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Chukwuma Azuonye, University of Massachusetts Boston

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WRITING

Edited by
Cyprian Ekwensi
Dedicated to the spirit of African Cultural Re-awakening

HITWING

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You will know her if you think very well. Tall thing that walks like antelope, the only daughter of our dead brother Mazi Izuogu. She went to Ala Bekee, but there is nothing inside her head. It is that thing which is said that tallness is not that my child has grown. Look now, see what has happened to the mother of Adaogu: a woman who was eating on table yesterday, she is now eating on the floor. World has rejected her because of what her daughter went and did. If you turn as if you are going to Ekeagu market, at the side of Iyieke stream, you will find her daylong dirge steaming smoke from her house....Yes. But why am I telling you what you all know? Is there a person in this our Okom who does not know Adaogu that keeps mouth like twin chips of fire!

Do you know what happened? This tigress, this our daughter Adaogu: she went and told her own daughter whom she bore nine months inside her belly to be calling her "Anty". Have you seen that kind of thing before? That a woman whose child smeared with chalk and gave child, should go and tell her own child to be calling her "Anty"! You do not understand this thing except you know what Bekee calls "Anty". Me, I did not go to school, but my brother who went to school has told me: "Anty" is what the children of Bekee call their big sisters like our children call their own "Daada". When I heard this thing, our people, I did not know myself again. I spat off and said: "May my eyes never see my ears except in a mirror! Run-come and see where the shit of dogs spark fire!"

Story concerning what happened to Adaogu what Adaogu went and did; I tell it with anger; yes, I spit it out to tell it. Because this thing is eating food in my belly, but Adaogu does not call it anything, and Adaogu will not hear. Dog of foul wind, wherever she goes she scatters people. Her story will turn the belly of everybody here. I know. But I tell it as I heard it, I will not hide my mouth. Yes, why should I hide my mouth, did Adaogu hide her
anus when she was farting this bad air into our noses? Did she hide her mouth when she used the mouth with which she eats yams and cocoyams and told her own daughter to be calling her “Anty”? It was that time that the earth broke in two, my brothers. You see, this the kind of thing which when it happens should not be covered; because when it rots-open everything with which we live will follow it and rot. But Chineke, let evil not prevail! I say tufia to what the earth deplores. I say tufia to what ought not be heard with ears!

If you go to town now, everywhere is shaking: Adaogu! Adaogu! Adaogu! Up and down, everywhere is shaking, shaking; shaking. There is nobody there who does not know what Adaogu did with herself. It is that thing which is said that at the ninth month who can hide pregnancy from the eye of the world? But the shame of this thing is not the shame of Adaogu but our own. The people of the town are now putting everything on our head, because Adaogu is our daughter. What else will they say? They say that Adaogu is what she is because the people of Okom are all like that! It is that thing which is said that one finger takes oil but it spreads to the others. But that one is another story.

The thing that happened was that Adaogu wanted to make “Miss”. Everyday, everyday upon noon, upon moon, she has been making miss, miss all her life. Even if river is eating her she will, still be making miss. But how can you be making miss, miss like that everyday everymoon and not miss your road one night. That was what happened. So Adaogu was making miss, miss like that and one day like this she missed her road. Because everyday is not christmas. But Adaogu does not know that yet. The whole town is breaking its head because of this thing, but when you look, there is no shame inside the eyes of Adaogu. That is what I was saying, that shame does not catch a madman but his brother. Now this thing has happened, it is Okom they are carrying about. I was in town. I saw Adaogu. Shame was killing me for her, but she was flashing her eyes, flashing her eyes, flashing her eyes about like what I do not know, and she was walking with all herself tied up as if she does not go to latrine. What else shall I say? Here in Okom, come and see her mother how she has shrivelled overnight, but go.
to town and see Adaogu how she is smelling like the queen of spirits and dancing staccato from man to man. I say, Tufia!

So Adaogu went and told her own daughter whom she bore nine months inside her belly to be calling her “Anty”. And this her daughter was calling her Anty, calling her Anty, calling her Anty... My brothers, this thing: it is fearful. Tell me, with which mouth shall we tell it? In all my truth we have never seen its like in Okom.

But you all know how Adaogu got this her daughter. You will remember that time she came back from Ala Bekee, when we were making funeral for her father; you remember how she march-entered our house of tears for her own father wearing trawsa like a man, and the only thing that came out of that her bad mouth was “Ityshashem!” Today we know what that bad word means and we do not know what to say. Adaogu did not weep her father three nights and she carried the corpse of herself and went to town to dance harlot with everyman she saw. That was why nobody agreed to marry her because they say that her eyes are too open, that she has killed herself with abortion. It remained like this, and everymoon the flower was not seen. Every moon the flower was not seen. Adaogu drank red ink, drank red ink, drank red ink until she nearly died. Then one moon she forgot to drink red ink, forgot her abortion belt, and the thing that wanted to happen, happened at last. It was that time that Adaogu ran to Lagos and hid until she delivered her daughter. That was the time shame began to kill the mother of Adaogu. She survived that one and agreed to suckle this child of naked conception. It was good thing for Adaogu and she ran back to town to make miss and dance harlot with her child.

How many years was it?—Yes, yes: seven years, yes. For seven years this daughter of Adaogu lived in this our Okom, a child who never sucked breast, only drank cow-milk from glass bottles, because her mother wanted to make miss. But it is a good thing that Adaogu did not throw her inside a gutter. This is what they do in town. That is how the women of the town sell themselves a penny in white-eyed market. They do not call children anything; they never dream to suckle babies.

So the daughter of Adaogu grew like that. She did not
looked at her face it was as if she would eat the speaker alive. But the one that would rip open her belly in the eyes of the world was still coming. The speaker spoke again, and when he began to speak, Adaogu broke mad.

"Our sister," he spoke, "We thank you; and we thank God. Whatever you touch, mmaji mmaji! Your chi is good. Chineke, his good arms! One thing we pray is that next moon when we come to eat Christmas again in this house and make Batday when you become nineteen years old again; let it be that God will make it that his your daughter who calls you "Anty" will grow up and know that he should be calling you "Mama"!

Before he spoke-finished, Adaogu rose like leopard. Her breath rose like wind. Her heart bombed like krutu. They say that she spoke fri-fri-fri like Englanlady and said she would bring Police to lock up the speaker inside Cell, that the man insulted her in her own house. What was it again they say she said? Yes, that in Ala Bekee, a man like that bold speaker must be carried to court, that he would pay out his eyes to save his head for what his tongue fanned.

She ran prem-prem, ran prem-prem, ran prem-prem; but the speaker continued to speak what he was speaking. Speaking, but it was not him that spoke, because he was not himself. Adaogu was barking like a dog, he did not hear her. He spoke. And he took everything that happened since Adaogu was born and told the people in that madhouse. They laughed. He told white, he told black. Then he brushed his bottom sat down, demanded and was given wine and he drank.

Adaogu was still barking, "Police! Police!"

Night caught fire in that madhouse. The people spoke: they took everything they knew about Adaogu and narrated. The women spat off and said: "Eh! So Adaogu this is what you are!"

They believed the story; and do you know that that man who spoke and burst the belly of Adaogu, he is from this our Okom. Yes: don't you know James—James Okonkwo the son of Okonkwo Irogewe. James the carpenter. Him. It was him that said it out. And he was not talking what he did not know. He was not talking what he did not know.

Adaogu was still barking, "Police! Police!" but she did
not stop to see what was happening to her daughter whom she did not allow to get father.

“Police! Police!” Would Police give father to this girl whose heart she had killed? That was what everybody was asking her. But Adaogu was still barking, “Police! Police!” and she was inside her room rubbing pomade, rubbing pancake, rubbing perfume.... That is how they rub it in town, rub out age, rub out pity, rub out truth, rub out womanhood, rub out manhood, that is how they rub out motherhood, rub out generations, that is how they rub out what holds their lives. And Adaogu took another abortion belt and divided her belly into two. Then she put on wig and came out. Everybody was looking at her face, but her eyes were still strong as before.

James Okonkwo looked at this thing, shook his head and said it shall not be. You know that James Okonkwo does not hear that twelve is striking, what more with wine in his eyes. What did Police mean to him? My leopard! He rose when he saw Adaogu about to bolt out and went and blocked the door. Again he spoke: “Go back, Adaogu. Go back and tell your daughter the truth!”

People did not allow Adaogu to speak again. But if they did not hold her she would have slapped James as they used to slap their men in Ala Bekee. Agwu was in her eyes. If you looked at her, she was frantic like a mad cow. People held her. They held her until her daughter came. Poor girl, her eyes were swollen as if she had cried for seven moons. There was nothing else in her throat only tears and words the wind scattered:

What else shall I say? That was how Batday ended that day. It did not take another day and Adaogu sent back her daughter home, and she is still there in town making miss, and this thing we are talking here does not reach her there. It is her daughter that is dying, she who has called her own mother “Anty” and will never know her father; she who will live haunted by what her mother went and did. What else shall I say? Adaogu is there.
Davldson Akazua
Ajose Kedeheinbu
Emmanuel Oblechina
Poet, Critic, Head of Department of English, University of Nigeria. Author of Literature For the Masses, Onitsha Market Literature, Tradition and Society in the West African novel.

FICTION

Fola Arliesere

Umaru Balarabe Ahmed
lives in Kaduna. The extract is from an unpublished novel titled THE JOURNEY.

Onuora Nzekwu
Deputy Director Federal Ministry of Information, author of WAND OF NOBLE WOOD, BLADE AMONG THE BOYS, HIGHLIFE FOR LIZARDS

Chukwuma Azuonye
studied medicine at the University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus

Tayo Balogun
studied English and Philosophy at the University of Ife. Has contributed to Ijala and to Indigo.

Amos Tutuola
author of The Palm Wine Drinkard.

Kunle Akinsemoyin

Rasheed Gbadamosi
b. 1943. Read Economics at the University of Manchester