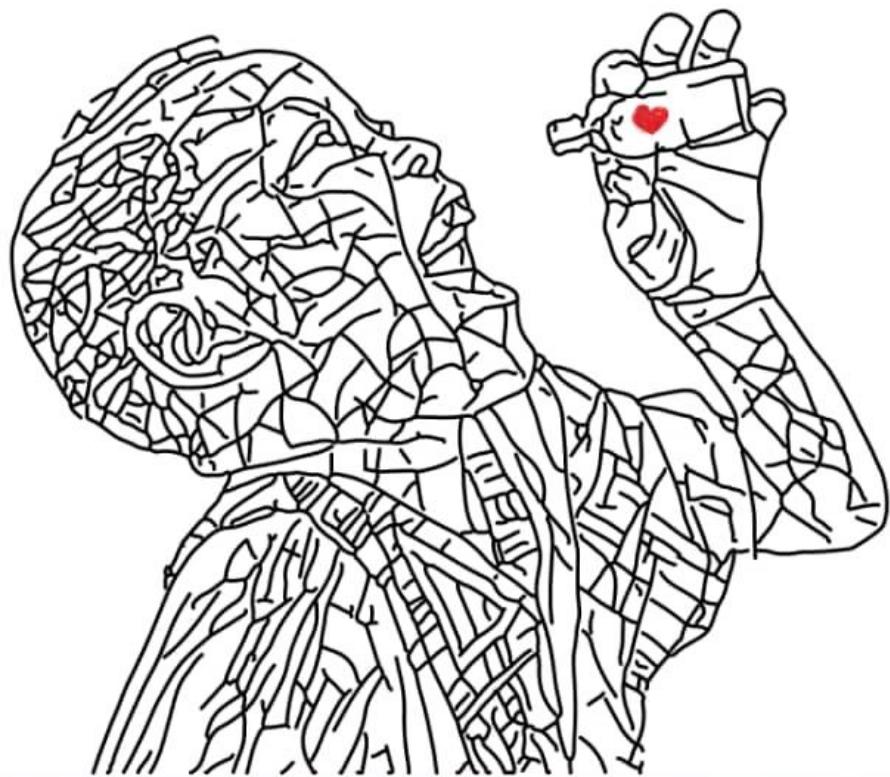


INKSPIRED POETRY ANTHOLOGY 2020



HOW TO FALL IN LOVE

COMPILED + EDITED BY

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WISDOM NEMI OTIKOR

TUKUR LOBA RIDWAN

HOW TO FALL IN LOVE

Poems

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Compiled & Edited

by

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*And think not you can direct the
course of love,
For love, if it finds you worthy,
directs your course.*

—Khalil Gibran

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FOREWORD

by

Pamilerin Jacob



Desire is the earliest cliché, yet, inescapable, and to be human is to be subject to its machinations, to be its instrument. Though all great poets spend their lives arguing otherwise in craft talks. Nonetheless, as always with all things human, the most important aspects of our living—the pith of it—remain mysterious, unapproachable. *We are not wise*, Mary Oliver once remarked, *and not very often kind*. While it is true that, as a species, we are brilliant in many regards, proven by footprints on the moon—we are however, in matters of the heart, innately defunct. At least, according to most philosophies and theologies.

Worse is the inability to expound the soft mutterings of the heart. A person in love is a prisoner of bewilderment. We all can feel love's throbbing, but succinct expression is (or seems to be) the domain of the poet. This was Emerson's position. A claim that shines all the more in matters such as this. Love is my favourite argument, and I suspect, every poet's. We are, after all, acolytes of the inexplicable.

No surprise then, this attempt by the poets in this anthology to elucidate that communal experience. Curated by **Jide Badmus**, a poet known for his poetics of sensual delight, the poems tumble through the liminal with unwavering precision. Poem after poem, the reader is invited to realise, as **UcheNduka** declares in the first poem:

Every season is a season of love.
[The Blurry Boat]

And as the poet, **Maxwell Opia-Enwemuche**, too says:

there's love everywhere like fresh air
[*expedition*]

Every season—sorrowful, joyful—points to love as undergrowth, love as an omnipresent marker of life's adventures: we grieve because we have lost a beloved thing, and we rejoice to the beloved's glorying. All too important, love's reach, that another poet, **OyindamolaShoola** writes:

If the choice was between my heartbeat and you,
What's the point of my life?
[*You asked if I will choose you...*]

The poets posit, there is no point being here without having held another's hand: *Or was it the evening you held my hand / on a long bus ride?* [Dara, **Derek OsazuwaEhiorobo**]. No point being here without being part of a thing: *a part of you is joined to the body of your lover. you grow together and your souls, her body and your body harmonise like a triad.* [How to fall in love, **IjeomaNtada**]. All these are truths the culture of the day tries to squash with its individualistic puffing. But the cliché of our living is simple, powerful, resonant: we desire to be desired.

//

...without you there's a hole in my soul
[Dear Ife: A Plea for Love, **OjoTaiye**]

In her essay, Anne Carson, says of Eros: *If we follow the trajectory of eros we consistently find it tracing out this same route: it moves out from the lover toward the beloved, then ricochets back to the lover himself and the hole in him, unnoticed before. Who is the real subject of most love poems? Not the beloved. It is that hole.*

Call this idealism, but without love, our end would be ridicule. We have a responsibility to be erotic: to submit to love that engulfs, love that animates. We must beg to be a part of that revival and sanctification. We must renew

our hearts, else, the hole within to which we pay allegiance, will widen unto extinction.

//

The anthology is equally remarkable for the diversity of thought, some, diametric to the reader's. The spectrum is wide, accommodating. By this, I mean, love is redefined over and over. Consider these excerpts:

*I wish love were like a hallowed ground,
but love is a destitute place: home to scavengers
searching for lost bits of precious things
like laughter, like portraits on walls now fallen.*
[How to fall in love, **Oni Tomiwa**]

—
*It's true love begins with mosaic of smiles
And sometimes ends with an unbending grief
Still, love is never guilty. It's never guilty.*
[Love is Never Guilty, **Ifenaike Michael Ayomipo**]

I am reminded, here, of the synoptic gospels, and how life is itself a long road of repeated syncretism. Both narratives of love above hold potency to renew the heart, various hearts. Remember love, like all things essential, defies the stricture of singular definitions. These poets, in invoking the unutterable, are unravelling a pathway to better traverse our inner lives. *I'm not going cry all the time*, as Frank O' Hara did confess, *nor shall I laugh all the time, / I don't prefer one "strain" to another.*

This multi-faceted nature of love gets all the more confounding when one considers the methodology of affection. How does love happen—two strangers (or more) suddenly afflicted with a need to care for the other? Thankfully, the anthology is rife with endless insinuations:

*Love comes when invisible nature begins to
make its sense to you;
and you no longer hide that*

part of yourself

you hated in the mornings.

[*Love Does Not Come in the Morning, FavourChukwuemeka*]

The right way

To fall in love is

To fall into it like you

Fall into every natural

Space moulded by

God Himself

[*How to Fall in Love, SheuJamiu*]

Pray a little, or send a wordless wish that love finds you

[*How to Fall in Love, AvraKouffman*]

Each poet seems convinced about their *how*, and I suppose herein lies the beauty. Each reader with their internal metronome will respond adequately to whichever method feels like a mirror. Art implicates us, after all. And poems, I have come to learn, are fingers reaching for the roots.

//

To avoid the risk of reviewing the whole anthology in its foreword, I must at this point alight, with a powerful enchantment from **Annmarie Mcqueen** within the same volume: ...*there are still bright things living inside me.*

This anthology being proof of that, and more.

Pamilerin Jacob

Sango-Ota,

Jan 2021

UCHE NDUKA

The Blurry Boat

And fishes write to you
with concern
about the coming gala.

Each petal forgets
the constance
of our merging tongues.

The wine drinks the glass.
Turn toward the blurry boat.
Lip-reading is not enough.

Every season is a season of love.



Grove

across the bight:
word and its sling

doorway into jackfruit:
regardless of love's duration

as we surf inside lotus:
guidance of steppingstones

shady grove of raw brown:
a poem waits for the word
a reader will add

across the water:
expand the available map



OYINDAMOLA SHOOLA

You asked if I will choose you...

And I couldn't help but sink in the memories
Of all the times I forgot myself just to be yours.

I can't measure the length I have come of myself
But by loving you,
I have given up my all.

You asked if I will choose you.
If the choice was between heaven and you,
You'd still be my first.

If the choice was between my heartbeat and you,
What's the point of my life?

I'll choose you.
Even if there is something greater,
Even if there is something better,
Even if it means I'll lose myself,
I'll choose you.



OJO TAIYE

Radii of love

for Victoria Hussein

begin with oaths and write the name
of a beloved on the palms of a year gone by

you breathe—a testament of a closed
window that must be opened

you breathe again to wake
the angels living in your chest

that love is an incense with closed eyes—
a sunflower courting the sky for a drop of water

you pour your ribs out and walk on ledgers
to a place where dreams—a sumptuous dish
feeds you sweet peace



Dear Ife: A Plea for Love

the horizon like a crumpled apology
is catching fire again

Ife,
i smell like your breath
most nights & when the lights
go off i become wet

Ife,
i want to write you a poem
you'll like so much

in the opening line: my hand is a field
growing towards you
there is eternity in your eyes
don't forget about me

Ife
i want to write you a poem
that blossoms without *thorns*
in painted lips
you are the book of psalms
i repeat
in my sleep

in my corner i listen to you--
sermon of fire
me--
a hymnal of
matchsticks



Ife

i want to write about your shadow
& footsteps & how they echo
in the back alley of my skull

you are a brief meditation

on a short story

[let me] butterfly stroke for you in the
worst way

this heat makes me want to

touch things that are not mine

pretty jukebox

without you there's a hole in my soul



AREMU ADAMS ADEBISI

Firefly

The night the firefly revealed her head
above the green frosty grass, we were out alone
on an empty field, our arms connected in pure warmth,
our hearts filled with wind and chatters.

We were out, touched by the hands of moon glows,
the singsong of birds, and the gentle heaves of the breeze.
We broke silence into calligraphies
written on our faces, and we wished upon
the firefly, intermitting radiance on our palms,
a long night of bliss and togetherness.

We listened
to the slaps of distant waves and joked about
the ducks, bearing down upon the beach,
their webbed legs wrinkled into shapes,
grief scribbled on sand with their feet,
and waves eating raptly at them again and again.

The other night the firefly
revealed her head above the green frosty grass,
I was there picking sound and silence,
smoking words into the ears of solitude.

The moon rose in the sky, its light spread
over the field and came to me,
tapping on my shoulders,



tapping to no avail.

The wind is familiar with the origin of heartbreaks,
so I drew in a heavy atmosphere,
watched the stars grimace in bland colours,
the firefly dazzled in its radiance and drove upon my palm.

I touched her colourful wings
to fill my chest with light, and she beckoned to me,
far beyond the field, far beyond the woods, landing on the beach
and I watched with joy how the ducks
scribble their grief into sand, and how waves
eat raptly at them again and again.



IJEOMA NTADA

How to fall in love

to fall in love, you must first culture a fraction of yourself in a petri-dish of vulnerabilities.

then, you hold a requiem for the memories of the lover that never stayed.

to be in this haven, you must know what *budding* means.

a part of you is joined to the body of your lover. you grow together and your souls, her body and your body harmonise like a triad.

to fall in love, you must first learn the language of your lover's soul and the loud echoes of her silence. love is the fluctuating weather. some days it pours without thunder first announcing its arrival. on other days, it threatens you with the strongest bells of thunder but never rains.

your lover too is like the weather. uncertain and quavering. this is why you must learn the language of your lover's soul that even in her silence, you hear her words.

to fall in love is to come undone. undress your wounds. show your scars—the trophies of your fallings and risings. show the charm embedded in the layers of your flesh. to fall in love is to gaze into the eyes of a stranger and let her take control of your cultured self in a petri-dish of vulnerabilities.



DEREK OSAZUWA EHIOROBO

Dara

I am a pilgrim in this place of yearning.
I have never felt hunger
this strong. I am slowly learning
what it feels like to burn.

I became your prisoner
one windless day—you tried to teach me
to draw, stained my fingers with blue
paint.

Or was it the evening you held my hand
on a long bus ride?—your eyes were brown,
they've always been brown—
we went through a sequence of streetlights,
& I saw you

Dara, I am crumbling. My body
has become a house haunted—open my chest,
& you'd find I have folded all our conversations
into ghosts.

See how you've held me
hostage, how I roll out poems
like prayer rugs, & pluck scriptures
from your name.

See me falling, light as the coloured feathers



you like to fix in your hair. See me breaking, lost
in this space between heartbeats.



I knew I loved you then

You sat beside me that night on a park bench, breathing
the cold harmattan air—& I was burning. Your hand brushed
against mine, sent flames crawling
through my veins.

I knew I loved you then.

We walked on a street that smelled like algae &
rotten fruit. You made a comment about clogged gutters—&
a poem sat in my throat. You leaned on
my shoulder a little, your hair—
a river of vanilla—
forced dryness into my mouth.

I knew I loved you then.

This is a poem about learning
to unravel. I watched you string stars
into a necklace, felt
myself crumble.

& I wiped sweat off my palms while you shivered
beside me, swallowed by a sweater with arms
that were a bit too long.

I knew I loved you then.



OPUKIRI IRRRA

Ateli

I see you,
When you are not here.
In the sun as she smiles,
Brightly, but not as bright as you.

I feel you,
When you are not here.
In the wind as she blows,
Soothingly, but not as soothing as you.

I touch you,
When you are not here.
Fingers intertwined,
Skin, sweat drenched
As we lay underneath the covers,
Walled by the memoirs of my mind.

I miss you,
Cause you are not here.
Dressed in blue solitude
I stroll through memories.
Lost in the bends of your waist,
Finding my way in the curves of your smile.

To hold you,
Would be to hold water, to hold life itself.
You are so God has to be.
Dearest, brightest,
Even your shadow illuminates my soul.



My world, my life, my own.

I love you,
Even when you are not here.
Spawn of my dreams
Your smile scorns the world's blame.
Your gasps hush its rage.

I need you,
Here.



Content

In a world where trees touch the sky
And roots spread deep into the ground

Would you be okay
With my little patch of soil

Like a flower
Proudly blooming from the vase

Would you submit the roots of your desires
To my confined means

Would you be content
With my own portion of earth



ANNMARIE MCQUEEN

Bright Things

Tell me the story of how we got here

from a distant October where we met over
old English translations, finding new words in ancient ones

from the folklore of a gingerbread town I grew to love
and a crumbling flat that smelled of chai

from a year where we lived in different cities but each month
you came, and it felt like a surrender and a blessing

to another flat, one we claimed for our own this time
a place which even now folds itself into me, fills the craters

that have grown over these years until I am brimming with it
and even though I've never liked the bittersweet aftertaste

our history is one that I will tell myself over and over again
to remember that there are still bright things living inside me.



Things to hold on to

Imagine if
our love story was not already told
by men the world has forgotten
and we were not a secret to be kept
or a skeleton to be buried

Imagine if
we were more than teeth and bone
and there were futures where we could
twine our lives together
into patchwork tapestries of gold

Imagine if
we could be rewritten
and the world could grow soft
they call us unnatural but you are
the one thing that's always
come naturally to me.



SIMON FAVOUR

Teach Me How to Love

What do you say to her on the coldest nights?
Rest on my shoulder, lay on my laps or let's dig the shovel in?

How do you love someone who is loved by another?
Pretend it's all good or gun down the rival?

How do you say hello when she barely listens?
Scream on a mic or blow some powder?

Teach me how to love.
Teach me how to play this love game.

Maybe if you teach me,
Just maybe, this would be my last sad poem.



AVRA KOUFFMAN

How to Fall in Love

1. Look at him
2. Look away from him
3. Look past him
4. Look down at your work
5. Hear his voice
6. Look at him again
7. Feel a reckoning between your eyes and his
8. Know you are assessing each other
9. And you may have met a contender
10. Look down at your work again
11. Muse and wonder
12. Repeat with variations
13. Feel your heart rise and fall with each in-breath and out-breath
14. Pray a little, or send a wordless wish that love finds you
15. Sometimes, that's all you need to do



MARTINS DEEP

recipes for making love potion

(a) let lake katwe beneath your eyes mirror:
i. dahlias sprouting through
 the masks over your scars;
ii. the wreath you've woven
 for your earthen bed untangling itself;
iii. the noose dangling behind you.
 swirl into the lasso with a loop that
misses fireflies to catch stars.

(b) boy/girl, in this exhibition, you must know
 some works of art are mosaics.

also, that the beauty of song relies on harmony,
and harmony on pieces.
this is music; pieces formed into all the musical instruments,
in an orchestra, and all the fragile fingers that bleed rhythms.

in your dream, there will be two hands
wringing your drenched pillow into a goblet.
it is philtre from your spirit to your soul.
you must drink, him/her.



MIRACLE QUIST

The Way to a Prophetess' Heart

look into her eyes. find a way to have
her face in your palms.

tell her how you felt
the first time you saw her figure
reflect in your eyes & like a prophet,
wrote down the vision she provoked,
broke your tongue from the shackles of fear.

that she's dawn;
revealer of secrets that have plagued your heart
since you first saw her.

tell her it's time. for prophecy.
& watch as your tongue unravels mysteries

of how her beauty defies
the law of imperfection that beset fallen man.

of how you want to love her. all of her
beyond the borders of the galaxies.

of how you want to plant sunshine in her eyes
& reap a thousand suns woven delicately
upon the fabric of her lips

now stop.



& watch as her face slowly drifts
past your palms, past your fears & your guards

watch as she bathes your lips
with a fulfilment of those visions
from the first time she saw you.



SHEU JAMIU

How to Fall in Love

The right way
To fall in love is
To fall into it like you
Fall into every natural
Space moulded by
God Himself

1. Fall in love, like you

Fell into your body when
You were born

2. Fall in love, like life

Falls into the frame of
Your body every waking morning

Because you rise and
Walk out of anything else
Man-made, artificial,
Unnatural:

Fall into a pool, and you
Would swim out
Fall into a pit, and you
Would climb out

But your existence in your



Body is divine: you
Learn to accept yourself first
And you carry yourself
Gracefully through every thick
And thin

There is no rejecting life

So, fall in love
In those ways that only
God can save you



MAXWELL OPIA-ENWEMUCHE

expedition

there's an easy way to your heart,
that which tingles your fragile fancy
& causes your imaginations to run naked.

there's love everywhere like fresh air,
but who dares harvest feelings with baskets
& leave the heart drooping with frustration?

there's a better way to fall in love,
but you have to become a magnet,
view a prospective heart like a crown cork.

there's no better way to stumble on emotions
than to plunge in like a vehicle
negotiating a corner with speed.
there, is your formula for falling in love!

here I stand on this route,
a wonderful experience here,
an expedition full of stories
laden with series of victories.



RIDWANULLAH APOOYIN A.

There's This Magic

There's this magic in souls of flowers
That calls on butterflies,
(Not really) in the petals.
There's this magic in butterflies' hearts
That traps the flowers into yearning—
Sweet, eternal, devotional:
Yearning to be touched,
Yearning to be kissed to bloom.
This magic is the same everywhere—
And when two loving souls meet,
They are trapped in sweet overwhelm
The way the sun falls in love
with sunflowers
And lavishes its golden rays.
There's this (wise) magic that man carries,
Not in his hands, his eyes, or even his soul,
It just follows him
To where love is,
Minding not its colour
Or stature, age, height or race.
It just makes it happen,
right there, unplanned.



IYEJARE OLUSEGUN

Broken is Beautiful

Love the a bond—of perfection.
When it cries, beauty dies.
But it cries.

Beauty hides in the perfection of love:
Love cries and beauty hides.
But love is broken
So beauty is seen.

Beauty is blood.
It flowed through the eyes of
love on the cross.
But we're all broken.
Love became broken that our beauty be seen
Now broken is beautiful.

It takes the broken to love the broken.
So love cries... because it is love.



PEACE UFEDOJO HARUNA

Falling

Clad in the orchestra of your heartbeat,
Drunk on your fruity smile
I dive into your arms and fall,
Into rivers pregnant with affection.

Heavy

Breaths.

I swoon in this surreal moment,
As our lips dance to the rhythm of our hungry hands.

B

U

R

N

A sip of you is enough
Because forever is a lie.



IFENAIKE MICHAEL AYOMIPO

Love is Never Guilty

Shadowed with sun-baked emotions,
She sat by a dark diary
Lynching love.
The boy who promised her a bed of marigolds
Just delivered a remake of her grief from old lovers.

Two culvers perched on a corroded sheet
stroked each other's beaks.
Isn't this nature translating love into simpler languages?
But we pay little attention to nature's messages.

Its true love begins with mosaic of smiles
And sometimes ends with an unbending grief
Still, love is never guilty. It's never guilty.
The nights that held many promises are all massacred now
Still, the boy next door isn't your old lover.
I heard he brought you some flowers yesterday
And you writhed it.

Saturate your body into a fresh wine of love with music.
Cremate the memories of your ex-lover,
Wait for the ashes to voyage before you
Walk out of every dungeon of insecurity
Holding you captive,
Unfetter yourself and fly.

If he folds your heart into grief tomorrow
Just see yourself a debtor



Paying back with heartbreaks.
Someday, you will be disencumbered of the debt.

But the flower boy will come again, and your heart will be flabby
Just love. Just Love. Just Love.



BLESSING OJO

Free Fall

Love only breathes when it's free
—Bash Amuneni

Fall, fall in love the way an eagle falls after a prey—
carelessly, wings tucked in, head low, eyes on everything
that makes love beautiful—her curves, her ebony skin, her hair.
Her walking steps: *does she moon walk?*

Fall in a way that means *here I am, catch me*
else I'd become broken beyond doctoring.
And like stars scattered across the night sky,
I'd hold no luminescence.

Love could be another word for a deep well
But fall in, like a heart in flames,
Desperate for water.
Forget the depth of the river.

Why should there be a string holding our emotions?
Why should I tuck feelings beneath my skin?
In a world where light is a toddler learning to walk,
love means everything. Fall like there's no end to life.
Fall like after now, there's no tomorrow, just eternity.



ISMAIL ADEGBOYEGA

My First Date

We would meet however fate destined us to.

Our first dinner at my place would be on a Friday night.

You would ring the doorbell and my awaiting heart will pulsate open to you
As I open at the door which shields you from my sight.

I would tell of how you glow like the last quarter moon on a beautiful night
The smile you return, would set me free to freeze this moment in time
Your perfection, your every inch soft and subtle

Oh! You would trip into my arms for our first kiss.

At long last, the sweet sound of your voice. Soft as the lips from which they
unclasp.

I would show you every corner in my studio apartment, then let you decide a
place to sit.

I would sit opposite you, watch you smile while narrating your day's wins.
And ascertain the night is a memorable one.

You would find my smile as true, to a soul like you.

I would listen to you tell me how much you thought of this moment too.

How you longed to find me, your own king to nurture.

Until then, my heart will beat on these words as I wait on fate.



PATRICK N'KANU OKOI

My Lover

my lover, dares me to make love to her
so with my tongue I write poetry on her body
and she moans
and she says
“Patrick, I thought you were only good with words”
and I smile
knowing how many more anthologies I’ll publish on her skin
and she smiles
and the sun sets on her face
and when she says “Patrick I love you”
these words come out like coal, too hot to handle
and when she leaves
i wait for her like the coming of Christ
hoping she will come to me like a thief in the night
and when she doesn’t
my body spells happiness backwards, nothing makes sense
and when her voice wakes my morning
her splendour falls to the ground like rain
and like a child
i go out to play—naked, for I have nothing to hide.



I Love You

when I say I love you
i mean
you are the taste
of ripe mangoes in Mid-March
your juice gliding down
both ends of my mouth.



YUSUF OLANREWAJU

Another Brand of Love

Here, I sketch
your memory
on a torn canvas—
a sturdy feeling.

Here, my body drips love
for my heart
reeks of burnt car
abandoned at the road side

Come and toll me
back to the place
where rusted heart
are refurbished
into another brand of love.



Ageless Love

And when the years are old
this feeling shall remain.
We will sit on the lounge chair
at the vestibule
smiling at the children feeding
their dolls with sand,
while singing them a lullaby.
We will hold each other's wrinkled hands
and laugh at stale stories
of how this love began.



AMBALI ABDULKABEER

my love, read this

this is a rosary of promises
layered with unquenchable feelings of love

read the litany of *amens*
on my lips to your silent prayers

in rain & pain
i am yours & you are mine

we are forever one, planted amidst daffodils of peace
reciting every verse of surah coming from the generous air

this romance may drown
but only in a sea of indelible memories

i know love hurts
but ours entombed in trust

for we are two hearts
on the lane of one love...



How to hate your love

Build countless bridges in your heart
& furnish them with tons of stones
Write yourself love letters when the sky is devoid of stars
Reminding your soul of the moon's death
That way you can turn your heart against the echoes of love.
Live alone in shadows woven by forlorn smiles
Or start counting your hisses as they come
That way you can fire the heart you admire.
Open some pages in the book of loneliness
& write how you feel in capital letters
That way you can forget those times you cherish.
Become stones cast at silent birds
Perched on trees of drowning memories
Make diary about days gone & write down the appearance of tomorrow
Walk through the stream of affection without getting wet
Light up the candle that survives in the bucket of running water
That way you can hate your love.



TAOFEEK AYEYEMI

[the goddess you are calling is not available]

a choir of grief sings into your body today [again] & sings your shattered heart—you pick its pieces & give each a name: abyss. bight. cleft. dungeon. each telling how deep/far you fell into the mouth of trust. how trivial you strain your back carrying crosses of hope/fear. how a bird strikes its egg & sips it. how a body of water pushes out a fish & another boils it to stupor. you carve a word [on your chest] with a piece, a line of blood rises into a crusade of black birds. like singaporean ravens – they left with bottles of letters. it's seventieth day and they're not back. you wonder if there exist a language love does not understand. a priest said sincerity is her only rites. you look yourself in the mirror & see how sincerity has reshaped your tongue & cheekbones. you imagine the treasure you'll make if you're to put your invocations of love on auction. at times you open a browser tab to remind yourself you've got a future to live. sometime you launch back into her worship. yet. it keeps saying the goddess you're calling is currently not available. please try again later.



How to fall in love

I wish love were like the plot in my head—
a loamy soil where affection blooms into
flowers to tingle your nostrils with soul scents:
like kisses, like cuddles, like nestling in the
heartbeat of a lover in a world falling apart.
I wish love were like a hallowed ground,
but love is a destitute place: home to scavengers
searching for lost bits of precious things
like laughter, like portraits on walls now fallen.
Sharp stones, glass pierce your feet and
you are weary of venomous fangs—love is no
loamy soil, things do not grow here.
They say one must fall in love, like a dreaming
star, like a diver into the calm of the lagoon.
But if you fall in love, do not fall head-long,
to fall with your head is to choose death.
You must fall freely, feet-first, ready to land,
to choose the scars love leaves but to live
and tell the winning tale someday in bliss.



ADENIJI SODIQ ADEMOLA

Hello Motunrayo

Hello Motunrayo,
Do you still remember me?
Or have you lost my name in the sands of memory?
I'm the one you taught how to fall in love,
When my heart was stale and heavy.

I still remember the day we met,
Under the scorching sun of Abuja,
Right there, I saw a garden in your eyes,
The first magic I ever performed,
Was undressing you in my thoughts.

Today, I saw a couple arguing
It reminded me how to you, love is a battlefield
And you wouldn't mind being at its forefront,

With you, there was never going to be an ending,
At least never what I envisaged,
Until you walked behind the veil of my heart,
And sent it back to where you picked it from,
Shattering my broken mirror of love.

Indeed, love is a dog from hell,
Torment, torment, torment is all I live with since you left,
I'm sorry for disturbing your peace today,
I just wanted to take you through the highway of my life,
While you continue to rest in peace.



OLALEKAN DANIEL KEHINDE

words

teach me how to love again because...

words no longer become hidden jewels;
they are now litters that swerve to my door
where i could use them home my little fate.
they are now scavengers raiding my heart,
feasting upon the leftover love; lust or lost.

words are now longer when we're no longer;
they are futile connectors begging for hopes
with alphabetical pities and punctuated pleas
just as we then paddled boats of memories
never dreaming those waters would sink love.

words are no longer than this empty space
where once upon a time didn't die of your face;
this place no longer retweets your lovely echoes,
but it now reads your long letters from far away
because words are no longer in hidden jewels.



The Oracle's Betrothal

Your lips were the beak of a whistling parrot. You built Anike's frame into pitches and notes, till father's singing kettle hissed to a halt; the boiling pond had dried up! You also forgot the silent murmurs of the plantain on fire till they became the burnt bodies of the children in Rwanda. But you've never been out of your forlorn village; the malnourished Sudanese framework whose portrait canvassed for aids abroad. Here, lack and hunger were the half-torn part of the picture, the other half -a people rallying the call of love, one of these was you. Not even poverty could cleanse your mouth of the sweet nothings you whisper. Another night, another African family went to bed hungry, but hunger was just another price for love.

Before father lost the thing that held his sanity. He taught you that prostration is the key. It was the same way the village chief's elder son got his clerk job in the big city. He told you how the village square was swept by the champion's belly in exchange for a bottle of gin. As you strutted along the bush path that leads to the chief priest's backyard, you invoked the spirit of the first man that fell in love to pave the path from every bad omen that could have tied the old priest at home. Was he not supposed to be in the forest plucking herbs? A few more steps, you saw Anike walking towards you. She must have seen you from the crouching rock behind her father's barn. How did an old man who neither farmed nor bought yam seedlings come to own such a big barn? Question for the gods!

Anike drew to you with canes in her eyes. You were puzzled. "What is wrong Anikemi *owon?*"

"We can't see again!" She dropped the bomb. "*Baami* betrothed me to the oracle last night", she continued. Your lower jaw dropped! The last straw holding your manhood snapped. You did not notice your belly was already on



the floor; sweeping. Almost anything that humbled a man can change the heart of even a beast, or a beauty. You begged her to elope with you, to run beyond her father's reach, their hut, the crouching hills, the village square, till you are both safe in each other's arms far away, but she couldn't. She was her father's daughter. Even if she ran with you, could she have run beyond the wrath of the oracle? She had been taught how unforgiving the gods can be. Like when Sango struck a man that stole vegetables the last market day. He had succeeded, but the vegetable seller was one of the chief priest's concubines, and she was as unforgiving as the two hills with which she held the oracle to her whims.

As Anike drifted away, you vowed this was the last time.



GODWIN NKET-AWAJI

if we turn to love

if we turn to love
like weary evacuees of heart-war
in bunkers of hope
we will find a lair

if we turn to love
in this turbulent sea we embody
perhaps we will find
a calling shore to moor selves

if we turn to love
to the east of the heart
we will find a spreading sun
to dry our draped emotions

we shall turn towards love
an abandoned route
out of this ocean-maze
foundering rafts of being

a beach of solace
awaits us at the other side
of this crest-looming reality
let's swim through love



love will...

love will ride me on the seas
without chugging, without boat trails

love will soar me cloud-high
in the tranquil sky of your heart

love will walk me through the desert
without footprints of a limp sojourner

love will forage me through dense forest
as slithery as snakes through shrubs' armpits

love will glow in my nocturnal earth
without moon's seasoned grin

love will take me through life
like diurnal zephyr through gland

love will count my days like years
and count my years like millennia

love will make time bear rivers stranded leg
oblivious of ebb and reluctant to tide

while our pendulum of passion swings incessantly
we will number not age but immortality



FAVOUR CHUKWUEMEKA

Love Does Not Come in the Morning

This is not how love comes;
Under flashing dims and between
Ice-cream flavoured cones.
In the midst of much laughter,
emitting from bottled-up souls;
love does not come.
Men love not at late night,
when all they behold are pointed highs,
and salty lows,
aching for the wetness of mouth.
This yet is how love comes;
the crumbled piece which holds back inside,
suddenly gives up itself,
without considering you nor ego;
former pain, nor after-mornings.
Given there will be no mornings-after;
awaking to hate and cries of betrayal,
but fresh desire for new discoveries
of this love that cripples yet builds.
Love comes when invisible nature begins to
make its sense to you;
and you no longer hide that
part of yourself
you hated in the mornings.



IBRAHIM ADEDEJI SALVATORE

Sunset

before we bid goodnight,
let's wrap our arms around
the day's memories...

lips locked in amber kisses
—our tongues hold
what's left of the sun

the twilight—a solemn witness
of two fond fingers entwined in
promises of passion

—these vows shall again be renewed
when we're greeted by day anew.



TOBY ABIODUN

Touch

I have a touch that starts a burning, unhinges the spine, sends the body
whoring. You told me. I knew.

When we made love I was mourning us: a thing that hadn't lived yet already
died. There is a neediness even the communion of bodies cannot fill, I knew,
when you placed your tongue on mine.

I know the tragedy of a love too quiet to be seen, too numbing to be felt. I do
not have the loudest voice; my loving isn't any different.

When we kissed you nailed my feet to the ground. Days after I showed a girl
the holes. I am not Jesus; I cannot stop a woman from bleeding. I do not
know how to put back what was never there.

I was born into empty hands; we give love by giving space. We give back
nothing, only a presence that is dead like an empty page and a hunger dry as
drought.

I have a touch that won't leave the skin, holds it tight like a choker. You've
washed yourself a thousand times but the prints did not leave with me. All the
places my tongue went it refused to return from, you tend each place like a
bruise: my voice in your clitoris, on your navel, on your thighs, your nipples,
when your body speaks to you it sounds like me.

Tonight I am looking at the mirror and your face is there, veined and wet like
a sky screaming thunder and a cloud bleeding rain. You sent me a picture and
I saw holes in your skin, all the places my fingers touched sinking with the
weight of wanting, of hoping.

When you questioned my quietness you forgot to question a love like rumour,
like a candle-white, pure but burning out



Nomads

There is an altar in the corner where the lamppost stands
Where your pillows like to fall from
Where sex feels holier
Where moans sound like angel tongues
Where your men come like Pentecost
The altar is where you hold them back
Where they burn like candle
You have raised a mountain from wax.
You know how to tell men by how they leave
- troubled men visit at dusk, return to their wives in the dead of night
- horny men call at odd times, leave when the goosebumps lessen
The altar is bloodied
You have mourned on it so much its pathway grew muddy
It wasn't always yours, the altar,
A hand me down from generations of women who figured
The only way to keep a man was to let him go.
You took it in, like Obed-Edom, expecting blessings.
Learned to pray and burn incense before it,
Prayed in large skirts and turbans,
Prayed in grandma's wrapper,
Prayed in tan tops and skinny jeans,
Prayed in lingerie
But prayers have never kept a man,
They have nomadic genes
Born wanderers looking for where the stars begin.



TUKUR LOBA RIDWAN

To fall in love (again)

Paint love a picture of pain
Yet, pronounce with the labels of pleasure
Like fire—it burns, yet
Touches your hunger with the kiss of death

Once, I dipped my fingers
In an element of life as if
A boy searching for a girl's g-spot
In the yolk of darkness

I touched the tip of love's forked tongue
And got struck by its fangs—a beautiful pet snake
The pain from the inside burnt fiercer
And no one would see, to quench this burning

Until the pain showed up as a tumour
In my heart—holes everywhere
For sunshine to fill
My soul, an abyss of paralysis

So I would hug fear for safety
Until you came with another touch, *sweetie*—
Of another tale of fire, and taught me
That the same fire that would kill

Could douse your thirst like a hot beverage—
Your coffee skin, your milky eyes,
Your confectionery of kisses in a sugary taste—



Hot cake

And for another time, I risked
My hands in a cuisine of fire—
My fingers touching your soul
Where this flame of love rekindles.

Your voice burns *yes!*



Falling

You fall in love today and fall out tomorrow. What is time in this fickle voyage? a long tape of memories and epiphanies as testimonies of gravity—always falling in and falling out, and everyone falls. But the thuds hit your bones differently. Some, like a bag of grains, breaking the spine of hearts, and others like a drip drop, splashing into dead ends drying out. You want to fall again and again when you are falling in like a lifesaver's plunge in a swamp of giant reptiles—the texture of your nerves must be a pleasant one. Little wonder, you want to go back to him again despite how he called your bluff in front of your friends and fiends after a time when you both fell at the same time. Your bones fracture intensely from falling out. The pain outweighs your threshold. You feel like a lightbulb losing its perfect pieces to the impact of falling out of your circuit—shatters, and darkness now feels safer than the vessels in your body. Nothing feels like haven in you



for the next tourist of love.
Yet, you do not mind to fall again,
because it's him, because it's her,
because you are used to them that way.
Time is of no use to your exploration
of changes and damages, but
do you even care if
you could find a portal to the past?



This is supposed to be a poem on how to fall in love

But love is no feat
In need of a handbook

A course in need
Of a cookbook

Bricks and mortar
A house is born

And cupid's arrows
Lay in dispelling tales

Yet I know
Love is...



Fireworks and butterflies

A word
and a world
comes crumbling down.

There's a burning
In your touch
A fire in the tryst
Your palm, my skin
And a volcano erupts within

Tell me you feel it
The butterflies that find freedom
Each time you look at me

There is a fluttering
in your coming
a soul finds wings
and I become a child
Building castles in the sand

but just one word
and this world
comes crumbling down.



OLÚWATÓBI EZEKIEL POROYE

Àbíké

thoughts of you do to me
what asters do butterflies.
purple flower, you are the
reason i unlearn resistance.

i surrender to your dawn.
sky undressing soft rising.
dew tonguing spines. you
love me & i turn a miracle

of morn & feather moans.
in love, shame dies
like night on the beaks
of birds & sun's claws.

defying distance, my
heart stretches into you
like road, river. bridge.
i breathe you like nature

—cannot run out of air.
where you earth, i dust.
where you sea, i salt.
where you love, i exist.



Treasure

on mornings,
i taste like your kiss
—a cocktail
of dawn & dew.

dearest,
in your eyes, sun
glistens my garden
of naked cravings.

i lie vulnerable
to your doings
like earth under
the weight of gravity.

at night,
i am your confession
—a carnival
of stars & fireflies.



JIDE BADMUS

(In)Dependence

I'm a stem of desire
firmly rooted in you.
You satisfy me
You satisfy me

To be in love is to
be boldly vulnerable
I'm a leaf—unafraid
in the heart of autumn—
anchored to your branch
You hug like heaven
You hug like heaven

To be in love is to
be tethered & free,
fall & fly all at once
To be in love is to be
unashamedly dependent



How to Fall in Love

succumb to the sound
of laughter—of joy splashing
against jagged rocks in its path,
water mocking fire.
yield to the smiles of a stranger.
surrender to winds of emotions
like fast wheels on shiny tarmac.



BIOGRAPHIES

UCHE NDUKA is a poet, essayist and dancer. He is the author of twelve volumes of poems of which the most recent are *Nine East* (2013), *Sageberry 1* (2017), *Living In Public* (2018), *Facing You* (2020).

His writing has been translated into German, Finnish, Italian, Arabic, Serbo-Croatian. He presently lives and teaches in New York City

OYINDAMOLA SHOOLA is a writer, author, and feminist. She is also the Co-founder of *SprinNG*, a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting Nigerian writers.

Oyindamola graduated from Bronx Community College in 2017 and the New York University in 2020 with a Bachelor's Degree in Organizational Behaviour and Change.

An award-winning leader, writer, and student (of life) - she coaches others to enhance their career development and academic success experiences.

OJO TAIYE is a young Nigerian who uses poetry as a handy tool to write his frustration with society



AREMU ADAMS ADEBISI is a writer and economist. In 2019, he was nominated for Best of the Net, a Pushcart Prize, and the 2019 Philadelphia Fringe Festival. His work of poetry, “Force Mechanism”, was adapted into Lucent Dreaming’s first theatrical performance in Wales. He has works published in Storyscape Journal, Lucky Jefferson, and elsewhere. He served as a mentor for SprinNG Fellowship and a panelist for the Gloria Anzaldua Prize. He edits poetry for ARTmosterrific, Newfound, facilitates Transcendence Poetry Masterclass, and curates the newsletter Poetry Weekly on Substack.

IJEOMA NTADA is a black girl, an emerging Nigerian Poet/Writer that enjoys reading poetry and novels. She's a fan of lucid imagery. An afro enthusiast, her bulbous afro proves that. She has poems at The Praxis Teview, The Ducor Review and Visual Verse.

EHIOROBO DEREK is a writer, poet, and spoken word artist. He loves ice cream, Manchester United, and telling good stories. You can find him on instagram @derekimagines, where he writes poetry for a small community of literary enthusiasts.

OPUKIRI IRRA is a Farmer, Writer and wanderer currently resident in Port Harcourt. A tall black human who's fascinated with



Crows and possesses a deep love for watching things grow. He is also a volunteer facilitator with the Port Harcourt Literary Society and manages to scribble his thoughts on paper whenever he's lucky enough to collect them coherently."

ANNMARIE MCQUEEN is a London-based freelance writer and marketer with a BA degree in creative writing from Warwick University. She's been published in numerous magazines and anthologies including *Dear Damsels*, *Buried Letter Press* and *The Little Book of Fairytales* released by *Dancing Bear Books*. In her spare time, she runs a folklore-inspired candle brand called *Chai Lights Co.* You can find out more about her at www.annmariemcqueen.com

SIMON FAVOUR is like a burger, one with cheese toppings, he is a combination of so many things. Amongst other things, he is a Motivational Speaker, a Spoken Word Artist, a Life Coach, a YouTuber, a Writer and a Poet. Interesting right? Well there is even more.

He is from Delta State, Nigeria and a student of Mechanical Engineering at the prestigious Petroleum Training Institute in the same city.

Since he started writing in 2019, his passion to reach out to people has led him to writing series of poems, spreading the message of hope and love around his world.



AVRA KOUFFMAN writes poetry, features journalism, creative nonfiction, and literary scholarship. She was born in New York City and taught on three continents before moving to California. In the era of a worldwide pandemic, she is grateful to be part of this uplifting international anthology

MARTINS DEEP (he/him) is a Nigerian poet, artist, & and currently a student of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. His works deeply explores the African experience of the boy/girl child. His creative works have appeared, or are forthcoming on FIYAH, The Roadrunner Review, Covert Literary Magazine, Barren Magazine, The Hellebore, Chestnut Review, Mineral Lit Mag, Agbowó Magazine, Surburban Review, IceFloe Press, FERAL, Kalopsia Literary Journal, Libretto Magazine, Kalahari Review, & elsewhere. He loves jazz, adores Bethel Music and fantasizes reincarnating as an owl. He tweets @martinsdeep1

MIRACLE QUIST is a budding poet, a lover of music, badminton and arts residing in the ancient city of Ibadan with both parents and two brothers along with Pink, a cat and Captain Roger, a dog. He started writing poetry in 2013 and has not dropped the pen since. When he is not writing poetry, you'll find him hunched over his laptop designing. He is currently studying Ecotourism and



Wildlife management at the Federal University of Technology, Akure and can be reached via the following handles.

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SHEU JAMIU. A phantom. Writer who prizes poetry above her sibling prose and drama. An expendable pillar of initiatives like TALENTS and The Lyricists of Heaven. Writing, to him, is life and culture. When he is not writing, he explores the art of sketching still life, talking to computers and running surgeries on the poor devices, also engineering recipes to invent crazy dishes. As a staunch believer of love, he multitasks his all with being unapologetically romantic. A lover of languages: his Hindi can save him but his Japanese cannot buy ichiraku ramen. Meet his art on Instagram: @wswhitesage.

MAXWELL ONYEMAECHIOPIA-ENWEMUCHE is an enigmatic poet, a storyteller, a folklorist and a novelist who writes from Port Harcourt, Nigeria. He writes mostly on depression, suicide, sensuality, humanity, Boy Child, Rape, life, death and above all, Love. He believes in the mutual existence of humanity for the sake of peace to heal the world. His manuscript , 'Ozemenal' a collection of the Nigeria-Biafra civil war in meditative verses found a home in Poemify Publishers.



RIDWANULLAH APOOYIN A. (Aboo-l-Marjaan) is a final year student of Agric-Economics and farm management in the prestigious University of Ilorin.

He currently is a page poet and writer who explores nature and its beauty as he seems fit.

Most of his works themes around love, romance, divine devotion and nature of course. He's at the moment not published any book or featured in any much literary anthology collation or contests.

When he's not meditating, then he's definitely watching a movie, reading a book, flirting with nature/ poeticizing it, listening/watching poems recited, making fun chats with friends or sleeping.

IYEJARE OLUSEGUN is a Nigerian writer and web developer. He's based in Ilorin. He started writing in 2016 and his writing majorly celebrates the reality of light amidst darkness. He's works have been featured in the Mother of Light and Today, I Choose Joy anthologies by Inkspired among others.

PEACE UFEDOJO HARUNA is a creative writer and an undergraduate at the University of Benin. Her poem 'From Freedom To Free-doom' was shortlisted for the 2019 edition of Korea-Nigeria Poetry Prize, Student category. She has her works



featured in Ocean Of Dreams, Poemify Magazine Issue II and Boys Are Not Stones II amongst other. She is an advocate for female expression, poverty eradication, anti-racism and environmental friendly culture. She is also engaged in the fight against sexual and gender based violence. Writing is a way she expresses her thoughts and views.

IFENAIKE MICHAEL AYOMIPO is a young Nigerian Writer who writes on all genres on literature. He hails from Ogun State, Odogbolu, although he lives presently in Lagos State where he

catches his muse. He stans Ademule Ghandi David. He is a young promising Educationist with robust dreams. He is also aspiring to be a photographer. He loves listening to revolutionary songs. His ultimate dream as a writer is to see his work transmute into a mirror where his readers can assess themselves.

BLESSING OMEIZA OJO is a Nigerian teacher and author of *The White Shadow of Illusion* (novel, 2020) He has contributed to several anthologies and written for Roughcut Press, Artmosterrific, Con-scio, Lunar Review, Praxis, and others. His awards include the 2019 Korea-Nigeria Poetry Prize (Ambassador Special Prize) and the September 2018 Brigitte Poirson Poetry Contest (Second runner up). He is a semi-finalist in the Jack Grapes Poetry Prize 2020. Blessing holds a National Diploma in Chemical Engineering and is currently a creative writing instructor



at Jewel Model Secondary School, Abuja, where he has coached winners of national and international writing prizes.

ISMAIL ADEGBOYEGA is a contemporary artist and creative writer, with speciality in fine art at Alexis Galleries and One Draw Gallery (Lagos).

He constantly draws inspiration for his artworks (including writing) from existentialism and particularly his mixed cultural influences of the North, South-South, and Southwestern Origin. Amid the many interests, he finds a productive day in his home studio in his hometown of Ogbomosho.

He is a graduate of Ladoké Akintola University of Technology, with a bachelor's degree in Fine and Applied Arts.

PATRICK N'KANU OKOI is a student at Ebonyi state University and currently taking up a Master's degree in Public Health Parasitology. Despite his discipline, Patrick is passionate about poetry and has been writing for six years now. He has his poem *This is your death received* in *New Horizon Creatives* and *This home in the soon to be released third edition of the Journal of African youth literature*.

YUSUF OLANREWAJU is a freelance writer, poet, and tech enthusiast. His works have been featured or forthcoming in



Vanguard Newspaper, WRR, Kalahari Review, iwitness, Odessey, Thrive global, and elsewhere. He lives in the peaceful city of Ilorin with his pen

AMBALI ABDULKABEER is a graduate of English and Literature from Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. He is a thriving, enterprising writer and a critic of contemporary writing. Motivated by the functionality of art in social, political, cultural and economic reformation, he writes to reflect the reality that obtains in Nigeria and beyond. He is especially wont to the role of art in the regeneration of nature and love. A number of his works have appeared in both local and international journals. His book of poetry "Syllabus of Ruin and Other Poems" is on the verge of publication.

TAOFEEK AYEYEMI fondly called Aswagaawy is a Nigerian lawyer and writer whose works have appeared in Lucent Dreaming, Ethel-zine, the Quills, The Pangolin Review, Minute Magazine, Modern Haiku, Hedgerow, Acorn, Akitsu Quarterly, Seashores, contemporary haibun online and elsewhere. He won Honorable Mention Prize in 2020 Stephen A. DiBiase Poetry Prize, 2019 Morioka International Haiku Contest, 2019 Soka Matsubara International Haiku Contest, 1st Prize in 2018 PoeticWednesday Poetry Contest and 2nd Prize, 2016 Christopher Okigbo Poetry Prize. His chapbook "Tongueless Secrets" (Ethel Press) and full-



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ONI TOMIWA is a lover of every form of art and an amateur nature photographer. He resides and writes in Osogbo, Osun State. He has been published in literary outlets both online and in paper publications such as Praxis Magazine, Kalahari Review, Africanwriter, Blue Marble Review, EJJHSS, Heron's Nest amongst others. He tweets from @Onitomiwa6 on Twitter, and he is Oni Jewel Oluwatomiswa Olanrewaju on Facebook.

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As a member of JCI, his life is built around the JCI Creed, with emphasis on the last line that says "service to humanity is the best work of life".

Ademola's area of interest include writing, talking, journalism, capacity building, nation building, self-development, making people happy and obviously, he loves seeking attention when necessary. In his free time, Ademola likes to write, read and solve puzzles.



OLALEKAN DANIEL KEHINDE is a poet, essayist and storyteller. He has contributed to anthologies by Poets in Nigeria (PIN) and has works in *The Peace Exhibits Journal* and the 2020 Nigerian Students Poetry Prize (NSPP) anthology, *The House That Built Me*. He is a joint-winner of the May, June 2020 and October PIN 10-Day Poetry Challenge respectively, a finalist of 2020 NSPP and author of the top essay of the National Students Write Hack 2020. Olalekan is presently a student of English and Literature (Education) at the University of Benin (UNIBEN). He loves to read and teach English Language.

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When not carrying out his primary duties, he is attending or organizing a literary event under the aegis of his group -Echoes of African Art & Music. A literary platform started in June 2018 with its maiden event -ARTITUDE; a date with poetry, art and music, held in Ile-Ife.

He has been dubbed Officer of Poetry for his keen interest in promoting the art and also participate.

He looks to the future with much hope as he aims to keep developing himself and enhancing others to also achieve their God's given purpose.



NKET-AWAJI ALPHEAUS is a poet, critic and essayist. He is a level two hundred student of English and Literary Studies at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt. He has featured in *Citadel of Words*, *Towards a Beautiful Becoming* (both published by Words Rhymes and Rhythm), *Repostes of Lockdown Voices*, *Chinua Achebe Poetry/Essay anthology*, etc. He writes from Rivers State.

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He explores existence: memories, identity, creation, lust, ruins and loss.



WISDOM NEMI OTIKOR holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in English studies from the University of Port Harcourt.

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He can be contacted via instagram on @Wisdomotikor. He is a bubble of laughter in the city of God.



