

Poetry Series

**Moses Kainwo**  
**- poems -**

**Publication Date:**  
2012

**Publisher:**  
Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

## Moses Kainwo(26th April 1955)

Moses Kainwo is an ordained minister and studied in Sierra Leonean schools. His wife Violet is also an ordained minister and together they have two daughters: Jeelo and Jeeta.

Moses also participated in the Sierra Leone Conference on Development and Transformation as Chief Facilitator of the Focus Group Discussions as well as organised the senior Secondary School Essay competition.

# A Birthday Greeting

Out of sheer love  
In the desert of love play  
How can I say I love you  
And go Scot-free

Neither in a birthday cake  
Cut there on love lakes  
Can a boat rock a toast  
And make you go Scot-free

I will rest my pen  
Just to raise my voice  
And holler the distance to silence  
For love play in a sentence

Moses Kainwo

# A Chief Star Leads From Behind

The rain showered a cold on the pews  
With no leaking roofs and no cracked dews  
Like a rare ghost to haunt the saints here  
And fever found lodging in my spine

On the plateau of service in trends  
The cold crosses the paths of the fence  
In snippets of memorabilia  
Whether in pews or school books of sort

You will know the footprints of action  
The melodious cries of compassion  
Once a caring soul passes manners  
Like judgement from mediocres in jest

I touched it too in a bout of leads  
The star that scratched with meteoric speed  
The night sky of pestilence in vogue  
While the earth cheered raising mangled fingers

So you see I too can dream like King  
Who mellows with daytime spectacles  
While I count the stars in the night here  
The night with new character gallows

I had a dream then and still do dream  
Erect a plaque to say no star streamed  
When it was darkest or most gloomy  
Except in ideas beyond amends

Sure a tenor out there will sing bass  
Yet the bass in here will not chant bass  
For when we are not in we are in  
And when we are not out we are out

New generations will rise in here  
To carry the mantle that dropped  
From hands of stars that did not hurry past  
Or necks of white-necked birds that wry grin

I don't mind singing a solo dirge  
Or blowing the horn announcing birth  
But somehow the world must know of it  
That a chief star now leads from behind

Moses Kainwo

# A Flood Upon Lebanon From The Sky

A flood was poured from the sky  
Against the will of God  
Against the will of man  
Except that supermen  
Superimposing their flags  
Ordered a rain without a rainbow

The urge to move was strong  
Against the will of God  
Against the will of man  
But the woman with a baby inside her  
With a brain inside his head  
Ordered them to wait

The waiting could be worth it  
In the will of God  
In the will of man  
For in the history of that place  
And on the table of that grave  
Grave things are measured

In that same place a people were planted  
In the will of God  
In the will of man  
And God the gardener named a garden  
With flowers for them to name  
If they did there could be no death

In that same place a tree was fixed  
With shiny fruits  
For the gardener's pleasure  
But they claimed the fruit  
And changed the truth  
So the war threw bones apart

See how innocence is paraded  
In the streets of guilt  
Against the will of God  
Against the will of man

But Hope now holds a lighted lamp  
For they will lose the war to God

The intangible flood of love  
Is everyone's dream  
In the will of God  
In the will of man  
And this will once restored  
Will will the much desired rainbow

Moses Kainwo

# A Letter To A Pen Friend

Your name in my pen is all that spells love,  
Yet in that pain could be found a dodging dove.

In my pen there might be war-backing words,  
But not a blood-letting demon with swords.

I write then you write, you write then I write;  
I writhe over culture that spills the spite.

The postmark has invited forgiveness,  
Over such pregnancy of barrenness.

And patient Pascal recommends the wait,  
Over matters of word-full heavy weight.

A thoughtful reply is the retainer  
Of an advocate for a good dinner.

Then the first chance for the meeting faces,  
Declares rights to deserving embraces.

If such were to fall in the space between us,  
Then let us embrace as if on a love cross.

Moses Kainwo



# A Letter To Corporal Foday Sankoh

dear mr sun-core  
hold

i know your lenses are blind to  
kailondo's staff  
i know your wavelength is deaf to  
bai bureh's voice  
but hold

innocent blood strangles the throat  
please field marshal  
president of kingdom come  
chief justice of injustice  
hold

touch pen  
that you would grant the insane your sanity  
the cocoa your freedom  
the unborn your hope

please mr sun-core  
hold  
and let the handshake speak

Moses Kainwo

# A Letter To The Diaspora

Oh ... Yesterday

    Hmm ... Tomorrow

Ah ... Today

Dear Yesterday

Good evening and good night

My great great great...

Grandfather long dead

Might have sold

Your small small small...

Grandmother long dead

Good evening and good night

Dear Tomorrow

Good afternoon and thanks for calling

Your mask of tainted glass

Covers your intentions

So that you don't sweat

    Like a real farmer

    Holding world identity

    Good afternoon and thanks for calling

Dear today

Good morning and welcome

    Sitting under this cotton tree with you

    Brings along whispers of plantations

    Come of age in songs of carnations

With one hurdle to cross –

Caricature

Good morning and welcome

Oh ... Yesterday

Hmm ... Tomorrow

Ah ... Today

Moses Kainwo

# A Strong Strong Dance

1. Each coronation song  
hailed another Moses  
yet none was christened so

each tune then ended  
before the dance began  
the coming waves responded  
with their many many tunes  
and hence  
A strong strong dance  
Which no one else could do

let us catch the dancer's feet  
with a new new tune  
from the busy crowd  
and call him by his name

or sing not

2. Each toastmaster took the crown  
to echo another clown  
Courtin' frowns after the rounds

Each crown developed spikes  
On the inside and on the outside  
And the ruler lay straight  
Like a snake among the people  
And so  
A pastime on the canoe  
Which only one could paddle  
Let us count each leader's words  
Like seeds from a water melon  
So visible yet not so dark  
Planted on a hillside

Or list not

3. The space of elasticity

has been time for harvesting  
yet none was named a farmer

the harvest has been for one  
not even for the fambul  
the banks abroad grew bigger  
as those at home grew smaller  
and then  
the farce of an economy  
in a world of sombre economies

let us nurse this leader's words  
on this fertile fertile ground  
of land reclaimed from sea  
and give them back their words

of farm not

Moses Kainwo

# A Teacher's Prayer

God protect me from myself  
The cliff of my ignorance  
Pretends joy beyond the edge  
But I see the dangerous cracks  
In bottles of foolhardiness  
O Lord save me from myself

Sometimes I feel I'm wisest  
Even in my ignorance  
I will pose like Steve Hawkings  
Or speak like Daddy Shakespeare  
Yet hurtle down like Hate's spear  
Lord protect me from myself

Sometimes I spit spurious answers  
Good cause for calling friends fools  
I open my amphora  
But not a millionth degree  
Of your consciousness have I  
Please protect me from myself

God protect me from myself  
Let me know I sleep in you  
Let me know I wake in you  
Let me know I move in you  
And without you I am damned  
Lord set me free from myself

Thank you Lord for loving me  
My excesses notwithstanding  
Stupidities against life  
Mislead those who follow me  
And I'm mocked with my Nation  
Save us from idiosyncrasies

God save this State from vain elites  
Save her children from bad dreams  
Save her parents from negligence  
Save her friends from bigotry

May new wisdom shine on board  
Where her people peddle Word

God I know I am a fool  
Moulded to be a good tool  
For pursuing excellence  
But even as fool I fail  
To serve your benign designs  
Dear Lord save me from myself. AMEN

Moses Kainwo

# African Soul

The colour of my heart  
Is a culture round the fire  
The spirit of my heart  
Is netted dance in a sphere  
The proverb of my heart  
Is fire  
And you're invited

The colour of my mind  
Is a wind in harmattan  
The spirit of my mind  
Is roasted cassava in a pan  
The proverb of my mind  
Is fun  
And you're invited

The colour of my spirit  
Is the sky before rain  
The spirit of my spirit  
Is lightning to the eye  
The proverb of my spirit  
Is flight  
And you're invited

Moses Kainwo

# Amber Gambler

Guaging the amber,  
You run on the red.  
At first,  
You may hit the road only;  
Then second,  
You may go through  
With minor scratches only;  
But sit up and remember,  
You are the loser:  
When you hit nothing,  
You surely hit your conscience –  
And one day too,  
You may hit your eyes out.

Moses Kainwo



# Amistad! Amistad! Amistad!

Punches thrown for man and country

- PUNCHES gotten for man and woman
- What they did we did in Amistad
- YES... punches... for women and children
- Take it so... for man and country

What a way for fettered friendships

GIVEN or thrown for man and country  
 Taken or laid by hands in Amistad  
REDUNDANT aches for man and country  
You and I... amid star judges forever

Sails mounted on the Atlantic Ocean

ARE a famished embodiment  
 Of love and hate in Amistad  
SAILS neither blue nor white  
Are sailing... sailing... sailing...

Yet they come from careless neglect

SONS and daughters of Chiefs and Queens  
WITH no names from more names in Amistad  
SO I salute with enthusiasm  
My siblings who sail on the seas

Guilty punches thrown by Malice

SENGBE PIEH is a better name  
AND a Monarch gave birth to Amistad  
SENGBE whose blood knows how to spell NO  
With echoes on land and sea

And what he did I truly did

I got back my soul from punches  
 Amistad Friendship Amistad  
BLASTS many horns for many ears  
That the children may hear and live

But from what you say you have not heard

FROM what you do you have not heard  
FROM what you see there is no Amistad

Amistad horns will keep blasting  
For those of us that have not heard

Amistad Friendship Amistad Friendship Amistad Friendship Amistad

Moses Kainwo

# Ayo Ayo Ayo

Ayo ayo ayo ayo ayo!

Eeeeeeeey!

Ayo ayo ayo!

Eeeeeeeey!

Ayo ayo!

□ Eeeeeeeey! □

The Great Muse has spoken,  
So listen to the echo of his voice:  
Listen now, and listen well!

Hear me

You Matagelema,

Let us meet at Rogbane;

The agenda is Sierra Loya!

Follow the line west of 1961,

And you will find me;

Follow the line east of 1961,

And you will still find me.

The nation is ripe

For jubilee celebrations,

With democracy □

In over-abundance.

Love, joy and peace are faked,

When there is famine

In the land—my land!

And there is famine in the land,

Until you are David to your Jonathan,

Or Muhammad to your Book.

□

Hear me again

You over-prescribers of prosperity,

You under-prescribers of prosperity;

Hear me and hear me well! □

I gave you an anthem

And I gave you a flag—my flag,

After I set you loose? □

This is a well-earned jubilee for all who wink.

Did you see when the flower flowered

In the morning?

Its petals opened slowly to greet the sun,

And those who planted it

Saw the fruit long before it appeared.

The fruit appeared as fruit

Even for those who choked the flower,

With thorns from the onset.

This democracy has ripened for harvest;

This is why country boys have graduated into city boys,

And the age-old bush

Has overgrown its boundary

And become a jargon on the lips of democrats:

So be it, so the Devil—that Old Boy,

May bow his head!

Now you can see a democrat

When a soldier hails the ballot,

Even though they have the bullets:

Or when the people fill their tummies

From adopted staple foods,

From the horizon—in defiance of pop food. □

□

Can't you see

That people stopped drinking spittle,

Because they now saw

That they lived on the banks of great waters,

Which drowned them sometimes.

Can't you see

That the people now connect to power,

Since they own the power house?

Can't you see

That the long pregnancy of war

Delivered a new nation,

From the forest of thorns and wild beasts  
That beat their chest,  
For the gift of transformation?

Can't you see  
That the youths now hold the gravel  
For things that affect others and themselves?

Can't you see  
That the tree of jubilee  
Has a wide enough canopy to accommodate  
Both birds of peace  
And birds of prey?  
But at the end of it all,  
It is the former  
That shall sink the boat carrying the latter!

Can't you see  
That flowers of jubilee  
Have opened  
And are shooting towards the stars?

The clouds in the horizon  
Shall only pour their shower of blessings  
For the tenets of democracy to thrive:  
Whether in a desert or on fertile ground  
And the showers shall bring forth  
Petals of rainbow colours:  
    Of religious tolerance,  
    Of nationalism,  
    Of integration,  
    Of correct use of power,  
    Of gender parity,  
    Of lesser suffering...  
And those who drop down from Mount Ararat,  
Being so much on the increase, □  
Shall kill the virus of greed—  
In money, healing and judgment houses.  
And conjure maximum security,  
In police and soldier ranks,  
That Satan, that Old Boy, may bow.

And the Lungi bridge shall become reality,  
And the Athens of West Africa,  
shall wake up from sleep,  
With no new references from the elite;  
And deliver gains  
From the shower of deliverance,  
And Satan, the Old Boy will bow!

Can't you see  
You have a right to say  
What can help deliver this rain?  
So say it, and let the Old Boy bow!

Say it! Say it!  
And cast a prayer—in the year of jubilee:  
No more bumpy roads. Amen!  
No more boloh-boloh in attieke. Amen!  
No more peppeh-doctors. Amen!  
No more mercenary teachers. Amen!  
No more daka deke in business. Amen!  
No more kangaroo courts in the workplace. Amen!  
No more kukujumuku among the poor. Amen!

□  
So children may uncover their rights,  
To help their parents know their rights.  
And wives may stay from all-night prayers if husbands slam a ban;  
And dogs and roosters may stay in bush,  
And bears and deer may stay in town.  
So say it, in this year of jubilee! □

□  
Ayo!  
Eeeeeey!

Moses Kainwo

# Battle Talk

Advance

According to formation

And chop them up

While you lose

Retreat

According to plan

And give them up

While you win

Moses Kainwo

# Be With Me A Minute

Matatu time is vague;  
So is the plane's,  
So is the train's.

Time for them should not work,  
If it has not worked for you,  
Rushing for a plane on a matatu.

Be with me a minute,  
So we can count the time;  
Together—Pamuja!

Moses Kainwo



# Borders Of Truth

Every nation has its moments for expressing ignorance. This nation has chosen this moment to express it in her own nuance. But when History judges this moment, may it never be mentioned of me that I was among those who betrayed the nation. Let me be named among those men and women who crossed over the borders of doubt to the expanse of sanity; who kept the nation going until she arrived at her moment of enlightenment. When that moment comes may my soul be called back from the confines of the grave to dance on the new esplanade of truth.

Moses Kainwo

# Born Again—i Am

Human born—I am  
Birthday known—I do  
Live on earth—I do  
But does it matter?

Celebrity made—I am  
With CV pages—I do  
Ready for work—I am  
But does it matter?

Spirit Born—I am  
Birthday known—I do  
Live in heaven—I do  
But does it matter?

Born again—I am  
Conference speaker—I am  
With CV pages—I do  
But does it matter?

Wretched gossipper—I am  
Professional thief—I am  
Am I loved—I am  
But does it matter?

Do you love me—maybe?  
Do I love you—maybe?  
Does God love me—of course?  
But does it matter?

Moses Kainwo

# Breaking News From New Orleans

Breaking news of Noah's flood  
For eyes that see and ears that hear  
Is bound to break hearts  
Even yours and mine from the distance

The night that fell defied your west and my east  
Though night only for angels but a bite for the beast  
Surprised by a wailing wind  
On the shores of New Orleans

Soothsaying as an art  
Is now the property of forecasters  
Of rain and wind and flood  
For rolling out the night

Beware Honey  
Bells of night may ring again  
To wake the sleepers of day  
If only they can rise from sleep

I can hear your cry  
The great wind brought it to me  
In the middle of my sleep  
Now a shrill from your bloodless bones

Like the cry here  
Your voice bounces around my neighbourhood  
And they regret that I regret  
That I was so given and gone

If only I recall our last summer  
Around the kissing gate  
On another plate of love  
The farewell only meant always present

It was good we tried to be good  
Not promising the spacewalk  
Or the catwalk for the eyes  
That pop for the TV screen

But did Katrina steal you from me  
In envy of the love song that put me to sleep  
And you stood on top of a friendly roof  
Still whispering my name with that song

Katrina might make a show of you  
And grant you accolades for cinematic positions  
From a culture of shows  
But you will never ever shy away from love

Moses Kainwo

# Can You Kill Me

can you kill me

tear my flesh apart

smash my brain out

use a bomb

or a missile

or a gun

or a rope

or an arrow

or a cutlass

my voice bears children of my kind

my song moves quicker on their lips

they bear grandchildren

my spirit goes on

i shall go on

Moses Kainwo

# Cease-Fire

Cease!

The fire eats you,  
The fire eats them.

Peace!

It must cost you,  
It must cost them.

Build!

The work calls you,  
The work calls them.

Moses Kainwo

# Curiously

Curiously curiously curiously  
He looked at the water curiously  
The madman  
He looked at the river curiously  
And said keep on running there  
I'll be coming to run too  
Curiously

Curiously curiously curiously  
He looked at the horizon curiously  
The madman  
He looked at the sun curiously  
And said keep on coming out  
I'll be coming out too  
Curiously

Curiously curiously curiously  
He looked at the tree curiously  
The madman  
He looked at the palm tree curiously  
And said keep on standing there  
I'll be coming to stand too  
Curiously

Curiously curiously curiously  
He looked at the bird curiously  
The madman  
He looked at the weaver bird curiously  
And said keep on singing there  
I'll be coming to sing too  
Curiously

Curiously curiously curiously  
He looked at the dead man curiously  
The madman  
He looked at the body curiously  
And said keep on shutting up  
I'll be coming to shut up too  
Curiously

Moses Kainwo



# Elegy On The Death Of A University Don (To The Revd. Dr. Leslie E. T. Shyllon)

You stars that sell the gloomy late evening news  
Willing harbingers!  
Have declared untold sleeplessness  
On the eternal legal instance of nature and time fleeting time  
To search into the night for truth in rumours  
Did the summer leaves that took the Fall pass  
Actually fall to the ground and turn into ash  
This tale must not be sold in Freetown only  
Where the Venetian palate is on top  
And the tongue is non est in battle  
This account is with the seller who died  
Instantly after the big bang event  
You who specialize in tall tales  
That know of stars and their names and their age  
When they are active or inanimate  
When they are living or uninteresting  
What is the sealing on your knowledge here  
What would his wife of those many years say  
Or his children who still go by his word  
Or his friends who communed with him daily  
Or the students who in search of knowledge  
Searched him daily to drink from the water of Lees  
Or congregations that grappled with the methods  
Of salvation for mankind  
In the name of acknowledged religion  
What has become an avowed misnomer  
With friends spitting brimstone at friends  
And the man would interject et tu Brute  
Then stood Caesar to throw the dart at Brutus  
Then fell Brutus to mark the end of war  
But was there a seminar for students  
On truth in the Chapel or policlinic  
Of how the hoi polloi are displaced  
By the anointed intelligentsia  
On the Altar of greed and sadism  
No more than the Church historian can tell  
And the itinerant, surreptitious

Vulture-like doves will come in their numbers  
To flank the aisle with their gowns and skirts and rompers  
In carefully graded sympathy  
For me I am left to chew upon this truth  
I have seen tears  
But let compassion be showered from heaven  
Yes passion in gentle drops on all heroes  
For all are heroes in the arena  
All are champions in the game of death  
Who started dying the very day of birth  
But did I clearly hear you say he died  
How can they die who hoist the flag of truth  
I mean truth in whatever shape or form  
As long as other scholars feed on it  
Kings, Noble Men, Entrepreneurs  
And Seraphims All  
As long as healers daydream by it  
As long as shepherds find their sheep by it  
Let that passion fall with speed on them all  
...on them all  
 on them all  
 on them all  
 on them all  
... on them all  
 on them all  
... on them all

Moses Kainwo

# English For English

An open mouth for English-speaking fits  
Invites scrutiny from witnessing wits  
From farmers to statesmen to sailors to poets  
The stand is full and tongues are belly-full

Mind not the accidents that come with speech  
The trustees of seed-speech are spreading their reach  
English is simply a language to add  
So add it to Sherbro or your Krio

Th'overriding fact is that I'm on my feet  
With English to speak away from my seat  
Note your corrections and give me a wink  
I'll simply bow out and go for my couch

Moses Kainwo

# Forgiveness

Forgiven—I have been forgiven.  
To forgive—let me be a giver,  
And to give—let me be a loser,  
And to lose—let me be a winner.

I'm sorry—let someone say I'm sorry.  
I'm sorry—'cause someone else was sorry.  
They're sorry—so we too must be sorry.  
We're sorry—so we all are the winners!

You're happy—and that's why I am happy.  
I'm happy—and that's why they are happy.  
They're happy—and that's why all are happy.  
All are happy—and that's why all are winners!

Moses Kainwo

# God Is Posh

god is posh in the ghettos  
where trash is flash  
of posh or purse  
for a life wary of lush

god is ape in the forest  
where games of doubt  
are plagued by meshy minds  
tried for angles of fuss

god is dream at home  
where security is segregation  
of measurement and hope  
in the subplots of bonds

god is posh with poshy minds  
that would throw only leftovers  
of development riddles  
toward the poor from riddled reigns

god is sold by priests that peep  
torn blinds for chances of gold  
once sold as the earnest  
of development index in heaven

god is posh as posh is lush  
for minds of buoyant flavours of taste  
only tasted by the favoured  
through invitations to parties by the posh

god is dreamer and foolish  
for making man MAN  
man is dreamer and clever  
for making GOD god

Moses Kainwo

# God The Poet

God is my greatest Poet  
Because  
He nearly bursts my eardrums  
When He drums the words  
I AM  
I fix the metres of the world  
And keep spreading the rhythm  
Of my stars  
Period

Moses Kainwo

# Hector Pieterons (Written After Visiting The Museum In Soweto On 26th May 2006)

Hector Pieterons—name or idea  
Pulls the string on my tears  
Boiling at source to shower on museums  
In the jungle of pain I am poured  
Like the dew of the morning  
There are unsung songs in here  
Pulling on the song of my tongue  
Wetted by tears—this time of night  
But the morning will come  
And they'll know the unknown singer  
In the morning after the mourning  
They rise every day following the night  
I have seen them rise with a word  
That message is immortal so much more  
And I have a call to rise—alone  
Or with them—each time they rise

Moses Kainwo

## How Are The Mighty Fallen (2 Samuel 1: 19-27)

19. All your glories, O Africa, are perishing on your heights.  
Oh, how did this happen?

20. Publish it not in the streets of your exploiters,  
Those whose love can only enslave you,  
Before their daughters compose denigrating songs round your name.

21. Oh mountains of vain elitism,  
May the bloody jewels you wear,  
Become hangmen's ropes around your necks;  
And actually behead you.  
For it is with those heads that you dream of beheading others,  
Robbing us of all good heads.

22. So many great muscles from the soil  
Have not returned from the dirty fields  
But dived in new soils sometimes by friendly blows.

23. Need I name your loyal slaves?  
In life and in death they were African matter.  
Their new names ripped their tongues and lips  
For fun of the game.

24. Oh daughters of Africa,  
Weep for your heroes,  
Those that fed you with proverbs around the harvest fire,  
When the forest swung to your tunes of love.

25. But how did we lose those mighty stuff? Oh  
No, they sleep on your height, they are not lost!

26. Your eulogies are spoken in my blood.  
For if I ever knew love,  
You were my first teacher,  
My conscientiser.

27. How indeed the mighty have fallen!  
I wish you had become a pacifist,  
For the weapons from carnal hands will not last!



Moses Kainwo

# I Am A Child

I am that child—Papa's child.  
With no home—Papa's good as dead.  
On bare feet—the only shoes I know,  
And bare back—Mama's gift of clothes.

When I play the child—I'm naughty.  
When I don't play—I'm too dull.  
They just police me—everywhere.  
My body can smell the cane—and the street.

I fend for myself—So I can shout!  
I tread on them—that's the big boy.  
They tread on me—that's the small boy.  
Whoever cares if I'm pitched—or impeached?

Your sun did shine—as a child  
And made you a star—for listing stars  
I must step out—to stand in the sun  
And I will shine—to light up my base.

Moses Kainwo

# I Can Feel Your Pulse From Here

I can feel your pulse from here:  
The watchman for Flee-Town.  
I sat in the pinnacle  
And saw the ants (black and white)  
Streaming towards the city.

Here too I am my nation:  
A piece of your earthly dream,  
The necklace for poor neighbours,  
And they say, "Come on boy,  
A piece of you will feed us".

O they won't care to know you,  
Where they don't care to see you:  
They say your streets are too red,  
With sexless ageless lifeblood;  
I can feel your pulse from here.

Here in the tower I stand,  
Standby being my daily bread:  
No omolankays, it seems,  
Salute me as a chieftain;  
But I feel your pulse from here.

Peace has always been my lot:  
My teeth know no stream of tears,  
Though my eyes keep pouring rains,  
And nameless drops anoint my heart,  
Leaving there th'emotion drops.

Moses Kainwo

# I Married A Sheep

I married a sheep  
After my wolfish tricks  
I taught the sheep some leaping  
Who never would obey  
Me too I walked the sheep way  
Though a hard gait to play

The day began with a wolfish sheepish laughter  
And yet would end  
With a sheepish wolfish cry

Right now the sheep a wolfish sheep  
Beside me a sheepish wolf  
For us both a gentle gait would find  
To spite the shying mind

Moses Kainwo

# I Too, Have Got Shoes

Have you seen shoes on children here  
No shoes for other children  
No shoes for your children  
My uncle said to my dad

I lost my shoes—small shoes  
from then on  
My feet crushed the thorns  
from then on

The city was taken from me  
But not me from the city  
from then on

Many years later my shoe remover died  
And I got back my shoes  
Bigger shoes—for crushing thorns  
from then on

I cat walked in them  
And went to bed in them  
from then on

I got the city back  
Even when I stayed there  
from then on

Believe me I too have got shoes  
And I slip my feet in them  
But not for sleep anymore  
Yes I too have got shoes

Other children wear shoes  
My children wear shoes  
Wear shoes why not  
Why not why not why not why not

Shoes in the cot  
Shoes to school

Shoes to the market  
Shoes to the office  
Why not wear shoes

Moses Kainwo

# In The Belly Of A Flying Bird

Whether I stand longer on earth  
Than sit in the tummies of birds  
I might not guess as you proffer  
Only scrutinise me on a trip  
I walk across to touch the untouched  
I fly over to see the unseen  
I slept and woke and ate and watched  
In the little space allotted me  
In the belly of a flying bird  
The whole of humankind was there  
Marking the ascents or descents  
Through the vapours above the earth  
To puff up their impromptu plea  
Befriending the abode of God  
Until I was expelled from there  
The belly of that iron bird  
And deposited onto earth  
Far from the dwelling heights of God  
Far from the fostered fear of God  
Close to the mango tree I know  
Close to the river where I swim  
Greeted by friends on the ground  
Who never yet asked how is God

Moses Kainwo

# Join A Queue Standing

you can see the stars ministers mini mini mini  
gliding high above the clouds and clouds and clouds  
it is the way of servants who excel in the spirit  
where base things dare not stain their glows and glows and glows

not only that they also wash the jigger toes with straws and straws and straws  
which they came to see where they wash feet and feet and feet  
look at those feet in motor tyres claiming their ground on motor roads  
towards the place where the displaced are more unplaced

i can see my sister and brother in their true servant colours  
for those in the dark to see aglow aglow aglow  
indeed the master says the needy must see them  
before they go to connaught or unicef or state house

the parapprofessionals know their cue and queue up in queues  
of stars that call the children to play hand and foot games of games  
indeed they are here beckoning the new star to queue up  
come on sister you must catch the vogue and join a queue

Moses Kainwo



# Kitana My Daughter's Cat

Kitana my daughter's tomcat  
Goes to school to practise to play  
His new-tamed paws will march in a house  
Rather than mow down a mouse

All day long he will twist his tongue  
To chitchat with the Queen's blue tongue  
The rats and mice will sway their tails  
With Kitana so hot on their trail

The teacher once voted a verse  
But Kitana reversed for a dash  
    In a window had sat a rat  
An offence to my daughter's cat

He went for the hind of his find  
    The kind that satisfied his mind  
He had gone to school on a fast  
But now had a find for breakfast

Kitana Kitana they yelled  
As children and teacher beheld  
A bully had come to their school  
And had no regard for the rules

Kitana was thrown out of school  
For conduct that questioned the rules  
So he went to court with his tail  
To win back his name from their tale

The lady judge sat on dried rat  
With table well made from dried fish  
Vermin skin veiled all the windows  
For fear of the street in shadows

Kitana your case you may state  
The judge in her seat did dictate  
Kitana licked his paws from the dock  
In a bid to defend his frock

Kitana spoke in Queen's blue tongue  
Though hungry he stood there for long  
He told of the degradation  
The teacher had made his portion

The judge adjourned for five minutes  
In which time her table diminished  
Kitana with table in mouth  
Disappeared from court without doubt

He never returned to the school  
He never returned to be ruled  
The judge so surprised did not fight  
With case and table out of sight

Kitana was no more in sight  
Not in school nor on dock nor on site  
But Police dogged him with their dog  
That never returned from the dream

Moses Kainwo

# Lebanon On The Move

Tantrums from the valley beneath  
Are echoed repeatedly from above  
If only  
If only they'd retreat  
Like Kingdom forces  
With banner before missile  
You know  
Real peace  
Slipped through their fingers  
Like water in a sieve

Abess Alie-Samir Esquire  
Former diamond magnet  
I salute you  
Did I hear well  
That one missile sent you home  
To the Cana spot  
Only for another to send you home  
(For lack of chemistry for wine miracles)  
To the Kambui Hills

Little did I guess  
The conversion of a hilly life  
Into a richer valley life  
Was an empty vessel  
In the hands of choice and duress

I must add a tear  
To your river of tears  
In the tearing of a valley  
Now seated on the epicenter  
Of an earthquake  
Measured since 1947  
I see your face among the displaced  
The dispossessed

When will a ruby stand  
In that valley  
To salute your signature in style

When will the history book  
Be ready for your eyes  
When will the children  
Recite the verses of Omar Kayyam  
When will a President truly say  
They gave you a plot  
To plot your peace  
When will rhetoric grant you  
Permission to look at your gems

Maybe soon maybe not  
Maybe the tears will dry up  
Soon yes very very soon  
Let us keep that  
They say after dark the dawn  
Let us keep that  
They say the shadows of moonlight  
Will roam and find rest  
Let us keep that  
They say the shadows under the rubbles  
May not occur twice  
Let us keep that  
Or may they

NOTE: Kambui Hills is a range surrounding Kenema Town, the town where diamond is bought and sold in Sierra Leone.

Moses Kainwo

# Letter To Mandela: 11th February,1990

Once in  
Some in you go in with you  
Your self  
Your family  
Your land  
Sacrificing with you

Once out  
Some in you come out with you  
Your self  
Your family  
Your land  
Forgiving with you

One thing  
Yet knows no suffering  
Knows no boundaries  
Whether in or out of jail  
Is your voice crowned

You know  
All life in him  
All light in him  
All present in him  
All future in him

Standing free  
In your black  
In your white  
In your family  
In your land

Saves the land  
So, brother, hold on!

Moses Kainwo

# Letters

a letter sealed  
is a bomb concealed  
inside is action sentence  
covered with innocence

on breaking through  
it does you  
and you leap  
or fall□  
or scatter

it speaks life or death  
better than a silent messenger  
who staggers for breath

Moses Kainwo

# Love Conversation

M: Since I became your spouse the snob of society became meaningless.

W: Of course, you ought to know, I voted you my President.

M: The trees stopped dropping their leaves.

W: Yes, I gave you a garden of evergreens.

M: But the birds have not stopped singing.

W: Because my griots serve you with perpetual interest.

M: Witness now my name on every lip in the country.

W: No surprise! I jammed their wavelength with my broadcasts.

M: Chever went hungry.

W: Not since I became your daily bread.

M: Never went thirsty either.

W: How can you when my forest well has been reserved for you only?

M: Nor have I been lonely.

W: No darling, I gave you a piece of me to take everywhere.

M: Even when I bought no jewels for you?

W: Honey, what can be more precious than your teeth in smiles?

M: Can heaven be different from what I know?

W: What you allow me to share is a foretaste of heaven.

M: So, for better for worse?

W: I'll be the code for your conduct.

M: Or richer for poorer?

W: I'll be your tax collector.

M: In sickness and in health?

W: I will drug you on.

M: Is this how we pray today?

W: And everyday.

M/W: Aaaah men!

Moses Kainwo



# Mom

Mom

You are the mother of mothers  
You are the mother even of fathers  
Because you are the last in bed  
And the first out of bed—before your children  
Your bag is full of sweets  
For your children without prejudice  
And so we flank you like bees around nectar

Mom

Your ears will keep ringing  
As long as we yearn for food  
Because you are food to us  
As long as we yearn for school  
Because you are school to us  
As long as we yearn for play  
Because you are play to us

Mom

The neighbours dropped a scorpion in our path  
While you were away  
But even from the distance you prayed  
And the scorpion moved away  
And so the neighbours cried  
Oh we want your God  
Please share your God with us

Mom

They call us naughty children  
Because we pray the way you taught us  
So they become too bitter and sour  
Than any soup can contain  
We call you mommy  
Because our shortcomings hardly invite your venom  
Though caution in love is key...

Oh mommy oh mama  
Your voice is like a pain killer  
In the night of cancer

And your soft laughter  
Has softened the hardest laughter  
In our faces—removing the dimples  
And so we love to drink from your cup  
Because and only because you are mama

Mom

We just wonder as we wonder  
What would daddy do without you  
Because of your reassurance  
Hope in God is now our greatest capital  
And we have learned to stand on faith  
To uphold your hands in prayer  
Because you are mama oh mama

Moses Kainwo

# Moon Changes

First a paint is chosen for finishing...  
Yet another comes pulling on her pigtail  
So that in the same day  
Another paint is chosen  
Then another  
Then another...  
When queried by her new friend  
She replied  
My consistency is in the changes

Moses Kainwo

# Moses Had A Mother

Moses had a mother  
Who sat by the fire  
And told the old story  
Of days when she was stony

The coal in the fire  
Soon blasted her ember  
To mark the story  
For a little anxious boy

Moses' mother  
Took a lighter bother  
To tell her young ward  
The tale of many words

His sister stood there  
Her two legs took the share  
Of the story of their past  
Which was bound to last

If you too want to stand  
For the piece I understand  
Then hear me on your legs  
With a hand on your third leg

Moses had a mother  
And the mother had a mother  
And she too had another  
Just as each one has another

The others might have died  
But his mother was so tried  
So the story was alive  
As the telling was a jive

A long long time ago  
Was a wanderer of old  
He left his motherland  
For the strangest fatherland

And he lived on wild berries  
In the wild among the trees  
He went by choice  
And sure he went by Voice

The Voice was so kind  
Even naming a new kind  
Though he doubted as he doubted  
Throwing words that were so coated

With his wife he had a son  
And he too had his son  
Until all the sons had theirs  
Some of them to die in fears

But the rest ended as slaves  
Even longing for the caves  
And then Moses too was born  
To two mothers all at once

And so the story ended  
With the ears of Moses blended  
He wore his sandals flat  
For a journey with an art

Moses jumped  
Moses galloped  
Moses sauntered  
And Moses landed

Moses Kainwo

# Noble Prize

For guessing the correct answer,  
You have a ticket to Mars!

Remember though

    you don't need a bath towel  
    you don't need dollars ...

And please take the space tongue  
Before departure.

Period

Remember too

    As soon as you shoot out  
    You move into statehood  
    And your word bears a flag  
    Unlike your bluff walk so rude

Hallo!

Over and out!

Moses Kainwo

# On The Screen

On the screen,  
I saw famine stricken lands  
And a girl dying –  
Not from food famine  
But from family famine:  
No family member was there  
To open the door...

And then on the screen,  
I saw war-stricken lands  
And the boy soldier dying  
Not from gun shot wounds  
But from wounds of a heart  
That would not part with a father  
Whose grave was too raw...

Yet still on the screen,  
The great killer breeze, in one clinched call,  
Sent thousands to hell:  
For being too slow,  
Too slow for the heavenly chariot;  
And they managed to pray,  
“God, why do you forsake...”

And we all sat there,  
Double-breasted,  
With snobbish teeth and tears,  
And the question,  
“who would go for us? ”  
Was received with enthusiasm,  
'The Seventh World Saviours! '

Moses Kainwo

# Papa's Hat Papa's Hat Papa's Hat

Papa wore his hats in shades:  
Black hat on black suit,  
Brown hat on brown suit;  
You name the suit,  
And I name the hat.

Under his hat,  
Stick in hand,  
Papa matched  
Like a Yankee;  
In spite of heat.

I used to wonder:  
When he wore his first hat,  
Why he wore it,  
Where he wore it,  
And who saw it.

Did he grow tall,  
Or did he grow old,  
Under his first hat;  
Wearing it over his heart,  
In style for the file.

Red hats, white hats,  
Green hats, yellow hats,  
Felt hats, straw hats,  
Bowler hats, top hats,  
Panama hats, peaked hats;

Orange hats and Stetsons.  
Papa saw them all,  
But did not wear them all;  
He only wore what matched,  
The colours of his heart.

Maybe to Church  
On a sunny day:  
Black for black,



Brown for brown,  
He wore them all to match.

I have seen hats,  
I have won hats,  
But the gait is unique;  
And Papa had his gait  
With his head up.

With shoulders up,  
From time to time,  
And stick in hand;  
He saw them all  
And prayed a prayer.

I have an idea,  
To put on Papa's hat  
And walk the streets:  
For fame and favours  
Papa scored.

I cannot wear a woman's hat,  
Since that should go with women's dress  
And fake license to the ladies'.  
No, Papa had none of that  
And I must be me:

Papa's son in Papa's hat;  
I shall grow tall,  
And smile tall,  
And speak tall,  
And wave my hat above hearts.

Moses Kainwo

# Peace In The Mano River Union

River Mano Mano River  
Love meanders along a river course  
Gossip here will only seal the peace  
A man of rivers will only rev a boat  
To the other side to the other banks  
To withdraw from bankruptcy

I am the Mano River  
The collateral for true peace  
The pact you signed will last  
If you took me in as witness  
I was born in peace that was not faked  
Witnessing yours renders it fakeless

Write a song that begins with my name  
Sing a song that ends with my name  
Let the drummer boy talk with drums  
With Mano River under the cover  
Louder than street drumming and dancing  
That advertises in fake tunes

The aged must learn from their young  
The art of wriggling like snakes  
This is the child that was born to a couple  
Named Deception and Ignorance  
And learn also from my doctors  
How to inject morality therein

I too can dream and I got a dream  
That one day my three girls will come together  
And own a genuine business  
From a Mother of Businesses  
Headquartered in my heart  
That a single coin might be tossed

And the tossing will give birth to a state  
Whose greatness will be larger than the 'You Ess'  
Because it will bring many things on board

To families larger than large  
That honour the grey heads  
After lodging proverbs in my sentence

And that is my dream for PEACE

Moses Kainwo

# Peace Talk

- Mr. Prime Minister, Mr. President,  
I am your President.
- 
- My name is Abraham, your father;  
 Love my family—as your father.
- 
- Jews, can you seen me?
- Arabs, can you see me?
- 
- Your peace is my peace!
- Your pain is my pain!
- 
- Warn your children,  
 Not to go behind me.
- 
- Hatred is on my back,  
 Poverty is on my back.

Moses Kainwo

# Salla Kama Sallay

Sallay kama sallay!  
Bosway! Bosway!

Sallay kama sallay!  
Bosway! Bosway!

Sallay kama sallay!  
Bosway! Bosway!

Palm fronds in the sun  
Have catapulted the earth dirt into the eyes,  
In Wilkinson Road—in broad daylight:  
As if to construct anger and rage  
In slow-moving cars,  
In Wilkinson Road—in broad daylight!

But no!  
There is beauty in the horizon  
Shining like sea in the road,  
Wilkinson Road—in the year of jubilee:

And the blast of laughter from old cars  
Will level with speed  
The mountain of wastepaper journals  
Flying out of car windows,  
In Wilkinson Road—a road changing direction by the hour:  
The Chinese gift of road jigsaws  
To Salone.

And control of the road,  
Of everything;  
Is sometimes lost to cars and headless drivers,  
Who fail to see the beauty of the road ahead.

It is hoped that jubilee will breed joy,  
When enemies of progress  
Shall seal their lips and pockets  
And become converts to friends of progress;

And we will forget to play the game of chess,  
At the violet hour:  
And the expression man butu man wach □  
Or Dem say Bailor Barrie  
Yu say Davidson Nicol?  
Shall be deleted from our memory cards  
And in a couple of months  
The women will dropp their catwalk  
For a salute from those men  
Who salute women's hips:  
But such men will now see the grace  
That gave birth to precious hips.

And in a couple of months,  
There will be water supply  
For all on the edges of great waters—in the city;  
And in villages where villagers drown the waters,  
In the old old forests.

Give us a couple of months  
And Bumbuna will begin to visit certain towns and villages,  
Before travelling abroad for foreign exchange.

And in a couple of months,  
The differently-abled persons  
Will forget the farmhouses of the past,  
Where they were abandoned for another purpose:  
In Wilkinson Road—in broad daylight.

And in a couple of months  
The mothers will show greater care for their babies,  
And still be in the fifty-fifty game,  
In honour of precious deadlines.

□

And in a couple of months,  
All NGOs will honestly justify  
Their income in line with the work they say they do.  
In Wilkinson Road.  
Oh Salone,  
What a price you are paying for development!

And even now,

No new sect will filter itself into the system,  
And say they are a Church or Mosque:  
For fire shall fell  
On Churches and Mosques that visit from hell,  
And save the nation from obscurantism;  
Of isms from all schisms.

And in a couple of months,  
And the newly-found black gold  
Will not displace the weak from the land that they love,  
But honour them well-deserving rewards:  
At the dawn of engagement...

And the new MP shall love to write his name,  
In consonance with their alma mater,  
To prompt them—before the violet hour.

Yes! Yes! Yes!  
This rhythm of progress must this go on,  
Till late comers report for duty!

If independence means severance from dependence in a new jacket,  
Then this must go on!

If God did make men and women equal,  
With a mandate to reproduce their kind,  
Taking cognizance of population size,  
Then this must go on.

If the head boys and head girls will not betray the nation,  
In the year of jubilee,  
Then this must go on!

If parents will not wear their children's trousers,  
In the year of jubilee,  
To distract celebrants,  
Then this must go on!

If the academic giants will not sell their birthrights,  
For a plate of foofoo,  
In the year of jubilee,  
Then this must go on!

If the Athens of West Africa  
Will wake up from sleep,  
In this precious year of jubilee,  
Then this must go on!

If civil servants will stop dreaming  
Of wusay dem tay kaw na de i go it,  
Then this must go on!

If Church leaders will stop fighting each other  
From corners of unholy testimonies,  
Then this must go on!

If black friends of state  
Will stop taking black messages to State House,  
Like those black birds in the violet hour,  
Then this must go on!

If the tribes will unite,  
And forget their tribal agendas,  
In a new dance involving all,  
Then this must go on!

If citizens still in chain  
Can allow themselves to be liberated,  
In the dawn of the jubilee,  
Then this must go on!

If children will heed the thought that cheating in exams  
Is a wrong start for the workplace,  
Then this must go on! □

This nation needs a potion  
That will make dry bones come alive,  
A potion that will make tasty flesh become sour—  
In the mouths of vultures;  
So those vultures can fly away to the land of no return.

We have the potion that will add flesh and spirit and life  
To Wallace Johnson,  
Who will come with a pen filled with blood,



From cowards, to rewrite our constitution.

This nation has that potion  
That will kill loneliness born to marriages,  
Contracted in holy houses.

So let the fire of purification fall and shake everything bone,  
Let the fire fall and soften hearts of stone:  
And unnamed roses will salute the rising stars,  
In the maturing star of a nation.

Sallay kama sallay!  
Bosway! Bosway!

Moses Kainwo

# Sharing

Little girl, little girl—  
What will you give the orphans?  
I will give them my love.

Little girl, little girl—  
Can they eat love?  
I will share my food with love.

Little girl, little girl—  
Can they wear love?  
I will share my clothes with love.

Little girl, little girl—  
Can they read love?  
I will share my books with love.

Little girl, little girl—  
Can they feel your love?  
I will share my tears with love.

Little girl, little girl—  
Can you be their mother?  
I will be their sister. With love.

Moses Kainwo

# Silence Please

Your voice bounces through the building,  
From bottom to top:  
It hit my eardrums;  
On the seventh floor,  
And deadened my brain.

If you joined the choir,  
You would sing bass;  
But this building,  
Opts for another voice –  
□ SILENCE!

Will you cast your vote?

Moses Kainwo

# Snap Noise

Three tiers of noise  
Caught me from the side  
□  
One from under the trailer  
And on its hind  
A carpet for the heels  
As they crushed the madman's legs  
While he hung on to the side  
Of the long mirrorless lorry

The other just behind me  
And beside Gibraltar Church  
A woman who said  
"I am a mother he surely has a mother"  
Then she cried but continued home

The third from the third floor  
A Lebanese peeped and cried  
"Some relation of his will come  
And claim insurance on the lorry"  
With his eyes containing the container

So the lorry stopped  
To give madness a ride

Moses Kainwo

# Spent Jokes On Them Are Really On You

spent

and done  
you can go now  
emancipation will dance  
on your head hands and feet  
fly into that colourless world body  
your friends await your entry  
emancipation will dance  
on you like on them  
go and be  
spent

jokes  
head first  
then the rest  
what you leave behind  
is not yours but ours and theirs  
jump out of this colourful world body  
your friends await your approach  
this is graduation for you  
and them before you  
not acted  
jokes

on  
switch on  
those dead batteries  
farewell to grave indifference  
you now eat and drink to your maker  
your last meal or dance have no wings for the flight  
they are truly the meal and dance of worms  
the first-tier welcome for a celebrity  
dead batteries come alive  
as you go  
on

them  
the object  
of a spent force

are not forgotten there or here  
regardless your acquired senile jargons  
just leave them behind but also gain them ahead  
your maker views your smartness there  
with sheer shame and lament  
denounce the punches  
and you have  
them

are  
you there  
theorist mathematician  
your turn is here to be there  
no retractions of aberrations body  
the greatest of the great will welcome you  
as he did Solomon caulker before  
davidson nicol as you choose  
as their callings were  
so yours  
are

really  
really really  
a surprise awaits you  
who walk on your blistered hands  
like you would pick up spoons with jigger toes  
god was quick to announce his shocks when he made you  
no regrets just move on and take your place  
golden outfits and tools galore  
unlike those behind you  
go and enjoy  
really

on  
then body  
onto deeper depths  
to impregnate the unfertilized  
then to higher heights to abort your babies  
move on body in solemn answer to that great call  
no denying to float a well-spiced body  
no denying to float a hopeful soul  
your gifts of shoes

and robes are  
on  
  
you  
is death  
but me is life  
or the beginning of life  
for good eyes and ears and heart  
spent jokes on them are really on you  
journey with it on anxious feet  
all queries fall on their backs  
because me is life a-  
gainst death for  
you

Moses Kainwo

# Stony Aids

A battle to fight  
A war to win  
With stones  
Dead stones  
Living stones  
In your hands  
And in my hands too

A very hard stone  
A healing stone  
Of AIDS  
In AIDS  
With AIDS  
Has killed the virus  
And the world is healed

I carried the virus  
When I carried the stigma  
So positive  
So activist  
So upbeat  
Against you brother  
And yet it was I who died

When I dropped the stigma  
I dropped the virus  
So positive  
So activist  
So upbeat  
In support of you sister  
And I'm so much alive

Moses Kainwo



# The Dance Of The Nude

The picture on my son's wall violates my visit:  
The blues from the wild west with four legs.  
In the nude they dance on the wall:  
I can't guess when that drawing entered his poll,  
Entered my son's poll,  
To find a place on the western wall of his parlour.

I thought my culture was violated upon first sight,  
But when I entered the guest room I felt I was raped.  
Indeed the nude dance started way back,  
When his father said don't misbehave or I'll send you away...  
From decency ... Away!  
From heaven to hell, from this Ka to that Ka.

And the day I stepped outside to view the sea,  
Four legs danced on the porch like they came down from the wall:  
Four human legs of equal shape and length as those on the wall.  
And there too the walls were loaded so much,  
With the nude parade so much  
As coming from abroad like my learned son.

I am a prisoner of conscience within these walls,  
And my youth-age visits me with a raised axe:  
So I ask, what did I deprive you of in those days?  
I denied you cinema going in good faith my love,  
But not study time my love,  
So I draw a clean landscape not a dirty mindscape.

But here this returnee has chained our landscape  
And introduced multifaceted hills to the plain,  
Thereby raping even the breast that gave him bread.  
But what will weeping do to a drunken son in the nude?  
Only sharpen his pencil of nude!  
But that new drawing will not violate my eyes, never!

Moses Kainwo

# The Eye-Less God

The eye-less God needs your eyes,  
That use two lenses,  
Or more:  
That he might see...  
Will you let him?

The ear-less God needs your ears,  
That use two eardrums,  
Or more:  
That he might hear...  
Will you let him?

The nose-less God needs your nose,  
That uses two holes,  
Or more:  
That he might smell...  
Will you let him?

The mouth-less God needs your mouth,  
That uses two lips,  
Or more:  
That he might speak...  
Will you let him?

The arm-less God needs your arms,  
That use two hands,  
Or more:  
That he might touch...  
Will you let him?

The leg-less God needs your legs,  
That use two feet,  
Or more:  
That he might move...  
Will you let him?

The heart-less God needs your heart,  
That uses two pipes,  
Or more:

That he might feel...  
Will you let him?

The all-mind God would have your mind,  
That uses two heads,  
Or more:  
That he might think...  
If you let him.

Moses Kainwo

# The Lesson

The teacher opened her mouth

And spoke

The children opened their ears

And heard

There was only one key

The lesson

The teacher broke a piece of chalk

And taught

The children broke their pencils

And learnt

There was only one force

The lesson

ONE THING TO REMEMBER ABOUT TEACHING IS THAT THE TEACHER NEVER GROWS OLD. IN FACT SHE GROWS YOUNGER EACH TIME SHE PICKS UP A PENCIL AND OPENS HER MOUTH LIKE ONE OF HER PUPILS.

Moses Kainwo

# The New Salone Leone

The say as they always do  
That the Salone Leone  
Of the Seventies  
Died with the Seventies

But you know as well as I do  
That the Salone Leone  
Of the Seventies  
Never laid claim to immortality  
In the face of fatalities  
As dark as the Seventies  
Yes as stark as the Seventies

But that was in the rains  
When the ground was wet for growing notes  
As one might grow rice or coconut  
From the wet soil  
Or rutile or gold or diamond  
From the dry soil

Yet we still have the rains  
As we do the dries  
As we do the dries

Sure enough  
The Salone Leone will grow taller  
Than the tallest coconut tree  
On your heart  
If your heart is wet soil  
In the rains  
Or  
If your heart is dry soil  
In the dries  
Yes when it pours  
As it is about to pour  
From the new new sky  
The Sierra Leone song on development and transformation  
A rainbow from your heart

Indeed

In the new jazz of wet and dry

You are the Salone Leone

Shooting above the sky

Moses Kainwo

# The Pastor Cried

The Pastor cried each time his Queen giggled  
But his Queen laughed to solve the old riddle

It was dark for eyes but not for yielding limbs  
So wise and so submissive in the wings

None could see the pouring rain and bright sun  
But the feeling was there of duties done

This was before he slept like a baby  
And she watched over the newborn HE

Moses Kainwo

# The Peace Of Christmas

This fully spirited rendition  
Of tranquilizers,  
Packaged by innocence—in a manger,  
In a manger,  
Has surprised the hungry and the angry with peace.

But down the road in years ahead,  
Mary Magdalene waits,  
With many heads,  
That will settle  
For peace not dreamed of;  
Yet cares less who cares,  
And would follow her new-found dream  
To view a Roman cross.

As for today, Father Christmas  
Has chosen to be a toy  
To countless children—a celebrity god;  
Tantalizing them with gifts—not in a manger,  
Not in a manger,  
But packaged with superficiality  
For the anger sleeping in hunger,  
In ambivalence of ambience.

Accept my offer of  
The peace of Christmas—not on a platter,  
Not on a platter,  
Neither packaged in the superfluity of moments  
But the simplicity of purposeful humanity;  
To be sung by shepherds  
Who longed for morning light.

The peace of Christmas.  
The peace of Christmas.  
The peace of Christmas.  
The peace of Christmas.  
The peace of Christmas.  
The peace of Christmas.  
The peace of Christmas.



Moses Kainwo

# The Peeping Culture

## 1. Eyes

I

Those with gyrating eyes have prophesied,  
That the eyes are openings on the side;  
But entrepreneurs of the visible,  
Shall trade their luck with the invisible.

The young are short-sighted by inspection,  
The old are long-sighted by suspicion.  
Children peep to see with elderly eyes  
Dancing adults on their love prize with price.

See them still blinking at shadows at play,  
While adults must blink their fanlight replay:  
The ticklish world will unlock a window,  
The greedy world will shut the gazer's show.

Little surprise some shutters are so thick,  
Though lucent curtains serve the purpose pick:  
Many a gazer will tick to street bells,  
And choose not to be their sisters' angels.

II

Oh yes you can choose not to see the bell,  
Because death standing in that deafening knell,  
Attracts a witness that is not a witness:  
Behind the window blinds the conscience stress.

I turned it on my mind over again,  
Me too, I am not my sister's bargain;  
I am her Lucifer to chant her there,  
And since no one beholds I shall not care.

Lucifer is in you my countrybore:  
Together we mused and our sister tore,  
From the Gallery down to the Crypt,  
And from the Crypt down into the street.

If by this token new perception drops,

Then the nation wins the cowering crops:  
Elect a hoodlum and you have an imp,  
There you'll survive with a well-earned gimp.

Let each goggle gauge a reverse gazing,  
On the battered soul deformed from blazing:  
Indeed a sorry darkness sits within,  
And only when it rises will it spin.

## 2. Rivers

I

Five great rivers the death comrades did cross,  
To square up with the age-old peeping loss:  
They broke the bridges and co-steered their way,  
The strange navigators driven by pay.

An evening salute from death on the streets,  
Was not so welcome to the peeping feet;  
In fact the streets died with a woeful woe,  
As they bled and wasted before the foe.

Their names were written in the book of pyres,  
To choose their deaths in the face of hellfire:  
They received the eye-bursting-dripping beads,  
Or the gift of shirts with chosen sleeves.

New rivers began to flow the main roads,  
Nameless rivers made of countless red loads:  
My sister peeped and her eyes became blood,  
Her letter love was there in the flood.

II

Operation-no-living-thing had no date,  
Or else this poetaster could not vibrate;  
But Death sharpened the machete and cursed,  
Unstopping the river of blood for the nursed.

No one ever cursed like that heavyweight,  
No one ever cried like that featherweight;  
The two looked at each other in the eye,  
And the new peeping game was cast in dye.

But there was no rhythm in the new song:  
Sung by the Ocean where we saw dung,  
Waiting for a boat to set sail or withdraw,  
Anywhere under God's good sky for synod.

The river flooded on flora and fauna,  
With shoppers listing to Noah's oarsman:  
Some green some white some blue unseemly queues,  
Singing how we exhaust thee in the blues.

One mosquito that sucked the rancid blood,  
Became so fat and burst open with flood:  
But now rotten and not so good for washing,  
Got drained and bottled in a dark basin.

### 3. Creation

Was this the way the universe began,  
With a timeless zero and a big bang,  
In green and white and blue of any shape,  
With lions unseen on mountains in cape?

The metaphysics of the guessed order,  
Throws naiveté at the vexed founder:  
And that imaginative family tree,  
Is a god planted to harbour fleas.

The Cotton Tree of Fleetown is a god,  
Around whom the fleas converge with a nod;  
And every sober march re-routes from there,  
She amply fed and dressed with measured care.

Where the green god stands there is flesh on bones,  
There is hope on toes that the green god knows,  
From daybreak to nightfall they come and go,  
Lifting new symbols from the place below.

Not one burgher knows who proscribed with fire,  
And I want to ask who lighted the tyre.  
Who made the bad heart, I can only guess.

But who declared the war we should not now stress.

How can we know where knowledge is remote?  
You press a knob and something is afloat,  
You lift a finger and some figure's dumped;  
The bluecoat is there with his fingers cupped.

They say the Cotton Tree saw them chop dogs,  
She must have also seen them bogging bogs.  
But who can make her tell the faded tale,  
When the truth itself has been painted pale?

The sold train track some travel curses banned,  
The power now rests in the palm of the band,  
Which also is now in the poda handout;  
But real power remains in the rear mouth.

Right around your base and just yesterday,  
America waved in the nude by day;  
And again yesterday like the other judge,  
UNAMSIL was baptising in the lodge.

There they said disrobe to enter the pond.  
He took off a shirt and then the bottom bonds:  
Four shirts and four trousers on one body,  
A moving wardrobe in fear of war folly.

Story-telling Tree, receive the prayers,  
Offered in jest as a test of the years,  
Your children will come from obloquy and cry,  
Forgive their past and from your glory spy.

You gave them tongues yet dubbed their speeches wrong,  
You gave them drugs and proffered ladder rungs,  
The chequered love of a chequered nation,  
But the wheat and the tares must have options.

#### 4. Seasons

The dries are not summer so mark them tagged,  
Winter and autumn each have their fume flagged;  
They will come next year and always be first,  
But will not spring where the reason is cursed.

The tears in you will come as will the rain,  
Because the soul is alive with the stain,  
And the charred remnants of battle will float,  
T'announce the evidence of battered throat.

And one drunken gun-toter said to me,  
"This is your own ambush brave pedigree,  
Empty your pockets on a deserving angel,  
The revolution is here first to sell".

"Was this the accord you promised to pour,  
Hunger and thirst rained upon all the poor? "  
I could not ask more that desperado,  
The stooge of death ordered the thing like dough.

Someone will hate the success tale you tell,  
Someone will not stop despising your wealth;  
But please succeed and retreat from the rest,  
To hold onto excess will be a test.

Can present time annul past time and stay?  
You cannot bat the ball and keep it—nay!  
The aged say the times are new to them,  
The young reckon but say their time is dreamt.

We don't even know who last left the shores,  
Since the going is rated with sham shows.  
Can you actually blame the move on some,  
When in your heart and head you hailed the fun?

To appear they had to disappear,  
But time will come though time was always here;  
And time once lost is time forever gone,  
As a deed done is deed forever done.

Roses stand in dustbins and make them sweet,  
We need one on this ground for wiping our feet:  
Life now smells of the swift and the ugly,  
True revolution will make the foolish holy.



# The Princess Of My Heart

The Princess of my heart indeed  
Lived in the heart of death  
She cut a canal for fresh tears  
And hit the eyes of sunlight  
That hit my blind at dawn

This path of printed pages raw  
How royalty trod it for fun  
But my lone star did spot the sign  
Of printed minds as well  
Who had to paint the paint

The phenomenal race course  
Has bitter gold to give  
No cheering stadia fans  
To a game of non-starters  
Where God Himself is Ref

The Princess of the New Empire  
How can you say they killed her  
Who did what and where  
The underdogs bear me out  
Her life is red ink there

This full moon day has filled my eyes  
With water of salt so deep  
My Queen will ride into tomorrow  
Her Saviour calls her home  
Where angels praise and pray

The bridge that tripped her soul from sole  
Robbed her of all she had  
Consuming her love in anger bent  
Herself a swinging bridge  
Upon pent-up pen pals

Moses Kainwo



# The Rare Rulers

As if the people are paper  
They rule with a ruler  
The gun as red-ink pen  
Thunders decrees from dawn to dusk  
And the people become paper

Yet I never knew  
Could never guess  
The skull of humans could be cup  
Of lasting thought score in the hand

And the cup too is a ruler  
Where the people play stiff before it  
And spread like paper to be ruled

The rulers lie straight  
Like snakes among the people  
And writers who dropp their mixture of ink  
On the bodies of rulers  
Will instantly change their house address

Moses Kainwo

# The Return

One day I will come to you  
Just as you memorised me  
With dark shades on motorbike

That picture will not be me  
Because my eyes will be mine  
After one ten fifty years

With darker glasses than that  
Ten fifty a hundred years  
Not the me you ever knew

Even after one moment  
Riding away from your eyes  
Not the same voice anymore

Resounding your favourite words  
Like I did before a crowd  
Into your timeless eardrum

Not the me with giant legs  
Cat walking the stage of guilt  
Of fatherhood motherhood

One day yes one fine fine day  
I will come back with that name  
That answered the question then

My image is the story of Adam  
And yours that of Eve's  
With legends that touch the hour

Why did you come with a face  
Only to depart with none  
Not the me that you captured

On camera of your eyes  
That moment will never come  
(Never never being a new poem)

On that same old motorbike  
With my timeless goggles on  
When you hosted all of me

Or so you thought you did  
Making me hero from names  
In the news or books as you like

I'm not a footballer cannot be  
With my boneless feet  
To wipe the dews from the lawn

You must be dreamy dreaming  
Of a new day new moments  
Hot and cold and hot again

With the old me that you caught  
On camera of your eyes  
As in dream of new returns

When night puts on day and night  
Again and against again  
With the old me in goggles

On camera of new eyes  
As in dream of more returns  
When night puts on day and night

I will come back with stories  
With excuse for nights between  
Yes I will come back to you

With much more darker glasses  
Glasses that you never gathered  
In lieu of miscomputed looks

On the camera of your eyes  
And many uninvited eyes  
Yes I will come back to you



# The Song Of A Sheep (Based On Psalm 23)

The Lord is my Captain, I shall not drift.

He assigns me a quiet cabin,  
Speaks to me through the sea shells,

And my soul now has a heart.  
His name in my ears is a call to righteous steps.  
Yes, His name is a command.

Though I am overwhelmed by shocks,  
I am not disappointed;  
For you wait beside me,  
Serving soft counsel,  
So I am not impeached.

Your blessings come upon me like rain,  
That wets my head in the dreams of my enemies.  
My shower cap gives way to your anointing touch,  
And my cup of oil overflows.

Surely I shall remain blest  
All the days that greet me,  
And I will stay  
In my God-given cabin,  
Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow.

Moses Kainwo

# The Sun

The sun is a gift for sharing:  
This precious gift is not for custodians;  
You have it and I have it too.  
So let's bounce it back to sunless friends—n  
I will pinch from my loaf for them.

Moses Kainwo

# The Vote Against Aids

Our vote against ill health  
Is a vote for world health  
Our vote against AIDS  
Is in aid of full wealth

Our vote for ill health  
Is a vote for world death  
Our vote supporting AIDS  
Is in aid of full hell

Where we pledge to World Health

Moses Kainwo

# There Is A Turning In The Road

There is a turning in the road, trav'ler;  
For a willing, courageous and tested flier.

If you must turn to the left of the road,  
Do so knowing the world condemns your code.

If you must turn to the right of the same,  
Do so knowing that the world takes new blame.

If you must make an about face turn there,  
Do so as a trav'ler who knows the fare.

But if you must move on on that same road,  
Move, O willing, courageous and tested code.

Moses Kainwo



# Together

You may not like my race  
You may not take my face  
But if you spot the goal  
And would not mind the road  
We may hit the field together

You may not like my world  
You may not brave my kingdom  
But if you touch the choice  
And would not mind the noise  
We may film the fair together

You may not like me there  
You may not picture me here  
But if you sense the wave  
And would not mind the bait  
We may sail the seas together

Moses Kainwo

# Victoria Falls Verified

I came I saw and was stoutly conquered  
By a wounded river in its middle  
That brutally awoke from the dead  
Hearts beaten into rock and tough riddle

I came there when the rain killed cameras  
And sentenced cheap mobile phones to silence  
With human voices harassed and embarrassed  
By the vexed spirit of Victoria Falls

Even the rainbow was cowered and bent  
In apologies to Ma Zambezi  
Who fumed dewes of blessings on its bent back  
In downloads and uploads without a fee

I was puzzled by sudden presences  
Of nations jumping out of anxious beds  
To watch the rainbow drink water like fishes  
From a larva-spitting middle river

Such that early that morning I joined them  
As candidate and witness to miracles  
Where the river shouted in agreement  
To heaven and earth breaking sheer shackles

Oh Zambezi your own action secrets  
Remain unknown even to your parents  
And sharing this drama with kola nut teeth  
Might shake late conversion into cowards

And you oh Livingstone shall be labelled  
Among the famous among th'infamous  
Among the toddlers among the aged  
To frustrate moralists no end with a purse

I begged heaven to grant a parachute  
That I might fly beyond the roused rainbow  
To catch up with hope that clings to the future  
But opens a warm embrace for a new pal

Moses Kainwo

# What, Then, Is Scholarship Crowned?

what, then, is scholarship crowned?

yes, yes, a voice –  
a voice with limbs  
of a full-grown man  
impaired

when crowned by tongue,  
he debits the world their right to speeches,  
and their voices drown.

when crowned by limbs,  
he debits the world their right to labour,  
and their actions drown.

when crowned by head,  
he debits the world their right to silence,  
and their persons rise.

yet the critics fall together,  
alaughing out their heads:  
"i wish it were not written,  
i wish it were not spoken";  
and the timid fall together,  
aweeping out their heads:  
"i wish I had not written,  
i wish I had not spoken".

sold!

Moses Kainwo

# Words For Ears And Eyes

Too many words dropp  
On ears dripping fears  
And everyone knows they dropped  
But wish they were not there

On paper the toddler's designs  
Making sense to the author only  
Who sees the blank page  
As offensive and repulsive

Yet so few words penetrate  
Pensive eardrums  
To settle for some passions  
In the marketplace

On paper they dance as on TV  
Becoming a rainbow of pornography  
Leaping from wardrobes for words  
As oases in the desert place

Sometimes a bomb is dropped  
To triple the trouble  
Other times it is defused  
To cripple the creeps

Moses Kainwo

# Workplace Jingle

From the crammed crypt to the script  
A new sun has shone on me  
It is the Son from Sonzone  
And He says come work with me

Be you Martha in the fore  
Or that Mary wearing shawl  
There's new lease of life at work  
And He says come work with me

Yet one King will have to reign  
For all those who want a rain  
On their apron or their scalpel  
And He says come work with me

When He comes as C-E-O  
And you stand up on your toes  
Transformation is on us  
For He says come work with me

No one jostles to see Him  
He's for one and He's for all  
The workplace is His workplace  
And He says come work with me

You may have a piece of chalk  
Or duster to wipe the stuff  
Or that voice that pierces ears  
He just says come work with me

Come stand with me in my stand  
Come walk with me in my walk  
Come sit with me in my seat  
This is how you work with me

Moses Kainwo