.

“Where is your home, boys?” she asked.

“We don’t have a home,” they responded, “we live on the streets.”

“This is your new home now,” she said to them.

The boys were happy to be in a new place. The following day, she took them to school.





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Creative Non-Fiction

A Place Called Elsewhere

...When I dance, I tie a strap underneath my buttocks so that when I'm at it, your eyes are also at it. I shake my waist, left and right, up and down to rhythms produced by the hands of the drummers that only the angels are capable of pulling off.

Author: Chidinma Nnalue
Country: Nigeria



Growing up, one of those things I disliked most was moving. Moving to a new house or school meant that I left friends behind or if they did the moving, they left me. It meant that my siblings and I would no longer sing and clap with glee as our new priest, Father Joachim, led us in a song

during donations for our Parish building. It meant that I'd no longer see my two best friends; the ones I sang with during free periods in class, while I mostly tried but failed not to be caught singing off-key. Moving made me come to accept this Yoruba proverb, "Twenty children cannot play



together for twenty years”, long before I became twenty.

By the time I was ready to go to University, I already knew that life is in seasons and people come and go. So I didn't mind choosing a university six hours away from home. I remember how I couldn't stop admiring nearly everyone I saw on campus. I was there for *Post-Utme* and in the female hostel; whether it was in the tiny room where I stayed temporarily or in the common rooms, each time I saw another female student, I wished to be like her. And throughout the week I spent in that hostel, I don't recall missing home. All I wanted was to become an undergraduate. My wish would come true. And four years later, Youth Service called me off to a place even farther from home.

So far, I have been to or lived in 5 Nigerian states and this used to make me think of myself as a well-travelled woman. I'd joke with my siblings about it because they've never lived anywhere except Lagos. I would tease them because they haven't travelled hours on roads flanked only by trees or seen the numerous checkpoints that irk many travellers.

None of my siblings has ever regretted not having enough phone battery so they could entertain themselves on a journey that lasted till midnight. Nor have they been to *Ore*- the rest-stop of weary travellers- and chosen bananas and ground-

nuts over an overpriced restaurant meal. They also haven't seen the River Niger or bought jumbo-sized bread for the people they are visiting. They haven't experienced any of these; good or bad as they may be.

But I no longer flatter myself about being well-travelled. After all, I haven't been to Cameroon yet. I haven't tasted beans and *puff puff*. All I've done is wonder if it's the same kind of *puff puff* sold here in Nigeria; the one served as part of the savouries we eat at weddings.

I haven't been to Madrid either, nor have I been on a balloon ride in Istanbul or run my hands over the rugs in the Grand Bazaar. In fact, I haven't travelled farther than Ogun State in one year. And for several months this year, I have missed travelling.

It all began when I saw a friend post a video of her in a moving car. I saw the area and asked if she was on a trip. After seeing that video, on early mornings when I raced to board a bus to *Oshodi*, seeing passengers waiting at motor parks made me long to travel. But, despite this wish to feel some new places, all I have for now, are memories of places I've been to and a yearning for new places to come.

Yet, before I go to Cameroon or Turkey or Spain, I want to visit Kaduna, then Abuja for a truckload of books from a friend's library. I want to live a full year in Anambra or Enugu. Or perhaps Imo or Aba, if only to hear little children who speak more Igbo



than me, then to Yola, because someone told me that it's a beautiful place.

I had never thought of the northern states as anything more than a danger zone until I met a girl whose Igbo father met her Yoruba mother in Adamawa. Meeting her in the Middle Belt re-educated me, however little, about northern Nigeria. It made me realise that beyond being seen as volatile to the rest of the world, up north is the only home some people know.

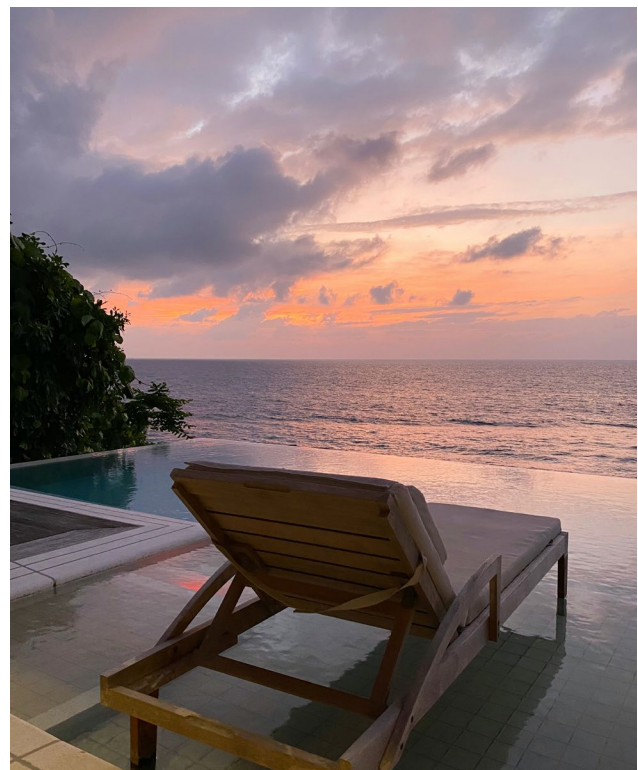
Living with this friend taught me a few new things too; like enjoying eating dates and coconuts and drinking *kunu shinkafa* with plenty of sugar. Plus, I picked up a few *Hausa* words. And perhaps if I had paid enough attention, by now, I'd know enough *Hausa* to communicate with vendors selling *suya* and vegetables and *ofio*, so I can get a little extra.

I have found that going to a new place has changed me. I've met people who are not Igbo or Yoruba or Hausa and I've come to cherish many of them. I've learned something about their culture and dance. It has also left me indecisive about whether it's the Tivs or Binis or Idomas or Hausas that have the best gospel songs. It made me long to set my stories in places other than this densely populated city where I've lived most of my life, too.

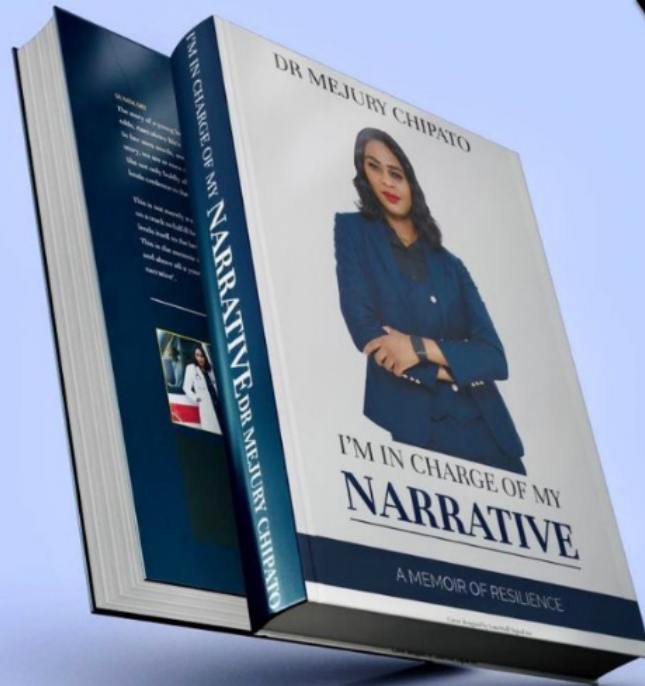
New places, whether it's a new home or state, or workplace have helped expand my life's story. I've had new experiences. I've

taken roots in places where I never thought it possible to thrive. I've found love with and drawn hope from the people around me and that, for me, is priceless.

"Happiness doesn't have just one address", and I agree with whoever wrote it. There's a lot to see in the world and a lot of happiness to experience, even in new places. The healing you need could be in a place far away from what you've always known. The leap your career requires might just be found when you choose to move to that new town. The creative spark you desire may be found once you step out of your room into somewhere on the other side of town, or someplace across the street. New places, however far or near, may just hold some of the most beautiful experiences that our lives need. You and I only need to find those places. I hope we do!



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Creative Spotlight

with PPBlessing



In this August edition, I had a chat with the multi-talented Makha-go Peter, whose story, the millionaire orphan won the 2021 Wakini Kuria prize for Children's literature. Join me as I have a chat with this son of Uganda.

- Blessing Peter Titus (PPBlessing)

PPBlessing: Let's begin with why you write.

MP: I read and so decided to revenge. I come from a family of readers. When one of us at home got a book, it would be shared according to age until everyone had read it. My starting point was basically one evening in the village, I had finished senior six and I thought I would lose my mind if I didn't do something with my time. I felt writing would be a good one for me so I got an exercise book and began. I still have that manuscript gathering moss on my laptop.

PPBlessing: Why haven't you published it?

MP: The rejections come in thick and thin. You know how you begin with all the excitement and even celebrate when you make your first submission. Then after some time, it seems you are sending your work into a black hole. You reach a point and ask yourself, "Am I really meant for this?" In all submissions I ever made, only one publishing house ever sent me their review. Then you are caught with the demands of life and as you get older, they keep piling up until one day you remember, you wrote at some point in your life.

PPBlessing: Does this mean you have no published work aside from the millionaire orphan which won you the Wakini Kuria prize for Children's literature? And are you saying you no longer write?

MP: Yes, that is my only published work. I am still polishing some of the manuscripts I wrote back then.

I do write. I write in phases. Trying to balance it with everything else. Sometimes, I get caught up in something different and find it too overwhelming to write. But I have also done some technical writing for a European company. So, I can console myself that I am still writing.

PPBlessing: What's your revenge strategy?

MP: I was in the village most of my childhood. I don't know if you can see somebody in a house at night with a candle trying to finish a book. I was like, it would also be good revenge to make some other person stay late in the night reading what I wrote. That is some good revenge.

PPBlessing: Indeed, it is. Any publishing plans on ground?

MP: Yes, I am still working on that story I started in my village. After I am done, I want to submit it to a firm that does critique and editing services. The people I had to get in touch with in the country quoted prices that scared me. I didn't know writing was that expensive.

PPBlessing: Since publishing with a publishing house seems expensive, have you considered self-publishing?

MP: I haven't.



PPBlessing: What occupation are you in?

MP: I work for an NGO in Kampala called Children At Risk Action Network. I began as an IT skills Teacher but moved to an IT technician doing repair which I have always loved. I had been teaching computer studies in Pallisa and I led my school in winning the ACIA awards in the raising stars category. These were organized back then by UCC (Uganda Communication Communication). It opened for me a door to move to Kampala. What can I say, some opportunities appear once in a lifetime. It changed everything.

PPBlessing: True, some opportunities are really once in a lifetime. How has being one of the winners of the Wakini Kuria prize for Children's literature been for you?

MP: Shocking. You know I saw the advert on Facebook one day and I was like those lepers of Israel in the Bible who were at the gate starving during the war who said 'if we remain here, we shall die and if we go who knows?' I said I lose nothing if I send so I pulled up the story, edited it quickly and submitted it. I didn't know it would turn out the way it did. It has also encouraged me to pull up those stories of old and once in a while, do some edits. It opened my eyes that well, somebody out there enjoyed what I wrote and am like; a perfect revenge indeed. There is something I have

never forgotten in my primary days. When I was in primary seven, our math teacher came to teach us in the evening. I had just borrowed 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' from the library and didn't want any interruption. I used to sit in the back and I was reading it at my desk. You can guess that I hated mathematics. Little did I know he was seeing me. He sent me out. He didn't know he had made it easier for me to finish reading the book.

PPBlessing: Congratulations once again. What other genres do you write aside from children's Literature?

MP: Thank you. I am trying to get to teenage readers. I have some thrillers I am working on. Something I have always loved reading. I like the excitement, the diversions, and the confusion. I have always been imaginative even when younger. When mom would tell us folk tales in the village in the kitchen, we would brave the smoke. Many times, when she was telling the stories, I would see the characters on the walls of the kitchen in that flickering light. I like when a story transports you to a different world and you see, feel and touch something. It's a feeling so hard to describe.

PPBlessing: Who are your favourite authors and why?

MP: I read so much in my younger years.



Mark Twain, Robert Louis Stevenson, Rudyard Kiplings, so many, Tom Swift's books and Enid Blyton's. Those made me think every cave had gold ingots. It was when I was older that I discovered African writers. Chinua Achebe hits you differently. He must have drunk from some oral pot. Goodness, his writing style is something I would find on a grandfather's lips in my village. No wonder, people complain about how we don't read a lot, we just like to cook, steam, and fry our words. Our African ears like to eat more of the words than our eyes. I just like a well-written story. No favourites for me. Each Author whose book I have read and liked has room in me for their work.

PPBlessing: Has working in an NGO focused on Children had any impact on your writing?

MP: When I think about it, I have always liked children's stories. I really want to motivate a child to do something smarter and also about their welfare, and their world. And it also works for me because they are often short and not overly complicated. I have a short attention span generally.

PPBlessing: What did you write on when you first started writing and what do you write on now?

MP: Ah, wanted those children's investigation stories. The effect of Enid Blyton's sto-

ries, pirates and whatnots. And those Moses in trouble series by Barbara Kimenye. I don't know who didn't like those stories. I re-read those books like crazy. Eh, I really had an adventurous childhood. In secondary school, our English teacher told us to write poems. I got an Okot P'Obitek poem and mutilated it with my ideas. He was able to know and warned me about plagiarism but eh, I liked what I had written and laughed. Those small steps, made me think about trying more and more writing.

PPBlessing: Every child that read those did like them and indeed writing what you like is amazing but plagiarism is something serious too.

MP: It's not that I was going to send it somewhere for publishing. Just getting something already built, deconstructing it and adding in more bricks and cement, and seeing what will come out of it.

PPBlessing: Understood. If you weren't so involved with being a technician, would you have considered a full-time writing career?

MP: Being a technician, makes sure there is food on the table and also ensures I can write with peace of mind. Writing doesn't pay. So, I think they complement each other. I really respect writers who go in the whole way but I am too scattered-minded and can't do a single thing. Right now, I



am in a studio recording a song. I still have that leper's attitude, what do I lose? But my singing is a hush-hush since I run from home and my family doesn't know am here.

PPBlessing: A multi-talented writer! That's beautiful. Aside from being a writer, technician and musician. What else do you do?

MP: Ah, if making noise on social media counts then I would add that. Our country has been sliding backwards. The word is met with bullets and threats. It's all about one man who has decided he knows anything and everything. This is impossible but he is not interested in anybody who says the opposite. The few remaining places are the internet, for example, that they are targeting but we are much more than them. They say being Ugandan is a full-time job and that's where I am. We are stuck somewhere, something like a loop. An oppressive environment may make us creative but on the other hand, it stifles and you can't know what you could have achieved if you were given the freedom to fly.

PPBlessing: True. In your years of writing, what do you think is important for every writer?

MP: Write down the idea. Record the idea. I would have said consistency but it's a rule I often break. So how can I force others to carry what I can't. Additionally, knowing

the period you're in. There are times when the ideas are many, like you have a creativity overload and there are times when you are dry. You have to learn how to feed one into the other.

PPBlessing: Thank you. If you had the opportunity to publish all your manuscripts, how many books would they be?

MP: I have two manuscripts I can be sure of. I have short stories for adults, and some poems I have written. Honestly, I have never counted them. When the ideas come, I write them down, polish them, save them, forget about them, and then I pull them up to do some more editing. I have never been to any school or training on writing. I just do it for revenge. If I remember well, I would have performed better in my exams but I would spend time writing thinking I would make it at the time. Little did I know, patience is the name of the game when it comes to writing.

PPBlessing: Well done. May the fire of writing keep burning. What is your greatest achievement as a writer?

MP: Really? The prize. The prize. The prize.

Thank you for reading through this interview. Join us again next month, for yet another interesting chat with another child of Africa.



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Poetry

Poet: Kilibwa Isaac

Country: Kenya

MeroLine

Is a waterfall with brunette, dread locked clouds?
And rainbow irises
At Chavakali, I say. Scalding
When the smokie vendor asks, how hot your pepper?

He doesn't believe it.
He doesn't know
That this place has taught me forgiveness of self
To look in my eyes and accept the disappointment
Of fatigue, to promise that I will try again tomorrow.

That these hills
Bubble with molten marrow sometimes
In the black of her mold.

Your lips are a tang of sea
Lapping at the edges of my subconscious,
I'm floating in the fragrance of your froth
And speaking Luo in my sleep.

Then I remember when I see you
That your phone is in my pocket
And your bus has left.

Let's sit here for a while, for all things work together,
Lost in twilights of strange suburbs,
Let's not fret.





Poet: Faniyi Tomiwa
Country: Nigeria

Portal of Angels

With my hands lifted
I hear the present song
From the growing shadows
Oh! It's the song of angels
Coming from the great city
An atmosphere filled with smoke.

I set out to sail
Through the sea of life
Where walls don't exist
I checked in at the gate
A big gate with the inscription
"A portal into other realms".

I'm on a journey
To the doorsteps of angels
I saw angels with wings
Flying on the wave of sound
An angel awaits at the other end
To show me the time that flies and never returns.



Poet: Chikapa Bernadette

Country: Malawi

With This Pen

Writing has taken me to the farthest of places
From the US to Asia from the Atlantic to the Pacific
Writing has given me wings to soar across the globe
I've travelled the Earth and I've been in the clouds

Poetry has been an adventure and a great privilege
It has taken me to great places, fitted me in different bodies
I've been a lad, a mother, a hero and a villain
Poetry gives me all human roles and even that of an animal!

This pen and paper have driven me to all the continents
These pages have flown me high above in the atmospheric layers
I've floated in the zero gravity of the moon
I've danced and bounced from galaxy to galaxy

Writing has been the best voyage of my imagination
The places it has taken me are countless, I could go on...



Poet: Mwansa Trevor
Country: Zambia

Divorcing Skepticism

They were skeptical about new places,
Skeptical about meeting new faces,
They dreaded socialization,
And feared societal re-integration.

Never did they dare contemplate on relocating,
As resolute as roots, they were keen to hold on to their way of living,
No time to prove all things and hold fast to that which is good,
They felt some dubiety about new beginnings
And on their ground, they stood.

One day, they heard a rushing wind of change.
Troubling whispers pierced their ears
till they felt an urge to engage
Tossed, to and fro, they scattered and landed in new places,
It felt like a new dawn and some
Seamlessly transitioned in the new spaces.

In verity and in totality, they divorced unfounded skepticism,
New places gave birth to new perceptions and optimism,
They dreamed new dreams and sailed,
They set new goals and like a noble eagle they blissfully soared.



Poet: Zungu Bongani
Country: South Africa

Hoerikwaggo's Footprints

And on these sacred rocks, these tales appear:
Under the shadow's sun, feet once pressed
against these warm desert sands.
Those who never tired in their tracks,
told the oldest clicks from the Namaquas,
along such easing banks of the Gariep
With willows and shrubs pressing further
on near acacia's shade and kharree trees.
That, when their bodies emerged with lips
Humming *N | uu*. As broad and flat, as tapering high;
As small and light, as always was and will be.
Along those ancient trails in the Angra,
with rivers' might and baking Bays.
When all fingers palmed grasped and
owned the watchful eye and harmless
soul of Hoerikwaggo.





Poet: Solomon Ayomide
Country: Nigeria

Take me to Eden

Take me to a realm, take me to Eden
Sync me into the bowel of this flowery
landscape, a place where dad rings to us each rising dawn
“Here, water kisses the tongue of merry” so he said
“Here, the sun is a twin to the sapphire’s glow”

If you desire me an abode, make it Eden
Where the serpent’s fang is an emblem of décor
And the five fingers of the sycamore flutter with glee.
Take me, take me on a voyage of awe into
This opulent place of glassy seas.
For my rest, cuddle me
Cuddle me into the arm of Eden
Where men hunt for animals and not man for game
Where dollops of warmth sprout in its very soil.

Do you hear the lion coo alongside the pigeon
In the conduit of spree?
In Eden diverse species speak the same tongue.
I do wish to get engraved into this locale,
To breathe the alluring holiness of its capes and in her,
Model out the Mother of all Seven Wonders.
I do hope to make this new place my favourite of all,
But would this roving blade at its entrance ever give way?



Poet: Fiske Iv Ivan

Country: Liberia

“Paradise”

Will everything burn
including our memories of the past?
How do you forget the night?
when there's darkness in your eyes?
Shall we not repeat the past
once it is still rooted in our mind?
According to the Bible - the Christian manual,
It says;
there will come a time
Where this world will be ashes
And a new world/place
will be given to the “believed” breathers.
Yes, not all of us but the “believed”
And this time,
It's not the garden of Eden,
It's not this present universe
but a place
we won't be cursed and cast out.
A place where death won't be present.
A place called paradise.
Paradise!
Will it be the last place we will reside?
or will there be another plot twist?





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PoeticAfrica is Africa's first trilingual poetry magazine published quarterly. The magazine showcases rich and diverse poetry in English, Kiswahili, and French from all over Africa to the world.

Sight to Behold



By: Ngovi LeBron Bulelani

Country: South Africa

Oby slowly emerged from her sleep to see a gentleman sitting by the window, gazing at her silently. His profile was silhouetted against a shaft of ashen light that poured into her hospital room from the outside. But for some odd reason, Oby felt that the man was smiling at her shrewdly. Before she could say anything, he rose to his feet, and slowly advanced towards her. His gait and stride were those of noblemen.



“I can help you beat this,” whispered the gentleman, standing a couple of feet from her. Oby met his gaze in that dim grayish light. He was immaculately dressed in a dark brown suit. His sharp features lent him a somewhat otherworldly appearance that was utterly pleasing to the eye. But his skin was very pale, almost transparent, with a web of black veins stretched out like poisoned roots across his face, down his neck and hands.

“I can help you beat this,” repeated the gentleman, now hovering over her. Oby didn’t remember seeing him move from where he



was standing before. His breath strangely stank of freshly turned earth mixed with ashes.

“Who...who are you?” Oby asked, lifting herself up with some difficulty.

“That doesn’t matter. What’s most important is to get you on your feet,” said the gentleman, smiling amiably.

“But...”

“Shhh. Easy now, dear child. I know all your desires. Even your darkest ones. The biggest one right now is for you to get up from that accursed bed, and I can help you with that.”

The gentleman felt in his vest pocket and produced a small glass phial containing a red liquid. Holding it between his thumb and his index finger, he brought it close to Oby’s face.

“This is the Holy Blood, and a small sip from it would resurrect you even from the dead.”

He went on relating to her its origin, dating back to the 1st century.

“It was underhandedly collected by Joseph of Arimathea following Christ’s Crucifixion. For many years, Joseph had kept it a secret, in his personal vault, until he revealed its existence on his deathbed, hoping that it would spare his life. When he sent it to be extracted from the vault, it was found missing. And since then, it’s been the most

sought-after relic.”

Oby’s eyes widened. She had heard that Joseph of Arimathea was tasked with wiping the blood from the body of Christ after He was crucified, using a cloth that is now famously kept in a vial at the Basilica of the Holy Blood in the medieval town of Bruges, Belgium.

Oby allowed her desire to live poison her soul. She could feel it coursing through her whole being. Indeed, as the gentleman had stated, at that moment she wanted nothing more than to continue living. She had a plethora of wishes to fulfil in this world; wishes that now seemed inconceivable more than ever, for osteosarcoma, a type of deadly bone cancer that affects the limbs, shoulders and other locations, had reduced her into an utter invalid. She had been battling the disease ever since she was a child.

Yet she had never lost hope that one day she would recover from her gradual demise, and live a healthy life. That’s what she prayed for every day. Growing up in Cape St. Francis, a rustic fishing village in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa, she had never been anywhere else to see the world – her biggest wish after regaining health.

Now the blood in that glass phial held by the gentleman could make all that possible.

Before Oby could accept anything, a furtive tapping sound of a cane hitting the floor



could be heard approaching the room, and soon emerged an old man clad in black and white.

“Father Presley,” Oby gasped, her eyes darting between the blind priest and the gentleman who now crept along like a spider, retreating into the shadows.

Father Michael Presley stopped in his tracks, and lifted his head as if sensing something.

Oby furrowed her brow, clearly disconcerted, her eyes still darting between the two men. The stranger now stood motionless in the shadows, his glittering eyes being the only sign giving off his presence.

“I wasn’t expecting you, Father,” Oby whimpered.

The priest lowered his head, and advanced towards her. He stood over her quietly. He remained like that for quite a while.

“There’s a dark force in this room,” the priest finally proclaimed. His voice was stiff. Letting his cane fall to the ground, he stretched his arms and held the girl’s hands.

“We need to pray, dear child, for the devil is always about, prowling like a lion roaring for its prey.”

The priest began praying while Oby kept her gaze on the shadows. She could see the glitter in the man’s eyes losing its spark by the minute, until it diminished altogether.

Only then did the priest cease to pray.

He fumbled around for a chair and sat next to the girl who now feigned sleep. He could hear her breathing heavily. He sat there a long time; his face filled with trepidation.

He left the hospital in the first breath of dawn, though rather tentatively. He strongly felt something really bad would befall the girl.

As soon as his footsteps and the tapping of his cane faded away, Oby awoke, and cast her eyes where she had last seen the stranger. There he was, standing motionless, the glimmer in his eyes back.

Oby would live to remember that dawn, etched in her memory like an epitaph on a gravestone. She would remember how she finally accepted the phial from the man with trembling hands, and greedily downed its contents in one single gulp. How she, afterwards, felt a strange warm sensation coursing through her veins. How she, for the first time in her miserable life, felt no throbbing pain in her body.

She would recall how she had cast aside those blankets stinking of death and ambled out of her room feeling more alive than ever; the disbelief in her doctor’s eyes when he saw her emerge. How everyone declared her miraculous recovery as that of the paralytic at the Pool of Bethesda.

Her last memory of her saviour was of him turning into a black smoke that vanished



into thin air after lingering awhile in mid-air. Before disappearing, he had assured that she would have nothing to worry about ever again, and that she would have a free pass to go anywhere she pleased in the world without any hassles of acquiring traveling documentation; that she would stay wherever it tickled her fancy. All she needed to do was pronounce her name.

She would remember the look of her little town as it lay shimmering under a golden sun after she had left the hospital gates. That morning, the image of those little white houses with thatched roofs, perching on the canals, seemed to have been carved out of a Flemish painting by an Old Master.

The sight of her village stretched out in all its glory only whetted her palate. She had more enchanting sights to behold further afield – new places. She would travel all the seven seas in search of wonders.

She would remember leaving Cape St. Francis that very morning, seeing it receding into the background like a mirage.

She could not be certain whether she had heard right, but she thought she heard the old priest's voice calling her name as her bus began pulling away. She never dared to look back. She was now bound for big cities.

Not even once in all her pilgrimages did she feel a pang of guilt for how she came to

beat her terminal illness. She traveled the world with a light heart, sleeping at the best hotels, where valets and concierges would immediately drop to their knees at the mere mention of her name.

She traveled all over, back and forth, until the sights to behold seemed to run dry. She kept at it for years until she decided to go back home. By this time Father Presley had long been late. She heard that the old man died with her name on his lips. In his mumbling, he claimed that she had sold her soul to the devil. Everywhere she looked she could see accusing eyes, until she decided to leave town again.

She now wandered around the world aimlessly, like a lost soul. She couldn't bring herself to look at her reflection in the mirror. For a while she had noticed that she was not aging a single day. She realized then that what the strange gentleman had offered her was nothing but a simple curse.

The world was no longer inviting to her. It was cold and empty. She felt exhausted deep in her soul, until she decided to take her own life, in vain. To this day, she is still wandering around aimlessly.



Places Become Feelings and Memories

By: Olabode Oluwabukola
Country: Nigeria

I should feel remorse for the disgrace I brought upon my mother and myself. Instead, my heart feels warm, grateful that I can keep this miracle. “What’s to be happy about?” Mum barked unexpectedly at me. My hands flew away from my belly, and I became aware of her intensely contemptible gaze at my three-month pregnancy. I’m her 19-year-old daughter.

Mr Audu hurriedly swerved off the road, and mother got down from the car, greatly annoyed. While mum worked off her anger outside, Mr Audu watched me through the rearview mirror. His eyes held a kindness which made me distraught. “Be good to Grandma,” He said casually and smiled. I could not return the smile. I would miss my unsuspecting course-mates at the University, but not as much as I would Mr Audu.

Mother returned to the car a while later, and we continued our journey to Grandma’s house.

Grandma was outside a sturdy but unpainted house, waiting for us, and watched as Mr Audu parked the car under the blooming fruit tree. I checked her expressionless face. She was supposed to be 75 but looked much younger and quite energetic enough to spank me if the need arose. I watched my things get transferred to the front of the house. Never ready for what came next, I got out of the car onto the flower-covered sand without a fuss. I glided toward my Grandma, clad in a colourful Ankara. The other two watched the procession. I went down on my knees as though to say ‘Please accept me.’ Grandma instead hugged me tightly. Tears formed in



my eyes, and I let them flow while inhaling the old-woman scent while more flower petals showered on us.

Grandma gently drew me up and wiped my eyes with the edge of her wrapper. It was not the most appropriate occasion, but everything screamed 'Welcome!' at me.

We entered the sitting room, and I became drawn to a picture of Grandma, late Grandpa, and my much younger mother hung on the wall. It reminded me of what my mother told me about my maternal grandfather. I was never to mention him because of his premature death in the Nigerian army.

At Grandma's request, we all sat at a raffia mat to eat pounded yam and egusi soup. She wanted to relieve the moments her children lived in the house. I looked at our plates and found that my meat had additional premature chicken eggs. Grandma caught me looking around and smiled.

"How's the pounded yam?" I smiled after swallowing one of the boiled miniature eggs. "I could eat it every day," I replied honestly.

"Akinwale, Baale's grandson from Lagos, pounded the yam very well as I taught him. Very good boy, he is serving in NYSC." Grandma said resolutely, and all three pairs of eyes turned on her. She chuckled, knowing what curiosity she had sparked.

"Grandma, I'm here." A male voice called in a refined Lagosian accent from outside the

house.

"Wole, Omo Akin" Grandma replied, and a lightly bearded chocolate-skinned guy entered the sitting room. He looked twenty-something years old and was on a checked shirt. His faded jeans were barely below the knees. When our gazes locked for a tense moment, he looked away, confused. Realizing what was happening, I tore my gaze away from him and held on to my belly.

Mr Audu and Mum left that afternoon, but not without a minor argument between mum and Grandma.

"He won't impregnate someone who is already pregnant," Grandma insisted when mum expressed her dissatisfaction at not being told about the existence of an Akinwale.

The first week was novel. I drank surprisingly cool water from a clay pot and ate fresh vegetables. Grandma listened to the radio most of the time, while I had to attend to the books I had brought along.

Akinwale usually came around to pound yam at Grandma's requests and did some manly duties around the house. He helped put on the small generator, so we could watch the box television and charge our phones.

Fridays were my antenatal at the local hospital just a few walks away from home. But I had to go with Akinwale for those four weeks. I suspected his motives for a while,





but finally got used to seeing him around.

My pregnancy grew into six months, and life became more difficult. I had several headaches and gradually grew weaker. At the foot of my hospital bed, Akinwale sat, watching me keenly till my face caught fire. He then came around and placed his hand on my forehead to check my temperature. The gesture made me flinch, and he moved away. When the awkward moment passed, he cleared his throat.

“What were you thinking about?” He asked, and my pupils widened. I wondered if my conflicting feelings were that obvious. He looked at me as though I had to answer. Seizing my condition as an excuse, I closed my eyes and pretended to fall asleep. I later got to know that he only wanted to ask me about my high blood pressure.

I got discharged a month later when I felt a lot better. Grandma came with Akinwale on that Saturday to take me home. While the taxi drove past a vast body of water, I marvelled and wished I could go see the water.

“You look like you haven’t been to any water body before,” Akinwale said pointedly at me, and I nodded.

“The water is quite calm today.” The taxi driver chipped in.

And before I could process what was going on, Akinwale was helping me out of the taxi, and Grandma was telling him to



bring me back home early.

We walked in silence down the winding path to the river. My tiny frame swerved from right to left, and my belly moved in the opposite direction. I had no choice but to accept Akinwale's help as he wrapped his arm around me to keep me from sinking in the grainy soil.

We got to the water, and I breathed in the fresh air. I had not noticed how blue the sky was since I became immersed in my pregnancy. And from where I stood, the world looked massive than I had thought. I looked back and caught Akinwale staring at me.

"I've never seen you smile this happily." He said gravely and spread a cloth from my bag on the floor.

"You thought I wasn't a happy girl? If you had met me before now," I was saying but paused. "You wouldn't have met me anyway," I replied quietly and sat after he did. He then started preparing tea from the hot water in the flask. I watched him for a while before bringing out a novel to read.

"Have some tea," He said to me while gently putting the novel away. The tea warmed my hands.

"What do you want to do after giving birth to our baby?" Akinwale asked after a brief moment of silence. "Our?" I laughed. I know who the father is. Akinwale's face turned

serious all of a sudden.

"I can be a good daddy to your baby," Those words left his mouth, and the tea in mine escaped, splattering all over the sand.

Akinwale looked at me, causing me to look away. Slowly, he inched closer to me and took my hand in his. My breath caught at the surprise move, and I tried to wiggle my hand from his grip. Gently, a smile spread across his face. He was enjoying how uncomfortable he was making me.

"Hmmm," I cleared my throat, and he let go of my hand.

"I'll study to be a lawyer, so I can catch spoiled rich boys who think they can get away with raping their naive girlfriends," I was about to say. But without prior warning, I was tearing up again.

"Are you okay?" Akinwale asked gently. I looked at the nice guy before me and wondered why I was going through a rollercoaster of emotions.

"It must be the pregnancy hormones," I said plainly, wondering how life would be after the baby is born. Whether or not I allow my feelings for Akin to blossom, I won't forget what I felt in these places.



The Journey of the Black-eyed Susan

By: Nyaka Neo
Country: South Africa



Staring at the Chinese lanterns hanging over my head, I wonder to myself; with all this beauty hanging above me, what could possibly go wrong?

Chipping, crackling and crowing, the birds sing pride for the day. Rays of the sun pierce through my bedroom installing an orange hue that rests on the triptych wall painting, giving the geisha staring at me a twinkle in her eyes. Really, with such a stare; what could possibly go wrong?

At the sound of the mirth from downstairs

I carry my kimono to have Cheryl dress me up.

#

Cheryl is wearing a skin-tight garish dress that exposes too much of her décolletage. Although she has a chutzpah that I detest, I had no choice but to hire her because she is the only cosmetologist capable of turning me into a geisha for my maternity photoshoot happening by noon. She is an expert oshiroi make-up artist and she can style African braided hair with the kanza-



shi to perfection.

The décor in the lounge also ensues a Japanese theme. I have boarded the place with shoji walls and as a center piece I rented an archway covered in sukuras and fairy lights. With a set of candlelit lanterns kneeling before the archway, the whole setting looks like a holy shrine.

As Cheryl works on my hair, I wistfully sink into the day when I met Mondli, the father of my unborn child whom I have since broken-up with due to his love affairs. We met in Japan. He was there on business and I was there for work. I was dressed as a geisha; one looks at me and he was amused. He said he never saw an African geisha before. Ours was a love at first sight and from that day, Japan became my second love.

#

During breakfast a cracking erupts and sparks fly!

After investigating the scene, it seems that the fairy lights had a cable fault.

Qhawekazi makes a call requesting the person on the other line to bring Christmas lights. After the call, she tells everyone to calm down and that everything will be sorted.

#

Someone knocks at the door, Qhawekazi's daughter runs to open and she excitedly shouts, "Malume!"

I feel a twinge in my heart. He looked lovely of course but I did not want to see him, especially not today, or ever again!

Mondli walks in carrying a box of his Christmas lights. He greets everybody and looks at me. "Zalira, may we please have a talk?" He demands.

I look at Qhawekazi and tearfully ask, "Why would you betray me like this?"

I grab my car keys and run out the door into the garage and I pull out my car while everybody rushes outside to stop me.

Qhawekazi shouts, "Oh wow; so now you are going to run away. That's so typical of you!"

I yelp back at her, "I should have known. Betrayal runs in the family!"

Cheryl intervenes, "Zalira, it's not safe for you to drive in such a state. Please come out of the car. I will ask Mondli to leave; you don't have to be so dramatically puerile!"

Out of anger I decide to take an unplanned therapeutic trip and see where the road leads me as long as it is far away from baby daddy confrontational drama. Mondli runs after me but loses the strength to keep up and I drive away.

#

In the middle of nowhere my car gets a flat tire. I try to call insurance but there is no signal and my phone's battery is flat. At this



nadir, I am filled with regret. Maybe Cheryl was right. With no sign for help around; I grab my car keys and handbag, and I start walking. I have to find help at its nearest.

#

At an entrance, it's written; 'Welcome to Amara's Village. I walk through. There are beautiful trees and branches on either side of the rocky aisle. Observing the place, it seems like I have landed at a Nature Reserve. A part of me is frightened about the sight of loose wildlife on a chase.

As a travel journalist, I have traveled a million miles to African Nature Reserves in the course of my career and I have since developed a disliking for the service because it's a cliché and marketed towards colonial interests. After all colonialism was in its pinnacle sense the commodification of the Western culture. I want Africans to decolonize the tourism industry by selling an authentic African cultural experience that gives travelers a self-realization journey like the one I feel when I visit Japan.

#

A branch of trumpet shaped like flowers releases an irresistible fragrance. I pull out a few and bury them in my handbag for indulgence. There was a caution board by the entrance asking tourists not to tamper with the plants; but oh well, who cares!

Suddenly, I feel faint and a headache weakens my knees. I fall to the ground. A viper,

a gigantic viper in the nightfall slithers towards me! And its fangs so large towards me. I feel terrible and afraid. What is this place, why do they keep such a terrible beast? I scream and I shout but the more I scream, the darker it gets and the fangs enlarge. I can't help but scream louder as it gets darker. Although I cannot see it, I know the viper is there, growing larger than life with all my screams.

#

Chipping, crackling and crowing, the birds sing pride for the day. The sunbeams gush through the sash window and an orange hue rests on the emulsion painted women in their khanga carrying calabashes above the head.

A young lady sitting on the bedside holding a mortar smile at me and introduces herself, "My name is Samantha, I am an herbalist nurse; the doctor will address you shortly. For now, please take a spoonful of this mixture." She says putting the mixture in the mortar on the satin sheets.

"What is this?" I ask.

She seems irked, "The doctor will see you shortly, if you have any questions, please read the broacher on your right." And then she walks away.

#

Shortly, a six-foot tall man walks in wearing khaki scrubs, "Hello, I am Doctor Qoph-



elo, please call me Doctor Q for short. We found you lying unconscious. Fortunately, for you and the baby I could help. I run this institution, it's a Nature Reserve that only reserves plants and livestock. Amara's Village is also a health retreat where people receive naturopathic medicine for treatment of various sicknesses. We also provide expeditions and ethno-medical research on our herbal products and services. Last night you administered a noxious plant with neurotoxic side effects, so we had to keep you at our facility without your consent for treatment; and now that you are aware of your condition, do you consent for further evaluation?"

All of a sudden, I remember, the dreadful snake growing above the tree in the nightfall.

"Yes, I do consent." I reply. "But why do you keep such a dangerous snake at your village?" I ask out of concern.

"You saw a snake?" He curiously asks.

"Yes, I saw a snake, a larger-than-life snake."

"Ah, I see. You were hallucinating." He says, his eyes wide open.

"The plant you stole from my forest is called an Angele's Trumpet. The flower is known for inducing terrible hallucinations and it's also fatal. However, I often find that what you see in those hallucinations has a meaningful message." He looks at me with a mild concern.

While looking at the heath from afar through the sash window, he continues, "The snake symbolises a poison that you are carrying inside of you. You have so much anger. You must let go and forgive. You are putting the child's life and yourself in danger. However, as an antidote, I see that you are also capable of removing that poison yourself because I also see that you traveled with the spirit of the Black-Eyed Susan plant."

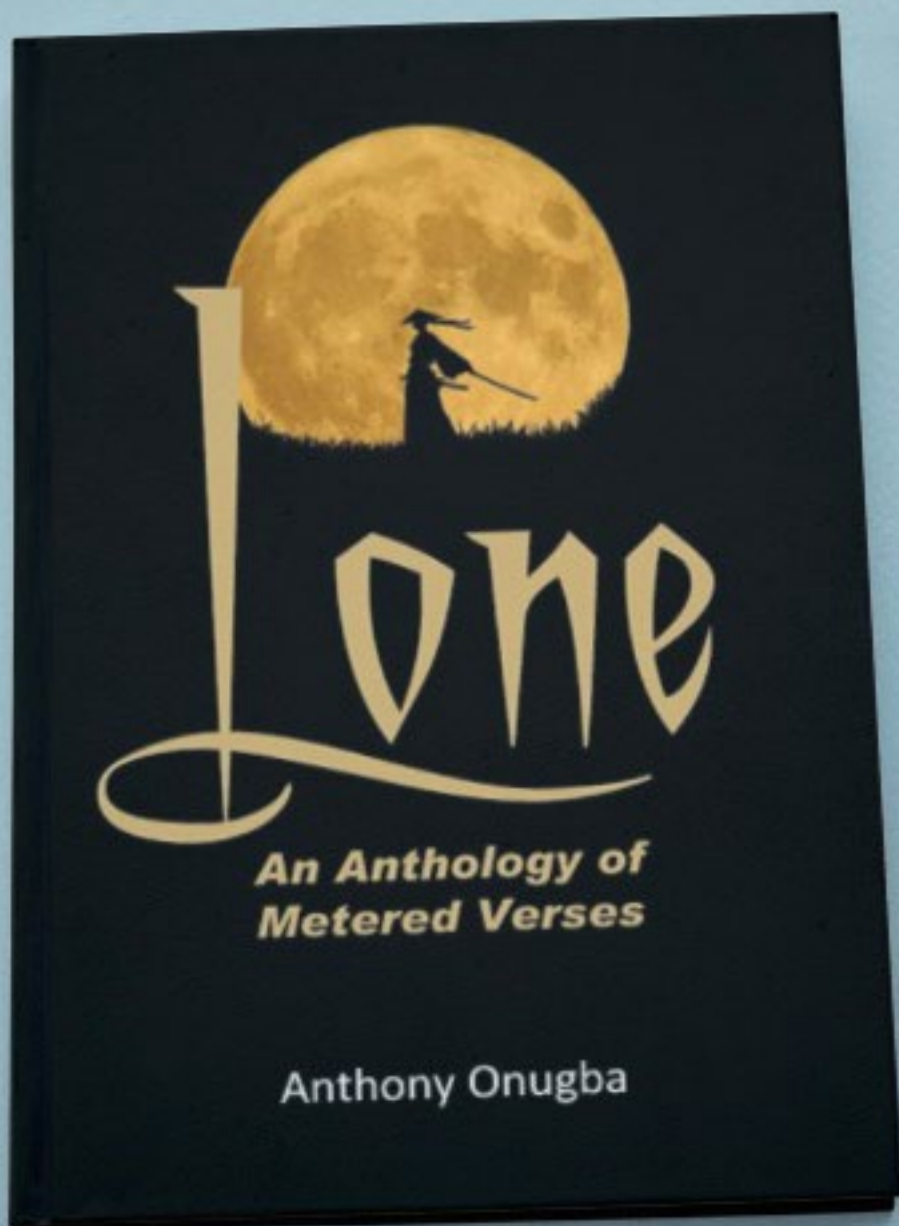
The more he speaks, I can't help but sense an aura of an African Sensei or a Guru of some sort about him.

"To help you heal, I will give you the plant so that you can heal from this anger because on this journey, you have become the Black-Eyed Susan. Although, its seeds are poisonous, the stems and the petals have healing properties. Native Americans are known to have used the plant as an antidote to snakebites. Pick up your ears and make this journey count. Anger is as poisonous as the snake you saw on this journey."

I have travelled on this journey to get away from the bitter poison of the anger I felt towards Mondli and his sister and I found myself healing through this African self-realization journey not as a geisha but as Black-Eyed Susan.

The End





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AFRICAN LITERARY THEMES THROUGH TIME



Mimi Machakaire

Zimbabwe

Introduction

In many ways, African literature consists of a body of work in different languages and various genres, ranging from oral literature to literature written in colonial languages (French, Portuguese, and English) but more are also written in our own native African languages such as Xhosa, Shona, Kiswahili, Yoruba

and more. As African literature evolves, the storyteller speaks, time collapses, and those who are listening are in the presence of history.

African literature originates from orature (oral storytelling) to written prose of current times. It seems that more storytellers have developed the desire to tell different stories about their societies, the struggles of their people and delve into topics that challenge the status quo, such as Senegal's Mariama Bâ, one of Africa's most influential women authors, who is known for her powerful feminist information, which address the issues of gender inequality in her home and other African countries.

Storytelling in Africa has

been manifested in many ways and was used to serve many purposes. Some authors use their stories to educate or enlighten the readers, while others simply want to spread a message of change by pushing the narrative of African people to the forefront.

This has then pushed storytellers to use different themes to convey their message to the masses whose previous consumption was dominated by non-native voices. Therefore this article will be focusing on the growing and changing themes in African literature.

African Literature development over the years

What is important to understand is that before co-



lonial rule, African literature existed. It has always been present. In the pre-colonial African societies oral literature was the dominant form used in most countries although evidence of written stories such as those on cave walls mark a documentation of these tales. It was further valued as one of the major means by which these societies educated, instructed and socialized some of their younger members.

Once European exploration began, the documentation of African literature in non-native languages began around the fifteenth through the nineteenth centuries. In the beginning, it was mostly folklore that was documented. There is a common theme in traditional African folklore that is the small animal which tricks larger creatures in order to survive. Other themes found in this era usually describe various oral histories, myths, and proverbs additionally to remind whole communities of their ancestors' heroic deeds, their past, and the precedence for their customs and traditions.

An example of this can be seen in the world popular stories of Anansi the Spider which were documented by R.S Ratray. Anansi the spider is a character from a Ghanaian folklore, who is associated with skill and wisdom and often triumphs over foes larger than he. Since then there have been more authors who have documented African folklore such as George W. Bate-man, who translated tales from Kiswahili told by natives on Africa's East Coast and

published them in a collection of short stories entitled Zanzibar Tales.

In the 1900s once colonial rule was established in various African countries and systems of formal education were installed, African authors began to use their voices. They wrote at home as well as in the West, and told stories in both their native language and the colonial languages. It is in this time that while Africans became literate in their own languages, they often reacted against colonial repression in their writings.

Principal themes that developed in post-colonial African Literature are those of exile and alienation; rebellion, struggle, and opposition against colonial powers and not to forget the mixing or confusion of identities, multiculturalism, and the establishment of cultural autonomy.

Within this era, the literature world would detail a lot of information from people trying to reclaim their freedom and their new identities after struggling for independence. For example, in the book *Things Fall Apart*, written by Chinua Achebe in 1958 just before Nigeria's independence, it highlights some of the violent societal conflict that resulted from the first initial arrival of the missionaries at the end of the nineteenth century and the effects of the British colonialism.

I think the story was successful in the sense that it showcases many factors that are in



play in a culture that is on the verge of change. The story highlights the pressure of whether or not change should triumph over tradition and the story often involves questions of personal status, which in the African context, many other nations have gone through similar societal patterns in the past.

In another book written around the same time, Kenya's Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Weep not Child* focuses on the post-colonial effects in his home country. It noted the great damage to the native African tribal culture, and stresses the need for education to revamp the society. The novel prioritizes children's education, and emphasizes that education alone can bring a new dawn to the country.

In this *Weep not child* novel I think it tried to give us some insight into the Kenyan society where they were fighting among themselves as well as fighting for change. It again tried to educate the reader's mind in a different way, telling us that there is a need to look towards the future especially within the youth.

It can be generalized that these two authors mentioned above, paved the way for mainstream consumption of African Literature, especially that their works were not only read and applauded outside of African but within as well. But, it can also be argued that we still have a long way to go in terms of experimenting with themes outside of those depicting post-colonial strug-

gles of the African people.

In modern and contemporary African Literature, the topics and themes of the decolonization process and the after effects are rife but there are many themes being highlighted in different countries around Africa, which range from current political repression, gross violations of human rights, the African feminists movement, to mention a few.

For example, in *The Goddess of Mtwara and Other Stories*, a collection of short stories written by different African writers which won the Caine Prize in African Writing, one of the stories featured is written by Arinze Ifeakandu and titled, *God's Children Are Little Broken Things*. The writer elaborates a journey of self-actualization through Lota, a young Nigerian student uncovering his repressed sexuality.

I think this is one of the most important viewpoints in African Literature that is lacking; the voice of children/youth. In most African societies it's hard for children, and even teenagers and beyond to speak their minds, and talk about their true self amongst people. There is a need for more stories that highlight the coming of age in a child's life- the process of puberty, the exploration of feelings during this journey, including those nagging questions that go unanswered because of the anxiety they bring and uncertainty of their reception. In this story it shows Lota being able to express himself despite whatever may come



his way.

Another example of more modern African Literature can be found in the works of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, a Nigerian author who wrote a book length essay titled *We Should All Be Feminists*. In this she talks about the stereotypical idea of feminism and the word feminist; and the process of normalisation. Other issues discussed by the author are: invisibilization, pay gap, raising girls and boys differently, culture and gender.

This is an example of how the message of feminism is coming from a fellow African and shows more people; possibly other writers who could be reading, that there is a need for more stories that tell of this movement. There are not enough African voices that speak up on feminist issues apart from women who are being abused, or in somewhat stereotypical traditional settings.

Conclusion

While I acknowledge the importance of dominating themes of the past such as the struggle of freedom and hope in post-colonial African literature, I believe that most writers need to move on from these themes that put Africa on the global literary map and begin to focus on other themes that could educate or raise awareness to a new generation of Africa. Themes of religion and tradition, expressed in rituals and ethics, that become the social ex-

pression of enlightenment I should say. These are some topics that are trending and have become popular recently, among others. Overall, the writers who come after us, learn from whatever it is we have left behind, and so let's leave a wider, richer range of themes and tell stories that can inspire this new and budding generation of African minds.

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WSA MAGAZINE REVIEW
JULY 2022 EDITION
[**SELECTED REVIEWS**]

The image shows the cover of WSA Magazine. At the top right, there is a logo for WSA (Writers Space Africa Magazine) featuring a map of Africa with a stylized figure. Below the logo, the text reads "WSA Writers Space Africa Magazine" and "July 2022 Edition - Issue 67". The main part of the cover is a photograph of Clara Wanjira Karuiki, a young woman with short, curly, light-colored hair, smiling broadly. She is wearing a yellow and purple patterned off-the-shoulder top and a gold chain necklace with a small pendant. The background of the photo is a blue fabric with a brown, ornate, repeating pattern. At the bottom of the cover, there is a dark grey banner with white text that reads "Clara Wanjira Karuiki" and "Winner of the 2021 African Writers Awards (Poetry Category)".

WSA
Writers Space Africa
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July 2022 Edition - Issue 67

Clara Wanjira Karuiki
Winner of the 2021 African Writers Awards
(Poetry Category)



The Perfects That Define My People

Writer:

Gana Jemimah, Nigeria

Reviewer:

Chidiebere Udeokechukwu,
Nigeria

When understood from an ethnocentric perspective, “The Perfects That Define My People” is likely to attract negative appraisals because the writer tells of certain cultural practices personally experienced, which may seem barbaric to an individual who is of non-Nupe origins.

For reasons of conceptual clarification, ethnocentrism entails the “evaluation of other cultures according to notions hinged on the standards and customs of one’s own culture”. It becomes easy to understand that a human rights activist/scholar (probably from any part of Nigeria but Nupe) would likely condemn the writer’s experience as barbaric since it seems to demean the dignity of one’s person.

It would seem inhumane that as a child, the writer was laid on her mother’s thighs, and scarred not once, not twice but three times on both cheeks. She graphically represents this seeming ordeal: “I bear marks on my face that lie on both cheeks ... born from blades, fires and herbal concoctions.”

But if this article is viewed from the perspective of “cultural relativism”, it will not be too difficult a task to realise that Gana Jemimah’s article extols her roots and heritage. What an ethnocentric philosophy would frown at,

is what Gana prides herself in. To corroborate this assertion, Gana notes that “you will get to know my scars more than you know me”. And she admits that any non-Nupe reader may see her progenitors as savage and cruel; but the reality (for her) is that the scars which caused her great pain, now are insignias of pride that make her stand out anywhere she may find herself.

To clarify any lurking obscurities, cultural relativism denotes the idea that “a person’s beliefs and practices should be understood based on that person’s own culture”. Apologists of cultural relativism also tend to posit that the norms and values of one culture should not be scrutinised using the norms and values of another. It goes to say that for one to understand the truth and pride behind this article, one must certainly come to terms with the Nupe culture.

The entirety of this writing is more like a eulogy to the writer’s roots and heritage: her traditional dance steps, the delicacy (two rice and bean soup) and her marks of identity. Indeed, it becomes a thing of pleasure that the Gana identifies as a native Nigerian who is profoundly proud of her culture.

There may be no better lesson to be learned!



My Dark Culture

Writer:

Moses Tololo, Zambia

Reviewer:

Tamunomieibi Enoch, Nigeria

In the story of My Dark Culture, we learn that even though our culture has its flaws, it is beautiful and it is made to protect, uphold, and guide us through life.

This beautiful Children's Literature will teach children that they don't need to put on a certain type of dress to be beautiful and stand out. It teaches children not to allow negative things they see to influence them.

The story also points out that parents should speak to children about their self-worth and take time to daily guide them.

The story will teach children the value of respecting everyone, especially their elders. It teaches the value of kindness and of treating people nicely.

Most importantly, it teaches that every child has the right and freedom of expression, and the right to be heard.

The age bracket of the work ranges from 9-16.



When the King Dies

Writer:

Olabode Oluwabukola, Nigeria

Reviewer:

Benita Magopane, Botswana

Rumours, rumours! This flash fiction piece whizzed by and left me wondering what the truth is. Did the King go the way of all flesh or not? Where did the rumour come from? I have a feeling it came from a desperate desire of the people to want their King dead. At least, the majority of the people. You know they loathe him that much when even the radio news, where information must be verified facts, can report on hearsay.

When I got to the crunch of the story, I assumed all my questions were getting cleared up, that our Yoruba King is alive and well. However, Olabode Oluwabukola threw me into a muddle again but made up for it with an amusing and mind-boggling end. If the Abobaku who is supposed to die and be buried with the King is on the run, perhaps

the King is dead, but then he might not because it's just another rumour.

How amusing! Just too good a tale. It's a full story yet deliberately incomplete at the same time. And from beginning to end, it gets neater. Every advancing twist acts as a crown on top of the ones prior, giving Olabode's story a seasoned narrative. I completely enjoyed it, it's complicated and funny. As for the ending, I could buy it with diamonds, it's that amazing and defining of the story. And whether the King is truly dead or not, the story tells us what happens, "When the King dies." People will talk about it, some just because they have to and some out of respectful contempt. Some people will become happy, some won't. And the media will always report about it.



What We Are Made Of

Writer:

Ogechi Osuji, Nigeria

Reviewer:

Laurent Bwesigye, Uganda

Ogechi Osuji describes the elements of African culture in his poem, “What we are made of.”

How would one know their culture? Through paying attention to the way one dressed, the type of art one created like pottery, the way one danced, their type of hair and the name of a person. If we carefully looked at these elements it would be very easy for us to know where each person comes from and what their culture is, Ogechi Osuji explains.

The poet focuses more on cultures like those of the Igbo, the Masai, the Zulu and the Himba. The Igbo can easily be identified by their

name, the Masai from their energetic way of dancing where they do more jumping than anything else. The Himba are clearly distinguished by their dreadlocks. At the end of the poem, the poet speaks of slavery. With slavery, different cultures were meant to be dissolved since there was a movement to foreign places with and meeting people that are different but he says that the culture of Africans is too strong it cannot be washed. Wherever they moved they stayed Africans.

This poem has no specific rhyme pattern and is written in free verse with great cadence.



An Awkward Cultural Enlightenment

Writer:

Tumisang Shongwe, South Africa

Reviewer:

Bohlokoa Lephoi, Lesotho

The story, an Awkward Cultural Enlightenment is a well-written relatable story. The story opens with a happy couple contemplating marriage outside of familiar cultural boundaries despite the gentleman having been warned to not marry out of his own culture.

Their relationship unravels as the lady assumed that things can be settled amicably and informally and the gentleman refuses.

The story shows that all marriages are a mystery to outsiders and even more to the married people themselves. This, we see when one day the gentleman asks his wife to make him an easy South African dish because he was too tired to prepare the food for the week. She placed her feet on the table and said, "Nope!" That, I believe became a shock because the gentleman didn't know his lady to be like this and worse, where he comes from women are more respectful.

What's extraordinary about this story is that everyone is right, based on their position in the situation. The gentleman finds it wrong to not pay Lobola, just marry in court and also the wife not kneeling in front of his parents. The lady finds it otherwise, which I understand her being Xhosa kneeling in front of parents isn't a norm.

Oh boy, this story gives me a lot to think about. I'm not sure I want to date someone from a different culture anymore! It's a great story as it lays out challenges that intercultural couples may have to face. I appreciate the author's honesty and forthrightness.

This story is largely engaging, entertaining and relevant. Tumisang is a good storyteller, but there is the feeling of a smaller, tighter, more devastating story lurking here. As it is, the emotional punches can get a little lost amid the padding and point-making.





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