Poetry Series

Eche Ononukwe

- poems -

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Eche Ononukwe (22 November 1984)

LIFE AND BIRTH

Popularly known as Magikpluz (simply Magik) , Eche Ononukwe was born at Bariga, Lagos to the family of Ononukwe. He is a native of Umuezukwe of Awo-Omamma in Oru East Local Government Area of Imo state (Nigeria) . His father., Boniface, died in 2005, when he (Eche) was about to gain admission to the Bayelsa Science and Arts as a polytechnic student.

ACADEMIC DISPOSITION

Eche Ononukwe attended Abule Ayo Primary School, situated at Bariga. He exhibited extra-ordinary performance during his primary school days which lasted between 1990 and 1996. Although he was not among the school prefects, he enjoyed the privilege accrued to the position.

In 1996, when he gained entrance to Howell Memorial Grammar School, he took his studies so serious. This was so reflected in his performance in class that his classmates became interested in having him as a friend; Eche was so selective in his choice of friendship that he turned down the request of many as that might influence his personality negatively. Eche faced a serious financial set-back at his final year in the Junior Class to the extent that it affected his academic performance, although he managed to be promoted to the Senior Class; but still, his financial statue became worsened, and so he failed his promotion exam. His failure gingered him to work much harder for his studies. Eche got lots of experience and skills above any of his classmates. This drew much attention from all and sundry, especially his classmates and his teachers who became inquisitive to know more about him. His favourite then was mathematics and his mastery and success were attributed to his cousin, Uche John Gilbert Ileozor, who taught him the rules and application of the subject. Eche also developed interest in English, when he was influenced by Shakespear's ''Macbeth'', ''and ''Merchant of Venice''. Yet he preferred History to Literature or English. As a brilliant student, Eche was the second Chief Block Prefect appointed by the missionary school, Bishop Howell Memorial Grammar School. He also made a tremendous effort in his studies so much so that he represented his school in debates, drama and quizzes. His last outing was a debate contest conducted by the NTA Channel 5, Lagos to which he could not qualify his school for the national one, having failed in the contest.

Owing to a financial crisis, Eche travelled to Onitsha to answer a call from his elder brother, Chinedu, who promised to help out. Eche wrote his GCE O' level after a year stay with his brother. He also embarked on self-education in preparation for his pre-University admission. He had an encouraging score

of 259 but failed to gain entrance to study Law at NAU. Out of frustration, he withdrew from education and went into trading to help himself in furthering his education at a due time. After two year, he registered as a CEP student at Namdi Azikiwe University (NAU) Awka. He was also the course representative unopposed until he withdrew owing to financial difficulty. Eche's interest in full-time course in English Language and Literature made him to re-write the UME and so he scored 279.

CAREER AND INTERESTS

The ideas and philosophies of William Shakespeare, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Chinua Achebe, Joy Eyisi, St Augustine and St Thomas Acquinas make lots of influence on the attitudes and personality of him. In turn, Eche has also influenced many, especially as a teacher.

WORKS WRITTEN

Having taught for many years in many secondary schools, and as a researcher in Christian Religion, Government and Politics, History, Literature-in- English and English Language, Eche has written many works to his credit, some of which are '' Contemporary Government and Politics'', ''The Ancient Black Pot'', ''The Small Still Voice'', '' The Place of English Language in Nigeria'', 'etc.

Works:

'Contemporary Government and Politics', 'A Voice Within', 'A Still Small Voice', and 'A Black Ancient Pot'

… WE MUST BE GOOD REAP'R

Who must be good reap’rs?
We, of course, must be good reapers!
Plenty of human and natural resources,
we all have right here now –
what must we do to ‘em now?
Must we plant ‘em like mustard seeds,
letting ‘em grow to their fullness?
If they’re still like a little star,
not yet grown to an adult,
we must furnish ‘em well;
If they’re gifts not yet exploit’d,
buried und’r the red ground of the Earth,
we must toll, plough and harvest ‘em well.
If they’re in one place,
but scarce in anoth’r place,
we must use not for the selfishness of our purse,
for they’re gifts from above to all purses.
If they’re humans – young and old –
we must use and dump ‘em not,
but give ‘em their due rewards.
Never fear,
we must be good reapers
in all facets of our lives!

Eche Ononukwe

A HEART OF FLESH

I have got a fleshy heart for you,

but you give me not the openness I deserves;

I know I owe you not,

but you have tak’n to owe me now,

causing me much pains in my heart that loves you.

O, see how I wand’r now

in the sea of worries and troubles

like a mad wind chasing nothing,

for you refuse to embrace my heart in your stony heart.

Eche Ononukwe

A HYME TO MY MAK'R

The Sun extols Thee by her rays;
the Moon, the skies and the cloud wave their hands to Thee
by their splendid bows at dawn, at night and in the day:
all heav’nly bodies are at Thy feet,
dancing round Thy Majestic Throne night and day.

We, beings, eulogize Thee each time,
for having creat’d us and the sea tide;
my me in me praises and dances to Thy greatness,
for having made me in your image and likeness.
I, the great minstrel, praise thee now
for making me a first-class
when all have made me second-class!
To Thee do I bow and lift my hand,
having train’d me for battle against my foes!
Eche Ononukwe

A WITNESS TO THE FORGOTT'N

In one silv’ry night,
when the eyes of the moon peep’d thro’ the sky
while the sun had her eyes long shut,
ev’rywhere turn’d night and silent.
Save the owls who cried to awake the silence,
rodents pacing to and fro searching for fodder,
and the toads croaking to arise the dead.
There, where all men lie low still,
his image plac’d on his grave, smiling;
smile that seems to ask me:
    Why have you have forgott’n me so soon,
    me that won a medal for my mum and dad?
But before I left, I replied the smiling image:
    I will win like you, but not lie low like you.
Eche Ononukwe

ACCUSATIONS UPON ACCUSATIONS

Consid’r what I see here on earth
with my God-giv’n bifocals,
eyeing those in black and those in green,
arm’d with weapons of warfare,
snatching away our rights,
and detaiing us in their maggots-infect’d cells.

They refuse us a statement,
But investigations, they claim to have made,
and unbalanc’d, they accuse us by the plaintiffs’ statements,
forging accusations upon accusations against us,
refusing a bail to us,
and our own people, from seeing us:
food, they make us taste not
unless we oil their itching palms.
Eche Ononukwe

AFRICA, MY ANCIENT HOME!

I met my lov’r on the day I was born;

I admir’d her splendid beautiful face;

she dress’d in expensive cosmetics

all over her gold’n body, and I said:

O Africa, you’re beautiful to the brim;

your illuminating night on my skin

wickles like diamonds and gold,

your eyes in the sky make my skin

thick’r like savannah leath’r

than the spring, winter and autumn of Europe.

O African, you’re the true home of all creatures!

Eche Ononukwe

AT THE BACKYARD

Life is not all that easy

for all who are threaten’d with wants,

but easy for some who, at least, born with silv’r spoon.

Life seems to lock out those

who are sudd’n slush at the backyard.

Many rush into the gold’n hous,

thinking that they are all in all:

some for their wealth; some, brilliant brain.

But few who are more competent

are outside striving to ent’r:

they struggle and struggle

till their smooth skin torn,

yet they remain in the backyard, awaiting for their turn

which they must get now or later in the future

Eche Ononukwe

CALL TO ETERNAL HOLINESS

Holiness, they claim he spent his life in:

he wasn't cruel to anyone;

he lov'd all with equal love -

he refused not the orphans their gifts;

neith'r did he refuse the widows their bread:

he was free like the air we breathe in the temple,

where we sang his praises;

praises, he devour; d all alone from all.

They say:

He wasn't weak of illness,

nor did anyone poison'd 'im,

but he left his belov'd gently, gently.

They then say he spent his life well,

to be call'd to an eternal rest.

Rest indeed before the Judgment Throne,

answ'ring queries why he took glories to himself alone,

why he refus'd to help the needy,

without some coins;

why he secretly oppress'd the widows,

flirting with 'em before giving 'em gold;

why he turn'd himself a true worshipper –

though a hypocrite.

Million queries, the Throne asks him,

but he stands before Him, silenc'd

like Nigerian refineries.

.

But it pains him that his belov’d
are proudly praising him their on earth,
while here, he’s about to be doom’d with ajuju,
too much ajuju to sentence him.

In the fiery furnace,
he now beg all living to live justly,
and not to nzowu, nzowu oth’rs.
Eche Ononukwe

COLONIAL MENTALITY

We always say our land is desecrat'd;
that the whites from the wintry land
came with their heavy machine guns,
firing here and there our aged-civiliz'd land
like Shylock on the flesh of Antonio.
But we're quick to forget
that we fought 'em heart and soul
to claim back our enslav'd land,
which they demanded from us –
they won us, we won 'em lat'r.
After a long period of perpetual chains,
we won our land, thanks to our Chineke God.

Now we rule ourselves yet enslave ourselves,
with our acquir'd colonial mentality of rule-and-divide,
standing in a platform, mouth wide open
like windows of heaven about to let a heavy pour.
We preach a corrupt free society,
yet we're corrupt in our heart.
Eche Ononukwe

COMFORT TO THE DELIGENT

Think not that you're born low,

for your Mak'r has made ev'rything grows;

relieve not your engine,

for your Pott'r packages you with energy;

think not that you're senseless,

for your Frath'r has given you Solomon's senses;

pride not myself,

for your Creator creates beings to praise you;

gath'r not food for yourself alone,

for your Provid'r gives you food to feed the needy;

weep not again and again in vain,

for your Consol'r shall comfort you

with which you shall comfort oth'rs;

think not you're born barren,

for your Lord is a Fruitful Being;

Hasty not unnecessary,

for your miraculous days have come;

fall not to rise,

for you're in this world to fall and rise again.

While you're down with nothing,

your God is up for something.

Eche Ononukwe

COMING AND GOING THESE SEVERAL SEASONS

Deep down in the testes;
testes wrapp'd in a thick scrotus,
micro-organisms always spring up,
travelling thro' the Red Sea of dusts,
with liquid-ornament'd fluids;
down again straight to that strong iron rod,
standing like Moses' rod

Zoom! It kicks that rubber-band pot-hole
in a long period of down and up,
trying to form frisky foetus
which looks like an unborn reptile.

Now he screams for help
Aft'r nine days in a hermit.
Weaning, he passes thro':
four legs, he crawls in;
in two, he walks to make a living;
to three, he lat'r journeys back;
weak, he dies and returns to the dust
where his relations – wombs! – feed on 'im,
now longing to be born again.
Eche Ononukwe

DOVE

He came from Papa God;
above, He came from there
where He is also God
to save us all from our sins here.

He became as a dove on earth,
ev’n when He was flogg’d and flogg’d here on earth,
making Him carry our cross His cross
to die for us on the cross.

And he died…
Marys buried him in a tomb
that was newly built by Arimathea;
Mary saw Him first on the day He arose from the tomb

Now He now wants us to be a dove
as Himself was and is a dove, a dove.
Eche Ononukwe

DURING FESTIVITY, WE FIND MIX'D FEELINGS

n this moment time,
come we with top joy,
dancing and drinking with our heart in joy
travelling and trekking to the village,
visiting long forgott’n ancestors
once seen in a half-roof’d-thatch’d hut
infect’d with stubborn termites and rat.

At this festive time,
in our hard time,
ent’r we into this wide weeping market:
front and back, like a mouth basket,
allowing all buyers and sellers;
inside, like busy bees in their hive.
engaging in business;
then come the thieves,
engaging in their own business,
pick pocketing our deaf purses
also blinding and butchering our skin
leaving us crazy and empty
like the womb of a barren woman
‘My purse, by breast, my private, my eyes! ’
We cry all day long to the Mother Sky
before many heads come to hear our rhyme.
Eche Ononukwe

FOR YOU CANNOT TELL MY PROWL

On my reasoning, you trample;
so will I convince you ethically
that I'm a mast'r for the deals;
if you like you may call me a quack,
but am I a duck that quacks?
For you have fail'd,
fail'd woefully to know
that some learn at different rates than oth'rs.

Delay, delay you've caus'd me
while I ought to be on my feet alone;
was it like that in the start
when Heav'n and Earth were made?
They quickly came to be as soon as He summon'd.
But you've accus'd me of pride;
what pride is it again,
when I know I can make it
right in any season
to sow and reap for the harvest?

O, you proud devil!
Think not that I have you,
or you have me.
For I now stoop low to conquer you!
Eche Ononukwe

FROM THE DARK AGED CONTINENT

A people comes hurrily
from the dark aged continent,
emerging as the world super-power
in no distant time.
A people once a colony
of one European species;
a people once oppress'd,
and culture down-turn'd by the bleach'd culture.

Here comes the people of tough black skin,
conquering peoples upon peoples
to rule the whole world with
their own refin'd science and arts:
a people of one soul, one way, one mind.
Eche Ononukwe

HERE COMES THE NEW PARADISE!

1.

To your shame, Big Brothers,

I am sorry!

You, like a Christmas goat

Tak'n to the abattoir,

parade yourselv's before us on parties' platforms,

canvassing to have our votes.

Behold you now,

making promises that travel to the sky,

where the Holy One has His Home!

Like an empty whirling wind,

fumbling before an impregnate cloud,

you ask for our votes,

which you need before you will be in vot'd;

with you chameleon humble hearts,

you stress points after points

as an African elephant would trumpet,

causing no earthquake.

See and see you now,

humbly come to win our hearts

with your ever-sugar-coated-blabbering tongues!

So Soon, you've forgot'n your million pledges,
made to us your wives before the altar of politics
in the eyes of the Chief Priest of election.

2.

To us you pledge to provide good living,
like Him who creat'd things out of nothingness.
To us, new Garden of Eden is avow'd
where Hunger will avert her weird face.

Here now comes the new paradise,
that you these ruthless-ungrateful juggernauts
have to us brought!
Paradise of torture and of shame,
that pierces through our already nak'd marrows!

Lo we promise you,
the fool paradise of oppression
shall you in turn reap!
Eche Ononukwe

HIS PAST, HIS FUTURE

Just let’s look at Him born in a mang’r,
for the wrongs committ’d by the first man;
the wrongs that cause us much, much pain
that we crash our skin until blood gushes out!

Just let’s look at how He fast’d and pray’d,
tempt’d by the serpent
wanting to prevent Him from fulfilling His Holy plans
to save our souls from these wrongs!

Just let’s peer thro’ how He was hat’d,
ev’n when He gave ‘em food and heal’d ‘em!

Just let’s imagine how they sang hosanna,
but later they nail’d Him for His Hosannas!

Just let’s now behold His Glorious Rise,
putting out faith in Him and in our Chineke Nna,
waiting for Him to come again!
Eche Ononukwe

IN A DISTANT LAND FROM HOME

I came, I wander'd in a far away land,
searching for easy greener pastures;
I wander'd in the white man land
like an aimless wind in the sky above.
I travell'd afar off from my belov'd wife,
a wife I left as an innocent angel
with breast full of sweet milk,
but I left her to search for what will gladd'n her soul.

From the distant land,
I sent a message full of hopes to my belov'd;
I avow'd to see and feel her in my arms again
but she first felt I grab my honey first,
I relay'd my feelings to her again,
but she now told me she needed a messiah first.

I now come,
traveling down home to my wife.
Alas! Another man has bounc'd on my wife
like an eagle on a chick.
What must I do now that I am back?
I must save my wife from this man, riding on her back,
parading himself as her messiah,
for I am her true lov'd messaiah!
Eche Ononukwe

I'VE TRAVERS'D ALL

I’ve toil’d all ov’r the earth,

looking for the real equality;

I find none but inequality.

I have also labour’d for it to come to its fullest;

lo, what I see is perpetual corruption!

That makes me ask:

‘Is folly plac’d in all high places? ’
But my humble self replies:

‘No, that must be a mistake.’

Now, I’m optimistic for man’s rights –

I’m sure they will come in our generation.

Eche Ononukwe

JUST FOR OUR RIGHTS

We shall strive for the freedom of man,
and not be prevent'd by our torturers' heavy hands.

We shall drink from the juice of freedom,
and ask our torturers to free the unfreed.

But see, they take us as unfreed,
and we must be free to free the rights of man!
Eche Ononukwe

JUST LOOK AT THEIR FOLLY

My heart itches me
like burning fire of the sun
when I hear ‘em declare
that we knew nothing at all, at all.

Proudly, they beat their drummy chests
like a jubilating chimpanzee
to tell us with their filthy fingers at us
that we’re nothing before they came to us.
They boast’d that we had no scept’r;
we had no locomotive metallic monst’rs;
we had no designers to cov’r our raw flesh.

But they’ve fail’d to know
that our land gave ‘em their riches today;
that our ways were to us very much absorb’d;
that people’s rule was born first in our land;
that our locomotive metallic monst’rs were our animals
which needed ev’n no oil to move;
that our clothes were natural,
coming from our fig trees and our animals.
We must let them know
that we absorb now some of their ways
just not because our aged ways are bad,
but to show that the world is still one.
Eche Ononukwe

LIKE THE BEARD OF AARON

1.

Like the beard of Aaron,
the Great River Niger flows from
the Great Triangular Sea
to the Atlantic Ocean,
down again thro' the Equatorial Guinea,
seeing it again at Lokoja
and beautifully sings through Onitsha
to give birth to the Oguta lake and other lakes;
River Niger, thence Mrs. Luggard labell'd our country!

2.

Like a mad wind,
River Niger toss'd up lives and objects,
for failing to do her wish, as we were told.
Zik came and detain'd the goddess of the river
in a small bottle, sealed;
Julius sacrificed his life to erect a bridge across the river.

River of great potentials,
    we adore you!
River of great economic value,

we salute you!

We, your worth, know for the Easterners;

we, your worth, acknowledge for Nigeria!

You who'll help in passing more goods and persons across

like the Sea of Lagos

if carv'd deep and wide for ships to pass,

we hail you!

Eche Ononukwe

MAKE WAYS FOR OTHERS

In peace we're born,

in peace we must return.

So, let's grant liberty to all,

let our siblings, our fore-related siblings, live,

let's bury our machetes and swords in a peace hole,

let's bury our guns and live,

and so again roll ourselves as one people,

that we may live free for oth'rs!

Eche Ononukwe

MOTH'R OF THE LEARN'D

O, Knowledge,
you are so much pow’rful to make us curious!
You allow us to search the unsearchable,
and make us wise and learn’d.

O, knowledge,
you are expensive for men and women, young and old
to have you possess’d!

O, Great Moth’r of the learn’d,
come forth that I may possess you more and more
that you may make me great and great.
Make me live a virtuous life
when you shall fill me with your gifts!

Eche Ononukwe

MY DESTINY WITH TWO FACES

I believe, not to proud, that I have wealth;
wealth that my Mak'r has got for me.
Ev'n when it seems not be ready in a bodily form,
I see I have got it for the future.
But I pity Baraks who think nev'r have it,
causing enough sorrows to their heart
to die lat'r of so many heart attacks.

My destiny with two faces;
with my talents giv'n me by my Mak'r,
I'll use to serve and help man,
man made as an image of His Invisibility;
I'll serve God in my duties to man,
with my hand cleans'd of stains.

I know I have wealth
only to wait for its manifestation,
having put aside my anger
and then learn to be meek, enduring all things,
without grumbling about evil done to me –
or evil that man does to man,
for God sees ev'rything.

Eche Ononukwe

MY JEWELL

What’s wrong with you I know not,

but all I know is that you’re a morning star,

fresh’r than a morning dew from the sky;

you’re the hand that gives fragrance to the rose;

the lily by the sea of my love

that pours on you from above!

Eche Ononukwe

O, YOU ANCIENT MIGHTY SLEEP!

You ancient mighty warrior
that dwells in our hypothalamus!
You that lays your heavy hands
like Ghana pepper upon our brows!
Jekyll and Hyde are you;
Mighty too are you
when you cause sweet sleep on us,
sweetness we can nev’r help
ev’n when we ought to rise
to struggle for living!

You are an old English soldier,
the great conqueror of our weak flesh!
You conquer’d Adam in Eden
to produce the moth’r of all living;
You defeat’d the eyes of the three Christian pillars
while their Mast’r was away
to answ’r the suff’ring call of Jerusalem.
You are the provocateur of rest
when the day is spent and dead;
like the Grim Reap’rs, you steal us away,
finding ourselves in the world below and above
aft’r our bodies’ souls have judgment fac’d
before the Holy One.
Eche Ononukwe

ON MY FEET

Kill

me not

when you see my dying

like a lamb torn in pieces by a hungry lion!

Help

me to stand on my feet,

for your gold is not just your gold alone!

Love and peace

is when all have their feet to stand

for you stand and I stand!

Eche Ononukwe

OUR HEAV'NLY RACE

Just two, two choices we've got on this planet:
life, life and death, death;
life on earth, eternal life in heav'n above,
and death here on earth, eternal death in hell below.
But questions, questions ask we ourselves below:
    'How do we live here on this planet? '
    'what's our rewards aft'r death? '
Death is inevitable gentle young man:
plants die, animals die, we too must die
and sleep in Mr. Death's grave;
we must die in flesh, not on soul returning to God.
Isaiah holiness, let's accept
that our death may be our sweet pillow for rest
or we due to second death eternal in hell!
Eche Ononukwe

OUR LANGUAGE IS BLACK AND WHITE

We utt’r black words from our
tired-strick’n pens, lips and hearts,
trying to tune our coarse voice from our lungs
to fit our audience’s ears.

We utt’r white words from our
joy-strick’d pens, lips and hearts,
trying to fit ourselves in the midst of pens
but all in all is black and white.
Eche Ononukwe

PENS AND PERSUASSIONS

Clamping us in iron-rod-wick’d chains;
chains, piercing pieces our flesh and bones;
chains, holding us in the hail hell of bondage,
refusing us our long-lov’d freedom,
which now have to come thro’ pens and persuasion,
for that is our only light for freedom
without which we forev’r live in Egypt in chain.
Eche Ononukwe

PRIDE NOT YOURSELF, O NIGHT!

Why do you permit evils
by habouring thieves in your shadows, O Night?
Why do you welcome black cats and black birds,
by allowing ‘em, und’r your arms, to bewitch the innocent?

O Night, you think you’re much wiser at night
when you give us your sleeping poison at night!
Pride not yourself, O Night,
for our Lord has destroy’d all your works
by exposing ‘em on the broad day light!
Eche Ononukwe

SALUTE TO MY ANGEL

1.

I've wast'd my sweet time
with that little Gomer,
that know not my love for her.
Gomer, knowing that I had a nak'd heart,
avow'd to tear to pieces my heart,
leaving it to pound a million times!
I've wait'd to make her myself for change,
but her grave made us apart.

2.

Now, I've seen my new love,
you're quite different, my dear!
I wasn't aware of your creation;
I was just dosing in oblivion of your creation
when my Mak'r matches me with you alone,
to sweet'n my nak'd heart alone.
You delight my glamorous eyes
when your Mak'r took a rib from me to frame you;
your rainbow hair springs down
from your head to your circumcised toes
like the bridge of the River Niger;
your smooth skin with its melanin
brands thick like the savannah of my heart;
your breasts with their nipples

stand straight like Nigerian electric pole;
your stomach lies flat
like butter applied to slice bread.
Wao! Your thigh twinkles my eyes again
like the beauty of Delilah.

My angel,
I was down but you wait'd for me to rise,
I was away but you stood for my coming back,
refusing many of your suitors like Portia
against your parents' heavy hands.

In my vow to you now,
I stand to build my Rome in your heart
that I may dwell in forev'r.
Eche Ononukwe

SECOND-CLASS CITIZENS

In that tattered-maggot-infect'd building;

building with ageing documents, machines not working,

I see those tough monkeys in uniform –

uniform of our national anthem,

which they have made to weapons of harassment,

frowning at us as if they know us not:

"What is your occupation? '

'You resist'd arrest? '
'You threaten'd the life of that man? '

'You're a dangerous criminal? '

Such are how they query us,

letting us not to utter any defence of our own,

before we find ourselves in a cell

where our already-tortured ribs are exposed to maggots.

Eche Ononukwe

SET FORTH AT DAWN

Alert, alert in this weird wide world!

Alert as the ants prepare

before the sweet season run dry!

Alert before the early morning rises;

ignore not the wise sayings of Noah

ev’n though they may seem to you as Lilliputian,

but beware that a little leak sinks the great ship!

Eche Ononukwe

SYMPATHY FOR THE COCK

Come and see what's happening here.
To and fro, our people have gone
for a balance of price of articles here and there
just to answ'r their stomachs' calls.

Home, they come also with cocks and onions
in the Day of Christ's Birth and Rise.

Before the dawn of this Day,
these cocks used to wake us up with their crows,
that we may prepare for our day job.
Now, the cocks suff'r in our hands,
crowing before their usual dawn early enough,
kokoroko, they crow,
fearing that they may be slaughter'd;
for they now ask for our help in return.

Eche Ononukwe

THE DOG IN THE MANGER

Standing like an iroko tree
on that high, high hill,
peeping thro’ to spy on that monst’r,
sucking and tearing blood and flesh
like a hungry and angry lion,
eating to glory himself for the lost battle.

Eche Ononukwe

THE FRINGE OF OUR LAND

Long, long ago
when, they say, we liv'd in huts,
in peace and in plenty we dwelt;
then came those ov'r-ripp'd pawpaws;
sermons, they preach'd
in their huge cathedrals of doom.

Just in our land,
In captivity, they held us –
and made us pass'd thro'
that Great Sea to their sugar plantation,
looking like a harsh-snowy-strange land.
Seeming not okay with this,
they landed with their politics,
dooming our aged culture as nefarious-inferior.
But we fought and fought 'em
and had our real self.

Long, long aft'r our freedom,
a people, the Great Strugglers
from the Jewish family,
dwelling by the side or across the River Niger,
east of our homeland and omnipresent in all,
we engag'd in a civil brawl;
no victory, no vanquish we declaim,
but in our heart of hearts,

sorrows and tortures we have for ‘em:

depriv’d, we make ‘em;

detain’d, we shall get ‘em;

and desolat’d, shall their land be to ‘em;

for rebels they had been and want to be.

Freedom fight’rs they are:

the fringe of our land shall they be!

But we’re born to rule and reign in plenty.

Eche Ononukwe

THE GODS HAVE SPOK'N

I’m the small still voice of the gods
that descend from a humble hut;
I speak only the words of the gods
to you all who care to give ear.

Pay heed to the soft messages of the gods
that travel forth from my mouth,
before the gods strike you down!

The voice of the gods,
a voice of great wisdom,
bringing down many and rising up many;
a voice that turns for better the life of many
who care to listen.

I am the young still voice of the gods
that echoes around the whole wide world;
he who know me not, know not his name,
for I and the gods are one and the same!
Eche Ononukwe

THE JOURNEY ON THIS ROAD

How do we describe the journey on the road?
Obiageli, you came to this road stark nak'd,
just without something!
You came ev'n without a cry but these Mid-wives,
behind your moth'r pinch'd and pinch'd you
before you could trumpet like an elephant.
But they said you're abami eda.

Obiageli, you're nam'd eight days
after your moth'r gave birth to you;
people far and near came to laugh with your parents
on that gold'n day of your birth.

But now you've grown up like an ukuoji,
and you're still ornament'd with wisdom;
books, books are in your small head.
Our elders say:
A big head without sense is a big burden to the neck.
Yours is laden'd with substance,
drawing near friends and favour to you –
questions upon questions they plaster you with,
but gently, gently you give 'em wisdom.

Obiageli, you're the apple of your father's eyes;
the ofor that holds your ancestors;
the eye of the gods of our land;

ngborogu ayi jia gwo di oria, and
the pillar that hold the Ibo race.

Alas, you depart early enough, Obiageli!
Friends no longer see you und’r that tree
where you normally have your delight.
You depart like a thick smoke to the tiny air,
leaving your flesh to lie in state.
I know not your state, Obiageli,
before that metallic monst’r pieces your
carbonat’d dry bones on the road!
Eche Ononukwe

THE PEOPLE OF THE RIVER

There were three eggs in one basket
that came from a very different hen;
one with Jewish blood in his vein came;
anoth'r, a Bayajidda, from Far East;
and the third a claim'd heir of Oduduwa.
These three jamm'd togeth'r and fought anoth'r;
one triumphing ov'r anoth'r,
to enslave anoth'r.

Lat'r a period of pause came,
with each egg living on their land,
which he fielded for his heir.
Buying and selling they engag'd in,
promoting their own culture
until those yellow pawpaws came
from their far snowy-hurricane-infected land;
they came ruling us with iron hands:
chaining our necks, our legs and our hands;
they're no friends at all, at all –
but they forced us into signing friendship
while deep in their heart they met hateship.

Now we're bombing our broth'rs;
our lands have turn'd to be kidnapp'd,
ceding to our next broth'r;
the lands our parents gave us to inherit,

the land fill’d with milk and honey,

filling our heart with joy,

the land along the coastal area.

Alas, the sun has burnt us!

The snake bitt’n our legs!

These lands are ours,

we’ll fight back some day to come!

Eche Ononukwe

THE RICH OLD FOOL

Because you devour your food alone,

you are gluttonous!

Because you want wealth for yourself alone,

you are greedy!

Because you claim having all wisdom alone,

you are an impostor!

But if you have to feed all,

you have true love!

Eche Ononukwe

THE SEA AND MY GOLD

With my deep eye of eyes
when each eye had tak’n to their bed,
my gold, I saw in the oth’r part of the Red Sea,
the Big Red Sea of the man Moses.

At the other side of the sea
where the sea her bank has,
I snap’d to see brave, brave heads
swimming to magnet their own gold,
but I ask’d for mine, they refus’d me.
Long I stood wond’ring why the sea
Refus’d to catch ‘em that troubl’d her;
long I stood seeing heads joyous
after having their own gold,
then I div’d to catch and catch my own gold
and that has giv’n me a forev’r gold.
Eche Ononukwe

THE WORLD IS NOT WORTH TRUSTING

We’re born into this realm of sorrows just like that;

sorrows, sadness and pains exactly after birth.

Nature cheats on us, we not on Nature.

We envision, we seek, we tend to have,

but have not;

we strive, we labour hard just in vain,

but Nature has multipli’d our sorrows.

Some born great gladd’n,

for Nature has made ‘em so;

oth’rs, suff’ring they all reap,

not that they’re lazy but Nature make’ so.

Some rich suppress;

some broth’rs help not broth’rs

and the world becomes and comes in vain.

Eche Ononukwe

THINGS HAVE FALL'N APART

In those days –
days I cannot ev’n recollect the year –
when things were alright and okay,
when death was sparily heard of;
when children were fed okay,
and kinsmen work’d for kinsmen
like ants working in a summer day,
fath’rs would send their childr’n to their kinsmen
living in a far away land –
they would go with their hand fill’d with bush meat;
on their way, they would play and play
till they were tired of playing;
then they would return to that place
where they had left their bush meat to play,
and they would find it there, untouch’d.

In those days,
fath’rs would teach their childr’n so many tales;
childr’n would learn to farm;
they know their adds and minus, unhelp’d;
they were also train’d for war;
their gifts were skillfully fram’d by their Chineke.

But now, when those fath’rs have gone,
we no long’r care for our tales;
childr’n respect no more their parents;

they no more do thing on their own,

for robots have taking the places of hands;

kinsmen refuse to work for kinsmen,

for greed and jealousy are now the ord’r of the day;

broth’rs steal broth’rs’ meat;

fath’rs no ev’n fit send their childr’n to school

for the whites have brought thiefilization,

and our traditions have fall’n apart.

Eche Ononukwe

TO MY BELOV'D

Look at how you're treat'd, my belov'd!
you, I know, are made natural
like Mr. Adam from the dust.
Your breast are filled with sweet natural milk
like milk and honey of the Land of Canaan.
But you're been made to look
like an ugly African chimpanzee;
they've rubb'd your face with shame –
shame of corruption and oppression.
Your childr'n are now made to taste suff'ring
but you now look on us, silenc'd!

Look at how they now ride on your back
like monst'rs mounting on helpless horses.
Your childr'n refuse to love anoth'r;
tell 'em not to hate one anoth'r
like America against Iraq,
or Iraq against America.
Tell 'em to plast'r you with wond'rs,
and help those in need like Big Brother Joseph.
Aft'r you have told 'em these, my belov'd,
then shall you look like a diamond!
Eche Ononukwe

TURNING WHITE INTO BLACK

Deep inside their strong stubborn skulls,
and ev'n in their glitt'ring eyeballs,
they really know that black is black,
no way white will be black –
ev'n when they attempt to burn it to black,
its ashes cannot be black but grey.
But for the thirty silv'rs they want to receive,
they, from their basket mouths that can nev'r
hold on a dropp of wat'r,
say that white is not white but dark black.

Lies are now their Messiah here,
and their odour are their John, the forerunner;
Justice but their Israelites in Egypt!
Their hands are cloth'd with mess,
making all their body smell shit, shit of lies:
    in the scept'r, it is there;
    in the cross, it is there,
    not ev'n our homes are spar'd of this mess.
They know that white is white,
for their eyes are not blind;
neith'r are they, themselves, confus'd,
but their greedy mouths have made it so,
turning justice to injustice!
Eche Ononukwe

UNTIL WE WITH DEATH TRAVEL

Far and wide we have gone,
searching the greener of life;
we toss our efforts to be anew bone
for our humble hobbies of our future lives.

All around we have struggl'd
to see our future bright,
being perfect'd by our Mak'r's struggle
in His Glorious Heav'nly posture in bright.

Sleepless we work,
working to bett'r our expos'd marrows,
but leaving the rest to our Creator
until we with Death travel.

Eche Ononukwe

WE HAVE A CALL TO ANSWER

We’re born in this wide world we fully not know,
with a call – from birth – we must answer;
I have a call, you have a call,
all, all have a call!

I must answ’r my own call
thro’ the well use of my gifts:
I must write, teach to covert souls
from the dark’st world of ignorance
to the brightest world of knowledge,
climbing the mount of prosperity
I must attain that zenith of greatness,
ev’n though the sea strives to put me down.

I must answ’r my own call
before I stand in the dock alone,
for we all have a call each to answ’r!

Eche Ononukwe

WE MUST BE COMFORT'D

For joy we're form'd from the dust
where ev'rything is made ready for us;
we liv'd in a gard'n of plentiness
until tempt'd to disobey in plentiness.

Now the paradise is lost,
for we sinn'd and are now sinning against our Mak'r.
We sin to refuse to ask for His pardon;
we suff'r ev'ry day by day
for the contract'd and committ'd sins against our Mak'r;
but we lay our faults on oth'rs,
blaming 'em for not helping us out.

What must be done now, right now?
Let's be comfort'd once again,
putting our sins aside,
putting our spirit to work;
let's mightily put our talents
for something more profitable than sins,
that we must again be comfort'd.

Eche Ononukwe

WE MUST BE IN PEACE AND NOT IN PIECES

In peace we're born,

in peace we must return.

So, let's grant liberty to all,

let our siblings, our fore-related siblings, live,

let's bury our machetes and swords in a peace hole,

let's bury our guns and live,

and so again roll ourselves as one people,

that we may live free for oth'rs!

Eche Ononukwe

WHO SAYS KNOWLEDGE IS LOST?

Who says knowledge is lost?

Let ‘im scan for it,

ev’n in a dark’st dark of the night

in where all feet must tread;

let him scout for it

ev’n in a silv’ry day

where all have eyes to see.

Seek and scratch for it –

knowledge we know will nev’r lost.

Ev’n when it seems to lost,

we can find it in our thoughts;

we can find it in our imagination;

we can also feel it in our experiences,

for knowledge we know is omniscience and omnipresent.

Eche Ononukwe

WORRY NOT YOURSEL'VS

Give me minstrels' seats and not be late;
sit with me in one that I may ask you
the reason why some of you
are still worrying yourselves on why late
some of your flesh and blood marry,
or ev'n at all refuse to get marry.

Give me these seats
that I may comfortably sit
to tell our elders the gospel truth
that was in the beginning:
'This is the bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh'.

Give me your listening ears that you may hear
that you're the causes of some of their curses,
having made 'em chain in your wick'd customs,
making 'em costly like Christmas cows,
having made 'em held in your wicked spells.

Give me my own seat
because you have refus'd to sit
and hear me declaim that some have refus'd,
and made their bodies the Holy Temple of God
serving the Only God,
whom they have fall'n in love with, saying:
'No weapon fashions against me shall succeed! '

Give me your ear

that I may tell you that two heads bett’r than one;

but in some, one is one problem; two but two problems,

for marriage is good in patience.

Eche Ononukwe