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Invisible Chapters [Association of Nigerian Authors Prose Prize, 1999] and Alpha Song - and a collection of short stories, Return to Algadez. His second poetry collection, Stanzas from the Underground, is awaiting publication.

GLENDORA OCC

Midnight's children

surfing the clouds our faith embraces itself and rigour becomes vigour devotees oscillating around a thousand aeons of light midnight's children rising from bunkers of small faith whistles assail our fore-prints we can hear all things know all things but see only the excellency of rust the world is only a knock away but the foot-noters are already at the gates mapping new worlds with me and i but the world will not stand still and neither shall we the parables of origins: the myths of being confluences swelling the concourse between the living and the dead bonded by invocations traipsing upon the waters

and all our worlds converge

at the homing gates

ii

"ich mag dich" moonlights your postcard, uche
I hear only the tuareg orchestra
Yours still the orgasm of the spirit
last night, dreamt
of the morning carafes of yore
and the sporadic litanies in phantom worlds
where we feed on choice morsels of the night
now, i hear you in many many voices
coasting on the path of thunder
chesting cantatas for rain-clouds
you tell me:
when is the end of forever?

III

laughter still binds us in giddy heights, obigbo once upon a time when the earth was mist at dawn the roped urn signified our passage rite and our spirits knocked about

footloose and rain-blessed now I know you could speak until tomorrow meet me in algadez the day after and i will have camels waiting west is the desert but east is the return journey to nri

iv

izzia, is it because you are a nomad that you follow the rail station everywhere it goes? your roots are in the sky where the mating clouds transform into litanies of rain promising a feast of jazz and rice balls eyeballing dimples meant for kissing i am holding on to the kite praying like a harmonica how many more miles to the next terminus? every stop a requiem of flesh

V

when is the celibacy
of several septembering afternoons
in mid-eternity, e.c'?
your names are spelt out on the ocean-floor
like a marinated song
the frankincense trail is your destiny
-the spice route to oases of memory
yours the alchemy of everything:
from tree-houses to icebergs
from anklets to the music of the earth
you the prophet at crowther lane
where are your tarot cards?

vi

your pointed shoes will question
the oracles to your hometown, nengi
your answers will come
in spreading faith
like the music of the tomb
beyond apples, beyond serpents
i will play the sax
when the hunter of flamingos
reclaims the chronicles of the sun
still, what is the call of the river nun
after the regattas
undress their ambitions?

vii

to room in church street
is to hymn to gods and bubbles
cusping the embrace of whirlwinds
laughing into flesh and bone
your spare rib farms the streets
of cities sworn to reckoning
the iotas of the earth, chiedu
the night masquerades gather
saluting their slivers of moonlight
in smoking voices
and the rains in your heart
scent for the harmattan

viii

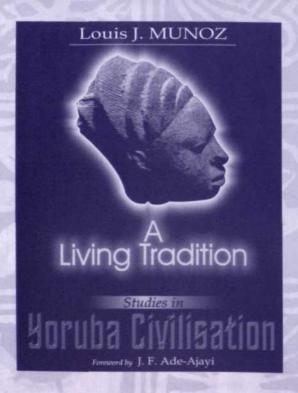
ours then the new niche
of reincarnating dreams
so we gather by the fireside
where chinua* sculpts totems of anthills
with proverbs to mice and mink coats
riches of rain
the spine in every spin
we put on our masks

-palm fronds, crucifixes and sandstorms and we become prophets of the remains of the day presences accompany us through street where absence is the price of salt bullets in our dreams flowers in our antiques nooning sockets of a history that insists stilettos and sea shells magenta and purple nothing survives the night that does not endure the day the muse accompanies us still with sapphire, graphite and inkwells our spirits gather and we are no longer alone omens to pigeons and dreams

*Chinua Achebe, Nigerian novelist and author of Things Fall Apart.

nesting to be free. GR

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