

CHIDI UZOMA

O Poet O Captain

The Grove 19 (2012)

for Leopold Sedar Senghor

O Poet
O captain of the mighty ships
great sailor of the Tenebrae
in the mighty art
of sailing
of words
of the mind

A mention
enough would not do
to caress the warmth of your blithe
pose.
A mention
enough would not do
to music upon the music, upon rhythms

and to remember
letting memory live—
these flutes
rekindles evergreen
rekindles youth.
This khalam rekindles passion

passion of intellect
passion of life
passion in eating a melon soup
for the melon (or)for the pounded yam

“No hate your heart without hate
no guile your heart without guile.”
Great Sage, O undying species
pray, hear to let me say—
words in-depth of heart

Bear to hear me say
words indebt of words
to say —
a prayer to the masks.

Path of Oforula

Walking a tightrope
 a m'ama non m'ama
 Walking a tightrope
 you have to find the path
 The way to your garri
 the way to a roof over your head
 Walking in a new land
 in a never-never land
 May you find
 the path of Oforula in you
 So traveler you would do better to get going
 and so traveler, my own homeboy
 You better set out early
 early before the sun rises.

29 October 1995

A Free Man

While I'm in need of food
 I am not free

While I'm in need of water
 I am not free

While I'm poor
 I am not a free man

Wherever hunger persists
 there's no freedom.