

# Poetry Porch: Poetry

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## **The Bicyclist**

By Jonathan Chibuiké Ukah

Lost a house in Port Harcourt,  
chased out of a job in Diobu,  
home crushed by a hurricane,  
the aftermath of an unholy war.  
He thought Harmattan season was far off,  
tried to clear his head in tandem,  
but his eyes wore a fog, his face a mist.  
And his future caught up with him.

He mounted his black bicycle,  
faced the road littered with famished bodies.  
His could soon be among them.  
He closed his eyes, breathed out,  
smoked imaginary tobacco,  
clouds thicker than the Zuma Rock,  
blew out the air from his nostrils.  
He needed water.

He set out pedalling, his throat ready to burst;  
the road was burning like wood,  
its embers smoldering beneath him.  
He dared not admit how numb his knees were  
or how every moment hurt.  
He was pedalling, pushing the bicycle  
towards where he thought was home.

What is a man without a home?  
Not the pride he wore like a hat.  
On his bicycle, he dodged bayonets,  
jockeyed over potholes,

ducked machine guns, eluded snipers  
and troops lying in ambush, entered into a sea  
of hidden bombs and abandoned pistols.

His bicycle was a saddled horse,  
but my father closed his eyes  
until it bore him home.  
On arrival, he wore a new body,  
like my ancestors, his forefathers,  
who went to war in their own skins  
but carried no weapons in their hands.  
His ancestors wore invincibility like a jacket,  
as the sky wears the clouds,  
as the desert wears sand.