

# Dance of the Intellect

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# Dedication

To all lovers of life and art and  
especially to my brother  
Ray Rex Pope  
for his unwavering faith in me...



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# Introduction

*Dance of the Intellect* is a collection of poems written over a long period. They are a materialisation of the many stories, comments, experiences and observations that inspired my life. It is a cross-section of experiences that I have gathered from several settings as a child, student, mother and as a member of staff in several workplaces.

Split into six sections; Life and Art, University Life, Ageing, Disillusionment, Physique and Accolades, I explore what we may call, “two sides of a coin” as I try to make sense of the ever present conflict between the bad and the good, ugly and the beautiful.

Sometimes, with a ‘prophetic eye, I peer into the future’ and send a sombre invitation to my reader to share my world. I have always told friends that mine has not been just eventful, but also emotionally engaging.

A.J.K.T.

# **PART 1**

## Poems about Life and Art



## **Dance of the Intellect**

It begins in the word of God  
To fathom great depth  
And wisdom,  
In scholarly journals  
It skips as it grapples  
With views and opinions

In research papers  
It hops and jazzes  
As it adds and subtracts  
To multiply and divide  
Facts and theories.

In books and encyclopedias;  
Those great volumes  
That excite  
With joy;  
One draws conclusions  
For others to reject or revise...

On the internet  
Ha! The network  
Of myriad thoughts,  
Views, opinions...

You sort, sieve, winnow and remove  
All the whey to cream fact,  
And polish it to precision.

So you dance away your void  
And fill it with knowledge  
"Dance of the intellect"  
And the quest goes on ...

## Name It

It was strong, overwhelming;  
I resisted shying away  
It rebelled against me  
    Resistance conquered.  
    "Name it", said Reason  
    "It's love", said Heart.  
    But is it?

Now with acceptance  
It saps my strength  
Grips my soul  
Holding my being  
With fangs of powerful passion  
Powerfully, my feelings grasp it.  
    "Name it", cries Intellect,  
    "Hate reversed", answers Emotion  
    But is it?

I still want to know what 'It' is.  
It enslaves my body  
Troubles my mind  
Leaving me in a state of confusion.

    "Name it", said Sense  
    "Is it madness?" I asked  
    Only time can tell, cautioned Prudence

Then logic took over  
To reason and pass judgment:  
    "You are young  
    But wait until you're as old as I am  
    Then you will know  
    What it is!"

## The Secret

Today I discovered the secret;  
The secret of life  
And it is no open secret  
That takes one a decade to get to  
I have indeed discovered.

Maybe, it's what you make of it  
Make it nice, it will be thrice  
Make it sour, it will expire  
Yet, others say, it is short  
Live it as quickly as you can  
For who knows when it will wane?

Some say,  
It is not worth the bother  
Then why labour to gather  
That which will only wither  
With the passage of time?

I heard it said  
That life was sweet  
And I was tempted to taste  
That which was sweet  
It tastes me as I taste it!

My father cautioned  
"Beware, it is hot and cold!"  
And I said I would make it  
Lukewarm -  
But how?

The elders talk about it  
As the other side of death,  
I wonder how they know  
Which side it is  
For those that think know  
Indeed know nothing!

Today  
I made a leap  
Into the pool  
And came up with  
What it is;  
It's not  
What you think  
It is!

## **Pleasant Pain**

I am sorry, I must hurt you  
Although we hear  
Our bodies screaming  
To fuse and explode,  
I must hurt you!

The noise is louder,  
Louder than cannons,  
But a tiny voice whispers  
"The line... the line...  
Never cross the line..."  
You pound and stagger  
Oblivious of my stance  
But I hurt and rejoice  
For the painful victory  
Redeems my conscience...

## **If Only!**

If only you'd pour your heart out,  
Let me know what you think,  
Then I would not roam the world  
In search of tit-bits  
Which disintegrate in the process  
Of finding out!

If only you had come clean  
And confessed everything  
Then you would not have to worry  
Who will tell me  
Another heart-rending, soul-freezing lie!

As long as you keep silent,  
I will traverse the whole world  
In search of 'news' about  
That which threatens  
To cut me in half!

## The Magical Bird

“Kanyamushungushungu, Kanyamushungushungu,<sup>1</sup>  
Will I ever die or will I live forever?”  
The head bends downwards  
But my spirit, my youthful spirit,  
Refuses that answer and asks again:

“Kanyamushungushungu, Kanyamushungushungu,  
Will I ever die or will I live forever?”  
This time it glances upwards  
And my youthful spirit rejoices  
In the great news of the promise:  
The promise of everlasting life  
“But, how come I’ve never seen  
Anyone who has lived forever?”

“Ha! ha! ha!”  
My brilliant brother mocks,  
“How could you, when you have not  
Lived half the time  
That forever takes?”

---

1 The bird Kanyamushungushungu is believed to have prophetic powers. Children ask it questions about all sorts of things and they believe it gives them true answers.

## Not Quite

“Not quite”  
Is the tale of my life  
Of my mother’s co-wife  
Pressed the hoe on my mother’s tummy  
And disoriented the fetus  
Not quite dislodging it.

So I was born by a prime,  
A month before time.  
The long desired child  
In a shroud of membrane  
And the first cry  
Not quite right.

I refused my Mom’s breast  
And I refused the artificial teat;  
Exclusively fed on milk,  
I stuck to it  
Even when my age-mates  
Had long started on solids;  
For eight good years,  
The growth was not normal.

Light as a feather  
With a big head  
White protruding eyes  
That threatened to dropout.  
Pretty, but not quite!

School tended normal;  
Daughter of a headmaster,  
Pampered and dotted;  
Started a little too early  
Skipping primary three,  
My aptitude, not quite normal.  
In primary six,  
Called upon to do sums

Considered un-doable  
By those in primary seven  
Come Primary Leaving Examinations,  
Performance, not quite spectacular!  
No first choice schools,  
The option, not quite superb.

O. level:  
Not quite extraordinary;  
bouts of sickness  
death of a beloved brother  
The result, a normal Grade one  
The candidate, not quite ecstatic!

The onset of 'not-quiteneess'...  
The academic arena:  
Mediocre grades;  
The social life,  
Hot-cold salvation,  
Not quite ideal.  
First class at Makerere  
Narrowly missed;  
"A very bright student"  
With no evidence to prove it  
Not quite brilliant!.

Off to the marital platform  
Losing a first-born  
Struggling with a second pregnancy,  
In an out-of-wedlock liaison.  
Not quite right  
For the once savedee

The struggle continues;  
A healthy child born,  
The marriage cleansed;  
Then the call  
To tutor  
Not to Lecture

However, marital duties  
Must be fulfilled across the border  
And career expectations  
Not quite fulfilled.

For years, I lurch  
In the education pond  
And nurture young brains  
The white man's tongue  
Now rolls on my tongue  
And endowed with skills  
To impart it, I relax  
In a half-baked state myself...  
Not quite fulfilled.

Is it the remuneration?  
Why not mix business with office?  
So I bake for and dress  
Lovers ready to address the public  
With their nuptial bliss ...  
The pressure is overwhelming  
The gains are promising.  
But the status, not quite right.

I middle in middle class  
Living in a structure of 'our' own  
Which is not quite complete,  
Owning a personal vehicle  
With no road license!

Children go to school,  
Fees hard to find  
endless needs...  
now compete with them  
In the search for knowledge  
Not quite the end of the road.

The sure certainty in it all  
Is the middling quality

The never-reaching factor  
Is that I strive harder,  
Like Paul the apostle,  
To reach the goal and win the prize  
That goal, that shifts like a mirage –  
Not quite reachable.

Realisation hits me;  
That contentment is the horse  
That will swiftly carry me  
To ultimate fulfillment ...  
My positive confession

But in my true confession  
My mind still wonders  
Whether things will ever be  
Quite right.

## Far Yet Near

At crossroads  
I cry;  
Far away,  
Countless miles,  
Over the seas,  
Across oceans,  
Beyond ...  
At night  
In solitude,  
In dreamland ...  
We talk,  
Play  
Laugh  
And joke!  
Then, tears wiped,  
As I read through your letters  
I get a glimpse of you  
On paper;  
What better eye  
Than that in the mind?

## **The Pearl**

Your precious flowing waters  
Are now running amok among  
The harnessed turbines...

Pearl! Oh Pearl!  
What a gem you are!  
Though your priceless forests  
Are ploughed and plundered  
And your swamps are no more...  
For the papyrus reed, marsh and bog  
Are nothing but historical facts  
In Geography text books.

Pearl! Oh Pearl!  
Wake up from your deep slumber  
Of complacency  
And arrest the remnant waters  
On the mountain side  
Before gravity swallows up  
Your wells and springs.

Modern Technology,  
That mother- killer,  
Has butchered the natural resources  
In the name of development.

## Citizens' Prayer

Our Emissary,  
Who art in Parliament  
Honorable be thy name  
Thy corruption come,  
In scarcity as in plenty.  
Give us this chance our daily request,,  
Free us from intimidation and apprehension:  
And remember the votes we gave you!  
Lead us not into nepotism  
But deliver us from poverty  
For yours is the egotism  
The decadence and the duplicity  
Displayed in your parliamentary sessions  
As you fight over the crumbs of CHOGM<sup>2</sup>  
To attain the sitting allowance  
Rather than redeem us:  
In our day, and the days to come ...  
    And may the God of justice  
    Dwell in your conscience  
    And the love of material gain  
    Depart from your routine  
    Now and forever,  
    Amen.

---

2 CHOGM- Commonwealth Heads Of Government Meeting

## The Fork's Diary

It used to be three times a day  
This dipping in the rice  
But with the invasion by mice,  
Now it's hardly twice.

Daily I move  
Together with Knife;  
In, out, to, fro ...  
The pattern subsisting  
Until yester-night!

I missed that round  
Or they missed Dinner,  
As I waited behind clear Plate  
I was in place,  
Yet no one spotted me.

Did they eat  
Straight from the pot  
Or did they use bare fingers?  
So I'll miss Soap  
Now that I am not soiled  
And will not be soaked in suds  
And rinsed in clean water.

## **Life and Art**

Art has made my life,  
Part of what I am as a wife.  
My life is an art;  
And art has gripped my heart.

The meaning of life is the secret of art.  
The wedding with rings and hearts,  
Is a quest for love, beauty and truth in life.

The art of life is the life of art  
Like the love of a wife is her heart  
With wisdom, courage and devotion:  
A wife with heart and emotion.

Like a wife to passion,  
Is artist to devotion;  
Wholly involved and absorbed  
In nature, and inspired.

Like the love of a wife is spontaneous,  
The feelings in a life are continuous,  
With care, contentment and duty-bound;  
A wife and an artist are in the same boat found.

## **The Priceless Gift**

You are the pillar and the salt of creation,  
You are the anchor and the soil,  
The soil that nurtures the seed of the  
World...

Who but you in your threesome presence  
Can withstand the storms and turmoil  
That marriage and life entail?

The union with Him and him by your side  
Like a triangular sail that traverses  
The troubled waters of this world.

Mary Sumner, Mary Magdalene,  
Mary the virgin mother,  
You are our pointers...  
To guide, to counsel  
But most of all  
To love and to be loved.

For years, we have dogged your steps...  
Till now a century later,  
We live your life  
And what a difference!  
From the uncouth, uncultured  
And totally blinded wife,  
To a life that is full:  
Like a river with over-flowing waters,  
Like the never-ending ocean,  
God's waters surround us with  
Love, patience, truth and grace...  
A grace that lifts  
Our hearts today and forever...

## Look Out!

You should have asked  
What company I had  
Then you would know  
That my conscience, my ever present companion,  
Would never desert me  
To the wiles of my aching body  
That thunder in tumultuous rebellion  
Craving your magical touch.  
You should have allowed your mind a chance  
To give meaning to this consuming fire,  
The smoldering flame of passion  
Well harnessed in the façade of decorum.  
Then you would have kept your anger in check  
And given reason a chance  
To analyze the pros and cons  
Of the would-have-been moment –  
The long-awaited moment  
That never was.

## **Famine**

Thoughts are uncontrollable weeds  
Suffocating the psyche  
That is a reality.  
That 'absence' can cause  
The mind to rotate around in a maze  
That we know as habit.  
To imagine that thoughts are endless is  
To understate the magnitude of absence!  
So it's better to unchain the mind,  
And to release the thoughts  
For to imprison an innocent victim  
Is a sin against humanity!  
The bars that offer a peephole  
Reflect the longing...

## Subordinate

The bitter gall that spills over  
The tearing-apart-look that sprays venom,  
The turmoil that splits your inside  
On seeing him in your 'supposed inheritance'  
And the uncontrollable quaking;  
Engineered by the tumultuous myriad of emotions  
That have now become incognito  
In the smoke screen of subordination.  
Why not surrender with poise  
Resign to the inevitable  
That the omnipresent has smitten you with  
In reward for your 'excellent facility'?  
Why not look to the new state  
As a plan for a better life,  
A life packed with lessons  
And hints:  
To revisit your star?

## Tears

When the baby cries, the mother weeps  
When the toddler cries, the baby-sitter frets  
The adolescent moans and friends sniffle  
In sympathy.  
But when a man cries, his fellow men sob  
For themselves, knowing that one day,  
They'd get a slice of what triggered the tears.  
However, when a woman cries, mankind howls  
For mothers' tears  
Arouse infant instincts  
And in legitimate concern the whole universe  
Is perturbed...

When Mankind cries, God also cries  
In sympathy;  
In poetic justice  
He sends his angels  
To radically  
Eliminate the cause!

## Night and Day

The long awaited day  
Arrived at the wrong time  
Or was it the right time?  
He came on my day;  
The day of victory,  
The day of reaping,  
The long-awaited day of pomp and show  
To confirm my wits and crown me with paper  
From the 'Ivory Tower'.  
I sat in the 'square',  
Impatiently, waiting for the ceremony to end  
As he waited, impatiently,  
To bridge the gap; the rift that was  
But should not have been  
We embraced and cried  
Hot stinging tears,  
Tears of joy and sadness,  
Such uncalled for pain.

## **Sour Mother**

I hate and love her  
Because she is  
What I should be.  
My children call her Mom  
And I crave to keep them mum  
For that name is rightfully mine.  
I wallow in Lucifer's den  
And seek to reap without sowing  
So as to bestow favors  
On the undeserving  
While harbouring hatred  
For the one I should love.  
I surely will rot in hell  
And reap what I sowed  
This time round,

If I don't find it in me  
To do what ought to be done  
And say what ought to be said  
When it can be heard!

## **Blind Heart**

Without a flicker, you  
Incessantly burn on,  
Inextinguishable  
Despite all odds!  
You defy lies  
And shun wiles,  
You wrap up foul  
And lift the soul.  
You conveniently see  
What you want to see  
And blindly behold,  
Nothing but right.  
You blind heart,  
You oblivious soul,  
Content in your seat  
In the guise of love.

Wake up now  
And cast away the veil  
That shrouds your eyes  
And glare at the naked truth  
That is common to all  
But sealed from you.

## **Empty?**

You sent a message without a word,  
And later said you never lack words  
I now wonder;  
What had happened that time,  
When you sent that message  
That had no words?  
Has that granary gone empty?

## **Painful Pleasure**

As I wriggle and groan  
With pangs of childbirth  
I recall with mixed emotion  
The pleasant pain that caused it all;  
The wild sensations  
That so confused and mesmerized me  
Heating me up to melting point  
The melted snow  
That got transformed  
Into a mushy mass of soft tenderness  
And blissful rapture...

The resultant mound  
Not so comfortable  
What with nausea and sickness...

But the expectancy,  
So fulfilling as the picture unfolds in my mind:  
I can see,  
Little angels  
Blue and pink  
Wrapped in beautiful shawls of cream,  
So innocent and chubby  
How sweet...

I can see them smile  
And laugh and blabber  
I can hear the first word  
"Taata, Taata..."  
I wonder; why Taata?  
Is patriarchy inborn?

I can see them seated in a bent posture  
Then gradually sitting up  
And holding onto things,  
They stand and even walk!

Yes I see them walk away,  
Away from my outstretched arms,  
Away from my protective embrace,  
Then panic grips me  
And I become a divided being...  
My heart is no longer one  
My heart is no longer mine  
It goes with each one of them  
And I only wonder how it copes  
Being one and five all at once!

Seasons go by,  
But my babies remain my babies,  
For babies never grow in the eyes of a Mom,  
Once a baby always a baby!  
I still see,  
The blooming teenagers  
Demanding their freedom  
As I struggle blindly to imprison,  
What is already out of reach,

As I see personalities emerging;  
Doctors and nurses  
Counsels and professors  
I don't stop to wonder;  
Are they still my own?



## **PART 2**

### Poems about University Life



## The Torches

My classmates would tease me  
That my eyes were like torches  
Big like those of frogs, they said  
And I loathed their jokes,  
For they touched on the truth.

Time did pass, I grew up,  
What did happen was the reverse!  
Frowned upon by my fellow women  
Appraised by men.

Then confusion reigned in me  
Whether to consider myself lucky  
Or to mourn my hated state still;  
All because of the torches  
That were my eyes.

Luck was beyond my contemplation;  
Mourning – beyond my imagination.  
So now I use my torches  
For looking at 'the inside'  
To see the unseen  
To learn the hidden truth.

## The Handshake

As I moved from one to the other,  
I could feel the rising tension  
The tension carefully concealed  
By a supposedly mature stance  
But alas! The handshake spilt the milk  
And betrayed the underlying emotions.

Dorothy's  
Was soft and warm,  
Coloured by the quaking  
Of a cornered cat  
Ready to slowly but surely  
Pounce on the lecturer's granite questions.

Ziwa's  
Was assertive and 'confident'  
With his phallogentric machismo  
He would surely show the PhD's  
"That he knows it all"  
As he unraveled their mysteries  
That larked behind the numbers!

Simon,  
Who was usually as vague as he was vain,  
Proffered a hand that was as firm as it was steady,  
Ready to emit sparks from his grey matter  
And show the Professors that victory was his twin.

Kalema,  
Who was as shaky as a leaf  
In Oleghe's Sudden Storm,  
Swayed with unsteady poise  
Ready to flee from the fireworks

Should the academic arena  
Turn to a blood-birth to blow him away!

Moses and Emma  
Were the siblings of sobriety.  
Their quiet but resilient natures emitting  
A bold, mature and rational approach to life  
Ready to shower the booklets with well-kept loads  
Of overflowing wit  
To challenge the examiner's of this world!

Wamara's –  
The cause of this discourse –  
Was cold, aloof, unfriendly,  
Maybe to hide the turmoil within him  
Of conflicting emotions: fear and confidence  
As he accessed the great composition of answers  
In his systematic archives of mother-brain.

And Jossy, whose hand was shaking  
With dread and trepidation,  
Chickening and quaking  
Like Mugabo Mugenge's shaker  
Could easily re-pump the handshakes  
To assure herself that Austin's puzzles  
Would be plain sailing ...

And so the candidates set to work  
Like bees in a hive,  
Idyllically summoning  
Their well rehearsed 'performances'.  
'The man' and 'The teacher'  
Would surely join the struggle  
Waiyaki this time would do the reconciling  
For the revolution has to be sustained  
And the 'Masters' have to be awarded ...

Watching over the bent and seemingly sage heads  
The invigilator smiled his slow but assuring  
Performance of a 'been-there-done-that' attitude  
Patronizing the shaken but confident lot  
Whose "salvation was to come  
From the hills" of Excellence ...

As I left Lecture Room Four,  
I could hear the walls whispering  
"On the beach, on the coast  
Under the idle whispering coconut towers  
Before the growling foaming waves..."  
Alas! I had forgotten to intertext!  
But nonetheless  
I would go to the beach to relax!

## Groping in the Dark

The groping foot  
So unsteadily poised  
Before landing on  
Scorching,  
Rocking ground  
And a piercing scream – Oh!  
Off in another direction....  
Hands grappling empty air  
Shadows tricky, deceitful,  
Bright promises posing,  
Beaming nothing – Despair?  
Groping in the dark.....  
This hazy light in the forest,  
This thick jungle of books,  
With creepers – idealism:  
Embracing mysterious misery  
In the acquisition of knowledge.

## The Campuser

I met her at the male Res,  
Sauntering like a wizard,  
Like Okot's Clementine.  
Her waist was as tiny  
As a wasp's,  
Her posture, poised  
Like a portrait ...

When I asked my neighbour  
About the sleek ghost,  
He laughed at my pre-colonial expression  
And asked, "Are you the only one  
Who does not know the campuser?"

Then I looked again,  
This time in careful scrutiny  
And for sure  
The signs of 'colour' were there  
And her readiness for 'Proggie'  
Was unmistakable.

So I delved deep in my pocket  
To check for the shield  
And sure enough  
There it was  
Reassurance that the night  
Would be long and nice ...

## **The Proposal**

*(Part 1)*

I can no longer tell day from night  
All has come to be day!  
As I tirelessly work  
As I grapple with indefinite terms  
And grope in the dark forest of research  
I have this uneasy awareness  
That more hurdles are yet to come  
But what could be worse?

## The Proposal

*(Part 2)*

Like thunder  
The pronouncement struck,  
All minds instantly recall the topics;  
What is the "introduction"?  
They start,

Like one getting a bride,  
The "hypothesis" has to be positive  
Who can risk walking into a lion's mouth?

The "review", yes,  
To contextualise and inter-textualise...  
That's the paradoxical puzzle for the mind!  
The "motivation" is sure but difficult to phrase

The "framework" is certain  
But the "methodology" has to be concocted.  
While "significance" is like "justification"  
Making heads become jumping beans  
"What is the difference?"  
They ask,

So the task is at hand  
To be checked and cross-checked  
And here, the sage contract each other  
And leave the pursuer in a fix  
Like a cat that has just missed a rat

What one upholds, the other denounces...  
As we battle the proposals,  
The dream of the award seems to recede  
And to keep focus  
We struggle on...

## **Seminar Room Seven**

*(Makerere University, Kampala)*

How I will miss you!  
Your impressive atmosphere  
Your awesome ambience  
That aura of your sagely poise  
Your warmth,  
Like by the fireside, enjoying grandma's words

How will I survive without you?  
Those tales of knowledge,  
How will my mind manage,  
To cope without the challenges you pose?

I love your stifling smallness;  
That which never hampers  
Your enlarging capacity

I will miss the constant interruptions  
By the lost scholars  
The way villagers  
May miss that neighbour,  
Who enjoyed defecating on their footpaths!

And how I will miss the intellectual springs  
That the professors emit unreservedly  
Would I could leap ahead  
To the minute of recapture  
As I, now professor,  
Gyrate to the dance of the intellect.



## **PART 3**

### Poems about Ageing



## One Evening

The sun is about to set  
And I, panicky and panting  
Fear the sure approach  
Of evening...  
Pursued by the subsequent darkness...

I fear for my body  
That inevitably sags;  
It sags and slackens,  
Fights and kicks  
In swiftness and aptness.

I fear for my mind  
That clouds with threats,  
Threats of uncertainty  
And a slow-ebbing of wit.

I fear and tremble  
For my soul,  
The soul that embodies  
Abstract age  
That age which courts  
Imprisonment and stagnation.

I fear for my sanity  
That suffers the blow,  
The blow of reality,  
The reality of ageing,  
I fear that the sweet ingredients  
Of life seem distant.  
Oh, that I could turn back,  
Turn back the clock  
And wallow...  
In the blossoming bliss  
Of day...

## **Another Evening**

Night seems to be closing in;  
My back aches, my spine aches,  
My eye aches, even my heart aches!  
Aches, aches, all over  
My once vibrant body  
Surely, this must be  
Darkness ...  
Ache gives birth to ache  
And they all conglomerate into pain  
Oh, how I wish  
For the earlier hours of day!

## What Happened?

What happened to the pounding heart  
The pulsating throes;  
And the strong emotional pangs;  
That used to constrict my entire being;  
As if their motive was to suffocate me?

What happened to the zeal,  
The enthusiasm towards work and all?  
What consumed my ever present desire  
To accomplish whatever I'd started?

Could somebody tell me;  
Where my vitality went  
My curiosity,  
Integrity  
Vibrancy  
All I see  
Is a struggling jalopy  
In a dangerous mechanical condition  
Struggling to make it  
To the long-awaited destination.

## Off-Layer

How I hate that reference;  
The term that writes the years  
And confirms my longevity  
Despite the adage;  
That age is just a number!

A number!  
Oh, what number that is!  
A number  
Which is so close to change  
A number which is a cousin to distortion.

A number!  
What number is it  
Which erases memory?  
Which number  
Deletes all files  
Without being ordered

A number!  
What number is it  
That affects the admirer's eye  
And makes him pass you by  
As if you were just a tree?

So don't speak of numbers  
I hate them and their kinship to attitude  
Just give me the facts  
And teach me how to cope  
With this off-layer period.

## **PART 4**

### Poems about Disillusionment



## **Dangling!**

A mosquito bites an elephant  
Like a fly in a lion's wound  
Trying to survive

But I'm made  
To fail,  
To fail without trying.

See the enticing breasts of chance  
Dangling, like a fly before a chameleon...  
See outstretched arms  
Eager to embrace...  
Pepper in the eyes  
A gush in the heart!  
Is the inflaming touch  
A one-way traffic?

## **It's Raining**

The fierce wind rages,  
As thunder roars  
Like a starving lion.  
Lightning flashes  
Like neon lights  
On a dark night.  
Then, the raindrops  
Strike  
Like glowing charcoal  
Biting into the skin  
Reducing me  
To a soaking, shivering jelly....  
I step in mud,  
To wade through the mist  
For it is a storm  
Raging through the walls of my heart

## I Say

Every turn and corner,  
Every phrase and joke,  
Every glance and stare  
Arouse my dying heart,  
Like Jesus raised Lazarus,  
To dump it  
In realization of  
The tearing  
Heart-rending,  
Morale-damping,  
Tear-inviting  
Absence ...

I want you here  
To open that  
Dark passage  
That forms  
The Chambers  
Of your eluding  
Heart.

I want to feel  
Those piercing eyes  
Like a thousand needles,  
That inflaming touch  
Like acid,  
On a wet skin.  
I want abuses too  
Like hot charcoal  
Under the soles,  
The criticisms  
Like mud  
On a milk-white sheet  
Yes, come  
Love  
Smile  
Scold  
But, please,  
Do come!

## **Lost**

In your presence,  
Clutching claws  
Of emotion  
Grip trembling-me  
Internal bliss sparks off.

In your absence,  
The lone groping shadow  
The staggering drunkard  
On a dark stormy night  
Is lost,  
Lost in you!

## **The Moment!**

Soft stinging stares  
Strong melting eyes  
Quick stirring gasps  
Dawned it ...  
Allowing but a glimpse  
Like a crack  
Did the spark  
Oceans of fantasy  
Fade in reality?

## Relief

I know the definition of relief  
Yes, I think at last the penny has dropped!  
I can fully elaborate it's the meaning.  
Correct me where I blunder  
Or maybe you have a better version.  
Tell me, isn't it the warm overflow  
Releasing the pent up emotions?  
Or, is it the steady ebb  
Of encompassing bliss that follows stress?  
I was thinking it could be  
The lazy reeling of me in dreamland  
Munching the delicious snack  
Of momentary sleep...  
No, it must be the suffusing happiness  
Enveloping Me and the World in perfect harmony!

Yes, it is the opposite of stress  
And the twin of bliss,  
Sibling of happiness  
And the daughter of grace,  
The niece of rest  
And the in-law of hassle.

## Sanctuary for Trust

You, wounded heart,  
Why do you still pump and pound  
With the pent-up anger of a bitter victim,  
A victim stung and sour?

I will hide you in the remotest corner  
Of my being  
Where no hurt will find you  
And in your sanctuary,  
I will surround you with Trust –  
The remnant Trust,  
Salvaged from abuse;  
Raped and defiled.  
Oh! See its bleeding nakedness...  
Can you feel the raw wounds?  
And the gnawing pain?

Oh, Trust, if you are still alive,  
Let me hide you and never let you surface  
But hide, hide, hide!

Listen not to the lies,  
Well-calculated to entice you,  
To abandon your sanctuary  
And take up your usual abode,  
Only to be unseated again:  
Listen not to coloured conviction please!



## **PART 5**

### Poems about Physique



## Of Heads

Some are clean-shaven  
Shining like new silver platters!  
Others are like black velvet carpets  
Shining with the 'New Vaseline' look  
Yet others are like the dry  
Savanna grassland with rows  
Criss-crossing each other  
Like in a poorly planned tea plantation.

Some heads have pinko-grey lanes  
Running around them  
With clusters of thick black  
Forests standing out like islands  
In the middle...

Others have neatly drawn  
Zig- zags and circles  
That make them look like mats on display.

Yet other heads have long rope-like braids  
Twisted around in unsightly poses  
To bring out the rasta-look.

You've not seen the coloured ones,  
In purple, red and orange...  
Emulating the chameleon style ...

Forgive me if I sound ancient,  
But some of the modern  
Hair styles are really  
Outrageous!

## The Spear

I still feel the piercing look  
That sent arrows into my body  
And unnerved my senses  
That 'actions' speak...  
Unraveled its truth on that  
Fateful morning ...

The venom in the unblinking eyes,  
The sting of the scorching,  
Scalding expressionless eyes  
That belittled me and cast me  
Far, far away from him...

What is it that you loathe,  
That you would have cast to hell,  
The hell of your burning  
Consuming fire?

I fear that fire,  
I fear those eyes  
That pierce and kill  
Without blinking;  
I fear most  
The spirit behind them ...

Please, let me have the  
Words and not the actions;  
The drama is too loud,  
My ears are now deafened  
By the obvious hatred  
In your stare!

## The Smile

Constant is that beautiful smile  
That illuminates your face  
A hint that something good  
Something great, something exciting  
Exists between us!  
How I love that set of teeth  
That gap that opens into my heart  
That sweetness that suffuses  
My whole being  
When you smile.

Are you as good  
As your smile  
Or is it another  
Of the world's wilful ways  
To promise and not deliver  
To excite and not fulfill?

Tell me if that gap  
Is a passage to hell  
And that the two white rows  
Are not the surrounding wall  
To hem me in  
And draw my life out...

Does the dental whiteness  
Match the purity in your heart  
Or is it all  
A mere bluff  
Aimed at sweeping me off my feet?

God, let the smiles  
Be not wiles  
And the sweetness,  
The rancid taste  
Of a snake's venom.

## A Letter to My Hand

Dear Hand,  
How I love and respect you!  
You do all the work  
And okay my every command,  
Whatever time it is.

How I wonder at your patience!  
You willingly caress  
The clean and the dirty  
You strive to tidy all there is to neaten  
You sweep up all the chaff...  
How I despise you at times!  
You grab what is not yours  
And throw stuff at the innocent.  
You hide and bestow favours  
Even to those that are not deserving!

Dear Hand,  
Why don't you give me  
What I deserve  
Or, at least, what I've worked for?

You hand of fate,  
Of chance,  
Of life;  
You, my hand!

## **PART 6**

### Accolades



## **Bishop Stuart University**

A budding plant  
Among the thorns  
That's what you are

Like blooming lilies,  
Attract the bees  
So does your promise  
Of flowing wit...

## **Harbinger**

The voice still lingers  
In the still quietness  
Of my eardrums,  
The joy still sings  
In the corners  
Of my heart,  
The memory still lingers  
And persistently clings  
To the chords,  
The chords that still  
Vibrate and resonate  
To stir pulsations  
And arouse heartthrobs  
That torture  
My pounding heart  
To simmer  
And calm  
In a thankful heart.

## **A Word of Farewell**

*(For Karen; 11/03/04 – 10:00a.m)*

The clatter in the room  
And the multitude  
Of pieces of luggage  
Are a sure sign  
That she is leaving ...

Karen Happuch, as unique  
As her name;  
An epitome of goodness,  
An embodiment of happiness,  
A friend to all  
A lover to none!

Her going is a threat;  
A threat to me  
Who like an orphaned child,  
Will inherit D6<sup>3</sup>  
Our haven of music festivity  
Our bank of secrets  
And our boiling pot of differences!

Karen Happuch,  
An officer to be,  
Will, like her renowned beauty,  
Never be forgotten  
For like an Angel  
Her blossoming love  
Leaves an indelible imprint...

Good-bye is a bad compound  
That pounds the heart  
And wrings the memory  
In joyful tears  
Of assured re-union  
And everlasting trust.

---

3 D6 is a room in Dag Hammerskjold Hall in Makerere University for graduate students.

## **I Salute You**

I hail the spirit behind my zeal  
That spark that awakens my potency  
That eye that sees what is hidden  
In the veneer of naivety!  
You arouse the sleeping giant,  
You challenge the quiescent matter  
In mother-brain,  
With exemplary wit  
And overflowing ambitions  
That burst the shores  
Of my intellect  
And flood  
My whole being.

## **Him**

I knelt and spelt  
My woes and troubles  
He hears my cries  
He answers,  
And I know it!

I asked and received  
I sought and found  
I called and was heard  
O what a joy, what a life!

I have learnt  
Life is content  
In trouble or in joy  
Spilling over with hope  
Because He lives

## **My All**

I see you Lord with my inner eye,  
I hear your voice Father,  
Conversing with my inner-self  
I mark your hand,  
In the work of my own,

And I praise your name  
For my exaltation over other beings!

I glory in your knowledge,  
As I swim in the waters of your blessings  
I bask in the sunshine of your presence  
And behold! I savour your consuming grace...

I see you Lord in my waking moments  
I see you still in my dreams  
I talk to you every moment  
And I praise your name  
For my exaltation over other beings!

### Third Impressions\*

Mwena ngu' eeh,  
Eeh  
Mwena ngu' eeh,  
Eeh ...  
He hails from the hills of Ibanda,  
To lead in sagely splendour  
The flock of western Uganda,  
To shepherd in awe and wonder

Mwena ngu' eeh,  
Eeh  
Mwena ngu' eeh,  
Eeh ...  
With wit and divine blessing  
We await your wise counsel,  
You are eve already among us,  
To emit loads of wisdom

Mwena ngu' eeh,  
Eeh  
Mwena ngu' eeh,  
Eeh ...  
Your arms are like twin branches,  
Ready to serve and grace us  
With ceaseless springs of blessings  
From your oceans of experience,

Mwena ngu' eeh,  
Eeh  
Mwena ngu' eeh,  
Eeh ...  
Your head underneath your crown,  
Is but a fountain sublime,  
How lucky we are,  
How fortunate!

Mwena ngu' eeh,  
Eeh  
Mwena ngu' eeh,  
Eeh ...  
Arise, Bishop Stuart, arise!  
Let us welcome our chancellor,  
With loud and thunderous applause  
In loud and endless ululation,

Mwena ngu' eeh,  
Eeh  
Mwena ngu' eeh,  
Eeh ...  
He hails from the hills of Ibanda  
To lead in sagely splendour  
The flock of western Uganda,  
To shepherd in awe and wonder  
Welcome chancellor,  
Welcome to your home.

\* This poem was first recited at the installation of Bishop Sheldon Mwesigwa as the third chancellor for Bishop Stuart University, Mbarara on October 14, 2010. Then, it was titled, "Our Bishop, Our Chancellor."