

TO RALPH CROWDER

by

KOFI ANYIDOTTO

Crowder, Crowder,  
your message came last night  
Atta says you want to come  
that you and your comrades-in-woe  
are standing in the harbour  
your tired arms stretched over the whispering seas  
to this home your grandfather left so long ago

He says you said  
you cannot go on like this  
waging infernal war  
in which you hear no promise of victory cries  
with the foes daily rising, scheming  
calculating ingenious strategies

Atta says you said  
you have fought so long  
but all this long you've been on the losing side  
that the harder you fight  
the more stubborn the enemies grow

So you cannot go on like this  
fighting with all your blood  
bleeding all the time  
You wish to give up the fight  
and retreat to the old old home  
the home your grandfather lost so long ago

You may come  
Crowder  
You may come  
But O! - Brother!  
all is not well at home  
all is not well with us

Here in the house you long to see  
we continually wrestle with the ghost of death.  
But Atta says your struggle is more ghastly  
So I understand why  
why you are anxious  
anxious to retreat  
retreat to the base your grandfather lost so long ago

You may come  
Brother  
You may come  
But O! Crowder!  
all is not well with us  
all is not well at home

We cut the grass with cutlasses  
And wait for the rains to come  
Often the rains do not come at all  
Sometimes they come all at once  
Each year the harvest is poor

But We Do Not Feed On Stones  
You may come  
Crowder  
You may come  
But O! Brother!  
all is not well at home  
all is not well with us  
We shall welcome you back home  
We shall pour libation to our gods  
But there is little, very little to give you.

Your grandfather left so long ago  
His lands are now in other hands  
But all the same you may come  
We shall give you somewhere to start anew  
We suffer here so much  
But they say your case is worse  
And you have fought with all your blood  
But have always been on the bleeding side

So you cannot go on like this  
Come  
Brother  
Come  
But I tell you all is not well at home.

FRAGMENTS OF DISNEYLAND

(For Shelley and Rhonda, Moses and Leonard)

by

KOFI ANYIDOTTO

MEMORIES are cheats, Shelley,  
Memories, Rhonda, are poisoned arrows  
Unto the foggy screen of time  
they flash reflections of joys that died too young  
crushing the heart with heavy reminders.

All I do today  
is lie upon my aching back  
and  
dig  
deep into the ruins of our yeaterday  
for  
fragments of Disneylands:

our dreamy drive  
down the Freeways  
and  
up the Boulevards  
the sad, masked faces  
of those  
dehumanised beings  
that passed us by  
on their  
hurried drive through life;

the half-remembered opening scene  
that railroad trip to the beginning of things  
the unreal realm of the primeval world  
where

    roaring volcanoes vomited rivers of molten lava  
and  
    nameless superbirds poured their agonies into the skies  
where

    Triceratops stood guard over monstrous hatching eggs  
and

    Stegosauri  
wrestled supremacy from the jaws of  
    Tyrannosaurus Rex

While

Brontosauri growled and wallowed in pools of mud.

These too come and go

flashes of the scene set  
in the unspoilt forests of Adventureland:  
the quiet majesty of those three giraffes  
staring with easy grace  
upon  
the splendour of the zebra  
and  
the sleekness of the gazelle  
the treachery of the rhino  
and  
the meanness of the crocodile.

Can you tell, Rhonda,  
and you, Shelley,  
Can you tell when the climax came?

That Roller Coaster Ride  
when  
your screams of joyous pain  
filtered into my soul  
to be filed away in  
memory's cabinets of long forgotten joys  
That Sky-Ride into Tomorrowland  
when  
we looked away to Los Angeles  
and kept our thoughts to ourselves

And now  
all I do  
is  
relapse into reverie  
listening to echoes of  
the Grand Opera of the Lost Angeles  
set in  
The billion-dollar fantasy world of Disneyland.