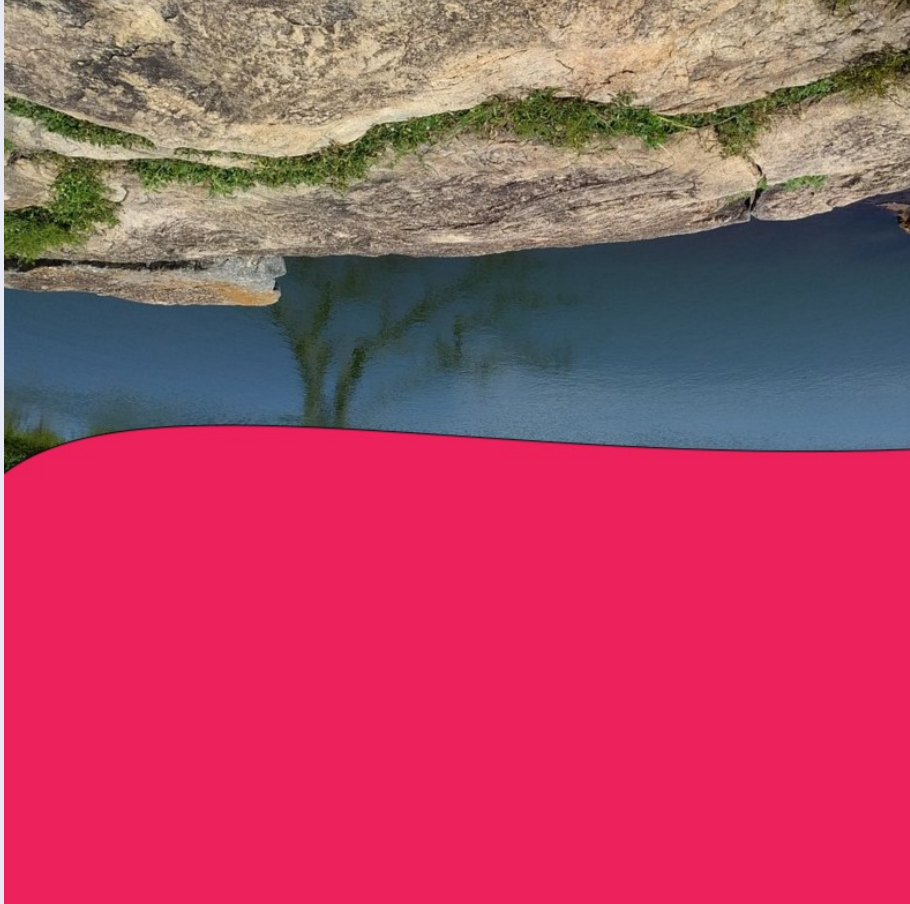


# NOSTOS



*Caleb Durojaiye*

A Chapbook.  
(titles:)

*ALMOND;*  
*ACACIA;*  
*TERRACOTTA DOVE;*  
*ASSEMBLY;*  
*CATHODE RAY;*  
*AIR TIME;*  
*ANTENNAE;*  
*TERRARIUM;*  
*SHORTED TO DEATH;*  
*NISSAN BLUEBIRD;*  
*POST NO BILL;*  
*HOUSE WORMING.*

*blank*

# ALMOND

To a child, a story begins with the words; "*Once upon a time...*" and then the refrain; "*...time, time.*" The listening child grows eager; the storied world they're about to enter must be fun; their imagination will get engaged. This story will told orally by an adult or another child. There's a buzz in the air.

It is morning. We gather at the living room and keep our eyes closed. Father shows us there's another world up in the sky; and we close our eyes because someone living there wants us to.

It is afternoon. We're under a tropical almond tree, on a Yoruba straw mat, in a Montessori. Headmistress tells of the proverbial tortoise and the hare. We sing, we dance and we cheer.

It is night. We're seated outside on stools and chairs. Staring at the moonlight's blue and white. Mother tells us the world is huge and round. And somehow I had a dream that night. That an unidentified flying object was found.

# ACACIA

Time flies to the far reaches of memory;  
settles in the warm air of trees within Northern Minna Barracks,  
of open asphalt roads and quiet fenceless residence;

Flies to when time was a hot boiling sun  
and yet a fruit beyond the grasp of the Monkeys on the Acacia  
and the Children staring at its podded purse of seeds;

Hoping to snatch a purse, to plead to monkey, or become one;  
free from the asphalt, from the grounding space of gravity.

So in envy do we squint at the grinning Monkeys in reach of the  
purse's magic,  
to grab and shake the meaning out,  
to beat it on our make-shift drums, fling it like boomerang;

to open its purse, whip the dried halves on our skin when we  
tumble & run,  
and look for use within its black seeds to eat.

But the trees rain on the road—  
pods that break to invent the song of Sèkèrè,  
over and over again.

Oh beautiful Acacia, pull off your buried roots and dance to the  
music of your fruits within your reach since the dawn of time.

# TERRACOTTA DOVE

The boy will be seated in middle school, completing a note  
when afternoon arrives.

Doves, 4, 5, take flight into the sky from the school's roof  
over the boy's thoughts and fly in circles.

They glide about laughing, *WOO WOO coo coo, coo coo*  
*WOO WOO*; summoning an apparition, almost nostalgic,

from the kilning clay of the earth, escorted by wavy  
ghosts of heat and gasoline.

And then, in a dissolution of images;

The boy is stood alone in nursery school staring at that  
terracotta window, lost in thought, to church? or  
fellowship;

the sight exulting to heights bathed in breeze, warmth and  
light.

A brown dove is seated there, in one of the holes, bobbing,  
staring, quiet;

at that terracotta window;

in middle school.

# ASSEMBLY

In files of six,  
Or perhaps ten?  
We line our mistress's office  
Afore the porch steps.

Girls and boys on  
Different sides?  
Hands on Neighbour's Shoulder  
To even lines.

Short ahead and  
Tall behind?  
Heads and heads  
Sing songs and rhyme

With drums and hymn  
We fly to joy?  
To see All things  
Beautiful and Bright.

After the talk,  
We march to class?  
To disturb the peace  
And learn to write.

But now, the day's burnt up?  
And Night is drawing nigh  
Shadows of the evening  
Steal across the sky...

## CATHODE RAY

the TV is long gone to the blind oblivion and so is our doctorship as we bang and spank the plastic case of its head hoping for fix of what oblivion cannot remember whether it be the breadboard or the heavy glassy of its screen? cataract iris staring dead at us, happy third thing when alive with pictures that keep family centered to soap opera, or a cause, the news, to the pop music of culture, world broadcast on beams of electron scanning rapid to the eye unaware, left right, up down the screen of white noise glitching eye pinned to screen and now to tv-top antennae pulled for signal not screeching to ear banged! hang! 'tennae there here bang! set! clear! zapped man fibrillated by opera doctors we are and watch with rapt attention that he not die, not the tv, not the family centered happy on a rainy july evening all awash with incandescence and cold air of stew cooking from the kitchen where i lift breadknife to improvise-press faulty tv button living inside on breadboard of tv already deteriorating with clumpy candle wax on plastic case and bubblegum tattoo stickers that bleed into speaker pores or the magnet kryptonite that rainbow glassy screen permanently, eventually perdered off to some aboki, aluminum condemn, for chicken change and yet... dream on anew! aurora tubed in the glassy of mind, doctorship to be found, im'provision to realize, a family centered.



## AIR TIME

Bubble from juvenile spittle bursts into ball of hiccup growing skin tough, lifting over south coast clouds far over shores of Okokomaiko's underground swamps, seeking home-stage from a dis coherence of the Lagos howl, substending Makoko stilts till the far-reaches above North-North and all of Nigeria. The ojigbi of TV slapping hands on filmed scalp Ajasco off the roof jumping on father's advice about the nature of this life and its superstories that take on from Egbeda to Festac to the diasporas housed within the shared context of a sitting room for rough play and house of commotions where laughter is leaked through open windows into the compounds sheltering neighbourhood's antennas collecting sounds of music singing a goge Africa of dust, jungled art, and wild meat, my personal meat! stolen from the kitchen pot, rushing to parlour to resume KKB show as no one paused for you nor Ibu nor Aki and Popo as they look alongside you at them with side-eye when NEPA takes light and the generator refuses to start because ahh oga, it is the alternator, the alternator is not supplying power to the carburator and the injector so it is affecting the radiator and the evaporator cannot work effectively that is why the car is jerking jerking to new dance cool in school as Shakiti Bobo working unlike blood money Kanayo making sacrifices in mystical Nollywood live over expanse of land named in myths and tradition remote but as close as Sangotedo Magodo Ojuelegba Gwagwalada Awhum Abakaliki Lafia

## ANTENNAE

childhood insulated from live wires of the colloquial histoire, left to rust at house, to rust without charge, without fume, without accelerants of hoaxed revolution. now, coaxial cable, out of market, now spread wide, screaming to the netter-skies for reception.

or recognition or what-not but look at the household otherworld. the familiar turkey cuisine; the unfamiliar animal and songs of gobble they sing, the signs of gobbledygook they read. and watch as our cognition cowers away in furtive shame, why do these animals chase us? and gobble after every whistle tiny or loud? what is a turkey as it approaches a strange new shape and the antennas of wondering empathy yearn to become one collecting answers from household observation, poetry embracing the surreal spread of their feathered bodies, blue head, neck dripping red, throned in collars of feathered gown.

even yet, all this: pointless bone, poem, to suck out marrow and spiced turkey stew for the pleasures of being, without stress or animal slaughter for science or revolution. left to rust in ignorance. poetry left to rust. yet, extending-wide ever still. from a household sky to the netter-skies.

# TERRARIUM

remember remember when we summoned a culture of amoeba  
using household chemicals, that two pronged metal, the anode, the  
cathode, the whole electrical, fed into boxed jar of plants and fever  
that never sprout anything green, neither weed nor gyra teeming  
with life.

remember the seeking for motion's magic, the push of the first  
domino that clicks endlessly onto the bajillion threads of life, going  
on and on seeping into the darkest nooks of space and sea.  
the stealing wonder-first into libraries for books that explain the  
most esoteric of life's atomos; viral animation, molecular orchestra,  
abiogenesis.

the scouring through damp concrete wardrobes containing 2, 3,  
torn ghana-must-go's of old university books, lecture materials,  
blacking A4, wilting handouts, dusty pages sneezing spit an' gunk  
onto books, into air, rubbed onto shorts; clamber atop wardrobe,  
flipping through traveling-boxed secrets... that never sprout  
anything green, neither weed nor gyra teeming with life.

# SHORTED TO DEATH

*"chap! chap!  
teeth glides over,  
stripping,  
copper-spiced wires  
like grrah! grrah!"*

*I am shocked!"*

to potential cooked up, raw blue. plastic pen cap. chapped, chewed.  
tiger battery cathode ring. bent, skewed. one and nought 5 bloated  
cashew volts, overripped to death. fermenting with gas pompous,  
empty CO2. fizzing, seething, AGITATED TO DEATH. buried  
scream, draining drink-well, unable to sink pen or lift thirst. black  
beguiling twin at water-mirror well-bed, suggesting eagerly to  
meet in water-world beneath earth

*"and so he goes;  
down into deep-end,  
losing height until, splash!  
feet glides over  
water waves  
swimming,*

*unable to swim,  
drowning.  
until.. drowned.*

*settling in low entropy"*

to reveal dirty earth of carbon and chemical decay.

## NISSAN BLUEBIRD

Imagine the figure of a car, hatchbacked and brutalist with edges that never betray perspective.

Very unlike the round beetle that tittle tattle tayoonyoon— smoking gossips of stress and penury until pushed.

Imagine the Nissan. Sky blue, white, or so. Imagine the tough ash black brown cotton insides, the doors that smell of sunpressed sellotape stickiness, their tough film of plastic leather that wants a peel & bite, teething into woody cabin..

biscuit crumbs on yellowed transparent carpet we wash as kids every evening day as today before we left home on our way to Ekiti, I lift my eyes off carpet to the Nepa poles zipping past the window glass..

wound up, round and round the handle spinning hand about a center that jams window fully closed to the doorlock rod; plucked, pulled, pressed, with tactile effort..

Father beat me. For breaking the quarter glass of our Nissan bluebird. With a magnet. I threw it. I did not know.

When we traveled to Ekiti, a birthday card with flat metal speaker playing *Fur Elise* followed me in the Bluebird's door pocket.

When we travel to Eko, Akon's *Lonely* follows me and I think about the girl, kind with the pretty pup face, beside me in nursery class after assembly.

# POST NO BILL

the suburban streets walk beside me extending its  
geography from the receding horizon ahead into the  
trail behind vanishing away;

returning home from school, eyes wander fence to  
fence speaking every word scene; one where alien feet  
is warned from an empty land: DO NOT TRESPASS;

Campaign posters with grinning faces and faces on  
fences that say POST NO BILL;

BEWARE OF 419;  
HOUSE NOT FOR SALE;  
CAVEAT EMPTOR;  
POSSESSION TAKEN TODAY.

Yonder, a man's taking a piss on DO NOT URINATE  
HERE, sees SALES GIRL NEEDED, never calls number  
written there.

KEEP OFF what's behind the walls? in a paranoid  
street that speaks you DO NOT

# HOUSE WORMING

sitting for sleep, live at midnight town, behold my house  
grow black veins of air, creeping on spot young but tired  
sinking thru' foam bedclay, rushed economy foundation,  
as floor goes down down down, creep by creep into earth.  
buckle, break, wait for when roofed responsibility comes  
crushing crushing crushing crushing crushing headlong...

as in split second, body implodes with wretched fervour,  
screaming, i mean, fuck you! fuck it! my words ah-seedin  
for money, seething, 'ffervescing, ascending nobody into  
nothing, meaning nothing, doing nothing, nothing wanting  
running from there-here, here-there ah-looking for wealth  
wealth  
to lift roof that come ah-crashing soon into my bed loom

sitting for sleep, live at midnight town, behold my house  
as genealogy toil till their body wrinkle & leisure in dream  
i back'fall like a mango tree,' product of the commonthink  
in this suburban of town, praying armscrossed that i thaw  
on thud into bed of earth buried with the gashed corpse,  
browning maggots of rot, rubbished dustbin of dreams  
circling thru' to dawn with everything new in hand to remix

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