



# THE POETRY CLUB

USMANU DANFODIYO UNIVERSITY, SOKOTO



## Editors

S. Su'eddie Vershima Agema  
Michael Imossan  
AbdulBasit Oluwanishola  
Abdulkareem Abdulkareem  
Bagidi Latifah

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ISBN: 978-978-12345-6-7

SEVHAGE  
Makurdi, Nigeria

KONYA SHAMSRUMI

Black Gate Trove, No 3, MFM Street, Karu, Nasarawa State, Nigeria

<http://sevhage.com>  
sevhage@gmail.com  
Makurdi. Karu. Abuja. Ibadan.  
Nottingham (United Kingdom)  
+234 (0)703 028 5995; +234 (0)807 358 0365.

**Cover Design:** Adakole Stephen

**Cover Concept:** S. V. Agema and Gabriel B. I. Agema

**Cover Picture:** Oladosu Michael Emerald

**Book Design:** Su'ur Su'eddie-Vershima Agema and Oko Owoicho

**SEVHAGE Editor:** Su'ur Su'eddie-Vershima Agema

**Production Team:** Charles Miles Victor

With support from Goethe Institut as a Benue Book and Arts Festival Project

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## **Gratitude and Commendation:**

Before this Anthology, there was the Club. Therefore, the previous executives and core members who have always been committed to the club's success deserve special mention.

### **First Executives**

- Abdulbasit Balogun—President (Medical Laboratory Science Student)
- Gaius Bangda Bala—Vice President (Medical Laboratory Science Student)
- Abdulbasit Hussein—Editor-in-Chief (Political Science Student)
- Rodiyah Omotoyosi Mikail—Deputy Editor-in-Chief (Common and Islamic Law Student)
- Abdulqayyum Balogun—Secretary (Public Administration Student)
- Zainab Babandi—Deputy Secretary (Medicine and Surgery Student)
- Gift Adaora—Treasurer (Agriculture Student)
- Abubakar Mikailu Datti—PRO I (Common and Islamic Law Student)
- Taslima Bello—PRO II (Pharmacy Student).

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- Abdulbasit Hussein—President (Political Science Student)
- Rodiyah Omotoyosi Mikail—Deputy President (Common and Islamic Law Student)
- Ayobami Kayode—Editor-in-Chief (Literature Student)
- Isah Aliyu Chiroma—Deputy Editor-in-Chief (Agriculture Student)
- Gift Adaora—Secretary (Agriculture Student)

- Abdulqayyum Balogun—Deputy Secretary (Public Administration Student)
- Zaynab Iliyasu Bobi—Treasurer (Medical Laboratory Science Student)
- Shakirudeen Abdulazeez—PRO I (Political Science Student)
- Khadijah Hassan—PRO II (Pharmacy Student).

### **Third Executives**

- Isah Aliyu Chiroma—Editor-in-Chief (Agriculture Student)
- Zaynab Iliyasu Bobi—Deputy Editor-in-Chief (Medical Laboratory Science Student)
- Bagidi Latifah—Secretary (English and Literature Student)
- Mudashir Busari—Deputy Secretary (English and Literature Student)
- Adamu Yahuza—Program Manager (Zoology Student)
- Abdulbasit Oluwanishola—PRO (Agriculture Student).

### **Fourth Executives**

- Abdulbasit Oluwanishola—Editor-in-Chief (Agriculture Student)
- Bagidi Latifah—Deputy Editor-in-Chief (English and Literature Student)
- Mudashir Busari—Secretary (English and Literature Student)
- Sumayyah Muhammad Shuaib—Deputy Secretary (Agriculture Student)
- Fasasi Ridwan—Program Manager (Agriculture Student)
- Alqasim Nafisah—Treasurer (English and Literature Student)
- Sulyman Abdulkabeer Agaka—PRO (English and Literature Student).

**Core Members:** Naimah Abdullahi Sabo, Michael Imossan, Abdulrahim Hussani, Mazeed Mukhtar, Hussein Son'ofNuhu, Iliya Kamba Dennis, Ba Sabouke, Abdulrazaq Zainab, and many more.

## **BRIEF HISTORY OF POETRY CLUB UDUS (2019-2024)**

The Poetry Club UDUS (PCU) was conceived by two great minds, Abdulbasit Balogun Opeyemi and Gaius Bangda Bala. They registered the club in May 2019 and nominated the pioneer executives in June 2019, thereby forming and organizing the first-ever poetry club at Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto.

Abdulbasit Balogun Opeyemi served as the President, starting with about 20 individuals in 2019. He handed over to Abdulbasit Hussein and his team in September 2021, by which time the club had grown to over 200 members.

Abdulbasit Hussein, during his tenure, significantly elevated the club's recognition. He later handed over to Isah Aliyu Chiroma, who, in turn, passed the board of executives to Abdulbasit Oluwanishola, the current Editor-in-Chief (as the title of President was scrapped after the tenure of Abdulbasit Hussein).

This anthology (the first-ever anthology by the club, which will be the foundation for future ones) was conceptualized during Abdulbasit Hussein's tenure, nurtured during Isah Aliyu Chiroma's time, and finally came to fruition during Abdulbasit Oluwanishola's tenure.

## FOREWORD

With great pride, we present this first-ever and long-awaited anthology from the Poetry Club UDUS. It is the product of collaborations across editors, publishing houses, and organisations. It builds on the hard work of Abdulbasit Balogun Opeyemi and Gaius Bangda Bala who founded the club, and every succeeding Executive Committee of the club, and of course, the wonderful members who ensured they sent their pieces to get this together.

This important project is a compendium of diverse voices that capture the complexities, beauty, and resilience of life and thought in contemporary times. The beauty of the poems, which are mostly from members of the Club beginning with Summayah Muhammad Shuaib to co-editor Abdulbasit Oluwanishola, belie the novice status that several of the writers claim. There is the presence of famous PCU alum, Zaynab Iliyasu Bobi and the veteran, Michael Imossan, a co-editor of this work himself. Backed by some invited voices like Jide Badmus, Pamilerin Jacob, Jakky Bankong-Obi, Damilola Omotoyinbo, Rahma O. Jimoh, and Martins Deep, amongst others, these authors have pieced a mosaic of great beauty that traverses the contours of our individual and collective experiences.

There is so much to look forward to, especially with the experimental nature of a good number of poems. Abubakar Auwal's 'A Metaphorical /¬/S/O/N/G¬ for a Blind Poem' stands out in this regard. The poem, like some others in this collection, is prefaced by a contemporary poet, Zaynab Iliyasu Bobi, referenced above. The soulful poem set in Khartoum shows the endless possibilities of what a poem can do in terms of aesthetics, theme, depth and breath. There are several other poems like that all through that will leave readers applauding.

Africa's literary tradition, steeped in oral histories, communal narratives, and cultural diversity, finds a renewed expression in this work. Here, the poets engage in a dialogue that stretches across time and space. Their words resonate with the echoes of ancestors, yet vibrate with the urgency of contemporary realities. This anthology is a bridge, connecting the wisdom of the past with the aspirations of the present, and by doing so, it challenges us to envision a future shaped by the power of the written word.

The journey to this moment has been long and richly layered. From the inception of the Poetry Club UDUS in 2019, when it was a gathering of passionate minds, to its growth into a vibrant community of over 200 members, the club's trajectory mirrors the essence of steadfastness, growth, and creativity. This anthology attests to the dedication of its members, past and present, whose commitment to the craft of poetry has culminated in this remarkable collection.

The themes explored in this anthology are as diverse as the poets themselves. They traverse the landscapes of identity, memory, conflict, love, and longing. They speak to the spirit of those who have ever wrestled with questions of belonging, loss, and renewal. Indeed, in the tradition of Africanist thought, this anthology does not shy away from the realities that define our times. From the harrowing stories of conflict and displacement to the tender musings of love and home, the poets give voice to the silenced and bring visibility to the unseen.

As you turn these pages, you will encounter voices that are raw and refined, playful and profound, traditional and experimental. This anthology also serves as a call to action. It reminds us of the power of collaboration, the importance of nurturing talent, and the need to preserve and promote poetry and indeed, art in all its forms. It challenges us to think critically about our roles as readers, writers,

and citizens of the world. Above all, it inspires us to believe in the boundless possibilities of storytelling.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the contributors for their courage and creativity, to the editorial team for their dedication and insight, and to the Poetry Club UDUS for fostering a space where such magic can happen. Special mention must be made here of Abdulbasit Hussein and Ayobami Kayode, Isah Aliyu Chiroma and Zaynab Iliyasu Bobi, who played various roles in their time in getting this book into some form. Indeed, I am honoured to have been a part of this journey too, and I am excited for the world to experience the brilliance contained within these pages.

On behalf of the editorial team, I wish you a wonderful read. We pray that these words will find a home in your heart, and ignite inspiration that carries on the legacy of our forebears and the aspirations of generations to come. And may the times treat us kindly.

**S. Su'eddie Vershima Agema**

20<sup>th</sup> January, 2025

*Sumayyah Muhammad Shuaib*

## **TWENTY-ONE**

Here is 3rd, January.

Wherein I gather the years I've witnessed into bundles of sticks. Today my life's sticks are twenty-one. I fold neatly my errs & wins, packing them inside a cardboard box. Yellow song floods the room as I feed air to adolescent candles. Mother, Junior, Sa'ad & Sa'adah sent baskets of flowers, love and rosy red letters. Memories of Father's affection and goodness rain into the space of the Merry field. These are events in tenses where father has refused to be anything but air, where his bones wear the brown cover of sand, where his voice is the night until trumpet sounds. His over-pouring love, stainless as water gushing down rocks was placed in pure cotton as a meal for the graveyard. The day closes with a breeze bringing images from the village cemetery, my eyes glass and my grief rekindles. I'll tarry this sphere till my soul detaches from breathing, bearing the heart of one whose bond with her father has drowned in the arms of seas that do not bear names.

*Sumayyah Muhammad Shuaib*

## **A SONG OF AFFECTION**

i button my head to your shoulder /bearing the softness of pillows/while i seek the compass that tells the cardinals to your tenderness/i'll flower in her fragrance/be the rainbow curve of seven colours/raining down your face and essence/painting them into the colorful picture of aliveness/singing ballads only to your cochlea/feeding you rice balls spiced in cloves, sage, thyme, ginger and rosemary/our days mixed waters of separate rivers/ i want to whisper through your body's opening the suavest of nomenclatures/light of my vision/sap of the grapes in my vineyard/moon in the face of today's sky/waters dancing on the skin of this planet carrying my living/your reflections and refractions hovers as cloud above my cranium/my wishes are to pour into poems the beautifulness of your name as the radiance of sun in yathrib/invade and imprison in silver chains every inch of your breathing/hold your hands and walk through land to the farthest end of the end/beyond the predominance of humankind/ inherit the divine gardens in the belighted cities of paradise/draw our footprints on her sand of goldendust/gulping the angels whitened milk of saints/from pearl like cups and trays/helpers swarming our circle shaped bond/like bees buzzing in their hive/the Lord's pleasure making to glitter this unity/as the everest of all desires.

*Samuel A. Adeyemi*

## **CELEBRATION SONG**

*(after Holding Absence)*

I'm alive.

The hands seeking to unthread me  
thawed before the sudden light.

They trembled like a limb  
torn from its root. Whose prayer

has kept me untouched? Whose God,  
whose merciful God, has made me

fearful & sharp? Blade on my skin,  
thorn from my bone—I cut the knifer

& his knife. Metal in blood, metal  
in metal. I stood at death's door

& the entire room began to shrink.  
Smaller than an eye, I could not push

my body through: the threshold  
clamping around my foot. To whose

supplications do I owe this grace?  
For I cannot even pray for myself,

running through this wild world like  
an arrow mindless of the arm that cast it.

I merit none of this, but shall I not rejoice?  
I'm alive. Something smiled on my misery

& put a hole in its heart. When I doubted  
my life, it said to me, *Fear nothing—*

*the water is perfect. Leap. The ice  
will hold your feet.*

*Abu Bakr Sadiq*

## **memory establishes contact**

i do not always remember the right order of events.  
what must have come first were dewdrops on grasses.  
from them, the rivers grew. in the blink of an eye,

the people i will grow up to call mine all owned a mouth  
filled with saltwater. as a keepsake, i got a gallery  
of forgotten history where God meant for my throat to be.

to live in accordance to the customs,  
i have gone  
weeks without making motions with my hands.

haven't held my palms, fanned out, until all i see  
is a pair of shredded curtains swaying before my eyes.

faithless, i have lifted every bone in me,  
running over signposts that call me to live in service  
to the reawakening of past lives.

old traditions confirm that dark spots splayed on the left  
half of my upper lip indicates the world wants my mouth  
foaming with the tidings of my forefathers' lifetimes.

it has never been a dream of mine to be the one who  
traces tracks of time, with shaky fingers, back to when  
disappearance from the world counted as an act

of defiance against cruelty.

to deepen my love for remembrance, without which  
my hippocampus will lose sight  
of its purpose, memory shapeshifts into a woman  
whose tender thumbs run circles across my spine.

as demanded by tradition, i must make acquaintance  
with lapses of time waiting to be bent backwards.  
the movement of my hands around an imaginary hour  
wheel, a stepping stone to the ritual of regurgitating memories.

the faces will return, first as faded figures on a canvas. my job,  
to connect the dots until they reveal my father's face  
in a broken frame. still a boy. chin, beardless & untouched  
by strokes of old age. long before my entrance into the world.

long before memory became the headless shadow of a crow  
hovering above my shoulders. keen on returning to me,  
a childhood i've buried inside the mouth of a dry lake.

*Rasaq Malik Gbolahan*

## IN MEMORIAM

*From the moment our babies are born  
are we meant to lower them into the ground?  
– Fatimah Asgar.*

In each grave dug in a hurry  
there are remains of a child

named after a country  
on the brink of vanishing.

Tonight in the history of a land  
there are bullets crowding the air as children

are held to their mothers' chests. In my mother's country,  
the dead outnumber the living.

In every empty street there are footprints of people  
buried untimely, shadows of people

whose dreams flicker like the light of the world  
during a siege.

There are birds sorrowing as aches gnaw  
the hearts of those mourning

those buried without flowers decking their tombs,  
those who carry the photographs

of their relatives in their pockets as they flee their country,  
those who know, too, that each road that leads

to their homeland is filled with trees  
replacing the unfound corpses

of their loved ones.

*Idoko Saddam Ifeanyi*

## **DREAM HAS WINGS**

Dreams have wings.

Yet they do not soar

or glide

but they flap and flap.

Dreams are a heaving navel  
nurturing bournes and desiderata;  
yet pregnant with broken bliss  
and deterring rubs.

Dreams are a vessel  
to be towed through archipelagos  
ere it is sailed through straits  
to the western sea.

But there always lies the shore  
where men sing of their sails  
and tempests overthrown.

*Ahmed Bagidi Latifah*

## **SELF-PORTRAIT AS A WAR VICTIM**

In the heart of chaos,  
where cries blend with thunder,  
i stand as a titan 'neath a sky torn asunder.  
With every step on shattered ground i tread,  
my resilience blooms amidst the tears i've shed.

Through smoke and fire,  
where hope flickers frail,  
my courage blooms like poppies in a war-torn tale.  
In the crucible of conflict, i find my light,  
bearing scars of valour, in the darkest of night.  
Yes, i died before a bullet hit me, what then happened?

*Naziru Sulaiman*

## **SELF PORTRAIT AS AN ESCAPADE IN GAZA**

If ever the clouds hold my bile in its mouth, the earth would have been drenched from the bitterness that I bury in the muscles of my chests. Yesternight, a reporter on Aljazeera said, "Boys are earthing their fathers in Gaza." I have once had a heart under my fear, he would always lift the bud covering the artilleries of confidence to shoot into my veins—Looters of Dreams, and air/and life/and breath- they were called then and now. They are orphans mixing metaphors of their grief to become flowers they'll use to decorate father's caskets. Forgive my insolence as an aggrieved child, the only atom of respect left on my tongue is maybe prayers, not fall from the edge of my crept heart into the mud of uncertainty, deciding whether life held father's name on its right lips before it kissed the earth into it. The reporter on Aljazeera said again, "people are dying" Gaza is bleeding. I didn't want to look him under the cornea of his eyes to know whether they held some truth/or they are just cooked lies./Men don't die twice, I whispered in silence: truth is revealed. Oh Night! Bury my fears in your arms, I said loudly.

*Naziru Sulaiman*

## **CALL THIS POEM A BROKEN SONG OF JUSTICE**

Yesternight, a boy misled my thoughts into rivers of his blind ideas,  
He said; to be a father, is to own a body so burnt in flames of  
uncertainty and call it progress,  
That one that left me wallowing in between the breath of a ten year  
old boy in Gaza.

There; bodies are timebombs calculating the distant at which  
Shrapnels of father's body travelled like the acceleration-motion in  
physics.

And here; my body is a ship - sailing on the top sea of brokenness  
Like how we gather corpses/ in caskets/  
Here at Gaza; Only God can save my body in this trance  
I mean, only flowers illuminates light on the face of a boy asking  
the world the meaning of balance.

*Fasasi Ridwan*

## **(on) ~~un~~becoming a country**

*(after reading Angel Nafis)*

1912: a country was named after a river,  
named after drowning. say, *nigeria* and we plunge  
headfirst into the terror of a foreign tongue.

1960: the guest left, & we sang country.  
the guest left, & we sang water. the guest left  
& we drowned in their violence. how do you  
glorify a river if not to drown in its existence?

1970: the war left us, the war stayed with  
us. say, the only way to stay alive is to become  
one with the violence that dwells in us.

2020: my country does not spare a flickering  
thing. my country men, flickering things, moths  
dancing near a fire. in other words, we are scared  
of death but home seems so familiar.

2050: My grandson says to put home on a gamble.  
& you will learn how to carve stars into the barren sky.

*Fasasi Ridwan*

## **survival**

*(after reading chiwenite onyekwelu)*

survival is nothing but a witness to the beginning of another grief. in a video, a woman whittled into a conference of testimonies at a church. & i recall the days of trial: our old backyard resurface, bright with father's voice beaming over mom's, *this boy go drop out of school, those wey no go school sef dey successful.* & i stand —the little me—silently in my room searching a way out of memory. tonight, the story replay—blurred & every looping is another way of retelling grief, an escapade. i still wonder how this body, small as a grave could fit in all my sorrow? how i absorb all the pain the way a child learn his *A, B, C*, every alphabet, sticking into his bodies from the inside—had you been there, you'd have mistaken my cry for a dirge before it fell into the mouth of silence. before i fell into the mouth of this memory & every dose it gives is a witness to the opening of this poem.

*Oluwatosin Oladapo*

## THEY

They are here again. My usual visitors.  
They come at me, vengeful  
Their malicious eyes gleam as they sight me  
I'm their target every night  
This night, like others, I strive to escape but they won't let me  
Prancing around me, their teeth bared as I quake in fear  
They charge at me and I can't find escape  
Their fangs sink into me; tearing at my soul, wounding my spirit  
I fight for survival or at least, to die dignified  
I'm enclosed in high invisible walls  
My mind scream words that seem to bounce around the space and  
no one hears  
When will I be free from these ghosts?  
Death seems more alluring  
Maybe I'd never make it  
Since peace is a mirage and tranquil is more heard of than tasted  
Momentary silence comes only when the substance permeates, and  
suddenly,  
Freedom doesn't seem like a fairy tale  
Though for a while, it's everything there seems to be.

*Oluwatosin Oladapo*

## **HELLO FEAR**

I've let you decide for me,  
color my dreams and shade my smile.  
You've drawn the lines, the barrier.  
The thread to my kite, you won't let me fly.  
You told me who I was and what I could do.  
I've held my breath because I dared not cross you—

But not anymore.  
Never again will you tell me where or how far  
I could fly, nay I'd soar.  
I'd let my wings ride the wind  
far above where you pinned me.  
Because now, I'll face you  
and I'll fight you everyday.  
I'll shed the weight you've placed on me and run wild.

I'll tackle you to the ground.  
I'll make you bleed my dreams.  
I'll make you pay for the choices I've made, for your sake.  
Then I'll run far from all you've said I'll be,  
because now, I know you're a limit I can cross.

*Sulyman Abdulkabeer*

## **PORTRAIT OF A BOY AS A BODY OF WATER**

It's the new dawn of the year and we're encamped by tragedies  
days running faster than memories  
Kale, we're engulfed again by your memories.

a glance at your room, everywhere is filled with dust of doubt  
we still mourn your chronicles:

    how you fill each mouth with laughter  
    how you became dish for nature in the voyage  
    how your head became one like nail, pinned down in between  
        bricks.

    how the car brake betrayed the leg as the road split into horizon  
    how bridge incised into two and your bus resound the water.

    the driver became wind, maybe turned a molecule inside the  
        river &  
    your breath was held by shock—that is how we lost you  
    that is how you refill our mouth—how you became memory.

    when we entered the scene again, the water was still running  
    perhaps nature was still reacting on the bricks  
    even the bridge bears no memory of your journey  
    but our heart is filled with your broken beauty.

when a man dies, his soul morphs into stars—winking &  
every night i'd talk to your reflection inside the water.

this is what i understand about life: human becomes  
a body of water in different scenes  
maybe we're only here as characters to cheer God  
maybe we are only destined to perform exit role.

*Sulyman Abdulkabeer*

## **SARAH (A SHAPELESS METAPHOR)**

I know everybody will pass through the river before getting drowned,

drained depending on the river's rage.

Sometimes a man dies of a storm: struggling to regather himself and survive.

The world will end by water or perhaps everything will be blown away like dust.

Today, I tour down the North where the melted sun recovers its conscience

& everyone is mouthed with different news, recreating sweet scenes.

Love is now a dagger to strangle its players;

Some girls say, "love is a fire where lovers get burnt every day of trial."

But love is a pothole where everybody will stumble, where the story will end.

Sarah,

your friends are busy carving your stories into different shapes  
but death has no perfect picture & you're no longer a shape.

The road to heaven is undefined.

I knew you wanted to stay, to see the sun again kissing the trees at dawn

but mourners were quick to announce your demise,

I'm sorry I could not stop you.

I was wingless and without flight.

It is not an easy test to uproot your soul out of your own body;  
I have witnessed a farmer uprooting a grain from sand  
I could imagine how blood get drained in your vein,  
how you struggled to hold your breath before the sun fell into your  
mouth &  
everything ended uncaught.

(Author's Note: *The poem "Sarah" is a farewell for a hundred level student of Biology at NSUKA who recently committed suicide.*)

*Chinemerenem Prince Nwankwo*

## **inside life**

*once, I saw a bee drown in honey,  
and I understood —Nikos Kazantzakis.*

### **VIII**

*baptism*

& body, a tract of sea —  
a torso wickered in hell. & I, ubiety  
of something dying like natality in  
blades & blood. each breath drapes  
to a god. how do I not saunter into  
light? sin is beautiful, at least, in dark-  
ness I figure as a glowworm. I flutter  
wingless into utopia, decking what's  
not freedom. freedom, a seagull afraid  
of shore. shore is a bait & bait hooks  
the water to blood. if nothing breaks  
the soul in sable hour, then a miracle  
stands in haywire. shape the fullness  
of breath into gulf, vernal air youthful  
of dying. death is how I go again in the  
name of dousing -sand & water.

### **IX**

*bifurcation*

sand, dunes of stories that Adam into  
the skin. & how water, a lectern of self

staggers into salvation. ode to the past  
that echoes dream. only that nothing of  
man chooses to butterfly. bone & spirit  
thistles its petals to a home. how svelte  
is the garment that wears the grief?

## X

### *bliss*

in orison, teach me the psalmodic tongue  
of welting, maybe not of a bee drowning  
in sweetness. but as roses of rouge flesh  
frailing back to God.

*Aishat Omoniyi*

## **UNSEEN WOMAN**

"I am also a woman and I deserve to be seen as one"

I screamed to the hearing of everyone giving the light-skinned lady with all sorts of attractions in place every attention that could be in the room.

Then I recall I didn't scream, it's all in my head and I am exactly what an artist would depict in his painting as a woman with facial features lacking a mouth and maybe, a nose.

I never speak out, of the number of times I was told what my body should be while growing up as a teenager, I never did speak up.

For a girl who received more criticism than compliments on how the swells on her body aren't perfect enough, I never said a word in defence of my body.

Instead, I would resolve to refuge in baggy clothes, and whatever clothing would shield me from the scrutiny of the world.

This is my reality, my resolve, and what brings me a bit of sanity in a society where standards are set by humans like myself.

Maybe one day when the standard finally shifts in my favour, I will shed this shell and perhaps, my resolve will change.

*Abdulbasit Oluwanishola*

## **FRIDAY HEALS MORE WOUNDS THAN SALT**

*(After Fatihah Quadri Eniola)*

It's Jum'ah, all the nightingale voices  
purify the cloudy world with Qur'an  
and Adhkar. And every dust mad into  
the dark bush—into the river.

Just as a mouse would gallop  
out of the room laced with cats.

Inside Masjid, Imam seeks for the Surah  
housing every dead soul. I whisper into God's ears:  
Halt the road from sucking blood  
when we go out. Put full stop to our bones  
sinking like a boat in the ocean's belly. Amen.

I witness a man rolling his pains into his  
palms. Hoping for a white lane in return.  
Hoping for onions, with waterless eyes,  
to spice his pains, till they forget their origin  
is sour. May his hook catch a big fish.  
Bless his tongue calling unto salvation. Amen.

I carve all my grieves and say, *God,*  
*as I dwell in this Suratu-l-kahf—the Cave,*  
*cave all the fragments of my grief.*  
*Let my shadow gain (f)light.* Amen.

*Abdulbasit Oluwanishola*

## **HOME IS**

*(after Razaq Malik Gbolahan)*

Today, I passed through Lekki Toll Gate.  
I remembered how home could be a cold  
sea flogging out every warmth from the body  
of a provider, of a mother, of a daughter  
in the red face of a protest.

Home is the mother –still– longing  
for the return of her dead daughter.

Home is the canteen—the kiosk  
serving as an umbrella for those  
flood/war stroke out of their abode.

In Sambisa Forest, a boy writes his will—  
The return of a soldier is a promise  
ready to be broken.

Home is the tender arms of a mother  
embracing her son, with tears, after  
surviving rain of missiles.

Home is the first meal taken by the man  
who knows the paths in the forest  
more than the paths lying beside his house.

Home is the air free of smoke from riffles,  
free of gases from bomb blasts; free of CO,  
breathing in by my grandma, my sister,  
by the remaining people in Lagos, Kaduna,

Maiduguri, in every land that has drank  
blood more than water.

Home is the wall beholding memories  
in the portraits hung on it.

Home is the mouth, crunching corn  
devoid of invocations to not be amongst those  
whose prayers couldn't hold them.  
Home is the breast, feeding a baby  
inside a garden and not debris.

Home is the government that grants  
peace and comfort to the citizens.  
the road void of fear.  
the forest worth touring.  
the word of justice from a poor man, yet, listened to.  
& children riding bicycles around Abuja  
without the fear of pedalling into a bomb.

*Ayobami Kayode*

## **SOJA!**

The Cobwebs have grown wings.  
The grasses are now taller than the house.  
Children, like Godot, await your hands full  
of candies. The grandma that lives down the  
road tells death to come for her after your arrival.  
Remember your fiancé? She's still holding balloons  
and a bouquet at the airport.

We want to hear your story, tales of victory  
Dropping from your mouth like jewels. How fresh is  
The apple at the war font? Do you, like Bluntschli,  
Ferry chocolate to the battlefield? The wrinkles around  
Your mother's eyes must not finish their meeting  
Before your feet embrace the soil of this Country.  
Your father is dead, his grave needs some flowers.

Do not die in their battle. Home, like nightingale,  
Sings your name/eulogises your lineage, do you  
Hear it? The stool in the backyard is waiting for your  
Buttock. The sun here longs for your melanin, do  
You feel it? After the toil colours your soles and  
Your fingers with blisters, we'll invite the camwood  
To welcome you.

*Zaynab Iliyasu Bobi*

## **bargaining**

i did not peel the chicken feathers.  
i close the kitchen door & open a portal  
into this poem. i know you are wondering  
why i start from the end. i guess because  
that is where the body rests—cold & bloody.  
if this kind of death can be called *rest*.  
it has been many years since i was frightened.  
i've heard a lot about catastrophes. i have seen them too.  
i would say there is nothing about loss that i haven't felt.  
but not today. tonight, i will sit myself down  
practice how to answer the phone calls. how to bargain  
for my loved ones' ransom. how to cut my rage  
into tiny pieces of gentleness that will not fuel their madness.  
*ranku shi da d. Allah ya buce zuciyar ku. dñ labai.*  
i will keep speaking to them this way because last time  
my uncle lost a limb, & i've heard of children dying  
in captivity. at this moment, all i can hear is so many  
thoughts hauling my mind. *maybe i should scream until*  
*i lose the voices in my head.* even though this might have a ring  
of calmness around it. i could not wear it on my finger  
or hear the vibration in my bones. holding the phone  
to my ears, *dan labai, nawa zamu biya wannan karar?*  
i need to know how much my loved one's head will cost this time.

*Mazeed Mukhtar Oyeleye*

## **a poem as a supplication to the god of misfortune**

this poem opens her mouth  
to show you a tongue, heavy  
with prayers, but she is at a  
loss of whom to say it to

because this poem doesn't  
believe in the Holy Trinity,  
the oneness of Allah or the  
myriad of entities and man  
made deities that answer "God"

but this poem swears, by  
everything you hold dear,  
that she is not an atheist  
—that she is religious—  
not because it is a fancy thing  
to be, but because she is poor,  
and poverty is a misfortune  
crying for a devotion bigger  
than any named religion

& this poem asks; 'but  
isn't misfortune beautiful  
—or another religion?' but

fears that you might not  
honestly know—or tell.

pray tell:

why is it that misfortune, like  
religions with proud adherents;

i.

invites you to seek solace in circles  
that itch you, cramming your heart  
with wishes like ‘if not for humanity’?

ii.

shelters you in halls that nurture  
you into a plant—green with envy—  
your tongue, carrying prayers like ‘if only’?

yes, if only. & that’s how  
this poem supplicates, but  
‘to whom?’ is the question.

*Michael Imossan*

## **FORESHADOWING OUR BLEEDING**

*Because even when leaving, love is still sharp  
enough to bleed a person to death*

—Romeo Oriogun

Regardless, we walked through  
our uncertainties. The dusty roads of  
Kano. The razor-eyes of onlookers.  
The evening and its harsh wind.  
We fell into the city's wide arms like  
a branch knowing for the first time the  
brown hands of earth. You pointed  
me to the gates, to kofar Na'isa.  
You told me of blood and its place in  
the book of history. The evening began  
to harden. The streetlights flickered  
before standing still, just like  
your eyes blinked before our first kiss.  
Through your lips; the stories that  
you told, I knew your people.  
Knew the culture buried inside their veins.  
I loved them in the way I loved you.  
The city was moving fast. We ran after it.  
On our way back home, we saw a man  
playing a traditional harp. Heard the  
songs that rattled inside him.  
I did not understand but I stopped and

listened. There was sadness in his voice.  
There was something sharp inside him.  
I did not want to be cut yet I asked  
you to interpret. We are here now, at the  
end of the man's song which is also the  
end of our story. Fatima, how do we stop  
this bleeding?

*Adamu Yahuza Abdullah*

## **martyrdom**

i do not know if i'm living the right way or not.

i promise, this poem is not another failed attempt at trying to breathe right.

today, i do not know where my agitation would lead me.

i have carried enough light and laughter that are not mine.

once, NEPA took the light and my father could barely distinguish me from the night.

everything i approach runs away, including my shadow.

i'm the only thing that doesn't want me dead.

it's morning and the day opens like a bad poem.

if you read the news and didn't see the day closing my people into a coffin, then you didn't read long enough.

in the news, there is a headline full of ghosts.

there's a father too dead to be given a death tag.

there's a mother hawking the emptiness of seasons.

there's a country opening into a graveyard: in it, there are boys, like me, surviving on metaphors.

*Jakky Bankong-Obi*

## **SEASON OF WRECK AND PIVOTS**

*(Guzape Hills, circa Harmattan 2023)*

Time worn

sheaves of wild savanna, common flowers and my mood  
cede to the plainsong of old trade-winds and solitude.

*O Sirocco!* Plaintive and rote as *ama*'s solo chanting  
throeing the fields, again and again, harmattan returns  
on the same frequency as devastation, finds me pliant.

Perhaps, it is a debriefing. This pining, levanter's  
brittle bore paring November's long shadows  
to a cache of ruin – dust fog, aculate bristles,  
fragments of reams in the crosshairs – even the hardy bush  
-willows fail to resist the onslaught.

*Because of nostalgia  
or the requisite pruning of flesh?*

All season long, further losses swarm and throng.  
Weft with pathos, the days founder, foreclose  
on a vanishing purview. More friends withdrawing  
to furnish newer climes in the fallout. Each absence,  
tallying more dearth to the already etched-out landscape.

So what does it mean to be  
a ley, a woman, bereft and adrift? A lone

raptor in vantage, ravening, cycling, beating dark,  
dark wings against the void. Premonitioning of the depths  
*and pivots.*

NOTE FOR THE POEM:

*This poem paraphrases the lines  
“because of nostalgia  
or necessary pruning of flesh”  
from “Nowhere in the Skin Without this Bloody Embrace” by Jean  
D’Amerique.*

Abubakar Auwal

# A METAPHORICAL /¬/S/O/N/G¬ FOR A BLIND POEM

*¬i cut her body out of the scene when she was about to sleep  
in her blood and hid her in the echoes of her mother's du'a  
¬zaynab iliyasu bobi.*

a girl in khartoum ran to me with a whisper  
like a bullet, escaping it melting body from burning.  
i offered her a thousand *salam*. away from the geography  
of martyrs & hid the fire that arose from my tongue to  
quench a city, not too far from the nightmares. behind  
the wheels: we chiselled our tongues from blabbing,  
our eyes from striking the anatomy of missiles  
& our ears from burning to the rhythms of wails,  
of laughter & claps from bizarre of bombs & guns.  
deep into the scrotum, our lips are a photograph  
and a movie we filmed to tear our bodies; our souls  
to the wind. to hold our breaths from departing our chest;  
we name our faith to the colours of prayers.  
every prayer is an ice-cream, men lick to submit  
themselves to an unknown journal in peace.  
every prayer is an ice-block, we insert in the chest  
of little babies, tired of singing their thirst in a blind poem.

*Abubakar Auwal*

## **ART & SCIENCE EPILOGUE OF MY COUNTRY'S PEOPLE**

*¬my mouth is a passage to a country  
where light drags behind tales of the night¬ ojo olumide emmanuel.*

today, i swallowed my father's tale  
& i am a country, dancing with the fate  
of my intestine on a thousand ridges  
i dug my heart, my lungs and tongue  
to taste the saxophone rhythm in my throat.  
what's left of me are theories of both fire  
& war as the people in my buzzing  
tummy learnt the art and science hygiene  
of a sanctuary:

- i. tell my mother her weight is the gravity  
of my endless transfiguration.
- ii. tell my mother her tears metamorphose  
a river in the anatomical laboratory in my head.
- iii. tell my mother i've loosened the warm handshake  
intertwining my limbs with the shoulders of the gods.

tell my mother the gravity of my country's fate  
tell my mother the physics & the chemistry of my country's weight.

*Damilola Omotoyinbo*

## **picturesque**

give your waist to the beat of existence.  
today is not a day to mourn.  
the god of happiness waits at the door.  
barn leaps over the mountain of harvest,  
threshing floor is full of grains.  
look how shame wears its garb elegantly,  
how laughter holds onto the loins of joy,  
everything is happy, even the dusky robin.  
travel the world & let's meet  
at the end of this thin line—call it merriment.  
call it abstractionism—call it being flanked  
on both sides by joy. when we say the lilies  
bloom year round it means the seasons  
have favored us. it means we are in the good  
book of the gods. at this, even earth  
watches with glee.

*Pamilerin Jacob*

## **DAWN OVERTURE**

Like a slice of watermelon, I ate what you offered,  
pink & wet in that dark, I obeyed the commandment of want.

We belong to that hour, altered by our touch.  
With the dagger of a kiss, we exposed longevity & its ruse:

Is that Time I hear running outside the room  
alarmed by the fracture we have dealt it?  
What is an hour? What is a life

-time? All seasons compressed into a coin  
with which we repudiate its philosophy.

The way I listened to the lyric of your breath.  
The way nothing mattered except your hands.

Your face lit up like a torch, & I knew dawn was near.  
We are both believers in the necessity

of weeping. So, I obeyed the commandment  
of want, did not remove my tongue

until I felt a teardrop, yours, fall  
to my cheek. Responding to the light in your eyes,

a cock rose out of its coop, to crow.

*Taiwo Hassan*

## **silent prayers**

how much light can a night eat before a boy's ears become lost  
in the music of scared crickets?

it's 12 a.m

and my eyes start to float in fear - limbo - balancing  
forces heavy enough to turn a vessel of blood and bones  
into a house unsure of the power its walls have always held.

how do you trick a broken heart

into believing that grace, too, can be  
one of its valves?

my body has always been a stranger to this journey.

i open my eyes, and this big white room blooms into a rose garden.

i stretch into a piece of my mother's diary, unsure  
of what shade of red i'll find myself blotted with.

thorns find a friend in my feet and my soles don't struggle  
before morphing into a door.

but tell me, what home accepts pain as a guest?

i ask this, shrouded in dry leaves and painted in colors that taste like  
tears,

who knew a rainforest could one day be the perfect metaphor for  
this naked vessel?

this is where i concur,

where i become the only good thing to come out of this  
dream.

this time, my hands don't tremble and a cuckoo perches on it,  
unafraid, humming,

my mouth doesn't wander before finding harmonies in her  
song,  
each crack on my chapped lips breaks and silent prayers become a  
river, flowing out of them.

*Jide Badmus*

## **A PERFECT TIME**

I.

Dawn woke me  
with a thirst for  
fire in my throat.

They said it's too early  
to have a sip of Vodka.

It's never too early to pray,  
douse libation to the gods,  
burn your spirit in oblation.

II.

Light wanes into night.  
Bones sit in ashes  
of weary muscles.

They said it's too late  
to bathe in a cup of Latte.

It's never too late to kneel,  
plead a miracle for bleeding  
dreams & emaciated hopes.

III.

Stars have lost their place

in the sky of poetry. Rose is  
no longer a metaphor for love.

They said it's too early to  
discern a lover's motives.

It's never too early to savour a kiss,  
feel a heart race against your chest.  
There's never a perfect time to fall in love.

*Rahma O. Jimoh*

## **portrait**

there is a whirlwind  
knocking things.  
it moves my portrait  
from the wall.

maami picks a mug  
—black like her grief  
and pours Lipton.

her tongue picks the heat;  
life burns, charring  
everything.

i wear her oval face.  
my dresses fade first  
then my voice.

before my image fades

alarmed,  
she shut her brain  
into silence and  
paused the hands  
of her time.

she spoke daily

to my portrait;  
she won't let me vanish  
    into yesterday  
like the memory  
    of her mother  
she won't let me wither  
    into history.

there is a whirlwind  
placing things.  
it pins my portrait  
back to her mind.

*Rahma O. Jimoh*

## **in a conversation with maami about my birth name**

where she calls me my late sister's name  
who died before my pink fingers formed.

I carry the weight of incarnation—  
one who wears a smile  
and hold tissues of light to fill up  
the hole in her mother's heart.

i am learning how close christening is to prayer  
—a joyful act that a child is God's response  
but sometimes it is a curse, a burden;  
a pulley of histories not asked for.

Yet, my being is a cause of laughter  
for maami, my name, an assurance that  
she never sees the still form of a child again,  
once, i joked that a newborn cousin be  
called my name and maami scolded,  
"may we never have cause  
to name anyone, *remilekun* again."

*Ayeyemi Taofeek*

## **Akóredé / Akómolédè**

*(for King Sabeed Òṣùpá)*

Your throat the bowel of kéríkéri,  
the universe of sounds and symbols,  
of trees holding the crafts of spiders,  
of lakes that are mirrors of the moon,  
of cottages pregnant with enigmas & effigies.

My Adam's apple a lump of your aphorisms,  
Methuselahs form a queue by the entrance  
of your kitchen to eat from your pot of wisdom.  
Solomons throw in their hands  
through the window, for you know  
the right ratio of sounds to words.

Perhaps your song is a scripture,  
is an heritage, an open-door of  
secrets passed down through a long  
line of wise men. I grew up in the nest  
of your words and the first song  
of my fledging was your tongue twister:  
*tokinní tokéjì tórósagbe tórómònà*  
*ṣákáturà wérewèrè tó ntó gbalajà atudé.*

By this I mean there are pieces  
of your tongue in my mouth.

Father held my hand into your fire  
and I exploded into the aftermath of a  
popped corn. This morning as I placed  
my feet out for a twelve-hour road trip,

I slipped into your old song and  
swam through it till I got home.  
swam through it till I got home.  
swam through it till I got home.  
swam through it till I slept & woke.

*Ayeyemi Taofeek*

## **a brief meditation on shadow**

i plucked a milkflower,  
scribbled my name on the back of my hand  
with its juice,  
sprinkled some dry sands on it & blew its vestige away.  
the second day, a mammoth temple has towered over me.  
in this boulevard,  
i am on my feet but my shadow is prostrating.  
sometimes it would be swimming in front of me,  
sometime it would drag itself behind me,  
sometimes it shrinks into a stool beneath my feet.  
what is shadow?  
shadow is a pouch of our secrets,  
is an enigmatic sheath holding swords and arrows,  
is an alcove of suppressed gifts & artefacts  
flowing in the veins of man,  
is a rosary of hundred poems moved by unseen fingers,  
is the water we wade through into forbidden territories.  
shadow reminds me of kissing the blackstone anytime  
i locked my lips in between my lover's,  
reminds me that judas pointed at jesus with a kiss.  
& yes, in the dark of man's life,  
shadow is the acknowledgement of light.

*Martins Deep*

## **LET THERE BE MISREMEMBERANCE IN THE CLOSING OF MY EYES**

Eigengrau veil lets me through, and here I am; eyes

and gaze split into all the lives I wish I never outgrew.

Self at fifteen, I apologize. How quickly the world

moved on without you. Growth as euphemism for dying.

Your stupidity was courage. Body at twenty, we have

a missing tooth now. I carry absence in my mouth.

Diary at twenty-two, father is dead. He is right.

You must listen. The books from Nagarta Bookstore

will not save you. O, what sigh will return to me

with a wisp of Anietie's scent before his amnesia?

My skin is a register of lost things. Nostalgia is longing

moonwalking. A boy from 2005 asks me what

I remember about the future. I say nothing, swallowing  
a lump the size of the bullet that tore through  
his flesh fifteen years later. Explains my indigestion. Or maybe,  
my stomach ulcer. My curse is to live clearing my throat  
of his blood clot. What note can I not strike in the songs  
for loss? What is this animal in me raised solely on keepsakes  
and missing things? What is this ritual of reaching into  
an old pond of dead fingerlings and touching only water  
to distort my reflection?

## CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES

**Abubakar Auwal** is a multiple award-winning writer and author of *Portrait Of gods As Metaphors*, 1st runner-up Nigeria Prize for Teen Authors (Poetry, 2024). He was the winner of the Splendors of Dawn Poetry and Short Story Competition (February-April 2023) and Arting Arena Poetry Chapbook Contest. Also a finalist for BPKW Poetry Contest, NYTH Poetry Contest, & longlist Brigitte Poirson Poetry Prize, and others. He's the Editor-in-Chief at *New Voices* Magazine, Founder/President of Nigerlites Spoken Word Artists as well as the librarian of Hill-Top Creative Arts Foundation. You can access some of his works through this link; [@abuba\\_karauwal](https://linktr.ee/AbubakarAuwal) Instagram — @saddiq89 Twitter.

**Abdulbasit Oluwanishola**, SWAN V, is a young Nigerian poet and essayist who writes from Ilorin, Kwara State. He's studying Agriculture at Usmanu Dafodiyo University Sokoto. He won the PCU Eid Celebration on-the-spot poetry contest 2023 and was shortlisted in the Dawn Project Writing Contest 2023. His works appear in or are forthcoming from *A Long House, Poetry Journal, Poetry Column, Ninshār Arts, Visual Verse, Rowayat, Haven Spec, World Voices Magazine, Last Stanza, The Marbled Sigh, Invisible City* and elsewhere. He tweets @OO1810107.

**Abu Bakr Sadiq** is the author of *Leaked Footages* (University of Nebraska Press, 2024), which won the 2023 Sillerman First Book Prize for African Poetry. He is the winner of the 2022 IGNYTE award for Best Speculative Poetry, The Paulann Petersen Award for

Poetry 2024, Margaret Gibson Poet Laureate Poetry Award 2023, and a finalist for the Evaristo Prize for African Poetry, 2023. His work has been nominated for the SFPA Rhysling Award, Pushcart Prize, Best New Poets, and is published in *Boston Review*, *Poetry Ireland Review*, *The Fiddlehead*, *MIZNA*, *FIYAH*, *Uncanny Magazine*, *Augur Magazine*, *Fantasy Magazine*, and elsewhere.

**Adamu Yahuza Abdullahi**, THE PLOB, TPC V, is a poet from Kwara, Nigeria. He was a pioneer resident of the Muktar Aliyu Art Residency, Minna, Niger state, Nigeria. He is a Best of the Net Nominee, and second-place winner of both the first edition of Hassan Sulaiman Gimba Esq Poetry Prize and the Bill Ward Poetry Prize for Emerging Writers 2023. His works are published in *Lolwe*, *Strange Horizons*, *Chestnut Review*, *The Temz Review*, and other places. He is on X [Twitter] as @yahuza\_theplob and Instagram as @official\_yahuzeey.

**Ahmed Bagidi Latifah** is a literary and arts enthusiast from Kwara, Nigeria. She studies literature at Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto. She is obsessed with books and those who write them. When she is not reading, she might be found practising journalism, believing it to be an arrow that stops disasters. Latifah is a member of PCU club UDUS and one of the winners of the UDUS 2023 poetry contest. Latifah is a former Assistant General Secretary of NAKS (UDUS chapter) and presently, the Vice President of the Association.

**Chinemerem Prince Nwankwo**, SWAN IV, is an apprentice poet, who's currently a final year student of the Department of History

and International Studies, University of Uyo, Nigeria. He is the Poetry Editor, *The Cloudscent Journal* and an Assistant Poetry Editor, *Arkore Arts*. He was adjudged Honorary Mention of the Akachi Chukwuemeka Prize for Literature 2024 and shortlisted for the Idumaese Alao Prize for Literature 2024. He tweets @CPNwankwo.

**Damilola Omotoyinbo** (Frontier XIX), is a Nigerian creative writer and software engineer. She is a fellow of the Ebedi International Writers' Residency, the winner of the SprinNg Writing contest, a co-winner of the Writing Ukraine Prize, the winner of the 2023 Writivism Poetry Prize, a joint winner for the SEVHAGE-KSR Hyginus Ekwuazi Poetry Prize and a finalist for the 2022 African Writer's Awards. She has been nominated for Best of the Net and Pushcart prizes. Damilola has work published/forthcoming on *Lolwe*, *Olongo*, *The Deadlands*, *Ake Review*, *AHC*, *Torch Literary Arts*, *Agbowó*, *NND Poetry Column*, *Mande*, *20.35 Africa*, and elsewhere. Damilola studied Biochemistry, and her happy places are Pinterest, YouTube and The Church. Tweets @\_Damilola\_O.

**Fasasi Ridwan** is a Nigerian poet of Yoruba descent. His works have appeared/are forthcoming in *Eunoia Review*, *Lucent Dreaming*, *Afribill Press*, *SprinNg*, *Eunoia Review*, *Kalahari Review*, and elsewhere. He is a member of *The Swan Collective*. Find him on Twitter (X) @Ibn\_Yushau44.

**Idoko Saddam Ifeanyi** is a poet and article writer from Enugu state. He mostly researches and finds solace in musing and scribbling.

Saddam's poem has appeared in Arts Illustrated as one of the four winners of the Haiku Chapter Contest 2021. He studies Common Law and Shari'a at Usmanu DanFodiyo University Sokoto.

**Jakky Bankong-Obi** is from Kakwe-Beebo, a village on the corridors of the Cross River rainforest, Nigeria. Her chapbook *What Still Yields* was chosen by Kwame Dawes and Chris Abani for publication in the New-Generation African Poets box sets (2023). Jakky is Poetry Editor for the Liberian litmag, *Pepper Coast Literary* and co-curator for *Poetry Sango-Ota*, a Nigerian Journal curating poetry of place, nature and otherworldly geographies. A media consultant living & writing from Abuja, Jakky's work has appeared and is forthcoming in *The Poetry Review*, *The Kalahari Review*, *Reliquae Journal*, *Pidgeonholes*, *Moremi Review*, *Gutter Magazine* and *Memento: An Anthology of Contemporary Nigerian Poetry* and others.

**Jide Badmus** is an engineer and a poet inspired by beauty and destruction. He believes that things in ruins were once beautiful. Exploring themes around sensuality and healing, Jide writes from Lagos and tweets @bardmus. He is the author of several books including *Obaluaye* (FlowerSong Press, 2022) and *What Do I Call My Love for Your Body* (Roaring Lion Newcastle, 2022). Founder of INKspiredng, Poetry Editor for Con-scio Magazine, mentor in the SprinNG Fellowship, and member, board of advisors for Libretto Magazine. A Best of the Net and Pushcart Prize nominee.

**Káyòdé** is a Nigerian and an African literature enthusiast, interested in Academics and Yorùbá translation. His works have been

published/are forthcoming in *icefloe press*, *Olongo, Atélewó, Poetry Sango Ota, isele, Ake Review*, South Florida, and elsewhere. He was shortlisted for the Ake Climate Change Poetry Prize (2022). He tweets @kayodeAyobamii.

**Martins Deep**, poet, photographer, and digital artist, is a graduate of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, who is currently pursuing an MFA in Creative Writing at the University of Memphis, TN. His works have graced/are forthcoming in *Magma Poetry, Strange Horizons, Palette Poetry, Frontier Poetry, Fiyah, december, Lolwe, Tahoma Literary Review, Augur Magazine*, and elsewhere. Connect with him on X @martinsdeep1.

**Mazeed Mukhtar Oyeleye** is a creative writer and journalist whose works have appeared/ are forthcoming in *The Litlight's Road to Success* and SprinNG's *Come Back Safely* anthologies, *World Voices Magazine, Allpoetry, Book O'clock Review, Spare Parts Literary* and elsewhere. He bagged a Best of the Net nomination and made the longlist for the SEVHAGE/Hyginus Ekwuazi Prize for Poetry in 2023, and tweets @mazeedulkhayr.

**Michael Imossan** is a poet, playwright and editor of Ibibio origin. He is the author of the award-winning chapbook *For the Love of Country and Memory* (Poetry Columnnd, 2022) as well as the pamphlet *A Prelude to Caving* (Konyashamsrumi, 2023). His full-length manuscript *Broken in Three Places* was named semi-finalist for the Sillerman Prize for African Poetry, 2023, after which he was declared winner in 2024 for the manuscript *All that Refuses to*

*Die*. He won the 2022 Radical Arts Endless Sky Competition and is a recipient of the PEN International Writers grant.

**Naziru Sulaiman** is an eighteen-year-old Nigerian poet and Spoken word artist. He is the current vice president of Nigerlites Spoken Words Artists and a member of the Hilltop Creative Arts Foundation. Naziru is currently a 100-level law student at the Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto.

**Oladosu Michael Emerald**, artist, art teacher, actor, athlete, photographer, and poet, is the author of the poetry collection *Every Little Thing That Moves*. He is an art editor at *Surging Tide Magazine*, a first reader at *Radon Journal*, and a multidisciplinary artist whose creative pursuits span digital, musical, and visual art. Michael's works have been published or are forthcoming in numerous magazines. Among his achievements are winning the Off the Limit Art Contest and the SprinNg Annual Poetry Contest, earning second runner-up in the Fireflies Poetry Contest, and being a finalist in competitions such as the AprilCentaur Essay Contest, the Arting Arena Poetry Chapbook Contest, and the Paradise Gate House Poetry Contest. You can connect with him on Twitter (@garricologist) and Instagram (@garrycologist).

**Oluwatosin Oladapo** is a passionate lover of storytelling in all its forms. As a Content Analyst, she finds no greater joy than deconstructing how skilled writers, poets, filmmakers and musicians craft their works to educate, entertain, and stir the depths of the human soul. While her life may not have been the brightest colors, she spends each day recouping trauma-stolen time and

reconstructing herself. Subsequently, she celebrates soul-stirring art and creativity.

**Omoniyi Taiye Aishat** is a poet passionate about exploring (mental health) through her writing. She has been writing since her second year in the university after attending the Sokoto Book and Arts festival and is eager to share her voice with a wider audience. Outside of poetry, she enjoys reading and crafting. She recently completed her BSc degree in Microbiology from Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, and currently resides in Ilorin, Kwara State.

**Pamilerin Jacob**'s poems have appeared in *POETRY*, *The Rumpus*, *Agbowó, Frontier, 20.35 Africa*, & elsewhere. He is the Founding Curator of *Poetry Column-NND*, and *Poetry Sango-Ota*.

**Rahma O. Jimoh** is a poet and storyteller from Nigeria. She was a 2023 fellow in the Undertow Writing workshop, a winner of the 2022 Lagos-London Poetry Competition. She has been published or has works forthcoming in *The Slowdown Show*, *Salt Hill Journal*, *Agbowo*, *Ake Review*, *Micro Podcast*, *Tinderbox Poetry*, *Lucent Dreaming*, *Isele Magazine*, *Kalahari Review*, *Brittle Paper*, *Tab Journal* & others. She is a SprinNg writing fellowship mentor, a poetry editor at Olumo Review and a prose reader at *Chestnut Review*.

**Rasaq Malik Gbolahan** is a Nigerian poet and translator. He is a co-founder of *Àtélèwó*, the first digital journal devoted to publishing work written in the Yorùbá language. His poems have been published or forthcoming in journals such as *Prairie Schooner*,

*Ploughshares*, *The Nation*, and elsewhere. He won Honorable Mention in 2015 Best of the Net for his poem 'Elegy', published in One. In 2017, Rattle and Poet Lore nominated his poems for the Pushcart Prize. He was shortlisted for the Brunel International African Poetry Prize 2017 and was a finalist for Sillerman First Book for African Poets 2018.

**Samuel A. Adeyemi**'s chapbook, *Rose Ash*, was selected by Kwame Dawes and Chris Abani for the New-Generation African Poets chapbook Box Set 2023. A Best of the Net Nominee and Pushcart Nominee, he is the winner of the Nigerian Students Poetry Prize 2021. His works have appeared in *Palette Poetry*, *Frontier Poetry*, *Chestnut Review*, *Evergreen Review*, *Agbowo*, *Isele Magazine*, *Lolwe*, and elsewhere.

**Sulyman Abdulkabeer**, poet and writer, writes from Kwara State. He studies English language at Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto. His works have appeared on *BetterThan Starbucks*, *FieryScribe Review*, *The Africa* and others. He is a winner of MELLSA's Poetry Contest 2022 and tweets @Aduagba Agaka

**Sumayyah Muhammad Shuaib** is a campus journalist and an aspiring Nigerian poet currently based in Abuja, Nigeria. She hails from Odu-Ochele, a small village in Dekina, Kogi State, Nigeria. She is an Agriculture student at Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto, with intentions to major in Agricultural Economics. She writes to express her thoughts, tell the unknown stories of her hometown and document history. She is the co-winner of the February 2021 PIN

monthly Poetry Contest and a fellow at the Spring Writing Fellowship 2024. She tweets @Bntuu\_Muhammad.

**S. Su'eddie Vershima Agema** is a multiple award-winning creative writer who was adjudged one of the leading Nigerian poets in 2022 after his book, *Memory and the Call of Waters* won the Association of Nigerian Authors Poetry Prize and was a finalist for the [NLNG] Nigerian Prize for Literature, one of Africa's most prestigious prizes worth \$100,000. He is the curator of the Benue Book and Arts Festival (Nigeria and the United Kingdom). He is @sueddieagema across social media channels and also @sueddieofficial on Instagram.

**Taiwo Hassan** is a writer of Yorùbá descent, a poet and a vocalist. A 4x Best Of The Net Nominee, his poems have appeared in *Uncanny Magazine*, *trampset*, *Kissing Dynamite*, *Lucent Dreaming*, *The Shore*, *Brittle Paper*, *Dust Poetry Magazine*, and others. He's also an undergraduate student of Demography and Social Statistics at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ilé-Ifé, Osun State, Nigeria. His first chapbook, *Birds Don't Fly For Pleasure* is published by River Glass Books.

**Taofeek "Aswagaawy" Ayeyemi** is a Nigerian lawyer, writer and author of the chapbook, *Tongueless Secrets* (Ethel Press, 2021) and a collection *aubade at night or serenade in the morning* (Flowersong Press, 2021). A BotN and Pushcart Prize nominee, his works have appeared in CV 2, *Lucent Dreaming*, *Up-the-Staircase Quarterly*, *FERAL*, *ARTmostterrific*, *Banyan Review*, *Conscio*, *Porter House Review*, and elsewhere. He won the 2021 Loft Books Flash Fiction Competition, was 2nd Place in the 2021 *Porter House Review*

Poetry Contest, and got an Honorable Mention in the 2021 Okuno-hosomichi Soka Matsubara Haiku Contest and 2020 Stephen A. DiBiase Poetry Prize among others. He is @Aswagaawy on Twitter.

**Zaynab Iliyasu Bobi**, Frontier I, is a Nigerian Hausa multidisciplinary artist, poet, and a licenced Medical Laboratory Scientist from Bobi. She is the author of *Cadaver of Red Roses* (O, Miami Books) that won the 2023 Derricotte/Eady Chapbook Prize; winner of the inaugural Folorunsho Editor's Poetry Prize 2023; Labari Poetry Prize 2023; the inaugural Akachi Chukwuemeka Prize for Literature 2023, the Gimba Suleiman Hassan Gimba ESQ Poetry Prize, 2022 and the first beneficiary of Carolyn Micklem Scholarship. Her works appeared or are forthcoming in *Strange Horizons*, *FIYAH*, *Uncanny Magazine*, *Poetry Daily*, *Agbowo*, *Poetry Wales*, *Torch Literary Arts*, *Arc Poetry Magazine*, and elsewhere. Her second chapbook *Uncensored Snapshots* is forthcoming with Chestnut Review (2025). She is active on X @ZainabBobi.

# THE POETRY CLUB

USMANU DANFODIYO UNIVERSITY, SOKOTO



## Contributors

Fasasi Ridwan | Adamu Yahuza Abdullah | Idoko Saddam Ifeanyi | Ahmed Bagidi Latifah | Sulyman Abdulkabeer | Aishhat Omiriy | Suymayyah Muhammad Shuaib | Naziru Sulaiman | Olawatosin Oladapo | Abdllbasit Ouwanishola | Michael Imossan | Mazeed Mukhtar Oyeleye | Chinemerem Prince Nwankwo | Ayobami Kayde | Abubakar Auwal | Jakky Bankong-Obi | Zaynab Iliyasu Bobi | Rasaq Malik Gbolahan | Abu Bakr Sadiq | Pamilerin Jacob | Samuel A. Adeyemi | Jide Badmus | Rahmah O. Jimoh | Damilola Omotoyinbo | Martins Deep | Taiwo Hassan | Michael Emerald | Taofeek Ayeyemi.

