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Outburst Of Fireflies

Sesan Ajayi, one of the purest and most confident voices among a whole new generation of Nigerian poets died late last year. He was thirty-five and unmarried. Recently transferred from Ogun State University, Nigeria to Obafemi Awolowo University as a lecturer in the English department where he also doubled as a doctoral student.

Sesan was a lover of the slain Nigerian poet Christopher Okigbo whose tone, depth and sometimes sheer turgidity reechoes in his poetry. He published only one book of poems, A Burst of Fireflies (Kraft Books Limited, Lagos) out of which these poems are excerpted.

Below is Sesan's signature from an autograph to the editor made shortly before his death.

the promise of age

(for my 300-level class; 1990/91 session)

Your children are now wild,
Lord:
they dream of chocolate on ice,
they dance on skates,
they wear skeletal brows in the day,
and hairy hedgerows at night;
they munch man-hours
On slabs of dreams.
Lord, your children are now wild;
kitted in bales of cow-hide,
they torture their days of innocence
they wear hot-pants in winter,
sing hard-boiled elegies
On snow-crates,
paint their arms in rows of periwinkle
Lord, your children are now wild-
they make me afraid;
for they write out the times
in their festoon of thorn.

a night out in Choba*

Nestled in the shrieks of night-
the opaque scars
of wandering talons,
and mired in the grips of neglect.

Once, at ease
in the rubble
of golden fumes:
of golden bazaars
and puddled presences,
of atonal shrapnels
showered on
burdened lampposts;

of riddled rust-bins
hidden in nightlong shrieks of orgasm,
and cascading cadences
in hidden moments of supplication.

The sooty soul renders elegies in miry lanes.

wayfarer, pray not to encounter sentinelled winds of travail,
and cadenced seconds of orgasm;

And may your journey be at daybreak,
on streets laden
with copperworms;

may your wandering be
a pursuit of golden puddles.
May you not inhale wafts of tobacco teasers
couring through sooty hours.

And,
pray for zephyrs of dawn,
not hardened liquids of stale hours.

* Choba is the seat of the University of Port Harcourt.

a dream remembered

The world shall forgive me,
in moments of agony;
trapped in this eerie mood
I trundle aching emotions,
walrus dreams of atonement.

The old aching dream
shall blossom in dark elegies,
Sung in terminal tones
of morning;
charged in syllables of death,
I echo the delirium of living
pausing awhile
to count yellowing pages
opening onto momentary collage.

Beaten into scrolls
of abrasive,
my tar-trunk is aching;
the world is a
plangent scent
of drowsy hibiscus,
the congealed, dreamy-eyed lonely self.

Come, my love,
when the night is awash
in eerie thunderclaps
stripping the tweaky tones
of tenement sweepers, come, please, to ease my somnabulist strip-teasers.

And, pray for the liquid moment of muscled amens, the caricatured ligament of the lonely cycle; burden me with chloroform of quickened stargazers, receding, heckling, searching in the rubble of aching dreams.

And let us be certain it's the tone-laced aluminium dream clear in the flush of an April hymn of penitence.

endings?
(for Dare Okesola)

You must hurry on trembling tarmacs, notches on flailles candles and burn bright in the soundless raptures of aging catacombs.

Hurry forth, here dressed in ashen adrenaline.

Hurry, here, mutant on the rim of saxophoned cadences.

Hurry here, in catacombs of salt-washed emotions.

Hurry, here, in heraldic melodies of quickening love songs.

Endings?

Mutant on the archival rims of earth: you must hurry in notched cubicles of delirium-Mutant.

Slit-tones.

Combed beach-head of quicksand.

anti-SAP song I

I have wished to be nailed to the earth, to be forgotten in mottled cans; for I have hidden thus far; and to be seen is a ritual.

O Lord, shall I still run forth to be nailed when my ancient obligations run a ring round lone alcoves of wishes?

O Lord, nail me, if I can't exorcise the demon of naira to curse my leaking purse: for I have a wish: to be faithful to my obligations.

anti-SAP song II

here, in the gullies where men drown their sorrows here, in the lilylakes where men are fed on hemlock here, in the aging cocoon where men never grow here, in the valley where scales are our only measures of success here, in this tearfilled Chrysalis where rivulets turn, at night, into lilylakes of age

yes, here, in this eternity of sorrows we shall remain heroes

in this twilight of despair.

a burden of ties
(for a toiling old woman in Choba, Rivers State)

shall your days be spent in mindless vacuity? O Lord, flaps of wrapper in supplication to Heaven: shall this grey cloud cock her wishes in this damned cinder? shall your days be echoes of dreams muzzled in madness of these giddy times? O ageless burden of rainbow, shall your days fizzle out like ashes scattered in the gale of want?

sokoti