

Caged behind the Barbed Fence

Behind the barbed wire of the fence,
In the deep diversity of our culture
Varied backgrounds and skin colours,
We the Arabs, Africans and Asians,
We stood in commonality and looked on,
Our faces very maudlin in lugubrious
Dimples, admiring sexy freedom beyond
The in sensuous terse fence of the barbed wire,
We longed to move away from the tensions
And emotions of poverty and confinement,
Graced with stark angst of deportation,
The fear and pale lot of all immigrants,
On the blind run as climate refugees,
Running for life from political and social climate
Changes in the lands of Africa and all Arabia
They have shamelessly sired for Europe.
And others lands with envied affluent claim
The hopeless illegal and black immigrants,
Behind the barbed fence we slept,
Under the open scorch of desert sun,
And bivouacked in the sharp chills,
Of European nights of winter,
We admired those in freedom,
As they snarled and mocked us through
The tiny holes on the mesh of the fence,
They threw words of scorn and hatred at us,
They clicked, farted, and gnashed teeth at us,
Flamboyantly in whiteness of their humanity
They eered our black bravery and daredevilry,
That filliped us through the horrendous Euro-tunnel,
And held us mysteriously alive through ships,
Of our stowing away across the high seas,
Between stony Morocco and Spanish coasts,
When we were running away from home,
We the black renegades of patriotism,
We have no choice for our national energies
It was grimly washed down and away,
By the masochistic powers that be,
In our countries, counties and boroughs,
Suffocating us the wretched of the earth,

Alexander Khamala Ernesto Opicho. Three Poems: 'Caged Behind the Barbed Fence,' 'Singing Ox' and 'Poetic Dystopia.'

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With discrimination, poverty and corruption,
As we form not their body politic there,
Gender blind cultures roar like a wounded lion,
Silencing the person in the skin of the weak,
For we have no succour even in the lewd thoughts,
Of choosing to be social climate refugees,
We now wallow in shame and slogging despair,
In the foreign lands of Europe and America,
We are swallowing saliva with mad appetite,
For the plethora of ripe fruits from imperial efforts,
Begotten sweat of the sons of Europe,
We blame no one for the misfortune we chew
Behind here in the menacing barbed fence,
As we slavishly wait for the deportation,
Back to Africa the land calling for hard work,
Patience in spirit and careful in choices,
For no land is bad but human policies,
Change some and Africa will shine in plumage,
Of plenty in victuals and supports to life,
I rest my song behind the barbed reason.

Singing Ox

I am an ox
Old and castrated,
Having no testicles,
They were chopped off,
In a glorious peasant stampede,
By my bucolic owner,

He lives on the handkerchief-sized land,
With no where for my fodder,
Forget of fresh grass,
Space for jumping and teasing,
He heaps me in a shed
With knee deep cow-dung,
Dropped there by my colleagues,
Fat cows with bulging vulvas,
Which I only eat with my eyes,
As the peasant crushed my balls,

He left with me only a reproductive vestige,
That I only use to piss and nothing more,
The peasant takes me to the river,
Very late always in the noon
For I to drink dirty water,
After he has labored me
From cock-crow
With cart pulling work,
With a short break of sleigh tracking,
Carrying manure to here and there,
On his desperate farm,
Very small like dog's tongue,

When I get tired at my knees,
And drop in my speed,
To walk slowly as I recuperate
The exhausted energy,
He whacks my bag with stinging whip,
He sinks another whip on my rump,
I wonder why this peasant acts a true devil
When driving me to pull him out
Of abysmal poverty his eternal wallow,

I work his farm alone,
And he eats all the proceeds,
He sells always the stalks of maize,
To buy salt and lime for the cows,
He gets milk to feed his tuberculotic wife,
And throngs of his *peasantly* sired kids,
Leaving me on a tether under harsh sun,
Burning my back like fires of hell,
Only to be punctuated with torrents of tropical rain,

Then I got sick the next day,
Diarrhoea and fever and pale skin,
Then he called the butcher man
To buy me away for the slaughter,
I wonder how a sick life
Should be capitally condemned,

The butcher man came with clout of money
He found me covered with dark clouds of luck,
I was sick and emaciated under full veneer of dung,
Reeking like a footloose municipal sewage,
The butcher man was repulsed by my state,
He got sober off his love of cash,
And felt pity for my sorriest state,
He balked the idea of buying me for his trade wares
And noted to my owner the foolish peasant,
To buy me anti-worm drugs plus putting me on good diet,

The butcher man walked away on my hiss of relieve,
The peasant kept on clicking in a satanic stare
At my protuberant ribs, with no ready move,
He walked into the house and found his wife dead,
He came out wailing like a king of empathy,
I mused in my head on how fate changes courts,
My death at the slaughter house now in his wife,

But I knew I was not safe,
Because peasants slaughter oxen,
On the burial day of their relations,
But God of fortune and of the poor,
Like me the peasant's ox
only knows my full kismet.

Poetic Dystopia

When I grow up I will seek permission
From my parents, my mother before my father
To travel to Russia the European land of dystopia
that has never known democracy in any tincture
I will beckon the tsar of Russia to open for me
Their classical cipher that *Bogy visoky tsa dalyko*
I will ask the daughters of Russia to oblivionize my dark skin
Negro skin and make love to me the real pre-democratic love
Love that calls for ambers that will claw the fire of revolution,
I will ask my love from the land of Siberia to show me cradle of Rand
The European manger on which Ayn Rand was born during the Leninist census
I will exhume her umbilical cord plus the placenta to link me up
To her dystopian mind that germinated the vice
For shrugging the atlas for we the living ones,
In a full dint of my Negro libido I will ask her
With my African temerarious manner I will bother her
To show me the bronze statues of Alexander Pushkin
I hear it is at clitoris of the city of Moscow; Petersburg
I will talk to my brother Pushkin, my fellow African born in Ethiopia
In the family of Godunov only taken to Europe in a slave raid
Ask the Frenchman Henri Troyat who stood with his penis erected
As he watched an Ethiopian father fertilizing an Ethiopian mother
And child who was born was Dystopian Alexander Pushkin,
I will carry his remains; the bones, the skull and the skeleton in oily
Sisal threads made bag on my broad African shoulders back to Africa
I will re-bury him in the city of Omurate in southern Ethiopia at the buttocks
Of the fish venting beautiful summer waters of Lake Turkana,
I will ask Alexander Pushkin when in a sag on my back to sing for me
His famous poems in praise of thighs of women,

I will leave the bronze statue of Alexander Pushkin in Moscow
For Lenin to look at, he will assign Mayakovski to guard it
Day and night as he sings for it the cacotopian
Poems of a slap in the face of public taste,
I will come along to African city of Omurate
With the pedagogue of the thespic poet
The teacher of the poets, the teacher who taught
Alexander Sergeyvich Pushkin; I know his name
The name is Nikolai Vasileyvitch Gogol
I will caution him to carry only two books
From which he will teach the re-Africanized Pushkin
The first book is the *Cloak* and second book will be

The voluminous dead souls that have two sharp children of Russian dystopia;
The cacotopia of Nosedrev in his sadistic cult of betrayal
And utopia of Chichikov in his paranoid ownership of dead souls
Of the Russian peasants, muzhiks and serfs,
I will caution him not to carry the government inspector incognito
We don't want the inspector general in the African city of Omurate
He will leave it behind for Lenin to read because he needs to know
What is to be done.

I don't like the extreme badness of owning the dead souls
Let me run away to the city of Paris, where romance and poetry
Are utopian commanders of the dystopian orchestra
In which Victor Marie Hugo is haunted by
The ghost of Jean Valjean; Le Miserable,
I will implore Hugo to take me to the Corsican Island
And chant for me one sexy song of the French Revolution,

From the Corsican I won't go back to Paris
Because Napoleon Bonaparte and the proletariat
Has already taken over the municipal of Paris
I will dodge this city and manoeuvre my ways
Through Alsace and Lorraine
The Migingo islands of Europe
And cross the boundaries in to bundesländer
In to Germany, I will go to Berlin and beg the Gestapo
The State police not to shoot me as I climb the Berlin wall
I will balance dramatically on the top of Berlin wall
Like Eshu the Nigerian god of fate
With East Germany on my right; Die ossie
And West Germany on my left; Die wessie
Then like Jesus balancing and walking
On the waters of Lake Galilee
I will balance on Berlin wall
And call one of my faithful followers from Germany
The strong hearted Friedrich von Schiller
To climb the Berlin wall with me
So that we can sing his dystopic Cassandra as a duet
We shall sing and balance on the wall of Berlin
Schiller's beauteous song of Cassandra,

When the Gestapos get impatient
We shall not climb down to walk on earth
Because by this time of utopia
Thespis and Muse the gods of poetry
Would have given us the wings to fly

To fly high over England, I and Schiller
 We shall not land any where in London
 Nor perch to any of the English tree
 Wales, Scotland, Ireland and Thales
 We shall not land there in these lands
 The waters of river Thames we shall not drink
 We shall fly higher over England
 The queen of England we shall not commune
 For she is my lender; has lend me the language
 English language in which I am chanting
 My dystopic songs, poor me! What a cacotopia!
 If she takes her language away from
 I will remain poetically dead
 In the Universe of art and culture
 I will form a huge palimpsest of African poetry
 Friedrich son of Schiller please understand me
 Let us not land in England lest I loose
 My borrowed tools of worker back to the owner,
 But instead let us fly higher in to the azure
 The zenith of the sky where the eagles never dare
 And call the English bard
 through our high shrilled eagle's contralto
 William Shakespeare to come up
 In the English sky; to our treat of poetic *blitzkrieg*
 Please dear Schiller we shall tell the bard of London
 To come up with his three *Luftwaffe*
 These will be; the deer he stole from the rich farmer
 Once when he was a lad in the rural house of John the father,
 Second in order is Hamlet the Prince of Denmark
 Thirdly is his beautiful song of the *Rape of Lucrece*,
 We shall ask the bard to return back the deer to the owner
 Three of ourselves shall enjoy together dystopia in Hamlet
 And ask Shakespeare to sing for us his song
 In which he saw a man rape Lucrece; the rape of Lucrece,

I and Schiller we shall be the audience
 When Shakespeare will echo
 The enemies of beauty as
 It is weakly protected in the arms of Othello.

I and Schiller we don't know places in Greece
 But Shakespeare's mother comes from Greece
 And Shakespeare's wife comes from Athens
 Shakespeare thus knows Greece like Pericles,

We shall not land anywhere on the way
 But straight we shall be let
 By Shakespeare to Greece
 Into the inner chamber of Calypso
 Lest the Cyclopes eat us whole meal
 We want to redeem Homer from the
 Love detention camp of Calypso
 Where he has dallied nine years in the wilderness
 Wilderness of love without reaching home
 I will ask Homer to introduce me
 To Muse, Clio and Thespis
 The three spiritualities of poetry
 That gave Homer powers to graft the epics
 Of Iliad and Odyssey centerpieces of Greece dystopia
 I will ask Homer to chant and sing for us the epical
 Songs of love, Grecian cradle of utopia
 Where Cyclopes thrive on heavyweight cacotopia
 Please dear Homer kindly sing for us;
 From Greece to Africa the short route is via India
 The sub continent of India where humanity
 Flocks like the oceans of women and men
 The land in which Romesh Tulsi¹
 Grafted Ramayana and Mahabharata
 The handbook of slavery and caste prejudice
 The land in which Gujarat Indian tongue
 In the cheeks of Rabindranath Tagore
 Was awarded a Poetical honour
 By Alfred Nobel minus any Nemesis
 From the land of Scandinavia,
 I will implore Tagore to sing for me
 The poem which made Nobel to give him a prize
 I will ask Tagore to sing in English
 The cacotopia and utopia that made India
 An oversized dystopia that man has ever seen,
 Tagore sing please Tagore sing for me your beggarly heat;

The heart of beggar must be
 A hard heart for it to glorify in the art of begging,

¹ Romesh Chunder Dutt (1848-1909) was a translator of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, and Goswami Tulsidas (d. 1623) was a Hindu poet-saint who wrote *Ramcharitmanas*.

I don't like begging
 This is knot my heart suffered
 From my childhood experience
 I saw my mother begging food for us
 We were nine voracious children
 Our appetite
 Had rural peasant orientation
 Often when she brought home the begged food
 She mostly never ate herself
 She was denying her self in self-immolation
 For the food to be enough for us,
 I used to think she has eaten a lot in her life
 That pains and pangs of hunger
 Could not come her away;
 Like humpty dumpty I was goofing
 Tagore you are right the heart of a beggar
 Must be very hard like the rocks of Africa.
 The fear of begging has made me to vamoose
 One on one up to the land of plenty
 Southern America
 for I fear Northern America
 Where riches flow into peoples homes
 Like waters of river Nile from Uganda to Egypt
 I will not be easy in such land where there is no culture
 Other than business of making money while speaking broken English
 Those of you who go there, in the Northern America
 Pass my regards and warm greetings
 To the daughter of Richard Wright
 Tell her that my heart loves her
 The way I loved intellect of her father
 Her that had to transfigure
 Himself as Bigger Thomas
 The native son
 In the land where Africans agonize under slavery
 Where cacotopia of slavery dances
 With utopia of corporatism into a commercial blend
 To sire dystopia of capitalism
 Which Eric Blair aka George Orwell
 Foresaw it to be watched by the big brother in 1984,
 But me I am going to Chile instead
 To sing an ode to clothings
 With my fellow communist Pablo Neruda
 We shall sing in turns the odes of Neruda
 But I will beg him to sing for me the song of burying a dog

So that I get goodness in the ode of clothings
And angst in the song of the dog burial
To achieve my poetic dystopia
Of Nerudian poemocracy,
Dear comrade Neruda let us join hands
As comrades in arms to sing the ode to clothings,

From America I have gone home to Africa
I jumped the Atlantic Ocean in one single African hope and skip
Then I landed to Senegal at a point of no return
Where the slaves could not return home once stepped there
Me I have stepped there from a long journey traversing the
World in search of dystopia that mirror man and his folly
Wondrous dystopia that mirror woman and her vices
I passed the point of no return into Senegal, Nocturnes
Which we call in English crepuscular voyages
I met Léopold Sédar Senghor singing nocturnes
He warned me from temerarious reading of Marxism
I said thank you to him for his concern
I asked him of where I could get Mariama Bâ
And her pipe sucking Brother Sembène Ousmane
He declined to answer me; he said he is not a brother's keeper
I got flummoxed so much as in my heart
I terribly wanted to meet Mariama Bâ
For she had promised to chant a scarlet song for me
A song which I would cherish its attack
On the cacotopia of an African woman in Islam,
And also Sembène Ousmane
I wanted also to smoke his pipe
As we could heartily talk the extreme happiness
Of unionized railway workers in bits of wood
That makes the torso of gods in Xala, Cedo
As the African hunter from the BaBukusu Clan of *kawambwa*
In the land of Senegal could struggle to kill a mangy dog for us.

Any way; gods forgive the poet Sédar Senghor
I crossed in to Nigeria to the city of Lagos
I saw a tall man with white hair and white beards,
I was told Alfred Nobel gave him an award
For keeping his beards and hairs white,
I was told he was a Nigerian god of Yoruba poetry
He kept on singing from street to street that
A good name is better tyranny of snobbish taste
The man died, season of anomie, you must be forth by dawn!

I feared to talk to him for he violently looked,
 But instead I confined myself to my thespic girlfriend
 From Anambra state in northwestern Nigeria
 She was a graduate student of University of Nsukka
 Her name is Oge Okoye, she is beautiful and sexy
 Charming and warm; beauteous individuality
 Her beauty campaigns successfully to the palace of men
 Without an orator in the bandwagon; O! Sweet Okoye!
 She took me to Port Harcourt the capital city of Biafra
 When it was a country; a communist state,
 I met Christopher Okigbo and Chinua Achebe
 Both carrying the machines guns
 Fighting a secessionist war of Biafra
 That wanted to give the socialist tribe of Igbo
 A full independent state alongside federal republic of Nigeria
 Okigbo gave me the gun
 That I help him to the tribal war
 I told him no, I am a poet first then an African
 And my tribe comes last
 I can not take the gun
 To fight a tribal war; tribal cleansing? No way!
 Achebe got annoyed with me
 In a feat of jealousy ire
 He pulled out two books of poetry from his hat;
 Be aware soul brother and Girls at a war
 He rate to us the poems from each book
 The poems that echoed Igbo messages of dystopia
 I and Oge Okoye in an askance
 We looked and mused.

I kissed Okoye and told her bye bye!
 I began running to Kenya for the evening had fallen
 And from the hills of Biafra I could see my mother's kitchen
 My mother coming in and going out of it
 The smoke coming out through the ruffian thatches
 Sign of my mother cooking the seasoned hoof of a cow
 And sorghum ugali cured by cassava,
 I ran faster and faster passing by Uganda
 Lest my elder brother may finish Ugali for me
 I suddenly pumped in to two men
 Running opposite my direction
 They were also running to their homes in Uganda
 Taban Lo Liyong and Okot p'Bitek
 Taban wielding his book of poetry;

Another Nigger Dead

While Okot was running with *Song of Lawino*
In his left hand
They were running away from the University
The University of Nairobi; Chris Wanjala was chasing them
He was wielding a Maasai truncheon in his hand
With an aim of hitting Taban Reneket Lo Liyong
Because him Taban and Okot p' Bitek
Had refused to stand on the points of literature
But instead they were eating a lot of Ugali
At university of Nairobi, denying Wanjala
An opportunity to get satisfied, he was starving
Wanjala was swearing to himself as he chased them
That he must chase them up to Uganda
In the land where they were born
So that he can get intellectual leeway
To breed his poetic utopia as he nurses tribal cacotopia
To achieve east African thespic utopia
In the literary desert.

Alexander Ernesto Khamala Namugugu Opicho was born in Bokoli village, Bungoma District, in the former Western province of Kenya. He went to primary and secondary schools in Western Kenya. He studied Accountancy, then governance and leadership at the University. He is currently pursuing a PhD course in management. He has two wives; Literature is the first. He has published poetry with Ghana poetry foundation, the East African Standard and on AfricanWriter.com. He believes that the praxis of literature is the practice of freedom.