

The life of the dead

Yesterday, a Nganga priest said to me:
the dead are born from the four seasons
with the enigma that is life.
They never die: they just melt the murmur of their breath into the
Earth.
When they reincarnate they are liquid mirrors of
ourselves:
We can feel the *pataki* of their lives.

When they work in the heart of the jungle
they become a weave of nests, arms of moss and mangrove
on a sea of beginnings.
Their faces are carved into our hands
covered in mud, clay and uproar.

When they wander, they become inhabitants
of the stars, passengers of the air.
That is their way of staying alive
in the song of a bird.

They come from the past to contemplate us.
Like a chorus of bees they furrow the curve of the retina.
A lunar mystery orbiting in their gaze
deciphers our thoughts.
They are the invisible narrators of our dreams.
They whisper among themselves of images
that become ideas and words.

They trace out channels on our bodies,
forests of nostalgia, resonant fragments
where the weight of our memories can lie.

They are the rain setting the rhythm of the days.
If we listen to them we feel percussion
galloping across the hills of our tongue.
The artillery of a force in the core of our soul.

We make offers to them of fruits and flowers.
From them comes the freshly baked bread,
the afternoon coffee, the sweet drink at day's end.

Syllable by syllable, they are invoked with the balm of prayer.
They are serenaded with the blood of our animals,
bonfire of verses that lights up their absence.

We spray rum from our mouths and they prophesy to us
with words liberated from the stocks and the whip.

Let the voice of the dead fall at our feet!
Let our fingers feel the drum of their tempest!
Let them dance with us to the tune of the most
ancient melody!