

TO
BEE
A
HONEY

Oyindamola



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“...this is for the bee in me that stings
and for the honey in me that sweetens...”

Oyíndàmolá

Proem

When Oyin's debut collection, *Heartbeat* was released in 2015, it was riddled with a kind of uncertainty; one usually found in precocious writers trying to find their voice amidst the conflicting paroxysm of influences. However, with *To Bee a Honey*, we encounter a poet who does not only revel in the new-found confidence of her scribbling but also in the lush glow of her womanhood.

What immediately strikes one upon perusing this work is its aesthetic beauty. This is not limited to the arresting visual images drawn up on the pages but also the arrangement of the lines; with carefully-planned alignments birthing creatively-shaped poems, Oyin gives us a collection that is a true remarkable sight. Making use of the modern advantages which the new-age document-formatting applications have brought, she stylizes the poems in ways that add to the overall allure of this compendium, heightening its experiential quality simultaneously. A perfect example is a poem in this collection titled *the pression*, which relies more on the manner of presentation of the words to relay the message, than the actual self-contained meanings of the words themselves.

Every single poem is a brilliance of sorts. *BITS*, a section of this collection opens with these lines:

Dear _____,

When will you stop pun.Ct;ua,ti?Ng the way you love me?

Oyin pays attention to detail like never before, taking her time to make sure the poems themselves are drawings along the lines of the reader's consciousness.

Despite being rather unusually tame in her assertiveness in the earlier parts of the collection, she descends into a braver and less conscionable voice as the work progresses, tackling abortion laws, sexual objectification of women, the media's attempted control of black women's likability, justification of rape, and negro pride.

For many reasons, Oyin's work is different from her previous. Apart from artistic growth, which is obvious, she has also had a change of perspective, owing to migration. As a Nigerian teenager, fresh out of high school at the time of her first effort, her reality during the publication of *To Bee a Honey* has changed: she has become black. And being black and woman in America means carrying a lot of baggage, to be apologetic for merely existing. The constituents of this reality have caused an explosion of feminist awakening in Oyin's heart and we, her readers are the lucky spectators who get to watch her bedazzle us with this scintillating work of art. Throughout the work, we see influences of other powerful women of color such as Warsan Shire, Rupi Kaur, and Maya Angelou, albeit not with the author's intention.

So, come into the world of Oyin Shoola and get lost in its arresting diction and captivating visuals. At the risk of being accused of over-proclamation, I dare say, welcome to the future of twenty-first century African poetry.

- **Kanyinsola Olorunnisola**
Founder of Springg Literary Movement

Oyín;
Yoruba to English translation
- Honey, Bee, Honeycomb

To the reader,

As you turn these pages
I hope that you will
find your name in yourself
and yourself in your name.

THE TAKING

To flatter me, I let him say that I was not like the other girls without making him feel sorry for his words. I was expected to find my value in devaluing other sisters. I was only different; his words didn't make me better than they were.

Perhaps the advices and all the fears I was taught,
will have been useful if he touched me like I
learned to anticipate. It will make sense now,
why all the thieves that ever stole my
innocence come knocking:

soft,
slow,
and
subtle.

They will even wipe
their feet on the mat
before

e
n
t
e
r
i
n
g
.

- **Love is how they touched us invasively**

The next time we met,
he leaned closer. I did
not want it but I did
not complain. Over
the next few weeks,
the space between
wherever his
hands hung
and my
body
was
consumed.

I was no longer
personal to myself.
His hands became too
comfortable locking on my
body in a way that I had not been
brave, and loving enough to touch myself.

When
you tried
to ~~love~~ touch me
and

m

y

b

o

d

y

was stiff,
unwilling to
~~love you back~~

r

____e

s

____p

o

____n

d,

it was saying for me
what my mouth was in
shock to speak and my mind
was unprepared to experience.

Home. Like a falling bangle, I

l m
 i p,

I shriek, I scare, I **shrink**,

I stu-tut-ter,

I mutter, I whisper,

I starve, I w

e

e

p,

I **SCREAM**,

I slump,

I die, I **fade**,

I hide, I die again,

I **Sink**.

- **The pression**

From all these unwanted memories
and surviving days
when I didn't want myself,
it is hard to speak of you
without your name
rolling off my tongue
like an apology.

Oyindamola – To Bee A Honey

In the disguise of love,
you took from me
an innocence
that I was just learning
to own.

- **The taking**

PRAISE FOR *TO BEE A HONEY*

This book is ripe with Oyindamola's transcendence into a mother of self-realization. From the well thought out title, to the depth of the poems chosen to create this uncanny ensemble. It is the metamorphosis of her becoming. So woman!!!

- **Olanrewaju Oranyeli, Writer**

When poetry pleases the eyes as much as it tasks the mind, then I can't have enough of it... that is what Oyindamola Shoola achieves in *To Bee a Honey*. She is daring, artistic and delightfully inspiring.

- **Kukogho Iruesi Samson, poet**
Author of *What Words Can Do?*

These words don't need sound to call for attention. The poems in *To Bee a Honey* are like wind on a day nothing seems to be blowing. I enjoyed every piece here and I feel like I should own some of Oyindamola's thoughts.

- **Patience Lawal, poet**
Author of *Sea Shells*

A witty collection that subtly dips in and out of reading like a sweet lullaby and pinching you behind the ears with its message.

- **Tolu Akinyemi**
Author of *Your Father Walks like a crab*
Author of *Funny Men Cannot Be Trusted*

This is a flawless display of everything poetry should be, simple words that hit you, in just the right spot with maximum impact.

- **Pyrokardia**
Author of *A Beautiful Mess*
Author of *Broken Wishbones & Empty Spaces*

MORE PRAISE FOR *TO BEE A HONEY*

Oyindamola has taken mere words and made them music, turned them into songs you can somehow only hear by reading. If any one hopes to ever understand love, they must first know how love speaks, how it laughs and smiles when no one is watching. Love is shy but Oyindamola's poetry takes you by the hand and brings you close enough to observe but not be seen, close enough to understand that love is not blind - it is only myopic.

- **Oluremi k Oluseye**
Performance Poet, Film maker
Founder of The GODfactor Movement

It was an amazing read. I enjoyed every line of it! This isn't like more complex poetry that would keep you wondering if the poet wrote it for herself alone.

- **Seye Kuyinu**
Author of *Dates and all the things I tell you*
Author of *Things I Wanted To Tell You in Other Words*

This is a great piece that translates into our core and strips us bare, with every flip of each page. *To Bee A Honey* transcends a work of art into realism. Just like Rupi Kaur, Oyindamola Shoola did an exquisite work by being blunt, emotionally burning sensations, not holding back, words skillfully weaved and put together and powerful thoughts inked legibly; a metamorphosis of a woman who is unashamedly owning her truth. *To Bee A Honey* is every woman's truth and also, every woman's blessing.

- **Ebukun Gbemisola Ogunyemi**
@Ibukunwrites

MORE PRAISE FOR *TO BEE A HONEY*

This anthology is a uniquely written one. It is not written for all the poets out there but for a class of poets who would read in between the lines and decipher the message therein.

- **Mr. Njoku, C. J**

Author of *Specific Approach to the Study of Literature & Literary Concepts*

To speak of Oyindamola's *To Bee a Honey*, I had to first strip myself of the approach I had started out with. This anthology is perfectly written, the thoughts and syntax woven delicately; like the silk threads of a spider's web. One barely gets through the first poem with the warmth she brings, and that ghost of a smile that begins to linger around the edges of your lips.

An exceptional feature is the fluid way the pieces evolve from one theme to another without being disjointed, letting her parade a range of emotions and opinions without portraying them strongly, allowing us to feel her in her words.

- **Heych Essien, writer**

Hersey97.WordPress.com

This collection proves how poetry's scope isn't limited to heart or soul, but can interest aesthetics, mind, and critical conscience as well. Yes, you'll find feelings, and even doubts, frailties, and pains, inevitable in any honest soul-digging. But the Author's poetry is imbued with such a deep, lucid, untamable analysis of the mechanisms behind our way to be, whether as individuals or as elements of bonds and society, to provide a challenging and thought-provoking reading experience on many levels.

- **Daniele Bergamini, poet**

Human, believer, helper, thinker, creativ

The Author



Oyindamola Shoola is a writer, book reviewer, feminist, and blogger. She is also the Co-founder of Springg Literary Movement, a non-profit organization dedicated to curating, revitalizing, and transforming the New Nigerian Generation in writing and literature. She is the author of *Heartbeat* and *To Bee a Honey*.

In 2017, she was named one of Nigerian Writers Award (NWA) most influential writer under the age of 40.

www.shoolaoyin.com

Oyindamola – To Bee A Honey

Thank you for coming.

To Bee a Honey is now available for purchase via
<https://linktr.ee/oyindamolashoola>

For all inquiries and questions
please email the author
shoolaoyin@yahoo.com

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