

# **When Spirit Sings**

*And Other Poems*

*By*

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Kudo Eresia-Eke

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## DEDICATION

To my charming children

Munachukwuabi (I live with God)

Chisuso(God is sweet)

Chihumeya (God has fulfilled)

Chimezube (God has fulfilled)

And to my wonder wife, Joanna

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## THE UNTOUCHABLE

Over you, my amour  
I place my arm  
Armour and more

Harm can never meet you  
Witch can never reach you  
Man can never maim you

So the dogs can bark  
Till the voice is void  
So the masquerades can warn  
Till the masks are warm

You remain,  
The untoouchable.

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## ONE REASON

For love we grow

For love we grow

For love we read

For love we lead

For love we dine

For love we die

## MY TEACHER

I scold and smack  
He cries and runs  
Eyes red and wet  
Then next I call  
And quick he's back  
Hugging and sobbing  
Daddy I love you.

## GOOD MORNING

When I return  
At crow of cook  
My lids part  
To find the light  
My heart  
To find delight

Another chance to live  
Another chance to love

## UBIQUITOUS

‘Xcept wrapped  
In cellophanes of self  
How can we not feel  
The wetness of love  
Seeping through  
Every crack,  
Crevice,  
And cranny

Every door

Floor,

And wall

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## THE TEACHING

Thanks you teacher  
For 1,2,3,  
For A,B,C

Skills for coping

Thanks you more  
For open heart  
The wisdom way

Skills for living

## LISTEN

To love the baby  
Is to listen to its cry  
To listen for the pin  
To the beg for help,  
To listen and understand

To love the boss,  
Convulsed and caustic  
Swearing and sweating  
Is to listen

To listen for pride  
To listen for fear  
To listen to ego,  
Begging for massage

To love the night  
Is to listen to its song  
To listen for music  
To listen for the whistle  
To listen to the din

To love the customer  
Is to listen  
To listen for prick in the price  
To listen and understand

To love the wicked  
Is to listen  
To listen to the throes of the loser  
To listen to the rustle and the reptile,  
To listen and understand

## THE ONE

I am the one  
When the child  
    hugs you  
When the help  
    hurts you  
When the lad  
    lauds you  
I am the one.

I am the one  
When the trader  
    Taunts you  
When the neighbor  
    Nag you  
When the writer  
    rocks you  
I am the one

I am the one  
When the teacher  
    tests you  
When the doctor  
    dogs you  
When the robber  
    robs you  
I am the one

I am the one  
When the rain  
    Raids you  
When the sun  
    Sucks you  
When the wind  
    Whirls you  
I am the one

-8- (*continued*)

THE ONE

I am the one  
For whom you're born  
For whom live  
To whom you die

## MY CHILD

Whatever you do,  
Please don't take the child away from me

So I see in everyday  
Freshness,  
Newness,

So I can wonder  
And ponder the wonder,  
Of the world,

So I can laugh,  
Loud with joy,  
Till birds of tears,  
Perch in my eyes

So every time I comedy,  
And everywhere is theatre,

So I'm free  
Know no boundaries,  
No color  
No creed  
No race  
No rot

Whatever you do,  
Please don't take the child away from me.

## SLUM DWELLER

You labored through the slum  
Endured the strain  
To mastery to of self

Free from cell  
Free from shell  
To flap your wings and fly

You welled though the gutter  
Coped with the mud  
To claim your stool  
And sit as king  
Free  
Free you are  
Till it hits you  
That return you must  
To the slum

Maybe not to learn, again  
Maybe not to dwell, again  
But to help

So better love the slum,  
There is no running away

## WHEN SPIRIT SINGS

When spirit sings  
I long for home  
For the beauty  
For the dazzle  
For the peace  
For the love  
For the warmth  
When spirit sings

When spirit sings  
My eyes light up  
Like a thousand stars  
My heart pumps  
With the honey of life  
My ears fill  
With hymns from heaven  
When Spirit sings.

When spirit sings  
It surges through my being  
I vibrate exalted  
As a calm  
And confidence descends  
When Spirit sings

When Spirit sings  
My fears melt  
Like darkness in light  
I walk on ground  
Yet freely floating  
In paces beyond  
When spirit sings

-11- (*continued*)

## WHEN SPIRIT SINGS

When spirit sings

Truth brightens like sun

Wisdom flows like river

Life tastes like sugar

When spirit sings

When spirit sings

I am child again

Running naked in the rain

Smiling awake and asleep

Living in heaven again

When Spirit sings.

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VIDEO

Where the lens  
Is good  
And the focus  
Is clear  
There`s no movie  
Soul can`t make

## BATTLEFIELD

Battles won  
Battles lost  
Not in fields  
Not in parks  
But deep in dreams  
In words of yore  
Of wings  
And waves  
Where fluid is held  
In trunks of thought  
Molded  
As models to come

TIGER`S TAIL

If there in mind  
In time you`re there  
Like dawn drags day  
Like fin follows fish  
Like tall trails tiger

## THE TASK

Tougher than climbing sky

Is taming mind of man

To a pet pretty and nice

Indifferent

To the dung without

Deferent

To the dad within

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SAME POT

My thirst grew  
As each glass  
Dated with dirt

Till it occurred to me  
That I fetch from same pot

To drink  
I must try another

## REALITY RULE

When reality rules  
Matter is master  
Slave is king  
Man is mangled  
Padlocked in prison  
Weakened of wings  
Undressed of dreams  
Ruled by not.

-20-

ACME

Where else can I find the sum

But on top

Above all it cares for

Where is can I find you,

But on top

Above all you care for

## CREATION

To make the absent  
Is a present power  
Of the abstract camera

The picture it sees,  
Though not there,  
Is real presence  
In the village life.

## PINNACLE OF GOD

Why is god such a paradox?  
Why is IT such a paradox?

Sitting at the pinnacle  
Is being at the bottom  
Of a pyramid inverted  
Reflected ion spirit waters  
As top of the tip,  
Tip of the top  
Supporting all life  
From the very base

Why is god such a paradox?

Sitting at the pinnacle  
Assumes a hard climb  
Up a rock  
Rugged and rough  
Yet all it takes  
Is the lazy turn  
Of an easy knob  
Like a radio dial  
And the station is there  
Right with you  
Always with you

-22- (*continued*)

## PINNACLE OF GOD

Why is God such a paradox?

Sitting at the pinnacle  
Is ranching the climax  
To rest and relish  
The wealth and wisdom  
But that's when to come  
Lowly and lonely  
To serve without grumble

Why is God such a paradox?

Sitting at the pinnacle  
The power is overwhelming  
Your quiet whistle  
Rages as storm

Still you walk  
Like a lamb  
Soft and gent  
Like a baby.

Why is God such a paradox?

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KATAKATA

Anger rose

Bottle broke

## OVERFLOW

When the sea of love  
Washes over the heart bowl,  
It fills and pours forth,  
Not as play  
Or as pain,  
But as joy  
Struggling to self-express,  
As tears without cause

## SUCCESS

To till the soil  
Without ceasing  
Knowing the harvest is rich

To search the sea  
Without ceasing  
Knowing the catch is good

To ponder the question  
Without ceasing  
Knowing the answer is there

To do it  
Without ceasing  
Knowing success is given

-26-

TIME

Book eternal

Written and finished

Printed and published

Your present moment

Is just the page you're reading

-27-

## CHAOS

If man bites dog

It could be funny

Very funny

If cart drags horse,

It could be funny

Really funny

If matter rules man,

It's time to run,

To run for dear life

-28-

## THE FEAR OF GOD IS ....?

Let's be fair

We flee

From what we fear

So how do we fare

If we fear

Not love

The source of life

-29-

READY

Scream all you can  
Command all you might  
Speak in tongues  
Till your mouth busts into flames  
You`d never find me,  
Till you give me your hear  
To fill with me

-30-

ALL PERFECT

Living in kitchen,

I face smoke and heat,

Living in playroom,

I meet noise and mess,

Living in bedroom,

I'm bored and dull,

Living in doorway,

It's bare and poor

Living in the house,

It's perfect world.

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AS WE SEE

Till the eyes trigger

The heart is numb

As a barren gun

Bereft of life.

-32-

## HALITOSIS

Anywhere you go

You say you smell

Yu have to go

Everywhere you are

You say you smell

You have to run

Don't you know

That the smell you smell

Is your own smell?

-33-

## WORLD

Isn't it a lie

There is one world

When each lives

In a world his own?

-34-

MANY FLOORS

Each man

A say scraper

Ignorant is reptile

On the ground floor

-35-

NAMELESS

It's neither a he

Nor a she

It's no-man

No-thing

No-one

It's formless

Faceless

Shapeless

This ...

This ...

This nameless one

BOOMERANG

Anger,

Violence,

Dogs

Mad dogs

Send them

To one cool

And calm

They return

And descend,

Ferocious

On their sender.

-37-

FLOWERS

Flowers

Only flowers

The reason

Flowers

Sharing flowers

The season

Flowers

Giving flowers

The living

MESSIAH

Scare them

Convince then

They're doomed without you

Never to bloom

Outside your groom

Then they're nailed

Hanging on your line,

Dangling on your cross,

Helpless flock

For whom you become

Messiah

The devil's incarnate

INTRO

The mumbling may be good  
The rambling eve better  
But sweet as the preacher's soup  
Take with a pinch of salt  
For his is only intro,  
To the ocean of sauce  
Within you

-40-

## STAR

How can he claim star

Just because he writes

Or paints well

How can he claim star,

Just because he rigged his way to power

How can he claim star,

Just because people know his name

Only he is star

That lights the star

In you

## THE JOURNEY

If God is still worshipped  
As an external being  
To whom we pay obeisance,  
Like a king on the throne,  
The journey hasn't started.

If God is a being,  
To be revered and obeyed  
Because we fear his error,  
His jealousy and anger,  
The journey hasn't started.

If God is male or female,  
Whom we follow blindly,  
Without thought or question,  
Like zombies and robots  
The journey hasn't started.

If God is in us  
In our very essence,  
In our very being as souls,  
In the endless depth within  
Then I'm afraid  
The journey has begun

TRINITY

Father, mother

And child

Afternoon, night

And morning

Life, death

And resurrection

Positive, negative

And neutral

Thesis, antithesis,

And synthesis

Spirit, matter

And men

HU, man

And human

NOTHING NEW

Who can claim  
To create  
Or destroy  
When reality  
Rests since time  
In the bosom of life  
Casting shadows,  
On the planes below,  
Mere reflections  
Of the eternal form  
That was always there.

RESIST NOT

Seems rough  
Really rough,  
To keep this saintly spark,  
Taunted by donkeys  
Spoiling to din the light  
And paint your white  
The color of night

Smile it away  
The trouble never lasts.

## WHITE LIE

What lie,  
All time lie,  
Of white and race  
Of hate and ache

No man's white  
Only colored people  
Of deferent shades

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PINTER

His mind, his lens

The sharper the focus

The clearer the picture

The fewer the objects

The finer the detail

Painter

Painting things already painted.

MIND

Restless machine

Wheeling freely

Deadly horse,

Dancing whore,

Only its tamer

Is master and king

ALWAYS ONE

I may not like you.

If you`re a thief

And a tout

I may not like you

If you`re a gossip

And a glutton

I may not like you

If you`re unguarded

I may not like you

If you`re evil

And envious

But my heart is yours

For beyond the veil

We`re branches of one tree,

Fingers of one palm,

One blood,

One,

Only one,

Always one.

MATURE

Rather the giver  
Than the beggar  
Rather the maker  
Than the made  
Rather the sought  
Than the seeker  
Rather the host  
Than the guest  
Rather the father  
Than the baby  
Rather the father  
Than the baby  
Rather the life  
Than the living

## IMMUNE

It may rain all it can  
But you`d never get wet  
It may burn with fury  
But you`d never get hurt

The flood can gush  
The mud can slide  
The earth can quake  
But you`d never all

You`d see pain, and never feel it  
You`d see anguish  
And never have it

You`re immune  
Subject of another world  
That they can neither see,  
Sense  
Nor smell

You`re seen in the outside  
But live in the inside,  
Well beyond harm

ETERNAL WIFE

Recklessly

You can kiss

And flirt with religions

With impunity

You can pull the skirts of metaphysics

Caress and fondle the body of magic,

Without commitment

But the day you touch truth,

Hug or shake her

You're bound

Restrained,  
Constrained,

Transformed and sentenced

To the soft,

Sweet,

But endless hold

Of an eternal wife

## WATER IN BASKET

We may pile treasure  
Till they rise into mountains  
Mount on them,  
Scream with glee

And still fell empty,  
Because it's not there

We may stuff ourselves  
As bloated balloons,  
Puffed and pompous,  
Bigger than all

And still feel empty  
because it's not there

We may thirst for power  
Till we govern the world

And still feel empty,  
because it's not there

We may seek love  
In hateful ways  
Hoping to find water in the basket

ALL – POWERFUL

It comes not  
From the victories  
Of warriors at war fronts

Ti comes not from the lure  
Of alluring jezebels

It comes not  
From the muscle  
Of champion wrestlers

It comes not  
Form the hypnosis of demagogues  
And demigods of demos

It comes not  
From the command of armies  
Or the control of commerce

It comes to each  
From conquering self  
This crown of true power

## WHAT GOD REMEMBERS

What God remembers  
Is not whether you succeeded,  
Or failed,  
Whether you made it big,  
Or small

What God remembers  
Is not whether your work was complete,  
Or stalled

What God remembers  
Is whether you tried,  
Truly tried,  
From the heart

THE G

What is it in us

That lend us

So easily to treachery

Temper and

Tantrums

If not the green in our eyes

The greed in our hearts

For the grains in their hands

-56-

OPEN UP

What is the fight about,

The water is enough,

Always enough

More than enough for all

If only we turn on

Our private taps,

And let through the flow

Of the endless stream

ANGEL GABRIEL,  
(for: Gabriel Okara at 80)

Look closely  
I may not have the wings  
Or the whiteness  
Of the celestial,  
But it is me alright,  
Gabriel,  
Angel Gabriel

I dabble in the debris,  
But I'm never ailed,  
I speak for people,  
But don't politic,  
My name is revered  
But I walk the streets.  
A common man

Look at me  
Look closely,  
It is me alright,  
Gabriel,  
Angel Gabriel

I could reach the riches,  
And stuff the bank,  
Till they cough and slump,

I could lobby for laurels,  
But the pieces of metal,  
Make no meaning to me,

I need them not  
To be who I am

-57- (*continued*)  
ANGEL GABRIEL

Speak simple truth,  
Live simple life,  
And swell in peace

Look at me  
Look closely,  
It's me alright,  
Gabriel,  
Angel Gabriel

GRACE

Not how much we strain

Or struggle

Not how much we suffer

Or sweat,

Not how much we work

Or whack

Rather

How easy we rest

On the bed of life

Knowing the desired is,

Already.

-59-

## FULL LIFE

Live me

From the fore

Of your head

Live me at the fullest

Live me as lord

Of layers below

ONLY DECORUM

If burial is  
To discard  
Tate decomposed  
With decorum  
Then it is

If it is  
To bemoan  
And mourn  
The man  
For months  
Then it isn't

For life's eternity  
As spirit never pretends  
To bury itself.

## THE SOUND

You must know that sound by now

The sound

The sound

The lift into heaven

The sound,

The music of the spheres

The sound

The mothers of creation

The sound

The living word

The sound

The gushing wind,

The sound,

The rumble of thunder

The sound,

The sound,

The sound,

You must know that sound by now

The babble of the baby

The sound

The moo of the cow

The sound

The mew of the cat

The sound

The hum of the born

The sound

The murmur of the river

The sound

The sound

You must know the sound by now

The song of the forest

The sound

The rhythm of the gods,

The sound

The drumbeat of life

The sound

-61- (*continued*)

## THE SOUND

The sound

You must know the sound by now

The tone of the fridge

The sound

The whistle of the fan

The sound

The hum of the car

The sound

The zoom of the bike

The sound

The sound

You must know that sound by now.

## SEAT OF POWER

Power in your hands  
It for loving  
Not for looting  
It's for cooks  
Not for crooks

Power in your hands  
In for serving  
Not for slaving  
It's for sweeping  
Not for slapping

Power in your hands  
Is for painting  
Not for parting  
It's for healing  
Not for harming

Power in your hands  
Is for housing  
Not for hoarding  
It's for farming  
Not for faking

Power in your hands  
Is for building  
Not for breaking  
It's for justice  
Not for jesting

Power in your hands  
Is for grace  
Not for greed  
It's for teaching  
Not for touting

-62- (continued)

## SEAT OF POWER

Power in your hands  
Is for caring  
Not for killing  
It's for heights  
Not for hate

Power in your hands  
Is for food  
Not for fast  
Is for plenty  
Not for playing

Power in your hands  
Is for health  
Not for heat  
It's for love  
Not for lust

Power in your hands  
Is not raise  
Not to ruin  
It's to shine  
Not to shun

Power in your hands  
Is for energy  
Not for allergy  
It's for polish  
Not for punish

Power in your hands  
Is for light  
Not for night  
It's for perfect  
Not for perverse

-62- (continued)

## SEAT OF POWER

Power in your hands  
Is to cheer  
Not to cheat  
It's to lead  
Not to load

Power in your hands  
Is for roads  
Not for rogues  
It's for thanks  
Not for thugs

Power in your hanks  
Is for hugging  
Not foe sobbing  
It's for all  
Not for war

Power in your hands  
Is for freedom  
Not for serfdom  
It's for joy  
Not for jail

Power in your hands  
Is for sweetness  
Not for sickness  
it's for life  
Not for death

## THE GIANT HAND

Sometimes I'm tempted  
Beyond limits to contend

And so I fall  
Raging like rain,  
Lashed on the floor,  
Torn to bit,  
Beaten and battered

But there always  
Is the hand  
To raise me again  
To the heights  
There I belong.

Behind this coarse  
Heavy amour and  
Clothing of flesh  
You live as light  
Blazing fire  
Humming,  
Like a million bees,  
Quintessence of queens,  
One with life,  
Immoral,  
Indestructible,  
Luxuriant,  
Ageless king  
lord of time,  
Duke of space,  
Ever unfolding beauty

## HAPPY HEAVEN

Heaven like happiness

Is state

Not place,

To be won

Heaven like happiness

Is radio

Tuned and re-tuned

For the right vibes

Heaven like happiness

Fruits of the heart

To harvest we reach within

Up the tree

To taste of it's best,

Everyday

TWO WORDS

Two wonder words

Terrific together

Dandy duo

Keys of the heart

Truck of treasure

Piles of pleasure

Sweets of now

Lessons of past

Values of Morrow

Tow little words

\sitting on my lips

One named thank

One named you

D-Day

Simple service,

Of slicing the crust of the cake,

To reveal its sweetness,

Conceals the heavy crust of trust,

Thrust in the hands,

That sliced it through

Only a fool

Will not feel the weight,

That comes with it,

And the joy of being the chosen one

## IN THEIR IMAGE

If parents were lions  
What would we be happy to be?

Lambs?  
Shepherded for life?

Or cubs,  
Wading through waters,  
Shaking through shrubs,  
Hunting hyena,  
Learning to service,  
Knowing sooner than later  
We are lions, ourselves?

If parents were spirit,  
What would we be happy to be?

Mounds of flesh,  
Bursting with bulging muscles?  
Or baskets of brains,  
Mazed by the mirage of matter?

Or would we be spirit,  
Vibrant with vision,  
Farming the formless,  
Roaming the ranges  
Of the timeless planes?

-69-

## ONLY JOY

Life is joy

Known as love

All we do

Is for or not

The course of love

Stand for joy

Or stand against

The course of life

-70-

VENDING MACHINE

Thought,

The coin

By which we buy

From the vendor of life

SOUL

Thinker of thoughts,  
Is really tinker,  
Of the tin of life,  
Pounding the pan  
To shape of choice

MAN

To be a man  
Is to be mean?  
Bottle in arrogance?  
Swollen like muscles in spasm?  
Feeling effeminate  
To say the wonder words,  
I love you?

To be a man  
Is to be mean?  
Contorted with anger?  
Talking tough and coughing curse?  
Barking badly like bingo?  
Having to say  
The simple words,  
I'm sorry?

To be a man  
Is to be mean?  
To demean ... gifts from the heart?

SONG

I would be all melody,  
My body all harmony,  
I would dwell on every lip  
And live in every heart  
If I were a song.

But who says I am not?

INVERSIONS

Virgin green is  
Signal for the browning leaves  
Break of down  
Siren of a newborn  
Cradle of his last breath  
Sound of a new song  
Harmony of its dirge  
Warmth of welcome  
Fever of parting  
Clatter of laughter  
Sounds of sobbing  
Scream of joy  
River of pain  
Stem of morning  
Roots of night.

-75-

DREAMALISE

Dream it

Believe it

Fed it

Know it

Act it

It comes

IT JUST COMES

## STAIRCASE

When I climb the staircase  
I have a zillion eyes  
I see everything  
Within, without,  
Inside, outside,  
Behind, before,  
Here and there,  
All at a time  
When I climb the staircase.

When I climb that staircase  
Bushes, rivers, planets, seas, forest:  
All a part of me.  
My breath, the wind,  
All men, my sons,  
All women, my daughters,  
All animals, my pets,  
All fishes, my friends  
When I climb the staircase.

When I climb the staircase  
I am all  
Yet all is null.  
I live for all  
Yet all is me  
When I climb the staircase.

When I climb the staircase  
I am the king in an endless kingdom  
I make, yet I don't learn  
I see yet I'm blind,  
I hear yet I'm deaf,  
I speak yet I'm dumb,  
When I climb the staircase.

-76- (*continued*)

## STAIRCASE

When I climb the staircase,  
I know, I am,  
I am, yesterday, today, tomorrow,  
I am, for time is still,  
Motion, yes movement, no

When I climb the staircase.  
I'm lost,  
Lost in the wild,  
Yet I know I'm home,  
Home with myself,  
When I climb the staircase.

THANK YOU, SON

I don't know how it happens

But any time I smile

To a crying child on the street,

Something comes...

Anytime I give a ride to

A scraggy old lady

Something comes...

Anytime I free a bird

Trapped in a cage,

Something comes...

It comes and it touches my heart

With honey and

I wonder.

NO FIRE NEXT TIME

The cloud is churning,

The sun is raining,

Bright as night

Can I bring some water to put

The fire to sleep?

No, no, fireman, let it burn

Bring me some fuel instead

And make it burn brighter and faster

To eat up all the world until all left are

Smoldering twinkles taunted by gales,

For then I know that rest is here

And in near time all will be gray and

Then indeed peace is,

For nothing burns anymore

IF .....

If you love a plant,  
If you love a dog or man,  
If you love a mate, colleague or enemy,  
If you love a beggar on the street,  
A fighter in the front,  
Or a lover in the night;  
If you love all forms of life,  
Why then bother with me  
For in all these I am  
Ye I'm none  
I'm everything  
yet I'm nothing  
I am the mighty void  
If you find me you find nothing  
Yet you find everything

## DESTINY

Dear destiny,  
If you want me to be one of the strips of  
    The rainbow  
I shall refuse to be  
Until you let me mix a little of each  
    Of my favorite colors  
To one different from any of its constitution

Then I know  
Apart from the others  
    That I am.

I may not turn out as prominent as red  
    Sweet as orange  
Beautiful as blue or  
    Good as green  
But at least I'll know  
    That in my own way  
                IAM

## THE COIN

The wind whirls, the coal shoulders,  
The fluttering flicker threatens my busy eyes  
I blink them in fear  
As my mind stops to submit  
But, no, this coin I must find.

A growl of thunder, a flash of lightening  
A shy rain and my head is wet  
Pollinated to a tinge of silver  
A whack of cold and my mass is rattler  
Neck strained and sprained  
But, no, this coin I must find.

Now the rain is swashing  
And my red coal is black and cold  
My eyes see blackness and  
My fingers are in a dance of blindness  
The spring of my life sags  
But, no, this coin I must find.

My head hits a stump and  
Seven daggers bounce into view  
Tearing through my body  
I stumble, stagger, stumble  
My face slaps the floor  
My hands stretched out in sad surrender.  
Only then to feel the roundness  
Of my little coin.

## FIRST PRAYER

Lord, thank you for grandpa and grandma:

They are so nice, so kind, so gentle

You made them.

Lord, thank you for mum and dad:

They bought my new shoes, new socks and new cap

They take me to see Father Christmas

Yu made them

Thank you for making them.

Lord, thank you for my brothers and sisters:

They play with me, to play with them and

I like them very much.

Lord, thank you for daddy's car:

It smells so sweet and the seats so soft

If goes so fast and takes me so far

To see birds, trees and animals

You made them all,

Thank you for making them.

But lord, tell me lord,

Who made you, lord?

SUN SHADE

The world  
Is the sun we make it  
Taking the color we choose  
Upon the glasses we wear

Violent when the shades are violet  
Blue when they are blue

Blame not the sun  
But the shades we choose to wear.

## STRANGE TEACHING

Is it really strange this teaching

That the more you give  
The more you get

That the more you sow  
The more you reap

That the more you serve  
The more you're loved

Is it really strange?

Is it really this teaching

That to be forgiven  
We must forgive

That to live  
We must die

That to laugh  
We must cry

Is it really strange?  
Is it really strange this teaching

-84- (*continued*)

## STRANGE TEACHING

That nothing is for free,

Not even freedom

That without pain,

There is no gain

Is it really strange?

TABULARASA

Life is a slate  
A plain blank slate  
On which we write  
What we well

Not with a well  
Not a nib

But with thoughts  
Strung together  
As a bridge  
One lifetime  
To another.

BIRTHDAY

Who can deliver consciousness,  
Pure spirit?  
Yet we celebrate,  
Days of birth,  
When the mould was ready,  
For breath to enter,  
And make body cry,  
Possessed by you,  
Glorious,  
Eternal you.

LIKE DEATH

Night

Time of darkness they say

When lights go to sleep

Night,

Time of rebirth too

To rest and awaken a new

Fresh and ready

For a new day

Night,

Just like death,

DEMOCRATIZE POETRY

They took our poem  
And hung it on the roof  
So our hands wouldn't understand

They took our poetry  
And tied them in chains of obscurity

Please bring back our songs  
So we the people can dance

-89-

## JOURNEY JOY

Better enjoy the journey

Each inch of the way

The horizon you see

Is ever receding

To a destination

Ever a mirage

For all there is

Is the journey

-90-

## HAPPINESS

Happiness

The goal

The end

The prize, they say

Happiness

The road

The key

The pass, we know

STARS TIME

If the water is shallow

Everyone can swim

If the take is cheap

Everyone is sharp

If the day is bright

Everyone is brave

So god made nights too

So stars can shine

THE ORCHESTRA WITHIN

For us

The resonance of happiness

Must remain occasional

Till our ears are tuned

To fully hear the music

And our bodies trained

To dance to the rhythm

Of the orchestra within

## SEEING GOD

When I want to see god

I think of a body's toothless smile

Then my eyes open

And I can see God

NOT THE POST

A church is just a church  
Till a priest gives it charm  
A court is just a court  
Till the judge gives it clout  
A hood is just a coat  
Till the monk gives it life  
A role is just a post  
“T is man in it that counts.

-95-

## LOVE SONG

So much magic  
Enchanting and engaging  
No matter the language  
Sheer sugar  
Unmistakable balm of the heart.

NOT THE FIELD

Interestingly  
Scanning the fields  
I stumble on greatness  
Scarce and scattered  
Painted only in the scarlet  
Of deeply convicted hearts.

## THE SEARCH

I searched the cotton of clouds the world over,  
I roved that blue basket of the skies,  
I waded that marshy murky swamps,  
And swam the deepest seas

I climbed the ivory tower until it broke  
I trudged very temple disappointed  
I smelt every currency and got catarrh,  
I read my eyes sore and wore binoculars

I traveled the universe weary and worn out  
I searched everywhere until ...  
Until a silly voice begged me to search my pocket  
Then I found it.  
All along I had it.

## THE HIGHER

The higher you go

The wider your view

The higher you go

The faster you move

The higher you to

The more you let go

The higher you go

The higher to go.

-99-

## MAGNET

Magnificent magnet

Consciousness

On whatever it rests

It glues.

-100-

LIKE THE VICTIMS

In witches way

They come as victim acts

Hobbled like ailing cats

Swelling leaches upon your blood

Sobbing

Like the victims

DEAR GOD

You made up  
Some say  
So we could fan your ego  
Worship you  
Night and day

Bow before you  
Every moment

Sing your praise  
Without ceasing

That way  
You are happy

Your head swollen  
Fat with flattery

At the mention of your name  
Our knees must crumble

Our heads must droop  
Like slaves of fear  
In prison for good

Is that really it?

MANHOOD

Manhood

Is not in the mound of biceps

Or in the big broad shoulders

But in the calm in the eyes

When the sea is rough

WORRYING

Strange

Dying to go east

And racing west,

Desperate to climb,

And filling down,

Needing cleanliness,

And rolling in mud,

Strange

But that's worrying

Warring against wisdom.

## GENIUS

Genius is neither in the brain

Nor in the heart

It's on the face

Where the eyes are two

To see within and without

It's on the face

Where the ears are two

To see within and without

It's on the face

Where the ears are two

To hear the inner and outer teacher

It's on the face

Where the nostrils are two

To breathe the inner and outer air

It's on the face

Where the lower and upper mounts are

To marsh the outer and inner wisdom

Into one.

THE TEST

Vouch for no man  
Except tested with power  
To decide over others

Vouch for no man  
Until you count the money  
Left to test his greed

Vouch for no man  
Till he needs to give  
Without motive of gain

Vouch for no man  
Till he tastes the sweet of success  
Without the dysentery of arrogance.

MOTHER SOUND

Between sounds,

Silence

Between thoughts,

Silence

Between notes,

Silence

From silence they come

Through silence they become

To silence they return.

## EASY TO UNDERSTAND

You make it easy to understand

Some struggling  
Achieving nothing,  
Some hardly sweating  
Reaping roundly

You make it easy to understand

Just met stranger  
Fell flat in love  
Ready to climb the skies  
Just to be with him

You make it easy to understand

Some burn blind  
Some burn wild  
Men ugly like frogs  
Marrying pretty wives

You make it easy to understand

Lucky people  
Blessed in all they do  
Unlucky people  
Doomed in all they are

You make it easy to understand

Religions legion  
Each proud of its ways  
claiming right of way  
to just one being

-107- (*continued*)

EASY TO UNDERSTAND

You make it easy to understand

That we come

Strong and young

Walk and work

Pale and depart

You make it easy to understand

-108-

LIVES

Sets of strings

All the same

Various vibes

Each of them

Deferent dins

Upon our songs

DARK GOGGLES

Roundly wrapped in laden layers  
Who can catch a glimpse of you  
With blinds opaque across your window  
Where's the chance of knowing you

## INHERITANCE

Take my golden chair,  
My throne,  
Don't be afraid  
Take it it's yours

No it's not an overthrow  
It's not a change of guards  
Neither is it a coup  
It is yours

It has always been,  
From the beginning of time

Take over the palace  
Be the king  
Wear my crown  
This is your universe

Be anything you want to be  
The world is at your feet  
To do as you please

All I have ever owned  
Or will ever own  
Is yours

Take your mother as well  
Make her your wife  
Don't be say,  
Boldness my son

-110- (*continued*)

## INHERITANCE

She is yours

She is most fertile

Ready to multiply as you think

She is your blood.

As I am too,

We are one,

Son,

Mother,

And I

Multiply,

Prosper,

Flower,

Manifest my sunshine

All over your life, my son

That is your meaning

That is your being

That is your mission

-111-

SATAN

Though we curse you  
For every woe  
You are but only a teacher  
Doing your best to make the best of us  
Without the trickster,  
How could we ever learn?

IT`S THE DEVIL

If I drink dirty water  
And get cholera  
Blame the devil  
That wicked witch

If I fail my exams  
Which I didn`t read for  
Blame that devil  
That wretched evildoer

If I am not promoted  
Having done shoddy jobs  
Blame the devil  
That treacherous monster

If I`m careless with gas  
And set my house ablaze  
Blame that devil  
Dubious dirty daemon

If I steal  
And I am caught  
Blame the devil  
The terrible tempter

If I rape an infant  
Blame the devil  
The tantalizer  
He pushed me to it

-113-

AS YOU SOW

Business of living

Just like fishing

Small baits

Small fishes.

## HIDDEN AGENDA

Excuses, more excuses

Wars, more wars

Each fighter screaming monster

Naming foe purely Satan

And he himself purely saintly

Burt who tells the why of conflicts

Only he in the hidden closet

Seldom part of the public reason.

THE VOICE

I'm love

Try not to define me

Try not to understand me

Try not to analyze me

Just be yourself

That is all I ask

For I am you

When you are really you.

I CHOOSE

There is wailing in the land  
There is the clatter of gnashing teeth  
There is the rumbling of the grumbling ones

But I choose

I choose that laughter of life  
I choose the whistle of the wind  
I choose the music of the crickets  
I choose the violin in silence  
I choose the happy moments of life  
I choose

There is hunger in their anger  
There is anger in their thunder  
There is slaughter in their slander

But I choose

I choose the chuckle of my boy  
I choose the giggle of my girl  
I choose the happy moments of life  
I choose

There is dirt in the land  
There is stench in the church  
There is corpse in the corner  
There is garbage in the gutter

But I choose

I choose the sparkle of the stars  
I choose the aura of the rainbow  
I choose the smile of the newborn  
I choose the happy thing of life

-116- (continued)

I CHOOSE

I choose

There is death in the dungeon  
There is blood in their sword  
    There is fart in their fan  
There is pain in their power

But I choose

I choose the humble things of life  
I choose to watch the flowing river  
I choose to see the break of dawn  
    I choose to play in the sand  
I choose the happy things of life  
    I choose

There is jostling in the office  
    There is pushing for power  
There is backbiting and back – stablign

But I choose

I choose the sweetness of service  
    I choose to tell children stories  
I choose the happy things of life  
    I choose

-117-

MY SELF

I know my hand

My heart n

My head.

I know my mind

My thought

My song

I know I know everything

But myself

## THE WORD

Without the word

Who would I be?

Without poetry

Without prose

Without jokes

Who would I be?

Without music

Without humor

Without laughter

Who would I be?

Without vibes

Without light

Without sound

Who would I be

## FATHERHOOD

Fatherhood,  
Not manhood  
Not parenthood, not brotherhood.

Fatherhood,  
Not bravado  
Not roughness, not loudness,

Fatherhood,  
The big heart:

Large enough,  
To baby the strong,  
Big enough,  
To beg the guilty,  
Wide enough,  
To hug the wicked,  
Long enough,  
To love the leper

That is make – hood,  
Fatherhood.

-120-

## WITHOUT REASON

A kiss is a kiss

A hug is a hug

A smile is a smile

A gift is a gift.

Life is simple for loving

As it is for living

We spoil it all

When it has not be

For something.

TRUTH ABODE

Where else could truth, the unchanging, be?

In flipping page of history

In blue and then cloudy skies  
In green and then yellow leaves  
In smooth and then wrinkled skins

In fleeting friendships  
In fading fads

Where else could truth be,  
But in the untouchable inside  
In the hallowed holy

My clothes may change  
So also my skin

Black to white  
Brown to yellow

My names may alter  
Smeenk to smart  
Chukuaka to chilaka  
Yen to young  
Victor to victovitch

Still the essence is  
Inside me  
From time to eternity.

SILENCE

Crust of treasure,  
Bed of noise and laughter  
Where all sounds sleep,  
Holy music of heaven.

-123-

DEATH

Ultimate monster

Close as a shadow

Distant as a star

Wretched witch of the earth

Try hard as you may

You can't extinguish us.

SOUND SUPREME

Buzz of the bee,  
Song of the wind,  
All in its name,  
All for its sake,  
And all is well.

-125-

A DREAM

Life,

What a dream!

Just when you wake up,

Lo, you are dead!

VALENTINE CARD

Vivacious valentine  
How dear and  
How lovely your memory is.  
I send you this card from the ghetto  
Across the state wall  
As I wonder what sense we bring  
To your name when it means  
Sharing from our national bowl together  
Each with a spoon the size of his neighbor's

LET'S WORSHIP

It's morning and hallelujah rise:

An eye on the hymn book,  
The other on the lady in front;

Hand in try,  
Heart on neighbor's husband;  
Chest in the church,  
Conscience on last night's robbery;

Ears to the sermon,  
Head on the with doctor's mixture;

Hallelujah, sing,  
It's another Sunday.

## LIVING DEAD

In this truculent world  
Forever tumbling,  
Tossing and turning...

In this crooked world  
Forever cheating,  
Stealing, deceiving..

In this devilish world  
Forever demonic,  
Sinful and satanic...

In this troubled world  
Forever enemies,  
Worry in and warring ...

In this helpless world  
Forever enemies,  
Worrying and warring ...

In this helpless world  
Forever hurting,  
Hollow and hopeless...

In this lost world forever wailing,  
Wayward and wild..

In this deadly world  
Forever dangerous,  
Dirty and dubious ...  
Chance of happiness  
Is living dead  
Everyday

LIVING ROOM

Why do we run so far to find a teacher?

Why do we try so hard to find a home?

Why do we walk so far to get a doctor?

Why do we work so hard to get a meal?

Why do we sweat so much to find some peace?

Why?

Just why?

When it's all in the living room?

THE LEVIATAN

Goliath;  
Towering  
Fearsome  
Lethal  
Making mincemeat of men

But within this bloated armory  
There always is a hole  
Just big enough for little David's pebble.

## AFRICAN GIRL

Lips, red of her monthly river,  
Eyes, blind with foul faces,  
Hair, griddle, dead and dark,  
Face, laden with layers of earth,  
Walk, swagger of a drunken sailor,  
Dance, boring pendulum swing.

Come, tell me,  
What have you done to my daughter?

To the respect for her brother ?  
To the culture of her people?  
To the pride of her mother?

Tell me,  
What have you done to my daughter ?

Now, at the wave of your cowry  
She loses her head,  
At the sight of your car,  
She no longer hears her name.

Come, tell me,  
What have you done to my daughter?

To the saint in the eyes  
To the arrogance of her chest  
To the natural ochre of her lips?  
Now you treat her skin with acid  
An turn her into a smelling swine,  
You treat her mind to vine  
And turn her into a giggling go-go  
You brusher brain with gold  
And then she goes ga-ga.

-131-(*continued*)

AFRICAN GIRL

Come, tell me,

What have you done to my daughter?

To the baby shyness?

To the brown of her body?

To the tough curly crown of her head.

Come, tell me,

What have you done to my daughter?

TASTELESS NECTAR

It may be power

Or provider for them

Savior or

Shelter for us

Defender and

Doctor for you

Here, fighter

There, conqueror

Magi or Magician

Still spirit is

That tasteless nectar.

MR. CAREFUL

Act,

For god's sake, act.

Fear not to

Make mistakes.

Act,

For god's sake, act

Learn now to

Live and love.

SURRENDER

When the jargon jars  
And you can't understand ...

When the road rough  
And loading nowhere...

When pans fail...  
For the umpteenth time..

When luck is hard  
And every touch is wrong....

When darkness falls  
Is the midst the day

When you've worked  
And it aren't showing ....

Only surrender  
And it's over.

TRIBUTE TO TEACHERS

As I look through this fog

Across the Rubicon,

I see you.

I see you as a territory

On the universal map of ideas

Ruling minds

As long as there are men

So how can they say

That you are dead?

-136-

AFRICAN CHILD

Siren in the night

And here comes our chance

To date eh would

Welcome, special,

Welcome to share or mats and mates,

Forests and fiends

We hope you bring us good tidings

Ancestor come back.

## LOVE IS NOT

Live is not a right  
To be demanded  
To be fought for

Love is not yours  
To be taken  
To be kept

Love is not a privilege  
To be had  
To be enjoyed

Live is not a gift  
From others  
To you

Love is an obligation  
You owe  
All beings

Love is yours  
More to give  
Than to take

Love is a gift  
Not from others  
But from you

Love is thought and deed  
Without motive  
Of gain

Love is what you do  
To be  
Like God.

I KNOW A FIRE

I know a fire

With flames bright and blue

Blazing freely fiercely

I know a fire

Inside and outside of me

Humming ever loudly

I know a fire

Purifier

Rarefier

I know a fire

That fills and keeps the universe:

The fire of love.

-139-

LIKE A MAT

Love is often handed down

Wrapped and folded up

Like a mat

Only when spread

Can it be useful

Can it be known.

FAT WIFE

When we trekked in the sun,  
Sweating and smiling,  
I was not fat.

When we had a bicycle,  
And I mounted the carriage,  
I was not fat.

When we had a motor bike  
Dodging traffic is the sun,  
I was not fat.

When we had a Beatle,  
And I struggle to get in,  
I was not fat.

Now you have a big car,  
A Mercedes Benz,  
You say I'm too fat.

SONG OF A LADY

Hold me in the morning  
When I'm cold and frosted,  
Warm me in your well of love  
And melt me.

Relieve me at noon  
When I'm worried and weary  
Kiss my sweat away  
And soothe me

Praise me in the evening  
When I glow as the golden sun  
Make me your queen,  
Your goddess,  
Worship.

When darkness blankets  
And my eyelids are lead  
Let me find a pram in your are, lead  
Sway me slowly  
And sing me to sleep.

SMALL GOD

Sweet smiler

Filling fondness

Waddle walker

Silky skin

In your eyes

Searches cease

Riots rest

Come, godson

Come, baby.

## THE DEFERENCE

It's not what you are

But how you are.

Not what you wear

But how you wear it.

Not what you say

But how you say it ...

not where you live

But how you live.

Always, life's the same

The living, the difference

## THE X-FACTOR

What happens  
When all is done,  
All prayers said,  
All effort made,

All caution taken  
To fulfill a function  
That finally fails?

What happens?  
Who takes that blame?  
Me?

Of course.

-145-

## NETWORK NEWS ROUND-OFF

To end the news,  
The highlight once again.

This morning,  
President Africa passed a perfect piss.

It was a golden are of free flowing  
Fountain  
Also today, his wife flashed a smile,

Teeth shinning as silver  
In Sokoto sunshine.

Finally,  
Just this evening, His son was seen  
Sporting a velvet vest  
“T was lovely,  
Like a little lake of light.

THAT`S THE NATIONAL NETWORK NEWS.  
Good night.

MISS FASHION

Wavering in the wind,  
List ship in turbulent waters,  
Striving for that which is only null,  
Embellishments of a decomposing corpse

GRADUATE

Now that the ritual is over  
And the sheet is in your grip,  
What do you see in it,  
A ladder to raise you  
To arrogance  
Or a shovel for gold-digging?

Do you find in that scroll a  
Torch to be borne for mankind  
Or a membership card  
Of the blood sucker's club?

WORLD CUP

Die, dates, die,  
Wait, wives, wait:  
Time to stare at the magic box,  
To worship short shadows,  
Mere images,  
As mankind melts into a hamlet,  
Bonded by a single ball.

CHILD ABUSE

Akara, akamu

My head aches from scream since six  
For a mama drone sleeping and snoring  
While I sneeze away in this cold

And rain.

Akara, akamu

My limb so numb  
My feet so sore  
All for a saucer of soured soup  
And eleven eggs of garri

Akara, akamu

My neck creaks from carriage  
Bottom drips with dew  
Just for a space in the store  
To share with rats and rodents

Akara, akamu

The sun must meet me on this endless stroll  
To suck the water off my face  
For then can I face the goddess  
Justified to bring the remnants home.

SWEET SEVENTEEN

As sixteen ceases,

I wish you wealth

The world's

Worth,

Happiness,

The height of heavens,

Love which lasts

Longer than all life

Happy birthday

Sweet seventeen!

## THE CONVOY

Move the convoy

Faster, faster

Crush the cars,

Marsh the men,

Wield the whip,

Sound the siren

Louder, louder

Halt the ambulance

Death to the plebeian

Move the convoy

Faster, faster

His Excellency must use the toilet.

PRESIDENTIAL PERFUME

Bathe the president with perfume

To fight the fart in his flat

And quench the stench in his ranch

Act,

Act fast,

Lest we die.

## HEART BREAK

Alone I stand in this wilderness  
All I see, human, is my shadow  
Suddenly I think I hear crackle,  
I turn and there it is staring at me  
    Face like mine  
Lord, thank you I find my type  
    Each pace brings me closer  
And I find my friend hides behind  
    A shiny silvery surface  
    I smile, she smile  
But as I stretch to shake hands  
    Something shatters  
Once again, I'm alone.