

Poetry Series

# **Obodokasi Ade'etem Agbor - poems -**

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# Obodokasi Ade'etem Agbor(1992)

Obodokasi Ade'etem E. Agbor is a Nigerian poet.

# Amour Maternel

To the wombs that bore me  
From half to whole,  
Foetus to flesh  
Till I summed nine moons and ready to drop.  
The thighs that fell apart  
And never contracting even in pain,  
To spare this petty being  
Calm and thoughtless.  
I regret the harm and pain I caused.

To the hands that held strong a brittle being,  
Unsteady and fearless of fall,  
The sore nipples that visited my lips  
To address the hunger in me,  
The restless lips that sang me lullabies  
And kissed me to smile and sleep.  
Pray, forgive the nights I stole your sleep.

To the voice that imparted wisdom unto me,  
The loving eyes that grew stern  
In chastisement  
When my thought train derailed.  
Forsake the years I contested against your knowledge.

But then I was a child,  
Calm and thoughtless,  
Unsteady and fearless of fall  
And all that love meant nought to me.  
Now I am a man!  
Your love has brought me thus far,  
Your hands have held me strong,  
Your sweat has set me before the chalk  
And I have learnt enough  
Never to strike the fingers that fed me.

Obodokasi Ade'etem Agbor

# Blood Day Night

Behind the green infested walls of the Cathedral  
Ere a worship palace left to ruin and ghost,  
I stood shaking of fear, knowing 'twas evil's hour to befall,  
On a ghostly place was a little lamb lost.

I heard the wind blow soft, and leaves taking bows  
I heard far an owl's hoot and then a snarl,  
I heard far foot-steps frolic forlorn parts of isles and rows  
At spot, I knew where the head was to fall,  
Alas, the watchman is the night's choice for the bloody banquet  
The other nights was a child lying loose in the park, then a tired ballet.

Oh look, here she comes, riding stealthier than the wind  
Making no sounds but for her slow snarls,  
Her hairs swam from skull to waist, a gown that 'ssembles a bridal knead.  
Her eyes sunk deep into her skull  
As if to draw eye-sight  
A tool much needed for the night.

Riding near the watchman she grabbed him still  
First taking out the eyes, then digging a hole on his neck to fill  
Her blood desire.  
I heard the old man whine,  
As an animal tossed to fire  
While she on his blood kept to dine.

Turning her white face up to me she whispered  
A silent whisper as if daring the owl who kept guard  
'Come son, come and taste how sweet an old blood,  
Come feel the pleasure of old in new wine-skin'  
There I stood hungered and thirsty of food  
Any kind was offered my body to win.

I took a step or two  
And smelt it fresh like dew,  
Tonight I shall draw my first blood  
And I have been asked to your bed.



# Flying Stars

Ho flying stars are out tonight  
Wearing white sparks for summer tide,  
Ere the woodlands I us'd to know  
Bore burning stars that flew all through  
Till It's green lush's are spots of lights.

And young- a child used to fight  
The itch to weigh their burning might  
Then to know tis but of cold glow.  
Ho flying stars.

Oft By the woods nigh the sea's sight  
Look and see stars taking low flights  
Like a herd of planes flying slow,  
And happy - a child still to grow  
Would think 'the stars have left their heights'  
Ho flying stars.

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# Have You Seen Stars

Have you seen stars in autumn  
Or moon at the spire of her glow?  
If you have, i bet my smiles for frowns  
You will pass them to kings as crowns.

Have you tread deep into obudu forests  
Near the bounds that bred me long ago  
Were lilies on vales and mounts grow,  
If you have,  
You will forsake the wonders of west.

In one of those festivals,  
Were maidens dance bare breasted  
In the scourge of the sun,  
Listen to the Swahili rendition,  
I say,  
Even the birds dread a competition.

An African maid,  
When she tend the sheep  
Or lay the bed  
And sent deep to sleep,  
O' even Australian summer  
Hath not nurtured such flower

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# I Am African

I am African  
Not because I am hungry,  
But the color of my skin  
Says so.  
An empty stomach is the way of the black and white.

I am African  
Not because my tongue has not tasted french wines,  
But the protruding veins about my body  
Says so.  
Wine or not is my mind to make.

I am African  
Because my neck has been bejewelled  
By ropes and locks  
My sore wrists entwined in cuffs,  
My ankles wrapped in jingles of chains,  
Stacked in waiting ships  
And sailed across oceans to till plantations.

If your skin is burnt black  
Or fried by the sun to the tone of akara,  
If the veins about your body  
Makes you like the shape of an iroko  
Whose roots have escaped the soil,  
If your wrist  
Have been made to wear  
Cuffs that do not tell time  
And your neck hung on ornaments  
That are too heavy to bear:  
You too are African.

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# I Call Your Name

I will call you the morning dews  
That salutes the farmer's feet by morn news,  
I will call your name.

I will call you with the stainless  
Fervency of a child desiring  
It's mother's breasts,  
Alas, those sweet breasts.

On the aftermath of a rainy day  
I'll throw my hands And catch a rainbow  
Write your name on it And hang it Same way-  
Verily, that bow will bear an added colour.

I call your name  
Like the wing'd seraphs of heaven  
Singing alleluia to the heavenly amen.  
I call you my dame.

I call your name,  
I hear your voice resound from the vales,  
A sweet song from a sweeter songstress.  
And that my nightingale  
Is the reason I call your name.

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# I Know Faith

You know her,  
The solitary sower  
She buried a thousand  
Grains away in deep sand  
Tarrys a whole year  
And hopes to find a bountier harvest there!  
She is faith.

You know him  
From his gun or his dog team,  
The highland hunter  
Treading so far a border  
And laying traps for eloping antelopes  
Not a thought if the creatures ne'er elopes.  
He too is Faith!

You know the office Jack  
For today he's done and back  
Eats himself empty as hollow  
Make a list and sets an alarm for morrow  
Tosses his body to bed  
And dies till the day ahead.  
Even He is Faith!

And the tax collector  
He's play'd same scenes before  
Making my dear chief  
Run like a chased thief,  
Today he's back again  
Promising to put them to same pain,  
Not a care if the red heads are dressed for war:  
This is Faith taken too far.

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# In The Words Of The Preacher

Ye banks and seas and mounts and vales around,  
All gold and silver and rubies underground,  
The sun burnt bricks of African set  
And Chinese relics the world covets.  
Hear the preacher say are all vain.

O castles of Montgomery  
Decked with covers of tapestry,  
The beautiful maidens of Rome  
And sweet savored soups of my home,  
Hear the preacher say, your desires shall wane.

Love the seas but not as your friend,  
Love the mounts, but to an end.  
Once a while, love the memos of home soup  
But when you go for a meal, take with you a friend.  
Gold I hear takes sweat and strong to mine,  
But love and friend is less time to find.

So Love your friend  
That when the mounts are fallen  
And the seas rise to claim the maidens  
You shall be left with Love and friend,  
A friend to stand by you on judgement day,  
And love to wash your sins of vanities away.

Or did God not command man to love?  
Three virtues, yet set He love above.

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# Laws Of God And Man

The stables of heaven are risen  
And hell plummets and sets low  
In its abyss lay fruits forbidden  
And my brother I know,  
Holds love for the curs'd amid Eden.

Nights have I spent on strumpet calls  
And day on drunk drinks till night falls  
Times what my neighbor holds I find value  
Most times I stray'd my bounds and snap'd a few.

Now, of twenty score years i have seen earth  
Take as much as i have strayed from faith  
I reckon it leaves me with hell and death  
And a night in Hades i hear is hate.

Heaven did God first found  
And Then Hades too as man's test  
Two meres he set as bound-  
Mercies and love: man made the rest.

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# Letter Of Admonitions

Low, low, lay him low  
Oh wailing team,  
Fill his hollow tomb with tears no more  
He's had But time enough  
To sleep And dream.

Swift! Turn back your tears widow woman  
Go back to toil when thou art still fit And can  
Put all your crying weight to work sack  
Rare to see a man traverse so deep a path And back.

Save incense, save candles And burning time  
Sowing seeds in sow seasons is the wisdom of the sower  
So sow soul brother, that when try time is over  
Thou wilt save for thineself a penny or dime...

If thou saw your brother rowed to grave  
Thou wilt know vain 'pon vain is what we crave  
That time may or August  
Thou too shalt kiss dust  
So choose while earthen, What gold path to pave.

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# Lovelete

Shalt I see thee as the glistening sun  
Setting on the steeps of mount olives upon  
Or the flawless green lushes of the sycamores  
That adorns the sunlit soils of Nile shores?

I might take thee as the moon that encompass the ocean rise  
But I shame to see soon  
That thou art of better price.

Thou art the stars in the dark skies of midsummer  
The sculpted pottery of ancient sumer.  
The cherry that blooms in south  
And tis nut  
Are But The sweet of the mouth.

Thy words are as decrees of reed stylus  
Spotting rolls of Egyptian papyrus,  
A millennium of love letters  
And big bounds of bronze fetters.

I mayst compare thy comfort  
To the gentle harmattan chill from north  
Or a sea of winter snow alighting forth,  
But of truth, thou art of higher worth.

Thou art my mistress  
That build'th me fortress,  
That keep'th my heart  
And tend'th my bed  
And feed'th me fat  
With love And bread.

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# Many Reasons To Love

I love the fisherman,  
With his boat and net and patience  
He has ransacked the seas  
And brought home fish and crab  
To chase the stranger in my stomach away.

I love the blacksmith  
He has gone through fire  
To mint me guns and swords and shields,  
So that the enemies of my country  
Shall see me and flee.

I love the teacher,  
With the price of the chalk  
He has bought me sense  
At folly's expense.

I love the soldier,  
He whips me to his whims,  
Points my attention to his gun,  
Flexes his broad chest  
And says to shoot me if I don't love him.

And I love the poet  
Because he has taught me  
To love the first three for love,  
To love a soldier for fear  
And to love a poet for he is a poet.

Obodokasi Ade'etem Agbor

# Nigeria

I touch her feet, I freeze  
I touch her palms, I freeze  
I kiss her lips, frost, like ice in between teeth.

I touch her neck, I burn  
I caress her thighs, I burn  
I nibble at her nipples, huge mountains of fire

I climb her body, I am pricked  
I roll to her south, thirsty rivers  
I roll to her north, drowning deserts

I look in her eyes, my heart leaps into the Atlantic  
And drowns  
I breath in her ears, my lungs waste away

I love you, I love you to Venus and back  
I love you, I love you to the sun, and oh I am burnt,  
Nigeria, your love makes me sick.

Obodokasi Ade'etem Agbor



# On A Museless Night

Oh musing muse, were gone thee  
Hath thou fade with winter glee?  
Riding aloft whirl winds free  
To coast i never pri'thee.

Shalt I by seas spare you wait?  
Or sink to bed desiring fate?  
Or make my ship and trail  
Were my dear muse set sail?

Summer is gone but not far,  
Hath my muse eloped with her?  
Cherries are ripe and blown away,  
Hath my muse blown cherry way?

Puzzles are for answers,  
Answers are for sages,  
But were find sages  
Amid muse-less ages?

Oh my dear little muse,  
Summer stay is without use,  
Cherries too can blow wild,  
But not thee o' my child.

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# Sins Of My Father

My father, he left calabash and cowries  
For enamels and pounds,  
Later forlet clay, rafter works  
And turned to the seas and ships away.  
No sorrows, I and my friend can play  
Kpapkangolo around the yard without a man to shout us away.

My father, he left our mud huts  
Derided rafter mats  
And longed for vast castles in the lands aftersea.  
No sorrow, the mango tree behind our hut is ovulating,  
How joyful to know that I can eat a basketful without a man to knock it out.

He abandoned his father's shrine  
His morning duty of drinking palm-wine  
For the chapels and temples over the railway line.  
Oh, Look the man I have become  
At the start of harvest season  
I, not my father shall have the first fruit offers neck deep in pocket.

As I sat to enjoy my ripened mangoes  
I saw a man yon the fields  
With a soured face wanting food and place,  
With semblance of my father  
Approaching,  
Same strut as my father's  
'The castles of Cheshire are nought like my father's hut' He said.  
At instance,  
The child and fear that had long fled me returned.

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# Songs Of Love

I speak of thee as a starry constellation  
That adorns the sky like strings of pearls  
Entwining the royal neck of a queen.  
A beauty to the eyes.

I call thy name with a victorious roar  
Of an Athenian war song,  
After Sparta had fallen to it's plunder.  
Thy name is sweet to the tongue.

I speak of thee with the fervency  
With Which Jehovah talks of mount Zion  
'Gather Yea at the foot of this effigy  
And Yea shalt not be moved nor tramped upon'

And I speak of thine eyes  
A birth-place of stars,  
The green field of fireflies  
And the glory that eludes Mars,

A sight so justifying  
That a reigning duke  
Would give out his kingdom  
And turn her way to look.

Methinks of thee as a Persian maid  
With semblance of the stars  
All dressed for a night show!  
Or that thou art better prized.

Now, sweet lady, ere I part  
I would I hath thine ears and heart  
Thine heart for a moment or lifetime  
And thine ears for the fancy of mine rhyme.

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# Sounds Of Spring

A choir of clouds gathered and perched on hills  
Making mild mounts as segmented bee hives  
And then arose the fiery winds from North  
To the course were its southern mate howled forth  
On paths were they pined  
Trees parried to let them pass  
Not praying to dare the venom that trailed their paw,  
At the square, the winds hissing tongue meshed to kiss  
And bred lightening flares as witness to their amorous bliss.

This sounds when they echo  
The walls that sit the seeds roar.

Sambas of thunders rented the air  
Like strings of guitars strummed at a fair,  
And the simmering clouds burnt to coal  
As it strained to emit the essence of its soul,  
At instance,  
The Heavens ejaculated dew to Earth's wombs which winter stole,  
Pellets of dews like investors pell-melling banks each for a share.

This sounds when they echo  
The invoke the walls that sit the seeds to uproar.

The clouds sang sedition to north and southern rhyme,  
This wind which whistled to the hears of the clime,  
The flares which hearkened to thunders hum  
And the rains dressed in crystals and set to drum.

This sounds when they roar  
They sow wings to the seeds that sit in the soils to soar.

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# You And I

Let's go to the sea  
Let's go to the ocean  
You and I,  
Pick some periwinkle  
Pick some shrimps  
You and I  
Sit on wet sand  
And bath in the yellow streams of the sun  
You and I,  
Let's go to where the rising of the sea  
Meets the falling of the sun,  
Where the misty winds are interwoven with the gloss of your lips  
So that they purchase the taste of 'salt in sand'  
Let's sail on the bended backs of crayfish  
And break our vows on crab shells,  
You and I  
Let us proclaim our love  
For we are before the ocean,  
Before that waters that tie the world together.

Anade, since I have met you  
My life has become a walking miracle.

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