

PLAGUES IN THE GREEN

for Ralph Campbell

...Before the people became popular
he loved them... D.W.

(1)

the grass,
tender at their dawn of spears
rounded the shoulder.
tiny snakes slid into the wind
down the hill to the sun
blinking out a succession of lamps.

among the gloom,
this wastness collected in the hand,
a dreaming into the shallow of the dip
nesting echoes.

from here at first
these sounds came like a memory,
dying-away engines,
they danced in the wind like a cloud,
clattering wings,
ready to swoop down these darkening canyons.

and I am awake,
cobwebs are nightmares at the lashes of my eyes.
Swimming the well, drowning,
reaching at clamouring vines,
I slip into the sleep with insects.

/Cont'd...

What are they about,
 this gossip of old houses carrying their voice
 like an evening of galvanize roofs
 heavy on leaning shadows?
 - these three cripples,
 three plagues in the green !
 and I, who cannot afford tiring
 search for the voice adrift in these hills.
 Am called names: 'who killed Christ'
 that's it.
 I have no why's for anyone.
 They do not understand
 why I am become the earth and bleed so.
 Why instead of decking my breasts with flowers,
 like some smiling general of the field
 I take my lips to mouths that reek of rust,
 and invite fleas to mine my 'precious life-blood'.
 (but my blood is not precious yet !)
 You would sooner fell the fruit tree
 if it only gave shade.

eager to kill with their dirge,
 weekend lecturers eye their notes
 to relate their infatuation with crystal of matter.
 these tourists hang their legs like cautious crabs
 to catch this native's mamaguy.
 What worm has plagued their after-birth
 that the navel perishes so?
 hungry faces on a pilgrimage of laughters,
 where is the real joy?

Only echoes.

history folding its crispness in mucky corners.

Who have cut the wings off

that the body is a giddy kite?

Where is the fire of the eyes

that words are so like baked clay?

this chorus of 'jumbie parasols'

come to praise this rising sun !

never.

it will not do !

I will not hear nor see this !

I will not

(IV) (epilogue)

I am a poet, I tell you.

my fingers hurt when I flirt with the strings.

good blood loses its colour,

and I am an agony of burning moths

against an opaque face

-to see light and not touch it !

I myself alone

will become such a mess of colourness

-popular sadness fossilled under a clown's mask !

never.

rather forsake this tomb, to go tipping on water

to nest in a lullaby of light !

LeRoy Clarke

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