

Two Poems by Kapwepwe Khonje

FRAGMENTS

- a) I'm the trumpeted history
that has obliterated heroes and
erected a deity on crimson scribblings
since the September crisis made us
sing praise-songs without repose
at this altar of power monopoly;
- b) I'm the laudable geography
that photographs highways and belching locomotives
traversing valleys and rocky mountains
that perpetually prays for more rains—
not to sweep away bridges and rails
but to avert last year's drought;
- c) I'm the vital statistic that matters only
during self-help projects
during electoral campaigns
during charity contributions
for drugs in govt. hospitals
and famine relief distributions;
- d) I'm the political haven where
few erect mansions on soft loans &
import limousines duty-free
slum-dwellers' protests drown
in wanton bullets and crowded jails
a fragile Reich sucks like a tick;
- e) I'm the flawed socio-economic development
that counts industrialists on fingertips
that plans and executes on foreign debts
that rewards tobacco/tea rather than food growers
& workers flirt with violence to effect payraises
that merits district quotas in schools & colleges;

- f) I'm the enterprising developer
 grazing known pastures to the ground
 laying tombstones bare to the glaring sun
 discarding broken bones in gaping graves
 laughing at desecrated ancestral homesteads
 clutching frothy glasses: not to pour libations
 but to negotiate contracts with associates.

CHOICES

Why are we still haunted by crocodiles
 after decades of developments
 when we fought that beasts of prey
 should go with the dreaded colonialists?

Why has the drought made us reel
 with fits of devaluations and cat-call strikes
 when silos were full and reserves piling
 and piling overseas?

Why these perpetual witch-hunts
 and paralysis at frozen packages;
 chanting these doomsday messages
 of civil strife in variegated voices?

Haven't we moved thirty years
 in a full circle?

Haven't we been taught classics
 at this transplant of Eton
 where our skins don't qualify us
 and local graduates snubbed?

Haven't we argued in borrowed tongues,
 dissecting the legends and ideals of
 Napoleon, shaka, Lincoln, Marx, Cicero
 in the tradition of Whitehall?

Haven't we?

Now, when coming to choices
 why shrink from foreign ideologies like vomit;
 aren't we reversing wheels of the history
 we have been shaping all along?