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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;
and mired in the grips of neglect.
Once, at ease in the rubble of neon fumes:
of golden bazaars and puddled presences,
of atonal shrapnels showered on burdened lampposts;
of riddled rust-bins hidden in nighthlong 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
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

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
nail ed
when my
ancient obligations
run a ring
round lone alcoves
of wishes?

O Lord, nail me,
if I can't exercise
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

Forging barnacles of sweat,
Laden with cairns of metal:
Hireling, who frogjumps into
The shattering furnace-
Mould decanters of
Corrosive patterns,
Echoing metallic dawn,
Straining at God's own leash.