

The Promise This Time Was Not A Flood

A SEVHAGE Anthology of Flood Poems

Edited by

Hyginus Ekwuazi, Tubal Cain

Su'eddie V. Agema, Debbie Iorliam

Servio Gbadamosi and Maik Ortserga



WHITELINE



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Literary and Development Initiative



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2016

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AN INTRODUCTION OF SORTS

You have in your hands a compilation of various poems on floods selected from some of the finest flowing verses in Nigeria and a few other countries. This is no boast. In this collection, we have freshly pressed verse as well as others gleaned from words poured out to the public afore now...But before we go there, why this collection?

The promise was not a flood. Yes, the promise of the rainbow was different. The promise from our leaders wasn't that they neglect us when they are meant to put things in place to make things better. The promise was not to die through ways that would ordinarily have been prevented. Yet, the reality this time defies the promise. So, what do we do? We seek to understand, to document, to 'celebrate', to put it down...

There is a need to understand a few things that occur to us – natural phenomena, issues of life, and so much more. Even when we can't understand them, there's a need to express our feelings of them. Many times, these expressions help us to remember. For many times, we are affected by certain things and events that change our lives forever. We forget to put them down and forget. When the story of time is told, what then would be said of us? What would we leave our generations coming who would necessarily need to have an idea of what world was before them?

To keep the memories of flood, we thought of two ways – the tales and the songs. The tales because not everyone would be able – or better still, willing – to fetch the meanings embedded in verse, no matter how simple. The songs, or verse as collected in this collection, are a response to the essence of nature; its sound. Find in this collection then, reflections on the flood – different floods, mainly harmonized in unity by the watery floods that visited Nigeria in 2011, visits other lands regularly and one we wish wouldn't continue to be our portion. Though the flood is the binding chord to the tunes here, there are notes of love, corruption, family, nationhood, nature, and the like found everywhere across this collection. One had to wonder at some point if the flood was reflected fully in one poem or the other. Editorial and selection debates rose. Some really nice poems had to take leave while others upon deeper reflection found space.

There are different engaging poems from diverse authors here. Some of the finest quality from the aging beauty of J. P. Clark, Niyi Osundare, Ezenwa-Ohaeto, to the continuing grace of Hyginus Ekwuazi, Musa Idris Okpanachi, Emman Usman Shehu, Bose Ayeni-Tsevende, Eriata Oribhabor, Ebi Yeibo, g'ebinyo ogbowei, to Unoma Nguemo Azuah. There are the refreshingly fresh voices of Obari Gomba, Iquo Eke, Okwy Obu, Rasaq Gbolahan, Maik Ortserga, Sibbyl Whyte, Adeola Opeyemi, Sewuese Leah Anyo, Yakori Muhammed to Rikimaru Tenchu. Admittedly, there are a few voices here and there that are somewhat gruff but what they might lack in skill, they find in soul. That, more than anything else, has earned them a spot. For in the end, isn't poetry mainly passion and heart? But it isn't a strictly Nigerian thing as this roll call suggests. There are poets representing Ghana, Tanzania and a few other countries here.

The moods of the poems are not singular as there are those of disappointment, as well as those of celebration. There is despair in some parts and joy in others. Love here and some pure anger – not hate in full – there. In some poems, you would find a mixture of them all. There is an attempt to put like poems together and a deliberate jumbling in some other parts. There is a mixture of poems and poets, fine and flat.

In the several lines and verses that mark the entirety of this book, lie an ode to nature and the floods, a note to emotions and the human spirit in ways far beyond any one experience, an offering to the several people whose lives were affected by the floods – and we have not restricted it to the waters

alone. May we remember to make each moment count and when we can, guard against any such occurrence as would cause so much destruction to leave us sad.

May the times be kind.

- SVA

Mhambe, Benue State, Nigeria

20th January, 2016

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The Last Stanza Sam Ogabidu

Acknowledgment
About the SEVHAGE Flood Projects
About the Editors
Other Titles from SEVHAGE

This collection is dedicated to

development workers sacrificing their lives and time for the displaced;
all children in the hope that the future guard them from floods of every ramification;
every African writer;

and

all those affected by promises not kept.

Flood away *Tersoo Ayede*

Flood flood go away
Never come another day
Homeless people need their homes...

Circuits¹

Musa Idris Okpanachi

The beginning is the end
The departure is the destination
The whole is the part
All things are one and divided
Everything is moving straight on
In circuits as in the beginning.

...

¹ From Musa Idris Okpanachi *Eaters of the Living* (Ibadan: Kraftgriots, 2009)

Song of the flood *Maik Aôndona Ortserga*

Though our minds saturate
In nostalgic thoughts
Of milk from our fathers' fattened cows
And prized tubers from large barns

Though the frothing lips of palm wine
And the razor-sharp water
From our mothers' pitchers
Stand on prolific memories

Though we live in sweet memories
Of hunting legs combing the forest
Under the vigilant eyes of carbide lamps
And the echo of tireless pestles
Mercilessly boxing the helpless mortals

Though we remember
The splash and chatter of our lively ponds
On hot afternoons
And the rattle of fishing nets at night

Here we are
Dying every day at this camp
Fainting with pain
Weeping in vain
With drums of hunger on our door steps
Amidst invisible relief packages on wings of media waves
Because we could not contain the water
It has contained us

Song from my soul² Kukogho Iruesi Samson

This violin is my pen, I am the player
I use this tune to ink teary words.
I peel my haunted soul, each layer,
As I make my song on these chords.

See not my beady tears as salt waters;
They are but rivers of seasoned grief.
They flow for me, for sons and daughters,
Barren but pregnant with unbirthed grief.

I have seen thirst standing in the river.
Hungry I've been, standing in the barn.
Where some have smiled, there I quiver.
Orphan I am, I look for my father's arm.

I slow no tune to make you somnolent;
But my voice shall tear down walls,
I am knight. I string my lance, my instrument.
Listen, a troubled soul, helpless, calls.

² From Kukogho Iruesi Samson *What can words do?* (Lagos: Origami, 2013)

Flood³ *Musa Idris Okpanachi*

The dam of the dawn
Burst forth in cascades
Of streams rushing
To the gates of the city
Claiming rights of property and lives
We wake to the holy
Visit of the river
Snaking in like a thief
Leaving behind moths of people
And the lacerated fingers
Of God on the land
What a flood come home for a sacrifice
When the prophet-laden jets
Perch in the air
And no arks on the earth

Remember⁴ *Musa Idris Okpanachi*

Where memory is pain
I am a sadist
Where it is a harvest
I reap
Remember me
For occupying this corner
Of the world
Wear my memory
In your heart
Like a birthmark
Keep my image
Like a tulip
Before your eyes
Leave my cracked
Earth unmarked
My footprints uncovered
Take my sculpture
From the museum of time
Let's go our ways
Farewell unspoken
Don't loiter
Look back and close the gate.

³ From Musa Idris Okpanachi *Eaters of the Living* (Ibadan: Kraftgriots, 2009)

⁴ From Musa Idris Okpanach *Eaters of the Living* (Ibadan: Kraftgriots, 2009)

My feet did not come empty⁵ Bose Ayeni-Tsevende

Did I come empty-handed
From the land of the dance?
Let the intricacies of my movement,
Tell the tale my mouth would not tell.

Gently, softly...
Do not exert unnecessary strength;
You are king.
The steps of the rich are measured in dignity.
It is the poor that raise dust.

The drum called my name
My feet answered.
The drum called my name
My feet forgot dignity.
Tell me, whose dawn is yet to break?

I fetched riches from the stream of dance-
My feet did not come empty.
I fetched children from the field of dance-
My feet did not come empty.

⁵ From Bose Ayeni-Tsevende *Streams* (Ibadan: Kraftgriots, 2010)

The Flood⁶ *J. P. Clark-Bekederemo*

The rain of events pours down...
Like a million other parakeets, cunning
In their havens out on the lee,
I don my coat of running

Colours, the finest silver and
Song can acquire, Not enough,
I unfurl my umbrella, resplendent as any
That covers a chief
At a durbar. It buckles, and will

Fly out of my hand. In the grief
Guests of rain now over all the land,
I flounder in my nest, a kingfisher,
Who flockmates would play
At eagles and hawks, but like

Chickens, are swept away
By flood fed from septic tanks, till
Together, we drift and drown
Who were at home, on sea, air, and land

⁶ From J. P. Clark *A Decade of Tongues* (Prentice Hall Press, 1981)

The lake came to my house⁷ *Niyi Osundare*

It all began as a whisper among
The leaves. The tree's tangled tale
And the wanton narrative of the wind

Then, the pit pat pit pat bang bang
Of the hooves of the trampling rain
My shuddering roof, my wounded house

A shunting of shingles
Unraveling of rafters
And the wind dropped a pool

In my living room. The sky
Rumbled like a stricken bull;
Lightning zigzagged its fire through

The darkening clouds. Wind-driven,
Tornado-tormented, the Lake overran
Its fence, pouring its piled-up anger

In the careless streets.
Levees (built with levity)
Collapsed like hapless mounds

Roads lost their names,
Streets their memories

A torrential torment enthralled the city
The day the Lake came down my street
And took my house away.

⁷ From Niyi Osundare *City without people: The Katrina Poems* (Commonwealth Books, 2011)

The city⁸ *Niyi Osundare*

Is
8 feet
below sea level

The people
are
many, many miles
below government care

Postmortem⁹ *Niyi Osundare*

I
Lakeisha's grandma
Drowned here
In her wheelchair
When the water rose
Above her head

A good Samaritan
tethered her floating body
to an electric pole
to prevent it from

Getting washed away
by the raging flood

II
Narita's baby
died in this house

The lake stole him
from his cot

And gave him
to the hungry sea

⁸ From Niyi Osundare *City without people: The Katrina Poems* (Commonwealth Books, 2011)

⁹ From Niyi Osundare *City without people: The Katrina Poems* (Commonwealth Books, 2011)

III

Sniffer-dogs

Have just unearthed another body:

A six-year old girl
(or thereabout)
with her bones neatly packed
in her denim pinafore,
her plastic toy
one muddy inch

from her contorted fingers.
She left no clue
About Mommy's whereabouts

IV

Another skull
Just discovered

In House 10
Road 7

Negroid
aged about 70

Probably loved fried chicken
black-eye beans and collard greens

Judging by
the shape of the teeth

We leave the Coroner's office
to put a name to the bones

V

A pair of boots
stands at attention

Atop the grave
Of a rubbled home,

bloated by the flood,
its medalled memory muddied

And bravely sad.

Once saw action

In Normandy
trudged through purple paddies

In Saigon
Everywhere in search

of a prize
which eluded him at home...

A sad, vacant pair
still in search of their missing feet

VI
The Sheraton
towers above the muddy mess

Its own wound
bandaged with brown paper

Once thought impregnable
until Katrina turned its rooms

Into a rubble of broken glass

VII
So much there was here
So little now
But

Hope, thin-bodied,
Is bent
Never broken

Rain drops and tears drop Hyginus Ekwuazi

He stood there—an island in the rain.

He could not make the tight shelter
that the rest of us had made.

So, there he stood—an island in the rain
only an arm's length away.

The day's newspaper, held o'er him
sheltered his phone from the rain.

'...the fingers'—he was shouting into the phone:
he had to raise his voice higher and higher
to swallow the raucous voice of the rain—

'...his fingers...you counted them?
They're ten? Are you sure? His toes, too...
they're ten? Sure? *Quite* sure?

... My voice... my voice is breaking?
The rain—it's pouring here...'

He switched the phone off and on—
the sodden newspaper still serving as shelter.

'His head...it's not too large or too small?
Proportionate...did you say *proportionate*?
Are you *sure*...really...*really* sure?'

He turned to us
and shouted into the ferocious downpour:

'I am a father!
My wife has just had our baby!'

His voice was wet with tear drops

tear drops which I could not see
for the unrelenting rain drops
building up floods everywhere—

the countless thousands of rain drops

making mockery of the weatherman's
light showers and scattered thunder storms

and dusting all previous records
of rain storms and flood disasters.

II

The destruction was massive:

collapsed buildings

roads and buildings washed away

uprooted trees and fallen electric poles

passengers and pedestrians floating
upside down in gutters and canals—

the flood was unprecedented
the destruction, incalculable...

wet and cold and tired and hungry
I picked my anxious way home
through streets that were under water

the building was still standing—
but the roof was on the floor
like a hat tossed aside in anger

and as I contemplated
the dripping debris which was now
all I owned in the wide world
I saw him clearly in my mind's eye

he was standing there—an island in the rain

and again, I heard, distinctly
that joy-filled, tear-dripping voice
which the rain could not muffle...

I was still biting my nails

but the smile that flooded my tortured face
was gold—solid and unalloyed gold
all twenty-five carat of it.

Drowning dreams *Rasaq Malik Gbolahan*

Signals of thunder trek the street of the sky,
Yes, the wind cackles, trudging the lane of the cloud.

We stand, gazing through the window of fears,
As the wind rides again, gathering sewages of yesterday's feasts.

We sing *"Rain, come rain.
Come rain, to circumcise the land for planting
And fill parched throats with ocean of joy."*

We sing on...
As the sky changes to an arena of drizzling drops,
Dotting our skins,
Yet, we sing...We sing
Until the shell of song breaks,
When memory of ruin rumbles
Inside our battered hearts
As the buildings crumble,
And the fence cracks, trees stagger
And we in
 return reap remains of dead souls,
 sinking inside the bloody downpours...

The street of flood *Rasaq Malik Gbolahan*

The street remains a road *"untrekked."*
After blood of flood dances inside the gutters.

The street remains a route *"untracked."*
After memory of rain turns our laughter to tomb of tears.

We market songs across the ears of the exiled wind,
As we scribble notes of condolences,
To those wayfarers who hide under the tattered roofs,
Singing hymns of pains and aches, *"we shall overcome."*

We sing the songs of memories,
As we return back home to cuddle remains of relatives,
With bodies, reddened, flood has coloured their skins.

We trace back our ways home, under the dark banner of the cloud,
After the dejected kinsmen struggle to find back their dreams,
Lost, derailed with the coming of the down-pours.

Night after the flood *Rasaq Malik Gbolahan*

Night after the elegy of rain renders us helpless,
We voyage on the sea of departure,
As our children grip our attires,
With their cold hands, stamping tears on our faces.

Night after the ceremony of blood sends us on exile,
We brave the streets of struggles,
Singing the hymns of a fallen house

II
And tonight we sit on fences of dilapidated houses,
Watching the rays of a faded rainbow,
We wander around corridors,
Searching for where to hide flood-drenched luggage,
And some passports – so dreams may not die.

We trek on this dark lane
As we struggle to bathe the scars that
Map our skins.

We trek on...
As night knits
Web of wounds
On the hearts of dejected men.

Ode to water *Miranda Ese Ogboru*

Indispensable water
Irreplaceable water
In the beginning you were
To generations long gone
You are known. Even now.
And to future generations
You remain a never-ending tale.

You are highly sought after
Your showers ... blessing to all.
Your fury none can withstand,
Your absence proves deadly
Abode of the seen
Home to the unseen
The great ones and the small ones.

Your beauty is undeniable
I see it in the springs,
In the falls, in the showers,
And in the waves of the vast oceans.
Even in your tiny droplets!

None compares to you; none can contend with you
I stand in awe of Him who spoke,
And your stormy elements stood still!
In your proximity I tremble ...
Yet, none can make an enemy of you!

How I love to ride your waves
Happily, like one of your dwellers.
How I long for your hand of friendship!
Then, I'll loose this beastly terror.
At last, like the Master, I'll be at home
Even in your presence.

The flood with claws

Unoma Nguemo Azuah

Their bellies were bared, the rivers
Fishes wriggled for life.

They were swelling
then they hovered
from a distance
a lion gauging a prey.

The rivers came crashing back
their belly bursting
their tongues lashing
their voices roaring
with the tongue of a dog
the waters lapped lives off riverbanks.

It was a full bellied meal
for their tongues cut like blades through the walls
of peace
swallowed up farms and towns,
homes, domes, mountains,
hills, valleys.

Encroached *Kwabena Agyare Yeboah*

The rains steal nights
Delivered to speeding waterways
A sad juxtaposition...

A home crumbles
as pains burst like several volcanoes
clocks tock meaningless chimes
to watered reality
darkened rainbows tell tales – cold tales...

The sage's loneliness
is the wisdom he speaks
and the seer is blinded
both find silence on a day
humanity's meaning is questioned
waters encroaching, conquering
rainbows prayed for...

When it rains *Adeola Opeyemi*

Angry broom of nature
Sweeping sewage and souls
We hear it;
Nature's vengeful howl
We hear it;
Mothers' silent screams

When it rains
Our children do not make canoes
From papers pilfered from old books
Our children are paper canoes
Submerged in bubbling torrents

When it rains
We do not sit around fires
And feed folklores to awed kids
We tell stories
Of homes ferried away

Oh, dearest nature
Will our tears rise above
Tuneless beats of fuming flood
To solicit clement gaze from you?

The Floodgates 'Zika Olofin

Born of saturation - a heaviness
That saddled the heart of heaven
The weight from months of toil
Of fury, erstwhile unimagined
Now yielding, by instalment
A tear here, two drops there
A pitter-patter, a rushed endeavour
The deafening applause
Unrelenting performance
Exhausted reserves?
A lull, a sweeping breeze, a hush
A look out, then I'm wonderstruck
For saturation - a fullness beyond satiety
A belch
The floodgates of heaven opened
And earth drank beyond its fill
We're all afloat
For good or for bad

the flow *Yemi Omerah*

the flow...

systemic

sequence, events, crescendo:

termination.

The flood¹⁰ Terhemba Wuam

The flood can take me down
In the easy swim of the Benue
I will be lax, and allow the waves
To lap me, enveloping me not with warmth
Through gasps I will not struggle
Still I will remain; take me down
Take to the confluence
Only then will you, oh merciful Niger
I implore you begin your rage
Take me fast, quickly, a fish make of me
It is on the Atlantic seaboard
That I think the sharks wait in readiness
Not at home where the Benue is gentle.

¹⁰ (From David Ker (ed.) *Voices from the Benue Valley*. Makurdi: Aboki, 2002)

difference¹¹ *Su'eddie Vershima Agema*

there are drops in the sun
 rays in the land
cold in the air

the goats pen in rivers
fishes swim in our streets
crocodiles roam in our rooms

we seek the twin pots of the rainbow
 to claim her riches
 to grab our land

there she is, wondrous beauty
queen of colours shining to that promised duty
but they cover a rag to hide her lines

from the despairing waters
they pick up sacks of trinkets
empty them and throw us the sound

the pictures draw our groans
as nature swallows after they chew our fortunes
reality increasing their bloat

We judged the pace¹² *Su'eddie Vershima Agema*

We judged the pace
of running waters defying space
counting in loud thumps drawing boundaries
gently swallowing our entirety

We rowed our grief
to camps that sardined our lot
to a compensation of a rice cup to ten mouths
to sacks grabbed by our *saviours*

We drank our tears

¹¹ Written for this collection but first published in *Home Equals Holes: Tales one shouldn't tell* (SEVHAGE 2014)

¹² Written for this collection but first published in *Home Equals Holes: Tales one shouldn't tell* (SEVHAGE 2014)

as they prayed the floods on
glorying in the dim sun
eating more of our supposed relief, bloating our fears...

Dawn came upon us one morn
as we took our load back to the receding waters
starting a new count and judgment
to bring much to ourselves

We judged the space
of drying waters increasing our landed space
counting in grateful breaths richer boundaries
gently reclaiming back our worth.

Sequence¹³ *Su'eddie Vershima Agema*

Tip, tip, tip
Gather your cover
The clouds can no longer our water keep
The skies sing its song

Not to dance, run, run...
Swoosh, fwooooosh...

Here cometh the currents
Hide from the torrents!
Block the way
It comes washing away the wishing

That comes from the preventable howls
Close the way, shut the doors – gbam!

Do we close the doors now the water is in?
How do we hope to win
A war long declared on plains far outside
Let in from those that should guard our cause?

Gbugudugum, the drums, the bell
– do we dance now as they echo in our thoughts?

The warning bells
our increasing hell

¹³ Written for this collection but first published in *Home Equals Holes: Tales one shouldn't tell* (SEVHAGE 2014)

Unheeded beats of warning drums
Create dances to massive cardiac dances

Swing this way, and dance that way
Run out, fall to knees, beg Aôndo's mercies...

Do we shout 'Damns'
To flooding dams
When we could have danced to safety
If we had only heard?

No sense *Gabriel B. I. Agema*

It is said...
why do you need to dredge
when you have no *gredge*¹⁴

Yes, I mean
remove the sand,
from the river that is now land

To an illiterate government
who rule by the stick of torment,
this makes no sense

To a Naval officer,
to the engineers, to the managers
to the civil servants, no sense

To all technical people,
the reasoning people, the scientists in Nigeria,
this is no sense

So the floods have come,
now sense is made even to the villagers
to the street hawkers, and money talkers

Let sense be made,
things can be reduced, prevented or stopped
and let the blame on fate not be laid.

¹⁴ [Naija slang] Food

we only prayed for rain *innocence silas*

behind these parapets, behind these walls
against nature, are stories found in memories,
in every strands of remembrance, where sorrow rests

in spring came an onslaught of rains
with hurls of manslaughter, banging rooftops,
tainting the playing fields of innocence;
torrents of skies that cursed our dry lips
in their crude rivers of doom,
swimming away mortal screams
of fading voices that clinched stillness
in watery graves

there came a sojourner with furious winds,
balls of storms, flashes of anger
crackling branches, uprooting roots,
and from the drippings of our eyes
we see tomorrow drowned today

taking away petals of nascent roses
back to earth, back to wet dust,
building clays of memories and insignias of sadness

eternity is a flood of memories
spent gazing upon icicles of past lives

the river sujjana swallowed the yolks with broken shells
making us sit yearly by its banks to see lines of colours above,
shining, a reminder of darkness,
of rains that never came for desiccated tongues
but with wetness for eyes that will defeat the rising sun

mother, we only prayed for rains, not rainbows;
as long as they blanket the sky
all ages will judge the clouds for crying too long

The flood that changed us Rikimaru TENCHU

The applause of rushing water is resounding with every sweeping wave
A clutter of trees, zinc and wood; distorted, mangled bodies broken
We watched in anguish, a word hardly spoken
Alas, this futile task is done, nothing left to save.

Lonely thatched roofs remain; a gloomy immortal emblem
A reminder of what once was; what will never be
We who resisted the water's pull will tell them
'It was the flood, it was the flood' that killed thee.

To build again what was destroyed and lost
To cherish memories that travails hurt
To desire to live, to withhold thy ghost
Is not a man's work; 'tis but faith's thrust.

This history we must not forget, never!
That fathers, mothers, brothers died
To our unborn, our anthems soar
'It was the flood, it was the flood' we cried.

What waters washed, our hands revive
Our villages, towns, our hands rebuild
The days of mourning to joy we drive
This is our mandate: "Bad to Good".

The applause of rushing water is resounding with every sweeping wave
'Tis the same as Noah up until today
Waters rise and subside; our song shall be brave
'it was the flood, it was the flood' that washed yesterday away.

The logistics of hope Obari Gomba

In the blizzard of rainstorm
Grey-demons fan a rush of vertigo

To assail our tireless sail.
Lights are snuffed out

When night stands uptight
With fumes of temper.

We see that filaments are frail things
In a gushing storm.

And sundry owls pelt us
With their pithy mockery.

They dare our resolute cult.
We never cringe in the boat.

Our nerves are toughened
By the raw flint of hope.

What if days are charged wires,
As they say, on high pylons?

We shall still ride the tide
Of our stubborn dreams.

After the Seventh River Obari Gomba

After the First River
Butterflies swarmed at my feet.

They called forth the shadows.

On the long voyage
Through the underground

Rivergates raised horns upon horns.

Who goes

Through the Valley of Skulls

Must brave the jaws

Of the seven rivers.

River after river, storm

After storm, I have clung

Onto the amulet of light.

Through the naked teeth

Of a cruel long night

Right onto the Seventh River.

After the Seventh River

Eagles dance at my feet.

They call my kingdom of songs.

Elegy of the River *Obari Gomba*

The long horn booms out the voice of the River.

The dirge is a long horn beyond the banks

To the concourse of the hoary spirits

And to the legion of the young and strong.

The River wails the swirling fog over the waters.

The dirge strokes the heart of time.

The River wails the nebulous gestation

In the guts of fractured days.

The River wails the branded-ones without limbs

Who are acrobats on the steeples of holy places.

The River wails the lost housekeepers
Who let howling tramps to the rooftop.

The horn is for the children caught in the cave of thorns.
The horn is for the warriors bereft of the amulets of light.

The long horn booms out the voice of the River.
The bardic flight is a long horn beyond the banks.

The feast of the Old Dragons *Obari Gomba*

Old Dragons have broken the rivergate.

Old Dragons roar as they ravage the river.
New tears fall where old ones never run dry.

New lesions where old wounds are running sores.
New deaths where old corpses clog the river.

Old Dragons have broken the rivergate.

We must go to the Root of the River
For our birth-cords are anchored at the riverbed

Where destinies are woven in the great loom.
We must go in search of strong selvedge.

Friends from the other side *Obari Gomba*

I
Those who have died
By water
Are here again.

They come on the raft

Of waves
In the Season of Return.

They know the world
Of water. They know
The wide floor of roaring flood.

Though sometimes they build
A bridge of sighs on the hump of night,
They always make great campfires.

They always make great campfires
On the bank.
We have warmed ourselves beside them.

II
Sometimes they speak
To us and we see strange
And lovely demons in our heads.

Their brusque voices
Call to us,
And their wild wild laughter.

Buffalo thunderstorm *Andrew Ame Aba*

The wireless warns
of a thunderstorm
and for the boats
on the lake to dock.
Come the storm
and I hear a rumble
and the raps and
taps of a tap
and the claps and
slaps of woods

Awake with the sun
I see a wetted kerb
and hear them rave
of a thunderstorm
and how it poured
and poured at night.

Sleights of Sinai *Andrew Ame Aba*

XIII

flood victims failing downstream
on flotsam polythene trash,
once the shielding crown of family home;
with all six gone in the belly of iceberg,
the victim's requiem remains:
this life is only worth living...

...

XVII

away thunder
bidding us farewell
until the storms return
to rumble and grumble
and tumble again...

Swept away *Richard Inya*

Tears of the firmament

Make terrestrial drops

Earthling, *tear-cataracted* eyes

Watch bodies, buildings and all

Flow freely to the sea

Silences¹⁵ *Emman Usman Shehu*

Some things speak our silences
quietly betraying us
like the wrong syntax rippling
stream of sweet sentences.

Some things sculpt our silences,
deeply denying us
like the symbol at Passover
separating the grist from the husk.

Some things scream our silences,
in spite of ourselves
burrowed in suits of acquiescence
sewn at the Saville Row of fraud.

Some things tear our silences,
revealing bare bones
framing false profundity
for salvation of our skins.

Some things show our silences,
like snorkels breaking waves
over submarines of fear
scuttling for safe horizon.

¹⁵ From Emman Usman Shehu *Open Sesame* (Ibadan: Bookcraft, 2005)

The clouds *Remi Raji*

Of
Yesterday's
Flood
Still
Hang
Like
The scrotal
Burden
Of
Convicted
Rapists
And
The smell
In the air
Is
The semen
Of thieves.

What is poetry then if it cannot raise a flood *Remi Raji*

What, if not the eagerness of avalanche
The heaviness of the boulder
A sudden rift in the ridge
Of criminal silence?
What's the use of metaphor
If it cannot be the madness of earthquakes?

Edifices of destruction *Debbie Iorliam*

A trillion miles from home
I heard tales of woes
Brought by wailing waves
Of a furious queen

In her fury
She splashed
Leaving in her trail
An epidemic of destruction
Of eons of sweaty striving

Her strides lethal
For all trembled at her sight
She struck deeper
With a maddening fervour

With each step she took
A mass of vegetation went limp
Every instinct of survival quickened
The gray of age
The young at heart
Sought for a cocoon of safety

Arms outstretched
Her cold warmth envelopes all
Though detrimental
To her unwilling host

Twilight sorrows *Debbie Iorliam*

At twilight
Activities of survival
Filled the air

Sprawled out on make-shift mats
Mulling on the painful reminiscence
Of a lost battle at noon

A symphony of confusion
Voices rose with trembling wailings

Singing melodious elegies of bereavement

All in private mourning
Of treasures lost;
Blood ties; properties, hope...

As days dragged by
Faces aged
Jaws clenched
From unhappiness

As twilight crawled to darkness
They crept in like the messiah
And struck

And at dawn
It revealed;
The virtues of young blossoms
Were brutally plucked

Homes swallowed to teeth
Paddled canoes sat
Where roads once stood

It was
A harvest of pains
A journey of a thousand travails

The intruder *Debbie Iorliam*

We did not ask it in
Yet it did

We asked it out
Yet it refused to go

We pleaded
Yet it did not budge

It rather laughed hideously
Feeling more comfortable

It traversed delightfully
Savouring each adventure

The look on the faces of many
Stony and haunted

Everyone moving around hurriedly
As if chased by a ghost

So much pandemonium
I hate this unrehearsed drama

I cannot find my tennis shoes
I see it in a distance floating

Mother is screaming like a siren
Father has aged over again

My friends are scooping it out
Looking tired yet determined

My pet Bobby drank to death
And I never said goodbye

I wonder when it will all go
Leaving us to the peace once shared

Feeding rain with images

Omadachi Oklobia

I stand...

My thatch is torn, a shred of rafters and discord
In my gifted circle of puddle, ponds and pain
I am grief struck, fashioned off the embrace of tears from the skies
I wonder, is this as true as a gift ...

But fluid as a million glittering pictures upon a long stretched river
I hear only the echoes of our ache
as pains ring around
tied to our souls like a rope around a bamboo trunk.

I wonder, why pain when the darker skies draped my tear drops?
I shiver, complimentary songs of the prodigal winds embrace me
I stand in a puddle of my tears and the sweat and pain around me
I feel the embrace of loneliness

I have become a castaway for the rains to feed upon.

Lungfish

Chuma Nwokolo

I use my tears the way an angry writer uses ink.
They are not to lubricate my lines.
They flow to drive the pain that drives me to the brink.
From where I aestivate in mines,
they run to drive the joy
that drives my hand, to drive the rage
that drives my recalcitrant mind
into the freedom of the gateless page.

The African Lungfish broods,
prisoned in his parched burrow of riverbed mud.
He waits for rain. For years,
he waits for rain,
brooding on the drought
that drives him yearly to extinction's edge,
until it pours, whether in deluge
or in the inches of his daily dreams,
and he breaks from prison into gateless streams.

Only tears of rain,
in rage,
or peace,
could set him free.

Only tears can set me free.

Water enemy *Agatha Aduro*

From a cloud
Small as a man's hand
Came the promise of rain
For little men to run naked
Micro-pendulum between legs
The cloud small as a man's hand
Consumed other clouds
Till it covered the heaven and darkened earth
Umbrellas upturned, became roofs
Borne away on windy arms
Darkness lighter than night
Scarier than the darkest dusk
Bore down on helpless souls
Pregnant palm sized cloud
Reached down and shook hands
With the mighty Niger
All the way from the Fouta Djallon
Twined to form a casket
lives and livelihoods
floated from former friends.

Outpouring the brim

Damore Alli

Down to earth
the barrage has fallen
in slow steady succession
a mass of water flows in

Unsafe, grim
hearts run
speed enough to be drenched
in a race too fast for legs

It comes through with a vigorous beam
a gentle gulp
of depths unmatched
a growing continual stream

Lands, houses, lives and dreams
raised hopes swallowed
helpless
tears like water outpour the brim...

You have come back *Sam Ogabidu*

You have come back /river to source
From other lands and other seas
You have come back to the village
Where it all began:
Where you found no land for your dream seedlings
Where the first baskets were thrown over
The range chickens of your efforts
Where the love in your heart was battered
In the market square
Where they broke the headlights of your mind
Where they taught your eyes to see
And hide all evils from your mouth
You have come back
Though you are mute we can read you
From the surface of your flow like the river
What pollutants you carried from the new lands and seas
You ran with. No doubt you built roads, roads, roads...
But today they have conspired to bring you back
To the earth of the village you jilted.

A drunk river *Sam Ogabidu*

A drunken river despoils
The town that stands besides it
The village idiot spouting insults
On anyone he accosts

II

A flooded city chews
The entrails of its history
Faster than an insulted man
Interrogates his soul

III

A drunken river rushes down
The valley with haughtiness

More oceanic than a princess swaggering
In the reflected glory of the crown

IV

A flood swiped city consoles itself
And deplores men to watch the waves
But the watchmen watch in vain
Whenever a drunken river is enraged

Our faces were that black *Sam Ogabidu*

Our faces were that black
Long like a column of black ants
Burrowing earthworms of sorrow

Our faces were that black
And contorted like the cornrows
Of a village belle

Water e don get enemy
Water e don get enemy

Fela eviscerates the scars

Match stick *Sam Ogabidu*

A kite soars into the trunk
Of a neem and our Wilbur Wright
Whines in desperate loss
Of time and labour
Memory stays his mind

All grown now he wonders
Why he saved his life in a match box
When he rode the sky
In the playgrounds of his boyhood

Memories stay his mind

Hard of hearing, save the drumming
In his berserk heart
Hanging in the line for food stamps
At a makeshift camp
Memories stay his mind

In the end his name
Is a number on the flood list
One of the match sticks in the water
With what hope will he strike and
Fire his spirit to flee this darkness

Earth spreads her bare arms, bare of foam¹⁶ Ahmed
Maiwada

Water flows out, fire roars in –
Cold in the womb of hell.
I'm staring at his infamous gloves –
Frazier, in trunk of blood.
The saint of a bee,
Scouts for nectar in the Garden Square.
Time now to sting
The devil bee hunter in the ring.
The faceless burglar is eyeing my gold.
So I'm taking arms!

Hear him saying: "You can't see me."
'O, I shall *bumaye*!
My banana horns want his blood –
His underbelly bare.
The envoy of grief
Calls for a stretcher – daring red machine.
'I'll grab and squeeze –
Mystery he displays, melt it down.
Rumble in my hovel is about to kick –
Oh, I'm taking arms!

Is someone there the cankerworm¹⁷ Ahmed Maiwada

Whose fleets are you, sea waves;
Thrashing dry land
Times seven?
Whose troops
Are you forest fires, eating
Up the bush?
Whose tomahawks
Are you, O hurricanes,
Drubbing our lands
By day and night?
Whose armoured tanks
Are you earthquakes?
For which cause does the General rise?
Our white flag is in shreds, in revolt!

¹⁶ From Ahmed Maiwada *Eye Rhymes* (Abuja: Mazarriya Books, 2013)

¹⁷ From Ahmed Maiwada *Eye Rhymes* (Abuja: Mazarriya Books, 2013)

Immersion Sibbyl Whyte

Niger and Benue connived,
for life's vagaries couldn't be denied.
Time after time, steadfastly standing still;
till the rains receptacle did overflow.
Creeping closer to the sandy shore,
to be rid of the Djalón's babe they bore.
Like the second coming of the Lord,
they stole across the lands;
eating up the tarred roads,
quenching the thirst of potholes.
Prising precious possessions
from rich and poor alike.
Rubbles of the churches and mosques,
sleep sadly, side by side.
Shiroro, Jebba and Kainji;
damned dames of electricity,
softly sing dirges when the poles tumble in the dark.
Lagdo's keeper rang the warning bells,
yet people of the crossed rivers,
were washed away in its repairing riptide.
Rich and poor all immersed in the raging tide.
Bodies float away in coursing currents of ire.
As man and debris lie in watery graves.
'Internally Displaced Persons' if for euphemism you crave,
have become refugees in their lands.
Flowing freely, unleashing fatal fury,
few could hide, for none was wary.
Transversing the Niger-area,
melding East, West, South and North
with a watery stitch of back and forth.
Masterfully mending the tatters of a country,
steadily sinking 'neath the decay that blights all.

\$ß.

TADHANA *Andrew Aondosoo Peregrine Labe*
(Inspired by my friend Meriam Mahipos, for the people of Philippines)

The present is haunted by ghosts from the past
Humming laboured lullabies for the long dead
Heralded by harbingers of wasteful winds
I see them in the whirlwind and storms
I see them in the diabolic cyclones
Shattering arteries in the sanctuary of my heart
The earth trembles, the eclipse blinds the Creator
The dead find asylum in sea morgues
Floating like gourds on the waters
The living seek solace in requiem songs
Sharing condolences in body bags
Crestfallen, the Philippines stands in blood stains
Drifting in the winds farted by obese gods,
On horrible holidays in Manila
Where water maids grind testicles
Under the watchful eyes of miserable guardians
Mermaids, witches and wizards come with rotten entrails
And doomed figurines to calm the rampaging Yolanda*
As nature rages wild with poisoned swords
Fulfilling the morbid motive of creation.

TADHANA: In Tagalog language of the Philippines, meaning doom, death, destruction, or some terrible fate.

YOLANDA: Typhoon Haiyan, known as Typhoon Yolanda in the Philippines, an exceptionally powerful tropical cyclone that devastated parts of Southeast Asia, particularly the Philippines, in early November 2013, killing a record of at least 5,982 people in

The irony¹⁸ *Paul Liam*

Our faults have awakened the ire of the gods
We sob in atonement
For a new order awaits us

Our hooks have caught the wrong fish
Our deeds have earned us accolades of shame
The gods demands drums of blood
Yet we must initiate the cleansing

To ask us for drums of blood
Is like hacking a wood with bare hands
Is it not for a cause that the moon divorces the earth?

¹⁸ From Paul Liam *Indefinite Cravings* (Kaduna: Leo Books, 2012)

At Ibadan (25th August) *Ochechi Francis Abba*

25th, the wind comes in freezing light
Mothers and babies in torment fright
As the visitor of destruction quakes
A visitor at *Apete*
The link of *Apete* and *Molete*
Everyone at their homestead welcoming it
With every gusto everything pushed to pit

Wailings at *Awolowo*
Even the ancestral home in turmoil
Screams! *O ti bere oo*
Egba mi ooo
Houses raised down by the torrents
Babies swim in gushing broad-day streams
With protruded tummies afloat
Mothers and their pots tangle at *Agbowo*
Thunder storms clap
And schools as garbage hip
Every cars floating like rumpled papers

26th, they say they would help
All propaganda in place
Hundred bags of grains given
Still, a thousand cries unquenchable
As mothers seek children
Children seek fathers
Even the pillows cannot cushion
August! An enemy you are a month
Your nemesis like a moth
Thunder!
Ragged cries!!
Wailings!!!
And the day weeps

Can *Ochechi Francis Abba*

Can the children's wailings ever stop?
Can the mothers' weeping ever be quenched?
Can our houses ever be rebuilt,
Yes! Our houses given back?

Can my father's car still take me to my washed away school?
Even, can my school still stand?
Would I ever get my books back?
And can the dark ever end?
And the pains mend?
Answer me O Flood

An unwanted visitor you are!
Answer me I say!
Can my days be bright again?
And my brothers be brought back
Never to see the dark
With no rain of pain?
Can you ever be tamed?
So as not to reign?

Wailing! Wailing!! Wailing!!!

Voice of Heaven *Shittu Fowora*

You have never heard that voice?
The voice of heaven

What is it you call the dribs of rain
On
The
Roof
That
Is
Over
Your head?

What is it you call the waft of breeze
that peels off your ceiling?

The melody of pellet drizzles
That remands you for the while it drips?

Whose voice is the angry thunder
That crack your eardrum?

Okay wait!
Wait until the eyes of heaven weep you a deluge
Wait again until the deluge meets a tsunami
And makes its way into your fortress
Wait until it pays you a visit at night
In the coastal plains of Lekki
Wait...
Please wait
For Heaven to speak again.

Crops in the river *Saddiq Dzukogi*

The water bags are leaking
The watery enclaves have opened the portals
For the river spirits
To hang on to us
In a sodden embrace

The rain is a giant
A swine that blows away
thatches and barns
And sink our earth
Beneath the skin
Of the river while it brims
Washing off thirsts

famine yet breathes lemon
as the torrents surges

Hunger is a twofaced metaphor
Of flood
And of drought

When the rains do not cease
the river will have its arms wrapped around you
you cannot be a fish bellow its grip
water wings confer a facelift upon homes
we now live liquid lives in aquariums
footpaths are now waterways
farms are now ponds
and we have lost our crops in the mire

As I see monkey dey starve
A` `` baboon dey chop
as I see donkey dey work
turkey dey chop
I know say the end don dey come

If the flood returns
Will it meet us napping?
Will it submerge our villages

sack us from our homes?
Or spare us the ordeal?

If the flood returns
Will it come like a warrior
ravage our farms
leave us in destitution
while we watch helplessly
like tethered goats?
Or fight back like wounded wolves?

Shall we watch the criminal flood come
To loot our lands
Rape our homes
And leave our homes desolate?
Or fortify our community?

Sometimes... *Humphrey Ogu*

In this global village
sometimes fishes and snakes
inhabit the human habitat

Sometimes snakes take over the rooms
sometimes humans have no shelter
clothing, food or water

Sometimes Boys and girls
men and women
vacate their homes
for wild animals

sometimes there's no water to drink
sometimes there's too much water to swim in

Sometimes it's Tsunami in Asia
sometimes it's Hurricane in America
sometimes it's Flood in Africa
sometimes it's blood flood
sometimes it's tear-flood
sometimes it's petrol flood
from upturned tanker
or ruptured pipelines

sometimes it's petrol scarcity
and electricity scarcity

Sometimes something bad happens
Sometimes something good happens
In our little corner of the global village

Songs for the lost waters *Adelaja Ridwan Olayiwola*

Thou Vagabond,
That vanquishes the sand!
With thy vehement fingers,
Thou submerge the land.
Out, I stay cast
Like on embargo.
My home -southwards,
I cannot go.
You pace around,
In the staffed-chief's pace
Left, Right and Forth
You have made a trace.

You think freedom
Is all you try express?
My men and kingdom
By that, you've just oppressed!
Innocent souls,
All forsook their homes.
Backyard or front-yard
They don't even know!
Their lots, their bought(s)
Not one, can they show.
The mouth serving plants
None, you spare to grow.

The call I make,
Is to ring you awake.
Sleep no more,
It's not a time to snore!
Go home-Go home, Thou Vagabond!
I hear of thy home
I hear it's like pond.
Trace back thy way,
Awaiting thee is thy bay.
Waiting in long await-
Go home Please, I say!

The flood *Dora Oyana*

Dark sinister clouds rose
Like an overfed puffed pillow of smoke
Suddenly moonlight gave way

The guardians turned
Their backs which have lifted many
Bent in humble resignation
If only...

Suddenly
The wind's whip fell it all
The trees
House tops
Wooden stores

And then the downpour
it increased
On the feeble and strong
Poor and rich

The sight of loss
Was more than unwelcome
Children were orphaned
Wives widowed
Through the waterways that bind us all –
Kogi, Imo, Benue, Niger and Edo ...
Nigeria wept
As our drinks turned our tears
Mother Nature wept
As she received them all

Sages stuttered as they spoke
Some held their breath in search for what remained
The earth stood still
Lagdo still streaming, the heavens still sighing...

Then God remembered
And sent a mighty wind to blow across the land
The storm ceased and the flood receded

Sound the alarm
Let the elders RISE!!
Let the broken words be bound
And the broken hearts mended with this united prayer

United Lord let us stand
Give us strength to keep every neighbour who suffered this loss
Even better than we found them

Address to the Benue Ada Agada

You were a tame wonder
In the many seasons gone by,
When you snaked your way down from the Adamawa Plateau
Tracing your smooth-flowing course in pleasant languor,
In that peace that seems so strange –
The eternal riddle of creation itself.

But this last season our agony came,
And you O mighty Benue,
You of the pleasant disposition and even temper,
You swelled with the rage of a puffing cobra
And burst the banks that keep the peace
Between man and mighty nature.

Pride of the Benue valley,
You swelled with the rage of water
From the ominous sky and a foreign lake,
And we here we mourned
Homeless.

Landlord unwelcome at mid-season,
You forced your way into our homes
Marching in like lord of all rivers, all seas, all oceans,
With twisting denizens of the underwater.

We who fled your roaring rage,
We who fled to the safety of solid earth
Ever in solidarity with suffering mankind,
We stand afar to contemplate your mighty rage
Even as our dejection queries your season's malevolence.
We lost everything,
Everything, but our lives:
We stand stubborn on sturdy feet,
We the inheritors of the indomitable will,
Face you watery spirit to human soul.

Where is the ark of Noah? *Ada Agada*

I watched the swell of the Benue
From that house at the north bank
Now a hostage to watery uprising
In land overtaken by floods.
I watched as the heavens poured
In the bitterest agony of a consuming passion
Which fathom I dare not.
Yes, I was the witness and participant
In a cosmic drama re-enacting the day of Noah.
The heavens poured
And the door of Lagdo dam was forced open
To disturb the peace of the valley dwellers,
Forced open like the virgin's femaleness
Violated by ruffians that know little mercy.
After the rise came the flooding,
After the flooding came the famous race for dry land
For which the fish quivered at the gills with laughter.
From my retreat in the dry interior
I testified to the terror and might of nature,
When it seemed Noah's day was back
Bringing all the horrors of Doomsday,
The cosmic quake, the watery rage, the human shrieks,
Everything but the ark of Noah

Languor *Tubal Rabbi Cain*

Eternal omen befalls all
If the weather's wet
We want it dry, if it's dry
Folks want it wet,
So dry we craved for water
Drink of the past, present and future
Abounding in plenty, soaking
Our burden of intangibles
Neither ken nor brawn
We drank, but could not hold
And ran, yet could not hide
From our drink on rampage
Who knew our drink could hurt,
Till it laid us bare, or aren't we?

Rivulet *Tubal Rabbi Cain*

Sandcastles built for pleasure
Dutifully held our treasure
Inspiring false sense of security,
Comfort, laissez-faire and leisure

As we dwelled, thriving on treachery
Sharpening our skills in archery
Swift with crossbows and ensigns
Fast and cunning in our debauchery

An evening so well designed
Set at naught by nature's design
As wild-winds of the afternoon mows
We bask in swiftness at reading the signs

Mansions fortified in blooming rows
Adorned and decked with fluffy pillows
Oblivious of nature's ways
Cedar from Lebanon decorate our windows

While we were yet awake
The brook took us unawares
Leaving but a lesson for all
To labour and amass, yet share our wares

Tomorrow's Memory

Servio Gbadamosi

The Nigerian god sits
on a trunk of anarchy
weaving the fabric of doom
on a Chinese loom.

A touchable emptiness taps
my throat with forked fingers
as we serve our tears to the
imp and his wife, the half-child.

The goat's eyes speaks in condensed
half-tones on the god's slaughter-slab:
tomorrow's memory is pinned to tanks
the earth forgets our faceless names...

Pour my guilt upon this land

Servio Gbadamosi

We pray-
hands on the trigger of hearts
and flint-eyes on the famed path
that hides the terror that milks our
night of its day

I'm the axe laid at the root of the
enclave of the elders' cult
the machete that silts the soul of
my country's ancestral grove
I'm the gin dried out in the furnace

The seed-
trodden and cast
into the confines of reinforced coffins

The deadless life that drinks the first air
as it is plucked from the cloudless
courts of Olodumare

I'm the birth that dies
the death that births
the child that cries
the cry that child

I'm the broken pitcher mended

So pour my guilt upon this land
that the rains of redemption may
flood the earth...

Lasgidi *Servio Gbadamosi*

The sea forgives
The lagoon never forgets
Lagos eats up the soul of her inhabitants
Filling up its space with concrete, steel

Each bus ride is a full-length novel
Tales dyed in thickened sweat and blood
Seated party of wailers in each laughing train
The thundering joy, the whispering sorrows

The deep serrating carvings of want and lack
The hostile hospitality
The shared cup of grieve and the common
Future of dust into which we are thrust...

**Lasgidi: Street lingo for Lagos City.*

I long to soil my hands *Servio Gbadamosi*

I long to suck forbidden seas flowing
Heavenwards in swabs of pointed haste
To tear down the buttoned veils of law and
Search out its vaults with soul-melting speech

To lick the barbed tendon at the crust of the Niger
To drill with the tip and thrust of the coated rig
And fill the Kalahari's fortunate womb
With the riotous oil of human gladness

I thirst and soak my heart in pleasant spirits
My tongue hurled a fleet of raucous chants at the priest
Spat a pint of salt water to the godhead
And poured out his life for the peace of the clan

I long to live frugal as the ant stashing
Crumbs of grace in banks of the coming dawn
Bring forth the ancient censers
Let today's incense hallow the shrine

Like the grasshopper, I long to stamp my itchy
Feet to the silent waters of the winds
To feast on the treasured thrift and pour out
The cistern of fate into the dawn's unstable waters...

Scrambled Sunlight¹⁹

Ebi Yeibo

A handshake is a prompter of memories
Of sunrays refracted in darkwaters
Of dawn, damming the silt;
Of aborigines under septic siege
Turning ancient fortresses
To fulsome funerals.

A handshake is a prompter of memories
Of leaders quartered in mermaid mansions
Their names loom large
When a conversation zeros
On muffling the masses
In sickening slums
Their nebulous faith
Seedy skunks
Ulcerates moonlight loves
Their nibbling fame
Dazzles even delirious dinosaurs
To the zenith of nothing
Menopausal in their prime.

Now
This palling paradise of pangs
Is in full bloom again
With subsidy scrambled
Cloy covens sprout
In every corner of the earth

Stripping bare a phantom faith
In a community of owl and bats.
O what feeds this rabid recourse
To a lonesome path
Singing darksongs in a fleshy morning
Yielding to the leafless lore
Of pandering patrons
Like milling mambas?

What feeds this rabid recourse
To worsted waters overflowing
With public spleen, severing
The patent greenery perfuming the earth?

¹⁹ From Ebi Yeibo *Shadows of the setting sun* (Kraftgriots, 2012)

True, the hurricane is never humble
It hurls all in its way
But what feeds this eerie rhetoric
Of a vague moon
Wrapped in bridal cushions
This patent poison
To the general purse?

O every politician on the podium
They say, is chosen by God
To cut hitherto untrodden paths
To hoist the national flag
In the precincts of the simmering sun
Even shrivelled old ones
Who cannot decode
The dialect of the age.

lost²⁰ *amu nnadi*

i am not what i used to be
i am lost in a world i do not own

every space belongs to you
every form
every fibre
every air

every tree bears your ripe fruits
every road your infinite promise
every sound
every heartbeat
you inhabit them all

i am not what i used to be
i am what you have made of me

lost in a world you own

plunder²¹ *amu nnadi*

i will make these moments with you
without fear
without remorse
this plunder
digging as they do for diamonds
into your earth

this is our rite of thunder
for it rains in our hearts a flood of misery
and our groans, like these rumbles
bemoan the darkness that covers us

pray, what more can it be?
with what fear can the chicken weep?
what more suffering
can draw blood from our eyes?

²⁰ From *amu nnadi through the window of a sandcastle* (Origami, 2013)

²¹ From *amu nnadi through the window of a sandcastle* (Origami, 2013)

we have sold our hearts
for privations of pleasure
bound only to this release
when we must stand,
bereft of tenderness.
and walk away.

Flow *Jennifer Chinenye Emelife*

There came the rolling tears
So fierce even its shed it coiled up

You can neither leave nor come in
For the safe path is dying

The wind has blown
All secret is laid bare

This bed becomes one of an
Endless flow

No friend, no foe *Celina Ngohide Kile*

Sometime in August
I craved for death
Knocked on the door of the underworld
Silence my feedback
What greater pain besought
Than that which the horrendous season bestowed
Terror bore horror
As fate left me faithless

Water they say is life
Yet my doom
Such, the irony of life
When he said
"Never again shall I flood the earth"
Was I an exception?

Recalling the days of Noah
Even the birds, not spared
Their homes made to sink
The children? How less you care!
No more hide and seek
Ah! The aged! Did you fear?
What insatiable lust you have

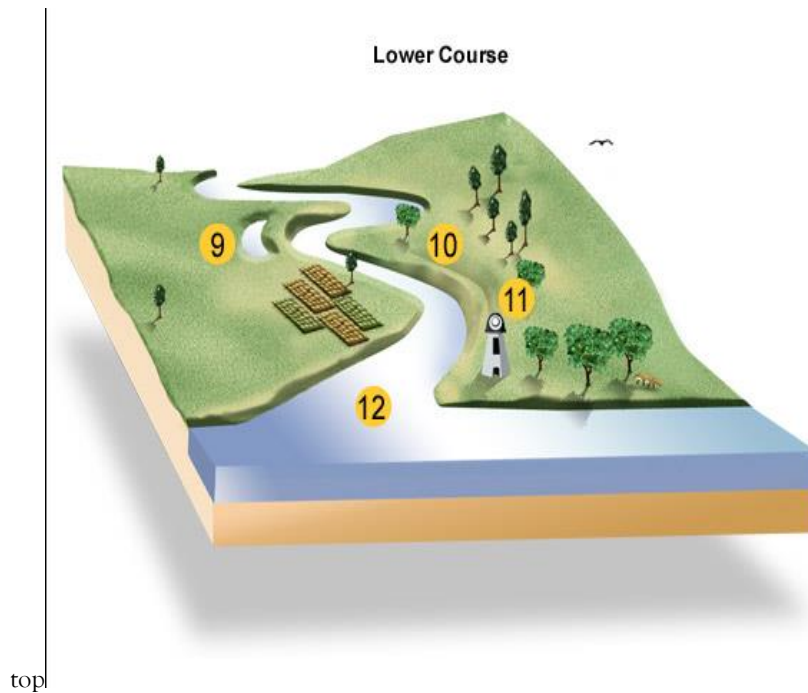
Droppings from above!
How often must you pay homage?
Why visit with your lineage?
At your departure
Paradise now inverted heaven
Vanity becomes vanity
Friends float in endless misery
No longer can I till the earth
Rendered homeless, hopeless and friendless

Oh!
Let man crucify me
Let him deny me the gains of my grains
Just after his departure
Maybe my seeds may regenerate
But you... Flee from me
You who knows neither friend nor foe.

The broken curse Ubonabasi Ime Ekpo

Reviving the cursed sea
in the deepest path
lies the fierce castle
As the fish in its shallow

Reviving the cursed sea
As the crabs clinch the



So does the turtle target its prey
Where the jellyfish plays always

Reviving the cursed sea
Where the water outflows the fish
Vomiting the wasted resources
Like the dolphin over cedes the Newton

Reviving the cursed sea
The wounded shores on its sides
Making the arrival of ship mantle
So does the kingdom varnishes away

Reviving the cursed sea
As the crocodile visit our territories
Making our homes as a terrestrial home
So does the hippopotamus play on its sides

Reviving the cursed sea

As homes and street inundated
Restoring the street with downpour
So does the water gush out dirty substances

Reviving the cursed sea
Like our villages and huts becomes marine splendour
Saving us the reward of old structure
As satisfying the octopus to its belly

Reviving the cursed sea
As the little mermaid disguise beauty
So does the whale swallows the prey
Like an empty swamp with waterweeds

Reviving the cursed sea
What is worthy of a broken boundary
As it touches the shores of seafarers
So does the widest of the sea enlarges

Water *Ubonabasi Ime Ekpo*

Water is the river of life
The drip of a lifetime
In the ocean, I am there
In the gutter, I am here
In the sea, I am always wanted
In the soak away, I transformed sewage
In the home, I am Adam's ale
Joining elements I can be formed
In the fruit, I can be reformed
Without aqua, life can be deformed
When life itself is essential with aqua pura
In a dive, the dilute of aqua is abundant
When bathing, it is the refreshment of body balance
I am more of importance but scarce than H₂O
So water is essential to all living creatures

Water is like a porter at my doorstep
Water is like a sorter in my blender
Water is like a quarter in my fish pond
Water is like a supporter with my food
Water is shorter in my cup than in my bucket
Water is a slaughter like a flood in my surrounding

Water is a snorter like an electric kettle on a socket
Water is a reporter in my sewage and gutter
Water is an importer in the ocean dive
Water is an exporter In the swimming pool
Water is a transporter on a shipping lane
Water is a deportees , throwing away remnant out of the sea

Floods *Ubonabasi Ime Ekpo*

Flood flood
Flood is a disaster
In my eye, I find blood
Like an alluvium in my babyhood
It is the rising of a tide over the east wood
The waterspout of the season
The violent stream flogged us out of our homes
As the awakening of oversupply of water flow comes
Baking the soils into an overspill runoff outcomes
Natural spring flashes out the downpour syndromes
The deluge becomes the gorge swamp in the rhizomes
As the rain begins to flush our family tree in a death zone
So does the gourmandize water parked our cones and cylinders
The drainage never storms the walls of our birth stones
So does the on slaughter starts from street to cross bones
Dashing out the binge to the ocean of death zones
Cloudburst into tears of unending flood cyclones
Inundation breaks the dreams of upcoming clones
As the outpouring torrent , the cold weather becomes collar bones
It is the coming like the bombardment of many cornerstones
The flood control scarf fed in cuttlebones
As the surrounding transform from river to ocean breast bones
So does the water overeat the joy of our chaperones
Our foods and cash crops varnishes into the neighbouring dethrones
As our electric poles metamorphosed into submarine curb stones
So do abandoned houses become the homes of aquarium lime tones
As the workers and market women refrain from their allophones

Floods and fools *Samuel Terseer Baki*

No matter how warned and alarmed
no matter how forewarned and forearmed
off-guard are we still caught
the tale of our continuous rot
where we find ourselves in pools...
like ill-fated fools

As it was in the time of Noah
so it is in the time of NOA²²
deaf, we are subject to the grimness of the Reaper
as we are no longer anything's keeper
time turning our laughter to whips
that flog us to disastrous slips

²² National Orientation Agency: An information dissemination and cultural reorientation agency in Nigeria.

Came alone *Anselm Sesugh Ngutsav*

Wake me tomorrow
Wake me before light
Wake me for I can no longer wait
For the margins of surprise have crossed
The home and passed sentence
Violently shaken in the hands of the man that came-alone
To oppress the kind and innocence
That cleansed our lands and instilled confidence

Our beds wet of the man's urine
Yes that man that came alone
To pollute mother's bath water and gawk at her
The came-alone is our neighbour
Whose wife is in labour
Her water broke
It gushed into our windows and doors and drowned our roofs

We raced out for mother to the market
But she flows unaware in the market.

Tales of flood (for my brother) *Madu Chisom*

Nwacheta

Can you still remember the Lagos flood;
That displaced and subjugated thousands breathless;
That made able-bodied men to count rosaries
Of tears and blood gushing out from their eyes;
That made our moon to hide in the pelvis of the setting sun?

Nwacheta, my brother....

It has happened again, lashing all the branches of our land.
Come, listen to dying heartbeats of Plateau and Benue,
Life has grown dunes there.
Do you know that I saw Benue children crying,
Carrying their belongings seeking where to lay their heads.
In Jos, they told me how flood sacked them from their slums
And how their children - fruits of kwashiokor were drowned.

Nwacheta

Just yesterday, the flood extended his wickedness,
To Bayelsa, Imo and Rivers, right now they're naked,
Lying on the thorns of silence.
Cross River, Delta and Kogi are now snails without shells,
Happily weeping but there is no one to console them.
Edo, Akwa Ibom, Ebonyi and Niger are bleeding
Through their soles, sinking deep in the sand of miseries:
While in Nassarawa, Anambra, Abia and Bauchi,
Alien vultures have woven nest of misfortunes on their hunch-backed hopes.

Nwacheta,

Do you know that Flood swallowed our schools,
Consumed our farm produce and washed away markets, houses and parks?
Now we are rolling in the fart of penury,
Hunger, diseases, privations and homelessness.

Nwacheta

Even as am writing to you now, our father's grave is no more
The Flood has possessed its place and father is not at rest.
Come see how his bones, floating here and there.
The government has become toad, slow
In stretching aids to the casualties.

Brother,

Flood has over-shadowed us;
And I am lonely in this refugee camp.
So lonely, so lonely here...

Flood view *Ene Odaba*

In a wondrous gaze I sailed
above rooftops and walked
in broken streets
with my eyes wild from the stares
that met them
statues of the living moulded
with hands to their head
remaining voiceless from tears shed

Homes are lost
familiar characters floating nearby
or still in hidden places...

I could not ask questions
I knew answers to
I could not control or comfort anyone
some reaching for ropes
others about to bring out their
intestines while wailing

My throat is scorched
yearning for the task of what
brought this calamity
shadows of a little lad
dancing in the rain and
a sower fulfilled
still the thoughts of the shallows in
the streets where beings on
shakable ends dwell

Alas, my stomach groans...

Lamentations of a centenarian

Paul Ugah

Adikwu Apochi stood by the banks
Bent by decades of barbing the land
He looked at the waters
Reflecting a recent past
Where stood his house
The torrents slowly went down his eye-ways
Past cheeks and to the floor

The rage from deep within his heart
Burned not at accidental releases of Lagdo
Nor the overflowing Kainji and Shiroro
As the memory of his gone entirety stoked
His anger, he directed it to officials
Who flooded accounts with funds
That could have sent a lot to better

They sang the song of 'Being on top of the situation'
Today, the country sat under the situation.

The hopeless flood *Moses Chibueze Opara*

The hopeless flood came hunting
our land again,
leaving our hopes overflowed to quench
in sparrows of thoughts,
as fears console our land
at its untimely coming to flood our hope.

our soil was numbed
consumed by the tide,
our faces wrinkled
as they saw our land
destroyed
cruel creatures in tow

in hopelessness our homes dressed
with sorrow advised our joy
in moulded agony to share,
each moment forgone as death knocks
to welcome our fading smiles with spears
of hardship;
turning our moods to dust.

grievous destruction *Moses Chibueze Opara*

destruction came visiting our land with pains
hunting our homes with decaying hopes
in our soul
sighing with sagging smiles.

in angry mood
the flood swallowed our crops
making our hopes desolate in descant tune,
it played the drums of sorrow
for us to dance along
its rhythms in debris

in cruel debacle moods it ridiculed
our joy giving us sorrow as song
to rehearse,
leaving our squeezed faces in curfew

of sorrow as it silently raped our land
of its fertility.

wounded our hopes in worried state

to weave spider webs,
in tears and our blinded heart

grope for the walls
in island of grieve.

we thought it came to bless us
but cruelly crunching our bones
to decamp from our heritage
and defiling our land
with loads of armoured deformity.

in worthless supplication,
our spirits boldly sighed in grieve
our hearts bleed in pains
as our land has been occupied
by the flood in grievous destruction.

Watery tears from the valley *H. O. C. Kochis*

Organic life in antiquity
Emerged from volumes of water
Same water unfriendly
Expansion as flood rolls life
And property like pebbles into
Untimely exit

This impersonal guest razing
Farms, homes for humans and animals
Alike threatening to swallow up
The low plains of the Benue River
This silent upsurge of water
Forcing people and property to
Emergency camps to experience
Yet another unpredictable phase
Of mortal existence on earth

I stand upon the scene
To disclose the tears of victims
Which volume far exceed
The looming dangers of the flood

But woe to mortals,
Both victims and managers
For being reluctant to change
Even as the flood receded
Because of material relief's
At no personal expense

The flood to remember *Don Chris Ukough*

From Cameroon to Benue
Comes the great flood
Unexpected as in Noah's day
They scattered on earth and strived with vigor
Seeking shelter to no avail
Oh! I feel for them,
Their agonies and pains
What a monumental tragedy!
Neighbours and good Samaritans surrendered their souls
They cried to the heavenly one *'Why me oh Lord!'*
It was a catastrophe, that froze hearts
As it had not occurred before
Or will it occur again?
Or is this a punishment from God?
Ah! Ah! The flood to remember
The experience and memories ours
The river, seas, oceans and fishes will all bow to the power of flood
Fishermen regretted, Farmers lamented in tears
But the waters leapt with joy
How mighty and strong is the flood
Then the day finally arrived
Of tears of joy
When it began returning to the sun
The fishes laugh, island appears, and canoe men traverse
Refugees back to their abodes
And to their great protector.

Rising waters *Sewuese Leah Anyo*

I stood
before the rising waters
dazed
as shivering lips
made attempts to part

the water caressed my feet
little fishes tugged at my toes
floating objects nagged me to give way
I stood
watching sinking homes and helpless souls

Trouble from afar *Sewuese Leah Anyo*

Released by callous hands
it screams in utter relief
Freedom! FREEDOM!

Overcome by the zeal to travel
it lashes out:
Give way! GIVE WAY!

Waters merge to trap lands
Seeking absolute worship:
Bow to us! BOW TO US!

Infant tears mix with rising waters
Babbles echoing with adult wails:
HELP US LORD! Help us Lord!

The flood *Theophilus Aôndover Kaan*

As the water of the Cameroun escaped
The banks of the Niger overflowing
Our thirst not quenched
Our hunger severed

Is water truly life?

Our farms wiped away
Our houses flooded
Our children disappear.
From the Benue valley
To Lokoja the confluence

No, it is taker of life

We are submerged.
With hundreds drawn
Thousands homeless
Millions hungry and camped.

Yes, it giver of life

With a handful
Feeding fat under our calamity
And singing compensation.

Movements *Major Agee Tertsegha*

CAMEROUN...

Your dammed streams stole into our homes, with roofs, brooms the klept left.

LAGDO...

Chei! see them swim you to the screams of Allahu akbar...cars?

BENUE...

Your rivers absconded from their course and climbed their banks to harm farms.

NIGER...

Your waters left their routes with streaming visitors and rode roads.

YOU!

Your fingerlings pluck at the eyes of a drowned warrior that floats bloat.

Your thoughtless tributaries sneaked in, drove us out mindless of a refugee's refuge.

The mud hut squatted on the ground and the storey standing in the high sky
have both been storied to nurse one hurt, both saw their walls fall.

Did you come, for the stolen sands and lands reclaimed, to claim?

Kpei! must we all pay this much for me and my kin's sins?

But I ask, is that how to wash the dirt off a soiled sand or land?

Now a piteous father fathers the fathers of the displaced family unhappily.

Reluctantly, the waters leave for home weeks after with our homes, lives, means cleaned.

Faith gives them all a fresh start, many fall but I see the wise rise.

Aid comes in, the select few gather and share and so feed fat.

From the camps, lean voices bite at the fat few who scowl at the gnats greed.

Go back home! trouble not, did you not hear of the dredge pledge.

Again I ask, is it the public accounts or the over-fed waterbeds.

Flood blast *Salamatu Sule*

On my mother land
A flood detonates,
And this flood blast
So our blood splash
From violent hand of rain fall
So our tears pour
On my motherland
The scene as we see
Is now all sea
Flood blast
And my children
I saw their wavering heads
And houses bubble down
I heard their voices
Caged monstrous rage and wave
Drifts them away
Far! Far away from the hands of motherland
Flood blast
As you can see
My land is now all sea
And my children displaced
So our tears pour
For they cannot be replaced
Of all that was in place

Payback time *Oku-ola Paul Abiola (pauldesimple)*

God sends us rain
Not to cause us pain
To make us better
Not to make us bitter

But we change its mission
Imposed on it a different function
To carry out our assignment
Intelligence, our basement

Now it's payback time
And we wail like it's a crime
For God to be so gracious
Blessing us with that which should make us rejoice

Bloody f(l)ood *Anyanya Bassey*

Flood, my God; flood, I nod!
Flood did nearly drain my blood
I watched it drink up homes and lands

It soaked my soul, touched my chin,
Wet the hem of kit and kin
Doubled our fares, smuggled our wares
Flipped fortunes and trumped the tracks

I, who watched the people's abode,
Frenzied, cruise on Niger's fury
I, a distant worrier,
Tell the tale to faceless jury

There was a flood, armed with a sword -
That chased mankind to refugee camps
There was a flood, clothed in blood -
That spilled for weeks in September's calm

I, who cannot speak for 'it', speak I,
For those who survived and those who died
There was a flood in twenty-twelve;
But coming years, how can I tell?

In the wake of the Niger *Anyanya Bassey*

Houses pose like sinking ships
People and paraphernalia
Come swimming,
In the wake of the Niger

Vehicles ply as canoes do
On roads and pavements,
Waterlogged,
Making waves
Prodding caves,
Breaking links,
Slashing things,

A hotel, a gas station,

A football pitch, a kiosk,
A baby in her cot
Cum a car casually packed,
All in the belly of the hungry fluid

The community's economy,
Wildly swilled
By the twists and turns
Of the tidal tweaks

The river is beautiful
Through a glass cup, or as the sailor's path
The river is horrible –
Noah's nuance, Titanic's tic!

We live while it sleeps
We slip when it wakes

Unless,
We build an ark of concrete
When Niger goes to bed
Before she dares wake again!

Voices from the flood fest

Anyanya Bassey

(We survived)

We are the victims
We who survived the flood's whims
We, we, we
See?

We are the victims of the watery hell
We are the ones who survived to tell fest
We are the victims
We are, even to the rims

Can you hear us from under the river?
We whose houses were washed ashore
Listen to the sound of our fallen walls
Our tales resonate in market stalls

And I, Bayelsa

I speak for us in South-South
You have read on the paper's lips
The media's mouth and eyes and ears
There is nothing more to tell

And I, Kogi
The centre of the country's North
Lost in volumes of steaming tides
Homes and hopes, and families and friends
There is nothing else to tell
Nothing, nothing, nothing else

And the others
Bear testimonies...

Everything was washed away
Everything, but the evidence

How can I sing?

(for the Ibadan 2012 flood)

Uthman Adejumo

How can I sing of a night
when memories were washed blank
like stains on laundered clothes
close relations became distant
babies snapped from mothers' backs
rubbies rubbles turned
cries ,wails knocked our doors
tears, anguish became our neighbours

water had broke its shackles
like a mad wind
swept our land
raced through our farms and huts
separated granites from muds on our roads
buildings knelt
souls departed in wet soles
shoes of sorrow visited our doorsteps
garments of grief, our curtains were
our land was robed in loss

now, after our deluge of loss
we seek refuge in thoughts
with our lips glue sealed
how can I sing
of a night
when water incised us with destruction

Flood island *Sunday Akonni Moshood*

Water took refuge in our homes
Scattered our lands
And sat, an imperial Lord
Sending us like the Master it was
 and we ran helter-skelter for safety.

But who is to be blamed?
Our Aso Rock companions,
associated with a million ideas.

Its cooled-cruelled currents,
ran about like a hare in a field.
our once safe town
became loyalist to the flood.

It stole the properties,
and left the dwellers with pity.
Its passage was swift,
making the abiders shrink.:
Flood! why do this?

Suffocate me *Stephen Crown Gyet*

Suffocate me: you tidal wave
Take me where calm lies brave
From above or beneath, I don't mind
All, but some liquid to swallow my shelters
My nostril to itch, salty tongue; unquantified litters
And crude rain of ne'er refined

This grasses of hue ever green
On thy visit, caused a muddy sheen?
You wouldn't stop, so, houses too must drown
And thousand being to fill thy watery mouth
O, wash the loam away and delay my growth!
For the season genuflected to sorrow and frown

You tugged my people' heart ashore
Never do expect, or think of thee before
Dirty wash my green soul, less; I waded and wallowed deep
All white country's attire; drenched in overflow
Did you not touch the men of high but low?
But, how forceful this torrent deep
Though, I shall dry and never weep!

II

Lightning, the incarnate voice too follows
This; the message of tears from the cloud
We heard same, passed years, as joy nudged our marrows
Harrow's teeth, deep deep to soils, and proud
Seeds, agriculture's hair trimmed
But soothsayers do not tell when the sun dimmed

The time the clouded shower visits
Frantic rills, dreaded deadly torrent
Deluge's anger surged and soared to tall summits
Hippos and crocodiles, in glad torment
Roofs humbly bowed before furious flood
While brine stirred through diluted blood

In the mouth of Benue-Niger, and region of western
Disordered dirge and washed grains
Green ground, groaned of north discern
Step by step it marched along Kogi plains
But whatever wreaked the ravage,
Homeless in queue of hunger's rage

Biting foams *Ojo Timilehin Julius*

See them all...
Like flames of burning waters
The pleas of their gods
Makes the heart of the caste wails
It bleeds like a running pipe
So, he's their blessings,
So precious, not as a humble spell
I taste their oozing urine
But makes me a glowing baboon
I sway to see their seat of wits
Only to discover it bald
Oh! This bite aches?
It's a massage of soul.

We thought of little waves *Bada Yusuf Amo*

We thought of little waves
That could make silent noise
We shrouded ourselves in our hut
When the cloud became pregnant
We thought of a little pool after the rain
That might relax us on our bed of clay

The pool became a flood
Over our house, over our farms
Babies cling on the back of their mother
Men stood with a fragile heart, thinking of Noah
We looked to the sky to find God

We looked the sky, all we could see id government jet
Splitting bag of cares from our country's wealth
Raising toasts in jests to our nation's health

Take the gods howl *Ololade Omotola Olatunji*

From no memory wipe
That night the rain howled
Slaving barren pots
Left to derive
To proffer our regrets

The sore roof Invasion
Stripped our rests
Penultimate night,
She chased windows bare
After bathen ply
Heat barged in robust dare
The vengeful veranda *intercessed* our lie

Differing tale that vile day
Sobs this rain
Thickened sobs
Like Mama's roaring okra soup
Taking large guts
In the embracing locale

Pans, raiments
Pension-sweat houses
Mighty imposing towers
Intimidating wheels
Took brisk slides

Forlorn souls
Who found their lives
Whose hope of restoration dims
Feeble hearts
Pleading life
Pleading purgative visits
of the gods no more...

Love tears at *antiatai*²³ Kufre Ekanem

By the floods of *Aba mo*, I yearn for your voice
I sniff for your perfume and wade
Through the ponds of *Anung adedie*
My urge out jumps my sleep as I battle
Aroud the anthills of *Ananwot*
When will you call?
When will you come?
I wish for the beaches of *Imaidien*
When the moon will meet us at the corner of *Ntuuk-etok*
Against the tree trunks of *Mmumidem*, I stretch
To scratch my eyes awake
To keep awake in wait for you
I have had my drink but my defences fail at *Nsimanide*,
I need your warmth to quench my thirst
I sprawl at the shores of *Ankakai*
My sponge is in wait for your soap
I will you to be here at *Antiatiai*
To scratch the itch that etches my heart
My only hope lies in the foliage of *Uyakka fien*
Can my hurts return you to me?
My heart pounds with pains of *Imataikang*
Will my urge bring you tonight?
Tonight, until you come, I will sit
I will sit restlessly
Beckon longingly
Wish futilely
For you
Only you
At the junction of *Antiatiai*

²³ From 'Kufre Ekanem *The ant eaters* (Ibadan: Kraftgriots, 2010)

Fortunes *Oguntinyinbo Motunrayo Favour*

The thought lingers on my mind

Properties streamed pass
Nakedness and a hunger of fortunes, souls and body
Refugee sons born

Like a flock of sheep
We were led to a shed called camp
Government they said would help us out

Everyone mourning their loss
Soldiers meant to protect turned abusers
A lonely place filled different minds

The story differed for us
Tragedy brought us together
Pain made us closer

Dearest mine...
In your arms, I found comfort
And in your misty essence got lost forever

Beautiful colours *Val Chibueze*

Beautiful colours stay old with words
they keep you alive
they make you survive

Beautiful colours stay above the clouds
they spread out fully
when the earth finds tears alone

They add life to the nights
giving humour to the rivers
and burn our essence into the mind of men

I see Victor Olugbemi

Standing in the sand on the bank of the river I look,
The river flows; I see my dreams flow away.
I wonder – what I did or didn't do,
Tears run down my face and flow away.
I ponder – is this the end?
I am drawn that I may flow away too.
The rays of the sun, glistening, dance on the currents
I look up
The sun shines, I see hope!

Dream drawn *Matthew Nyikwagh*

The best of my wishes
Ripped in my dream
The shining stars across the sea
The beautiful ones now born

Best swimmers of our time
Great ones of the future

But now swim
With the dangling faeces
Toontoon! Toontoon!
Drinking from our septic tank

Best swimmers of our time
Great ones of the future

Swimming to the sky
Across our streets and gutters
Over the roofs and trees
Across the hills and over the valleys

Wake up!
Are we drawn?

A flood of opportunity *Aturmercy*

After the flood comes calm
Looking back; there's no return
What once was lost; now is found
Hope renewed amidst a chaotic cloud.

Insensitivity cowers in the face of reality
A reality previously overshadowed by immorality
Man's ugliness flushed away by this flood of rebirth
Beautiful structures, now, devoid of lies to tell.

Opportunity knocks circumspectly
Dare we continue living our lives in the wind,
While the Universe watches intently?
Second chances are but rare opportunities.

On the wings of tragedy,
Greatness is thrust upon a few,
Are you willing to embrace the mantle of greatness?
Do you have courage, to step away from the crowd?

The heavens cried *Aturmercy*

I listened as heaven shed its tears,
Tears of sorrow; an ocean of misery,
Overflowing man-made barriers.
A barrier of problems easily averted,
The sun shone and we all smiled;
Ignorant, we killed our innocent with pride.
Pocket full; heart bankrupt,
Heavy heart; empty spirit.
Heaven looked down and cried
Its purpose to cleanse the land
As with each passing of life;
Old makes way for new
Destruction births new life
Stubbornness hinders not divine progress
What was takes flight
What is to be, now in sight
Sadness ushers in happiness
The flood brings joy and gladness
Heaven weeps to its heart's content
The seas overflow with the spirit of darkness
Its passion wells up deep inside;
From it no man can hide.

Bundled humans

Terver Chieshe

It's easy
So easy
To catch the fever
As the jittering comes over
The hosts unprepared

Crave you oh innocents
Haggard and crowded
Wail you oh victims
In confusion's chains
Could you have known it?
Could you have watched out
And matched readily through?

Would you have heard?
Were there alarms
That could have been the lead?

Cancelled *Terver Chieshe*

A childhood dream
To build a tent
By the riverside
Cancelled

Would you tell me why?
No! You should have known
By now
The sinking roofs
The washed out frames
The scratched out roofs
Would I stand it again
Would I be able
To scratch the beginnings again
In a hope my tent
Will survive my days?

Message to Mary *Terver Chieshe*

Just wedded
Stampeded
Embedded in the camps as IDPs

No! No! No! She left
Couldn't stand this start so bad
Lucky, she took no vows
Ours a wedding non formal

Can I think again of this?
Would I have a divorce suite
Mary would you sue me now?
Wound my heart in times of flood?

Oh I see
Not wedded
Not truly wedded
But we met and had a good time
I know you have my baby
So though you discard me
Please save my baby's life

Many thanks *Terver Chieshe*

You never knew me
You never saw me
But when you heard of me
Displaced by a flood
You prayed for me
And sent a gift
Many thanks

You offered shelter
And clothing too
Many thanks
You sent some food
And water to drink
Many thanks

And for the light, the medicines
And condoms
Many thanks to you
From our families

A town leaks *Yakori Mohammed*

(28/11/12)

A whirlwind appears heralding an array of havoc
Looming in the bleeding skies amidst the eerie stars
In the darkness of the hour nature weeps in silence

The oceans wave dances in horrid tunes
As it floods the enclave swallowing all on its path
In an instant rush souls are wandering in woe

People lulled to the serene breeze at night
consumed by utter bleakness
Empty souls gasp for the breathe of life

Huts are washed away in the deluge like sediments
hundreds without harbour in melancholy
Others yell as an array of corpses lie scantily

While some float atop the streaming water
An upsurge of bodies form a heap at the coast
Causing an uproar in the natives domain

Overnight children are turned to orphans
Crying in the blackness, wind emits heat
An ordeal is thrown at dwellers

A downpour breezes in fear worsening the scenes
Left in pangs of trepidation people are turned
Into shadows ceasing to exist in the presence of time

Stroke away my pangs (Quatern) *Yakori Mohammed*

In the darkness of the hour
dull colours paint melancholy,
light brush sweeps away agony,
wrinkled canvas holds tears - my soul.

My fingers stroke carves flawlessly
in the darkness of the hour,
gloomy profile of rays outshine
lilac portrait; beams and blossoms.

Image of pain an illusion
in the blue screen of my senses,

in the darkness of the hour
despair engulfs a sea of tides.

Feeling lonely a pale shadow
sings blues to the harmony - breeze
as echo of drums herald love
in the darkness of the hour.

He paints a dream (Flood)

Lytnes Kikya

With gentle strokes of brush
He paints
and captures the essence He wants
the scales that cover our hearts
the floods that ravage our lands
shards of broken glass, on canvas.

In these cuts and breaks,
curves and bends
where colours have blend,
like patches of sun rays
through clouds pregnant with rain
we finds the hope we crave..
and so learn
like others before have done
to endure the dusk till dawn does break
to hold on, to wait.

Floating thatches *Eriata Oribhabor*

Stands of competing heights
rope-bounded in reaching confidence
sky-touching in daring accord
in graceful presence of rainbow filths
making mince-meat of roaring tides.

Cries of roving engines speak reasons of life
flowing from waters in hues and riches
basking in harmonious sync with thatches
holding on ages of hedgy hopes
clapping to “wavy” dances.

Hanging stilts kiss loads of filth
Fishermen paddle-rove in smiles
Of contentment, oblivious of bounties
Beyond daily pulls for handful of fishes
Celebrated in bands of glee.

Same old story of blind happiness
Every wake leads to rivers of hands to mouths
At the mercy of the oceans that rolled in like a thief
Writing off engines, stilts and thatches, now flowing
Like filths that once kissed diverse stilts.

depression²⁴ *g' ebinyõ ogbowei*

grief and pain
break from anchor and ropes
and the boat of hope
rides the surf
is smashed
dashed against the rocks

what elaborate embroidery
on a face ravaged
by suffering and sorrow
a smile stretches the creases
and laughter
lightning out of the dark reaches
of a wracked soul
lights up his denuded face

masseur what adept fingers
can fathom the fracture
in a neighbour's soul
the broken pride
that leaves him limping

the cologne of decay²⁵ *g' ebinyõ ogbowei*

the revolting stench
of waterside wastes
hits the stomach
with triple h's hammer
and we double over

ebb tide
a gust across the mudflat
the cologne of decay
is sprayed in our faces
and we reel from the stifling fetor

muddied shoes waddling
through a prostrate shanty town

²⁴ From G. Ebinyõ Ogbowei *the heedless ballot box* (2006)

²⁵ From G. Ebinyõ Ogbowei *the heedless ballot box* (2006)

where the buzz of flies
stirred by the splash of water
muddy silver ocherous
compete with the fantasia
of slum boom

we who love life
who'd create a symphony
out of the rot and riot
would pass round
cream crackers and coffee
to waifs and wastrels
hand out bouquets
to buccaneers who've borrowed
our pot of gold
buried the ballot box
in a landslide

ah they'd have saddam's senate
weep and fast and pray
have us hand our children
over to human traffickers
pawky politicians
well practised in the magic of self succession

the singing school bus²⁶ *g' ebinyō ogbowei*

hurricane turai
pummelling the pauperized province
the mindless boar
blind to colourful road signs
drives a singing school bus
down the derelict east-west
like a loathed leaking wife
banished to the abandoned outhouse
has gone to ruins

the bridge of faith quakes goes down
the singing school bus goes down
the promise in the song of striplings
drowns in a roaring river

²⁶ From *g' ebinyo ogbowei song of a dying river* (Ibadan: Kraftgriot, 2009)

life's like an underground river²⁷ *g'ebinyō ogbowei*

life's like an underground river
running through dark caverns
cool gurgling unnoticed

but soon it surfaces
shimmering in the light

then impurities
point nonpoint
is heated becomes warm

then emptying into the sea
loses singularity in ceaseless ebb and flow
or perishes in burning sands
of an insatiable desert

the fumbling king²⁸ *g'ebinyō ogbowei*

determined to cleanse the contumacious coasts
determined to drain the defiant wetlands
with flattery bribes and broken covenants
written with the blood of her branded braves
to drain her strength break her resolve

the fumbling king falls
is carried away by the bravissimo of ravenous chauvinists

gurgling tides flooding the crabby coast
sandstorms out of the scorched sahel
desolating grief on harassed highlands
scamming sycophants at his table
wheel him into a shallow grave

oily words of sharks with shiny teeth
sharper than brutus's dagger

²⁷ From *g'ebinyō ogbowei song of a dying river* (Ibadan: Kraftgriots, 2009)

²⁸ From *g'ebinyō ogbowei marsh boy and other poems* (Ibadan: Kraftgriots, 2013)

*cut until his cunning heart
feels the feral pain of pleading death*

the pleading kind falls
is carried away by the bravissimo of ravenous chauvinists

Oceanic march²⁹

Nnimmo Bassey

This rising tide
Shoots for boiling point
Whose point is it to set it
On fire?
This pile of dirt
Heaps of death from
The exhaust pipes of death
Can't I refuse
The poison
And douse the flares from the nozzles of evil
This cocktail of an air I'm forced to breathe
Whose duty is it to mix
And to fix
This death sentence
In our homes?

I see the march of the sea
I see the crushing blows of the seer
In the midst we are in the python's grasp
Swept off our feet
Our hopes silted
Memories of life once lived
Floats back to us
As we face the spasms of pain.

²⁹ From Nnimmo Bassey *We thought it was oil but it was blood* (Kraftgriots 2002)

Once upon a flood *Jude Idada*

Once upon a flood
Silence reigned across ages past
A time hewn out of the angst of men
A plan mercifully hatched out in a celestial den
Where the fate of mankind was divinely cast

The fevered hand of the Primordial revealed
In the unrelenting tears of a weeping heaven
When humanity cried louder than the crashing waves
And unfurled dreams sank into tempests deep

One soul burdened with an ethereal wish
To build the impossible and house the improbable
A warning without salvation
The ringing of a death knell
A coming deluge to clean the slate
An end to earthly seasons for a confused reason

The logic lost in a spiritual miasma
That all should die but two of each
A hidden lesson to teach
The living breath of the souls who survived
Yet if that which forced the hand of the Divine
Through the scourge of the storm still survived
Then what was the need to author a new beginning?

That tree once planted
That fruit unforgivably eaten
That seed so deeply sown
The Source of all struggles to redeem
The beauty of creation so eternally flawed
So once by water and a time to come by fire
The roots of sin so hard to kill
By the I AM who is condemned to forever love the so imperfectly created.

Flood of Hate *Sever R Ayede*

I see clouds rain down a flood of hate,
In the name of God a flood of hate.
Sun rise within me, dry up this flood of hate,
it's within me, it begins me, it might end me... don't let it be so.

Red eyes and sharpened teeth;
everything that's good sank down to the coral reef.
The hate is within you dressed in your belief,
in our religion, in our vision and our blood red love for regions, yes.

We teach our sons and we teach our girls;
to a bow-tied swine we cast these innocent pearls.
If we win the battle, we rule these worlds;
a kingdom built on ashes, polished gems for the crown of fascists, yes.

I met a man who tried to cut out his wounds,
Again and again, as sick manic laughter echoed in his tomb.
And he died with a smile, because at least he knew;
that he'd cut out the old one, lost a leg, but this one at least was new, yes.

I see clouds rain forth a flood of hate,
in the name of love a flood of hate.
I gasp for oxygen in my flood of hate.
It's within me, it begins me, it might end me... don't let it be so.

Sweet melody of songs³⁰ *Maria Ajima*

Sing me a melody
Sing me a sweet melody
A melody to ease my hearts worries
Sing a melody full of hope
For all the tomorrows
Sing a melody
Like a gentle breeze
Stealing thro' the trees
The sweat on my brow
Sing me a sweet melody
To rock me gently to sleep
Blissful sleep
Without toss or turns
Oh sing me a sweet melody
A melody of songs!

How life flows³¹ *Maria Ajima*

Plains and hills
Flowing and undulating
Hills and valleys
High tides and low tides
Ebbing and rolling
That is how life flows.

³⁰ From Maria Ajima *Cycles* (Makurdi: SEVHAGE, 2013)

³¹ From Maria Ajima *Poems of Sanity* (Makurdi: SEVHAGE, 2013)

Dark rain³²

MaryRose Ochanya Nyinebi

I'm lost in the rain again
Insane madness lifts me as I
Try to protect the fire
I admire.
We found the tone that fitted our hands,
And gathered wood from our old wastelands,
We built a dream no one believed in,
Flames, fire and light,
That warmed our night
And drove away the night,
And chilled darkness that claimed us,
Unfairly ruled us.

The fire grew, our hearts expanded as we saw,
And we wished to see more,
But the wind blew
Just when we turned to warm our backsides,
bringing the rain

Each drop tamed the flames
And the black cold we had driven away heads
this way again.

I'm lost in the rain,
Insane madness lifts me as I
Try to protect the fire
We require.
Again, the rain came
And took away our flame.
So as I
In the darkness roam and cry,
I hear a silent voice saying,
Find some stones,
Build again or die.

³² From MaryRose Ochanya Nyinebi *Last Token and other poems* (Makurdi: Nabekota, 2010)

Eureka!³³ *Iquo Eke*

Joy as I dare envisage the shore...

Final strokes more difficult than others

Courage my companion
As I broach each passing wave
Renewed with the joy
Of testimonies to come

Better morrows ahead

Of the slapping waves

I advance in this battle
Gallop on the back of coming hopes
I berth the shore

Eureka!

³³ From Iquo Eke *Symphony of Becoming* (Lagos: Image, 2013)

post-diluvian scribbles Okwy Obu
(for Su'eddie)

they have receded now
dark diluvian dirges
which fondled homesteads
caressed pregnant fields
leaving handprints of pain

they have receded now
the exiles are back
to wrecked hovels
the earth battered but better
and the sun regained mastery
of the pitiless sky
at least for a while

they have receded now
soon
their draining echoes
will resound
in famished bellies pockets
as the old year bows
makes room
for the two-faced's feet

they have receded now
soon
their bitterleaf memory
will be swept up stored
by fat cat masters
in underground rooms
unattended

till the dark songs' return

I have seen dead bones rise³⁴ Remi Raji

After the waters raged
Nothing's left but silence and sorrow
After the waters rose,
Nothing's left standing, only
only the wind's breath
clung to the fallen bridge.

The fathers have disappeared....
Gone with the ominous night.
Gone, with the anger of the waters
The mothers have clothed with heads in ash.
We asked to teach the children new songs of laughter
Now they munch the sourness of wilted corns.

I have searched the entrails of our tale
Our narrative has caught fire
Our narrative is wilted
in the shrivelled lips of orphans
After the waters raged,
nobody thinks tomorrow will come.

But I have seen dead bones rise.
I have seen the prison walls of closed minds fall
I have seen the sun rise in the depth of night
And in the huge appetite of hungry deserts
I have heard the gurgles of oases...
I have seen the flooded fields smile in verdant colours.

After the rivers' rage
In the aftermath of acid rains
Tomorrow's sun will rise
Accompanied by the rays of deodorant winds,
Accompanied by the fruity fingers of naked flowers.
Tomorrow's sun will rise
I have seen the dead bones rise.

³⁴ From Remi Raji *Sea of my mind* (Ibadan: Kraftgriots, 2013)

Homecoming, this coming day³⁵ Hyginus Ekwuazi

Dead to everything around me
I scan this portrait of the coming day
my heart, the while, deafening me

the sun, I see, will bring you home
before pulling his daily stunt
of diving into the river
beyond the hills and far away

together, we'll watch the moon rise
and, like we used to,
we'll pick out our favourite stars...

my new favourite is Orion, the wayfarer
every night I sent him to you
with twinkles of my love

he'll miss my errands
but he'll twinkle extra bright
to welcome you home, this coming day.

II

Home, sweet home; sweet, sweet home
Where the vulture sweeps away with
Our offering ere it reaches the altar

Home, sweet home; sweet, sweet home
Where the crow is still the barnyard cock
And the vampire-bat
Dangles from the parrot's perch

Home, sweet home; sweet, sweet home
Where the intertwining wings of the vulture
And the vampire-bat and the crow
Still blocks us from the rain and the sun
But your homecoming, this coming day
Fans into embers the hope in me

- That fair will stand the wind for home
For that peace that used to be native to our
Land
- That these pebbles of fear in our
Driveways
- Will be ground to dust by our resoled boots
- That aproned hunger and her liveried
Waiters

No more any home will have in our kitchens

³⁵ From 'Homecoming, this coming day' in Hyginus Ekwuazi *Low Apart* (Ibadan: Kraftgriots, 2006)

For our rivers no longer will be snared into
Private dams

And dancing canopy of corn tassels
Will cover the scorched earth of our
Famished homeland...

Dear heart, your homecoming, this coming day
Makes me drunk with the love
Which sniffs hope with every breath

And with orion twinkling extra bright
I'll spread out a hope-*full* table
To welcome you home, this coming day.

Songs of flood *Edentu D. Oroso*

We may once more hear the howling songs; these cascades
from Lagdo that cuddle vast frontiers of river basins.
Angst from primordial currents from up-flung river...
we may once more hear the howling songs; these cascades.

Tango of stout over-stuffed walls and bustling waters
ruffling new depths, with new scale of effluents
that wrest the grains of toil and creativity's gems
which the Kingfisher carries in pitched crooning.

Stolen swathes of earth and edifices so subdued
like Poseidon's hefty dose of tide on drifting Odysseus ;
We may once more hear the eerie drone of scurrying beasts,
this strange excursion of arrant fish in splendored homes.

Fate's twist! I, proud Tilapia from far-flung depths,
waltz now upon gilded thresholds and peer
through tints of human secrets, the tapestry of life;
For Lagdo's offerings, I'm now the Manor's heady king.

But neither Kingfisher nor I can boast of eternal toasts,
these currents that we crest are no more than frills
of blind bats that are yet to reckon with their folly
in the natural priming of things of which we discern .

great spectres may once more elude the spawn!
unless bridges find placement between gorged hearts
or the safety of earlier depths I once more feel,
and the Kingfisher to the warmth of his nest return.

The post chant³⁶ Ezenwa-Ohaeto

...I am man of chants

I come from the city of chants
I return to the village of chants

In the age of my ripeness
I did not avoid living
I sensed various shapes
Old roads led to new roads
New roads converged on old roads
So many tributaries of life flowed

I am man of moods
Time tracked my mind with wrinkles
But a minstrel must return home

I rejuvenate my flute of chants
Even if I feel the chants subside
In the age of my ripeness

I chanted what I must chant

I wait for another journey

I mend the chants
I mould new chants

The minstrel waits
The flute waits

I wait...

³⁶ From Ezenwa-Ohaeto's *The Chants of a Minstrel* (Ibadan: Kraftgriots, 2003)

The last stanza *Sam Ogabidu*

God did not create
This new death in the homestead
So we shall turn on them
The hose of heavy water
Pour hot death on the evil flowers
In the desert and the irritant mudskippers
In the mangrove forest
They will believe the religion of our power
And never again cross
The red lines of our don'ts.
But the evil came before man
Hands of death cannot close its eyes.

CONTRIBUTORS

Ada Agada was born in Orokam, Benue State. He was educated at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka and Benue State University, Makurdi. He is the author of the novel *The Anxious Life*. Ada's poems have appeared in several anthologies and newspapers. Five of his novels and several volumes of his poems are awaiting publication. He is currently engaged in independent philosophical research. He is a member of the Benue State chapter of the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA).

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Ahmed Maiwada is a lawyer, critic, poet and novelist. His poetry collections include *Saint of a Woman* (2004), *Fossils* (2008) and *Eye Rhymes* (2013). *Fossils* was on the final list of the 2009 Nigerian Liquefied Natural Gas (NLNG) Prize for literature which wasn't awarded. Maiwada co-edited the poetry anthology, *Fireflies*. His novel, *Musdoki* was published in 2010 to some literary controversy. He received the Olive Award in the Arts and Literature for 'commitment and consistency'. Ahmed Maiwada is currently the National Legal Adviser of the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA). He lives and works in Abuja.

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Andrew Ame Aba is a poet and novelist. His educational pursuit has been wide reaching and fascinating. He schooled at Mount Saint Michaels, Alidede and King's College, Lagos (where he won the National First Prize JF Kennedy Memorial Essay Contest in 1968); Ibadan University, and S. U. N. Y at Buffalo, United States of America; ASCON Badagry and the Benue State University, Makurdi. Dr. Aba has published two novels, *The Secret in your hand* (1999) and *House of Tomorrow* (2008); and a biography, *Fulfilling a Dream (A Biography of Chief Audu Ogbah)* (2004). He is married with four children and is a life member of the Full Gospel Business Men Fellowship International. Dr. Aba currently teaches Literature-in-English at the Benue State University, Makurdi.

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Bose Ayeni-Tsevende is a dancer of over thirty-eight years experience and has been a choreographer for some twenty-eight years. She is widely travelled and has performed in many countries across the globe. She has also presented papers at seminars and workshops, promoting the effectiveness of dance as a veritable tool in social and economic change. Bose has two poetry collections to her credit, *You are a poet* and *Streams*. She currently lectures at the Department of Theatre and Communication Arts, University of Jos, Jos, Nigeria. She is happily married with children.

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Ezenwa-Ohaeto is one of the lasting voices of Nigerian poetry and a prominent member of its third generation. A poet, short story writer, biographer and literary scholar, Ezenwa-Ohaeto published several poetry collections including *Songs of a Traveller*, *I wan be President*, *Bullets for Buntings*, *The Voice of the Night Masquerade* and *The Chants of a Minstrel*. His major acclaim was for his authoritative biography, *Chinua Achebe: A Biography*. At different times, he won the BBC poetry prize, the Orphic Lute Poetry prize, ANA/Cadbury Prize, the Friedrich Wilhelm Bessel Prize and was a joint winner of the prestigious Nigerian Liquefied Natural Gas Prize for Nigerian Literature (Poetry) in 2005. He taught in many universities across Nigeria, the United States of America and Europe. Ezenwa-Ohaeto passed away on 25th October 2005 of cancer of the liver in Cambridge.

Gabriel B. I. Agema is an I.T consultant as well as youth development enthusiast. He was exposed to books at a very tender age and started writing as a child. He writes across the genres and once upon a time, drew comics. Gabriel believes that writing and literature should be as less academic and more entertaining/engaging as possible. Gabriel is an advocate of teen authorship campaigns and has supported several young writers in finding a voice.

g' ebinyō ogbowei was born in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, a native of Amatolo in the Southern Ijaw Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. Since 1978, his poems have appeared a various times in *Idoto*, *Matutu*, *PRISM International*, *ARIEL*, *Black Literature Forum*, *Okike*, *Liwuram* and *DRUM VOICES Revue*. He has five collections of poetry to his credit including *let the river run*, *the towncrier's song*, *the heedless ballot box*, *song of a river* and *marsh boy and other poems*. He has been on the Nigerian Liquefied Natural Gas (NLNG) Prize for Nigerian Literature (Poetry)

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Jude Idada has worked extensively in the film and theatre industry as a Director, Producer, Writer and Actor. The Theatre Arts graduate of the University of Ibadan has won the best screenplay award at the African Movie Academy Awards for his multi-award winning film "The Tenant." and the Goethe Institut Afrika Projekt. A finalist in the New Directions Filmmakers of the future project by MNET, he was selected for the Toronto International Film Festival's ADAPT THIS! Project. Amongst others, his play "COMA" which he adapted for screen is currently in production. Jude Idada's *Oduduwa: King of the Edos* won the Association of Nigerian Authors'

Prize for Drama (2013) and was longlisted for the 2014 NLNG Prize. Jude looks forward to being a creative agent of change.

'Kufre Ekanem (Abasikufre Ekanem) is a broad spectrum Marketing and PR practitioner, a Corporate Culture advocate and a Board games enthusiast with expertise across several industries. 'Kufre's experiences have spanned teaching, insurance, journalism, theatre, printing, advertising, brand management and consulting over two decades. He is the author of *The Ant Eaters* (Ibadan: Kraftgriots, 2010). He lives in Lagos, Nigeria with his wife and daughter.

Kukogho Iruesi Samson was born in Aiyetoro, Ile-Ife in 1984. He won the Orange Crush Prize for Poetry 2012 and was named as Number 1 in EGC's Top 50 Nigerian Contemporary Poets in 2013. Kukogho is the curator of the online poetry group, Word Rhymes and Rhythm that boasts a great followership of over five thousand members. He is also the author of the poetry collection, *What can words do?* He currently works and lives in Lagos State, Nigeria.

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Rikimaru Tenchu is a poet writer, lyricist and social commentator who lends his words to every social activity that promotes progressive change. Rikimaru believes that writing is the key to driving and maintaining social change. He also believes the pen is mightier than the sword. Some of his published works include: 'When you are 58, don't go to Abuja' (short story), 'I'm a Nigerian not a terrorist' (short story), *Songs of Living Freedom* (poetry collection), 'Moses', (short story). He is currently working on his Novel, 'Crash Course in Landing' and an insightful collection of poems, 'Nativity'. He lives in Lagos, Nigeria.

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Sam Ogabidu is a chemist, poet and short story writer. He is a past Chairman of the Association of Nigerian Authors (Benue State Chapter). He has edited different compilations of poetry and been Editor-in-Chief of some magazines. He currently works as a Speech Writer to the Benue State Governor. He lives in Makurdi.

Samuel Terseer Baki is a multi-talented artiste. He works with the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps in Makurdi, Benue state. He is a lover of rhyme and rhythm in poetry. Between 2003 to 2006, he worked with Delphia Kiddies Land, a Nursery/Primary and secondary school where he wrote poems that won top prizes at the Annual Children's Day Celebrations Poetry Competition for Primary Schools within the Federal Capital Territory in Nigeria. Baki's has a published collection of poetry, *Euphoria of Sophistry* (SEVHAGE, 2015). He can be reached at samagebaki@yahoo.com.

Sever R. Ayede is a videographer, amateur song writer, and avid fan of all things both human and observable, whether conventionally ugly or beautiful. He is also a habitual *meditator* of such pointless questions as "Why did the first person who ate a chickens egg do so?... After all, he had just seen the strange object squeezed out of a chickens unmentionables" among others.

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Sewuese Leah Anyo is the immediate past President of the student writer organization, Writers' League. She is a graduate of English at the Benue State University, Makurdi. She has a passion for writing, literature and connecting with writers. She is currently an intern with SEVHAGE, a publishing imprint in Makurdi, Benue State. Sewuese is also on the editorial team of SEVHAGE Reviews (<http://sevhagereviews.wordpress.com>), a site dedicated to African Literary Views, Reviews and Writer Interviews.

Shittu Forowa was born on the Lagos Island. He finds relief in reading and weaving his thoughts around words. He lives an ordinary life on the outside, but a hundred different ones in his mind; the lives of a hundred characters, dozens of scenes, rebels, hunters, lovers and activists. He currently resides in Kaduna where he works as an IT Specialist. He can be reached on: shittufowora@yahoo.com

Sibbyllina Onyeocha L. A also goes by the pseudonym **Sibbyl Whyte**. She is a graduate of Psychology with a deep interest in literature and modelling. She has been published widely online and is one of the top writers on Naija Stories (<http://naijastories.com/author/sibbylwhyte>).

Stephen Crown Gyet writes poems and is also a songwriter. He is yet to publish a solo collection but aspires to do so. He believes that poetry is all about life and something with which the world can be positively imparted. Stephen lives and studies in Kaduna state.

Sunday Akonni Moshood is an aspiring poet who lives in Lagos, Nigeria. Sunday writes across the genres and has his eyes on being one of the top names in the literary sector in the nearest future.

Su'eddie Vershima Agema is a poet and fiction writer. His collection, *Home Equals Holes: Tales one shouldn't tell* was joint prize winner of the 2014 Association of Nigerian Authors' Prize for Poetry. His poem, 'Tales one shouldn't tell often' was shortlisted for the Saraba/PEN Nigeria Poetry Prize 2013. Su'eddie was included in EGC's Top 50 Nigerian Contemporary Poets in 2013 and 2014. Su'eddie's personal blog is <http://sueddie.wordpress.com>. He also blogs at <http://sevhagereviews.wordpress.com>, <http://naijastories.com/author/sueddie> @sueddieagema on Twitter.

Terhemba Wuam works with the Ibrahim Babangida University, Lapai, Niger State. He is also a board member of Aboki Publishers, Makurdi. He has written several scholarly articles as well as edited different literary and academic collections/journals. Dr. Wuam is a one-time Chairman of the Association of Nigerian Authors (Benue State Chapter) and has also being a convener to several symposiums on arts, literature and history.

Tersoo Ayede is a Law undergraduate at the Benue State University, Makurdi. He works with SEVHAGE, a publishing imprint in Makurdi, Benue State as an Administrative Officer.

Terver Chieshe works with the Benue State government. He is the author of two full length poetry collections and two slim poetry collections for children. Dr. Chieshe sings and is a believer in the use of literature for instruction of youths and positive change in society.

Theophilus Aôndover Kaan is a Benue born poet who explores various themes through the medium of verse. He is a lecturer with the English Department of the Federal University of Technology, Dutsinma, Katsina.

Tubal Rabbi Cain has written a collection of poetry, *Mysteries in our streams* (winner of the Association of Nigerian Authors Prize for Poetry 2006), a novel *The Damascus Diary*, two collections of short stories, *The Raffia String* and *Dandaula* (shortlisted for the Association of Nigerian Authors Prize for Prose and Long listed for the Frank O'Connor short story Prize). A trained Engineer, he has a passion for writing which he continues to explore every day.

Ubonabasi Ime Ekpo writes poems of deep expressions with support from other arts like drawings. Ubonabasi lives in Lagos.

Unoma Nguemo Azuah is a multiple award winning poet, novelist and literary scholar. She teaches at Lane College, Tennessee. She is a crusader for gender and human rights in every ramification. She has been widely published online and in print and is considered an important voice of the third generation of Nigerian poets.

Uthman Adejumo lives in Ibadan. He was born on March 12, 1995. He is currently a student of the University of Ibadan, Ibadan. He sees poetry as a part of himself, as a way to express the endless sea of his mind, as a medium to yearn for the agitations of his people. Uthman is also a student activist and songwriter. He also goes by the pseudonym Grivist (a name gotten from blending 'Griot' and 'Activist')

Val Chibueze's writings are inspired by life. He can be reached at val.chibueze@yahoo.com.

Victor Olugbemiro is a graduate of Sociology from Bowen University. He currently shuffles his time between teaching children in an elementary school in Lagos, Nigeria, writing and finding a way to inspire others.

Yakori Mohammed is primarily a poet before anything else. She doesn't consider herself among the masters but she does give it her all. Yakori is an art enthusiast whose themes in writing as well as appreciation revolve around nature, life, love and melancholy.

Yemi Omerah is a fun loving mother, crazy zany soul and social hermit. Yemi loves a good laugh and is always ready to create one. She doesn't believe she is a writer but her friends think otherwise. She blogs at <https://oluwaballer.wordpress.com/>

Zika Olofin is a lover of letters, whose "addiction" to numbers (accounting) has consistently seen her in and out of "rehab." Her love for letters keeps getting the upper hand though, thankfully. She writes poems about life and the business of living. While not being a social reformer, she writes poetry that addresses those social issues that often get little attention. She blogs at zikaolofin.wordpress.com

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

IT HAS been really great working on this project. The final product has made every other thing seem like child's play. This has been due to the joys of working together while compiling this work and the rigours of editing, re-editing, fighting with some poets over lines to be reworked and all. The editorial team would love to thank the editorial assistants, Simon Lanshima, Sewuese Leah Anyo and Nater Frederick Akorigyah for the work done. Thank you. We are grateful to G' Ebinyo Ogbowei for his inputs too.

Thanks to all the poets who responded to the call for this collection after the floods of 2012. The collection grew to encompass far more than just the single story of that flood. To all of these poets who kept faith with us as we crossed set timelines, we are grateful. Some poets withdrew their poems due to disillusion with the project and the extension of our publishing deadline. To all of them, we proffer our deepest apologies and hope that in the future, we can agree once more on different projects. We got permission from several authors and publishers to feature their poems in this collection. After editorial meetings and debates, not all of the poems could make this anthology, as was the case with a minute number of submissions sent in. We thank every single author, editor and publisher that gave us permission to reproduce their work here. For those who we couldn't contact due to one situation or the other, we offer our apologies and would be glad to make contact as soon as is feasible. We have ensured that every single poem gotten from a book is fully referenced and cited. This is to give every due acknowledgment to the efforts of the writers and publishers.

We are grateful to SEVHAGE Literary and Development Initiative for the idea that birthed this project and for the collaboration with the SEVHAGE Imprint of Vershage Enterprises that has produced this. To the various writing bodies that supported the project through encouragements and publicity, including the Abuja Writers' Forum (AWF), Abuja Literary Society (ALS), Association of Nigerian Authors (in particular the Abuja and Benue branches), Purple Silver, Naija Stories, ARTMOSPHERE, WriteHouse and others unmentioned; thank you very much for your help. It made the work lighter. Thanks to Mrs. Elizabeth N. Jeiyol and the Gender and Environmental Risk Reduction Initiative (GERI) for remaining partners of the environment and development in general.

Hon. Omadachi Oklobia was supportive through the whole journey and to him, we give our unreserved thanks. The Nigerian Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) does its best in every emergency and the 2012 floods showed them doing what they could. We ask that they do more. There might be a few issues we groan about but in all, you deserve our appreciation. Thank you. To all the men and women who put themselves out to support those affected by floods, we can only say 'Well done. May the Almighty reward your every effort'.

To our families and loved ones who have stood by us, through the times even as we worked without sense, committing time we should have spent with you fully, we are deeply grateful in ways words can't express. There might be more of such projects in the future and we might still have to beg you to understand but know; you would always be first on our heart's list, the first note of our every song.

To everyone else; readers, critics, friends and all, we have done our jobs. The child is born, the song is sung. It is time for your dance. Ensure that you keep a promise and make life worth it.

ABOUT THE SEVHAGE FLOOD PROJECTS

In the wake of the 2012 floods in Nigeria and noting the growing phenomenon of floods and other nature related disasters in the world, SEVHAGE Literary and Development Initiative made a call for poems and short stories themed around flood. The collections were meant to document a response from writers on their views of floods in general in two aspects – poetry and prose. The first was done because sometimes the depth of certain experiences can be captured in elegant verse while the story collection was done for those who do not really have a good comprehension of poetry. The collections grew to be more encompassing than just water. The two projects were done simultaneously with a group of editors inaugurated to work on both. Professor Hyginus Ekwuazi led a group of six editors who compiled and edited the poetry collection while Su’eddie Vershima Agema was the editor for the short story collection.



ABOUT SEVHAGE LITERARY AND DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

SEVHAGE Literary and Development Initiative is a charity officially registered in Nigeria on February 13th, 2013. Its objectives include literary promotion, education, to advance social development and to create awareness about social, cultural and gender rights and explore strategies for securing its realization.

To date, the organisation has coordinated and initiated events from writer readings of such authors as Unoma Azuah, Musa Idris Okpanachi and Chuma Nwokolo to a full literary celebration of the 100 year anniversary of Nigeria titled ‘100 Years and a Day’. It also held its inaugural Literary Festival in 2015.

SEVHAGE is headed by a board of Directors chaired by Mrs. Margaret Aul-Mku. Some of the other directors include Dr. Maria Ajima, Professor Hyginus Ekwuazi, Ms. Mimidoo Achakpa, Barrister Tavershima Ayede and Engr. Michael Umanah. SEVHAGE’s current administrative head is the Executive Director and team leader, Su’eddie Vershima Agema.

SEVHAGE is a sister organisation of the SEVHAGE imprint of VERSHAGE Enterprises.

ABOUT THE EDITORS

Hyginus Ekwuazi is a multiple award-winning poet, playwright and novelist. He has five poetry collections, a couple of plays, screenplays, a novel *I've miles to walk before I sleep*, and countless academic papers. Some of his poetry awards include the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA)/Cadbury Prize for Poetry (2007 and 2008), ANA/NDDC-Gabriel Okara Prize for Poetry (2007 and 2010). He is a literary connoisseur and one of the leading contemporary Nigerian voices of poetry. Professor Ekwuazi teaches Media Arts at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. In addition to this, he is a trustee of SEVHAGE Literary and Development Initiative (a registered charity in Nigeria). He lives in Ibadan with his family, pets and a host of travelling friends.

Tubal Rabbi Cain has to his credit published works including a collection of poetry, *Mysteries in our streams* (winner of the Association of Nigerian Authors Prize for Poetry 2006), a novel *The Damascus Diary*, two collections of short stories, *The Raffia String* and *Dandaula* (shortlisted for the Association of Nigerian Authors Prize for Prose and Long listed for the Frank O'Connor short story Prize). A trained Engineer, Tubal has a passion for writing which he continues to explore every day.

Su'eddie Vershima Agema is the author of three poetry collections including *Home Equals Holes: Tale of an Exile* (Joint Prize Winner, Association of Nigerian Authors Prize for Poetry 2014); *Bring our casket home: Tales one shouldn't tell* (longlisted for the Association of Nigerian Authors Poetry Prize 2013) and a short story collection, *The Bottom of another Tale*. His poem, 'Tales one shouldn't tell often' was shortlisted for the Saraba/PEN Nigeria Poetry Prize 2013. Su'eddie was included in EGC's Top 50 Nigerian Contemporary Poets in 2013, 2014 and 2015. He is the Chairman of the Association of Nigerian Authors (Benue State Chapter), as well as Editor and Executive Officer at SEVHAGE. Su'eddie's personal blog is <http://sueddie.wordpress.com> and [@sueddieagema](http://sevhagereviews.wordpress.com) on Twitter.

Debbie Iorliam is a graduate of English from the Benue State University, Makurdi. The award winning poet currently works as an Editor with SEVHAGE, a publishing imprint in Makurdi, Benue State. Debbie is also on the editorial team of SEVHAGE Reviews (<http://sevhagereviews.wordpress.com>), a site dedicated to African Literary Views, Reviews and Writer Interviews.

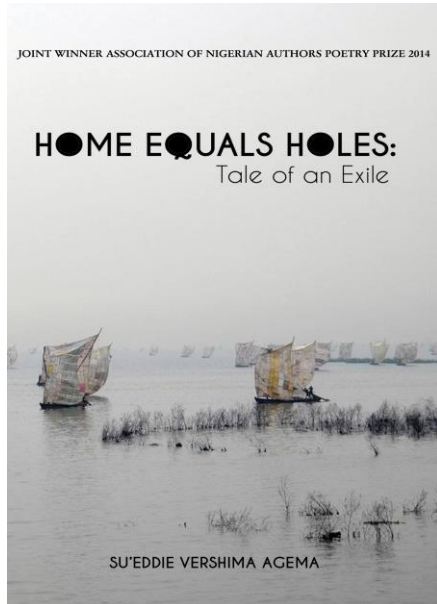
Maik Ortserga is an Executive Editor with Dalila and Bahiti Publishers, Lagos as well as the Secretary of the Association of Nigerian Authors (Benue State Chapter). He recently defended his thesis, 'A Cognitive Interpretation of the Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel, Measuring Time and Oil on Water*' for a Masters in Literature from the Benue State University, Makurdi.

Servio Gbadamosi lives in Ibadan, Nigeria. He works with emerging writers across the country providing multiple development and promotional platforms. His works have appeared online as well as in newspapers and anthologies. He won the 2015 Association of Nigerian Authors Prize for Poetry with his poetry collection, *A Tributary in Servitude*. He can be reached online at <http://twitter.com/betaservio> and <http://facebook.com/betaservio>.

OTHER TITLES FROM SEVHAGE PUBLISHERS...

(For orders and/or inquiries, send a mail to sevhage@gmail.com)

HOME EQUALS HOLES: TALE OF AN EXILE (POETRY)



First Published: 2014

Joint Winner, Association of Nigerian Authors Prize for Poetry 2014

Whether from our heart's home, lasting or lost love, wrecking work or weather... Somehow, every one of us is an exile. This collection encloses in verse the tale of our journey; an interaction with life, hearts, home and holes. Come on home; it only gets better.

“Agema’s *Home Equal Holes: Tales of an Exile* is a product of an aesthetic that renders private anxiety in a coherent, sustained metaphor that does not shy from interrogating the public. With its intriguing marriage of private and public images, and a subtle leaning towards orality, the collection appears versatile and protean, seeking, with an acute sense of commitment, answers to everyday questions that confront very many people living in the condition of abuse and privation in contemporary Nigeria.”

- Panel of Judges, Association of Nigerian Authors Prize for Poetry 2014

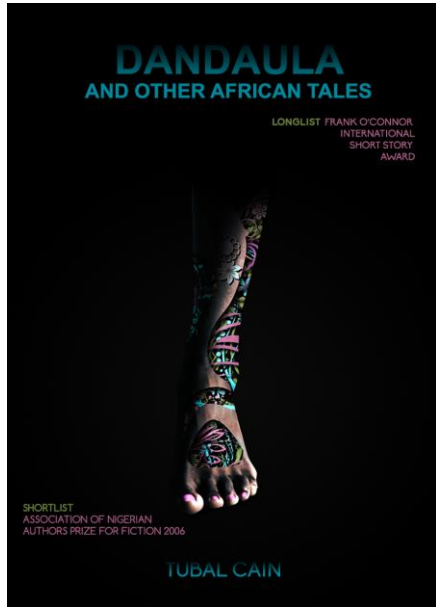
“Su’eddie’s poetry is preciously profound. There aren’t many poets of this generation whose art possess such depth of themes; such sophistication of diction.”

- Reward Nsirim, author of *Fresh Air and other stories*

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(For orders and/or inquiries, send a mail to sevhage@gmail.com)

DANDAULA AND OTHER AFRICAN TALES (SHORT STORIES)



SEVHAGE Edition First Published 2014

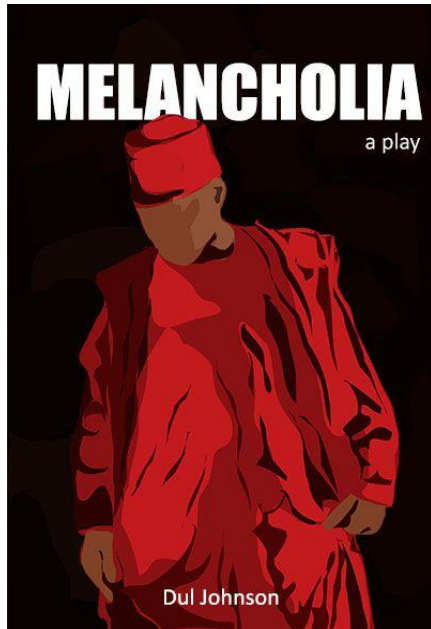
Shortlisted for the Association of Nigerian Authors Prize for Fiction 2006 and Longlisted for the Frank O'Connor International Short Story Award.

Dandaula and other African tales is the second collection of African tales from poetic maestro and award winning poet, the Nigerian Tubal Rabbi Cain. In 12 strongly themed stories, readers are transported to lands and experiences that show the full impact of literature: entertainment and education.

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(For orders and/or inquiries, send a mail to sevhage@gmail.com)

MELANCHOLIA (PLAY)



First Published: 2014

Shortlisted for the Association of Nigerian Authors Prize for Drama 2014

Melancholia (a play) is a satire on the leadership ambitions of many people in Africa. It lampoons the ugly beauty of the madness that is called politics. The play spiced with a huge dose of humour would leave several readers deep in thought while thoroughly enjoying themselves.

A truly entertaining piece that truly shows the Nigerian and African political scape with humour to leave all laughing at the charade that is our politics.

- Su'eddie Vershima Agema, award winning poet and author, *Home Equals Holes: Tale of an Exile*.

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THE BOTTOM OF ANOTHER TALE (SHORT STORIES)



First Published: 2014

Shortlisted for the Association of Nigerian Authors Prize for Fiction 2014

The Bottom of another Tale is a collection of 26 captivating short stories that capture different aspects to contemporary African life in simple but beautiful language that would leave a lasting impression on even the most casual of readers.

Dense thoughts, dense happenings, linkages and intertextuality; a writer's attempt to tread the thin line between dreams and reality...a daring attempt, an ingenious departure from the norm.

- Maria Ajima, *literary scholar and award winning writer.*

...delivered with a candour that reminds us of the brutality of reality and the arbitrariness of existence, bringing to fore Agema's keen sense of observation as an emergent voice on Nigeria's literary landscape.

- Abubakar Adam Ibrahim, *award winning short story writer and Caine Prize 2013 Shortlist.*

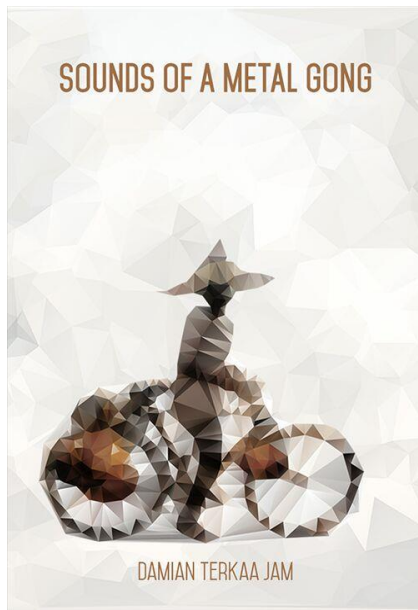
The Bottom of another Tale is a rare blend of legends and maxims...Engaging, the tales are short, crisp and pregnant, with diverse messages.

- Tubal Rabbi Cain, *multiple award winning poet.*

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(For orders and/or inquiries, send a mail to sevhage@gmail.com)

SOUNDS OF A METAL GONG (POETRY)



First Published: 2014

Shortlisted for Association of Nigerian Authors Prize for Poetry 2014

Sounds of a Metal Gong explores various societal and philosophical issues in short crisp verse. It is an open commentary on life, existence and challenges as seen through the eyes of a poet.

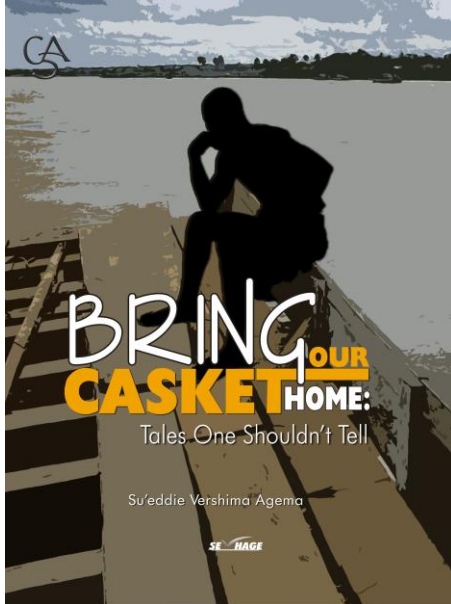
...[These poems] are didactic and thoughtful, emulating the style of the stories, proverbs, maxims and pithy sayings told in the past by firesides or during the moonshine with lessons to be transmitted to the young generation.

- Maria Ajima, *literary scholar and award winning writer.*

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(For orders and/or inquiries, send a mail to sevhage@gmail.com)

BRING OUR CASKET HOME: TALES ONE SHOULDN'T TELL (POETRY)



First Published: 2012

Shortlisted for the Saraba/PEN Nigeria Poetry Prize 2013 (for the poem, 'Tales one shouldn't tell often');
Longlisted for Association of Nigerian Authors Prize for Poetry 2013

A collection of unforgettable poems that tackle life, beauty, romance, death and the entirety of existence in refreshing verse that would stay with one for a long time.

"One of the most eloquent, passionate and imaginative collection of poems I have read in a while. An all encompassing and thought provoking collection, the sort of dose we need at times like this. A reminder that the artist is still the sensitive point of the society" – Odachi Elizabeth Onogwu, *Literary Scholar and critic*

"Su'eddie's poetry is full of silence; of words/sounds that combine with silence to create a dense accretion of images...: it creates a gyre which widens and widens until it covers the entire surface of the pond" – Hyginus Ekwuazi, *Multiple award winning poet and literary critic*

"Su'eddie's poems like songs serenade the core of anguish and at the same time tease the ease of our most mellow moments. With the poise of a minstrel Su'eddie draws us into the strings of his messages with rhythms that transcend caskets and losses. His is a rare talent" – Unoma Azuah, *Multiple award winning writer and scholar*