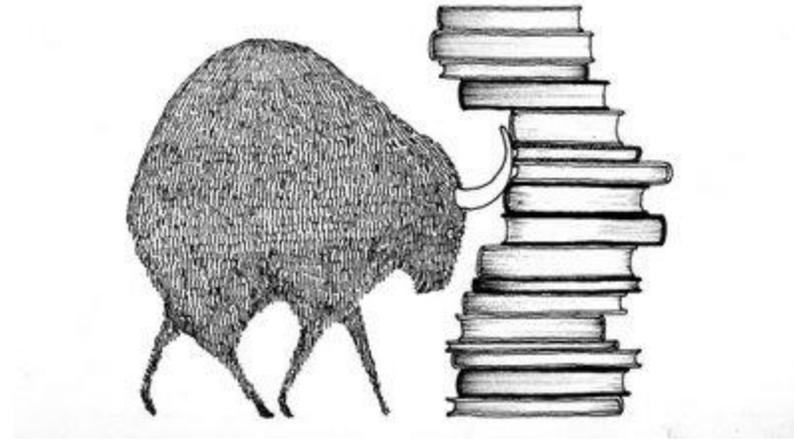


THE ECONOMY OF SOUND

Saraba's Poetry Chapbook



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July 2009

Poetry is an economy...

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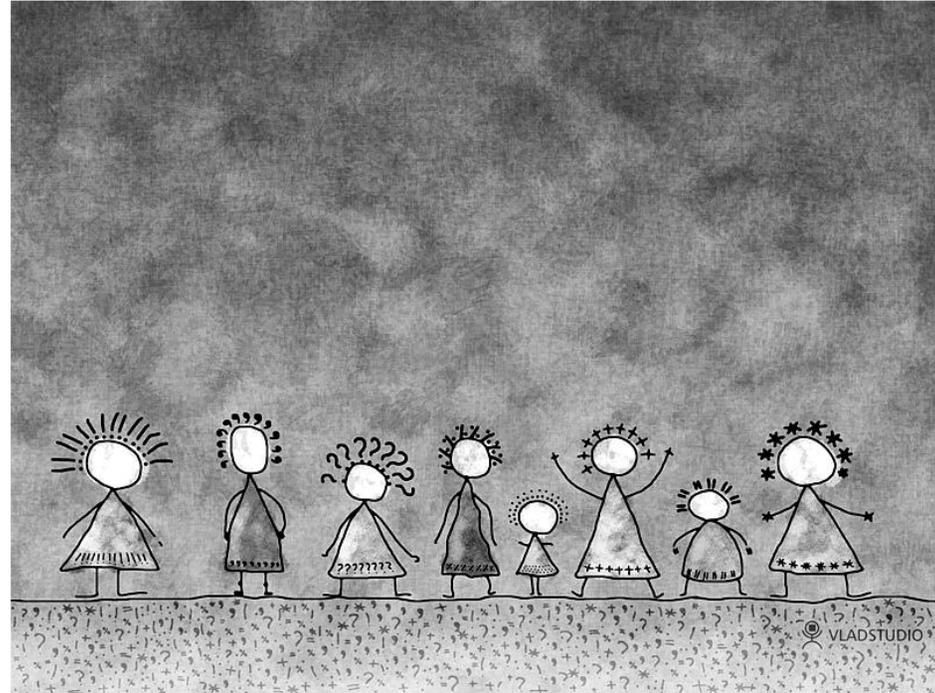
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Saraba publishes works by emerging writers, and has since February 2009 published a free electronic literary magazine.

For more, visit www.sarabamag.com

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Saraba Electronic Publishers

2009

Miasma: A Vision within a Dream

I Adio, Omo oni 'bi yo,
 I had a dream.
 In it, I went to a far-off country
 A land bare, treeless, endless,
 and the skies were grey.
 In this day-night,
 I heard a voice of the mourning,
 it was heavy with sorrow,
 and broken in places.
 What I heard, I shall quote:

The Rape of Gideolu

The wells now dry are filled with dust.
 Dust, dust, Ah! Dust.
 The hag's breast, long unsuckled,
 hang down, an ungainly sight.
 Once they stood, twin hills, firm,
 at the dawn of morning.

Her grown sons were first to rape her,
 then they fed fat,
 off the proceeds of her whoring.
 Then they fell out, drunken.
 Woe! Dog ate Dog,
 for they are no men.
 Now blind, she dwells in a windowless hut,
 where there is no difference
 between dark and night.
 Her fence is broken,
 and none will care for her,
 none to cover her nakedness.
 She has long been a reproach to her neighbours
 in the Committee of Nations.

Epilogue

I awoke, stabbed in the chest by fear.

Adebiyi Olusolape

Babel

Why do the nations imagine a vain thing?
They have conspired against the Holy one of Israel.
Their voices join in unison,
a great shout of a mighty host.
Their noise has gone out through the earth,
it has descended to plumb Heaven,
it has ascended to reach Hades,
and deeper is their madness, still,
such that the whole earth is set on its head.
The Lord of Hosts,
Mighty is He,
He shall come in all his glory
And He shall switch off the internet.

College Daze

I

"The waiting place..."
—Theodor Geisel

The boy sitting in the empty hallway:
nameplates, closed doors, regular intervals,
bulletin boards (Golgotha of faculty rosters).
The lonely broken bench,
pointing to the DO NOT LOITER sign.
A place of echoes,
insects of the night,
geckos in the light.
One can hear the frog prevail against the cricket,
and the quiet swallow it in turn.
In the end,
even that is overcome.
Time happens to all things.

II

"I am always ready to learn although I do not always like being taught."
—Winston Churchill

I am not the brightest star in this firmament,
but I am bright enough for that to hurt, a lot.
I am not the most diligent labourer on this field,
but I will make the daily quota,
Insha Allah.

The architecture of *Daedalus* >>

it has been reproduced in walls of ivory,
to preserve the memory for progeny,
that our sons may be educated,
and our daughters too.
But if I take the steps seriatim, as society dictates,
At the appointed time
I shall break into the outside world
Befuddled and unprepared

III

Aluta Continua, Victoria Ascerta!

"...waater, lightiii
fuudu, hausiii..."
the New Red Army marches,
returned from before the perestroika,
there is passion in their voice of speech, of song
Naked ulterior motives,
clothed in silken ideas of dust:
the rhetoric of forgotten sages,
memorized passages from musty books—
But the New, Improved Village Headmaster is neither perturbed
nor impressed
his is this backwater campus,
his word is law,
his word will stand.
stet
nemine contradicente
Otherwise, >>

>

school closed, *sine die*

IV

"...I have been human six days, but only sometimes."

—Chris Abani

Today,
I had too little to spend,
too hungry to understand
all I tried to read.
And then,
mother called me,
in the middle of the day,
she called me.
There was hope in her voice,
a debtor had come to defray...
she would send me money,
unfailingly, next Monday.
She had news,

> >

of weddings and births,
cousins and friends.
I am reassured yet again,
that I too,
I am human.
I call to gold,
Gold is mute.
I call to cloth,
Cloth is mute.
I call to the seven rivers,
The seven hills and the winds,
They are mute,
They are mute too.
Only people answer,
*Only people matter.*¹

1. This contains elements of a translation in F.K. Buah's *History of West Africa*.

†NB: Both *Miasma* and *Babel* have been previously published on www.60minuteswiththegeeks.com.



Slap

/THE LORD OF HOSTS/MIGHTY IS HE/HE SHALL COME IN ALL HIS GLORY/AND HE SHALL SWITCH OFF THE INTERNET/

The Two Trees

On either side of my path lie two massive trees:
Their immense stature covering the perspective
Of the path that lie before me
In my journey...

On the right is the gorgeous flower tree
Dazzlingly radiant in the iridescence of beauty:
Its branches display multiple colours of existence
And like glazing diamond its bark spark in splendour.
None ever passed the path before, even after me
Without halting to ponder the inexpressible beauty
Of the awesome flower tree;
Nor did any pass without wishing to be, for a flickering moment
A radiant flower on those gorgeous branches.

On the left is the firmly rooted fruit tree:
Dull colours and transparent background.
Its features blend with the green fibrous surrounding
And its branches spread wide

>>

Displaying some succulent fat fruits hanging vigorously.
Yet none passed to admire any wonder of the fruit tree
And none passed without plucking a robust fruit.

“How everyone stops to admire my awesome beauty;
Many spend precious moments praying
To be tiny flowers on my branch.
How mighty I am, not lying on a dull terrain
Unnoticed and yet plundered!” said the flower tree to the fruit.

“Quite right you are there my beautiful companion;
Yet, though it’s true that I stand unnoticed
The wise alone know that after the day’s sun
You shall wither and be bare of any wonder.
And lacking Seeds you perish.”

Having heard the dialogue
I coursed down the path before me,
tilting leftwards and rightwards

Arthur Chigbo Anyaduba

Beauty of Feeling

How does it feel to be God, sitting in the splendour of power,
Wielding the staff of authority, dictating the laws,
Glorying in beauty and worship,
In the sovereignty of divine affluence?

How does it feel to be Devil, leading the vilest Revolution
In challenge of a tyrannical All-mighty order;
Being the scorn of creation and the emblem of Evil,
Despised for even the purest of acts?

Or how does it feel to be Human, the victim of the Two,
Cast in-between the dictates of choices never owned,
Made to choose between the Extreme Wills of Fate
And Judged for never ever choosing Right?

Thus is the beauty of feeling, relishing what we never are
Nor ever could be

/...DICTATING THE LAWS.../



AYOADE ADEOYE

Every Silent Majority

Every silent majority
Speaks loudly
As we choose to hold our peace
We vote for what we loathe



/EVERY SILENT MAJORITY.../

Ayoade Adeoye

Lamentations

I am not afraid
Only petrified at tomorrow
Of unfolding events too
My husband, who will hold me
As I lie alone

But I am not alone
Only lonely
The pillow at my side is no longer warm
And smells of soap
Mine is wet

Still I will not cry
But tears freely flow
As grieve, I must
Since you were my world
And you walked out of it
Took it all away
Without notice

>>

I have gone quiet
Yet I am talkative
Only to my pillow
I tell him that I'm angry
That I am sad
He doesn't talk back
I miss that

I want to fight you again
To do that, we must be in the same world
But I don't want to fight again
If I apologize
Will you come back?
Please "un-die"
I hate the black

You are the late Lagbaja
But you are not late
You are never coming
And the tears are never stopping
The memories never fading
Your face ever before me
Your finger prints streaking my heart
My widowed heart

Ayoade Adeoye

Breathe

So if the pain goes away
Will I breathe again?
I'm not sure I remember how

Even if it will
How will it?
This pain has become my breath

So here's a thought,
Will you steal my breath away?
And fill my mind too

But the pain of you
Is more than double the now
Alas! I breathe no more



SO IF THE PAIN GOES AWAY/WILL I BREATHE AGAIN?/I'M NOT SURE I REMEMBER HOW

We All Were Casualties

(For the Victims of Ife Bank Robbery)

Casual thieves,
Uncouth and feckless,
Armed with Dutch courage
Heisted a drowsy town,
A convalescent of genocide

Gunshots from shot guns,
Many lives shot gone,
Ledgers of corpses and casualties,
Assaulted bodies bearing lead.

Led by eve's spawns,
Ruthless, Unfettered
They made to steal yuletide,
Leaving in its stead angst and tears

>>

Tears of widows and orphans
Rend confined atmospheres,
Customary sympathizers depart,
Genuine apathy sprouts

Sprouts of metamorphosed Fagins,
Our virgin youths are devil's apprentices,
Cradling auctioned consciences
In the metallic curriculum of firearms

Fire harms,
When the lawless unleash mayhem;
Legal entities flee freely
From brilliant sparks of ammunition

Masses passively plead mercy,
In communal tongues of hope,
Relatives awaiting closed theatres,
We all were casualties.

Damilola Ajayi

Clinical Blues II

I know of clinical meetings,
Not where doctors wage
Wars against like with literature
But where diseases wield
Their many forms in a game
Of hide and sick

I know of clinical sittings,
Where humanity is hors d'oeuvre
To refresh palates of HIV,
TB and other invited guests

I know of clinical beatings
Where patients are restrained facedown,
Where ignorance and other microorganisms,
Patiently whip man into coma
And onlookers use PET (peeping tom) microscope
To witness death's hospitality

I know of clinical heavens
Where the hopes of doctors
Levitate to after they die.

Damilola Ajayi

Am a Mess

Am a mess
Like a deserted night club:
Roaches and butts in ashtrays,
Broken beer and whisky bottles,
Used condoms,
Discarded capsules;
Left-overs of binges, orgies
And sweet misadventures

Am a mess,
Like regurgitated chyme,
Thrown against peristalsis
From organic recesses,
Splattered on concrete

Am a mess,
Like an erstwhile intact dung
Grazed by a hasty foot,
Devoid of its consistency,
Smearing sand and soles

Am a mess
Like a criss-cross of incest,
Running parallel routes on a family tree,
Where fathers are brothers
And grandmothers, mothers

Am a mess,
Like a prodigal
Who squandered till he squalored,
Laid in a pig's sty,
Dehumanized into mere livestock

Am a mess,
Like a nation blindfolded by
Her reins men,
Led backward through dark corridors
Of desolation

Am a mess,
Like a shooting dream,
Caught down by webs of
Circumstance,
Left in frost,
Paralysed

Am a mess,
Like a treasured earthenware
That lost its bottom and contents
To gravity

Am a mess.

>>



Face

/LIKE A SHOOTING DREAM,/CAUGHT DOWN BY WEBS OF/CIRCUMSTANCE,/LEFT IN FROST,/PARALYSED/

Looking No Further

I have tried to be
a magician
crossing seven seas
and oceans, having
reputed talisman
from India and Bahrain:
but I am here
in this room I made
twenty years before.

I took upon the thought
of visiting the moon during
my honeymoon, placing
a self-made flag and
claiming to my sweetheart
how wonderful it is:
but I have never left
or felt another existence
except the feather on this wall.

>>

It is not presumptuous to think
that I could write a masterpiece,
along glorious shelves my name
to be found, to speak as though
I held a vial that ran the world,
and move around countries
with ease: but this typewriter
placed on this table last century
has grown clumsy, with friction.

To think I have become this,
a self-cursed man, riding terribly
in mistakes of final years,
to think I can watch the ocean
fading, and be void of tears, to
think I have no finger to hold
a pen; to think all these
and remain sane, alive,
I am without words and grateful.

I'll look no further
I've found a place.

Emmanuel Iduma

Thoughts-in-Transit

Could have been the road
with endless highways and
junctions, or the sky
with towering hopes.

Could have been the girl
whose voice sounds like
Juliet's must've when
Romeo took in the knife.

Could have been the older
girl, with arms gripping
in wide succession, motherly
but firm, at least human.

>>

Could have been school
system of grand dotage
starting with phone calls
ending with care less.

Could have been offices
air conditioners and reception
men of Festac '77 and
money to splash and alcohol.

Could have been Magnificence
that old parley, sees unseen
knows, even hears the silent;
who knows, could have been.

Could have been me
staring at this void feeling
dreams touching the cold floor
not wanting to write.

Emmanuel Iduma

Ghost Arrival

When the ghosts came
I was sitting on the cubicle
thinking of a woman
whose love I'd missed.

They shut my arm
in their manacles
with garrulous attention
as though I were a fool.

Until the ghosts left
I could slap the gecko
scurrying on the great gulf;
they left and I stopped.

It's the ghosts I attribute
my beautiful essentials
the coherent Jesuit
of my grand career.

So now, the attention I got
first garrulous, now grand,
has made my age like
the grand canyon in orbit.



The Two and the Nightmare

/I TOOK UPON THE THOUGHT/OF VISITING THE MOON DURING/MY HONEYMOON, PLACING/A SELF-MADE FLAG AND/
CLAIMING TO MY SWEETHEART/HOW WONDERFUL IT IS/

Still Here

Why am I standing here
Before the break of day
Staring up at the misted sky
Hearing the bats squealing there

Why am I standing here
Looking around for such
Knowing my desolation and pain
Before the lights, blinding, come

Why am I here
Is it to catch the dew, ride the morning
The worm or the mushroom
My legs wet to the ankles in dew

Some body please tell me
To the stranger who is alone, with
No place and every place to turn, what reasons give
Before the morning rays come

I don't know why I am here
Yet I must be
And until there are no rays again
I must stay perplexed

Olaoluwa Akinoluwa

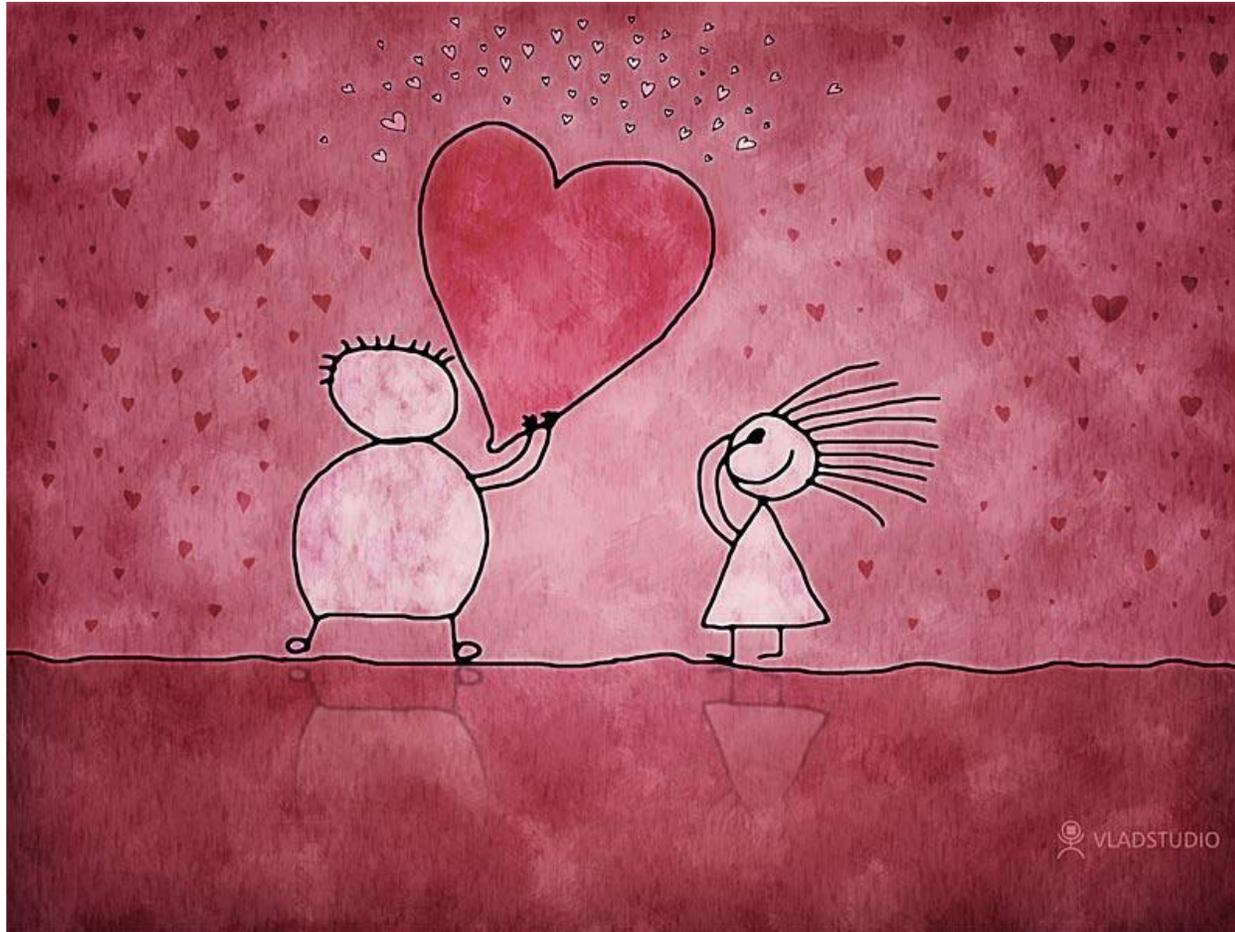
Words from Heart

These words are mine
I have desperately sought inspiration
In the green of the hills and the red of sunset
And I come away having only these
But be sure these speak my heart
The words are mine.

Polluted by a horde of templates
I have tried to write a masterpiece
Frustrated by care for words that never fit
The blankness of a page that is my mind
But passion straining at the leash, what the words tell
And they are mine

They are my own
Though they be unadorned
Like the sounds of remnant thunder or the fall of a leaf
The candour of a child or the face of a full moon,
Take it as it sounds; take the sounds of each word
The words are mine.

And these are my words
Hear my tongue only speak it
See it not on another's pen
This I have toiled for
My song, my verse
I love you



The Two and the Valentine

/AND THESE ARE MY WORDS/THIS I HAVE TOILED FOR/MY SONG, MY VERSE/I LOVE YOU/

AUTHORS

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OLAOLUWA AKINLOLUWA is editor of *Saraba's* forthcoming arts e-paper, *Suburbia*.

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POETRY'S AN ECONOMY



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