

Okhiogbe Omonblanks Omonhinmin

kids
from
the river

the 1990s, the number of people in the world who are undernourished has increased from 250 million to 800 million (FAO 1996).

There is a growing awareness of the need to improve the nutritional status of the world's population. The United Nations World Food Conference (1979) and the World Summit for Children (1990) have both called for action to reduce malnutrition. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has been instrumental in the development of the World Bank's *Global Strategy for Child Survival and Development* (1990), which has been widely accepted as a blueprint for action.

One of the key areas of concern in the *Global Strategy* is the need to improve the nutritional status of children. This is because malnutrition is a major cause of child mortality and morbidity, and it is also a major barrier to the development of the world's population. The *Global Strategy* calls for a concerted effort to improve the nutritional status of children, and this has led to a number of initiatives at the national and international levels.

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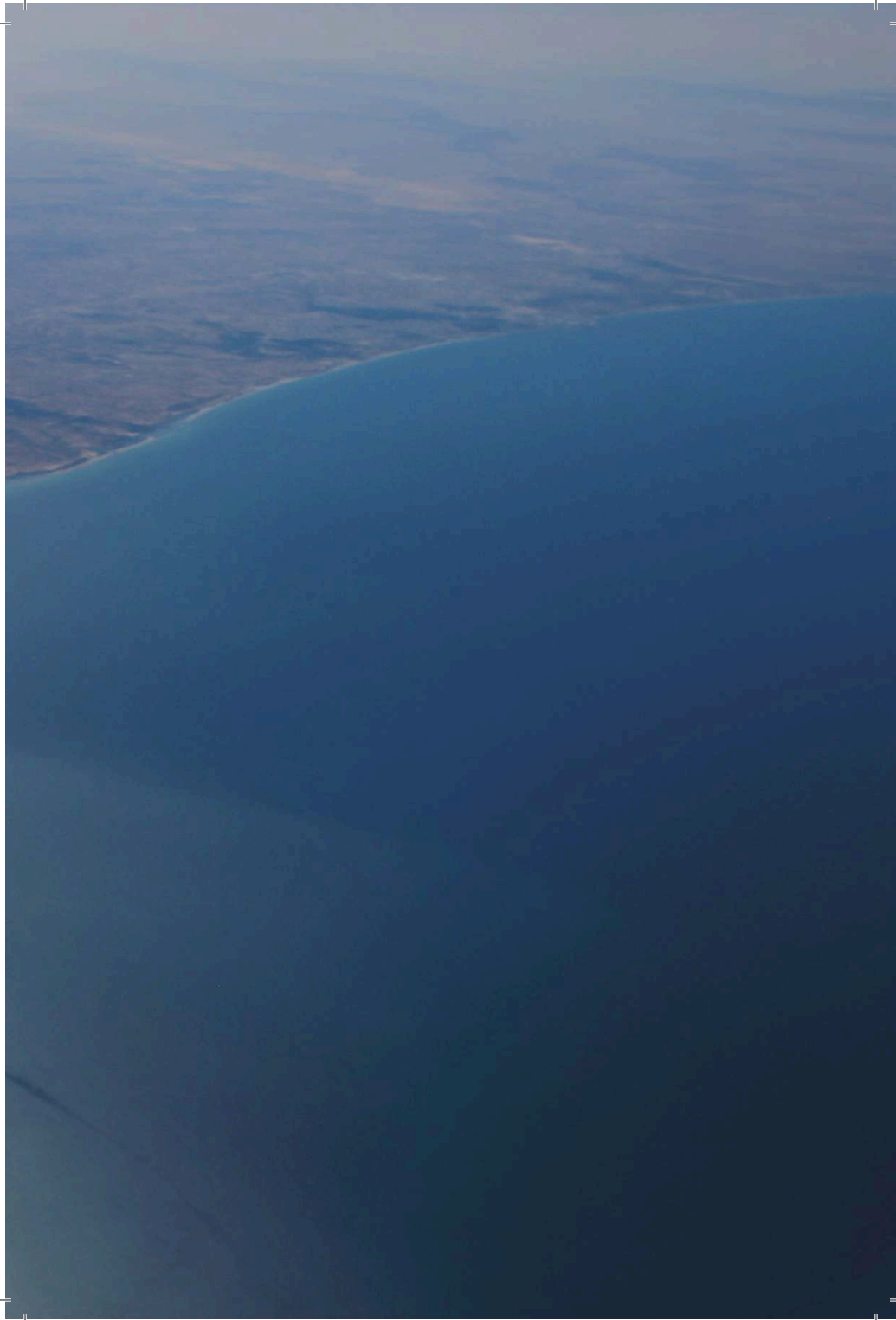
Okhiogbe Omonblanks Omonhinmin

kids from the river

ELOMESE IJ

This is for my mother...





To my parents,
the first producers and curators
i ever worked with,
my maternal grandmother (Nene),
my life partner, my child.

To Benin City,
the city that raised me,
thank you for all the
experiences and foundation.

The first of these is the fact that the system is not a simple one. It is a complex system, and as such, it is not possible to understand it by looking at its parts in isolation. The system is a whole, and its behavior is determined by the interactions of its parts. This is a fundamental principle of systems thinking, and it is one that is often overlooked in traditional approaches to problem-solving.

The second of these is the fact that the system is dynamic. It is not a static system, and its behavior changes over time. This is another fundamental principle of systems thinking, and it is one that is often overlooked in traditional approaches to problem-solving.

The third of these is the fact that the system is open. It is not a closed system, and it interacts with its environment. This is another fundamental principle of systems thinking, and it is one that is often overlooked in traditional approaches to problem-solving.

The fourth of these is the fact that the system is self-organizing. It is not a system that is imposed from the outside, but one that emerges from the interactions of its parts. This is another fundamental principle of systems thinking, and it is one that is often overlooked in traditional approaches to problem-solving.

The fifth of these is the fact that the system is resilient. It is not a system that is fragile and easily broken, but one that is able to withstand change and maintain its essential characteristics. This is another fundamental principle of systems thinking, and it is one that is often overlooked in traditional approaches to problem-solving.

The sixth of these is the fact that the system is sustainable. It is not a system that is designed to be used and then discarded, but one that is designed to be used and then renewed. This is another fundamental principle of systems thinking, and it is one that is often overlooked in traditional approaches to problem-solving.

The seventh of these is the fact that the system is equitable. It is not a system that is designed to benefit a few at the expense of many, but one that is designed to benefit all. This is another fundamental principle of systems thinking, and it is one that is often overlooked in traditional approaches to problem-solving.

The eighth of these is the fact that the system is just. It is not a system that is designed to be unfair, but one that is designed to be fair. This is another fundamental principle of systems thinking, and it is one that is often overlooked in traditional approaches to problem-solving.

The ninth of these is the fact that the system is transparent. It is not a system that is designed to be opaque, but one that is designed to be clear. This is another fundamental principle of systems thinking, and it is one that is often overlooked in traditional approaches to problem-solving.

The tenth of these is the fact that the system is accountable. It is not a system that is designed to be unaccountable, but one that is designed to be responsible. This is another fundamental principle of systems thinking, and it is one that is often overlooked in traditional approaches to problem-solving.





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the 1990s, the number of people in the UK who are obese has increased by 50% (Health Survey for England 1995, 1997, 1999). The prevalence of obesity in the UK is now 15% in men and 18% in women (Health Survey for England 1999). The prevalence of obesity in the USA is 22% in men and 26% in women (Flegal et al. 1994). The prevalence of obesity in the USA is higher than in the UK, but the prevalence of obesity in the UK is increasing at a faster rate than in the USA (Health Survey for England 1999).

Obesity is a major risk factor for a number of chronic diseases, including coronary heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and certain types of cancer (World Health Organization 1997). Obesity is also a risk factor for a number of other health problems, including arthritis, asthma, and depression (World Health Organization 1997). Obesity is a complex condition, and its causes are not fully understood. However, it is generally accepted that obesity is caused by a combination of genetic and environmental factors.

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making way

i am in this café called Annapurna, in Brixton, writing this introduction while my partner is next door taking part in a visual and writing workshop. We say Isé for days like this, when our priorities and desire to relax align.

But, i would not have ever attempted to write this introduction if i had not just gone through a series of life-changing events within the past month. While putting this book together it became clear to me that since losing my mother i have come to accept experiencing grief and pain alongside joy. It was quite a journey towards this realisation, which took over twenty years. The very first piece written for this book was about death, but to leave it at just that would limit my life's experiences. Equally, to only see me through my moments of joy would be another limitation.

i have realised that i am also how other people perceive me, and i cannot run from that. So, as much as i try to remind people that i am just me besides my ventures, i am still aware that what i do or the choices i make have effects. Good or bad, i welcome them with open arms but remain conscious enough to know that those are your perceptions.

i love chaos and peace. Sometimes i wonder how that can be possible and then i remember that i am truly an ambivert. Just as one might love peace and chaos, one can equally be both introvert and extrovert, and this is not to equate these concepts. The situation is

determined by the version of me you meet on any given day. In embracing this, i have learned to accept my contradictions, which in turn gives me a taste of freedom. Not the freedom of “i am free from the system”, not that kind, but the freedom of having a little fearlessness to attempt a lot of my heart desires. i do not have a sentimental relationship with success or failure, i see them with the same eye. i think all they do is teach me about myself.

Like this book, for instance, i started putting it together because i thought i could challenge myself to write a book. And as much as i wanted my first book to be philosophical and whatnot, i was also like why not poems, essays, photos and some blank pages? Why not do this for my little self who felt he could and would be everything he ever wanted? Thus, this book is not a guide or manual for life. It is just a chronology of how i have viewed life over time.

What is the magic of life?

How come my first writing on death is about the transition of my mother and then the last piece is about the transition of my grandmother, my mother’s mother? i do not move through life thinking it is all one big coincidence. Never. Everything is connected. Sometimes i catch the connection immediately, sometimes i catch it years later and sometimes people catch it for me. Sometimes it is missed completely.

“The mystery of life isn’t a problem to solve, but a reality to experience. A process that cannot be understood by stopping it. We must move with the flow

of the process. We must join it. We must flow with it.
Let go, let go, let go.”¹

i am intrigued
by people, space and community
i am drawn to mass gatherings
excited
by simplicity, chaos and complexity

i love to ponder and wander
i am movement

i am aware
no matter what is known
there is more to be explored

i am in my most happy place
my body, mind and spirit all aligned.
Elomese

1 Dune (2021 film), Scene 1:58:33 - 1:59:25.







17 February 2010, 7:34 pm

love

is a feeling. No, it's beyond feelings or reasoning; it's beyond your mind, and that makes it unexplainable. This love can't be logical or physical.

oh love, oh love
it is not creative
far from what you can think

Where your ideas stop, love flourishes; love is faceless, it has no limitation, no goals, no target. No connection can comprehend it; it is beyond material and physical attributes.

In my dreams and aspirations, love can't be seen. Love has no limitations. So shall motivation follow; in this love i speak about, there is no forgiveness because never was there hurt. Where my reason stops and my logic ends, there my love begins.

i wake up married to love
with no explanation to give
my life is complete and sure in love

love is god and god is love, so where is the word to describe it? Describe it, describe god. The love we share takes us beyond boundaries, takes us only where god and love can take us.

When i love a woman, she is god. When i love my offspring, they are god's promise. When i truly worship

god, love comes to life. i laugh because my love knows
no forgiveness; my love sees no fault or wrong in
humans. My love is purer than you can imagine.

This is the love i try to dream into being. My dream still
has a physical point.

i try to reason when i know my reason still has
boundaries.

i try to touch.

i make no preparation for love.

i make no demand.

When asked about love, my answers confuse me.

The day love comes

i shall be humbled

i know my life is true.

Love is my reason

oh my reason

Love is my life and

life is my love.

Life begins and ends with l-o-v-e.

In totality will i be lost if love comes not.

i shall love and love shall i...

21 September 2009

metaphor for changing life approach

My whole life is scattered into

p i e c e s
and my dew is due

Steps i take don't give a view

of

future, past

even my present

i see not

How can a man be so lost in himself

and still find happiness in a lost state?

Painkillers would become drugs

of satisfaction. Of inspiration

In this world he is the king of failed attempts

and now a kingmaker

retired to this world

nothing is he good at, they say

yet

He is lost completely, with no return

that, for him, is something he has got right

Life, to him, has ended

and this is the afterlife

he lives above the edge

In a pan is the last bit of this life about to be

boiled, toasted
and here he sits
smiling, loving

this is his last
and without remorse about his lost life
he smiles for the moments of failure
he has been able to share with the world

have you ever died?

If you believe in reincarnation, then your answer would, maybe, be yes. The various concepts of death oppose each other sometimes but still can point to something bigger than us, something that is sure to happen.

Although thinking about one's own mortality is not common because of fear, this question gives us the chance to think about death as an idea that is to come.

In many African spiritual practices, it is believed that we live, die and come back to continue what we have not finished. These beliefs are very well connected to the various concepts of reincarnation practised by the non-Abrahamic religions, which believe that we live and die, to be judged by the way we live on earth. Indeed, i find all of these ideas fascinating, but once you open up to other possibilities, you see the richness that they all present. One begins to see their connections to each other, and even the line that connects those who do not believe in God to those who do.

There are various types of deaths. i am not addressing the many ways that physical death occurs here on earth: be it natural, accidental, by suicide, homicide or undetermined. i am rather exploring the idea of death to include things like this statement by Paul the Apostle in 2 Corinthians 12:2: *I know of a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know – God knows.*

Many people who believe in reincarnation and karma and the belief systems that come with these concepts speak about understanding Paul's statement. There are, however, several Christians who do not, because their belief system has ingrained in them that there is only one heaven and that one must die and wait for judgement or resurrection to enter it. Other belief systems suggest this occurrence as an out-of-body experience – where the spirit or soul leaves the physical body and can journey as it pleases – through which only near-death experiences or with certain spiritual exercises one can achieve this state.

So, i ask again: have you ever died?

It could be when one loses their core beliefs and values. Distrust, alienation, stress, PTSD or other forms of mental instability can also cause or lead to a form of death. Could it also be intellectual death? Just like Confucius said:

Learning without thought is labour lost. Thought without learning is intellectual death.

Learning without thought =

Not being self-conscious or self-aware of the need or purpose of the knowledge or lessons one receives...

One might learn things that serve them in the moment and then find the need to unlearn or let go of those lessons. For those without the capacity to learn and unlearn, they might see this circle of learning as counterproductive.

Thought without learning =

Not learning from the processes of thoughts and actions or received knowledge.

Nevertheless, there should be space for a multitude of things. Thoughts with learning, thoughts without learning and more...

As simple as this might sound, someone who believes that all things happen for a reason would tell you it was all meant to happen. But this is exactly why i find these beliefs fascinating. There is always something to corner you or take you out of a corner.

Spiritual death – in many religious or spiritual practices – is a big death, and it occurs when one is separate from God, separate from the Divine, separate from their centre, separate from Nature. When one is no longer centred (whether it is through prayers, yoga, meditation, contemplation, exercise or whatever you do to be centred), when you stop doing that which centres you, you gradually die spiritually and eventually become untethered. In Christian theology, spiritual death is separation from God caused by sin. Environmentalists and those who believe in Nature talk about pollution as another form of death because death to Mother Earth is death to all.

Reincarnation within the Yoruba belief system is linked to how people are named. For instance, Babatunde means “father returns”, Yetunde – “mother returns”, Babatunji – “father wakes once again” and Sotunde – “the wise man returns”. They all offer vivid evidence of the Ifa concept of familial or lineal rebirth. In his essay ‘Life After Death In Yoruba Ontology: A Critique’, Mohammed Akinola Akomolafe, PhD, writes: “The idea of reincarnation among the Yoruba is indicative of the belief in the immortality of life. The actual word for reincarnation in Yoruba is *atunwa*. As a matter of fact, the word *atunwa* implies the second rebirth of a person or the shooting fourth of a branch, or born again.”

To simplify this, we can observe the following. We die when we sleep. We die during our short naps. We die when we are lost in creative thought – Soul, the Disney animation movie explained this so well. We die whenever we have an experience that alters our lives – good or bad.

Death is so close to us, and yet it is so feared. Death is, so far, the only thing that truly keeps its promise. How could we not take our time and get familiar with this experience from wherever we decide to enter it? Death has much to teach us about the past, present and future, the fear of death keeps us stagnant for as long as our fears exist.

So, let us think about it again: have you ever died?

If your fears make it hard to think of an answer, think about the moments you felt re-energised, refreshed, renewed; all these processes of starting over are forms of death that take us through seasons. After winter or harmattan come the seasons that bring life. When you start to embrace death as an idea or experience, life takes a new meaning.

So, if we live daily, we die daily and ‘have you ever died?’ could also mean do you experience living?

3 October 2014, 12:23 pm

defending you

Why can't they be nice?

Why can't you be okay with who you are?

When you scream silently
they scream openly
and you run inwards

Carry yourself with pride
and no human can step on you
Make your statement with boldness
and none shall ridicule you
Never look down on yourself or your community
Don't doubt your guts
Don't doubt your resolve
and
Don't doubt YOU!!

We are
most times
BIGGER and STRONGER
than what we think we are
The bully is a scarred soul
transferring fear to the next
If you say no and fight back
You might just win.

2 July 2010, 7:36 am

the future has you present in it

i look into my eye's mirror
and fear for the future
of that unborn child
coming into this world
ripping the misgivings of
the father and mother

Where do hardship and loss come from?
actions we know nothing of
rape and murder of the system
that guards the land

Where are we going now?
that world of no return?
for there is no entrance

With admiration
i look at these sisters
who pick out night
crawling to survive
the risk they sojourn through

When that survival trait is passed on
as a genetic attachment
to the daughters you bring forth
the man who had to kill
for wealth
killed by his own son for inheritance

The past prides me not the
dreams built internally for
this day

For the better
change i must
if not for my dream
of a better tomorrow
then for the unborn child

For me
change is sure
for cursed is the day
the future pays for my mistakes
If they do, let it be known,
i kept on changing
for the better

In my mind's eye
i see answers to questions

29 January 2013

pain

Morning and night
wishing
You were one with my heart
that you could feel the pain deep inside and understand
my cry

Morning and night
still wishing
Your feet were as big as mine
then putting you in my shoes
would have been my option

Morning and night
wishing
You paid the amount I paid
when i married Mercy's Mother
then you might understand
why i just can't let her go
but make her suffer in my house
after finding out that
Bayo is a bastard son

Morning and night
wishing
i paid a very expensive price for this visa
only to the realisation that i have been duped She comes
and saysshe has fallen in love
and they are getting married in a week
wishing

i said i loved you 15 years ago
We called each other lovers
loved you through high school
and university days

Why won't i hate them
who showed me love
calling me son all these years
and now
welcoming my own son to the world
with the news
that i was adopted

Why won't i be miserable
when i have been sleeping around
with any woman or girl i see
i love making love to Kudirat
and she happens to be
the only child of sister Ada
the sister Ada
i raped twenty two years ago

The only woman i have ever loved happens to be the
daughter of the man who killed my father
Why is pain within?
Why can't pain be like the circle of life?

29 September 2009

life

Life must be what i want out of her; she has to be my dream come true. i dream not of falls with a rocky ending but with so much to smile at. i pray for myself because i see me going at a fast pace, too fast i might hit a wall.

So, i paused. i see that what i need to amend is in me. i need to act in line with what i need to change.

i see death and i remember that life must go on. Being free is a part of life's greatest illusions. i am free from the fear of death. Like my existence, it is just a job for whoever has that task. So, i do not fear for tomorrow because of the things i have done.

They say my beauty is beyond this world as a compliment, but with that statement, they hurt my very being because beyond this world is not where i want to be. If on creation, i was meant to be where they call "beyond this world", then that's where i will be. But, no. i am on Earth, so instead of trying to impress me, tell me how i am to make this world glow

and make the sky turn green

or the moon into stars

and stars into planets.

Then, i would be filled with joy. Don't take me far,
for all i want is to be here.

“He came, saw and conquered”

Yes, he did come; he saw the sweetness that life has
to offer, but also its doom. And at the end of it all that
which was started in spirit ends in spirit.

6 October 2014

yesterday's truth

washing the memories of my youth
feeling my bones ache and my legs shake
i want the youth that washes out of me
i wish we stayed there longer
i feel the strength of memories leave
my body weakened
lost, the battle is for the past
lost in the future, the present is weaker

How can i get back the memories lost, washed? Where
can i get the strengths lost? how much? future has
memories stored

age expands, time expands
none is promised a stronger future
create a story
of your youth.
create a story
of your youth.
saved in time f o r e v e r

27 august 2011, 8:46 am

illusion

She is mine and forever mine
Her face becomes what i feel
every time i place my hands
on my very own face

i can't see the difference
between
what i feel for her
my love for god

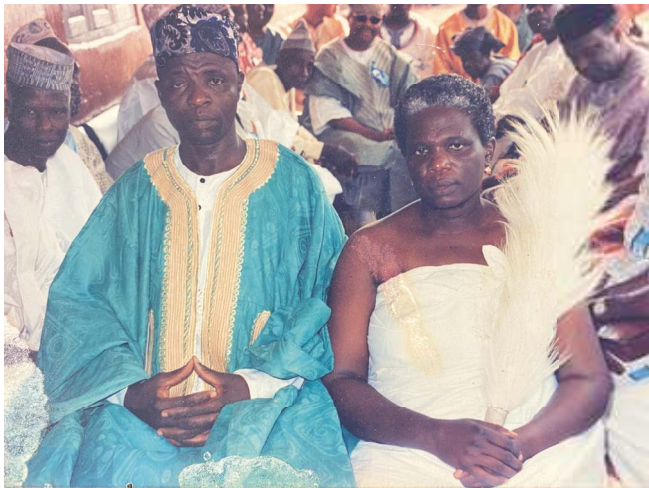
Sometimes i wonder if she runs me dry.

My dreams, my imaginations
no longer have a connection to my world
they have become my only root
to her world of bliss and fulfilment

She can't be compared
to angels
to demigods even

much too priceless She controls
my being.

i just made a discovery
here on earth my mission
make sure she lives on
my life i put on the line for that.
i only meet her in my dreams.



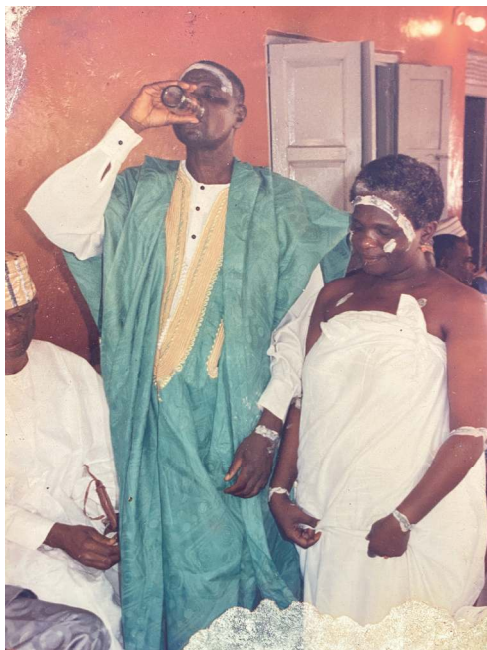














15 February 2008

truth

If the truth be told then
you would know
If you stand in this puzzle
L - I - F - E
we all make out

Dash back
igniting actions
and
thinking
twice
twice

Just imagine
a world of no going back
no healing. no repentance. no forgiveness
Imagine
a world where we are all we got
no sky. no limits

A world of immortality
with the pain of every moment
felt just the way it comes
A world where
a father's right is just fathering
mothers' keep till the point of walking

A world without feelings
is a world void of good and bad

Is this the world we ask for?

What a human tries to do in the world
is to change the world

to what they want it to look like

What is the purpose?

My hands are clean

hope yours are clean.

1 April 2012

the heart of hu-man

The heart of hu-man is like a dream
The heart of hu-man is like water
It takes any shape or form
It can die, can be given life

The heart of man is like the wind
It can be directed anywhere,
everywhere It can be peaceful,
destructive misinterpreted

virginal
can take whatever you have
delivers the biggest baby
moves faster than the speed of light
the reason behind love at first
sight

The heart is like the universe
too large to comprehend, too many stories to
tell never can we understand it completely
The heart is just like the wild
so much innocence, the deadliest wildlife

like the ocean
the heart is gentle and wild
takes you to your destination or another
decides to end your journey before you even start

the most equipped
library very vast in
knowledge like honey
depreciated
for lack of knowledge on how sweetness formed

Why is this heart so fragile yet so hard?
question created by my confusion
Please answer if the question belongs to you

5 June 2001

No. 7, Prince Clifford Street, Off Airport Road,
Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria

honourable death

Like a dream that manifests, you became true. Now i understand; you come as the thief in the night. i never imagined you in my house, dining with the ones I loved.

Without fear, i shall plunge the arrow of love right through your chests. i shall see you bleed. They say you never bleed. But there will be talk about the one who killed death.

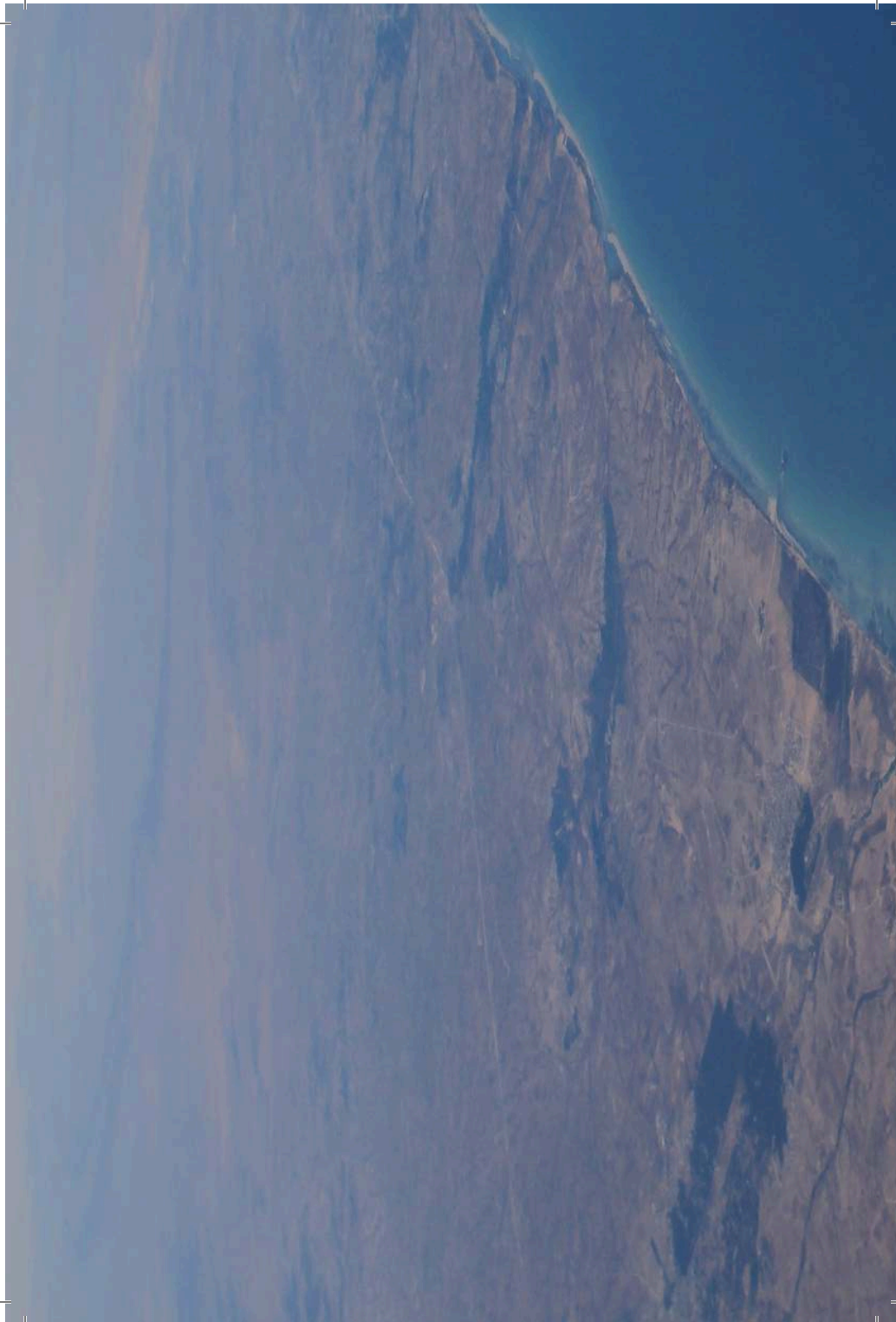
What do they know about losing, about fighting for the people you lost if given a second chance.

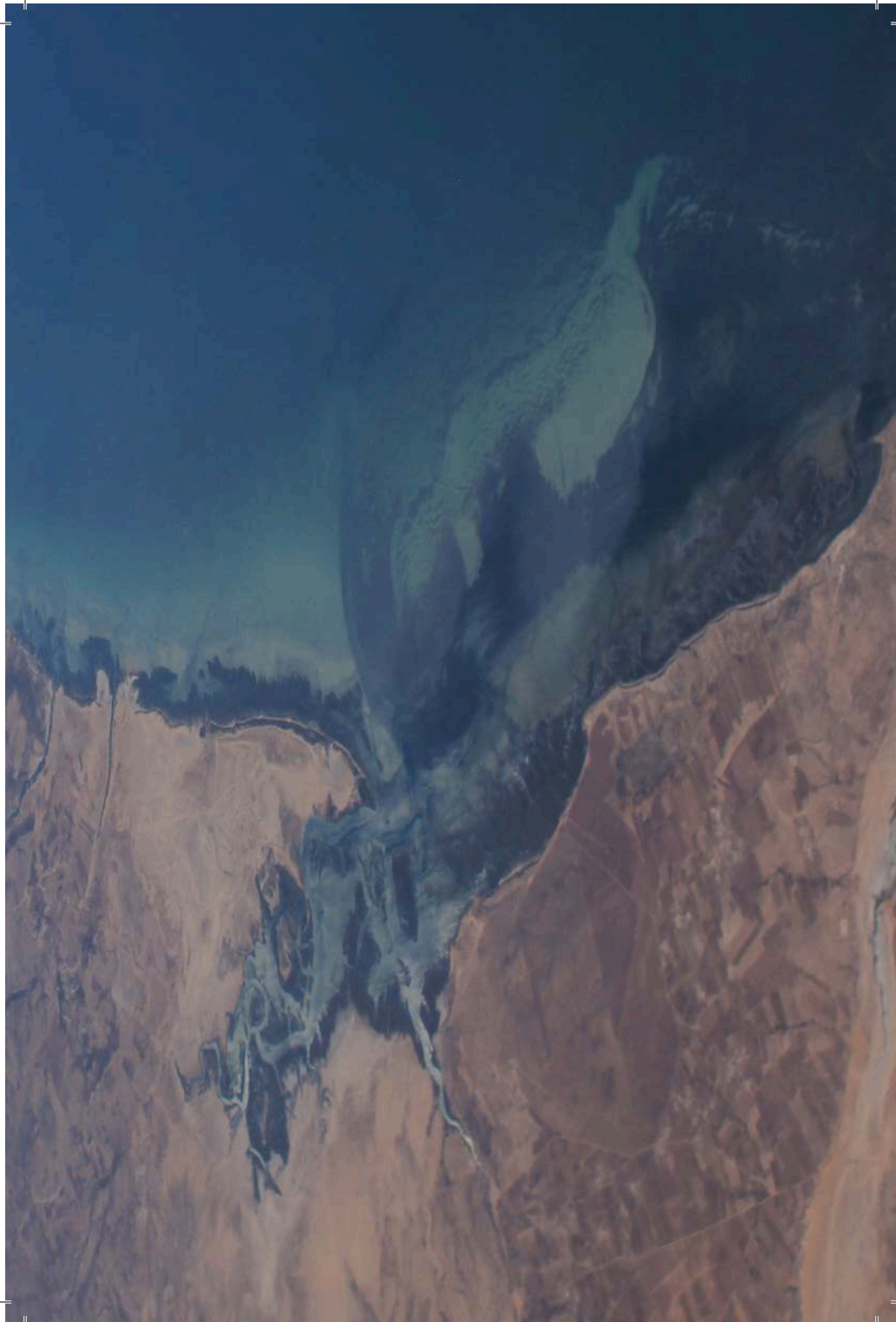
i shall talk and write all i can about how you wounded my heart; i still suffer the sharp pain anytime i think about the two i used to love and that you stole.

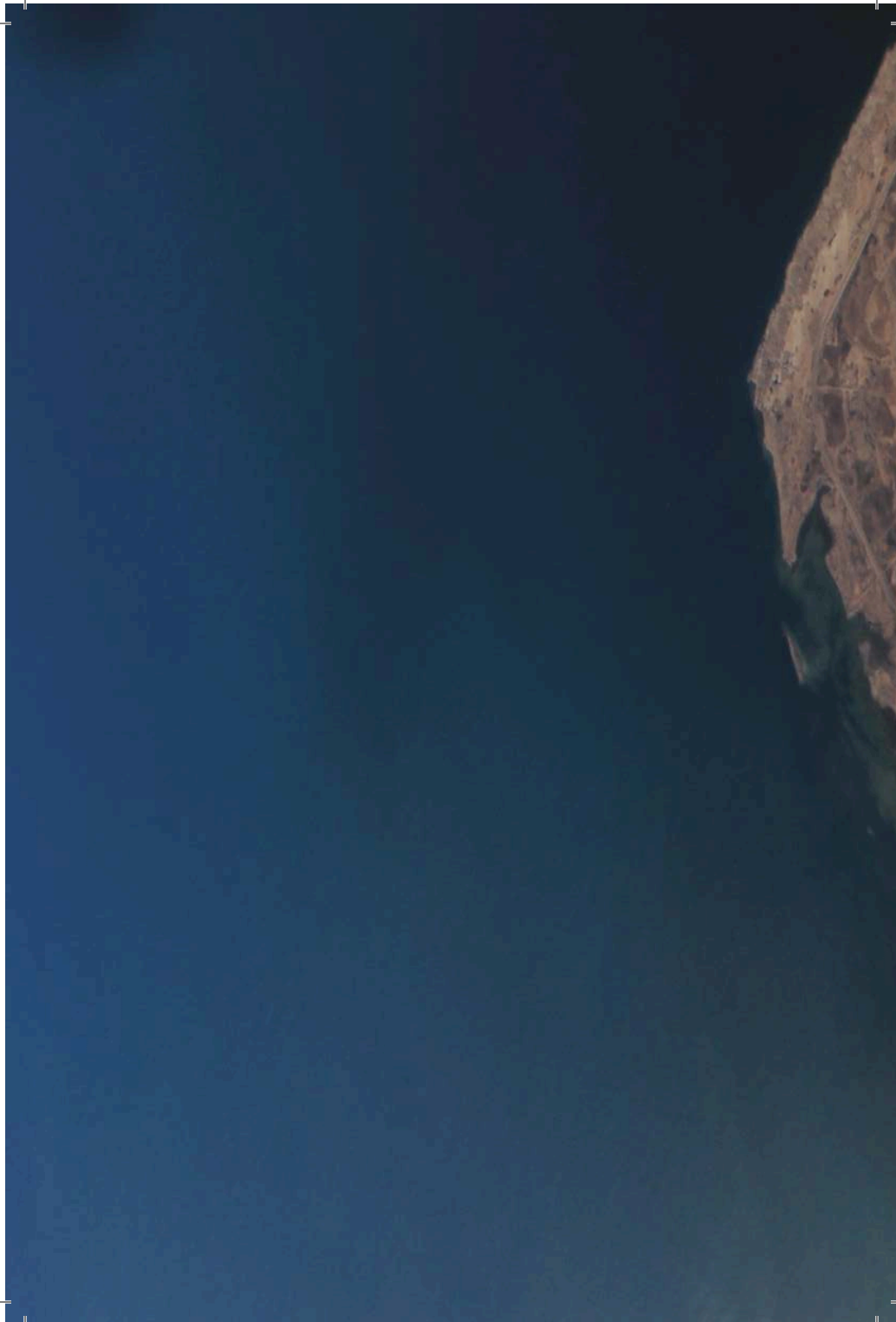
Oh yes, you brought as you took:
the gift of change
the heart of possibilities
the will, the strength for the pursuit of happiness
acceptance of the life they lived and the one I live for them.

Death has led to living life in reality and awareness of happenings around me. How
can i be the one crying for the ones lost in a circumstance avoidable by all means?
We must be as foolish as our forebearers, and growth is nothing they (we) think
about when they (we) make the one mistake that gives death the excuse to strike.
And now i see the future so big that i see nobody.
Enough is not enough.

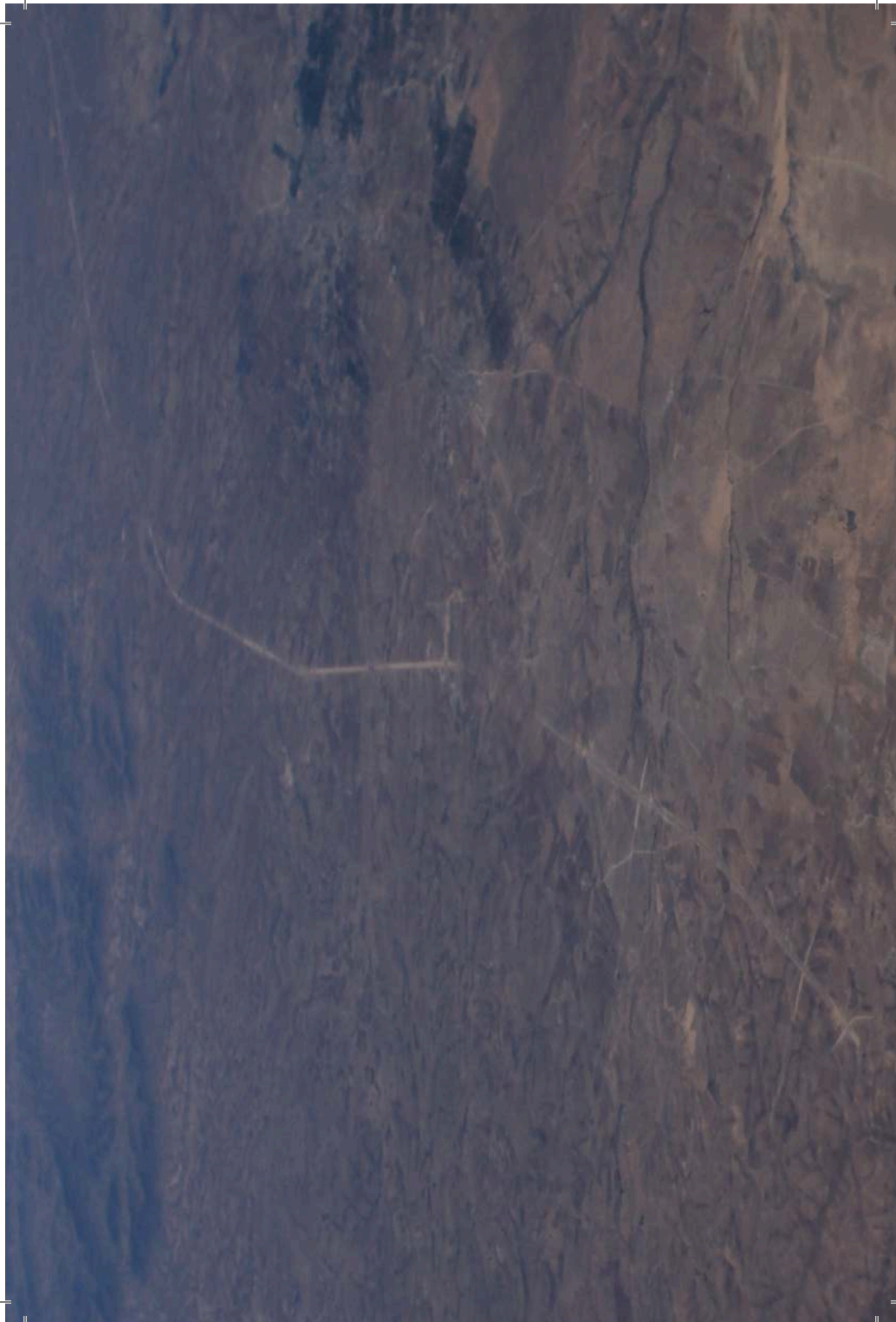
Yours sincerely,
Okhiogbe Omonblanks Omonhinmin
Son | Brother | Nephew

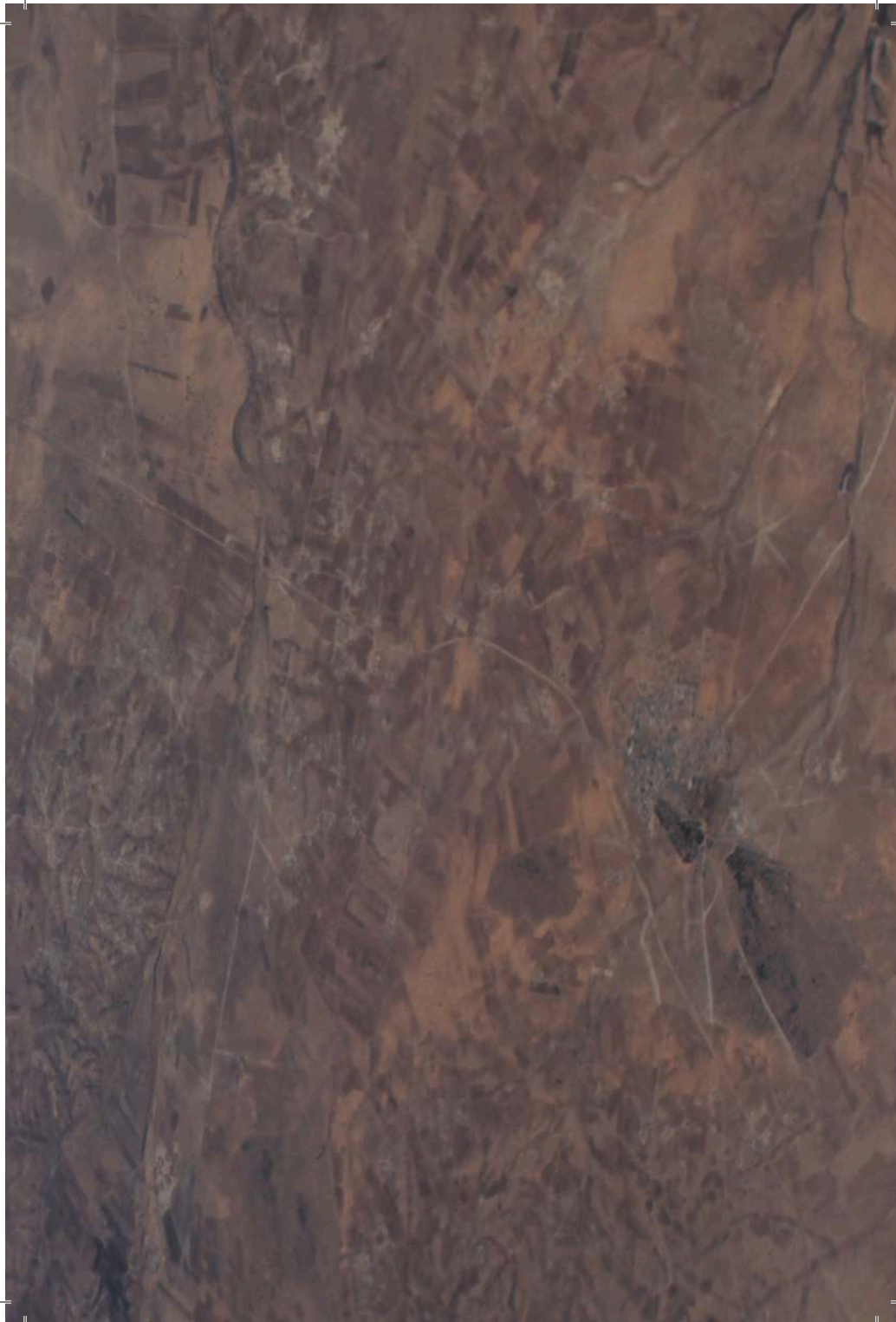


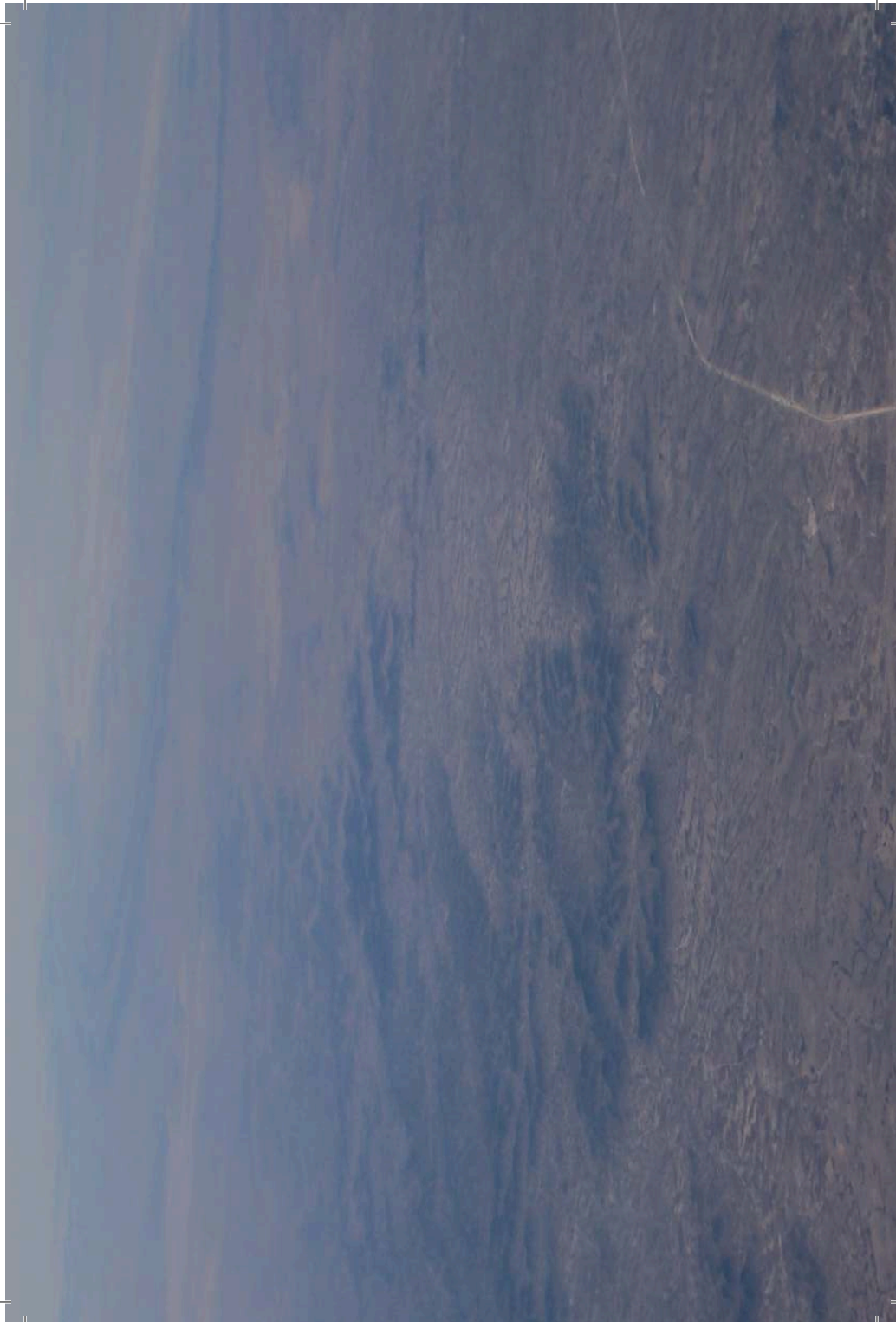




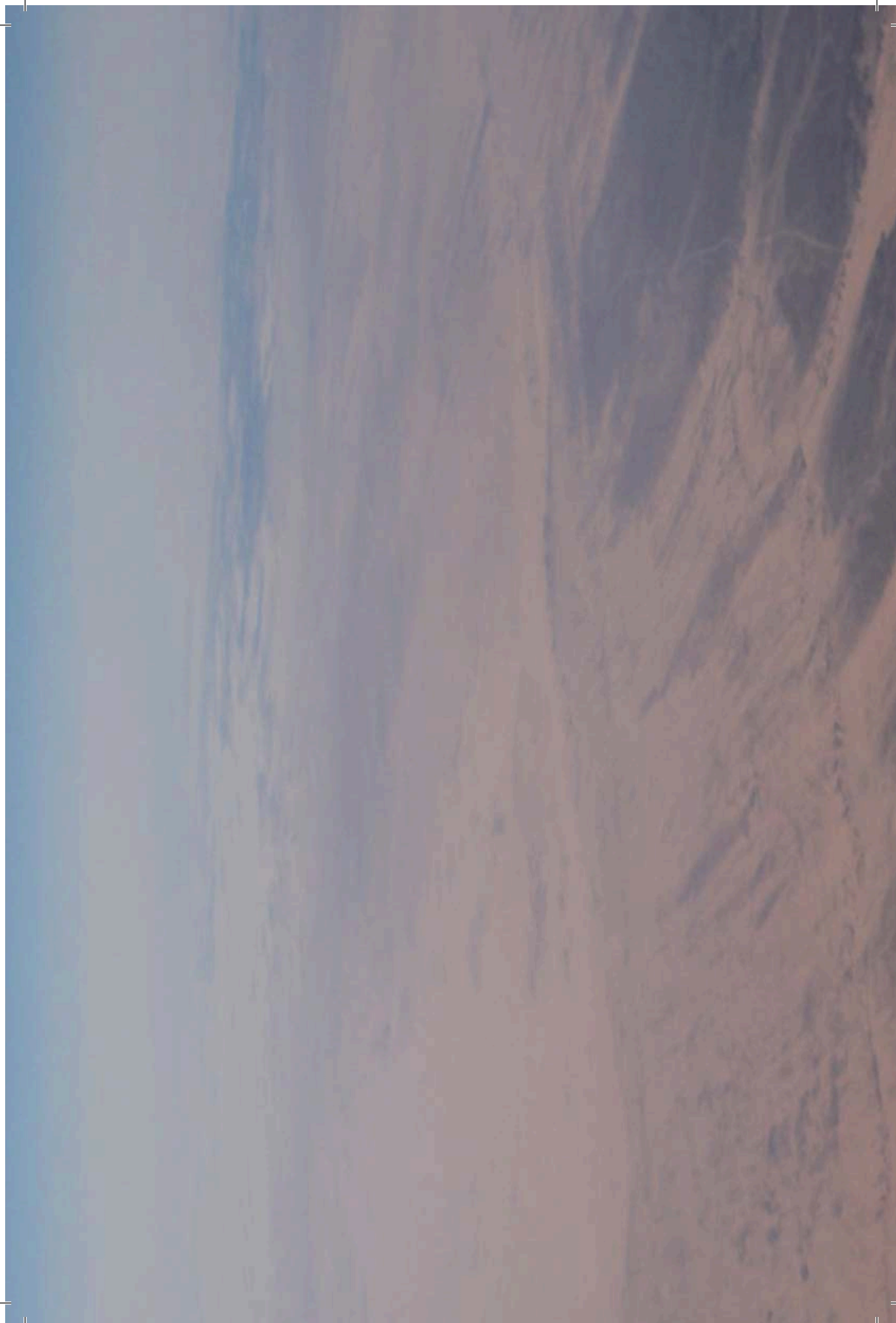


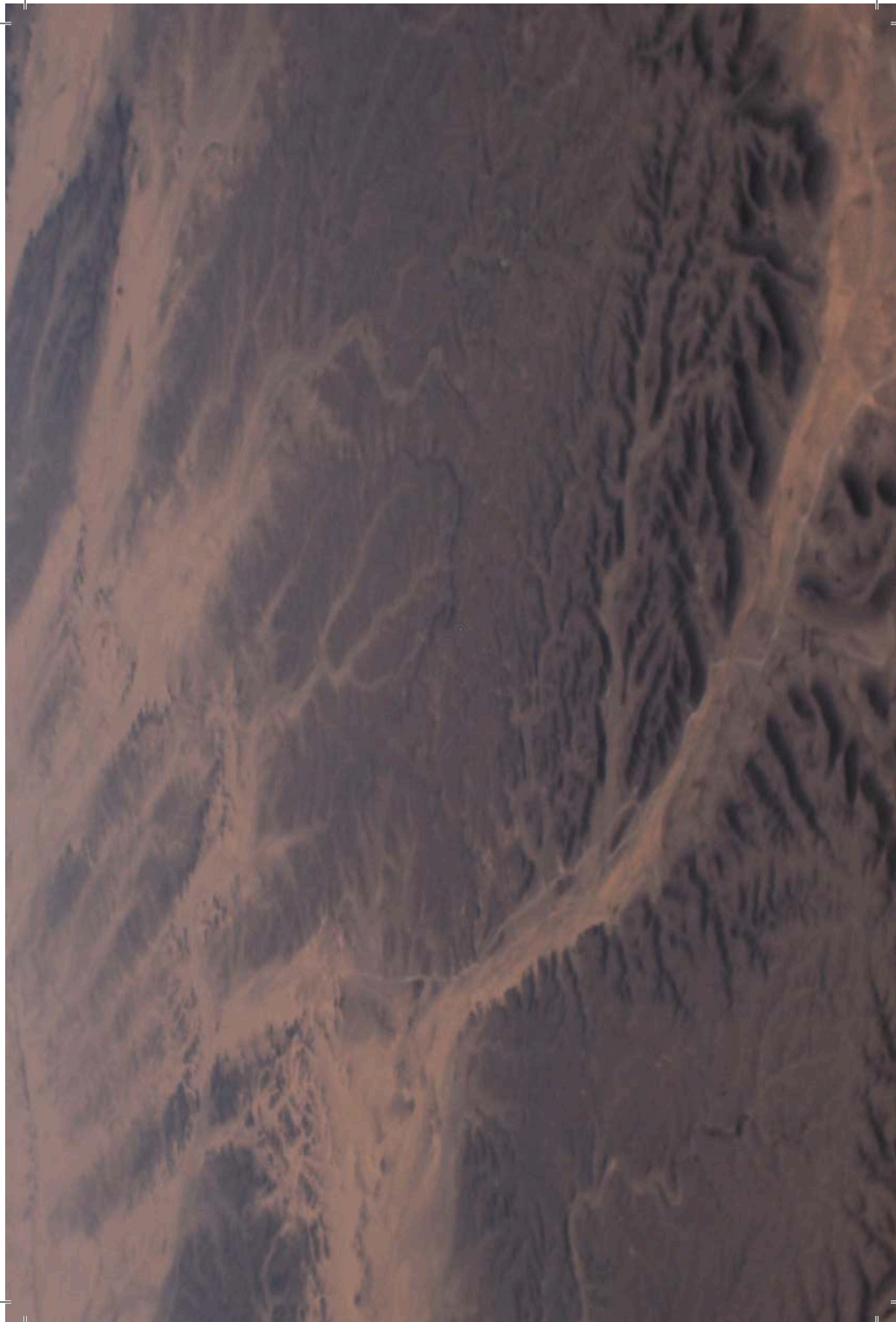




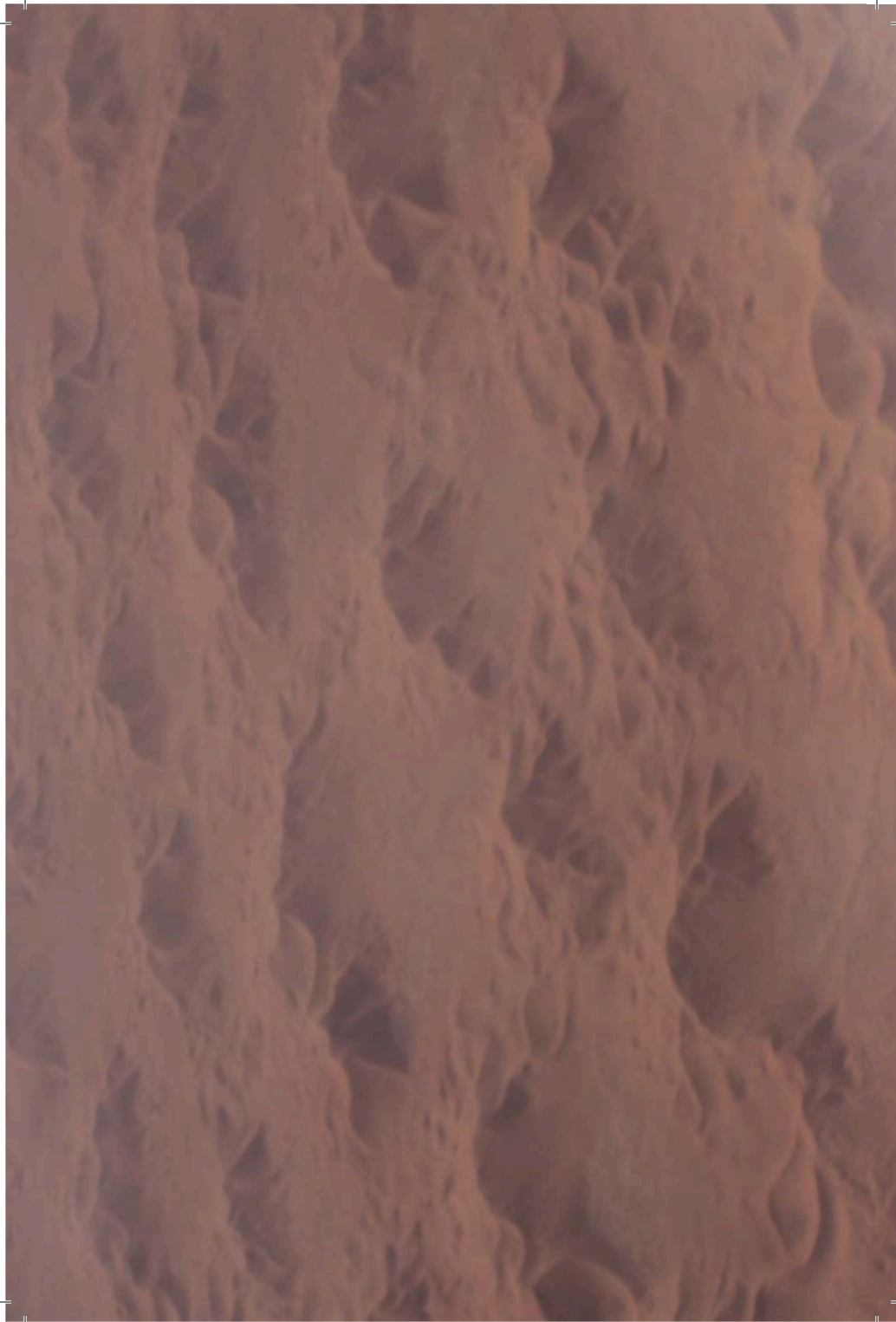












a note on the year of return

As we try to understand what is now called *The Year of Return*, let me introduce you to an Esan proverb that goes like this: *O'ne uwa bhagbe, olele sabo' gbe*. The proverb's translation would be: "One who is not betrayed by an insider can't be hurt by an outsider."

In 1920, the late Marcus Mosiah Garvey Jr. presented his famous 'Back to Africa' program in New York City. In his speech, he stated: *I know no national boundary where the Negro is concerned. The whole world is my province until Africa is free.*

This return, spanning the last four hundred years, celebrated by the Black diaspora (largely by the Black American community due to their history), i cannot help but ponder on how we Africans (Nigerian, Ghanaian and other African nationalities) see it. Do we view this from a negative or positive place? Are we welcoming our sisters and brothers visiting or indeed returning? Are we more comfortable with a short visit, and would we be quick to say our goodbyes?

i see a lot of excitement, but also a lot of judgement and anxiety, before and after the visit of large groups of people from the diaspora to Ghana, especially in December. It seems like our level of intolerance as a collective has grown high. There are those seeing this as a money-grabbing situation and those who find fault in the process and consider it as not-so-genuine. We scrutinise everything said, every mistake made, every step taken by our returning relatives, and lose

sight of what truly is happening. We overly judge when someone says 'Africa'. But as a continent, we have had some exceptional figures who led and shaped the continent in some form and these leaders built the foundation for interaction, reconciliation, and 'returning', between the people on the continent and the diaspora largely with the operational word 'Africa'.

Kwame Nkrumah, a renowned pan-African figure, in his All-African Peoples Conference speech in 1958 stated:

The mid-20th century is Africa's. This decade is the decade of Africa's independence. Forward then to independence, to independence now. Tomorrow, the United States of Africa!

In context, this makes sense: Ghana attained its independence through the leadership of Kwame Nkrumah, and this kind of optimistic energy influenced other parts of the continent. In the next ten years, many countries in the continent (like he proclaimed) achieved independence too. But, the questions here are:

This 'Africa' he spoke of, was it in a political term? Did he say this just to boost the fight for independence in the continent at that time? Why are some people born in this continent happy to identify as African but get angry or triggered the moment a 'foreigner' says "I am going to Africa"? When they make this reference, isn't something from those pre-independence proclamations coming to pass?

Musicians and artists from the continent have reinforced the idea of one 'Africa'. Fela – arguably the most influential artist from the continent – placed a lot of

emphasis on the singular African identity, and in one of his songs, he goes:

I no be gentleman at all o I be Africa man original
I no be gentleman at all o I be Africa man original
I no be gentleman at all o I be Africa man original

In the last ten years, there has been a steady globalisation of the entertainment industry from the continent, and in the spirit of togetherness, artists have done the same thing, aligning under one musical identity, 'Afrobeats'. which directly connects Fela and Burna Boy. Burna Boy carries himself as a reincarnation of Fela and is seen as one of the top three Nigerian artists of his generation. He has said repeatedly that he truly believes in the African identity proposed by Fela and hopes to see the day Africans will use a singular passport. He believes that only then would we truly actualise our strength.

A case has been made by prominent voices from the continent or lovers of the continent that show a 'collective' desire for a single African identity. So, when our people from the diaspora say, "I am going to Africa", what is our case when we rebuke them, and to what point?

In trying to reconcile the chaos handed to us, people born on the continent, i am reminded again of a statement by Kwame Nkrumah: I am not African because I was born in Africa but because Africa was born in me. So who are we to tell a Black person how they begin their journey of returning? All i can say is akwaaba.

this linked experience, stepping aside for others

There is something about this moment, this collective reality that we are sharing directly and indirectly. There is something about this linked experience that forces people to think about their mortality and, even more, creates fear and pain.

i am here. i am as centred as ever. i find myself silencing my experience to make those going through pain be seen. But who sees me? If i silence my experience, do i silence the fact that i had this magnificent time while there has been fear, anger, suffering around me? Can my joy and peace co-exist with the pain and grief of others? Why do i feel as though sharing my experience threatens those with opposite experiences? What world have we designed—where opposing ideas and realities can't take up the same space? When did the numerous ways of being in life stop to exist?

All these feelings and questions drive me toward clarity. To create a more inclusive world, positions must be lost or gained, some voices need to expand, extend, or shrink, some will exist in-between, and there will be ebbs and flows. i must make sure that in my experience of joy and peace during a pandemic, i am still mindful of the pain of those around me. i need to make space to make it comfortable for the person sharing their pain to feel seen. i will continue to learn when to share and when not to share. As simple as this may sound, the world still is figuring this out.

...

Why do we have more men in positions of power? Why are women still fighting for equal pay? To have equality, men must also be frontrunners in demanding and making space for equality. If men were doing this in the majority, we would not be talking about inequality in homes, offices, governments and the world at large.

If people were free to love who they love, we would not have a global movement fighting for queer relationships to exist. Society will be void of judgement, gaze and attacks. We would not ignore people when they state their pronouns.

We live in a world that still has a lot of work to do, and we must divide the responsibilities to make it easy to embrace the work. Thankfully, some of our progressive forebears created a path that we can follow. The path is right in front of us, and tomorrow, our footprints will guide others.

So, even though 2020 has been an amazing year for me, i worry about my aged grandmother and my ageing father. i worry about my siblings. i flew into various countries during this pandemic. Passing through empty airports is not fun. i was fearful sometimes. i cried uncontrollably when Chadwick Boseman died.

This is me saying: Do not get so stuck in your feelings, experiences, beliefs and ideas that you do not have space to consider other people's experiences, beliefs and ideas. No matter how opposed you are to others, do not

be the one that excludes them from a space where they can be or become. Sometimes, all we must do is open the door or keep it open, and let others go through.

little me, little you

Life is filled with little
little becomes giant
It all begins with little

a shadow of thought
grows
into full imagination
before reality sets

Our hearts must go through
the process
the climbing
before the falls

It's all about little you, little me

the water overflows
think back to the beginning, to the little drops little
smiles flowing into laughter
little me, little you

remember how little you were?
little you running around with just pants to cover?
it pays to know your little beginnings, right?

i still remember little me
do you remember little you?
Why can't we share the little stories of our little lives?

Why do we hide the face of little?
Why are you not okay with little?
Hold on to your little self.

Remember, little grows
i am a little man, and i shall remain little
only big to your eyes
little me, little you

6 October 2009

fear

i try to hold back this huge pain I feel

only

by holding it back

I create for myself a pile

a boiling pain

waiting patiently to explode

my mind is in deep confusion

holding it is so much easier

let

it

drop

I scare myself

distorted.

1 April 2012

time will tell

Run down to the very bottom of the ocean

go down there

y
e
s

down there where the existence of another life is real
Tell them about the world above sea level
how we plan to move in once we figure out
how to survive under water

jump to the very top

yes

↑

the very top

planets larger than this one called earth

Tell them about the effect of our actions on Earth
our plans for relocation to their world
Let them come out now
and give us terms of relocation
we might be bringing our problems along

What if the reality of another world is impossible? then
what?

How can we create a world of our own inside this large
one?

where those who believe in nature
can create and maintain the world

run and find out from the scientists
plans of eloping. plans of creating a world within Earth
secured from the meltdown coming

run and find out if minds are thinking alike towards
global warming and the green revolution
go around the world and see
if people now realise
technology is the cause of our problems
creators of evolved technology are scientists we praise

i can see them
planning to colonise Africa
once more, they whisper
for it's still a virgin

29 March 2012

the balance of spirituality

When man and woman no longer seek power or control
when children can now see through the eyes of the
guardian

when peace is no longer what we generally seek
when good or bad becomes relative
when truth is now an individual goal
when god is now a purpose and consciousness
when the human beside you is no means to an end

when we all look beyond self and serve
when our goal in life is spiritually directed
when formats and platforms are as ordinary as the flesh
when gratitude has no price tag
when there is complete peace and harmony in the world

This is the world we desire and badly want as humans
but we can't have a perfect world

Cain always kills Abel

family always falls

nations always control nations

guns and weapons of destruction will always be here

global warming is no mistake

earthquakes by the devil

oceans will one day flow over cities and wash them
away

But just as the evil multiplies
so does love

the perfect world desired by a lot is a false world
for all
the moment you realise that
then your unfoldment begins remember god is neither
good nor bad these are all physical attributes

god is love
love is god
to some, god is nothing

Being neutral would make more sense
when your spiritual eyes open
the path to god or spiritual liberation is but narrow
Truth will always be given
earn it in this lifetime.
humans shall not get there through good or bad but by
being detached from the world
and putting desire only on
the god idea
nothing else.

Our greatest gift from god is the freedom
to decide to be our own god
to create heaven or hell for ourselves.

1 April 2012

kids from the river

Are these not the same kids from the river?
Are they still crying?
making the river flow endlessly?

When they stop,

we shall know the importance
of the crying children
by the riverside.

29 December 2017

illusion II

i have met the one they said was only an illusion
She walks this earth with me
side by side

i no longer have an explanation
What i feel has no words or meaning
Her blows hurt me not
She is my constant spectacle
A miracle given with no expectation

In her presence
my pride is depleted

this heart

This is the heart that cries, the same one bleeding.
i stand tall on this mountain, not for fame, nor the gains
of life but for the sight i might attain; the sight that has
your face on it is the sight i seek with my life.

i am the man turned down by you. The same man who
picked you up when you fell and (yes) as you got back
in motion, you looked at me like a piece of rag. “Oh,
no! you bellowed.” That was what you gave me, and
with a smile, i took it as a sign that this is what i seek –
that you see me. Good or bad, i have fallen too deep to
start thinking twice. When it is you, i think only once,
and it ends with you at the top.

My words are now very concise sentences. All the
complete statements i make have something to do with
you:

i love her.

She is my love.

i am in love with her.

i want to see my love.

i am confused, yet i know the next step to take so far as
it is about you.

All that glitters is you.

When i see anything beautiful, i think about you. Still,
they don't appeal to me the way you do. i look no
more for answers to my questions because the answer
to my most important question, L-O-V-E, has been
answered. Because of you, i know now that no question

comes without an answer when the question of love is answered. What is harder than finding true love?

You are my whisper in the middle of the night, my sight when the earth has no more light. You are my voice when it is needed most; my hero is what you are because what can be more heroic than loving.

23 may 2010, 8:54 am

like that

You are my first sight like that
you are what i see
when i look into the future
like that
you are my breath and i lie not.

You are my taste
you are my satisfaction
and
yes
You are my laughter.

It's rolling still inside my head
the very first conversation
goddess-in-making
i compare you to nothing
angels would be jealous
how i feel about you is most unholy.

Every statement made by you
registered like what has been recorded in my head
i talk to you without thoughts
everything i
do around you
inspired by you

what else is there
i have you beside me.

Mountains are now like baby stones
the winds coming from the north are now ordinary
my whole body feels lifted to another level by you.

If you doubt me like they do
no problem

My question comes
Why can't i love when i was created by love?

This i give to you
my heart, body and my love.

mortality

The idea of the mortality that brings fear to humans has never been of great interest to me. As a time portal, i am doing just what i need to do to rid myself of the burden that comes with the 'ultimate attachment'. Greed, hate, envy, corruption and all become accepted as survival traits, and if i must survive in that way, so help me god, because i won't.

i have a gift – to see through life in a unique way. i see, in seconds, what it takes many people years to understand. i almost always feel like i am alone in this world; no one truly understands how my mind operates. Those who i think might understand are dead. If living, they live in worlds that i don't.

i have come to love and appreciate the world for what it is: a canvas. Every being living here could become immortalised or disappear with time.

There is, indeed, within me, the hunger for something new.

hunger

There is a hunger for more
in this hunger
pride isn't lost
in this hunger
humanity isn't lost
in this hunger
there is still responsibility.

There is indeed pain and sorrow
There is indeed fear for tomorrow
This is our reality
This is what we know.

But

There is joy and laughter for we are alive
There is contentment, for we know better
There is pride in our accomplishment
There is nothing and something at the same time.

transition

My life has changed forever.

As a child, i dreamt of becoming something incomprehensible. As a young eleven-year-old, i started my first venture which was gathering leftover wood at a sawmill which i sold to women who needed wood for commercial cooking. i was filled with the excitement of seeing things happen. i had some cash in my hands at the end of the day. From here on, my pursuit for more money, for so-called financial freedom, started.

Fast forward to 2004, i was an undergraduate, organising parties, deep in student politics, building a good experience as a student but not so much into studying. What i did with my time was to dream and find immediate ways to actualise those dreams. i did everything i could, served in any way i could within the entertainment industry and there my vision for life became clearer. In 2005, i decided that i would leave the university, set up my own company and start changing the world in my little way. So, i started an entertainment music business in 2006.

But, i had bigger dreams – to change lives, build a legacy deep-rooted in service and help in any way that could make lives better in my country and my continent.

i have always been a child with big dreams, forever walking on the street daydreaming. But i was a child only for a while, as i quickly fell into the race for „financial wealth and freedom“ and my dreams got clouded. They became fancy and anything that was not

related to stealing was cool. This was my life until 2001 when i lost my mother and brother on the same day. This changed my life into the man i am now and still consciously trying to become.

It did not happen over time, but after their deaths, i realised life was bigger than riches; to be truly rich was to touch lives and help them become better. Regardless, i was still keen about money and gathering material wealth. But, between 2009 and 2011, my goals in life and lifestyle changed. My life's journey became about affecting lives. i stopped drinking alcohol. i became boring at parties, and parties became a workplace. This allowed me to nurture and develop the dream to build a legacy, to be free, to be impactful. My desire to jump at any idea related to money gradually died. i wanted more. What to do, who to do it with, how to do it, where, when, why and how to keep doing it: these steps became important to me. If any idea did not pass the test of these core questions, i was not interested. This began my journey into studying great minds – women and men who sacrificed before me. i became curious about how they served and what exactly they sacrificed. My concept of service, sacrifice and legacy began to take a different shape, and in the last seven years, i have dropped things that had nothing to do with building a meaningful legacy. i have greatly benefited from the support of different individuals on this journey.

i am inspired by many things. Specific individual lives have continuously inspired my journey. Cuba's 1957 revolution and the people who tirelessly led it – Fidel, Che, Celia – stand out and inspire me. Visiting

Cuba, which from the onset of planning the trip felt like a calling and pilgrimage, rather than a vacation, has brought me full circle. It brought an end to self moulding and growing efforts that lasted seven years and kickstarted a new version of myself.

i am confident in this new me. i am Okhiogbe Omonblanks Omonhinmin. i am going to brighten Africa's map. i am going to shape my community progressively. i am going to develop initiatives or start conversations on accountability, education, and creative freedom. My choices will contribute towards a world where a Nigerian or African passport has the same access as anybody from Europe and America. i am going to help improve the way we see each other.

Going to Cuba made me aware of the price of freedom. i became conscious that freedom is an individual journey, which one must keep fighting for. i promised myself there in Cuba that i must share my life's experiences to inspire others, but without imposing my ideas of freedom on anyone. i am certain about the one person i want to go on this journey with, and i look forward to this new life with joy and excitement.

The Price of Freedom

The joy of my children taken or won?

Only time will tell

But time is turning fire into smoke all that is remaining is ashes

We were winners

who fought while winning

still fought when others celebrated

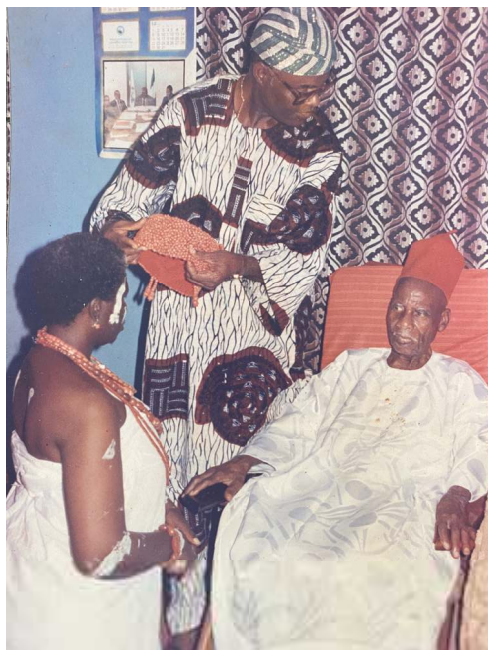
we still hold our fists.

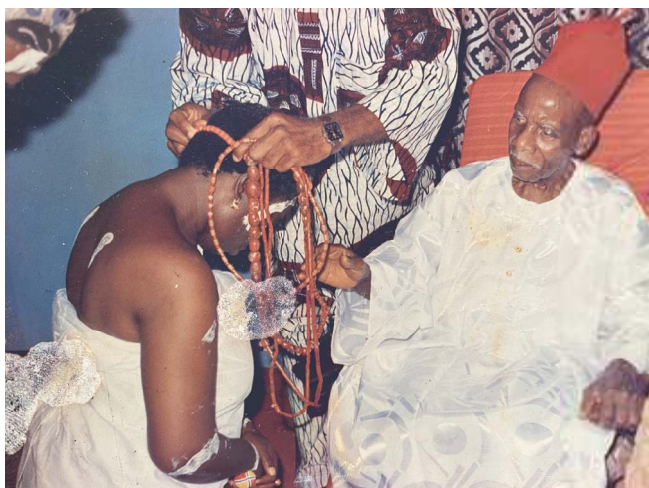
Pride is high
my eyes fixed on the prize
the prize is inner
dignity.

The fight since the 60s
hasn't been justified on both sides indeed
a sacrifice of a people still living.

two-faced
god
two-faced
devil
two-faced
world
two-faced
Cuba
two-faced
Castro







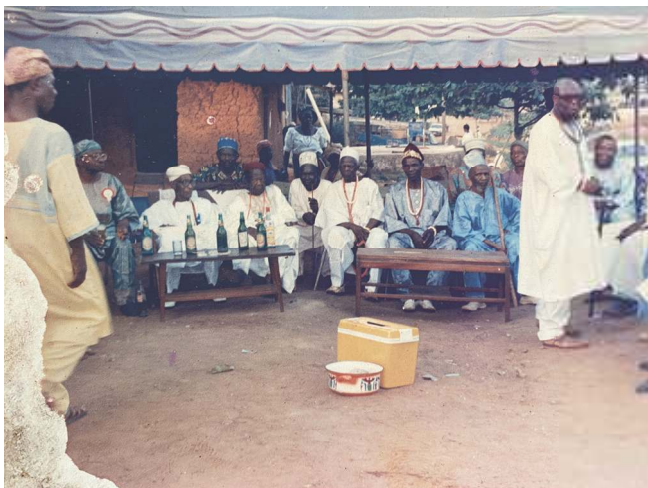














The first part of the paper discusses the importance of understanding the cultural context of the research. It highlights the need for researchers to be sensitive to the values and beliefs of the communities they are studying. This is particularly important in the field of education, where cultural differences can significantly impact learning outcomes. The paper then moves on to discuss the challenges of conducting research in culturally diverse settings. It notes that researchers often face difficulties in establishing rapport with participants and in interpreting their responses. To address these challenges, the paper suggests several strategies, including the use of local researchers and the development of culturally appropriate research instruments. The final part of the paper discusses the importance of ethical considerations in research. It emphasizes the need for researchers to obtain informed consent from participants and to ensure that the research is conducted in a fair and equitable manner. The paper concludes by noting that a deep understanding of the cultural context is essential for the successful conduct of research in education.



duality

When you arrive in Cuba, right from the airport, you can see and sense what it is to be free.

There is space for the old people. Walking through Havana made me realise that old people are indeed not meant to be locked at home. You can see them walking the streets of Havana with their support, crossing the road and selling, no one looking at them with sympathy. This was one of the first things i noticed; this means Havana is a place for everyone and every age.

The neighbourhood green parks in Cuba are a meeting point for every single person, from babies who are a few months old to youths and adults who are over ninety. i have seen them all in this microcosm of Cuba, where age, sexuality and colour have no border. This is the Cuba of solidarity and love.

i see children running and playing sports, youths all on their phones surfing the internet and parents doing the same while watching their young ones play. i also see grandparents mostly having a video call with their children, and others basking in the pleasure of speaking to a loved one, miles away. This is the Cuba filled with smiles and laughter.

These parks can be a catalyst for the revolt that Cuba still needs to move in directions that will benefit everyone. Witnessing the people call for change and ask for a better life is proof that the land continues to negotiate for better living conditions in Cuba.

But Cuba is not a perfect place, even for a visitor. i saw and experienced the other side of its charm.

At the airport immigration, carrying my Nigerian passport made me a target for yet another interrogation. i can't say why i assumed that i would not be interrogated in Cuba. What made me think this? Truth be told, this was my worst experience at any immigration check. i was held for more than an hour with no explanation. This experience quickly made me aware of how bad things could get. Over time, during my visit, i observed how the country could be a liberated place, yet very racist.

What would i love to see Cuba grow into?
Nothing and everything.

*We are all living in this big bubble
Within
sometimes, it becomes a
struggle to find one's
identity*

*where can a seeker go
to get out from under?*

transition II

Nine years ago, it became paramount that i take some drastic turns and change my lifestyle.

As i made my way through this journey, i decided to change how i communicate. This reduced the number of interactions i had to those who truly had something ‘interesting’ to say. Also, I began writing in CAPS.

This really worked through the years, and i am glad that i made those choices.

Not long ago, i realised that the journey had taken a different turn. With this, it is clear to me that change is the only constant. Where i once strived to have only meaningful encounters, it now happens naturally. This is my new life. i only find myself in meaningful situations.

The way i communicate and the people i am in exchange with have changed. i have said goodbye to writing in CAPS.

the inbetween space

You can always find me between the space of knowing and the unknowing, between the freedom that comes with searching and being still. Bound to the idea of ‘knowing’, once you know, do you stop searching? i am not in search of any truth, nor a defined knowledge.

For me, to be Black comes with definitions that do not come close to defining who i am and yet i am black. i continue to search to not be stagnant and blindly accept what that notion of being Black means or of who “they say i am”.

As i move through this world as a person – Black, African, West African, Nigerian, Esan, these ‘labels’ do not define my footprints. i am not just human, i am also a spirit, a traveller, more than human. In my human existence, i am many things: a child to my parents, brother to my siblings, nephew to my aunties and my uncles. This list is never-ending. Therefore, i am not one thing: Black.

Did you know that i lived for a while in Ghana? From 2013 to 2020? If it takes ten years to naturalise in Ghana, am i almost Ghanaian? If you argue against that, my partner is Ghanaian, Jamaican and British, and that connects me with these different places. But, what i am now and becoming daily is way bigger than what you think of me.

How does one seek advancement for their people?
How do we redefine justice and freedom within our community even as we exist in a wider society that still

holds people captive, still makes people feel unseen?
This is where we are: a 'black man' steps out of his home to fight for black equality, yet reigns with supreme terror at home. What equality is he searching for?

How do i become a better man within a patriarchal society, a society that has made life somewhat comfortable for me as a man, yet challenges me as i seek inclusion and change? What i seek is somewhat a burden, yet i must bear it. Selecting when to denounce and announce, i live a contradicted life.

Though i may live well as a man within a patriarchal society, in the end, patriarchy does me more harm than good. And though, i know we can never be truly free in this physical world, or make this world perfect, we can be kind, peaceful, respectful, loving.

the souls of b/Black folk

“Alas, with time, my contempt began to fade. The worlds I longed for - and all their dazzling opportunities - were theirs, not mine. But they should not keep these prizes, I said. Some, all, I would wrest from them. Just how I would do it I could never decide: by reading law, by healing the sick, by telling the wonderful tales that swam in my head - some way. With other black boys, the strife was not so fiercely sunny; their youth shrunk into tasteless sycophancy, or silent hatred of the pale world about them and mocking distrust of everything white or wasted itself in a bitter cry: Why did God make me an outcast and a stranger in my own house.

The shades of the prison-house closed round about us all: walls strait and stubborn to the whitest, but relentlessly narrow, tall, and unscalable to sons of night who plod darkly on in resignation, or beat unavailing palm against the stone, or steadily, half hopelessly, watch the streak of blue above.”²

2 W.E.B Dubois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, p. 2.

Often, i wonder about the line that separates the Black bodies living in Africa and those outside the continent, especially those living in the global north. Before i ever travelled outside of Africa, i gathered my information from television screens (“the tube” as it is called in the movie, *The Network*), occasional reading and largely by returnees. These kinds of returnees are either those who lived here before (for example, in Nigeria) and left (or escaped as some called it) or those whose ancestors were forcefully taken but found their way here in the present to be reconnected with their ancestors’ land.

i look at myself and those around me and wonder if we do b/Black the same, African the same, Nigerian the same? This thought has burdened me for a long time, for as long as i have realised that “the tube” only cares for capitalism, and that i must find my truth elsewhere. From here, my journey towards denationalisation & decentralisation takes centre stage.

Though the institutions and infrastructure inherited in Nigeria and other parts of Africa may look different from the systems and institutions in the global north, these systems are essentially the same. They are more alike and linked than we realise, and designed to be oppressive.

So,

i no longer wonder about the line that separates us; i no longer wonder about who truly is my kin. My gaze is on space, who enters, who does not, who feels safe and who does not and the infinite.

This system has forcibly used Black bodies to torment other black bodies, and likewise, black bodies - through survival and the gains of capitalism - have been used to disenfranchise Black society, be it in Africa, Europe, America or Asia. We have been outlined as “other” and we are left to find water in a desert.

How does the world atone for what has been done and continues to be done to black bodies? Why are black people burdened with the idea of making space safe for non-black people? Specifically, why are we burdened with white fragility? Why should we bother to think about your feelings? Why do we need to defer to your point of view on everything? Why do we still tether towards what makes you comfortable? Where does true freedom lie for Black people, consciously and unconsciously?

my body. my home. 35 □ of data

Certain sounds, smells, architecture, voices can easily take me into a loop that lands me back in time.

i often wonder how 'home' can be missed so much. Home isn't the structure or place you grew up in. Home is memory collected over time.

This music gives me a portal back to Benin City, where the foundation of who i become daily was built.

Music by Osakpamwan Ohenhen

Song: Atiti Nu Go

Album: Highlife Bini

VOWS

i have spent my entire life, every single moment has brought me to this very point, standing here in front of you.

i am here. i come complete. i am not lost. i am fully aware of why i stand here.

i am here to enjoy life with you. i am here to build life with you. i am here to travel the world with you. i am here to rest on your shoulders and give you mine to rest on whenever we both need to rest.

i vow to listen. i vow to take it slow and speed up when it permits. i vow not to be in a rush. i vow to protect me. i vow to protect our children. i vow to allow you to protect me when i can't and i vow to protect you when you need me to.

i vow to love you. i vow to learn how to keep on loving you. i vow to love us.

i vow to make sure we pack our bags at least ten hours before any trip. :)

i vow to smile. Remind me when i don't, and i will do the same for you.

i have stepped into a whole new world that i never accepted with anybody else. i completely surrender to your trust.

You make me better. i feel more connected to myself since being with you. You have opened my shell bit by bit. You have made me be able to connect with you and others.

One of the reasons i love you, i can share anything with you.

If i can think it, i can share it. i never thought i would be here, and this is happening because i met you.

i will share my life with you now and always with all the love i have.

i will work daily to be your friend, husband, partner and the best father to our kids when we decide to.

Billie Adwoa McTernan, i love you.









biography

Okhiogbe Omonblanks Omonhinmin, born in Benin City, Nigeria, has evolved through different spaces and realities to become an interdisciplinary being – an ‘ambassador of entanglement’. Like water, he takes on the form or position needed to actualise realities. His Life-Practice unfolds through participatory acts, shared experiences and continuous journeys. Omonblanks sees the body as a memory collector. He also sees everything he does as having a life of its own, creating ripples of possibilities. He observes and turns to the physical and non-physical to locate multi-realities.

His holistic practices include self-observation, conscious witnessing, past, present and future visioning, creative support, holding spaces of care, slowing down, retreats, thoughts and food sharing. In his work with individuals and organisations, he prioritises transparency, accountability and radical honesty to guide them towards their desired internal and external growth.

Before anything, the core of who he is today is being the father he is to his child and the partner he is to Billie.

notes on subversive choices

Ambassador of Entanglement: i borrow this phrase from the artist J. Morgan Puett. For as long as i can remember, people would ask me the same question: “What do you do?” My answer often changes depending on who is asking, but one thing that stays the same is that i present life as my practice.

b/Black: The way i see ‘us’ in the construct of being b/Black is not subject to ‘us/we’ perpetually responding to an oppressive system, reclaiming, denouncing, or enduring it. It is not exclusive or limited to claiming a position. My blackness encompasses everything black. It is not ‘one or the other’. It recognises all in the state they are or will be.

Curate/co-curate: Life they say is art and art is life. Therefore, i am art in this exhibition of life. My parents play the role of co-curators in my existence, as my partner and I do in the life that we bring forth.

i: In this book, i attempt to present myself with honesty. i have realised that in this physical world, one of the things i must do daily is to face my ego, the one given and the one created by myself. So, the small letter ‘i’ is my way of addressing and subduing my ego on these pages with many expressions and perspectives of myself.

appreciation

This book is in loving memory of my mother, Victoria Elomese Omonhinmin (née Akhimien), the person who made me write the first piece in this book, the same person who continues to inspire me in understanding life and working in my light.

My father, Cosmos Ijogbe Omonhinmin, aka Stormy-hatcher, aka the Godfather. i call him Popsy. My life practice is grounded in the fact that i can express myself through any form and medium and i dream fearlessly because i saw (and continue to see) him do a million things with the same dedication and joy.

My siblings, who travelled through a similar route into this world, with whom i share childhood memories and many inside jokes; “Onome, you see river, you balance, you jump put, who fish?” i hail una: Isebaghe Omonhinmin, Cosmos Ijogbe Omonhinmin Jnr, Esele Omonhinmin, thank you.

To the one, sometimes Neo, sometimes Trinity, sometimes Agent Smith, sometimes Morpheus, sometimes Oracle, all the time, Billie McTernan – through it all, we stay fly. Before you, i didn’t fully understand unconditional love, now i do. i love you unconditionally with no expectations. Thank you for making space for me to just be. Thank you for accepting to co-curate space for another human to pass through this world.



kids from the river

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Author's mother holding her first child. 1979

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