

TWO POEMS

by Marvis Hughes

AN OPEN-EYED PRAYER WITH STONE FINGERS

When the missionaries arrived
 the Africans had the land &
 the missionaries had the Bible.
 They taught us to pray with our eyes closed
 When we opened them, they had the land
 & we had the Bible

Jomo Kenyatta

Here!
 An open-eyed prayer
 with stone fingers

for the big-headed child
 with stark spindle limbs
 in a hundred nations

(among the threads
 of the tatters you wear
 sweat rosaries linger)

for the big-toothed smile
 and whip-coda hymns
 in a hundred nations

Here! an open-eyed prayer
 with stone fingers:

Heeeeeeeeyaa aaaa!
 (D#.....F#.....A#!)

Hee/zaa!
 (D#!)
 (C#)

ISIS SPEAKS

I speak for the soul
in the raft of the universe
I speak for the node
in the consciousness of man
devoted to a road
not quite imperial
but nonetheless grand.

I speak for the song
in the heart of a miracle
the eternal round
unrehearsed unrepeatable
rather than clock hours—
meagre week of machined conceit
miser's worth of fool's power
seated on the mire-based pinnacle
of wealth gained by stealth
by delusion entranced.

I speak for the clod
oozing into river faces
primordial glue of diverse races
sprouting from the mud
waves of grasses, grains
woven into tree bark, brains,
coursing through the blood.

I'll glue back your bones together
be they dry, brittle, tired
of perambulating, walking
poised on the fulcrum of a sigh
exhaled by God 5 billion years ago
inspired into yesterday's newborn child.

I'll reknit your knuckles with a tether
be they scattered over continents wide
calculating, counting
the months or the loves of a life
exhumed by God 5 billion years ago
fired into yesterday's newborn child.

I speak for the ark
in the river of stars streaming
I speak for the lark
on the crest of each day dream
I speak for the rain arch
and its spectrum of meaning
and its spectrum of meaning
many-hued truths, all lovely.

I'll collect your teeth in a necklace, on a pedestal
be they heavy ivory tusks, arced stilettos
or fretted, feathered, flat, weathered
molars molded
round the sound of a word
uttered by God 5 billion years ago
heard by the ear of yesterday's newborn child.

I speak for the wine
of living on the earth
I speak as the earth
for the earth by the earth
whirling world-home birthing.

I'll renew your sinews from the cinders
be they ashen dust, disintegrated splinters
imperceptible, unknown
as a "you" centered in a gnosis
devised by God 5 billion years ago
divined by yesterday's newborn child.

I'll retrace your flow of blood in rivers
be the waters cold, clouded, sweet, bitter
pellucid, clear
I'll decode "you" from the river mood and meaning
seméd by God 5 billion years ago
seen by yesterday's newborn child.

I speak for the soul
in the raft of the universe
I speak for life.