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?