

# Two Poems

Salawu Olajide  
July 11, 2026



## Somewhere in Borno

I  
it lingers, the sorrow, like a mist  
as men sit on benches with tumblers of gin  
in hands, smoke from bummed cigars drifting about  
the atmosphere—the only mechanism  
my countrymen have invented to disembody ache.

II  
a foreigner once asked why the children here  
wear old faces: i told him to wear his caution  
perfectly well.  
the bullets don't glamorise the body of  
an alien enough to spare it.

III  
at the arrival of the battalion in the village,

khaki men gave mothers cremated remains  
of their sons while the farmlands are still saturated with the blood  
of their fathers, slashed like festive heifers for civil mutiny.  
i tell you, hurt is too expensive a luxury to acquire,  
yet we manage to shoulder the purchase.

IV

in a dream where i loitered, i saw a giant orchard.  
then it collapsed in a raging wind: pinecones,  
cherries, pomegranates—littered  
& rotted in a single shut of a bright pupil.  
i have witnessed folks fade out this way  
from a bombshell—the failure of a lilting miracle.

V

on the dying mangrove, two waxbills chirp unsung melodies,  
& before the night spills over the roof,  
a curlicue of funereal crows stuffed with elegies  
displace their bodies.  
it's this city reminding me once again of its decay.

### Hazards

We gather again under a low fluorescent bulb,  
Worn out by the day's demands—the failing health  
Of the nation & its corrupt men on our dust-coated tongues.  
We take a sip of gin and spliff, passing each from head  
To head like a room full of initiates  
With eyes once wearied by catastrophes.  
The talk is old as a legend; our forefathers wasted  
Their evenings too lamenting similar cracks.  
Those who revolutionized earned the aftermaths  
Of misfired rifles and heavy boots.  
And so, silence becomes the ultimate resort,  
Amusing Aso Rock with the songs of our privations  
Even if the fire continues to singe our feet.  
This could have been another poem about peonies,  
Swaying leaves & fireflies buzzing through the delight  
Of a garden dipped in the soft air of children seated  
Under a crescent moon with cheeks full of gossip.  
The garden has rather become familiar with descent,  
The tree's branches have jettisoned all its grinning leaves—  
Doomed to a continuum of maladies.  
The cacophony of rust is rushing in again through  
The center of misplaced priorities, where my countrymen  
Placed into seats of power those who would never grant a gauze  
For their wounds, baited through small quantities of hope.

---

**Eniola Abdulroqeeb Arowolo** is a writer from Nigeria. He won the 1st Edition of Wanjohi Prize for African Poetry, received a honourable mention in 2024 Bacopa Literary Review Poetry Contest, and was a finalist for Folorunsho Editor's Poetry Prize. His works have appeared—or are forthcoming—in 2024 Small Fictions anthology, Bacopa Literary Review, ASAP Review, Full House Literary, FIYAH, Astrolabe, Asterlit, 4faced Liar, Weganda Review, The Republic, ANMLY, Nigeria Review, Yarnz Magazine, Breath and Shadow, 20:35 Africa, and elsewhere. He's a member of the Frontiers Collective, and currently serves as a Poetry Reader for Chestnut Review and Orion's Belt. Find him on X @eniola\_abdulroq



OLONGO  
AFRICA