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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 review poet

Midnight's children

i
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
cupping 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, chieftu
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
corners
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
nesting to be free. GR

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

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