

A white hand with red-painted nails reaches down from the top left corner towards a single red rose. The rose is planted in a dark, sandy mound. Several human skulls are scattered around the base of the rose. In the background, a dark, jagged mountain range is visible under a cloudy sky.

BEYOND THE SANDS

AN ANTHOLOGY
OF THE IDUMAESE ALAO
PRIZE FOR LITERATURE 2024

EDITED BY
OSIEKA OSINIMU ALAO
RASAQ MALIK GBOLAHAN
PAUL LIAM

Idumaese Alao Prize For Literature 2024

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Omninkus

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In loving memory of
Idumaese Alao (1988-2024)

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EDITORIAL

This anthology has sprung forth where the ache is greatest. This wholesome gathering of enthralling bards is a yield of the demise of my dearest sister, Idumaese. Her tragic death has unlocked a scintillating lease of life, birthing the foundation, the prize, and now this anthology where language and soul meld into magic of mauled hearts. *Beyond The Sands* is a shattering of the saddles of death in which the triumphant trickle is both acceptance and freedom. Acceptance that our mortality is frail and terminal. Freedom that death cannot hold us bound, that we are reaching, and reaching, and reaching, till we break the beyond, and the beyond breaks us into a paradisial prance where beauty is infinite. The poems herein have painstakingly reached for that beauty via linguistic infiniteness that foregrounds the delicate tales of our humanity.

— Osieka Osinimu Alao

The poems in this anthology examine profoundly the world in a way that draws us to the inevitability of human frailties, the individual and collective battles that shape our realities. Each poem bears the weight of something aching, something that demands our absolute empathy and tenderness. The poems call us, reach out to us to pay attention, to listen to the aches, to understand the language of the wounds, the dialect of sorrow. Because there is a language that burns in all the poems, a language that we must, as readers, learn to speak to confront the end of everything we crave and love dearly.

— Rasaq Malik Gbolahan

This anthology offers a refreshing collection of poems that reflect the psychological, emotional, and physical trauma endured by victims of cancer and their loved ones. It is a heart-rendering problematisation of grief and love for loved ones stolen by death. The poems share an uncommon brilliance that exposes the depth of artistry and craft inherent in the bards. Although they are mournful poems, one cannot help but be wowed by the sheer fineness of their expressions and the wit of metaphors. I am honoured to have had the pleasure of participating in the selection of these brilliant poems and to have also had the opportunity to serve as one of the judges of the maiden Idumaese Alao Prize For Literature 2024.

— Paul Liam

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CHIWENITE ONYEKWELU

Cardio/Post-examination

after Isabella DeSendi

Because we began where his ache
was small, even curable, only a handful
of nerve cells sliced open like a fruit.
Because he loved me the way a dying man
would love a child, frail & soft-reaching,
his hands barely able to grasp my own. Because
at first he was healthy even with the hemp.
I remember my mum's fear or was it her
disappointment as she flushed those
dried leaves into the sink. I watched her do it.
I was to be her fourth eyes. Her witness
to what a man's hunger has done to a man.
That was a day after his chest examination.
How, we'd prayed for a smaller wound.
Told ourselves it had to be food allergy,
a small ache on the left of his chest,
pneumonia, anything, until the doctor
said his heart was starting to fail. So he
walked home blue, terrified, swore he was
ready to hoard what was left. As if the first sign
of dying is a desperation to live. As if he
was on the end of a rope no one else could
pull. One time, I recall, I saw him wide
mouthed, forcing himself to breathe. When,
that eve of Father's Day, he kept quivering
until he threw his food, we were told he was
"withdrawing", & that was the sign.

Think of it as a black hole. As a rusty bridge
in between deprivation & want. His body
was learning the hard way but learning anyway.

The human heart is approximately
the size of a clenched fist. Which is to say
there's a kind of violence only the body
understands. Like that one time they shoved
a pipe into his chest, a procedure
they explained, would take drugs fluids
straight to his heart. It is true: you know
a dying animal by how much violence it's willing
to bear. Even now, I imagine him,
his quiet groans as he attempts to breathe,
the joy in his eyes as he succeeds,
the disbelief.

TIMI SANNI

Body Elixir, Blood Warrior

Imagine me a ripe tomato, my body's elixir, gone sour,
rogue nodes tempering my body in preparation
for ruin. Imagine the red circuit housed within me,
the hallways humming hard as they do, the rose-
cut ruby of my life dimming at the very core.
Imagine me, not dead, still hoping.

I envy the honey, its infinite half-
life and sweetness. I refuse to name you,
mirror of my malady, except that which
you already named yourself. Sickle, sabre,
scissors, scythe. O may metaphors
be damned.

On the eve of my tenth birthday, I woke up
and found myself dying. I still remember the animal
horror, the pinch and pulse of the pain.
It was one straight line between hospital and home.
Unfortunately, the doctor said on arrival,
though somehow, I lived. Ten days later, I find
a sickle cell booklet on the cabinet. It explained
a decade of drugs. It was freeing, if anything,
knowing then that my suffering had a name.

What flows through me now, not blood, but language.
Listen, as I shape and sharpen its gags and gurgles
into clubs. This is no field of science. This is where
giants meet to die; where I inherit, as friends, the enemies
of that enemy who stays in the shadows, sprouting fear
in songs of safety. I lose myself in living, the tedious
task of it; take pride in the sweet ache of my muscles,
whistling, "the work is the work is the work."

I make no summary of my body for the sake
of sympathy. I use my drugs in the quiet of my room;
take no sick days. And yes, I do not like the term 'Sickler.'
It lies too close to 'sick'. I prefer 'Sickle Cell Warrior.'
One shade short of 'martyr,' it suggests if I am to die,
I'll do so standing, vertical, against the will of this body
which sets itself, as if on a raft, so close to 'horizon.'

ABDULRAZAQ SALIHU

All the Things I Love, the Sands Have Covered with Memory

after Samuel Adeyemi. for my father, Sarkin Parwa and my loves.

I'm sorry I took this long to mourn. My people,
It takes a lot to break through an already
Broken body. What doesn't scare me these days?
The seeping of light from the green fields.
Through my window and into my skin.
I am so grateful. That all the things that happened to me
Did not leave me lifeless. I promise you, I do not like
This life much, but I appreciate every soft thing
That has touched me. I promise, my father's voice
Is a song I can never forget. Forget music,
Wisdom rests in people more than it does in words.
We buried my people and we buried the rest
Of ourselves in loneliness. When I gather
The remnants of chaos, I start with my people's
Cries in memories. Sarkin Pawa had a touch
Of tenderness before the bandits invaded.
My people were soft spots even after the attacks.
Guns in the air, bullets coordinating the assembly
Of lost soldiers. Who knew a home this exquisite
Would be pulled down by faith? Who knew a body
This black could be folded into frailty the size of loss?
My people were rainbows on white walls, but who
Knew something this beautiful was fated to fade?
In silence, I cannot find a compromise, only restlessness,
Only pain. But like every good son, I still love my people
I still love their silence & in some folklore, silence
Would always mean freedom. My people are free means
This is how they want to be remembered:
Starling murmurations as beautiful as God.

ADESIYAN OLUWAPELUMI

Terminal Maladies

for sister sola

Against an invasive tumour flooding the entirety of her body,
she wrestles. The doctor observes, through a biopsy procedure,

the blood assassin stage its operation. Her tissues rigged with leukaemia.
A cankerworm of carcinoma eats the fabric of her skin.

Her eyes, blood-red like coal in a canary. The prognosis for recovery,
a 50-50 life or death chance, to say she ballets

on the knife edge of oblivion. To thaw the cancer cells, the doctor pierces
her skin with a cryoprobe. But they evolve into more resistant

cell-eating cannibals. Her arteries, sickled and drained of their sap
like a pomegranate sliced in half. Such violence

crept up in her body. Call her what she carries. Necrosis. Dyspnoea.
Helicobacter pylori. Cachexia. Merkel cell polyomavirus kneading

her capillaries into a string of knotted vessels. Terror often sings its
tenor. Listen to it attempt to rip the theatre of birds inside her throat.

Pray our bodies do not become meat for everything that has teeth.
Including the air, armed with its fangs.

Dear Lord, there is a spindle of threnodies spooling in our craniums,
save us from the thing that plunders—the voices of wounded angels crying out.

CHINECHEREM ENUJIOKE

Ellipses

for Chukwuemeka

When I was four, my brother made me a paper boat. He had torn the sheets from his drawing book. Never had a sheet left that book. He painted the paper boat my favourite colour—blue. He said the sea and the sky would always lead me home. Two weeks later, he died from Neurofibromatosis. The week after was his birthday. My paper boat was at the bottom of the bathtub. I sat on the cold floor, my head inside the water. In the water, he was holding my ears and laughing. I told him they were burning his drawing book. He kept laughing. And laughing. I was thrashing. And thrashing.

CHINEMEREM PRINCE NWANKWO

An Autopsy of Dying in Which a Miracle Lives in a Famished Tumour

life is not measured by the number of breaths we take,

but by the moments that take our breath away

—*Maya Angelou*

stage I

[relatively soul & innocent. what is terminal begins with a feel of nothingness]

hold this body —

something haven. something donned & dighted in the genesis of breath.

isn't she a fine silt & the strand of a godly ooze? how jubilee it is, naivety

steeps in & makes her (w)hole. nothing seems radical like the shape of the

unknown.

stage II

[prostate gland but localised. lymph nodes invasion & smokes of piping hope emerge]

& there's war:

body carapaced in self-weaponry. fighting ghouls in apertures/ skin in

her apparel appetency/ how brave to sheathe & not hold the scars to

ransom. if therapy owns this body, how come the soul doesn't breathe?

the wound stealths open/ & healing crackles at exit. do you not know

a surgical blade is a fierce lightning in apparency than prostatectomy?

stage III

[seminal vesicles. tumour is a fighter & the body in acute soldiery. survival in question]

in this poem —

tell the body in therapy, of home. country where family is

whole. & grief bleached not to savour the blood. hold the lesion

in penury. the despair flickering in retention. life knows nothing of

housing a soul. light the flesh again & know frailty is nothing but

divine. to bite the dust is to ascend & to ascend is to bite the dust.

what's it about escapism? just to render gently, humanity is flawed.

stage IV

[metastasis of distant organs. figurine of delicate & dying. longing & beholding]

if a miracle:

hasten to anneal this body. what awaits itself is a miracle. say, it's
just a fragment of time. even nature traces the sound of silence.
what do you do with grief than to lay it to rest. anxiety respire
& the river sniffs in the drowning feet. but sometimes what's
left of nature is patience. her claws of longing: the sickbed &
the rising of sunset. the graveside, flowery songs & the hour of
silence.

ELIONGEMA UDOFIA

Countdown to Exitus

You will agree with me the human body is a mes[s/h], judging by how everything once beautiful in it, slowly wilts into the wide chasm of time. How the body, docile thing; is plagued with such ephemerality, that a man could lose everything, even the brightness that brims his eyes— Here is a body, my Pa's, whittled down into mannequin. Like a cracked CD, slotted into a stereo with prayer-stained fingers; I watch his body, vanish into the CT scanner. I cannot help but trace the likeness of it to a coffin—the CT scanner. His body disappearing briefly into it; this is how we learn to prepare our hearts for the actual loss the scanner reveals: my Pa's kidneys, in a monochrome portraiture, a dark cloud speckled with cancerous growths, shaped in the form of Portobello mushrooms. Ma, wearing hope like a garland, goes over a rosary prayer for as many times as her wrinkled hands can count. Still, the clock ticks a chunk of life from my father's body, each hour lettering his name into a tombstone. Ma's prayers falling back as the coldness on the patient's bed rail that makes my skin shudder. I do not tell her that there are no miracles in this kind of things, it is simple— what living thing homes mushrooms in its body? On my phone, I google how to control shock, because one day I will walk into the hospital ward that smells of antiseptic and pills and grief, and find my father, a prairie devoured by brushfire. They will throw a sheet over his face, because how they differentiate a sleeping body and a cadaver is how much the sheet devours the face.

ALIYU UMAR MUHAMMAD

Because I Do Not Walk the Dead, the Dead Walks Me

for Grandma, late Khadijah Alfa Muhammad

& one day it began with stars mourning on the palms of sky
Night shielding us. Us, shielding the night so it may not fall

& crash a brother's collarbone. One day I'd shoot myself
Into the wind & refuse to let my body fray into fire songs

Played at funerals. My mouth is a harp & I chose not to play the song
Because song is the size my brother bore on his chest

Like cross. Because his body was a shattered glass
& I, picking up pieces of a loved one I never loved. It all began,

With 'حتى زرت المقابر: 'until you visit the graves' - & we did
But because graves are silent corridors opening our wounds

Into the doors of resuscitation, half my brothers slit into mourning
& forget themselves between throat of prayers

& predicament of roses. But because death has no metaphors,
We soliloquise our mouths into what gives elegy a simulacrum

& because we walked the dead & the dead are planted into Eden,
My body exists on mornings that weigh down all the beloved bodies I've never met

& because love is ghost beaming on lost shadows, I'll evoke love
If through the wind, a body like mine migrates to the sea once swallowed by desert.

TAIWO HASSAN

M,

how much colour is peeled off a photograph before it melts into a memory? it's another day & i still perceive you in different bodies—our cat—the passenger who sat next to me today—old newspapers—the dry ground—how long will this wicked cycle continue? i now admit my mind is a haunted house, a whiff of you & i'm thrown into a river of regrets, an abode where unfettered memories of you wash off their essence and leave. grief hides behind my photochromic glasses and every blink i make melts into an attempt at deciphering its shape. each day, i tread on troubled waters, a misstep and i condense into the broken pieces you left me. M, i don't desire to be a wound returning to its blade, i want to fight this urge, this need to be a morning sky and repaint all your dreams orange, the hue of dawn. tell me to stop finding succour in sad songs and black coffee. teach me how to embrace a new day without a storm in my chest, how to make the evening sun reduce my qualms into dust, how to find reminders that these walls once held your light in their cracks. tell me how to remember that this house was once a home, was once you, M.

IGBOKWE ROSELINE

A Kind of Brotherhood

They say this body is flesh and blood that
Can — the next minute — turn into a petri
Dish culturing bacteria, morphing something
Once beautiful into a log of putrefying goodness.

They say that age is nothing but a façadal journey.
It freshens your skin with scoops of honey from
The bowl of youthfulness; wrinkles and weakens
Your walls with pointy nails of old-fashioned age.

They say that death is a cursed blessing. Ailments
Squeezed from roots of grieving shrubs attack; A
Workloom that drains you of your weight and eats
Away your muscles like cankerworms on rampage.

They say that old age and frailties belong to a kind of
Brotherhood. One where an oath is sworn in bloody
Stripes. I count my years of youthful covenant with my
Tongue and it asks — How many years do you have left?

~~They say~~ God says that the price you pay for life is
Terminal and turbulent. A thralled river vomits a fragile
Soul and a threnody kicks off. A vibrance is swept off
And sown underneath the soil. Another dirge ensues.

SAMUEL A. ADEYEMI

Loss, Again

Before my uncle died, he was silent for over a decade. The stroke took his tongue, left only splinters of language. But he was never alone. Someone was always there to listen to the little words: the broken Yoruba he could spit. But when my aunt—his wife—died, something left his body. Something greater than language. It has been a rough year for the family. I remember the hospital visits to my aunt, her grandchildren playing on the tiles. The doctors said she would recover, that the operation would work. Her brother, a prophet, said she would find healing, too. And the whole family trusted, held on to a miracle that would ruin them. *The doctors have killed my sister*, my mother said. They cut her open, like an animal, and let the life escape. The old man could not bear it. They did not even let him come with us to her funeral. Grief left him wounded and hollow, the way light leaves a body and makes it just a body. Bones and blood, empty of love. And death returned for my uncle's body, did not forget to leave the other side of the blade unused. I was away from the family when I heard the news. Now, when I return to the house, I will live in the echo of their absence. My cousins stripped of pillars. The walls of their lives breaking with loneliness. So quickly, we are left with nothing. I am trying to strengthen my heart from the transience of the world. The volatility of death that cannot be trapped by desire. I am learning misery may not wait for healing to end before it returns; that at the end of loss, loss may begin again.

AJISE VINCENT

recompense

the night mum exited the door of ache and grief,
father instructed us to spread out our pain
on mats in mosques so that they will crumble
under the weight of men rendering solat to God's ear.
in the midst of salvation and recompense,
we saw dad sob, his tears like a mirror,
reflecting the solitude of his nightmares
to the psychologist who conducted
a psychometric test on mona lisa.
like the search for a lost coin,
we sought a body he could fill with love,
a lip that tastes of mercy,
a kiss that won't trade his essence
for thirty pieces of silver but found none.
it's been two years since his first session of healing,
his tongue still speaks the language of loss.
sometimes memories of mum tiptoe to his senses.
he presses his ears against his body,
hears her echo on the walls of his flesh;
in rusty memories of joy, in silhouettes of quietude,
dangling like judas on a tree.
my father now stares at absence
as if longing for mother's return
he now grieves with his shadow
in silence, in groaning and
monochrome of rust.

DAMILOLA OMOTOYINBO

this is the year 2006

*Or according to the CDC, it is the most common type of dementia.
It is a progressive disease beginning with mild memory loss
and possibly leading to loss of the ability to carry
on a conversation and respond to the environment.*

& my grandmother is still alive.
i promised to build
her a house. buy her a car. but all i have become

is a poet, writing her body back to life.
she will die, in this poem. slowly and silently
in her sleep—out of old age, if you ask me.

my name did not slip out of her memory—
she did not stare vacantly while we threw
ball in our little yard.

i think we exist for the stories—the tales we've shared
—when they elude us, we also lose our sense of belonging.

in this story,
i did not read up Alzheimer's disease at the school library,
watching her shrink as it became worse.

2006 &
the sick smell did not persist in the house.
i did not see her lips quiver.

her hands did not tremble. i did not wonder
at how we've always lived an inch away from death.

2006 &
she died in her sleep.
everyone deserves a pleasant death.

MUBARAK SAID

On Being Asked About the War in my Body

after Paul Guest

it always takes the freezing of time,
then the eclipse of the sun,
then the squeezing of tongues,
to enter into the rubbles of my body.
there are my bones glued to my teeth,
there is a thunderbolt falling
on my diastema. yesterday,
I met a cyborg at the town square,
his face, a knife, his tongue, a furnace,
just like mine. the cyborg said we were
once in form of water before making it
our home. I'm now a bundle of burning woods.
I become an enemy to my home.
I carry the pain that is not mine.
I owed the world what I owed my body—
the war of tissues and blood,
the war of skins and bones.
what is a body without the exit-door
of smoke? I'm cold outside.
I'm a hearth from within.
& anything inside me looks black.

AYIYI JOEL

You

for Aunt Vic

The rain came today for the second time this year
And I stop to picture your face in the droplets.
There is nothing new to tell you, just to let you
Know that things have gone on to be and somethings don't change
With time. Like how the drizzles still remind me of you—
Clear-skinned, gentle and soft spoken like a baby, this is how I remember
You always in the call of things.
Like wool on skin, life should have been soft on you.
There are times I even wished the illness was gentle or even slower
With the task of gnawing at your insides
Before the clock began ticking to your countdown, the shutting
Down of your organs, I wanted to let you know
Of my wishes. Desires that peeled sleep from my eyes,
The way slicing onions robs the eyes of tears, at night.
You should know now how much like you,
More than you I dreamed of becoming. Like you
I longed for more: the desire to go to university.
It's night & I'm on the bus returning home, from Lagos to Ifo.
The calm patter of miniscule waters on the roof of the bus,
The bright headlights and the noise of cars and bikes will end soon.
Just like you I'd get home and unlike you
I'd feel everything you no longer feel— the ache of everything
I could have become,
A dream-sized ache. The loss. Laughters. The sorrow of your exit.

KELVIN OFEIMU

A War in My Mother's Body

My mother no longer holds flowers in her mouth,
because a boulder is stuck in her throat.

Pain leeches out the light in her body as chemotherapy
transforms into a carousel of microwaved nightmares,

where pigment of violence represses her supple skin,
turning it into a receptacle for brachytherapy needles.

Laryngeal cancer, the doctor limns it, & I wonder
how a plague unbidden into one's body can name itself.

I watch my mother's body knit like fallen molten lava
on the embers of a scorching earth crust.

Say a beautiful butterfly is writhing in hot charcoals.

I plant seeds of prayers in her frail body, water them with my tears,
& hope they bloom into flowers denied the chance to flourish

in the garden of her lips, the beautiful garden denied its rightful
place in her mouth.

THE CONTRIBUTORS

CHIWENITE ONYEKWELU is a Nigerian poet. His debut poetry chapbook, *EXILED*, is forthcoming in Red Bird Chapbooks (2024). His poems appear in *Cincinnati Review*, *Adroit Journal*, *Frontier*, *Palette*, *Hudson Review*, *Chestnut Review*, *ONLY POEMS*, and elsewhere. He was recently shortlisted for the 2024 *Isele Magazine Poetry Prize*. In 2023, he won the *Hudson Review Inaugural Frederick Morgan Poetry Prize*, and was a finalist for the *Alpine Fellowship Poetry Prize* as well as the *Kari Ann Flickinger Memorial Literary Prize*. Chiwenite served as chief editor for the Faculty of Pharmacy, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, where he recently completed his undergraduate studies. He lives in Anambra state, Nigeria.

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CHINEMEREM PRINCE NWANKWO, SWAN IV, is an Igbo apprentice poet and essayist who's currently a final year student of the Department of History and International Studies, University of Uyo, Nigeria. He is the Poetry Editor, *The Cloudscent Journal* and an Assistant Poetry Editor, *Arkore Arts*. He finished as a finalist, *Pawners Paper Poetry Contest, 2024*.

He was placed as the Second Runner Up, Spring Annual Poetry Prize, 2023 and was shortlisted for the Sevhave-KSR Hyginus Ekwuazi Poetry Prize, 2023. His works have been published/forthcoming in magazines such as Muse UNN, Poetry Column-NND, African Writers Magazine, Decolonial Passage, Pepper Coast Lit, Arts Lounge, etc. He tweets @CPNwankwo.

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THE EDITORS

OSIEKA OSINIMU ALAO is a Nigerian writer, poet, essayist, editor and academic. He holds an MA in Creative Writing from Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge. He was longlisted for the Commonwealth Short Story Prize 2019, Poets In Nigeria's Poetically Written Prose Contest 2022, Folorunsho Editor's Poetry Prize 2023, Brigitte Poirson Literature Prize 2023, and Toyin Falola Prize 2024. He was shortlisted for the Albert Jungers Poetry Prize 2022 and Eriata Oribhabor Poetry Prize 2023. He was First Prize Winner of the Brigitte Poirson Poetry Contest Soro Soke Edition 2022, Second Runner Up in the Creators of Justice Literary Award (Short Story) 2022 and First Runner Up in the Rhonda Gail Williford Award for Poetry 2023. He is the author of three poetry chapbooks: *Epidocycle* (2011), *Apocycle* (2012), and *Blood and Ink* (2013). His works are featured in *ANMLY*, *The Shore*, *Ta Adesa*, *The Beatnik Cowboy*, *Muse*, *African Writer Magazine*, *Rigorous*, *International Human Rights Art Movement*, *Pepper Coast Lit*, *Kalahari Review*, *Lumiere Review*, *Poetry Column NND*, and elsewhere. He currently serves as Editorial Secretary, *Bade Journal of Arts (BAJA)* and Director, Idumaese Alao Foundation. He is @OOAlao_ on X & Instagram.

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PAUL LIAM is a poet, literary critic, and author of two poetry collections; *Indefinite Cravings* (2012) and *Saint Sha'ade and Other Poems* (2014). A 2014 Fellow of the Ebedi International Writers Residency, Iseyin, Oyo State, Nigeria, and co-editor of the *Ebedi Review*. In 2014, he was honoured with an award of literary excellence for his contributions to the development of literature in Nigeria by the Ebedi International Writers Residency. Similarly, he has also been recognized by the Hill-Top Creative Arts Foundation and the Association of Nigerian Authors, Niger State for his contributions to the growth of literature with various certificates of merit. His poems have appeared in *Revista Prometeo* *Numeros 119-120 (Memorias; 33rd Festival Internacional de Poesia de Medellin, Julio de 2023)*, *Mingled Coins; Seventy Love Poems*, (selected and edited by Okinba Launko, Kraft Books Ibadan, 2020, anthology), *Echoes of Carnage; A Collection of Poems on Zamfara*, (edited by Jalaludeen Ibrahim and Maryam Gatawa, A.I Publishers Kano, 2021, anthology), *Blank Pages Anthology of Poems, Issue I* (a cross-cultural anthology, curated by Michal Musialowsky, Blank Pages Global Collective, Germany, 2021, online anthology), *Fireflies* (Kraft Books Ibadan, 2009, anthology), and *Life is Like a Flower* (Maziriyya Books, 2005, anthology). Liam served as the National Coordinator of the World Poetry Movement (WPM) in Nigeria and was a guest writer at the

33rd Medellin International Poetry Festival and the 1st Congress of the World Poetry Movement which took place in Medellin, Colombia, and Caracas, Venezuela in July 2023. He is a consulting art editor with the Daily Review Newspapers and a former assistant editor of The Art Muse Fair. He was equally a literary columnist and freelance reporter with Newline Newspapers, Minna, Niger State. Regarded as one of Nigeria's most prolific literary critics writing on contemporary Nigerian literature today, he has published over a dozen book reviews and critical essays locally and internationally. Liam has attended several literary and art festivals including the Abuja Literary and Arts Festival (ALITFEST2023), Lagos International Poetry Festival (LIPFEST2023) Hadiza Aliyu School Festival (HIASFEST 2023), Centre for Arts and Indigenous Studies (CAIS) IBBUL's 2nd Abubakar Gimba Lecture (2023), Festival Poetry Calabar (2019), the 38th International Conference of the Association of Nigerian Authors, Enugu State (2019), among others. Liam is also a communication consultant based in Abuja. He is @paul.liam on Facebook, @paul.liam on Instagram and @Terkhimbipaul on X.

Beyond The Sands is an anthology of the Idumaese Alao Prize For Literature 2024. It comprises sixteen poems selected by the Editors who served as judges of the prize. The featured poets are : Chiwenite Onyekwelu, Timi Sanni, Abdulrazaq Salihu, Adesiyan Oluwapelumi, Chinecherem Enujioke, Chinemerem Prince Nwankwo, Eliongema Udofia, Aliyu Umar Muhammad, Taiwo Hassan, Igbokwe Roseline, Samuel A. Adeyemi, Ajise Vincent, Damilola Omotoyinbo, Mubarak Said, Ayiyi Joel and Kelvin Ofeimu.

The poems herein have painstakingly reached for that beauty via linguistic infiniteness that foregrounds the delicate tales of our humanity.

– **Osieka Osinimu Alao**

The poems call us, reach out to us to pay attention, to listen to the aches, to understand the language of the wounds, the dialect of sorrow.

– **Rasaq Malik Gbolahan**

It is a heart-rendering problematisation of grief and love for loved ones stolen by death.

– **Paul Liam**



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