

Songs Of Life

Poems on the Mystery Of Life

By

Kudo Eresia – Eke

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With love to
Muna and Suso,
my children

Foreword

Kudo Eresia-Eke's second volume of poetry, *Songs Of Life*, confirms him as a compelling contemporary Nigerian poet.

His first volume, *Bee Buzz & Baby Babble* introduced us to a considerable talent, a new voice; a poet of impressive and striking clarity, exploiting the familiar mechanics of lyrics poetry and surprising his readers with fresh imagery that express a delicate sensibility.

Songs Of Life shares some significant characteristics with the first volume: simplicity of language, deft lyrical style and an ironic and wide-ranging comment on life and the maladies of our society. But in special ways, it is different from, and a development on, the general preoccupation of the first volume. Within its simple and relaxed framework, these poems are existentialist, they pursue the poet's urgent concern for the definition of and attempt to understand the self, there is a more insistent surrealistic probing of the metaphysics of life, an absurd questioning after meanings that lead back to the nullity of existence, the enigma and paradoxes that underscore life and take refuge in Christian moralism. The poems are more cryptic and epigrammatic, witty and satirical in tone, their humour ranging from the mockingly playful to the sardonically brooding.

Even if we question the poetry of some of the pieces, reading this volume is a salutary and sobering experience and we return to it time and again, picking up from the pond new fishes that help us cope with life, each turn.

THEO VINCENT

My Self

I know my hand

My heart

My head.

I know my mind

My thought

My song.

I know I know everything

Except I.

The Word

Without the Word

Who would I be?

Without poetry

Without prose

Without jokes

Who would I be?

Without music

Without humour

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 helper

That is male-hood
Fatherhood.

Without Reason

A kiss is a kiss

A hug is a hug

A smile is a smile

A gift is a gift.

Life is simply for loving

As it is for living

We spoil it all

When it has to be

For something.

Truth Abode

Where else could Truth, the Unchanging, be?

In flipping pages 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 changes

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.

Diana's Dilemma

Paul says he loves me,
He says it all the time,
He never forgets to say it,
Peter never says it,
But Peter is always there for me,
He waits on me,
He listens to me,
He works for me,
But he never says it,
He never says he loves me.

I am confused,
Peter or Paul
Who should it be?
Although you tell me
Love is verb,
Not noun.

Patience

In the end

What's the difference?

Between concord and discord

Age and youth?

Age has little time

But is calm and waiting.

Youth has so much time

But is harried and hurried.

Can someone tell me

What the matter is?

Community Interest

The trouble with you
Is that you never understand

You are hopelessly ignorant
Irredeemably imperceptive

Who ever made you?
A community relations officer?

Let me say it again dummy
When I say my community interest
You should understand
When I say my people's interest
You should understand

These are codenames
Synonyms for my pocket

Try to understand

You are too dumb
For my liking

Sun Shade

The World

Is the sun we make it

Taking the colour we choose

Upon the glasses we wear

Violet when the shades are violet

Blue when they are blue

Blame not then 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 served

That the more you love

The more you're loved

Is it really strange?

Maybe it is

But it is true

Is it really strange this teaching

That to be forgiven,
We must forgive

That to live,
We must die

That to rise
We must fall

That to laugh
We must cry

Is it really strange?

Maybe it is
But it is true

Is it really strange this teaching

That nothing is for free,
Not even freedom

That without pains,
There is no gain
That every good,
Must be paid for

That every salvation
Must be won

Is it really strange?

Maybe it is
But it is true.

Tabularasa

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

Not with a will
Nor a nib

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

Alita

Is this Alita?

Where everyone in blue-blooded

Princes and Princesses

No slaves

No bootlickers

Where everyone is-

Dignified

Fortified and

Glorified

Where every head bows to the other,

In deference,

Respect and

Reverence

Where every eye sees divinity in everything

Where every hand finds privilege in service,

This must be Alita

Where they say God lives.

So It Is True

I did not know it was true
That I live and account for my life
Even after I die

I did not know

If only I knew
There would have been no point
In killing so many
For power
Fleeting, stupid, power

If only I knew
There would have been no point
I stealing myself silly
Until banks were full of my meaningless painted papers
More useless now than the body in which I lived

If only I knew
There would have been no point
Of my countless women

Who only pulled me down
Faster than gravity

If only I knew
I would have hugged my children everyday
Kissed my wife night after night
Rather than soak myself in Bacchus bile
That bleached my belly in fatal lust
Until I lost my life

If only I knew
There would have been no enemies
Only friends

But I bound myself in bands of angst and anger
Until they squeezed my body away

Now I sit in the dungeon
Sick and sacked
Sentence for life
In this hole of hell

If only I knew.

Saviour

You say I'm a teacher
And a savior,
No arguments,
But I know I'm just a guide,
To point the way,
So you can do the trek yourself

I can coach,
But you must play,
I can design,
But you must sew

Don't be fooled
Your load is yours to carry
Not mine.

Mystery Of Life

Nothing mysterious about life

Just a huge mass of shapeless mortar,

Mould it, as you will,

But you must mould it yourself

Like Death

Night

Time of darkness

When light go to sleep

Night,

Time of rebirth too

To rest and awaken anew

Fresh and ready

For a new day

Night,

Just like death.

Ambition

Tonic for life's passion
Unbridled, is a raging fire,
Whirling from rung to rung,

Never resting,
Never savouring
Always slaving
On an endless course
Leading nowhere

Maria

Maria,

You say you're a leader

Vibrating like rickety molue

Clasping with kleptomania,

Dancing with nymphomania

Maria,

You say you're a leader

Nerves wrapped in rounds of grass

Being a Maria

Married to marijuana.

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 of you,
Glorious,
Eternal you.

The Sufferer's Song

Kem's sent to school
Lured by pea,
He strays off the path
Snake bites him in course
Then ne wails
And weeps
Help I'm suffering!

Ken cannot swim,
But lured by sea
Takes off on cruise
And falls in water
Then he wails
And weeps
Help I'm suffering!

It's dry season,
The roofs are peeping,
Pat wouldn't patch,
Till the rains come,

Then he wails
And weeps
Help I'm suffering

Kate escaped unnoticed
Blinded Alice wit' acid,
Then she goes an' returns
A totally blind child
Now she wails
And weeps
Help I'm suffering!

Democratize poetry

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

They spoke in mystic tongues
So we 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

Not the Post

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

The Journey

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

Happiness

Happiness

The goal

The end

The prize, they say

Happiness

The road

The key

The pass, we know

Time to Stars

If the water is shallow
Everyone can swim

If the task 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 turned

To fully hear the music

And our bodies trained

To dance to the rhythm

Of the orchestra within

Seeing God

When I went to see God

I think of baby's toothless smile

Then my eyes open

And I can see God

What About Me?

Husband wants me slim

Boyfriend desires me plump

Lover likes me fat

Men,

Just what they want

What about me,

What about what I want?

Love Song

So much magic

Enchanting and engaging

No matter the language

Sheer compelling honey

Unmistakable balm of the heart.

Not The Field

Interestingly

Scanning the fields

I stumble on greatness

Scarce and scattered

Pointed only in the scarlet

Of deeply convicted hearts.

The Threshold

Loving those who love us

Natural,

Normally natural.

Loving those that humour us

Human,

Simply human.

Loving those that hurt us

Cross-of the threshold.

The Search

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

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

I travelled 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 move

The more room you have

The higher you go

The more you let go

The higher you go

The higher to go.

Toys

See without eyes

Hear without ears

And know

That they are yet toys

For fun.

Magnet

Magnificent magnet

Consciousness

On whatever it rests

It glues.

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 us

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

Is it really it?

Manhood

Manhood

Is not in the mound of biceps

Or in the big broad shoulders

But in the calm in his eyes

When the sea is rough.

Worrying

Strange

Dying to go east
And racing west,

Desperate to climb,
And falling down,

Needing cleanliness,
And rolling in the 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 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 mouths 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
Except soaked in sycophancy,
And stays sane

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

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

Vouch for no man
Till he taste 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 born blind

Some born wild

Men ugly like frog

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

You make it easy to understand

That we come

Strong and young

Walk and work

Pale and depart

You make it easy to understand.

Life

Sets of strings

All the same

But various vibes

Each of them

Different 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

All that ever owned me
Is yours

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

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 sun

That is your meaning
That is your being
That is your mission

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 the devil

That wretched eviler

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 the 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

As You Sow

Business of living

Just like fishing

Small baits

Small fishes.

Hidden Agenda

Excuses, more excuses

Wars, more wars

Each fighter shouting devil

Standing tall on righteous pulpit

Naming opponent purely Satan

And he himself purely saintly

But who tells the why of conflict

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 analyse 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

Convulsing in the winter of want

There is the rumbling of the grumbling ones

But I choose

I choose the 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 the anger

There is anger in the 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 things of life
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 humble things of life

I choose to watch the flowing river

I choose to see the break of dawn

I choose a play in the sand

I choose the happy things of life

I choose

There is jostling in the office

There is publishing for power

There is backbiting and back-stabbing

But I choose

I choose the sweetness of service

I choose to tell children stories

I choose the happy things of life

I choose.