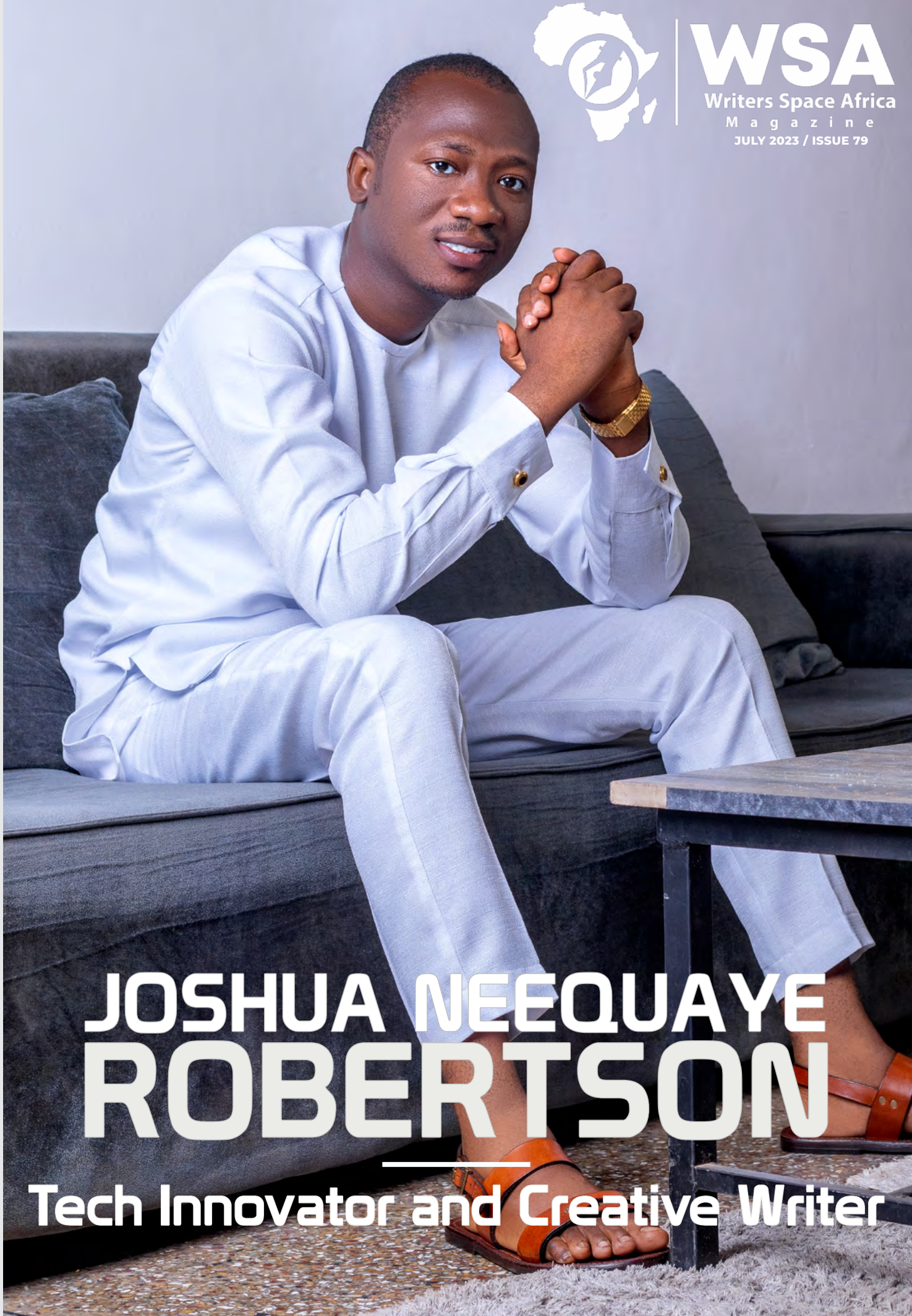




WSA
Writers Space Africa
Magazine
JULY 2023 / ISSUE 79



JOSHUA NEEQUAYE ROBERTSON

Tech Innovator and Creative Writer



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Editorial

Scholar Akinyi (Kenya)

“Prove that you are not a robot.” A familiar phrase, right? When computers began asking us to prove our humanness, it was all fun and games until it slowly dawned on us that the robots could potentially take over. A scary thought to entertain.

The ongoing heated debate on whether or not artificial intelligence will oust humans from their age-long dominance as the most intelligent species is proof enough that human beings have felt shaken. Are we living in the fictitious and horrific world of Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein?

This is a unique issue, and as we enter the second half of the year, it is only right to examine what the other half of our lives

is infiltrated with: machines and robots. The issue has opened up writers to either shun or embrace artificial intelligence, while some of them remain nonchalant about this new and rapid development. It is also interesting to note that writers in this field have fearlessly tried to explore just how irreplaceable they are, especially in the world of art.

What do you think of robots? Find out what other creatives across the continent feel about them and see if you agree with them. I also assure you that I typed this note with my human hands, and not once did I consider using a robot. Touché!



On the cover

→ Introducing Joshua Nequaye Robertson, an incredibly talented writer from Ghana. Explore his journey, his inspirations, and his remarkable accomplishments in the world of literature.

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WSA Awards

- **Monthly Digital Literary Magazine of the Year - 2022/2023**
(The Corporate LiveWire Global Awards 2022/23)
- **Best Monthly Digital Literary Magazine (Africa) - 2022**
(Global Business Awards 2022)
- **Best African Literary Magazine - 2021**
(MEA Business Awards 2021)
- **Writer Promotion platform of the Year - 2021**
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ROBOTS ON STEROIDS

Refilwe Nsibande
South Africa





Ross laid on his bed staring at the ceiling, when his curtains automatically opened, ushering sunlight into his bedroom. For the first time in many moons, he noticed the beauty and warmth of the sun so much that he immediately got out of bed and walked to the balcony to consciously bask in the sunshine, running his fingers through what was left of the few strands of hair on his balding head.

He suddenly noticed his dead cactus dahlia that his ex-girlfriend gifted him when he moved into the apartment. He recalled his ex-girlfriend telling him that cactus dahlias are quite resilient but appreciate being watered during extended dry spells. This fact about dahlias, which he considered 'silly' and paid no attention to, seemed to be an honest summary of his life. He had failed to tend to or 'water' parts of his life that needed to be nurtured to make him whole, things such as relationships, his health, appreciating nature and living in the moment.

Instead, he dedicated his entire existence to writing code for the invention of 'Robots on Steroids' for his company, neglecting everything for the 'greater good of tech evolution', only to be replaced by the very machines he helped create. This made Ross sick to the core, all that set him apart as a supremely intelligent being was now insignificant. He felt out of touch with his own humanness, as though he was 'hacked' and not in control of who he was.

He stepped back inside and made his way to the bathroom to brush his teeth, staring at his own reflection, he felt empty and useless like his excessively squeezed toothpaste tube. The thought of learning to be human weighed heavier on his mind than that of applying to Mzansi-Connex to have his brain implanted with an AI chip.

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Creative Spotlight

In this exclusive interview, I had the pleasure of speaking with Joshua Neequaye Robertson, an incredibly talented writer from Ghana. Notably, Joshua achieved the prestigious title of the 2nd runner up in the renowned Wakini Kuria prize for Children's Literature in 2022. Together, we explore his journey, his inspirations, and his remarkable accomplishments in the world of literature. So, join me as we embark on an insightful conversation with Joshua Neequaye Robertson, a rising star in the realm of African children's literature.

- PPBlessing



PPBlessing: Let's begin with a brief introduction. Who is Joshua?

JNR: Joshua, born and raised in Accra is the third of four children in his family. He embarked on his educational journey at Happy Home Academy, where he completed his Junior high school studies. Then he continued to West Africa Senior High School for his high school education. And later on to Wisconsin International University College, Ghana where he recently completed with a bachelors degree in Information Technology. He is currently a mentee in an artificial intelligence firm and a creative writer intern at a digital storybook company, all in Accra.

PPBlessing: How are you able to combine being a tech Bro with writing?

JNR: Of course, that's a very challenging one because both are quite demanding. It takes a lot of self discipline. And moreover my passion for both propels me.

PPBlessing: What do you do as an artificial intelligence mentee?

JNR: I am actually under training for a role in Data labelling, which is a branch of machine learning.

Machine learning involves teaching computers to learn from data and make predictions or decisions without being explicitly programmed. It's like teaching a computer to recognize patterns and make intelligent choices based on examples it has seen before.

PPBlessing: How has it been so far?

JNR: Well, it has been exciting literally because I have always been fascinated by how computers are used to solve problems and simplify complex tasks. And I'm really happy to be part of this AI revolution that is plunging the world into a whole new era.

PPBlessing: What's your take on the impact of AI on writing?

JNR: AI has the potential to make African storytelling even more exciting in the future. With AI, stories can be interactive, where readers can choose what happens next. It can also help create virtual or augmented reality experiences, where people can feel like they are inside the story. That would make storytelling more engaging and help present African cultures and traditions in new and immersive ways.

PPBlessing: Do you think writers who fear AI taking over their careers have a valid fear?

JNR: Well, I think their fear is valid to some point because AI is now being used to automate certain writing tasks and generate content. However, AI generated content often lacks that depth and originality that human writers bring to the table. Writers usually have that authenticity and personal connection that makes their writing unique. So I don't think AI can replace writers entirely.

PPBlessing: *When did you start writing and why do you still write?*

JNR: I can't recall exactly when but I started writing at quite a young age. And it was actually just for the love of writing and storytelling. I still write because it brings me joy. I think it has something to do with purpose. Secondly, writing allows me to express my thoughts, emotions, and ideas in a way that transcends time and space. Through writing, I have the power to create new worlds, breathe life into characters, and share stories that can touch hearts and minds. It is also a form of self-expression that enables me to communicate my deepest passion, fears, and aspirations.

PPBlessing: *Could you share some of the things you would like to achieve as a writer?*

JNR: As a writer, I want to leave my readers feeling inspired, encouraged, and empowered to overcome obstacles and pursue their dreams. Secondly, I seek to bring awareness to important social issues and promote positive change.

I also want to use my platform to amplify marginalized voices, advocate for social justice, and contribute to building a more inclusive and compassionate world - a world as rich and diverse as the colours of Ghana's kente cloth.

PPBlessing: *What's the meaning of your middle name, Neequaye?*

JNR: It's actually linked with my clan. In our clan, there exists a tradition that con-

nects us across generations. It involves naming the first male child either Neequaye or Kotey, and this naming pattern continues in a recurring manner. Specifically, the first boy child of the Kotey lineage is given the name Neequaye, while the first son of Neequaye's descendants is named Kotey. This tradition symbolizes our strong bond with our lineage and ensures a sense of continuity within our clan.

PPBlessing: *That's interesting... Aside Children's literature and flash fiction, what other genres do you write?*

JNR: I have been experimenting with poetry but I feel more comfortable with these, most especially, children's literature. However, I am working on a collection of short stories for children which I hope to publish in the near future.

PPBlessing: *How near is this future?*

JNR: I can't tell exactly because I have two exciting short stories now and I hope to add some more before I go ahead to publish.

PPBlessing: *How do you plan to publish? By yourself or through a publishing company?*

JNR: I would like to self-publish.

PPBlessing: *Which writers have influenced your writing the most?*

JNR: I would say the award-winning children's book writer/illustrator from Ghana,

Now we know...

→ I have been experimenting with poetry but I feel more comfortable with these, most especially, children's literature. However, I am working on a collection of short stories for children which I hope to publish in the near future.

Meshack Asare. His ability to depict the imagery of Africa in his writing is truly awe-inspiring. It's amazing how his style of writing hijacks all the five senses and transports readers into another world, making them feel connected to the story. I don't know, but for some reason, I think he has not received the level of celebration he truly deserves.

PPBlessing: *That's wonderful. What level of celebration do you think he deserves?*

JNR: I'm not really sure but probably an award scheme for young writers or something could be instituted in his name to continue his legacy as he ages and to encourage more young people to take up a career in children's book writing and publishing.

PPBlessing: *Let's talk about emerging 2nd runner up for Wakini Kuria prize for Children's literature. How was that for you?*

JNR: Oh my goodness! It was a whirlwind of emotions. I can't even describe how it felt at that moment. Like a rollercoaster ride, with excitement and disbelief swirling around inside me. I mean, I worked so hard for it but I still couldn't believe I had won.

PPBlessing: *Congratulations once again. Have you won any award before then?*

JNR: No. That was actually my first award.

PPBlessing: *What impact has winning the award had on you as a person and on your writing?*

JNR: Winning the award has boosted my confidence and validated my writing abilities. I mean, being recognized by esteemed judges is something one should be proud of. Furthermore, it has deepened my sense of purpose and dedication to my craft. It has been a reminder that hard work pays.

PPBlessing: *What inspired your winning story, Grandma's needlework?*

JNR: It all started when I saw a neighbour praying with her daughter before leaving for school. It took me back to when my mother prayed with me every morning before leaving for school. I remembered how I actually didn't want to go, sometimes, because I had this phobia for mathematics. I sometimes had to fake sickness in order to skip school, especially on Wednesdays because we had maths drills in the morning.

PPBlessing: *Aha! How did you get to overcome the phobia and study information technology?*

JNR: After watching the movie, "Like stars on earth." That movie really inspired me because my story was quite similar to that little boy's. I had a change of mind and a surge in energy. It was just a problem of mindset. My father got me an extra classes

teacher who also helped me bountifully.

PPBlessing: *What is one thing you would want to see happen in the African literary front?*

JNR: I want to see a united front because it is through unity we can overcome our challenges and make a significant impact. Most African creatives don't know where to turn to or the institution to contact when they need an information or collaboration or something. Everything seems scattered all around.

I think the honourable PenBoss and the African Writers Conference have done extremely well to establish something like this to unite the agents of African literary every year.

PPBlessing: *This is definitely essential. It is part of what we are doing at Writers Space Africa. Creating the needed platform for African Writers to interact and collaborate.*

Have you been mentored as a writer?

JNR: I got a mentor when I joined the creative writing internship early this year.

PPBlessing: *How has that been so far?*

JNR: It has been an invaluable experience. The guidance, support and wealth of knowledge is overwhelming.

PPBlessing: *If you were to live in a book setting, in which book and town will you be?*

JNR: Ayesha Haruna Atta's book, Harmattan rain.

It has been a pleasure to have you with us for this interactive interview. We hope you enjoyed reading and sharing the Writers Space Africa magazine. See you next month.





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IN THE LANGUAGE OF HUMAN-CRAFTED CITIZENS

Zungu Bongani
South Africa

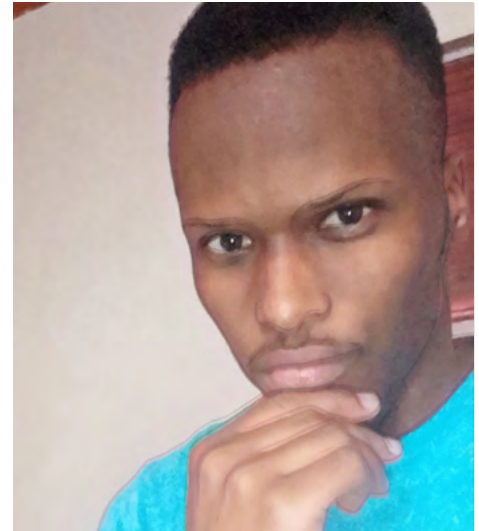
*It's raining lenses, from chip to cloud, and I want to go
through the footprints of the silicon area outside,
Tomorrow I'll probably feel a little bit rusty.*

The image of this code is of that
index expanding the pillars of pixels—
Of feature's frame, more and more;
true as trend with that clearer frame
by base and pace in point.

As ML moves closer to Cortex
interfaces, the image of the world
remains detected in embedded
humanoids; much smaller than the
critical detail in configurable
capabilities.

Then a drone. Drifting autonomously
in multiple gigapixels, turned towards
new neural networks processing
perceptions. A human-like future would
be wired and companded just as is.

*As was throughput here, therefore, seeing
from our carbon sight interactions is believing.*



CAN A ROBOT TAKE A JOB LIKE THIS?

Okorocho Chidubem
Nigeria

Mama Uche bent over the boiling oil pan
Stirring finely moulded bean cakes,
Shining and glistening as if in appreciation
Of the attention it's getting from the hot oil.

Each one of them a product of love,
Fresh onion sticking its little head out
As if trying to escape its confinement.
Fresh and bright pepper sticking close to-
this little onion as they cook.

The smile on her face as she sells,
Pride knowing the quality she serves.
One that has made her dominate that area for years
Calling each customer by name,
She is a part of their lives and they a part of hers.

Can a robot take a job like this?
Can the robot congratulate papa *Ejima* on the birth of his
twins?
Can the robot with a stern look, teach 3-year-old Ike
To give and take with his right and not left hand?

Can a robot take a job like this?
Can a robot relate with the neighbourhood like mama *Uche*?
When a robot can do that, then it is ready to take our jobs.

LIFE OF SWEETEST TEASE

Abdullatif Khalid
Uganda

Behold, they'll surge forth with artificial wit
And with fine features wrought, they'll fashion fit
A future fused in balance, a grand ballet,
A world with robots, a daring entrée.

Their frames of steel and chrome, resplendently gleam,
Their functions honed to the highest esteem.
Robotic power, a vision incarnate,
With them leading us, we'll reach a lofty state.

In factories, they'll work with nimble grace,
Their precision unmatched, no detail out of place.
While we relax and revel in our ease,
Their mechanized arms will toil with practiced expertise.

In war, they'll fight with nary a care,
To save us from harm, they'll never spare.
Their technology supreme beyond all compare,
A solution to troubles we never knew were there.

In skies, they'll soar with a gentle breeze,
On oceans sail with fluid expertise.
A world molded to their gentlest pleas,
A future with robots, a life of sweetest tease.

So let us embrace this burgeoning trend
And welcome these friends, our robotic blend.
The future held fast until the very end,
A world with robots, let our lives ever transcend.



WIRED TO YOUR TASTE

Medeatrice Bongshe Verla Fonyuy
Cameroon



If I could trade my heart and veins
For an engine and wires,
I'll not haggle the least
To get rid of feelings in mist.

I'll be heartless so to say
I'll be emotionless in every way
Without the burdens of expectations I've borne so far
I'll be a disappointment to none who perhaps,
Looked to me.

Strike me, I won't budge
Slit through me, I won't bleed
Hurt me, I won't feel
Mock me, I won't give a care

To be wired,
I'll trade my awareness for oblivion
My frustrations for algorithms
My fears for logic
My pain for sensors
My leisure for drudgery.

I'll be better that way,
You'll love me so
If I'm wired to your taste,
If I'm a Robot.

REFLECTIONS

Onoruoiza Mark Onuchi
Nigeria

A cobbled mesh of steel and wire -
infusion of circuits and electrodes
forged behind the labs of iron slabs as goggled eyed geeks
unbundle the wonders of technology!
Unmasking machine power
to dismantle the world of work
with ageless might and seamless beam,
haunting the lurking shadows of manual minds
beyond the soulless gaze of a heartless puppet
lies the artistry of music to the soul:
the mystique of love to the heart;
the beauty of our humanity
is priceless to a love-hungry world.
Automated machines, Silicon engineered robots,
the alchemy of cyborgs on the rise...
On a speedy rise to infamy...
Our humanity must not be lost on us
as we steadily reclaim our boundaries
the very one that unites us:
as inventors of this steely domain
we have the secret code to control these rising legions
on the verge of delusion!
This unfettered puzzle is a product of our curious minds,
It is time to restore our cryptogrammic humanity.



MINISTER OF ROBOT SUPPRESSION

Zikhali Zomkhonto Mbonisi
Zimbabwe



They asked the minister
in charge of AI suppression
if the country was ready for the next dimension.
He said, artificial intelligence will not scare Africans,
for we have long been robots without knowing
our soldiers programmed in their spine for slaughtering,
humanoids wound up over tribe,
semi-autonomous beggars
who “knew what we were doing”.

They asked the minister what tasks
are going to be assigned to the AI ministry.
He said, his son has an email address
and will go live to unveil the strategy.
“He says robots will not be allowed to vote
Unless they can prove they are people.”
No one in the crowd gets the riddle.

I think he believes AI is all robots
Because he thrives off pronouncing the ‘bot’
with such mechanical exactitude in his tone,
it would seem he himself has turned automaton.

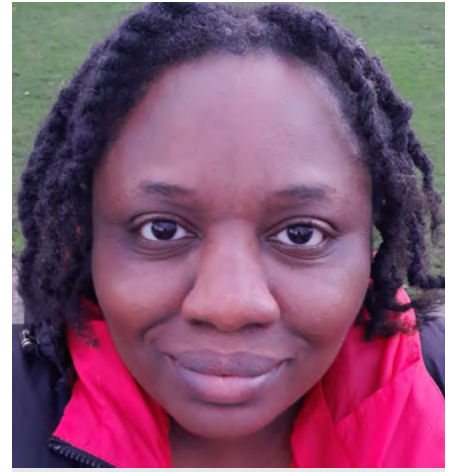


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PoeticAfrica is Africa's first trilingual poetry magazine published quarterly. The magazine showcases rich and diverse poetry in English, Kiswahili, and French from all over Africa to the world.

FORWARD AGENDA

Abíódún Abdul
Nigeria



‘È káàrò everyone. Welcome to this presentation on the Benin Robots.’

Ọlánrewájú took a big breath as she centred herself on the podium surveying the 2,000-strong crowd gathered at the Edo Museum. The Robotics Engineer had been working towards this convention project throughout her final PhD year at Ilé-Ife University. Finally, the day had come to

share her ideas and she was feeling a bit shaky. But she’d had a smart ànkàrá outfit made with a vibrant gèlè wrapped around her freshly braided hair, looking outwardly presentable to induce a confident delivery. She took a sip of water, looked into the sea of expectant faces, and continued:

‘The continent has come a long way since the Africa Union’s Agenda 10,104 strategic initia-

tives striving for 'The Africa We Want'. And indeed, great milestones have been achieved over the 50 years of its implementation for the prosperity of our peoples. I'm glad the Ilẹ̀ Káàárọ̀-Oòjíire government has recognised even more can be done within Technology, Innovation and Sustainability.'

Ọlánrewájú was now in her stride. Remembering all her hours of prep, her autopilot kicked in as the words began flowing freely.

'I'd now like to share my bid for the Agenda 10,104+ government funding: the Ẹ̀rọ̀ Idẹ̀ 10114.'

Without a hitch, the veil beside the podium dropped and the audience collectively gasped. Standing next to Ọlánrewájú was a 'full-sized' Benin Bronze with a vertically-lined head emulating Orí-Olókun...on a shiny, bronze, top-to-toe body, further lit up by the multiple flashes from the press pit photographers. Seeing the crowd's clear intrigue and simultaneous uncertainty, Ọlánrewájú continued:

'This Ẹ̀rọ̀ Idẹ̀ model is named for Kọ́jódá year 10,114 ten years from now, so you understand this will take us into the future.'

'Over a millennium ago, we Yorùbá built the Sùngbọ̀ Ẹ̀rédò and Benin Wall embattlements for irrigation and protection, the largest engineering feat on Earth to this day. And we did that without robots...so think what we can do WITH robots!! With the Ẹ̀rọ̀ Idẹ̀ 10114, we can build effective infrastructure in line with our Betterment Agenda.'

Half the press core hastily jotted notes on

their griot pads. Ọlánrewájú saw she'd got them with that one!

'As we dig the land, these robots will pinpoint bronze to regenerate themselves, whilst also extracting other metal ores and mineral wealth. We'll use these to build AND trade, further strengthening our currency, backed with the abundant resources across Ilẹ̀ Káàárọ̀-Oòjíire. Soon, we will have many citizens making history alongside Mansa Musa.' Ọlánrewájú beamed seeing people smile at her reference to the richest man that ever lived, and a fellow West African from neighbouring Mali. *'Centuries ago, he found all those wealth building minerals without robots ...so think what we can do WITH robots!!!'*

'Note their use will align with Agenda 10,104+ regarding sustainability. The Ẹ̀rọ̀ Idẹ̀ 10114's central purpose is conservation, not just of environment, but also of culture. Like their vertical lines, these Benin Robots will have our stories AND potential etched into them.'

Ọlánrewájú took the mic off the stand, left the podium, and ran her fingers over the machine's surface.

'These Robots will also fulfil the original mandate of the Benin Bronzes as solid libraries of consultation. Instead of recording written data, Benin artisans depicted data in sculptures to direct traditional ceremonies and dress. Indeed, this Ẹ̀do Museum venue was founded to display this cultural heritage. So yes, they will extract natural wealth from Yorùbá soils to build the future AND perpetuate cultural wealth of Yorùbá legacies fortifying us with our past, history in motion educating the coming generations, thus reinforcing our identity...and you

know how we Yorùbá love education!

The peppered smiles in the crowd spread wider across the focused faces. Ọlánrewájú had them now. Moving across the stage, she pointed at the jumbo screen.

'Cooperation is key in the Agenda 10,104+ project, but we must also keep our edge in the global market. Thus I've built in an anti-hacking failsafe: the robotics programming language is completely in the Odùduwà alphabet.'

'HA! Now I KNOW you're CRAZY for SURE! WÈRÈ TI MU È OOO!'

The convention crowd whipped their collective heads to the left towards the disturbance. There stood Eromidọlá, a rival robotics engineer who'd been vexed about Ọlánrewájú's Ẹṛọ Idẹ project beating hers to represent Ilẹ̀-Ifẹ̀ University for the Agenda 10,104+ government funding. Eromidọlá's name meant 'my thoughts become wealth' and she was always determined to fulfil that mandate, but this heckling was next level!

'Don't waste your funding on this one. How can you rely on ideas from a broken mind? I've seen the psych reports, she's DYSLEXIC! Her head is not correct. Odùduwà alphabet? Can anyone even read this script...and you expect to write computer code with it? Benin Robots?? This is a fever dream which will become a nightmare, an embarrassment for Ilẹ̀ Káàárọ̀-Oòjìire if you give funding for this Ẹṛọ Idẹ...whatever!'

The crowd's murmuring got louder and louder as they glanced back and forth between Eromidọlá's smug face and Ọlánrewájú's perplexed one.

The PhD researcher was visibly rattled, shifting from foot to foot, both hands gripping the mic. As she looked down trying to gather a response, her eyes caught her new ànkàrá outfit and her fresh braids brushed her cheek. Ọlánrewájú had made it all the way to the Ẹdo Museum stage, and she was determined to reach her goal. She looked up, went to the podium, took a deep breath, and spoke:

'Government officials, press members, convention attendees, this impromptu revelation is true. I am indeed dyslexic. But my right brain hemisphere dominance is a strength, NOT a weakness. Did you know over a tenth of Yorùbá people are dyslexic, one of the highest proportions in the world? Yet we still boast genius level intelligence and unsurpassed diligence. Like other dyslexic innovators; Aderin-Pocock, Greider, Einstein and more, I see the world differently. And THAT'S why my plan WILL work.'

Ọlánrewájú slowed her hurried voice.

'These Benin Robots are designed to accommodate our neurotypical AND neurodiverse workforce. When my machines encounter metal ores during excavation, they vocalise their findings.'

Ọlánrewájú walked to the robot, lifted its lined-hand and placed her bracelet on its palm. The Ẹṛọ Idẹ 10114's eyes instantly flashed as the vertical lines shimmered before its entire surface changed from brown to gold. Its stoic face became animated and said, 'WÚRÀ', drawing more astonished gasps from the audience.

'Yes, it is indeed gold,' said Ọlánrewájú. 'These

machines change colour every time they come across different minerals. So our workers receive immediate visual AND audio confirmation of their discoveries. On a good excavation day, they will rival us for the best multi-coloured ànkàrá collage!

Someone called out, 'Ah, they will be the life of our Ówàmbẹ̀ parties with this custom-made, stylish aᵂᵂ èbí ooo!'

The crowd laughed and Ọlánrewájú knew she had won them back.

'More importantly, this multi-sensory differentiation appeals to different brain types, accounting for accessibility and inclusivity for our workforce, wouldn't you agree Eromidọlá?'

Ọlánrewájú's eyes shifted to her heckler who could only stand in stunned silence. Eromidọlá and everyone at Ilẹ̀-Ifẹ̀ University hadn't seen the colour changing feature as Ọlánrewájú had kept it secret.

'Okay, that's all very well and good, but I have a concern' said a voice from the crowd. A man in Babalaláwo attire stood up. 'I'm an Ifá priest and many of our Benin Bronzes depict venerated Ọ̀rìᵂà like this Olókun example. Could people start worshipping the robots if they look like our deities?'

'It's a valid concern,' said Ọlánrewájú. 'But I assure you this won't happen. We don't worship the robots, the robots serve us, we have dominion over them.'

'This new programming is very advanced,' said another audience member, 'what fail safes are in place so they don't become sentient and try to control US?'

'These Robots do not have inner spiritual orí,

only we do,' replied Ọlánrewájú. 'We can use our orí, spirit and intelligence, in designing their encoding so they can help us. Like Yorùbá culture, the base coding of the Benin Robots is respect. These machines will recognise our respect for the role they play and will always work with us to move Ilẹ̀ Káàárọ̀-Ọ̀jọ̀ire forward.'

The Ẹ̀rọ̀ Idẹ̀ 10114 then automatically went into ọ̀bálẹ̀ mode, prostrating flat on the stage saying,

'I AM HERE TO SERVE'.

The crowd erupted into raucous applause, all except Eromidọlá who gave Ọlánrewájú side-eye, miffed her plan to destabilise the whole funding bid had backfired, perhaps even strengthening it. Still, the convention presentations weren't over yet.

Ọlánrewájú thanked the audience, saying 'Ẹ̀ ᵂé púpọ̀'.

She left the podium and her Benin Robot followed her offstage. As the applause finally subsided, she sat front row with the other candidates waiting to see if their funding bids would be successful. Exhaling slowly, Ọlánrewájú thought of her name's meaning: 'my wealth is in the future/advancing'. With a life mandate infused with innovation and forward seeing, perhaps she had managed to help others see her particular Agenda 10,104+ future too.



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WSA Magazine REVIEW

June 2023 Edition



A FATHER'S TOUCH

A Children's Literature by Pelekani Lwenje, Zambia
 Reviewer: Rose Wangari, Kenya



Each of us is born with a magic light that lights the lives of others if we are aware of its existence within us. Oftentimes, when we reach into this light and try to illuminate the dark world around us, we encounter barriers that are discouraging and hurting.

Momi, the protagonist, suffers jealous attacks, almost losing her life. Her restitution lay in the unexpected turn of events, the father's touch.

Find out the latter's transformation power by reading through Pelekani Lwenje's story.

FATHER'S DAY

A Flash Fiction by Edwin Mamman, Nigeria
 Reviewer: Elizabeth Nafula, Kenya



A famous quote says “Every father should remember that one day his son will follow his example, not his advice.” As a child grows up, he tends to look up to what their fathers do. It is often very hard to convince them that whatever their father does is wrong. The knowledge gathered through observation begins to sound real after the hero’s departure.

The narrator feels his life is incomplete as he lacks parental care and misses a father’s touch. The tales were much of an inspiration to him, and his absence is hardly felt.

Fathers really care and can offer another person to reveal what you may not understand differently. The wise words from the narrator’s mother shape him into the better person that his father wanted him to be. He understands why his father would sit quietly, smoke a cigar, and stand out in space. Father’s Day is a communication of the father figure in the narrator’s life. Father’s Day happens in a flash and ends in a surprise. I enjoyed reading the story and reflecting on my personal experience of a father’s touch.

FLOWERS

A Poem by Mwangome Caleb, Kenya
Reviewer: Akuei M. Adol, South Sudan

In Caleb's poignant poem "Flowers," the tender touch of a father is beautifully portrayed, creating an unbreakable bond that resonates with love and understanding. With its concise free-verse structure, the poem focuses on the emotional impact of the words rather than conforming to a traditional form. The brevity of the lines adds urgency, capturing fleeting moments of emotion.

The poem delicately captures the theme of a father's touch through its evocative language, unique style, and heartfelt subject matter. The poet skillfully immerses the reader in the protagonist's world, building anticipation as she awaits her father's offerings of flowers. However, it becomes clear that her longing is not for the blossoms themselves, but for her father's presence.

The symbolism of flowers carries profound meaning in the poem, representing love, affection, and remembrance. They become a metaphor for the protagonist's yearning for her father's presence, encapsulating her desire for genuine connection and emotional nourishment.

The writer's impactful imagery creates vivid snapshots in the reader's mind, painting

a clear picture of the daughter's yearning. Her expectation is met with a bittersweet revelation as she carries her father's flowers, navigating a crowd of people. Instead of his voice, she finds only a few wrapped-up lines, suggesting a disconnect between her longing and his sporadic gestures of affection.

Through the brilliant interplay of language, Mwangome illuminates the protagonist's complex relationship with her father. The phrase "daddy issues" implies unresolved emotional conflicts, while the absence of her "daddy issue" in the daily flower's hints at her deeper yearning for consistent presence and support.

In conclusion, "Flowers" is a significant exploration of a father's touch, delving into the longing for love and the complexities that arise from its absence. The poem teaches us the importance of genuine connection, consistent support, and the enduring power of love.

Caleb's eloquent portrayal encourages readers to reflect on their relationships and embrace meaningful connections with their loved ones. Approach this poem with an open heart and mind, allowing yourself to be moved by the raw emotions it evokes.

A GHOST EMBRACE

A Short Story by Halla Immaculate, Tanzania
 Reviewer: Benita Magopane, Botswana



Halla Immaculate's short story is a wonderful example of the kind of heroes some parents are. And of how they are brave enough to fight their children's battles, even to the death. In the short story, *Ghost Embrace*, we are introduced to a troubled teenager, Izzie, and his doting father. With Izzie's problems from bullies intensifying and becoming more horrid, it's his endearing father who didn't mind fighting selflessly for him at the forefront, as a parent and as a friend.

Although his son thought he shouldn't have been involved, Izzie's father knew better, that his son was his responsibility. He fought his son's battles until he died

doing so.

In reality, not all parents are this way, however, I'm very certain of the existence of some that are exactly like Halla Immaculate's character, Izzie's father. Parents can literally catch a grenade for their own and sacrifice their lives for their children. In the end, this short story sums up the message of unconditional love, arguably rare because of how simply selfless it is, since not everyone is willing to die for those they profess love to, let alone give birth to. This short story is bittersweet but a worthy read because it's a reminder that unconditional love still exists and that fathers can be heroes.

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