

NOTES AT YOUR GRAVESIDE

1/11/2023

8 Comments

By Babatimehin Aṣíwájú



for Prof. Ayo Olukotun, my uncle.

i.

sand to sand;

ashes to ashes;

& dust to dust;

ii.

once again, mother earth eats her child.

cruel mother! swallowing the carcass

of her children whole. your lifeless body is being lowered

into the ground. & the organist plays a solemn

hymn on his instrument. standing at your graveside,

all the ones you ever loved. tears...& tears...& I

become unsure of which it is: should a man not die?

or should a man not love?

iii.

how I have weaned myself from whimpering

when eating from the fruit of the grief that ripens

at the stool of your grave. I promised myself

not to do this. not to empty my grief

into the mouth of another poem. but this is how I mourn



Subscribe

* Indicates required field

Name *

Email *

Subscribe

Search



my dead: I carve a poem in their likeness.
& chew it until it becomes incense, floating
into the afterlife like the spirit of a solemn song.

iv.

here, standing at your graveside, I fight back
the surging Nile behind my lids from spilling over.
into the next line of the story. & again...& again...I stand
unsure of which it is:
should a man not cry?
or should a man not be seen crying?

v.

in the background, the organist plays a solemn song;

"strong man, don't cry
strong man, don't cry
you are your father's son..."

Writer's Biography

Babatimehin AŞíwájú is just another (lost) boy/who seeks refuge in poetry.

He has works published/forthcoming in Brittle Paper, Kalahari Review, African Writer Magazine, and Synchronized Chaos.



8 Comments

Alobu Emmanuel 19/11/2023 03:45:19 pm

"strong man, don't cry."

This is another evocative poem about grief and loss. The setting is the graveside, and the poet did not fail in stoking our hearts with the doleful events (of the funeral).

"should a man not cry? or should a man not be seen crying?"— these, and some other philosophical questions adorning the poem makes it moving and enjoyable.

Reply

Funke Adegbokiki 20/11/2023 01:04:31 pm

It is quite touching and apt.

This too will pass.

Reply

Olivia 20/11/2023 03:25:43 pm

'should a man not cry or should a man not be seen crying'

Babatimehin captures what grief can feel like for boys in a culture where 'strong men don't cry!'

And I say to him and myself, put your pain in your words for where else would they be? This was beautiful.

Reply

Yemidale 22/11/2023 04:08:32 am

His diction reminds me of my days as a poet. It's a beautiful poem reflecting on the idea of majority in the society that "men do not cry".in the last stanza. It's sad that men are considered weak if they do.

Reply

Chinenye Okechukwu 22/11/2023 03:29:11 pm

I find writing about grief quite assuring, having recently suffered a loss myself. The writer's depiction of the graveyard, mourning, and the societal pressure on men not to express emotion is apt. I hope that men know remember today that just like women, it is okay to feel. And it's okay to show it.

Reply

Supreme 30/11/2023 05:24:31 am

Grief is a very terrible thing to experience and because we cannot control the love we share with others while they are on this earth, we will always find ourselves grieving their loss.

There's no right or wrong way to grieve so the expectation associated with a grieving male can be quite annoying. Some people express their grief through writing (just like the author) and others let the 'surging Nile' behind their eyelids spill over. All in all, it is a testament of our love.

Omo, Rishy, better reply this comment when you come to read this. After all you like serious topics.

Reply

Flourish 30/11/2023 12:26:26 pm

This is such a beautiful piece, although it's heart wrenching.

I like how the expression of grief here is not restricted to any particular way.

Reply

Obinna 6/1/2024 12:57:40 pm

This reads like a tribute to Mother Earth and I really love the simplicity which the story's trajectory went.

Reply