

# TAMPHERED



THE  
FUTURE  
PRESENT

# Editor's Note

2018. No. 1



Tampered Press started out as a conversation on creating more platform and visibility for artists in Ghana and Africa. While blackness has become more noticeable now than in the past, and more space is gradually being created at the table, black as an identity is heavily nuanced and has to be dissected and carefully documented.

African artists in particular have fewer platforms. Our experiences, mannerisms and culture often have similarities, but our style, design, creation and content are different. We'd also all like to get better at what we do, and the most efficient way to do that is to crawl out of our many separate bunkers, stop giving each other suspicious looks, and share our best ideas, tools, and practices.

This was a profoundly collaborative endeavor. This first issue collapsed divisions between artists from different backgrounds and expertise; illustrators worked with everybody, fantasy writers created new worlds with photographers from different angles they wouldn't have otherwise ventured. Putting this first issue together was a communal effort.

A huge thanks to everyone who helped us lay this foundation; to all our contributors for trusting us, and to you our first readers, for making this meaningful.



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# Tampered

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### ANONYMOUS ANGRY HOUR

How do you make it as a writer in Africa?

10:39 AM



Nnamdi

Er...you publish in the fucking West? This one na general knowledge.

10:41 AM

Funmi



10:41 AM

Nnamdi

This reminds me of a recent article FragileSheet ran...the long and short of it is that they were saying the West isn't the Mecca of African literature. A very cocky and uninformed opinion. As long as African Literature is still being written mainly in English and French, the West will always be Mecca.

10:41 AM

Aisha

Write about the sufferings of the black homosexual (poor) community.

10:43 AM

Chika

If by make it, you mean become recognized and receive international acclaim, then I would say, write something good and get a good agent/publisher

10:45 AM

Nnamdi

Hahahahahaha. Aisha, you're angry.

10:46 AM

Nnamdi

Chika

If by make it, you mean become...

Chika speak in specifics. What do you mean by 'write something good?' For the purpose of this question, that's so vague.

10:47 AM

Chioma

Aisha

Write about sufferings...

This is good.

10:47 AM

Ama

Chika

If by make it, you mean become...

By make it I mean survive – as a career path, just like any other professional, - doctor, musician, teacher etc.

10:49 AM

Chioma

Throw a pity party about how you discovered your sexuality, suffering and sweating in the closet and finally letting yourself out. And then the trauma that followed and how it made you a recluse.

10:50 AM

Chika

Nnamdi

Chika speak specifics...

Write a good book on a topical issue.

10:52 AM

lfe  
Work in PR and communications.  
10:53 AM

lfe  
Chioma  
Throw a pity party about how you discovered your sexuality...  
I see how this can be funny, but I think it damages people who have genuine stories like this.  
10:54 AM

lfe  
Just write something that intrigues the West. That's where your readers are.  
10:55 AM

Ama  
lfe  
I see how this can be funny, but I think it damages people who...  
Also makes it hard for 'everyday stories' to be taken serious enough to merit publication or all the other benefits good writing should have. It's almost as if to get attention from the West you have to sell your pain/ or something extreme.  
10:57 AM

Ama  
lfe  
Just write something that intrigues the West...  
So, no audience (paying and non-paying in Africa?)  
10:57 AM



lfe  
Ama  
Also makes it hard for 'everyday stories' to be taken...  
Of course this all boils down to who pays for our stories.  
10:57 AM

lfe  
Find the people ready to pay, and write what they want.  
10:59 AM

lfe  
Otherwise, you won't make it as a writer in Africa.  
10:59 AM

Umar  
First, make peace with the possibility that you might never "make it". And then do any and everything your conscience can live with to see that you do, one day at a time.  
11:00 AM

Kunle  
First, become popular on Facebook. Second, forget your writing ambitions, because to make it on Facebook is to make it completely.  
11:00 AM



# INVER SION

*Story. Ivana Akotowaa Ofori | Photography. Josephine Ngminvielu Kuuire*

I have had an intense fear of inversion before I could even crawl. It's an ironic phobia to have, considering I need to be inverted to stay sane. The world is funny like that; it doesn't let you get what you need without making you pay for it in some way.

Before knowledge of the Inverse was common among the Jaloï people, everyone in my grandmother's village just assumed she was a crazy sculptor. All her clay figures were of perfectly erect humans with their arms straight up, like it was perfectly natural for humans to stand with their arms reaching for the sky. They all had flat palms, too. If you turned the human figures upside down, they balanced just as well on a horizontal surface as they did on their feet.

But even when trips between the realms had become daily occurrences, nobody bothered to tell my mother that giving birth in the Inverse was a horrible idea, that it left children permanently disoriented in the Upright, that we ended up being spiritually split between worlds, and would have to keep moving back and forth throughout our lives, just to stop ourselves from going mad.

Although disorientation was a standard characteristic of Invertible kids, I was the only one I knew of with this damn phobia. Having to cross worlds, for them, was a mere nuisance, an occasional inconvenience. For



me, inverting was like having to slay a demon with infinite lives over and over again.

I still had both feet on the ground, but my heart was already pummeling in my chest. My anxiety threatened to choke me. I slid my right leg back and transferred weight between my legs rhythmically, merely procrastinating before the final motion. Beads of sweat formed on my face. I looked like I was preparing for a fist-fight. I still couldn't bring myself to do the stupid handstand that would send me back towards sanity.

Finally, the strength of my compulsion towards the other side overpowered my phobia. I raised my trembling arms, wondering if they would be steady enough to hold me at all. Then I lifted my front foot, shifting all my weight to the one behind, then swung all of it forward again as forcefully as I could.

I saw the whole world steadily flip on me and dizziness flooded my senses. My palms at last made contact with the ground and my feet slammed against the wall one after the other. I was upside-down, and the panic was incapacitating.

Let it be over, let it be over let it be over, I pleaded. The unpainted clay walls of the room transformed before me, and my senses slowly reoriented.

I was now standing in a vibrant garden of green grass, balanced on the balls of my feet. A few feet ahead of me lay the road to the metropolis. My hands were raised erect and parallel to my ears, but above my palms was nothing but endless blue sky. My braids and dangling earrings were being stubborn, standing upright as if I were still upside down. A few shakes and pats later, they too had readjusted to inversion.



*"Because any day is a good day to show love"*  
[www.yobbings.com](http://www.yobbings.com)



I am a slow breath  
my poems are shaped like hunger  
I set the table  
with rhythm in my fingers  
and fold the napkins into homes  
on the plate is  
a strand of my hair,  
the sound of my voice,  
and the color of my eyes  
on the plate  
cracks of my body  
the rip in my jeans  
and the scar on my cheeks  
I am a slow breath  
my poems are shaped like hunger  
and when I sit to eat,  
my meal looks just like me

*Poem. Tryphena Lizzert Yeboah*



*Illustrator: Kye Innocent*

- ONE -

# .on pondering a familiar phrase.

essay. moshood | illustration. poeta asantewa

i wonder, thinking about it now, why the phrase has never really interested me. it is a quite familiar one - from seeing it inscribed on my friend Ivy's t shirt, to coming across it, occasionally, on my social media feed.

as an artist - ei, are writers artists? - a living artist for that matter, it should be a phrase that piques my interest; a rallying cry that i subscribe to, as a matter of course.

the phrase? support living artists.

on interrogating my apathy towards it, i came up with one or two...hypotheses.

first, there's that bone of contention: about whether or not being an art practitioner is the same, professionally, as being, say, a medical or legal practitioner. or, put another way, are artists different, special; or are they just workers like everyone else?

(i should mention that i have no personal interest in partaking in this debate; and that i only invoke it for the purposes of this essay.)

somewhere on the internet a couple of years ago, one user made a point relating to this contention. to paraphrase them: interviewers should stop asking artists about what they're doing to impact or give back to, society. because they do not ask such of non-artists - doctors, lawyers et cetera.



~~Support~~ Necessitate ~~living~~ ARTists.

~~Support~~ Develop ~~living~~ artists into a product.

~~Support~~ ~~living~~ artists Build your damn practice.

Support living artists?



i would say, after putting two and two together, that this person belonged to the side that says: do not essentialise artists. an artist is a worker just like the engineer, the journalist, the taxi driver...

support living artists. in the context of the contentious issue mentioned above, i'd say that the phrase betrays an essentialisation of artists. in that i've never heard a call to 'support living engineers,' neither have i heard of one to 'support living taxi drivers.' (emphasis on 'living' in both instances.)

no, this is not making a facile, decontextualised comparison here; because i personally acknowledge the fact that artists have their own special hells, so to speak, and as it stands, actually do have peculiar needs.

speaking of contextualisation... 'support living artists' - together with its less popular follow-up statement ('the dead ones don't need it') - suggests that dead artists somehow do get this support being solicited.

perhaps, this may be the case in societies where there is, for example, such a thing as 'the death effect' in art circles. but what does that implication - that dead artists are supported (at the expense of living artists?) - mean in the context of the society in which i live and practice - West Africa, Ghana? here where the artist, in the whole scheme of things, receives little to no support at all - whether they're as alive as Awo Tsegah, or as dead as Tommy Wiredu.

familial support, societal support, state support: almost nada. (i write here, by the way, of support which includes but is by no means limited to that of the material kind.) in the face of such a reality, the phrase rings hollow to me, a mere platitude.

we may have our own kind of 'death effect' out here, alright - and this one goes beyond art circles and covers the larger society. to give but one example of our kind of death effect: unlauded accounts of any unsavoury character of the dead artist is rendered almost

*support living artists. the existence of this sentiment is merely indicative of a bigger problem. and that should even go without saying. in a sane society, such a cry would be unheard-of.*



abominable to utter. so, say, the dead person was an idiot, or just a really callous individual in their lifetime, that fact, per the workings of this death effect, is inappropriate to mention posthumously. there is a word that this phenomena brings to my mind - and it is not support. the word? necrophilia. but i digress...

support living artists. the existence of this sentiment is merely indicative of a bigger problem. and that should even go without saying. in a sane society, such a cry would be unheard-of. because there would be sustainable systems/structures, and environments would be conducive; making for viable living and working conditions for all inhabitants - including, of course, artists.

moving forward then, i posit, just as many others most probably have, that much of our rallying efforts would be better off aimed at ceasing the conditions that necessitate the existence of such a phrase/sentiment.

in the context of the society from which i write this, that advocacy would be something like: struggling to change the fact of art(istry) being generally undervalued; that of people having prejudiced orientations particularly towards the pursuit of arts as a profession. and last, but most definitely not the least, advocating for state-level structural changes - towards a social organisation which, unlike the current one, does not frustrate artists and their artistry.

support living artists? that's well and good. rallying cries are useful, i suppose. but they've got to be sensible. of that, i'm certain.

Poem. Tryphena Lizzert Yeboah



- TWO -

**Today,**

I am not a poet.

I have hushed the melody from my words  
and no one would dance with me.

my throat is an empty room

*and life is in the walls.*

I shall not write about the love affair  
on Tuesday- how he asked me to stay-

As though I carry with me  
some light, some map,  
something meant to last

for a boy broken on the inside.

I shall not write about mother's anger  
or the grief that forced its way into my chest

And wouldn't go away.

**Today,**

It is too early, I say to myself,  
to think words can heal all wounds-

*look at your father's eyes.*

*Do you see happiness in them?*

I hold my tongue between my teeth.

My stories must first learn to breathe  
before they pull a jacket over their cold bodies,  
before they look at themselves twice in the mirror  
and walk unto a hungry stage,  
the mouth of a shark.

My stories must first learn to breathe  
before they run to beg for help,  
grip their chests in fear and wonder

*If God wants them dead.*

**Today,**

I am not the poet.

I am a poem strangling the beast of the sea,  
Daring the waves to come for me.

I'm not a gateman, you see, not really, he says with a plaintive look on his face. He is standing in front of the black wrought-iron gate, a tattered copy of *Praying Your Way To Success* forgotten on the grey plastic chair behind him, in light of the short, light skinned girl with the tray of hardboiled eggs balanced on her head, her gaze turned away from his face.

on her arm for a minute, just looking at the hairy knuckles and the black, bitten down nails and then she trails her gaze up the hand, past the FC Barca for Life wristband on his wrist, up his forearm where she can spy the edges of an ugly green tattoo curling out from underneath his sleeve, past his thick neck and finally, onto his face.

# A Tray of eggs

*Story: Pamela Naaki Tetteh*

She shifts from one foot to the other, her right hand hovering around the edge of the tray in case it starts to tip, but it doesn't. He is still talking but she isn't listening; her mind is far off in the muddy car park a few streets away, where, in a few hours, she will have sold off all her eggs for the day, and will go home with a tired but happy smile on her face, on account of all the naira notes rustling in the front pocket of her apron. Eager to be in that vision now, she straightens and starts to move away but his hand, startling in its blackness, flies from his side and lands on her arm, stopping her from moving. She stares at the large hand

It isn't ugly, not really. It just isn't the sort of face she would prefer to have sweating above her on a thin mattress in the pale light of a single candle. It is too thin, the eyes too sunken, the cheeks too pockmarked. So she shrugs his hand off, slowly, and with a hand on her tray to steady it, walks off. He follows her, his voice now a wheedling whine. He tries speaking Pidgin. Any tin wey you want, I go buy am for you, I swear. Dem dey pay me well well for here, I no even be like gateman for dem eye. She continues walking, a slow, measured stride, ignoring his rising voice and his arms which are starting to flail precariously close to her

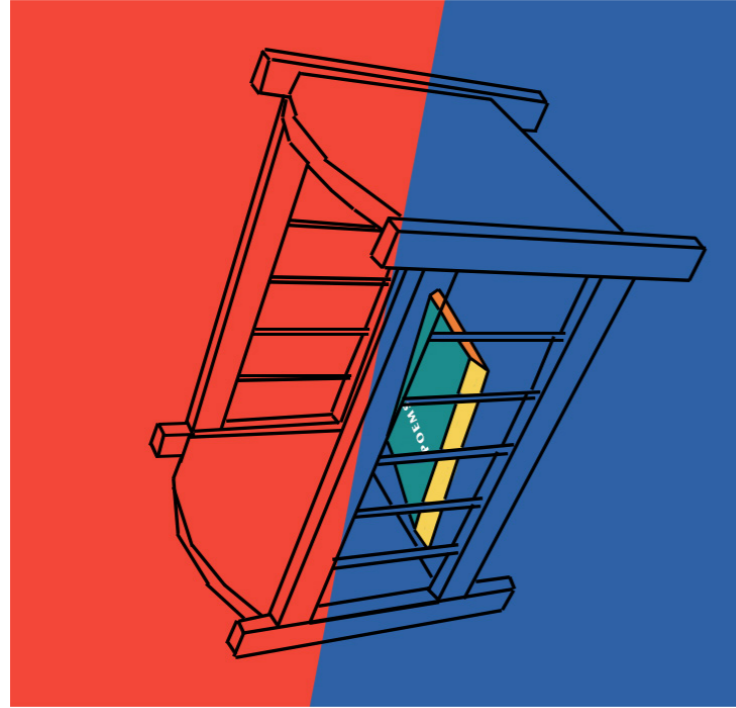
*“It just isn't the sort of face she would prefer to have sweating above her on a thin mattress in the pale light of a single candle.”*

precious tray. He has switched tacks; he is now calling her a public toilet. No be she he just see last week for Baba Ibeji shop, dey shack pami like say na she get the complex? Why she go let that old cargo knock the tin, but she no wan allow him even small one? She fights the urge to shove one of her steaming hot eggs into his eye and instead keeps on walking, her voice shaking just a little as she calls out Buy your eggs! Hot hot egg!

They have reached the junction, and a lot more people are milling around there but he is not worried. He knows that a crowd will not gather; it is not unusual to see a gateman trying to toast a hawker, especially a fine babe like this one. But she is starting to move a little faster through the people, and in a purely desperate act, his hand flies out to clamp her shoulder and stop her from running again. But he has miscalculated. The force with which his hand moved was too strong, so that instead of landing on her shoulder, it hits her in the back, between her shoulder blades. She had not been expecting this, and her head lolls a bit under the heavy tray. He watches with a growing sense of panic as the tray tips precariously to the left, then to the right, and then one by one, her eggs start to plop plop down onto the muddy, oil streaked ground beneath her feet.

She stares at the smashed remnants of her eggs between her feet for a few moments, within which the crowd seems to come alive. They swarm, from all sides, to the both of them, and start to hurl insults as one seething mass at him. He moves closer to her, his eyes begging, trying to placate her. But, suddenly, with the virulence that is only possible of Lagos crowds, they push her out and turn on him. From her not so vantage point near a stack of tires, she can see arms and sandaled feet

flying, and she can hear the thuds when they connect with his flesh. She picks up her tray from where it has fallen in an oily puddle and turns to leave when she hears the broken groans from the battered mass now on the ground. It is the sound of a man almost gone, she thinks, as she pushes her way through the thinning crowd and stretches out her arm to him. He takes it and pulls himself up, mouthing the words I dey sorry at her. But the crowd is not appeased, they have sniffed blood and now they want more. They start to close in on him when he shouts, sticks his hand into his front pocket and produces two crumpled one thousand Naira notes –far more than the worth of her entire tray of eggs, and sticks them out to her. She takes them and un-crumples them slowly, her eyes widening at this sudden good fortune. Then she smiles up at him, a sunny heartbreaking thing, and the crowd is appeased. They start to cheer and part for both of them to pass. She goes first, her empty tray under her left arm and the two thousand tucked safely under the folds of her blouse. He follows behind her, watching the seductive sway of her hips with a puzzled look on his face, the way a hung-over man might stare at the bottle of Hennessy still clutched tightly in his hand the morning after. Soon, they reach the wrought iron gate where it all started and part ways. He settles back down in his chair and picks up his book, thinking what a mistake he had just made; she wasn't even really that pretty for him to have given her all that money. And she turns into the next street, thinking that perhaps his face wasn't too thin after all, his cheeks weren't too pockmarked after all.



Illustrator. Kpe Innocent

- THREE -

When I speak of writing, I find myself needing a room with doors that have locks, with windows that only open by breaking-

throwing stones, punching fists, hitting a body against glass and hoping to not get cut. I do not know why I write.

I carry myself into a labor ward and kick the midwives out. *I will deliver myself.* I spread my legs like a curtain and push.

My breathing is rough. The light above my eyes fades to a softer shade and for a moment, I can almost see my mother's face.

*The words are heavy.* I feel my swollen belly would explode and they would come gushing out like the laughter of a child.

But I do not want an explosion. I want a smooth arrival between my legs-

poems pouring out of me like the plan of God- resilient, unwavering, having its way- gracefully- regardless of the fight

I slide my fingers into the gates of my womb, calling the verses out. *I am your mother,* I say. *I will take care of you.* My voice shakes.

The poems dance into my hands like an answered prayer.

Heaven must be a library and I am what the angels read.

My lips move but I make no sound. I tremble at the wonder

before me. It's a miracle, a beautiful song, a place at the center of the earth that calls me to belong.

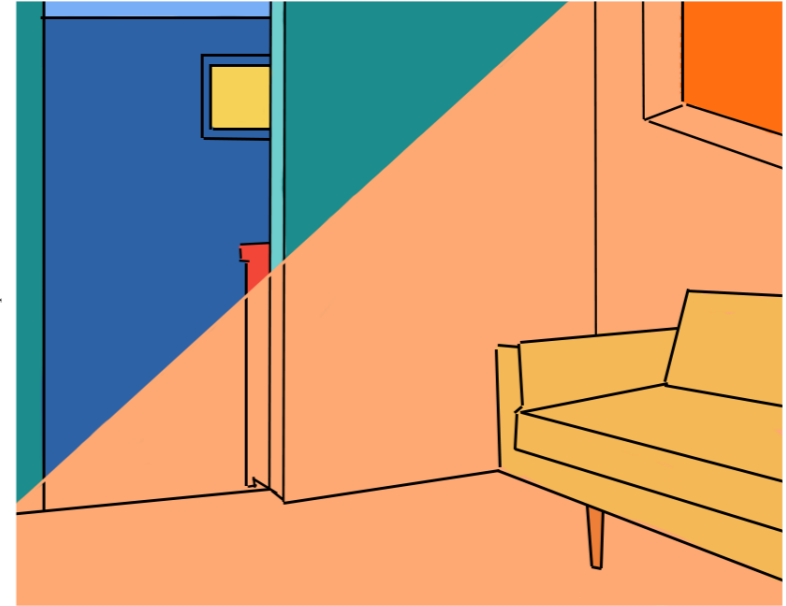
*My joy is sharp-*

piercing me like a knife but I do not bleed.

When I cut the cord, galaxies spill from my eyes.

Finally, something to call mine.

Poem. Tryphena Lizzert Yeboah



Illustrator. Kpe Innocent

- FOUR -

Sometimes the writing is an empty house, a window with a flood of light, a full emptiness a loud silence

Sometimes the writing is my heart on paper, reckless surgery, a war of words, where the knife gets stuck in my chest

Sometimes the writing is a bad lover, a kiss that bursts your lips, a lonely lonely touch A night when your body is bent, the pounding of flesh and the loss of breath

Sometimes the writing is a closed door that stays closed and sometimes the writer knocks forever



# Stone Lodge

Stone Lodge is a scenic, eco-friendly getaway in Ghana for individuals and groups. It is an estimated one-hour drive from Accra, past the Shai Hills Game Reserve, 5 kilometers off the Tema-Akosombo Road towards the Asutsuare Township.

Stone Lodge is set in a green and serene environment and is uniquely situated to offer spacious grounds for relaxation, a variety of outdoor activities and a panoramic view of the surrounding landscape. It is perfect for the city-dweller and tourist who wishes to escape the noise and congestion of the city and experience the unobstructed views, quiet, and beautiful greenery of the countryside.

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YOUR COUNTRY HOME

*Tampered Press*

**AFRICA'S DRAIN BRAIN:  
ARE WE DOOMED?**

**#100**  
"I don't see a future for Africa"

**FREE HOUSING AND BUSINESS  
LOANS FOR 2000 COMMUNITY  
FOCUSED ARTISTS IN  
EVERY REGION**

**PRESIDENT  
SELMA BIYIDAM ANOKYE'S  
STATE OF THE NATION  
ADDRESS (TO HAVE AND TO HOLD?)**

# @AnonymousAngryhour



I am angry about security. As someone who has been shot by robbers and robbed in her own home. I am upset that not only am I powerless but the police is powerless too.

I am mad at myself for not doing the things I can at the moment.



I'm extremely angry about the attacks by herdsmen and the seeming inability of our government to protect us and the obvious complicity of our security operatives in this. Somebody important doesn't want this to end.

I'm angry about Dapchi



I'm angry about Vodafone. Jesus Christo. I want to kill someone there.

I'm angry about working hard over and over and over and over, and still being economically disadvantaged. Does it ever get better?



Afrolitt' is a bilingual literary platform founded by Pamela Ohene-Nyako and rooted in antiracist, feminist and ultimately afrofuturist thought & practice. In Ghana, one of Afrolitt's activities is 'The Afrolitt' Webseries (TAW).

TAW hosts thought-provoking conversations on important social issues from select novels authored by contemporary Black writers. The conversations are centered on works of literature previously suggested for reading by Pamela who is the creator, producer, and host of the web series. The guests are people of African descent, from different professional and creative backgrounds, who reside and work in Ghana. Simply put, the concept of TAW is: 1 book, 1 guest, 1 location.




# Afrolitt

Season 1 of 'The Afrolitt' Webseries is titled « Wɔ Kpe », « we meet » in Ga. It is directed by Rwandan filmmaker and video producer Cynthia Butare, and comprises of 5 episodes shot in greater Accra. Other members of the team are Ghanaian photographer Nii Odzenma and Ghanaian-Dutch music and video producer Alex O. Wondergem. Season 1 is fully available on Afrolitt's YouTube channel.

Currently, Afrolitt's aim is to make TAW a trilogy in three seasons, each with its own creative direction, theme, and singular content. For more information and to support the project visit [www.afrolitt.com/en](http://www.afrolitt.com/en) and follow us on social media via @afrolitt



Nii Odzenma for Afrolitt' © 2017



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C:\WrittenBy\AmaAsantewaDiaka\

[When they ask if you are a feminist]  
[will your hand shoot up?]

will you be a supporting act or a qualifier for the cause?  
will you be a prop for the main show,  
or a question mark when the curtains are raised?  
will you be mere spice garnishing the main dish?  
or the main course that is too bland, or too much,  
or not enough?  
will you be a sophisticated dessert that makes an appearance  
on the menu according to the size of our purse?  
will you be sucked in or gurgled or whispered or spat out?

[When they ask if you are a feminist]  
[will your hand stay up?]