

# ÈŞÙ AT THE LIBRARY

PROPERTY OF MASOBE BOOKS

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& other Poems

PROPERTY OF MASOBE BOOKS

Kólá Túbòsún



MASOBE

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# Èṣù

1. “...the most ubiquitous of all the deities, being their messenger, and a complex yet mischievous one to boot. He sits at the crossroads and confuses the wisest of mortals and gods. This deity represents the random, unpredictable factor in both divine and temporal affairs. Èṣù is the dialectician of reality, a cautionary spirit who teaches that reality has more facets than one.”

— Wole Ṣóyínká.

2. “Devil, Demon, Satan”<sup>1</sup>

— *A Vocabulary of Yorùbá* (1847)

by Samuel Ajayi Crowther

3. “Trickster God of Opportunity, Communication and Instant Messaging”

— GodChecker.com

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<sup>1</sup> As recently as 2016, the translation of “Èṣù” on Google Translate still pointed to the earlier mistranslations from the Crowther dictionary, offending millions of adherents of the deity around the world. This has changed now, but the public attitude has remained unchanged, for the most part, as I wrote about in this essay: <https://blogs.bl.uk/asian-and-african/2020/05/esu-at-the-bl.html>

*Synonyms and homographs:*  
Bara, Exu, Echú, Eshu, Èlégba, Èlégbára, Eleggua,  
Láaróyè, Légba, Legwa

\*\*\*

*“I take the position that the collocation “good and evil” finds no reality interpretation in the indigenous thought system of the Yorubá, uncontaminated by and through diffusion.”*

— Olásopé Oyèláràn

**to Jimoh Isiaq**  
*(October 10, 2020)*  
**and all the Lekki dead**  
*(October 20, 2020)*  
**and beyond**

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# Contents

## **WHITE . . . . . 1**

Lingua Fracas . . . . .	3
Airport Pickup . . . . .	5
Chat Call . . . . .	7
In London the Umbrellas . . . . .	11
Memory Town . . . . .	14
Leg Room. . . . .	28
A Linguist at Primark. . . . .	30
Diet . . . . .	33
Witnesses at Peckham . . . . .	34
At the British Museum . . . . .	35
Deciphering Intentions . . . . .	36
Nelson at Goodenough. . . . .	38
Apple Store, Covent Garden . . . . .	39
A Brief Sunshine in Lagos . . . . .	40
The Escape . . . . .	41
Quiet . . . . .	44
Brit Hunger. . . . .	45
No Rolls at Waitrose . . . . .	47
The Airport Sign . . . . .	49
Brexit Day . . . . .	50

## **BLACK . . . . . 51**

Let Us Pray . . . . .	53
Èsù at the Library. . . . .	55
The Puke On The Train Floor. . . . .	58
If the Virus Comes to Town . . . . .	61

PROPERTY OF MASOBE BOOKS

Effluvia . . . . .	62
Dystopia . . . . .	63
No Wine in my Quarantine . . . . .	64
Closing Doors . . . . .	67
The Homeless Are Homeless Still . . . . .	68
The Snob . . . . .	69
Gone Innocence . . . . .	71
If These Were Written In Times Past . . . . .	72
Funeral . . . . .	73
Last Tweets . . . . .	75
If Only . . . . .	78
The Lines . . . . .	80
What Next? . . . . .	81
An Empty Town . . . . .	84
<b>RED . . . . .</b>	<b>87</b>
Capel Celyn. . . . .	89
In Crowds of Pain . . . . .	92
Bad Connections . . . . .	94
Ex-ilé . . . . .	95
On New Year's Eve. . . . .	97
Blood-Spangled Banner . . . . .	98
Maximum Restraints . . . . .	100
Soldiers in Lagos . . . . .	102
To A January 6th Friend. . . . .	104
Home as lights . . . . .	106
Acknowledgements . . . . .	108
About the Author . . . . .	111

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# WHITE

“Time is the deepest wilderness  
in which we wander.”

—Christopher Cokinos

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# Lingua Fracas

On the plane out of Lagos,  
A chatter between strangers  
Perked my ears from the discomfort  
Of my long tired feet.

“I live in Bristol,” the hostess said  
To the Nigerian across the aisle,  
Both in a moment of shared Britishness  
As others settled in.

“My sister lives in Bristol,” he answered back  
In the same vein and tone, the pride  
Of their common homes warming over  
differences;  
Croaky to tiny voice over the heads in-between.

“Nice,” she said, strapping in. “It’s a nice place.”  
My boredom feasted on the enthusiasm  
Of their bonding talk, and then back  
To pre-boarding reality.

“She’s a nurse,” he said again,  
And the crack emerged: A rounded vowel  
Where a central one would have fit.  
“What?” she asked.  
“Naw-se,” enunciating.

I watched the Nigerianism peel away  
the practiced years of speech repair;  
And there it was, audible to all  
Except the one to which it was directed  
Who took it for a different word.

“Oh, I live in the *North* too,” she shouted back.

# Airport Pickup

Through the barricade  
Into freedom, the signs beckon  
In different fonts: black board,  
White chalk. Bold, small, letters.  
An iPad once, and a piece of cardboard  
On another. Paper and pen  
Scrawlings of people whose stories,  
Like mine, begins here  
In the exhausting end to the long haul.

Mrs Smale on one. Not a typo on 'Small',  
I wondered. As with Jonathan Ward,  
Clearly someone's son.  
Mark Opzoomer will be Jewish  
Or not. Oppenheimer twins in name,  
From the Feynmann's books, destroyer of worlds.  
What he is, for sure, is late.  
His driver looks anxiously at the exit.  
Mark Hansen, on one. Maybe he's 'handsome'  
Or just has large hands.

The one with Krista Goodman was barely  
Legible from my distance.

I wondered also

How many of the visitors are spies

Or which had come on a visit

That would find me, in another realm,

Victim to this liberalism of travel.

David Fellows, like a studious dude

Coming for his lover Laura Howie,

On the slate held by the short Asian man.

Joel with no last name is on another.

And Andrew Brown, Mark Whipple, Richard

Toby

Near the exit where I was now, staring.

Heading to the subway sign, I saw a familiar one:

Bádé Adébòwálé on an electronic slate.

*Welcome brother. The limousine is not yours.*

The others waited for Imelda Clifford

And Ms Wells (AGM cars).

Faithful subject of empire, dragging along his  
pain,

I, with my two bags, will be taking the train.