

August - December 2025 Edition

A Literary Magazine
Amplifying Voices of
Underrepresented
Writers

Penned in Rage



*Edited
By Onyishi Chukwuebuka Freedom
&
Bridgette James.*

Penned in Rage

A Literary Journal

August – December, 2025

Edited By

Bridgette James & Chukwuebuka Freedom Onyishi

Published in Hampshire, United Kingdom

July 2025

All Rights Reserved

Penned in Rage Literary Journal

Copyrighted www.ellaspoems.com 2025 on behalf of published authors. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the explicit permission of the publisher.

Poems and stories included in this journal are original and fictitious. When names, characters and incidents portrayed in this journal bear any resemblance to persons alive or dead, it is done under Artistic License in the United Kingdom where this publication was produced.

TABLE of CONTENTS

Editorial: *We Were Not Meant to Die Here* - Chukwuebuka
Freedom Oniyishi

1. *Only Light Can Regurgitate The Thing Engulfed By Darkness* -
Obaji Godwin
2. *Google* – Uche Chidozie Okorie
3. *Creaking of the breast* - Obiotika Wilfred Too-chukwu
4. *The Heart’s Dreamy Journey* - Ewurama Tawiah Welbeck
5. *If You Can Carry Light* - Egharevba Terry
6. *Cantos for My Lost Home* - By Owólólá Ajúlékún
7. *for the death of Ka’Niyah Baker from South Carolina* - Traci Neal
8. *Sunday Best* – Ebenezer Mowete
9. *A Match to End All Matches* – Lergon Parris
10. *Extract of Book Review - **The Search for Othella Savage** (2025)*
by Foday Mannah

About Contributors

EDITOR'S NOTE | August–December 2025 Edition

Theme: *We Were Not Meant to Die Here*

Sometimes, there are stories we inherit, and others we are courageously forced to carry. While some echo through silence, others are patterned enough to speak even in the midst of fire. This edition of *Penned in Rage* is able to gather those voices together with their beauty: amazing works shaped not only by the force of anger and grief, but also by the stubborn endurance of those who have vowed to let their voices be heard. Whether through verse, narrative, or meditative reflection, the contributors summon a shared language that moves through broken systems and fractured selves, each boldly reaching deeper for something so startlingly honest.

To write in times like these is not only to tell, but also to name, to imagine, and to remain despite the sorrows. It is to assert presence, to stake claim to memory, and to resist dehumanization. The poets and storytellers in these pages understand that language is never neutral but can serve as an instrument of both redemption and remembrance. Their work maps a world where justice often arrives too late, where vulnerability sharpens under neglect, and where the body personal or communal—carries both memories as resistance. Yet within this terrain of pain and persistence, there is also an artistry that refuses to let go of clarity, dignity, or care.

Terry's poem, "*If You Can Carry Light*," distils this spirit of resilience in a stirring call: "If you can meet each dawn's first light / as men meet kings, unbent, unshaken— / while every cell screams run — / and still hold the Earth..."

This voice—unbowed by hardship and steeped in hope carries the essence of what it means to endure and forge light in darkness.

The theme *We Were Not Meant to Die Here* is not just a lament, but a vision—a profound recognition that even in spaces marked by betrayal, silence, or abandonment, something essential still survives. And that even that survival itself is not a passive act, but a kind of glory, shaped in repetition—word by word, breath by breath by those who have refused to surrender to death.

Penned in Rage lives at the intersection of protest and craft—in the aching labour of rethinking language, gathering fractured truths, and rebuilding narratives where silence once had its fullest chances. Every poem, story, and hybrid piece in this third issue continues that work of wonder—on the slow, burning immortality of hope, by reminding us that literature, at its fiercest, does not only simply offer escape from reality, but deepens our encounter with it too.

For this third edition, we invite you to read slowly, to listen between the lines, and to feel how each work carefully leans toward justice—and how, even in the centre of disillusionment, each of the pieces does not retreat into despair, but rises again and again beyond the blinding gates of every tragedy and darkness.

Onyishi Chukwuebuka Freedom

Editor, Penned in Rage

August–December 2025 Edition



Chukwuebuka Onyishi

1. Only Light Can Regurgitate The Thing Engulfed By Darkness
By Obaji Godwin

(for Natasha)

Federal High Court in Abuja has nullified the suspension of Kogi State Senator , Natasha Akpoti Uduaghan and ordered the senate to recall her.

Sahara Report July 4, 2025.

aerodyne of glee wafts me to heaven's gate.
at the feet of Divinity
i place garlands of
extolment, put my tongue in the
mouth
of God & pour grins into his belly
only light can regurgitate the thing engulfed by
darkness this thing that had remained in the nub
of skank till we embraced
this premise : our judiciary has morphed
into unclean shit

when we look at what ought to collect us from the teeth of
shark
but see how leviathans continue to pull it into the lips of
parazonium
we calligraph this postulation on the faces of our
bleeding hearts:
Justice has found home in the lungs of thieves
lion-teethed anacondas stripped a woman naked & when
she swims into the throat of Phoneutria to redeem her
broken self
we pour our hearts into grief
our irises birthing smoked-
rimmed waters of
disillusionment .
corrupt mouth only has dead bodies to vomit

while she curls & whirls in the foyer of
justice

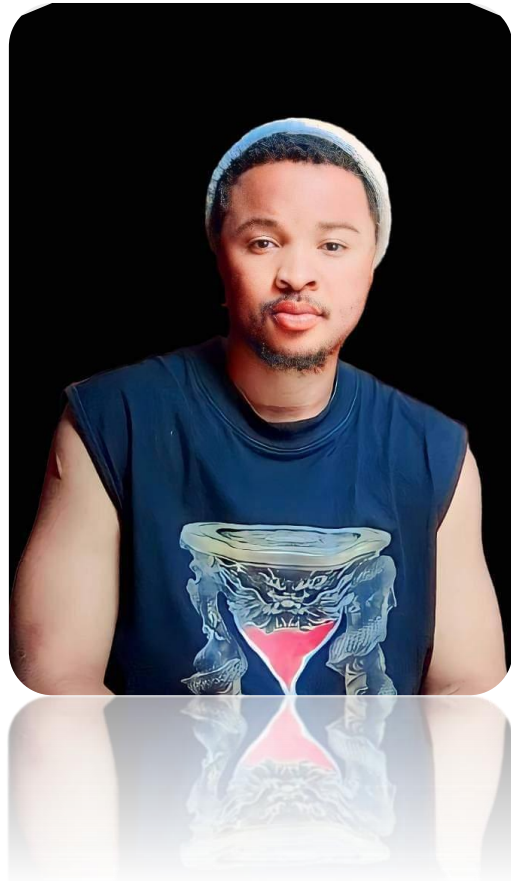
we expect
the graveyard to return a disfigured tongue to her constituents
but what we baptized rotten maggots

wore our senator
a gold-rimmed regalia

& place these lines in her tongue
Judiciary is not dead, it is & will remain the sentinel of the
just.

i place garlands of extolment

at the feet of Divinity
only light can regurgitate the thing engulfed by darkness



Obaji Godwin

2. Google

By Uche Chidozie Okorie

If at all, she can see,

Google needs medicated glasses

Washed with bleach and snows.

Before her very sight,

They peddle young Eve(s)

From one axis to different spatial,

Caged in meagre mangers

Where sex predators pay homage

In patronage and patriotism.

Where are the satellite?

The orbiters,

Patrolling my social space,

Joggle back with violations popping messages

On my feed,

When I say a thing,

Where are they?

Stalkers,

Monitoring spirits.

And how these traffickers eat

Their own hearts, kidneys, livers

And intestines out.

Having no human left

To think about the grave agony

Of thousands of mothers.

I hardly know.

Parents look out billion miles

Without seeing the footprints of their once windless angels,

Sliding down the staircase to staunch slumber.

Regrets are written on the platter of our hearts,

I hope yours are not engraved with titanium,

It will be forever there,

Even the grave cannot erase them.

It is a charcoal world out here

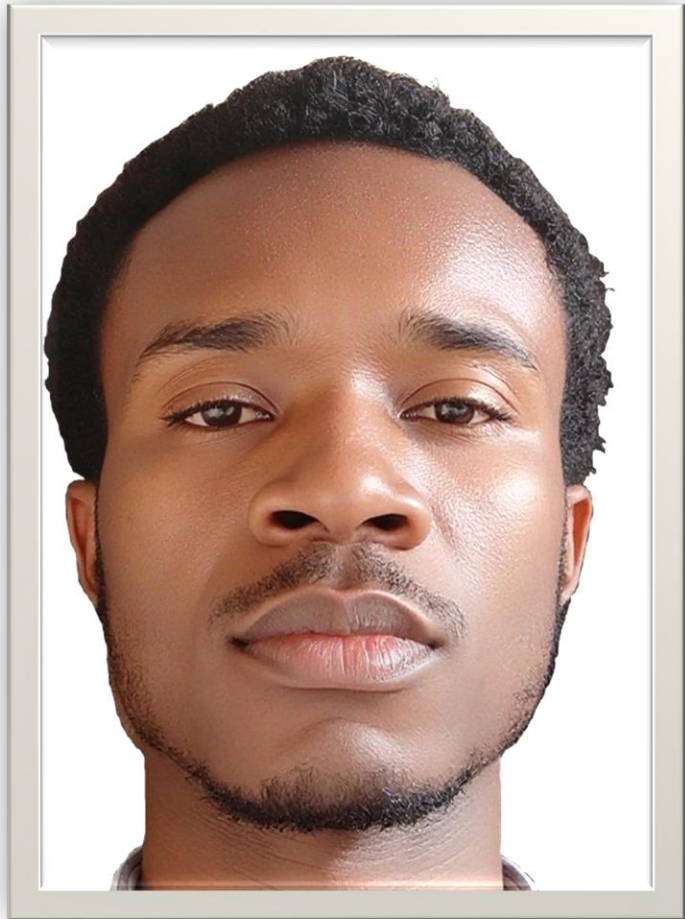
And the holy ones rarely get a corner.

Sorry,

Sorry,

My inability is hurting me the more

And writing this epistle increases the pain.



Uche Chidozie Okorie

3. Creaking of the breast By Obiotika Wilfred Tooohukwu

I used to have a dog, a local breed with a brown colour
but it had a dark face like a Rottweiler
with a white spot on its nose
it went after the flock of sheep taken home from pasture
fawning after the shepherd as a guard from the rear

at the flection of any anomalous person
it would twine and sniff behind the culprit
after goings-on in the morning
it would dig at the soil under the water tap
having dug out the ground, roused
it would lie there, gaze -
just as the beast would dispatch, men judge

until the wayfarers make the highways tense
dealing treacherously with bogglers
like the burning of lime, digging the underpinning of Sharon
with quirks, swirls, phylacteries, tassels of their garment
we could not cover our eyes from bloodshed
gory pictures of butchered, charred bodies

I used to abide securely as the munitions of rock
ruminated on terror from the tower
like rivers and streams recur to the fountainhead
a shaking of the head we were among the nations
and the people declined to gird their swords upon their thighs

when the madness of rulers appears in vaticination
the prodigy wins as others gape
a man deep in speech, for their nefariousness
cast him in the dungeon with dudgeon
the stakes are removed, cords are broken

*I used to contend with thieves
take sides with adulterers*

like a giraffe kicking the calf
I received a mark – an identity
So has been the groan of the heart.



Obiotika Wilfred Toochukwu

4. The Heart's Dreamy Journey By Ewurama Tawiah Welbeck

Her lover's heart was an empty shell
Where she poured her soul for solace.
Ashes and gore cradled her sweet limbs
From the pain her lover bestowed.
Yet, her tangled legs entrapped her in muffled linens—
Oxytocin glazed her heart with desires for comfort.

Disoriented, reasoning became her soul's sworn enemy
When her brute lover's gentle touch awakened dopamine's rush.
Freezing and melting, her heart yearned for love,
Seeking honeyed broth to palliate her inflamed senses.
Suffering must be the path to sweetness— she believed.
Pain is not a hard tunnel to traverse— she thought.

Then one night, she heard soulful harmonies
From an angel sitting beside her on her bed.
Then the next minute, it was all *a dream*.
She woke up with the voice of remorse in her head,
Saying, *I told you so*, for her raging hormones,
Searching for answers to the questions in her body.

For all the answers she got from the wrong hands,
Glimmers of light appeared at her bedpost
To wipe her tear-laced eyes in the morning.
This light beamed the angel's silhouette
As the dew of joy landed on her ailing heart,
Tending to the blisters on her traumatized brain.

While soft grins zinged through her veins,
The angel drew a curve of smiles on her face,
And redeemed her with comic relief,
Till the amusement washed the umbra off her eyes.
Hours had passed as she tended to her room—
Her memento of healing from her heart's undoing.

She set the ruffled bed and dusted the window
That welcomed the radiant light on her skin and hair.
That morning could have been perpetual horror
Decorated with her toxic lover's portraits.
Pain could have tainted her white walls, while fear
Could have swirled in her eyes, engulfing her heart.

But the angel hurried in with the light's compassion,
Illuminating her nightmarish path through the dream
To usher her awake into a new dawn—
A new home for her to find rebirth through peace.



Ewurama Tawiah Welbeck

5. If You Can Carry Light By Egharevba Terry

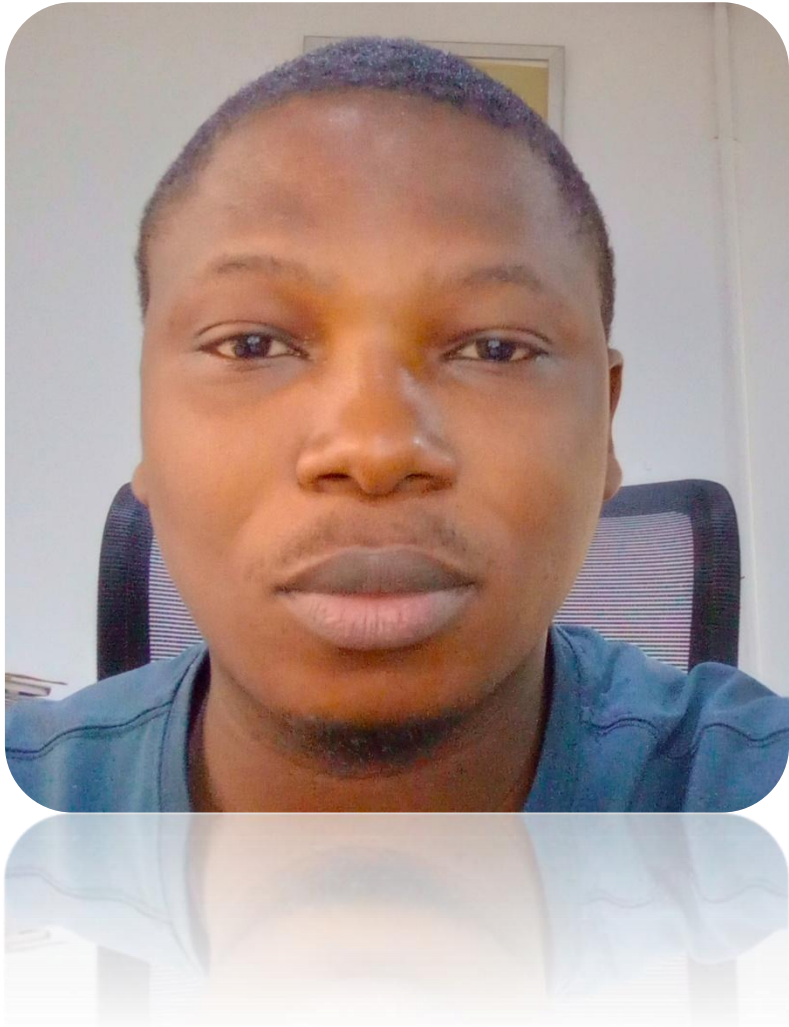
If you can meet each dawn's first light
as men meet kings, unbent, unshaken -
while every cell screams run -
and still hold the Earth
though its throne lies broken

If you can laugh when plans collapse
and dance when doors are slammed and bolted
wear your losses like leather straps
on boots that keep moving
scuffed, scarred, but never still

If you can laugh where others bleed
and spin gold from this country's chaos
turn every *No* into yam seed
and plant it where others see only dust

If you can smile through unpaid dues
sip your Garri like it's rare bourbon
win even while losing
and still raise your head
true African born

then you have learnt what they never dared to teach you
how to walk through fire and still carry light



Egharevba Terry

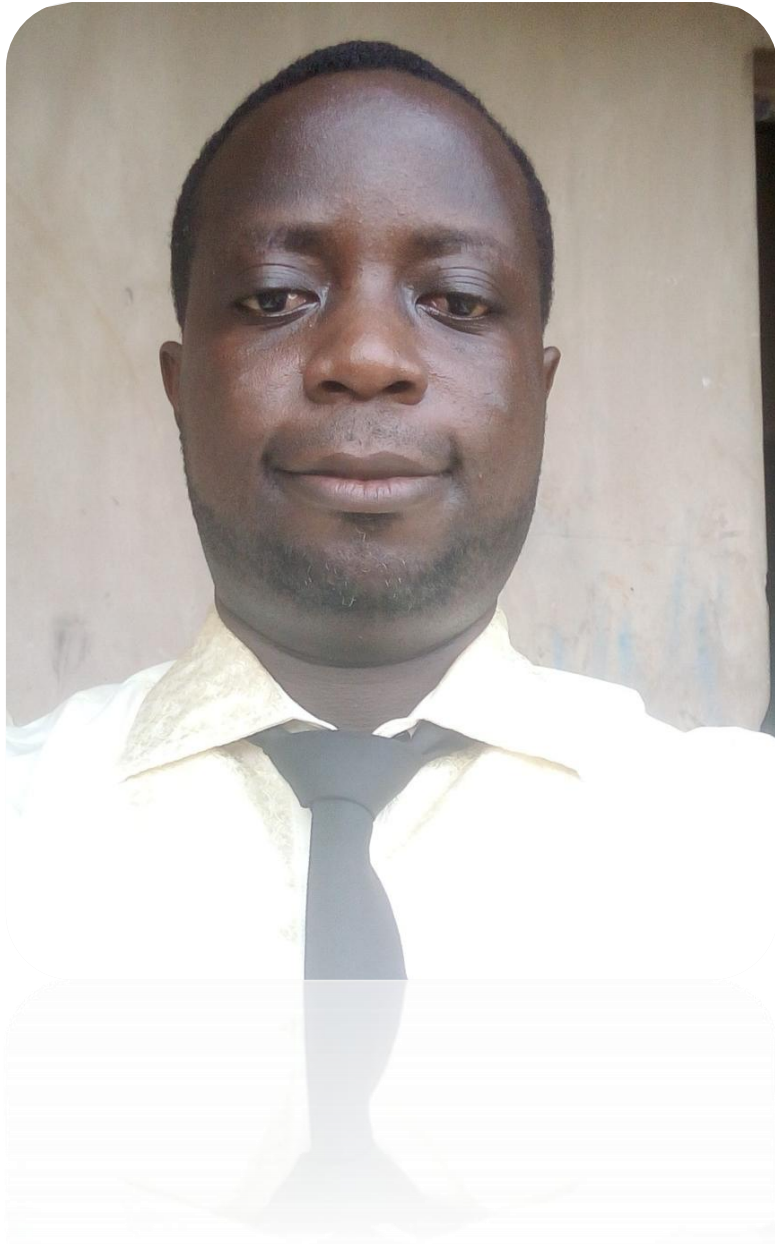
6. Cantos for My Lost Home By Owólọlá Ajúlékún

You're my first love—
Punchline of my aubade.
Your scent, the perfume
That littered my senses
Your sun soothed the soul of forest
Your valley stretched forth arms
And cradled my infant head
Your mountains shouldered my thoughts.

An hour at your feet,
Wombs bloomed, quivers filled
Goats kidded, pigs farrowed
Dogs whelped, cows calved
No arching back, no tilting hips.

Bullets of greed have now splintered your mirror,
A map for migrants on the wheel of trauma
The gods have lost their songs on the altar of lust
The priests too have lost their voices,
Squeaking through parched throats.

This place I call home is a memory of lost lovers
Found on the harsh arm of time
In the traffic of tariffs
Where dreams are watered by nightmares.
Here, the choice to live or die is a gamble—
A die thrown by a blind man
Who leads the crippled to the beautiful gate.



Owóloṣá Ajúlékún

7. for the death of Ka’Niyah Baker from South Carolina
By Traci Neal

heaviness heaps its weight in a pile.
hatred burns to plaster onto tongues.

within the pits of our souls, we want to
cool down from this fire, but the

weather outside scorches our skin.
we are trying to hold it together,

not hang on a hook like our black
ancestors were hung on trees, except

this time, black female teenagers
destroyed their own kind. offenses

often happen. our journey is brief, a
blink of an eye, a moment we will miss,

if we seek revenge. exchange the grime
for grace, take the tears, the challenges

to teach compassion as ice cream, so
we can live with a sweet taste instead of

wounds licked up off the ground. good is
the genuine touch we carry, buckets filled

with water for those who need peace,
who are searching for rest. when the weary

have heart and not hate inside, the world will
heal. hope compels restoration to come.



Traci Neal

8. Sunday Best

By Ebenezer Mowete

On Sundays, I wore dresses like armour.
Stiff lace at my throat,
tight shoes biting at my heels.
The mirror told me I was holy.
My reflection whispered: *pretend*.

In church, we clapped and sang praises,
voices raised like burnt offerings.
But no one heard the silence in my chest,
the hymns that choked on the word *sin*.

Every hallelujah bruised my body.
Every sermon sutured shame into my skin.
Desire became a demon
I was forced to cast out,
even as it knelt beside me,
begging to be known.

I learned to smile with my mouth shut,
to kneel with my fists clenched,
to pray for erasure
and call it purity.

Now, I write the truth in lowercase.
No more pulpits.
No more masks.
Only the raw gospel of being real.



Ebenezer Mowete

9. A Flash Fiction By Lergon Parris

A Match to End All Matches

Winston sucked in the warmth of the cylindrical stick, holding the freedom and masculinity it represented, until *he* decided that it was time to exhale the hypnotic, shapeless smoke into the atmosphere, where it joined the unabashed waft of jerk chicken, popcorn, and other fragrances of liberty. The pandemic had been a sadistic warder, walking along the cell blocks with keys jingling menacingly and a sneer on its face as it delighted in the discomfort of those epistemologically inclined to their adult liberties. Now, with each puff, he was reclaiming these things, as were the other people in the National Stadium with their defiant mingling and the incoherence of a thousand simultaneous conversations.

“Sir,” a voice beside him shattered his bliss. “You can’t smoke that here.”

“I’m not hurting anybody,” Winston replied.

“I said, you can’t smoke that here!”

Others chimed in, shouting and pointing to the ‘NO SMOKING’ sign. This alerted a patrolling security guard.

“Sir!” his voice boomed, rivaling the microphone-enhanced voice of the stadium’s announcer. “I’m going to ask you to put that out.”

‘Throw him out, Security!’ Winston’s initial opponent rose with conviction. “Throw him out!”

The security guard glared at Winston.

“Sir, please put out the cigarette and hand over your lighter.”

“What?” roared Winston. “You are worse than the virus.”

“Hand over the lighter, Sir! I will not ask again!”

The security guard’s tone was resolute, yet Winston rose to protest. But as he was about to speak, the angry football fans rose as well in wordless solidarity, forcing him to concede.

The group of dissidents started a mock cheer. Embarrassed, Winston quietly rose and walked to the stadium's exit.

But the embarrassment, now concealed from his oppressors, evolved into a look of defiance. This was no longer about the action itself, but the principle of it. *How dare these people steal his liberty! He was a man, wasn't he?* He had suffered the indignities of the pandemic, the torture of suppression. *This was his right.* Emboldened by these thoughts, Winston reached into his pocket for his backup plan - a box of matches. In the solitude of his hand, he struck a match, raising it to light a fresh cigarette.

"Sir!" A new voice behind him replaced his defiance with a momentary panic, and he quickly flicked the match into a rubbish bin and made a dash for the exit.

With its dying gasp, the match thrust its flame onto a discarded receipt, which in turn ignited other objects in the bin. The concealed fire quickly erupted into a flamboyant spectacle, halting the world around it, postponing the symbol of freedom that was to be the football match. Much damage was done before the fire extinguishers were brought into play.

Reading the newspaper the following morning, Winston's eyes widened at the headline "A MATCH TO END ALL MATCHES." But this was not the reason for the lump in his throat. The last line of the article read:

"Police are still investigating but are following strong leads."

There was a knock on his door...

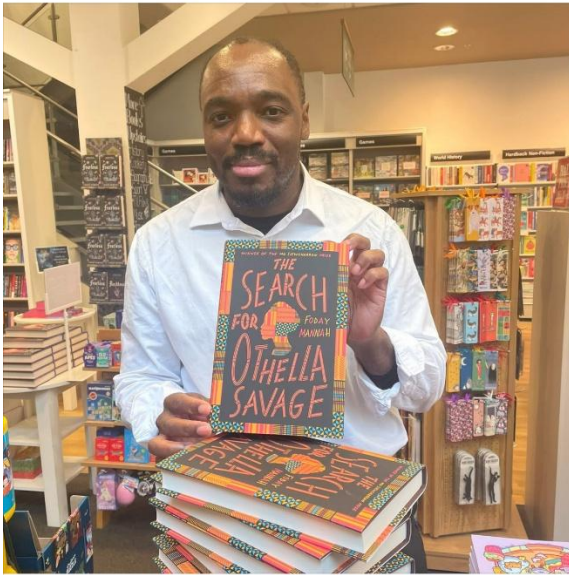
[510 words]

(This piece was specially commissioned by the editors of Pinned in rage for Editon 3.)



Lergon Parris 1

(2025), Foday Mannah will be featured in Book Club this July. 😊



Bridgette's Writing School

Follow

See insights and ads

Boost post

Like Comment Send Share

208

10. Penned in Rage: Book Review

Foday Mannah is Scottish Sierra Leonean. He's an English Language teacher, dad and prominent writer.

Foday has been writing stories for years and has been short or long listed in prestigious competitions, such as the Bristol Short Story Prize, the Bridport, Commonwealth and Bloody Scotland writing competitions. This story was actually the winner of the 2022 Mo Siewcharran Prize.

The Search for Othella Savage, 2025, was published in England by QUERCUS.

Comparison to Other Contemporaneous Literature from Sub-Saharan Africa

The *Search for Othella Savage* (2025) touches on themes that are common in contemporary Literature from the sub-region.

- 1. Over- Sexualisation and Objectification of Black African Women**
- 2. Religious Fanaticism Versus Religious Hypocrisy**
- 3. Migration to the West**
- 4. Deceptive Human Nature and Corruption**

*"I was stunned by Foday Mannah's portrayal of religious fanaticism in his book. It reminded me of Chimamanda's earlier work. In **Purple Hibiscus** (Adichie, 2004), Papa Eugene, main protagonist: Kambili and Jaja's dad, is a devout Catholic in public but a monster, wife-beater, physically violent and verbally abusive dad at home. Likewise, we soon see in Foday Mannah's novel that Pastor Ranka is a hypocrite"*

Bridgette James, Book Reviewer

About Contributors

Obaji Godwin is an Abuja-based Nigerian script writer, poet and performance poet. His poems have appeared in *Kalahari Review*, *Tuck magazine* and *Ebedi Review*. His poem 'Like thorn Kite in The Hurricane' made the Finalist of 2018 Uganda Babishainiwe Poetry Prize. His Haiku poem made the 2017 Uganda Babishaiku Prize. His poem 'This monochrome' won the 2022 POETREE contest. His spoken poem 'Suicide Begone' won the 2022 POETREE Spoken Word contest. His poetry diagnoses grief & cast conduits for its banishment. He is currently studying Political Science and International Relations at the University of Abuja, Nigeria.

Ewurama Tawiah Welbeck is a Ghanaian Creative writer and English Language teacher who uses poetry to explore beauty, longing, loss, and familial bond. She finds existential meaning through amusement, tragedy, and strength. An alumna of the SprinNG Writing Fellowship, some of her works appear in *Writer's Space Africa* and *ArtisansQuill*.

Uche Chidozie Okorie is a poet and music producer from Nigeria.

Obiotika Wilfred Toochukwu is an upcoming Nigerian creative writer. He secured a provisional admission at OAU Ile-Ife in 2008 to study Literature in English. After several attempts in various human endeavours, he has fallen back to his original calling which is writing. He is not just a teacher; he is also a public affairs commentator and socio-political analyst. Most of his write-up are influenced by the revelation in his faith as a dynamic Christian believer. Presently, he has applied for his MA in literature from a Nigerian university. His works can be found or are forth coming in *Flora fiction*, *Ojuju*, *North West*, *Northern writers forum*, *Dawn project*, *birthday anthologies* et al.

Egharevba Terry's poem was highly commended in The Annual Bridgette James Poetry Competition, 2025. He is a Nigerian banker who writes as if exhaling ache, his poems bruise softly, drawn from waiting rooms, broken clocks, and borrowed faith.

Chukwuebuka Freedom Onyishi was the runner-up in The Annual Bridgette James Poetry Competition, 2025. He is an English and Literary Studies graduate from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. He is the current Winner of the 2025 COAL (The Coalition of African Literature, a Nonprofit organisation in Nigeria), in partnership with the University of Leicester's Avoidable Deaths Network and the SEVHAGE Literary and Development Initiative.

Owólọlá Ajúlékún is a poet and doctoral researcher. An overall winner of the 5th Edition of The Agidigbo Prize (TAP), he has been published in various journals.

Traci Neal is a neurodivergent poet living in the USA- Columbia, South Carolina. She has shared her late diagnosis as a black woman on *Newsweek*, *Thinking Person's Guide to Autism*, *Autism Digest*, and *Good News Post- UK*, to name a few. Her poetry is featured in *Poetry Potion- Poem A Day*, *Spillwords Press*, *Wildfire Words- UK*, *Feminessay*, *Real South/West Mag*, and *Moonstone Arts* in 2025 and other publications since 2021. Neal uses poetry to advocate for those in need and to raise awareness for non-profits worldwide.

Ebenezer Mowete is a Nigerian writer and final-year medical student with a passion for telling faith-rooted, socially conscious stories. His work explores the intersections of spirituality, science, and African identity, often through the lens of speculative fiction. He has been published in several platforms committed to amplifying African voices.

When he's not writing or studying medicine, he facilitates youth development initiatives and curates health advocacy content.

Lergon Parris is a Jamaican writer who has won multiple national awards in creative writing. His style of writing usually encompasses anthropomorphism, where animals are not only humanized, but used to teach lessons.