



# **FEATHERS IN REVERSE**

**Tikum Mbah  
AZONGA**

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# 1. Crisis Meeting

Suddenly, the boss stormed in  
Looking drained, flushed out, haggard and jaded  
Before we could rise  
We were all there  
All to the last soul  
He ordered us down  
“Don`t even bother. I know you all. Band of traitors!  
Remain seated, all of you  
and take out pens and papers and write!”

Stunned, we slumped into our seats

“Here is the Grail Message  
Written just for you.  
Prepare the coffins  
the time has come  
and prepare them now!

As we watched flabbergasted, the tormentor went on:  
“Write down everything. Everything!”

“Everything, sir? Even the unanswered questions from Addis Ababa?” we yelled, fearing for our dear lives.

“Yes, write it all down  
That at exactly 3pm local time  
The archbishop came this way  
He came with no official gear and no company  
Alone, all alone  
But he carried the Fon`s footstool  
That is it!

The meeting is over!”

“But the agenda, sir? What about the agenda?”

Looking surprised, he asked with the air of a Lord  
“Agenda, what agenda? I am the agenda  
After all, Louis 16th was the State  
And the State was Louis XVI!”

With those words, he stormed out of the heavy and sordid  
room  
And promptly the lights went out  
Leaving us to our own devices in the middle of the ocean  
“Was he from AES Sonel, or from the capital?”, we all  
wondered aloud.  
But it was too late  
The heavy rain had started pelting  
And it would go on unabated for two weeks  
So where was Mugabe?

## 2. Those Who Dare To Preach To Us

I will spread it out  
I mean, spread it out  
With my index finger  
It doesn't matter if it's too thinly  
As long as we square the half mile  
We won't accept any green notes  
Nor the baker's long loaves  
Nor loose euros blowing in the wind  
We will tone down any strident calls for blood from DC  
We will question and vet  
Any petitions to Amnesty and Transparency from Brussels  
They're all talking drums that sound hollow  
Because their music is drenched and drowned in sour cheese  
droplets  
And odd bits and pieces of chicken and chips  
And left-overs of last night's burgers.  
We want our own voices to rise up and tower and dwarf  
We want our young to grow and step forward  
We want our on to show us the way  
We want our type to rule and govern  
But we reject any go-between  
We don't want godfathers  
Just let us be  
We turn down all mediators and arbiters  
Why should we trust them?  
They have betrayed their own people  
They carry guns wantonly and shoot randomly like Adolf's  
underlings  
They coldbloodedly strap up humans and inject them to  
death  
They wire them up like some new building and electrocute

them

Their stages and arenas are worse than Hitler's gas chambers

So who are they to stand and give us lessons?

They're nothing but opportunists who say one thing and

mean another

They can be all over the place

They can be everywhere

Yet nowhere

They're brief

Fleeting

Passing

Short-lived

Momentary

Ephemeral

A nine day wonder

So why trust them?

### 3. The Silence from Rome

The priest is tired  
His silk cassock has gone grey  
His hands tremble  
His mantle no longer fits  
His crook looks too heavy for him  
Isn't it time he went?  
Shouldn't he also get a rest?  
Or must it only be the pastor?  
Leadership is leadership  
Unless Rome thinks otherwise.

### 4. What Colours Mean To Me

(For Marelen)

The girl in white and purple  
That's who I am today and tomorrow  
That's who I was yesterday  
I am my own mistress  
I build my own bridges  
I trace my own path  
I fight my own battles  
Life has taught me that the world is inside of us  
Not somewhere else  
That's why I'm the girl in white and purple  
But the colours are the Almighty's, not mine  
He alone pulls the strings  
And I go at his bidding.

My white and purple



Are not bows without their arrows  
They are not the valley lily birds fed yesterday  
No, they are a new breed of flower sash from the seamstress  
But certainly not a re-enactment of Benson and Hedges.  
When we read the Wife of Bath  
We do so with due regard for her rattles  
That's why my students come here daily without fuss  
And my staff work harder than Oscar Wells.  
Here at ABCIT where standards are high and far from rubble  
We invite all and sundry to come and discover our deep gold  
mine  
If there is anything tied here, it's certainly strings  
That's why with my verse stringer, I'm prepared to go in  
hiding.

## **5. God's Changing Weather (For Bernadette)**

Wao! What a good weather!  
Don't you simply love it?  
See how meek and lowly  
Yet how sweet and charming it is  
Yes, it may change  
We all know the weather is fickle  
But who isn't?  
That's life.

For all the exotic readings, I thank the Father  
The cumulus, the nimbus, the stratus, they all do it  
So does the torrential rain when it rumbles slowly  
As a Gemini, I know when the weather is amiss  
Like a true child of Babungo, I can measure its full range

So it doesn't matter whether it's a down pour or a trickle  
Thank God for the splendid weather and the snow it isn't  
After all, without the changes, our Faculty has no real life.

## **6. Too Big For Charing Cross**

I'm not a man to roam  
I carry heavy bagpipes  
Like the Kilimanjaro poet  
Watch my eyebrows  
Don't you see them twitch?  
So, what more of the wanton birds at Charing Cross?

## **7. Inches Too Shallow**

**(For the victim's of Schindler's list)**

Some inches were unspeakable  
Frankly  
Imagine a yarn without fins or spreadsheets  
Where on earth would you then begin?  
Where?

## 8. THE WRONG DRINK

I couldn't find the gas pedal  
Nor the gradient level  
So did I have to sip Ukrainian Cognac?  
Just because of that?  
What about the charcoal trade?

## 9. Lone Battle for Christ

I quenched it  
Not with holy water  
Nor tears for fear  
But with God's own spirit  
It didn't take long  
Although the breath of it was so short  
And its Fallopian tubes severed  
I did it standing on the Kilimanjaro  
Yet, I did it  
Don't mind the band master.

We're all damned, profit or no profit  
Even if we're offered the best Twin Otter  
That's why for ever our offspring will speak from the rear  
Especially for those who know Tikrit  
And the scapegoat Washington gnawed and gored for so long  
The charge is nothing short of tort  
It's also nothing short of the leader who once was revered  
Forget the dirty bodices and shrunken payroll  
What really matters is the last candle no one really lit  
And the fact that son is equal to father.

## **10. A Prayer for Victory** **(For Lydienne Blanche)**

Give me an example, dear Lord  
And a good one, too  
For too long I have groped in the dark  
Today I want light  
I want sunshine  
I want your shoulder  
I want your hand.

Give me grace, but of your own accord  
I don't want to stick like glue  
I want to run and worship you like in the park  
I want to win with you without a fight  
Lord, be my grapevine  
Be my solace, my fortress and my giant boulder  
So that I too can see the Promised Land.

## **11. A Certain Point in Time** **(For Linda)**

I'll think  
I'll think and grow rich  
Just like Napoleon  
Just let the tides ebb away  
And the bottom line of Ant & Soc, thicken  
That's when we'll even the scores.

I'm not at the brink  
That's why I refuse to twitch

Instead, I demand brand new dandelions of neon  
If you will, that's my way  
That's why I must think and ripen  
And then get rid of all the pores and sores.

## **12. My Newest Creation** **(For Mayayong)**

Every new creation is good  
On condition that it doesn't get stuck in the mud  
And in the process  
Attract odd bits of iron filings  
Or some adulterated God's bits of wood  
Or even get steeped in sour lime wine.  
And that's the plain truth.

Whether I'm called Sandrine or Vera  
As long as Spanish is my oyster  
And the instructor, this man who makes me laugh  
And forever I have this leg in JMC  
The world shall continue to spin on its axis  
I'm not reinventing the wheel  
No, far from it, I'm calling a spade, a spade.

### **13. The Taunted Lion**

**(For Agbor Ambang)**

So what are you going to do about it?  
Let all the chickens loose  
Or get them pent up for another month?  
Do you think that's fair?  
To show a hungry lion meat from the booby  
And then abruptly withdraw it?  
Is a hungry man not an angry man?

I have come for my search  
And I have a torch, just in case  
I'm not seeking the heroin  
Neither a I seeking the villain  
I'm seeking the way to Mamfe  
Call me another lotus eater, if you like  
I will stand my ground.

### **14. My Quest for Leadership**

**(For Kelly)**

Why don't I always have what I want  
Why is this life this way?  
I love my fellow human being  
I offer help wherever necessary  
But I also want something in return  
It's something for something  
Not something for nothing  
That's what I want.

Yet when I move nearer, they move away

When I go in, they go out  
When I go out, they go in  
When I call, they giggle  
I want my presence to be felt  
I want to be present  
I want to be seen  
I want to be heard  
I want to lead  
I want to rule the world.

## **15. Is Man By Nature Good?** **(For Ngong Bertrand)**

Could people still be this good  
Or am I dreaming?  
Have heaven's doors and windows  
Suddenly flung open and whisked everyone up  
With no ticket, no money, no strings?  
Why have all the girls' faces brightened up  
And all the boys' grips become firmer?  
Surely there must be something in the offing.

Cars drive past and I am ticked off as ready food  
Amphi 750 is full to the brim and still streaming  
All oil paintings I see are like obsolete bows and arrows  
Any attempts at changing money simply flop  
Science students talk of nothing but concentric circles and  
rings  
When I attempt to walk up the wrong way, all strung  
Multiple hands stop me short of the garner  
Today, I wonder how so suddenly man can be so much of an  
underling.

## **16. In The Footsteps Of The Almighty (For Ronard)**

A girl with the fear of the Lord  
That's who I am  
No more, no less  
And I stand my ground  
I do so because I know myself

Each time I fall  
I pick up myself promptly  
And look up to the source of all life  
Instantly my spirits return and I take off  
The next minute, I`m hearing from him.  
*Copyright*

## **17. A Field Day For The Vice President For Akye Nchang**

You didn` t look everywhere  
Did You?  
Did you look among the daffodil beds?Di you look under the  
enamel flower pot?  
Did you look between the Tilly lanterns?  
Did you look among the rejected ballot papers?  
Did you even look on the honours list?  
That of the newly elected ASJUB officials?

I have a future cut out like Chinaware  
I have no fear of that which is new  
If you like, I can spin you new threads



What I hate is leadership rot  
That`s why our new team will always carry lanterns  
We do not doubt the value of our peers  
So that when the time comes our names shall be on the scroll  
That`s why the world, this world, needs presidents.

## **18. Worms That Snatched Me from Bridget**

It wasn`t worms, or was it?  
At least not another battalion  
For, weren`t we infested and festooned enough?  
Did we still have to be inundated, drenched, drowned and  
swept away  
Like the fish in Pa Muka`s flooded fishponds?  
Then what would Dr Oben say in his next peer-reviewed  
journal?  
After all he was our specialist in fish farming and aquatic  
science  
This wizard knew all the secrets of the little beast.

Anyway, the house, all of it  
Didn`t leak, it just stank  
And that was better, if you know what I mean  
No amount of perfume from Saudi Arabia  
Or dollars from America  
Or incense from the Dubai  
None of those could change anything. None  
So we were all hemmed in, trapped, cornered, caught  
I felt rotten as my body touched hers in the darkness  
But there was no way I could get onto Facebook  
And tell Bridget about it  
All about it.

## 19. A Post Card for Cynthia

I'm inspired each time I see you  
It's not your eyes or even your smile  
Neither is it your looks  
No, it's something else  
It's your aura, your body chemistry  
You make me feel good  
You make me feel high.

With you around me why would I ever want the loo?  
Unless we were both sailing down the Nile  
And me holding tightly to all my books  
Regardless of wherever are all the Earls  
Should anyone mention the registry  
Then Ill remind them of my hood  
And the fact that Cynthia is high.

## 20. Alone With a Cobweb In Zambia

Did grandpa's cobweb lie  
I mean, did it lie through its teeth  
Blatantly and unashamedly  
While Kamanga was still rising in Lusaka?  
And did she notice it at all?  
Or was she too overwhelmed by its  
multifaceted tentacles and web-construction prowess?

Did the comb-footed spider therefore pry?  
And spill the beans as proof of sleuth  
Or did it once again, like the Palace Clock of Lusaka

Box itself into a corner and refuse to walk tall?  
Then why didn't the rest of us fetch the stilts?  
Or were we still waiting for the ill-fated princess?

## 21. The Bed Wetter

I didn't wet the bed  
No, I didn't, I bet you  
I just did the pie chart thing  
I did it to map out my country  
But it came out as Africa  
But I did it, remember?  
Surely that isn't bed wetting, is it?

I didn't pool it with Ted  
I don't believe in tango for two  
But I'm wary of the wasp's sting  
That's why for the right circumference to comply  
One must junket from Luanda to Lusaka to Pretoria and  
Accra  
Must you be a member?  
Well, those who live will know it.

## 22. The Door the Moderator Snubbed

Will the end lines cross at last  
Or will they like the forsaken lap dog  
Bark at the wrong target and pop up uninvited for dinner  
Letting loose the molten crow bar and cursed smoke-coated  
lips  
Like another loose canon?

Will the Fon`s whistle blower finally blast  
Or will the folded window blinds refuse to twitch  
Making Mary`s Christmas puddings look like  
Half baked cake for the outgoing Moderator?  
Surely, that`s why our dining lines will never intersect.

## 23. Where Has My Love Gone?

(For Welle)

Is love real  
Or is it just a hollow sham?  
Is it papered over cracks  
Or yet another act of shoddy contrition?  
Why does our church pastor think it`s all sweeping under the  
carpet?  
What, for God`s sake, is this love?  
This demon I can neither touch nor see  
Yet daily it blows in the wind  
If it be a flower, then which is it?  
Is it the rose, the daffodil, the carnation?  
The tulip? The anemone? The gladiolus? The Iris or the  
rhododendron?  
Tell me then; tell me all about it. Will you?

Shall I then never strike this deal  
In a world where everything tastes like ham?  
Can I blur the writing on its tracks?  
Or must I first blow the moderator`s trumpet?  
I thought I had hit the treasure trove  
And so I quickly wrote to Basel  
But look what I have got on the hind  
Surely not enough theories or hypotheses to posit  
So, when shall I find my long lost love and hold it without  
frills?  
Does it mean I`ll never dance tango for two?

## 24. A Ride with God`

(For Jacqueline)

Is that what I want to be  
Or is it just a mirage of it?  
Am I between a rock and a hard place  
Or simply at the end of my tether?  
Nay, for a Gemini and a Lesan to boot  
I surely deserve better than that  
So, tomorrow at midday and unprovoked  
I will rise with the falcon  
And hedging my bets as best I can  
I will with one giant leap but without a single spring  
Land on God`s dining table  
To him in private will I state my case  
And make my point  
I`m sure he`ll nod and smile  
And lift me back to earth  
This time with feet of reinforced steel  
No longer molten clay.

## 25. The Girl with a Heart of Gold (For Laurantine)

May be I did but did not know I did not  
That's life, isn't it?  
It isn't about Facebook or yellow nectar or the new gold rush  
No, it's the hapless, hungry, stemless sky larks  
Who burn their last piece of wood at both ends?  
Like the foolish virgins, they walk on their poor heads  
And shamelessly dance in the rain on Sundays.

I'm not one ever to blow cold and hot  
But as a researcher, I can hypothesize and duly posit  
Like the royal broom, I can sweep away any thrush  
I know the names of all my brown sharks  
And I am an expert at monetary trends  
As a Virgo, I can walk on threads  
But mind you, I also have my fun days.

## 26. The Chances I Take (For Minnette)

I like strangers  
Yes, I do  
And I make no bones about it  
I am prepared to wine and dine with them  
Even if it means treading where angels fear to dare  
You may say I'm spreading myself out too thinly  
So be it  
After all, he who ventures nothing, gains nothing  
And life is never a bed of roses, anyway.

Do I like debaters?  
Of course, I do  
Because I firmly believe that to get it you must work for it  
Life is not only about Bethlehem  
It's also about being fair and paying one's fare  
Although I may criticize sorely  
I do so in good faith for we can't afford to live life dreamily  
Whatever we do must fit  
So that for ever we don't lose the silver lining  
If we do, then what on earth will ever again hold sway?



## **27. In Quest Of New Rungs** **(For Musi Jane Nanhyigha)**

Who am I, really?

A piece of wood flung at the callous wall?

A rotten chunk of meat thrown at the archbishop's dogs?

Or a lone candle stood at the altar by Christ's own successor?

Or am I the next standard bearer to walk up the stairs of the  
Kremlin?

Even without going to Delaware? Do you care?

Are you even listening or am I left to my own devices

Stood out in the cold to sing out my voice and lungs?

Why can't I also move and have my being freely?

Why, like the man of Sisyphus, must I always stall?

Yet my wheels are hampered by no clogs

For I know I belong to the protector

Even if I've never lived in Melim

Sometimes I wonder why for once, I can't also dare

And shout to the world that I too am full of devices

Even if what I need badly are a new set of rungs?

## **28. Eel on the Heels**

Shall we dig in our heels

Or shall we flee?

What does it matter as long as they don't show glee?

After all, is anyone of us able to come up with an eel?

## **29. The Ugly Bee**

Have they crossed it  
Or are the poor souls still thinking about it?  
If it`s all been used, then let them tell me  
Don`t treat me as if I was the world`s ugliest bee.

## **30. The Bunch We Are**

Are we being hounded  
Or simply being rounded  
When meat pies become Sunday lunch  
Then frankly, we`re nothing but a sorry bunch.

## **31. Whichever Way**

Will the two ever again meet  
Or is it just another rotten chunk roasting in the heat?  
Even when north and south stand aloof  
Why do you quake for sour grapes through the roof?

## **32. The Unfortunate Jug**

Did you say, "River bird?"  
Or was it "Cattle herd?"  
So what about the red jug?  
Or would you rather thrust it at the thug?

### **33. The Lone Apron**

I'm a jaded blue apron  
But one with no beefed up icon  
And no compressed gas chambers  
We were three; now we are one.

### **34. God`S Chosen One**

She is the best  
Simply the best, I swear  
All with the contours  
And the smiles  
And the assurances  
It`s compatibility at its apex  
But it`s not just a union made in God`s house  
No, it`s one ordained in God`s bedroom.

So let`s walk abreast  
Because that`s where we belong - no wear and tear  
Let`s pick a boat and go on a package tour  
All of that regardless of the mileage  
Regardless of the multiple trances  
Even if we are trapped by some entangled latex  
Let it be our Garden of Eden  
The bride and the bridegroom.

### **35. My One and Only Orchard Tree** **(For Sarah)**

You are the person  
You are the one and no one else  
You are the apple tree  
The one I ran into by accident  
I mean by pure chance  
Yes, you are the one  
The one and lone ideal teacher.

You may not be another Pearson  
But you are my Oscar Wells  
Even if it was all for free  
I'd refuse to concede a single dent  
Unlike Cyrus Vance  
Who grossly tripped before the crown  
That's why with you I'll always be a sea fairer.

### **36. A Virgin Gift for the Sultan of Fouban**

The founding fathers got it wrong  
They got it all wrong  
And all of that in the name of political correctness  
So let not those of us standing here and now  
Claim that our cats were cleaner than theirs  
If all we care about is a feline beast  
Then what shall we say about  
The numerous virgin gifts  
Which were all of a sudden  
Thrust at the Sultan of Fouban?

### **37. The Kiss He Planted On Her**

I saw him kiss her  
He may deny it now, but I saw him do it  
He thinks he`s God`s gift to the world  
Just let him wait until the soldier ants start biting her.

### **38. The Missing Cheque Book**

I don`t know if it`s here  
But I know it was sent  
So, check again and have no fear  
If you still can`t find it, the caretaker must repent.

### **39. Bodies That Shame Humanity**

**(For Funge Diffang)**

*(An impromptu reaction to the massive group of charred bodies Funge Diffang posted on Facebook today.)*

Those bodies aren`t bullet-riddled  
They`re charred  
They`re lined up  
Displayed  
Exhibited  
Paraded  
Arranged, massed up, jumbled up, shuffled, and reshuffled  
like a Pack of cards  
See how bare they are!  
Naked  
Unclad  
Shamed

Humiliated  
Betrayed objects of base value.

Yet they`re human  
Even if  
Silent  
Mute  
Uncomplaining  
Acquiescent  
Oblivious  
They too are to someone, somewhere, some how  
Husbands  
Wives  
Fathers  
Mothers  
Uncles and aunts  
Grandparents  
Sons and daughters .  
Nephews and nieces

So, whose greed is it?  
Whose shame?  
Whose disgrace ?  
Whose humiliation ?  
Whose betrayal?  
If not ours  
We who still live and behold and ponder and contemplate  
and wonder  
We who still have it all on our laps  
Partners in crime  
We live to be haunted for ever  
By those sordid image  
By those macabre images

By those  
By this heinous crime  
By this dastardly crime  
Man`s inhumanity to man  
It`s all so disgusting  
So repelling  
So repugnant  
So low  
So below-the-belt  
So squalid  
So foul  
So grubby\  
So chilly  
So horrid  
So ghastly  
So grisly  
So ghoulish  
So gruesome  
So grisly.

But we`re all guilty  
We all have blood dripping  
From our pens  
From our mouths  
From our ears  
From our nostrils  
From our private parts  
From our breath  
From our very being  
From our space  
From our world  
From our very being.

When the time comes  
The moment of atonement  
We shall all give an account  
All of all  
Singly and collectively  
We shall answer questions  
Searching questions  
Answer for ourselves and for them  
Right or wrong  
For we are responsible  
We are also responsible  
This world is one, global  
And echo one of us  
Is his brother`s keeper.

#### **40. The Mine-Infested Road**

It isn`t normal at all  
No, forget the packed lunches  
For once, pick up your Holy Bible and walk tall  
That`s the only way you can avoid the trenches.

#### **41. The Girl From Sierra Leone (For Ola During)**

I need a man  
Wherever I can find one  
I need him so that the boss can lift the ban  
In that way, I`ll be his Number One.



## 42. Hold Your Horses

*(For Nii K. Bentsi Enshill from whom I learned so much while a Staff Journalist at West Africa Magazine in London, U.K. Nii K. was Deputy Editor and the one in charge of the Francophone Desk to which I was assigned. His wide and deep knowledge of French was an asset for me. This was at the time when the Editor was Onyema Ugochukwu and the Editor-in-Chief was Kaye Whiteman)*

Let`s not talk about it now  
Let`s leave it for the evening before  
When you hear the Queen Mother vow  
Then wheel out all the pregnant girls to the fore.

## 43. Awkward One, This

All the swan birds have flown  
Taken off before the Fon has sneezed  
It has happened before the young have grown  
So how shall the lone widows be quizzed?

#### **44. Fee for Zoo Animals**

I won't spare any  
All must come down  
Down with a bang  
So, don't bet waste your bet.

My club licenses aren't legion  
But my chips are down  
So if want an orang outang  
We must be ready to pay the fee.

#### **45. So Much Waste Land**

Did you use a citation  
Or did you just cut and paste?  
So when it's time for confession  
What shall you say about all the haste?

#### **46. The Skewed Results**

Couldn't you find the data?  
Or was your methodology flawed?  
But when it comes to payments pro rata  
You wobble as if you had been gored.

## **47. God`S Only Olive Branch**

**(For Olive)**

Am I strong enough to face the challenges of life?  
In other words, do I have my feet firmly on the ground?  
Or am I just one of those loose cannons who float and lurk  
And in the end, rant and moan and babble?  
Am I talking to someone? Are we together?  
Or am I a lone voice in the garden of Tibati  
In search of greener pastures?  
And have I forgotten that today`s my child`s birthday?

I believe in godly harmony, not civil strife  
That`s when I`m in my element and on solid ground  
Even so, I`m neither, Mandela nor Burke  
I don`t dabble in portfolios because I hate tittle-tattle  
I`m the compatible Pisces go-getter  
And all the princes call me the Beauty Princess from Kribi  
I know about all kinds of recipes, although not fixtures  
And my secret at all times is one of making hay.

## **48. Seven Unmarked Posts**

What caused it, then? What?  
The submerged fjords or the barren farmlands?  
And you stand there and babble and swat  
Who do you think will pick up the pieces?

## 49. The Emir`S Rain

Ask yourself the question again  
Is your content larger than life?  
And if the Emir were once more to provoke the rain  
Who do you think would remmber the stands?

## 50. Art in All Its Forms

*(To Mwalimu George Ngwane and the rest of us who were at the AFRICAPHONIE workshop on Art and Culture Journalism held at the Hotel Residence Carlos in Buea-Cameroon from the 21st to the 23rd of March 2011. It was three golden days never to be forgotten.)*

This is art, alright  
But art with a difference  
Just look at the symmetric contours  
The concentric and bubbled sounds  
The tempered comic relief  
The jaded strobe lights  
The indented background  
It`s not oil on canvass  
But you can see the subdued frescoes  
Like those of the Sistine Chapel  
Call them Velasquez` or Michael Angelo`s if you like  
Consider the smoked silver filaments  
It`s all picturesque and enameled  
It may not be Gothic or baroque  
But it`s deep and profound and scintillating  
Just watch sky-blue and pacific love birds as they neck  
Like the peace plant.

See how their golden vertical and horizontal lines blend  
Oh! Don't they march and merge and fuse and melt?  
They thaw out and liquefy into one, single liquid  
A slimy and viscous fluid which  
Claims its own place in the sun  
For how can it miss out on this second Berlin?  
Forget about time, distance, speed and velocity  
We are talking about architecture  
So let's all together  
Gather it all up and hand it to humanity  
It belongs to mankind.

Let's return it to Mother Nature as we received it  
Soft  
Sleek  
Sublime  
Innocuous  
Majestic  
Fresh  
New  
Pure  
Unadulterated  
Undeified  
Immaculate  
Virgin  
Intact.

That's why here and now, today  
As we sit and deliberate on Carlos' throne  
We know that South Africa, Ghana and Cameroon are one  
United in intention and purpose  
It's several origins, one destination  
Several voices, one meaning

Several visions, one object  
Several tongues, one expression  
Several inspirations, one art  
One light  
One energy  
One source  
One soul  
One God  
The infinite  
Nothingness  
Zero  
Dissipation  
Regeneration  
Birth  
Rebirth.

## **51. My Girl in the Well** **(For my Facebook friends)**

Whatever happened to her at the moat  
I can't tell frankly  
All I can say is that she missed the boat  
Don't ask me if she did so sadly.

With an aunt whose arms grow weak each day  
And a second hand ticket no one wants  
How can anyone be surprised she sucks eggs with a spoon of  
clay?  
That's why when I think of her I relapse into erotic chants.

Today as the tiny stations fly past like Elstree  
And I in First Class am choked by hungry little faces

I wonder whether even she could have remembered the freebie.

If only she knew moats were far off hills, not good races!

## **52. A Bottle Full Of White Jelly** **(For the one and only departmental queen)**

He will not be there

When the time comes

Mark my words, the fool will be gone

Gone with the wind

And into the hidden cave

The lake of the Lake Queen

Where dinosaurs revel

On slimy stairs of gold

And stunted jilted girls

Dry out in the sun

Like drunk river birds too lofty to swim

If we prefer to serve as fodder for the cannon

We shall be left behind, stranded and in tears.

## **53. Alone With the Priest**

I don't like ammunition

Although I love cannons

But if I hear loose cannons

Then I rush to the priest for contrition.

## **54. The Other Whiff of Grapeshot**

I saw the makeshift sandbag whistle past  
At an angle too wide to count  
At once I picked up my three pinons  
And like a wounded lion, shot off to Babylon.

## **55. Here Comes the Master**

Fling out the red carpet  
Call out the servants  
Wheel out the kids  
The master is here.

The men of grace returned him home  
Come then and let us make merry  
Send a message to Rome  
And ask the pope to send back Mary.

## **56. Thou Art Lord**

Oh king of the universe  
Let your love flow down in reverse  
You are the most high  
For those who want to come nigh  
You who know our deepest thoughts  
Forgive us our torts  
You are our fortress, our refuge, our strength  
For to you we pay no rent  
Stand by us  
So that on D-Day we can all step forward without fuss.



## 57. My Lost Love

Apple of my eye  
In nature`s pool you float  
When shall I too become a spy?  
So that I can lift you like a boat?

My heart cries out with joy  
Pretty as you are, you make me pant  
Although some may think this a ploy  
I know that with you around I`ll never again rant.

## 58. Standing Betrayed

I have stood out here long enough  
Every passing clown has noticed me, poor me  
Splashed with pig`s blood  
But I alone dry the tears of this nation  
Oh! Dream of the forgotten founding fathers!  
Was this your wish?

## 59. Trips Without Tips

(For Gaelle)

The glasses, the teeth and the lips  
Those are the trump cards I hold  
But perhaps that is only the tip of the iceberg  
Which is where our cherished STV comes in  
Even so, aren't we all too slow for the flow?  
Have the loose ends at this Carlos Hotel workshop been tied  
up?  
Have all the `T`s been crossed and the `I`s been dotted?  
Or have the bosses simply papered over the cracks?

Despite our multiple stilts, I still need some tips  
Because as far as I know, I'm firmly back in the fold  
Despite the devastating gale from Johannesburg  
You are my fresh fish without the fin  
My golden compass for the nation despite the foe  
Forget about my shouting lipstick so finely lined up  
Or my Taurean obstinacy too closely knit to be transported  
I move warily enough to avoid the Delegate's cupid packs.

## **60. Grandma`S Empty Calabashes**

In none of these three calabashes  
Has grandma dumped her ashes  
If we weep, she dips her index finger  
If we creep, she turns into a waxwork figure.

## **61. Faced With a Weakened People (For sons and daughters of the Baforchu-Mbu clan)**

Why so much sorrow in the oracle`s heart of hearts?  
Why do cumulus and nimbus clouds gather momentum?  
Why do the hillside palace owls mourn?  
Why has the black smoke not fissured out?  
Why is our Fon still snoring?

If the young people of the village think tradition is only an art  
And thus reduce it to the age-old mbaghalum  
Then perhaps they`re living in the shrine room  
Ignoring the calls of Maformusong for all to come out  
If this goes on, shall we be saved from perishing?

## **62. Jelly with no Viscosity**

Is there sorrow or joy in the bulwark stars  
That peck away at God`s living boars  
Or is all the fire in the wolf`s belly  
Simply another crude form of petroleum jelly.

## **63. The Mad Moment**

I didn`t hear the window clatter  
But I heard the giant bird flap its sodden wings  
And the ugly sky bare its rotten fangs  
That was when the tides turned.

For someone whose life has all been in rubber  
I can`t help thinking of my million slings  
And all the stray orang outangs  
Put together, they`re like Saddam`s things all churned.

## **64. Barefooted For the Pope**

I own nothing but my bare feet  
My tinderboxes and golden cymbals all went  
They went with the wind  
Now that the pope wants me  
To sing and dance waltz for two  
What shall I tell the parish priest?

## 65. Memories of Lusaka

I own no mango boughs  
Although I have worked in boroughs  
A child of a mangled past  
Since the good old days with Chipimo in Lusaka  
I hop in and out as I like  
And the holy ground at all times  
Remains the holy ground.

## 66. Why Should She Do It?

Yes, why on earth should she do it today?  
Did she do it yesterday?  
Why should the poor girl auction her body  
Only to go to hell feet-bound?  
It`s Sunday morning in Las Vegas, you know?

While no one else is held at bay  
But everyone hails everything made of clay  
All your dirty mind sees are Easter eggs made shoddy  
Aren`t you therefore one of those who hound  
Ho hound and suck and fondle and throw?

## 67. The Other Tea Party

Tea and sea may sound alike  
But none is like Boston or a bike  
So when death becomes the mother of beauty  
Time and space become a lasting couple.

## **68. Paying For Incidentals**

The naked books are open  
And the glass nobbs warm  
When the green wings are flown in  
And all slovenly requitals become lustful recitals  
Won't we all become muttering landlords?

## **69. Compass Reading**

**(For Nasare)**

I'll go no more aroving  
I promise you  
Even if the sky comes down on my head  
And that's final.

So when you go round beaming  
Spare a thought for Jacob's zoo  
Where wrought iron has turned into allowed lead.  
If you trust me, buy me a sparkling crystal.

## **70. One More for the Risen Christ**

I though I gave you one  
Or am I dreaming?  
Why would I, when the swan birds haven't flown past?  
Neither has the minister's heart beat risen?

What we need most in Christendom is a crown  
For God's sake, not another farthing!  
Lest the boss flies the flag at half mast  
So let's rejoice for Christ has risen.

## **71. A Cheer for Pisces and Taurus**

**(For Caroline)**

Make a path and let others follow  
Don't just stand back and look askance  
After all weren't it for this film launch where angels lie fallow  
Why would anyone go into a trance?

Life isn't only Shakespeare's sonnets all so hollow  
No, it's also an arena full of surprises and a firm stance  
A platform where Taurean and Piscean of age frolic and  
wallow  
Melting into each other and hustling and jostling at the  
entrance.

## **72. A Dinghy for Ndingi**

**(For Elangwe Ndingi)**

Imaginary doing  
And imaginary underlings  
That's what I loathe most  
But when it comes to candle light  
And the wild roars of the deep blue sea  
I surely gird my loins aright  
And step into the arena.

Don't we all love hoeing?  
Or do you prefer David's slings?  
And those Achirimbi anemones about which you boast?  
If you're not ready for the fight  
Then I'll write to the Holy See  
And request another dinghy by right

If you don't like it, go to Ndjamena.

### **73. What Being a Delegate Means (For Saahkem Nancy Ephe)**

A girl with a difference  
That's what we all are  
Forget Margaret Thatcher and her knighthood  
I am also a Baroness  
Baroness Saahkem  
So let's all go back to the bank  
And count all the dormant butterflies.

Whether you pick the conference or the circumference  
The light green lace will never be far  
And that's when nothing counts but brotherhood  
For delegates like us who are full of prowess  
And who yearn daily to go to Bethlehem  
Far from being a question of rank  
It's a matter of who first spots the water lilies.

### **74. Shows with No Starting Time (For Ma Stella of Buea)**

Do I go to the net  
Or do you just want me to play to the gallery?  
I'm not a pretender  
Neither am I an actress  
I don't paper over the cracks  
Neither do I sweep things under the carpet.



You may very well call me your little pet  
But don't send me to Calgary  
Even if like Stephen, I'm an iron bender  
All I need is a little recess  
So that I can mend the stable in the barracks  
That's when all shows will merge to become one puppet.

## **75. Trousers That Won't Fit (For Missline)**

Happy and unhappy trousers  
That's what I wore yesterday  
That's what I'm wearing today  
And that's what I'll wear tomorrow  
After all, why not?  
Is life itself not happy and unhappy?

I fret when mankind flounders  
And nothing else holds sway  
That's why at all cost I shun the fray  
As Sagittarius I also feel sorrow  
But as the born fighter I can reduce it to naught  
Outspoken? You bet! But I'm also snappy.

## **76. Daddy's One and only Daughter** **(For Marion)**

Tribute to my late dad  
That's what I have to say  
And I mean it  
I say it from the bottom of my heart  
Dad, accept this as my Golden Fleece  
My sacred bouquet of flowers  
My genuine words of thanksgiving  
You deserve it all.

Without you, I wouldn't be clad  
And I would never have my day  
Even if I was fit  
You loved me from the very start  
Even when you went to Greece  
That was when you brought back the louveres  
Today that I am here, all alone and grieving  
I know you want me to stand and walk tall.

## **77. Daughter of the Lord** **(For Emelda)**

How great is he, I wonder  
He isn't a Fai  
Neither is he the Chairman  
But e is Lord  
The Lord of Hosts  
He owns the world, all alone  
And all the people therein are his oyster.

Are we his canon fodder?  
For always, He is nigh  
He may very well not be our nearest pressman  
But he perches on the fort  
And daily receives a thousand and one toasts  
All of them on one phone  
Above all, he calls me his daughter.

## **78. God from another Angle** **(For Emeli)**

Oh! If I were God!  
I would make this world all over again  
I would remake it, recreate it  
Turn all men into women  
And all women into men  
And then watch them play together.

I wouldn't feed them with any cod  
No, but I would offer them gifts wrapped and stood in the  
rain  
Never would I think any pastor unfit  
For I don't know how the Almighty made his stamen  
So, how would I match his deeds letter for letter?

## **79. Those Of Comfort**

**(For Comfort herself)**

What really must I do to be herd?  
Must I shout from the rooftops  
Or kneel before the most high altar?  
Must I first of all pray?  
Does it really matter?  
What happens now that I have a gagged mouth  
And bound feet?

Although I am Comfort and not Hird  
I do know about top of the pops  
And above all, my alma matter  
In my life, I have counted more than a sun's ray  
Without ever having to batter  
This beauty you proclaim is not from the south  
It was simply imported in the last fleet.

## **80. What the Virgin Mother Wants**

**(For Susan)**

Beauty and brains, what a combination! Or don't you think  
so?  
What grabs me most are the contour lines  
The missed symmetry and skewed research findings  
But not so much the holy water  
Or the altar sacrament  
Or even the holy rosary.

Aren't we all products of the great transfiguration?  
Even if some of us came in with half a toe?

Nonetheless, we grow our own wines  
And bear our own good tidings  
Isn't this also about smartness and the holy Father?  
What we don't want is another peppermint  
So that even I, Susan, can boast of a second rosary.

## **81. A Problem and a Half**

We have a problem  
Though not about the Marxist slogans  
Nor Mobutu's tin of sour baked beans  
No, it's the meagre and chloroformed Yiddish contribution.

I may not be a second Moslem  
Nor a former user of Morgan's  
But I know about all the virgin teams  
And the great day of retribution.

## **82. Sprouts No One Wants**

We're behind the bars  
For daring to spell our names backwards  
Cryptic sprouts and moronic administrators  
All of them with wet noses  
Stood up like sheppardless sheep  
And without shame  
Testified against the Man of God.

## 83. Jokers From East London

They are all sick Jokers  
That's what they are  
They stink and groan  
So don't give them a penny.

These guys shoot at anything that moves  
And munch sprouted shrimps like starved brides  
They gulp down leaven milk like castrated bullocks  
The fools do that all day long  
As if there was no tomorrow.

## 84. Bullets in Lipstick

How shall you count them?  
How on earth shall we do it?  
Crossed cannibals, gored palace chickens  
And chained toothless bulldogs  
That's what they are  
With their shallow buttocks  
Sunken jaws and false teeth  
Do you think they'll hear you?

Why do you waste your gun powder?  
Keep it in check  
Save it for the rainy day  
Above all  
Save your breath for your porridge  
If you have no underwear  
Fetch the golden bible  
Otherwise, you're doomed.

## 85. Sentence Before Trial

The last man was out  
So there was no need to venture in  
Only the lame wishes of the bride  
Or at the very least  
The stained necklace of the pastor`s wife  
Could dare the marooned king  
And put a foot forward  
That was why when the last of the Kaisers  
Bellowed and camouflaged like a Bafang pig  
Everyone quickly dug up their Nagasaki pearls and vanished.

## 86. Sugar Cane For Ever

We`ve taken care of it  
We`ve sent it back, haven`t we Michele  
So, let`s keep moving on  
And for God`s sake  
Let`s publish or perish.

If you think sugar cane is a hit  
Just ask Michele  
Not for fun  
Or as a new form of rake  
But a magic wand to cherish.

## 87. The Dusty Message

Let them,all of them, know it  
Tell it them  
But for God`s sake  
Don`t bell them  
In case they ask you to start knitting.

## 88. A Dime at Liverpool Street

I saw the cat game  
It was certainly not for the lame  
But it grew out of something eerie  
And the odd Liverpool Street name,Cleary.

## 89. Kids' Questions About God

She`s my friend  
That`s what Stanley said  
About Lizzy  
Because she accepted  
To play with him  
Stanley may not be Hogbe Nlend  
Nor the Emir`s Fakir  
But he`s Lizzy`s best Boh  
See them play together  
And Stanley asking her:  
“Do you think it`s God?”



## **90. The South-Bound Vessel**

No, I won't board the sinking ship  
Not again  
Once bitten, twice shy  
And that's where I stand  
Even if I stand alone.

Enough of Southampton  
Why on earth must I vomit twice  
On the same spot?  
Nay, let's swing around and head straight for the north  
They won't get us, even if they give chase  
I'm not ready yet.

## **91. Archbishop Tutu's White Wings (For Thembazaki Eunice Williams of Zambia)**

South African angels have white wings  
All of them  
Although not all white wings in Pretoria belong to angels  
That's what the Holy Book says, to those who can read it.

If this world of ours were made of only little things  
Wouldn't we all love to touch and dearly cuddle them  
Even if Durban preferred to bask all day long in the living  
light?  
Remember the archbishop says hard work keeps you fit?

## **92. Waiting for the Wanton Birds**

I thought I gave you one  
Or am I dreaming?  
Why would I, when the swan birds haven't flown past?  
Neither has the minister's heart beat risen?

What we need most in Christendom is a crown  
For God's sake, not another farthing!  
Lest the boss flies the flag at half mast  
So let's rejoice for Christ has risen.

## **93. So Much Waste Land**

Did you use a citation  
Or did you just cut and paste?  
So when it's time for confession  
What shall you say about all the haste?

## **94. Alone with the Priest**

I don't like ammunition  
Although I love cannons  
But if I hear loose cannons  
Then I rush to the priest for contrition.

## 95. Standing Betrayed

I have stood out here long enough  
Every passing clown has noticed me, poor me  
Splashed with pig`s blood  
But I alone dry the tears of this nation  
Oh! dream of the forgotten founding fathers!  
Was this your wish?

## 96. Missing In Transit

I don`t know if it`s here  
But I know it was sent  
So, check again and have no fear  
If you can`t find it, the caretaker must repent.

## 97. Global Sentence

Lecturers didn`t  
Only students did  
So when we came to the Cape of Good Hope  
Everyone was accused of dope.

## 98. The Veil of Shame

Our golden seat is wet  
So how on earth can we reserve it for her?  
If she comes and causes a stir  
Who shall rise and pull off the veil?

## **99. The Path Ahead**

It isn't normal at all  
No, forget the packed lunches  
Pick up your holy bible and walk tall  
That's the only way you can avoid the trenches.

## **100. Awkward Act**

All the birds have flown  
Flown even before the Fon has sneezed  
Flown before the young have grown  
So, how shall the lone widows be quizzed?

## **101. The Parliamentary Mace (For Dr. Joel Fusi Na'a Mukong)**

I saw it  
I saw it all  
I saw it coming  
I saw it with my own eyes  
So, don't start telling me stories.

Forget the pounding rain  
Or the merciless floods  
What matters is the mace  
The one the governor's man grabbed  
And wreaked havoc in the National Assembly.

## 102. The Fifth Dose

Surely, a sledgehammer isn't enough  
We need God's eternal wheelbarrow, and to boot, his will  
So that once we wind the wind mill  
All table birds will be rid of their cough.

## 103. Return Match

I will strike back  
And match him dollar for dollar  
We use the dollar  
His ugly wings must be clipped  
For too long  
The idiot has dictated the pace  
So, finally, who are we if not  
Toothless dogs  
And Lame ducks?

## 104. Forward March

He carried his luggage away  
And strode like a peacock  
No one could force him back into the shell  
Because all previous promises had been broken.

## 105. Miracle Time

We may be blackened by centuries of bondage  
But when the husbandmen arrive  
All the floodgates will close up  
The lame will walk  
The deaf will hear  
The blind will see  
And the dumb will talk.

## 106. On That Day

*(For Njেকে Ngwa)*

Shall these glories ever light up again?  
Or shall they like the Titanic, go down for ever?  
When all, that glitters ceases to be gold  
Then shall we the down and out rise and walk.

## 107. The Wrong Frames

Don't write epitaphs  
They can never be monuments  
Etch effigies on  
<http://www.blogger.com/img/blank.gif> canvass  
No one will call you an ass.

## **108. Double Blessing**

Our guilt is crystal clear  
Conceived in vampiric jerks  
But fashioned out of holy perks  
What else can we hold on to with so much gear?

## **109. Still the Bible**

The wooden bicycle isn't enough  
We must add a pinch of salt  
Even if the bike is cluttered and disfigured  
It is still the bible.

## **110. My Assigned Task**

I wasn't an idiot  
Although everyone thought I was  
I was the standard bearer  
That's why OI darn socks for auction.

## **111. Depressed Market Prices**

It's like conscience  
Not omniscience  
So when the sand pits overflow  
Let not the victims soar.

## 112. Mouth of the Queen

Let the mouths speak  
Let them all speak  
But give them no vinaigrette  
In case verbal strokes  
All the way from Newcastle  
Whet the queen`s dampened appetite.

## 113. My Holy Order (For Njie Enow-Ebai-Enow)

I am a triumpher  
Today celebrating my birthday  
With the sun in Aquarius  
My oysters are my pearls and my rubies  
And my island; my bosom

The day I become an artful interpreter  
Like old Jairius  
I`ll fetch my crowns and my candies  
And take off before the flowers blossom.



**114. Love as a Wrapped Gift**  
**(For Juliet Efuka Veseke)**

Good, it feels to have a taste of true love  
And I know what I`m on about  
Even at midnight, forgotten nuns  
All clad in their Sunday best  
Stream out to commune with loved ones.

Today, at least, I`ve found my treasure trove  
And I did so without a single bout  
Nor any innings, nor runs  
So if I`m put to the test  
I`ll quickly offer my birthday cake to the blessed one.

**115. Host from Fontem**  
**(For Amindeh Blaise Atabong)**

I am an ambidexter in every sense of the word  
But I`m far from being your soldier hamster  
What I need then  
Is to be your five-star Lebialem host  
That`s where I`ll celebrate my birthday.

**116. Linear Progression**  
**(For Sylvie Glenis Venyuy)**

Growing old is compulsory  
Growing up, optional  
But when in good, old Baltimore  
There`s one thing I yearn for most  
The dog that barked at me  
When I thought of my birthday.

**117. My Birthday as a Cock**  
**(For Neba Diana Lum)**

The desire to inspire and acquire, never to expire  
That`s my philosophy  
For eulogies, homilies and frost bites  
Forget pigs` furrows and dented hips  
What counts is the talcumed hoof.

That`s why in order to inspire  
You must shun controversy  
Even if you believe in the princess`s rights  
As such, when it comes to golden trips  
My birthday will be the only cock under the roof.

## **118. All or Nothing** **(For Tem Menging Honorine)**

Every opportunity in life should not be spoiled  
It should be grabbed as if it was the last  
And made maximum use of  
Life is like the wind  
It blows in different directions at different times  
Seize it now or lose it for ever  
That`s it  
There are no half measures  
No middlle way  
It`s all or nothing.  
Happy birthday!

## **119. Life's Multiple Facets** **(For Chia)**

My life is exactly where it`s supposed to be  
Upfront and centre-stage  
I maintain a straight course  
Head erect  
Shoulders high  
Not late  
Not early  
Just spot on  
On the dot.

You may call me the Queen Bee  
But, please, the one without rage  
But when necessary, I can seek recourse  
Like the President Elect

Who came hither and nigh  
I don't have a bait  
Because I also want to be treated fairly  
So that when my neighbour sues for fun  
I'll put her on the spot.

## **120. My Apostle'S Creed (For Bei)**

What I wish in life  
Is all that I'll include  
In my letter to God the Almighty  
I'll ask him for good health in deed  
Not a life of luxury  
I'll ask him for wisdom  
Not only beauty  
About which I am flattered.

In a world where evil is rife  
And people tend to be rude  
I'm bent on leaning heavily  
On whatever is his will. That's my daily bid  
I don't want to arrive in a flurry  
When it comes to the Lord's kingdom  
Here at U.B., though, I have a duty  
And that is to shower my God with praises daily.

## **121. The Love That Never Was**

We met them by the pool of the village stream  
And at once we knew their pants were crimson-red  
If I were alone, I mean all alone  
I would have known what to do  
But alas!  
This life being what it is  
I was not to be alone  
And so it was I lost the chance of my life  
To do what I knew best.

## **122. The Game of Princes**

Princes  
All of them  
Are nothing but needleword  
What they need most is the needle  
For fear of playing second fiddle  
Always they want to push off the bulwark.

## **123. Bait for a Toe**

Shall he wait  
Or shall he go?  
And if we stepped on her toe  
Would she then drop the bait?

## **124. Alone For Lunch**

Why so few feeding bottles?  
Is it because of the crunch?  
And what if we short-circuited all the throttles?  
Would the First Lady then turn up for lunch?

## **125. Lost in the Jungle**

In the midst of the down and out  
I saw my face  
Like the ghost face of Jackson  
It was the living among the dead  
Searching  
Trudging  
Shuffling  
Disfigured  
Changed  
Transformed  
Metamorphosized  
Smelling  
Unwanted  
And dumped.

## **126. The Right Way**

Don't hold it that way  
Hold it this way  
Because if she makes another claim  
We'll all go lame.

## **127. The Spear From On High**

What did they say?  
That all spears must come down?  
But how about the risen one?  
Has he come down?

## **128. Rome as the Ultimate Price**

What is the reason  
If not treason?  
And you say they deserve the bagpipes?  
You may as well cede them Rome.

## **129. A Choir Too Many**

Are you a hero or a mirror?  
Famished, bruised and bleeding  
You still sing praises  
So what about the future generations?

## **130. The Vicious Circle**

Let`s break this circle  
And get out of here  
Or do we want to go on limping  
As if we were punished for the world`s sins?

### **131. Hankies as Last Flags**

A million mouths for one loaf?  
Only here in this country  
And despite the buzzing flies  
And the stained white hankies.

### **132. The Taboo Word**

I can not pronounce the word  
It`s too obscene  
But if you want us to create a scene  
Then I`ll say it`s the third.

### **133. The Royal Recipe**

It`s not cognac  
Neither is it a Big Mac  
It`s water fufu and eru  
Topped up with kata and fufu corn.

### **134. The Pastor`S Girl**

She spoke the unspeakable  
And got away with it  
Just because  
The pastor admired her voice.  
That was it.



### **135. Victims of Prostitution**

Prostitutes are risk takers  
But not everyone is one  
That`s why the one-day thief  
Can easily get caught  
And then is maimed for life.

### **136. The Painter`s Hands**

They were big hands  
Not stained glass windows  
If Michael Angelo were to return  
We would burn a lot of midnight oil.

### **137. Voices from Yonder**

We`re opening up  
Not closing in  
When a girl works too hard  
She begins to hear voices.

### **138. City Lights Again**

I'm on the high seas  
All alone  
But I'm not complaining  
I'm simply telling it as it is.

When the glinting lid comes off  
And the odalisque babes go missing  
We shall all regret  
We didn't comb the city first.

### **139. Measurements for Two**

It wasn't the henchman  
No, it was the footman  
His measurements are taken in centimeters  
Not millimeters.

### **140. Devices for the Monarch**

The mechanism is alive  
Just send a tinderbox for five  
So that when the inevitable happens  
We'll know why the Queen Bee got rattled.

### **141. Stuff for the Loo**

I didn't deceive you  
You refused to receive me  
Just because I'm numb in the knee  
It doesn't mean I was meant for you.

### **142. The Hidden Truth**

Patricia has written  
I received it this morning  
But the letter came in ashes  
My own letters burnt and the dust gathered up  
As proof of my infidelity  
If only she knew the truth!

### **143. My Location**

I'm in the middle room  
Not the prime minister's lodge  
In my right hand I carry a broom  
But I bear no grudge.

### **144. The Road to Scoan**

I want to follow him  
All the way to SCOAN  
If the prophet shows the way  
Then the whole nation will rise and believe.

### **145. A Rope for Hope**

He gives hope  
And asks for nothing in return  
When it comes to our turn  
We ask for the rope.

### **146. The Last Ploughman and His Wife**

The plowman is her  
He came with his wife  
To search for the meaning of life  
So why be filled with rage and fear?

### **147. Letter for a Fool**

This is my open letter  
Dug up from the corner pool  
If I weren't a fool  
I would have acted better.

### **148. Dogs of Change**

We dread martyrdom  
But we want change  
If only we were dogs of war  
We would have moved mountains.

## **149. Faith as One**

Give them another chance  
Please, don't shoot them down  
They're the ones of faith  
And we, the faint hearted.

## **150. Prayer Beads without a Round**

It's a good idea  
One that will weigh more than a pound  
But if they challenge us to a round  
We won't rise without asking for a beer.

## **151. Bout of the Day**

She worked all day  
Taking the rubbish bags out  
But when we asked him to pray  
She claimed we had declared another bout.

## **151. Suitor for Trish**

What was it, really?  
Just rat infested rubbish?  
Then why did you get up so early  
If not only to woo Trish?

## **152. Catalysts for Wives**

He knows his fate  
So save your breath for your porridge  
The day we become hoofed ring leaders  
Our wives will all run to the shopkeepers.

## **153. Scarecrow with a hoe**

It was his word against ours  
Forget about the maimed scarecrow  
That`s why when mother sent for her hoe  
We knew we`d starve for hours.

## **154. Hearing among Oars**

**(For all sons and daughters of Bota Island)**

The oars are all roaring  
Like the angry waves of Bota Island  
When fishermen start to band  
Who`ll seek the red herring?

## **155. Naked Truth**

Could you say that to her face  
Or would you only whisper it under your breath  
Claiming that all jumpers of lace  
Are both deep in starch and width?

## **156. The Standard Wretch**

If I`m a wretch  
You`re a drunkard  
But at least, I don`t work for the Standard  
And I know about the Treaty of Utretch.

## **157. Group Action**

Like glue we`ll stick together  
Tomorrow or the day after  
Not in dad`s shirt sleeves  
Or the headmistress`s borrowed robes  
We`ll be clad in our wardrobe garments  
Those the parish priest left after his retreat.

## **158. Men Who Act**

We don`t ask questions  
We simply act  
Call us Yes Men or stooges  
It won`t change anything.

## **159. The Gap Between**

The gap is too large  
Larger than life  
Like New York, the big apple  
But then where is the Stature if Liberty?

## **160. The Queen's Return**

He sped past  
As if rushing to Heathrow  
Aghast,  
The archbishop asked if the queen was back.

## **161. The Bottom Line (For Eddie Momoh)**

He gives what he has  
The buzz, acid rain and animals  
She gives what she hasn't  
Love, perfumed hankies and velvet toys.

## **162. Parents' Coloured Hands**

Mother's left hand is green  
Her right hand, pink  
Father's right hand is pink  
His left hand, green.

## **163. Crossing Branches**

My tree branches won't cross  
So, don't bother  
Put back your axes  
And pick up your wheelbarrow.



## **164. Cows in Stockwell**

I know cows well  
I've lived with them  
Not in Bethlehem  
But in good, old Stockwell.

## **165. My Fright of Hills**

I really don't like hills  
They pose like bully boulders  
With large gaps between their teeth  
And Frost's yelping dogs  
Too thirsty for blood to retreat.

## **166. The Price of a Secret**

I know the secret  
And I'll tell you if you give me  
A female wasp, a cup of black coffee  
A calabash of overnight palm wine  
Two male goats  
A mature white cock  
Seven six-lobe cola nuts  
An unopened tin of palm of  
And the sum of a million Francs.

## **167. The Lawless State**

I don't like sponges  
They've soaked everything I have  
Where then is equity?  
Where's the legislative arm?

## **168. Judas in the Family**

My heart is in distress  
She left me this morning  
Carting away my wedding ring and bible  
She eloped with my best man.

## **169. Born Again**

It's all futile  
So give it up  
Think nothing of luxury  
Give your life to Christ.

## **170. High Society Party**

When it comes  
We shall be there  
Even without our apples  
We shall be given access.

## **171. She as Sole Proprietor**

I'm done with you  
You`re not my Cancerian RAK  
So why ask me for the world?  
All I possess is hers.

## **172. Life as a Peacock**

Life is never straight  
It comes in contours and meanders  
If you`re not the <http://www.blogger.com/img/blank.gif>  
wooden man  
You won`t even  
remembe <http://www.blogger.com/img/blank.gif> the first  
verse.

## **173. Deceptive Colours**

Colours can really be misleading  
They make you miss your step  
But turn out to be only a mirage  
Far off hills looking green.

## **174. Night Duty**

He massaged his head  
All night  
Outside, the owls suffocated  
All night.

### **175. The Cursed One**

These whispering birds aren't cursed  
We are  
That's why we pray daily  
And they feast daily.

### **176. Pop Up At the Pool**

I didn't see him drown  
In the municipal lake  
But I was told  
I saw his fly-infested clothes by the pool  
And like they predicted  
On the third day  
His body surfaced on the pool.

### **177. The First Lady's Nipples**

I didn't count her nipples  
But I noticed they were legion  
And they were crowded like cattle in a pen  
It's not only runaway nuns called Rose Kate  
Whose nipples have something to write home about.

## **178. The End Loser**

In the end  
I who stood still  
Have become the loser  
Yet, I'm neither the revenge seeker  
Nor the muscle developer  
Nor the railway signal man  
Nor the court registrar  
Nor the Council ombudsman.

## **179. Bethroted to a Prince**

That`s my last hope  
That she comes back  
Not with the golden fleece  
But with the charming prince.

## **180. On Self Exile**

**(For Ngafor Antoine. He and I know best the man who should have left without a forwarding address)**

I will rise and speak  
When everyone else is silent  
And I will tell the truth  
The whole truth  
Let no one stop me  
Not even my parish priest  
Because after the rally  
I'm taking off  
I will go never to return

And without leaving a forwarding address.

### **181. Drunk with Love**

I can feel her touch  
It`s as sweet as honey  
Her angelic breath; yes - that one  
Lifts me above all heights  
Today I`m simply drunk with love.

### **182. The Truth about Stone Walls**

Stone walls don`t speak  
But they`re choking with words  
That`s why from the Stature of Liberty  
Any wall looks like a stone wall.

### **183. The End of Sweetness**

Sweetness is nothing  
Not even a winged bird  
But if your holed up in an iron cage  
You`ll think the end is near.

## **184. Thirst as a Sphynx**

Thirst isn't grief  
Far from it, it's an appetizer  
So when you smell fermented corn beer  
Don't yet sing your last hymn.

## **185. A Dollar for Obama**

One dollar isn't enough  
Make it two  
Do you think it's that easy  
To push a confidential note to Obama  
While he presides over a cabinet meeting?

## **186. Angst of the Gods**

The gods are angry  
And our forefathers jittery  
If we in turn become so watery  
Then how shall the village solve the quandary?

## **187. Love For Two**

When love comes down  
With wings at last unclipped  
The lone damsel will float in a gown.  
But let no Kom man be irked.

## **188. Marooned on an Island**

Oh! Rose of my life!  
Where is your gloss? Or is it your cross?  
I'm stuck here in Fyffe.

## **189. Singing for the Dead**

You must stand up and sing  
If you want to be remembered  
But if your notes are too long for meaning  
Then the old matron's bones must be deterred.

## **190. The Stray Researcher**

Where does he think he is going  
Carrying Gertrude's prized wedding photograph?  
Is he banking on quantitative analysis  
Or is he thinking of the quantitative approach?  
Check it out.

## **191. THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH**

The president's speech was subtle  
But it wasn't Isaac Newton  
He had all the right articulations  
And spelt out all the right policies  
But who was listening?



## **192. In Bed with Awan Angob's Cat**

This is Awan`s cat  
The new one with sparkling eyes  
Not the black one that got missing  
Tonight I`ll climb on Awan`s plank bed  
Call up the cat  
And together we`ll pull up the old blanket  
And play hide and seek  
Then while Pussie purrs in her sleep  
I will listen attentively  
So that when Awan awakes  
I`ll tell her everything.

## **193. Lessons from Paris**

I like the silver runways of Paris  
They are like Paradise on earth  
Liberty, Equality and Fraternity  
That`s what it`s all about  
When shall we ever learn?

## **194. Danger of the Gusts**

Many have said it before  
So, I`m not reinventing the wheel  
When the great gusts rise  
Tye`ll bring down everything  
Even the sky.

## **195. Three Quick Steps**

The steps are steep  
Like those of the White House  
But if we`re snappy  
We`ll beat them to it.

## **196. The Joker and the Ear**

The ear doesn`t hear any longer  
Even when it goes to school  
But if you call it a fool  
It labels you a miserable joker.

## **197. Common Enemies**

My enemies are back  
And back in force  
Were not we all black  
I would have sought recourse.

## **198. The One On Trial**

The glare was forbidding  
That`s why she squinted  
Anyone who accuses her of fondling  
Must first prove he hasn`t deserted.

## **199. No Floor for Sea Monsters**

The sea monsters are back  
And back with a vengeance  
When the delayed ship sails in  
No crew member will have the floor.

## **200. Striking a Balance**

Golden lamps aren't really what we want  
Send us bags of rice and salt  
It's not nickel or cobalt  
Just what is remaining of the old grant.

## **201. Tears That Do Not Drop**

Tears aren't good  
Despite what the priest says  
But if you think they're food  
Then ferry them us in trays.

## **202. Salvation for a Few**

This is the day the Lord has appointed  
Nothing slippery or winged shall walk  
Only beleaguered mothers down with the flu  
Shall travel the whole length  
All alone.

### **203. Odd Messages from Arabia**

My old man spoke first  
But his speech was a heap of stones  
The the Holy One coughed  
And his cough was perfumed air from Arabia.

### **204. The Sunday Reader**

She came on a Sunday  
And read from Luke  
Although she said she was no crook  
I knew we`d prove her wrong some day.

### **205. Shelves of Dough**

We have enough  
For our boys and ourselves  
So just look on the shelves  
And send me some dough.

### **206. In Search of the Campass**

I stood before the brook  
Like some new Douala crook  
Surely, if I wasn` t rude  
I would soon again be en route.

## **207. Steady on the Path**

I wasn't in wrath  
I wasn't even upset  
I was only seeking the path  
Before the much vaunted sunset.

## **208. The Palm Of God'S Servant**

His palms are moist  
Like those of Mr Davidson  
Where then is the Lord's relic  
If not once more buried in relics?

## **209. The Code of Conduct**

Watch when I speak  
And listen when I yawn  
Across the bridge  
The good Lord will unfailingly take note.

## **210. The Nation We Set Ablaze**

I sincerely think that we erred  
We didn't break the sword, yes  
But we fanned the flames  
That's why the nation is on fire.

## **211. The Pilot, the Vice Chancellor and I**

When I put up my hand  
The pilot looks away  
When I then cross the bar  
The Vice Chancellor giggles.

## **212. Why We Love**

Mbonshu, you wonder why we love at all  
We love  
We all do, don't we?  
Because we feel insecure  
And unfulfilled  
Because we're messed up.

So like the round ball  
We seek a partner, a treasure trove  
Whether on land or at sea  
And call it our own property and tenure  
It doesn't matter whether it was willed or unwilled  
We just want a top up, another top up.

### **213. The Final Number**

I have run the race  
And fought the good fight  
Today I`m at my tether`s end  
The die is cast  
And the curtains, drawn.

But like Gbagbo, I`ll go at my own pace  
Because I know my right  
I have no more fences to mend  
I know the Lord`s kingdom is vast  
The only thing I want right now is another prawn.

### **214. Unlike A Sapele**

Don`t mistake me for a sapele  
A sapele is a plant  
But I`m not  
I think and feel and act  
And I have dominion  
Before me the sapele is nothing  
It`s speechless  
Powerless  
Impotent  
So how do you liken me to it?

## **215. Here to Serve**

We`re all God`s handmaids  
Not drowning men  
Or worse still, dying horses  
We`re willing guinea pigs  
And the last able-bodied seamen.

## **216. Blowing Hot and Cold**

If it`s really hot, well, blow it  
If it`s still hot, try oiling it  
If that fails, send for the archbishop in person  
He`ll bring his Sunday missal.

## **217. Landresses on Sunday (For Gideon Kweti)**

Don`t pile on the strawberries  
They`re bitter enough already  
Instead, do egg on the landresses  
They`re ready and raring to go.

But for God`s sake, don`t come in lorries  
Lest everyone thinks we`re heady  
Instead, come resplendent in your Sunday best dresses  
For once, forget about the hoe.



## **218. The Swapped Roles**

While with Sakwe and Tomdio I lit candles at the sacristy  
She sold groundnuts and akra to the workers  
She did so, even more than the preacher  
Believing she was fighting human adversity.

## **219. Goods of Burden**

We didn't send them back  
So don't hold us to it  
How could we  
When we didn't have the secret code?

## **220. Lilies as Day and Night**

Lilies aren't all the same  
Just as tulips too differ  
They all have joints, yes  
But their receptacles point in different directions  
That's why one is day  
And the other, night.

## **221. The Run Away River**

The river ran along, alone, all alone  
And not even the pastor could match it  
Flat-bottomed prostitutes brought wheel barrows  
And saber-rattling men cried out for blood  
As if they were another Bismark  
The Iron Chancellor  
So why didn't they stop the river?

## **222. Paced Footsteps**

I'm not in a hurry  
I've slowed down  
Unless you think me a clown  
Whom you're out to bury.

## **223. How to Do it**

How do they do this thing?  
How on earth do they do it?  
Do they start by tattooing  
And then fill up and top up  
With ginger from Ngaoundere?

I don't get it  
Despite my vision  
And what they showed me  
Does that mean  
The macrocosm is lower than the microcosm  
And the shoulders higher than the head?

## 224. The President's Visit

No birds chirped  
No serpents hissed  
No toads croaked  
No horses brayed.

But everyone including the Commissioner  
Clamored for a garland  
Then an empty altar bowl  
And cowrie beads without the dames  
All of that  
Just to make the loudest noise for the president.

## 225. Hibiscus for the Bees

I see a hibiscus flower  
Taller than the pope's tower  
But if the mask is pulled off  
The fertile bees will fly off.

## 226. A Bowl of Love

*(For my one and only Emilia)*

Oh, sweet glory  
What can irk you so?  
Why do you cough?  
Why do you sneeze?  
Come to me this instant  
And I'll give you rest  
Peace

Attention

Affection And above all, love.

## **227. Bait for Trisha**

The horror is over

So tell Trisha to return

Our treasures are once more visible

And the orchard branches, resplendent

What more does she want?

## **228. The Green Card**

Out of this country

I'm nobody

That's why I won't trade my soul

For Uncle Sam's card.

My umbilical chord is interred here

So are my ancestors

Above all, my future is rooted here

Even if I fly out, I must still fly in

Some day.

## **229. Sunday in Bombay**

Did you say, Bombay  
Or Sunday?  
Whatever it was  
Fetch my umbrella  
My scarlet scarf  
And my wind cheater  
And tell the prince I'm on my way.

## **230. The Sound of Silence**

If we're here today, boys  
It's for the sake of the parish priest  
And not the best man's toys  
So if you have your cell phones with you  
Please, put them off.

## **231. Long Live the Queen**

I had Kenyan tea  
And the river bank  
A handful of warriors  
And out I went  
To greet the newly crowned queen.

## 232. A Rabbit on the Run

Look at that one  
Just look at it  
With his rabbit ears  
He`ll soon shed tears.

He thinks he owns the road  
But he doesn`t know he`s just a toad  
If you declare him null and void  
He`ll instead think he`s buoyed.

## 279. Chickens Too Good For Christmas

Have the chickens not come home?  
Don`t they know it`s Christmas today?  
Or do they simply take us for new gnomes  
And our kindred for wrapped gifts for the Lamas?

## 280. God, the Greatest

Wake me Lord, when I`m asleep  
Feed me Lord, when I`m hungry  
Pour down the drink Lord, when I`m thirsty  
Give me hearing Lord, when I`m dumb  
Give me sight Lord, when I`m blind  
Whisk me away, Lord when I`m tempted  
Turn me around Lord, when I turn away.

Make me your slave Lord, when I disown you  
Gag my mouth Lord, when I curse you

Tie my legs Lord, when I walk away from you  
Tag me Lord, when I confuse you  
Smack me Lord, when I don't worship you  
Flatten me like bread flour on the table, oh Lord  
If I question you.

For who am I , if not your wanton sheep?  
Who am I if not your holy temple?  
What am I if not an unworthy child?  
What am I if not a mere parasite?  
I am nothing but trouble to you?  
What is my future without you, if not a bleak one?

That`s why when I`m downcast, you cheer me up  
When I`m weak at the knees, you carry me  
When I sneeze, you pat me on the back  
When I weep, you wipe my tears.  
Who else is greater than thou  
Who on this whole wide earth?  
Nobody  
None  
Only you  
Because you are the greatest.

## **281. The Lord as My Fortress**

Not only does my own soul sing  
It pines for the Lord  
When I`m wounded and afflicted  
And have no more straw to draw  
I turn to him for comfort and solace  
He is my rock, by barricade, my fortress and my refuge.  
He is my life, my future and my destiny.

## **282. Logs Too Short for the Lord**

Will these few logs do?  
Or shall we again send for the handyman?  
If we don`t want another boo  
Let`s plot and execute like the last journeyman.

## **283. The Egg Men from Meiganga**

We`re all egg men  
Even you  
So don`t start blowing hot and cold  
That won`t get you anywhere.

We`re not in Meiganga because we like it  
Meiganga was forced on us by the wind  
You see? The wind again  
So beware of egg men.



## **284. The Weight of Bricks**

The charge is high, too high  
If a single brick weighs a ton  
Then what would we expect of the cross  
If it wasn't carried by our Lord?

## **285. A Holow Sham**

Yes, I will say it again  
I will even shout it if you want  
This blackened roof top of a sanctuary  
Is the worst hollow sham I've even seen  
Go and tell the governor  
If you like.

## **286. The Palm Of God's Servant**

His palms are moist  
Like those of Mr Davidson  
Where then is the Lord's relic  
If not once more buried in relics?

## **287. Today's Impress**

**(For George Njwe, MBUDCA President, Buea Branch)**

Your is a cut above the rest  
That's why it's the best  
But when you reach the crest  
It will be at my behest.

**288. Alone With the Same House that Jack Built**  
(Reminiscences of an old nursery school rime that left a lasting impression on me).

I saw the house that Jack built  
I saw it with my own eyes  
But I found no rat in it  
However, I found scattered grains of corn  
Strewn all over the floor  
As if the rats had just visited  
Apart from that odd find  
Nothing else lay in the house that Jack built  
So I wondered  
Should I trek all the way to Nottingham  
To see what legacy Lord Byron left  
Or should I contend myself with  
The leftovers of the sour malt  
And the loose white hairs from the beleaguered cat`s body  
The footman said he preserved?  
And why should I believe him anyway?  
I didn`t see the dog, nor the man, nor the priest nor the  
maiden  
But as I came away disappointed  
I heard ringing in my poor ears  
Children`s deafening voices singing  
This is the house that Jack built.

## **289. Grandma's Knee**

One more sound  
Just one more  
And you're dead  
You can trust me.

If God's world wasn't round  
And all axe men weren't one  
Then everything on this earth would I dread  
Even grandma's knee.

## **290. The Queen's Thing**

It's not a stereotype  
Neither is it media hype  
It's something stolen from Halloween  
Just for the queen  
My queen.

## 292. Splashes of A Father's Coffee

*By Tikum Mbab Azonga*

Coffee also blooms and blossoms

When it`s time

That`s what my dad told me

And that`s what I saw.

If you live in the upper rooms

And each day imbibe a drop of lime

You`ll also prefer coffee to teat

And you`ll detest cubes of ice that refuse to thaw.

## 293. Gods Raft of Certainty

*(For Mola Charles Menyoli)*

I will shower your name with blessings

And cover your path with flowers and perfume

I will ask all the chirping birds of Gods air

To fetch their golden harps in wait

And all Mile 17 Park Boys with their strident voices

To converge like one man at the motor park

And with one voice, proclaim your holy name

You are God, you are Lord, and you are the most high.

I won't forget Fakoship`s stevedorings

Because I don't want you to fume

And also because to Mola Menyoli I must be fair

With God, Fakoship will not lapse

For he alone will forestall all its vices

And never will he let anyone be another Clark

Lord, yesterday, today and tomorrow, you are same

Our only wish is to be nigh and high.

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#### FOOTNOTE

*I wrote this poem on New Year`s eve, that is the 31st of December 2009 while dining at LADY L Restaurant in Limbe. Suddenly I thought about Pa Mola Charles Menyoli, the boss of FAKOSHIP, with whom I hadn`t met for about five years. Interestingly, a few minutes after I finished writing the poem and was still sitting at LADY L, I saw him pass in his vehicle. This was remarkable, I thought. Why see him only when I had just written a poem for him?*

*Pa Menyoli is one of the Cameroonians whom I hold in very high esteem. He once gave me a rousing reception at his Buea residence some ten years ago when I was on a mission in Cameroon from Britain which at the time, was my base. Apart from that, Mola Menyoli is a man with a kind heart. He is done a lot in terms of giving something back to the community. Those who know him, know that about him.*

## 294. Change at the Top

You talk of change?

What change?

Change of the guard

Or change at the top?

Has the bottom not fallen out

Like some old wine in new wine skins ?

Or new wines in old wine skins?

Aren't we just going round in circles?

After so many years of change

It's back to Square One at full range

If you doubt me, ask the coast guard

All he has is champagne to pop

Every male has been subdued by the political rout

Children with distended stomachs live like urchins

Heaped on them and their mothers are our leaders` sins

All fish have lost their left ventricles.

## **295. The Left Handed Child**

I am a left hander and I admit it  
Freely, democratically and willingly  
Without coercion or duress or peer pressure  
I didn't beg for it, neither did I buy it  
God made it so and he knows why  
In his infinite wisdom.

But what haven't I suffered from mankind  
Insults, beatings, torture, persecution and execution  
For no crime other than that I used what God gave  
Who is man to question God?  
How can a root question the top of the tree?

## **295. God's Foundation Stone**

God is a God of love  
He is a good God  
He is the light that shineth  
For those buried in the depths of despair  
And the abyss of condemnation.

Through his love  
And in his name as God  
Even the voiceless and the sightless from Elizabeth  
Can still rise and shine with greatest repair  
We call that, laying the foundation.

## **296. My Book of Psalms**

**(For Emmanuel of the PCC Synod Office, Buea)**

I have talked about kindness  
But not secrecy  
I have written about freedom  
But not neglect  
I have read about husbandmen  
But not sour vineyards.

Today the virtue I seek most to harness  
Is walking in the footsteps of the Lord`s advocacy  
Because what I seek is his kingdom  
As an education staff, he to me is the only one to elect  
Because he died for all men  
So, why can`t we be his life guards?

## **297. Storm in a Tea Cup**

I`m not hiding  
No! Why would I?  
I have nothing to hide  
Absolutely no skeletons in the cupboard  
I`m the open book  
That can be read by anybody.

If you started off on the wrong foot  
Please, don`t take it out on me  
I`m not the Urban Council  
Let alone Hysacam  
Too many bird droppings in my backyard already  
So how can I start hatching new eggs now?



## 298. God's Living Sign (For Claudia)

What a blessing, in deed!  
On this blessed day of our Lord  
I call this a miracle from above  
This day on which the white turtle  
Perched on my little head  
Like the apostles' tongue of fire.

I know the apostles' creed  
Even without riding a ford  
So, when Sister Irene thinks I have a stock  
I tell her: "No, *Grande Soeur*, it's only the throttle."  
For have I suddenly become some lad  
Or a cheap hand for hire?

## 299. The Task At Hand (For Uncle Peter Esoka)

You can get it  
Yet, you can take it out right now  
If you really want  
But first, let Peter come through  
And deliver today's dose of reflection  
Peter and us are now like finger and nail  
With maleya in the background  
And the tune that made them  
Shoot to fame spectacularly  
What more can you ask for?

Meanwhile, Ecobank is celebrating proximity

And the weighing bridge is announced  
Jumping little girls and boys in green  
Stoop along the road  
And write their names in the shifting sand  
And yellow petrol l procession  
Is that what you want?  
Just that?  
And you think you`ve had your fair share  
When you can go the whole way  
And pick up the jackpot  
Come on!  
You can get it  
If you believe you can.

### **300. Off On a Limb**

I`m out at last  
Out in this whole wide world  
And walking tall and free  
And taunting the wanton lilies.

If it wasn`t for the haunted flag  
I would have gone out again  
Like Maye Sunsaye  
Just to test the celebrity waters.

### **301. The Long Wait**

I have waited long enough  
In fact for too long  
Far too long  
The last birds have flown  
And the flags are at half mast.

Life here is very tough  
And nowhere  
Nowhere do I hear a love song  
Only the hapless age-old gong  
If I knew my baby had grown  
Would I still be an outcast?

### **302. Why I Run**

I hear a voice  
It is loose and unleashed  
Yesterday it was muffled and gagged  
Today, it`s a shadow of its old self.

I want to make a choice  
To show the world I`m unabashed  
That even if I`m tagged  
I can`t be exposed on the shelf.

### **303. My Last Stance**

For God`s sake,what does that mean?  
Shall we for ever walk backwards  
One step forward, two steps backward?  
Or shall we, for once just jump?

I may not be the best father  
But I honestly hope I`m not awkward  
Although I may look like a coward  
Nowhere on me can you find a lump.

### **304. One Way Ticket**

She hasn`t returned  
She hasn`t even written  
I`m now surprised  
Because she left with only her handbag.

She asked for the tray that was burned  
In order to spite her kitten  
But today, look how her teeth are priced  
That`s why we brought out the sand bag.

### **305. Too Little, Too Late**

Nobody comes closer now  
Not even you  
So stand back from the porch  
And let the lead sink.

### **306. Missing Bone**

I know a bone when I see one  
And I mean every word of that  
That`s why when I sniff at a cone  
I rush for my fur hat.

### **307. My Solemn Right**

I have the right to sneeze  
But what I won`t do is freeze  
But if my joystick sinks  
Then I`ll put on my cuff links.

### **308. The Toothless Dog**

I must strike a balance  
And by all means, not later than today  
Go and tell him that  
Tell him to stop his slander  
I have been there before  
I have seen it all before  
So let him silence that his choir  
Let him stop behaving like a lout  
Let him come clean and cut.

For a yes or a no  
That man would sell his soul  
Has he ever cared about anyone?  
Let alone himself?  
Even when I was at the bank

I heard his so-called sound bites  
His velvet sights and sounds  
But I tell you what?  
He is nothing but a toothless dog.

### **309. A Bridge Too Far**

This is the Dreamland girl's sister  
She knows all about pudding at Easter  
So if you think you're the next bishop  
Never again will the nuns come to shop.

### **310. Collect Call**

Did you call for him  
Or did he call for you?  
Or am I barking up the wrong tree?  
Would you mind telling me, Miss World?

### 311. Rebel with a Cause

I won't stand here and watch this  
I refuse to be a party to it  
I won't be an eye witness to man's inhumanity to man  
Stand by while God's world spins on its axis  
And while robust women with enough breast  
Push sopping and rotten bits of bread without butter  
Into the numb mouths of babies left for too long  
Far too long out in the rain and cold?

I'm out of it even if you take me for a novice  
Why should I - why on earth should I sit  
Then get up and curse the tree as if I wasn't human?  
What about the man with axes?  
One must decide whether one's on the trough or the crest  
Since I've been my own hunter  
Rather than maim, I'll prolong  
My greatest wish is to return to the fold.

### 312. The Football King

*To all Shesans*

I saw Song today  
I don't mean, Daniel  
No, I'm talking about Rigobert  
So, it's not the journalist  
It's the footballer.  
I saw the football king today  
It was in Bassaland  
His naveland, where his navel was buried

Like that of Roger Milla  
I saw him in Sanaga Maritime Division  
Along the Yaounde-Douala highway  
As we drove to Douala  
Song was smiling broadly  
From ear to ear  
Beaming  
On a roadside poster.  
He wore his legendary dreadlocks  
Like a man who had just been told  
He had been admitted into heaven  
With the privilege of getting there  
Without having to die first  
Yes, more or less like Tony Banks  
When he learned Tony Blair  
Leader of the just come back New Labour  
Had appointed him Sports Minister.

You ask why I call Song Rigobert  
`The Football King`  
You want to know why not Eto`o  
Or Milla  
Or Pele  
And you say if Song is good  
I could call him something else  
Not the King  
Well, of all the above  
Song is the tallest and the most stout and the most handsome  
He looks like a swash buckling soldier  
So he can defend you against any enemy  
Even Idi Amin, if he were to return.



Song is a Foot king in his own right  
If you`re still doubting  
Remember that those others are kings  
Only because they shone as part of a team.  
Thrust into the football pitch alone  
All, all alone  
Like the lone mariner on the high seas  
They would not play  
There would be none to play with  
And none to play against  
Worse still, there would be no linesman  
No referee  
No match delegate  
No spectator  
So even as the greatest world kings  
They would be null and void  
Nought  
Zero  
Toothless dogs.  
They would lose the match  
And lose woefully  
Not through forfeiture  
But through an unscorred lone goal.  
And wouldn`t that be a shame!

### 313. The Name Game

I don't know what to say  
So, don't ask me  
All I know is he gave  
He was here  
He came and he left it.

Yes, that may not be your pay  
But why ask me?  
Don't you know what's in a name?  
Anything, as long as it's near  
Unless you think it's a bottomless pit.

### 314. Dancing Kings

It's not a race  
So, slow down  
Hold your horses  
There's time for everything  
Besides, by rushing  
You can simply fudge things.

It's not because you're wearing lace  
Let alone a frown  
As long as you don't join forces  
Your life will be only a fling  
No fishing, no musings, no wrenching  
Just because you decided to grow wings.

### 315. My Share of the Cross

I have died a thousand deaths  
Yet I live  
What haven't I gone through?  
I've been through thick and thin  
I've been insulted and reproached  
Slandered, disqualified and ostracized  
Spat on and humiliated.

Even so, I stand tall  
And stand firm  
I hold my ground  
After all, what's one fall?  
Jesus fell, not once  
Nor twice  
But thrice.  
So who am I to moan?

### 316. Nativity Time Fever

Christmas is here  
And here with a bang  
The streets here in Yaounde are jammed  
And everyone is in a hurry  
In a mad rush  
It's a race  
A rat race  
Some kind of race for time  
But isn't it just a few hundred kilometers to nowhere?

All the men dream of is beer  
They tank it regardless of the big bang  
That's why daily we're crammed  
So we either unearth or we bury  
The unlikely two will fight the thrush  
Just because of this so-called modern craze  
And just because everyone wants to save face  
But then when the bells chime  
Shall we remember that Christ is everywhere?

### **317. Eyeball-To-Eyeball**

I don't like winged animals  
They're too petty for me  
They sniff at the wrong times  
And snore when they don't have to  
Their hair is always messy and disheveled  
They are unkempt and unshaven  
And carry about red roundish eyeballs in the wrong sockets  
They do that all the time  
That's why my parish priest at Bolifamba is fond of saying  
The Lord is good all the time  
All the time the Lord is good.

### **318. Man at the War Front**

I left it in the virgin orchard  
I did so myself  
Not by proxy  
Nor by remote control  
I put it away personally  
Out of harm's way  
So that tomorrow  
When my son grows up  
And starts counting the colours of the rainbow  
He can also stoop and conquer  
And bring home all his men  
Complete with their overalls and sweat shoes.

### 319. Not A Farthom More, Not A Farthom Less

*(For Alice)*

Am I sure?  
Even for a farthing  
I'd stand clear of them  
And call a spade a spade  
So, as you can see  
I'm cock sure.

I'm not a crook  
Crooks put the cart before the horse  
And call it expertise  
As if they were the World Bank.

No, I'm a gentleman  
Gentlemen see a man going the wrong way  
And at once put him back on the right track  
Even if they have to accompany Alice to Wonderland.

### 320. Were You There?

Where you there when he hit the ground running  
Or were you there only when he put his foot in his mouth?  
Where you there when he got up and walked tall  
Or were you there only when he shot himself in the foot?

So how can you, today of all days  
Stand up and claim, sghgamelessly  
It was you who caught his falling mango  
And it was you who posted his love letter?







*Feathers in Reverse* is the ideal gift for a loved one who is scared of poetry. It engages and immerses readers with the luring subtlety of a serpent. Themes treated include good and evil, heaven and earth, man and woman, birth and death, urbanism and rural life, wealth and poverty. As much as the poet highlights salient issues and conflicts in everyday life, he suggests answers to burning problems as well. A common thread runs through the over 300 poems feathered and featured in this collection. The notion of the “feather” is cross-cultural. It reminds us of the feather used as a pen in ancient Europe and the “red feather” that is stuck on the caps of African notables as a mark of distinction. *Feathers in Reverse* is a magic pudding to be sampled, shared and indulged.

TIKUM MBAH AZONGA is by training a journalist, teacher of French and Spanish, a translator-Interpreter and a polyglot who speaks well over ten languages. *The Cowrie Necklace* is the fifth of his full length poetry books. His other works published by Langaa include *The Wooden Bicycle and Other Stories*, *Cup Man and other Stories* and *A Toi Maman*.



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