

Poetry Series

James Mallum
- poems -

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James Mallum(30th July 1981)

James Mallum is a Nigerian-born scriptwriter and poet. As a precocious child he had read over fifty novels of different genres which were a collection from his mother's rich library. At the age of nine, he was already writing short audio plays that he casted with his younger siblings and recorded on audio cassettes. No doubt he is a gifted writer with the special talent of conjugating imagery and explosive images in a torrent of words.

Beaded Gourds

Royal blood
That is what I am
Not by the beads crimson as ruby
Nor with adornments gold and shiny
The king's wives are many
Mother is not any
In the kingdom of spite
A prince must pay the price
It was a call to a journey
Where men have no need for money
Beyond the hills of Olumo
The rock of a victor
And into the warmth of Ikogosi
To wash off my sins
Therefore I arose like the eagle
And followed the sun to its cradle
Where the men sang
And this is my dance

Shekere shekere
Akinmade Shekere
Bi onilu ban re
Omoba nlo

Oh how noble it is to be heard
In the parlance of common men
Celebrated, like the vapors condensing in spring
Welcomed, as the drunkard receiving a drink
Where we made music the sound of our soul
Dance is our heartbeat a rhythm of our own
The synergy of beauteous debutantes
And the energy of euphonious chants
O beaded gourds rattling with commotion
Altogether vectors pointing one direction
For our worlds have thus collide
Through each other's eyes
Omorewa your name
The sound of beauty driving me insane
Even myself I know today

The moon will beg you for the sun's ray
While the women still sing
Of your waist with envy

Shekere shekere
Omorewa shekere
Bibi onilu ban lu
Omoge njo

Beaded gourd
That is what you are
By the Jigida where lust have lavished
And by the bangles you have been ravished
With suitors so many
Only I can make company
If you would be my bride
I would surely double the price
I have heard the rumors
The gods are at war
Because when you spread those arms
And dance by the Ogun river
Tempting the waters as rain to disguise
Late at night with the Ijebu forest to reside
Whenever you throw the Shekere into the air
Suddenly I know how much for you care
Yabara a song as well as dance
The young men chant and hold the damsels.

Shekere shekere
Eyin odo shekere
Bibi onilu ban se
Awaga gan o se

James Mallum

Flow Niger Flow

Flow Niger flow
Is it your fault?
Wash debris and rubbish
Wherever you wish
Save flood and blood-thirsting
For your violator's sin.
I set my gaze upon your face
Curious for words with itching ears
As I sang with heaviness the language of waters
A song so sweet it summoned tears
Here and now at your bank
Of soft clay and fine sand
Wielding the magic of a brassy dowser
Bring now your reply in intermittent mellow tides
And truth be told let not reluctance hinder
Then with pulchritude an Amazon reared
Dreamy formations of facial features
Wavy lineaments like feminine curvatures
Ridges of calm undisturbed ripples
Like nipples in animated longitudes.
Reaching down with dowser in hand
Reeling forward forced by cold tinder-soaking fingers
I shrilled like a tinkle timorous
You have made confluence verse
And the reason so
A delta in the marsh
To boost our ego
Go, Niger flow
For now I know
Flush conflict and perils
And drown also misery
But the taint of confusion replace
With a quantum of peace.

James Mallum

I Pledge To This Land

I pledge to this land
By the beauty of the Nile
Where even angels sigh
To a people black and bold
To a place tales retold

I pledge to this land
By the splendor of Limpopo
Which rains the earth's hollow
To the green plains of Polokwane
To a place man renamed

I pledge to this land
By the wealth of the Niger
Whence the golden sun arise
To a place of grain and game
To a place the Baobab reclaimed.

James Mallum

I Want To Play

I want to play
Like I used to when a napkin was as much a pant
As a pair of jeans
When there was still twilight in the west
And who cares what the night may bring

I want to play
The piano in the church without missing a key
While the choir sings
And would not raise my head
To see the late-comer enter

I want to play
The game of chess in the open parks
With such an abandon
And hope not to jump with a start
At the sound of an explosion

I want to play
A movie from the rentals
Without the blood and horror
That I watch for free
Daily on the city streets

I want to play
With the solemn words
That echo my thoughts
In this lonely playground
Like the rounds of a firing machinegun

James Mallum

My Mother's Only Wrapper

My mother's fears and also her tears
Have wrecked her into many plenty
Will my brothers hear and until they learn
Once divided twice we very falling

Let unity at least with faith increase
With a hope in the farther future
Is peace the only process then progress all the rest
Till the day we savor succor

Who said it is white and thought 'tis a patch
It is green and white and green forever
So all at ease no tugging please
That is mother's only wrapper

James Mallum

My Myango Woman

They say they come rare
Those without heads for yams and condiments
Those that make pittance where they went
Oh! How bent are their backs

For one that I love
That one with a fire burning in her eyes
One that sits by the pot and make my fingers count their lot
She is all I desire

I wish I had words
From bow to stern she is like a ship full of virtue
A whole gold mine if that is her measure
But words are of no value

Who can compare to her who can
Pouted lips like roasted cashew nuts
Or firm bosoms lectured where to stand□
None compares to my Myango woman

James Mallum

O Wondrous Selection

A look at myself vivid and real
Not a reflection
From glass and from steel
So was I conceived of thought and deed
O wondrous selection
Of skin and of hue
A single journey of life and death
Into the ethereal
Through space and through time.

James Mallum

Simplicity

No alarm clock needed
No cock crowing by the window ledge
Time is just right.

Breakfast is as fast as its name
And lunch can do the same
Especially fast food.

Files will move from place to place
And some will go through cyberspace
Just click the mouse.

Suits are off the shoulder
And no noose as loose as a necktie
Easing off at the evening bar.

Friends will gather round
Even the boss may come around
He is just as simple a man.

Enemies sell cheaper than friends
And foes can fool you with their pretence
When a bull's eye is on your head.

Every pub has a men's room
A few drinks will bring you soon
It is a simple plan.

Just a question before the kill
If this old man has written a will
The boss is the job.

Cantankerous as he is
He sure had a word of his
Who sent you?

My contractors remain anonymous
Only murder-for-hire makes us synonymous
You can call me Simplicity.

James Mallum

Slave Master

Close to the shores
Where slaves once reveled in freedom
They welcomed slaves as master of slaves
Another in the order, one man came
Money rolled via vicious coupons
And unmeasured dimensions of castle built
What dismay for all that called him tailor
Fiddle with needle, go making suits
Fiddle he did, needle no
So pale was the moonlight
For the eyes that witness the tax of the payers
Just as the sun often robs the night
So were the losses of Dollars and fathers
Mothers wept in their cooking pots
And twice the soup it made
With all-can-find fled her sons
Greed no `gree! They waged in a wake
As hungered bellies quaked with emptiness
And sleep was murdered before loved ones
Asylum sought with restive readiness
Run-run it was, with castle along
Asylum yes, but asylum too
For this slave had thought he was sane
Once man has sworn by book to rule
The slave master is the master slave

James Mallum

Soliloquy Of A Chiboker

Awake again in this familiar darkness
Something similar to hell's sinisterness
Like a blanket of disgrace it covers my face
A dilemma embraced for hundreds of days
Listen now to the music
Of footsteps like bass drums
Not a dance can confuse it
Now I have to run
I see no one in particular
But tingly hands clutching my jugular
Robbing my soul of its piety
Preying on my sanity
Man O man where is thy soul
Life O life what have I sown
To reap innocence loss
Victim of this imminent lust
What I love the most
I am forced to let go
To the beast that pride on freedom
No leash now seem withhold
Enemies of our beloved kingdom
where men are black and bold
Chained! O de facto so
To a place with no name
Pain! No faith no
Nothing will remain the same
Where vultures feast
And there is no word like peace
Where men are savages
And there is no one to salvage us
Their thirst is not for blood alone
But the very essence of our blameless souls
What their horrid hearts constitute
Are the nagging nightmares of a prostitute
Nay! Hope is spent
Where fear has built her tent
Pray! Time should less be squandered
Before I remember home no longer

Some Too Are Lost

Some too are lost and blind
With a vacuum lagging and filling inside
Like a comet flashing across the sky
They let the Universe their fate decide
Some too have fought and tried
To escape this world and leave it all behind
When they shut their eyes to sleep at night
They drift through space and wish to never come back.

James Mallum

The Song In Our Hearts

There's a song in our hearts
Who will sing along
If only we could dance
But we are too busy on the run

Let us stay a little longer
And let our fears be gone
In that place we desire
But all our fortune burnt

There's a cry in every voice
That dared to sing our song
If only we could pause
And try to right our wrongs

Let us call each other brother
Just as it was before
When the only big fire
Was under the cooking pot

Where are we now
Where are the fields that once grazed cows
Bloodied and reeking with a stench so foul
Where are they now
Where are the young men that have the land to plough
Worried and seething with a vengeful frown
Murdering sleep and troubling peace

Where are we now
As we sing...
The song in our hearts

James Mallum

The Voice Of The Drum

The racing heartbeat of a lion
Is the voice of a beating drum
Like a clay pot covered in iron
Is his dueler's rump
Cautious is the hyena
Lurking somewhere in a corner
Such spectacle in this arena
He waits and holds his laughter
The prey is not just a victim
A porcupine in its solipsism

The common citizen
Punished for no reason
For long did grovel and pray
Father they cry
With sullen eyes their voice away
And then they ask why
Why does the jungle sway
From the left to the right
Why do the trees wait
Till the breeze is right

But that is the totality of the past
With their fate utterly politicized
Where are the renegades
No longer at home
To the farm engaged
With cutlass and hoe
Now they dance
To the left to the right
Holding hands
For there is a harvest tonight

James Mallum

Twinkles

There is a twinkle in the sky
Every time I close my eyes
Oh it shines with a lovely light
And the night is ever bright

There is a twinkle in her eyes
Like the stars that grace the sky
Lo she flaunts her cunning device
As an angel in disguise

The twinkle is in our smile
The joy of when our hearts collide
So the beauty is not in the sight
But the heart where love reside

James Mallum

Two Birds From Yonder

Cooee!

I hear you thence the heavens ply
I see whence the earth you pry
Kuka the singer
He that kept his house in order
Will not be found on the rooftops
Rawa your wife
Tailing with outspread wings do glide
As she danced circles to your songs

Cooee coo-coo!

Your cry as though a bird of yore
The early bird that catches the worm
Quasi-phoenix 'tis arty crest
Show me bristle tail and ashen nest
Only a life away were you my friend
What the eye does not admire
The heart does not desire
If freedom like yours are for rent

Coo-coo Cooee!

These songs the new ones
Are they ours or yours?
Rumor is that your name
Gossip and warning are never the same
Yet all are great travelers
Eschew is a word unspoken
The forest is not home but an oven
A fight not mine it makes me wander.

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