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Poems

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Poems

Abstract

Juve, Dry Season

not good enough to conceive of history in terms of 'Slavery and here we are now — Toyota'. There's a whole bigger sense of development which is ignored and is tied up with the sense of being predatory — of stalking and being on the look-out for the easy opportunity.

I'd like to think, in conclusion, that I was a Lamming who could cling on to the Caribbean. He's not super-popular in Barbados but he's a survivor. He says, 'Screw it. This is where I'm from and I'll stay here.' It's a difficult place to keep your head above the water if you're in any way critical, and make critical observations. People there just hate self-criticism. The critical tradition just hasn't developed. And because it's such a macho society, any condemnation of behaviour of the West Indian male is taken personally. I don't know how it will be resolved... Writers are notoriously scaly and headstrong, liable just to say anything... The general tone of the society is that you lose friends by simply being critical.

Charles Huggins

JUVE

Night silences
cricket choral—
rich clickety chirps—
on an air blending
gently, velvety soft bats' wings
beating in time to their squeals
fluttering in a light
swallowed by the dark

sugar-apple leaves
banana sheaths await their
cue from coconut whisperings
sliding along to spiny tips just
hanging onto the up-beat.

still my ears look
searching for the voice

croppo croaks above it all
with a spritely jump into
his muddy puddle. Squelchy
splash startles the silent woodslave—
waiting in the shadows
for silly moths, killing with swift
sticky tongue its
tidy squeaks vanish—
like a breath that never was.

and cold, pale light
that twists jaws
turns you crazy,
wraps its shroud around us.

away-too faraway to tell — a
mangy dog howls,
ripples lapping hesitantly
on the air, its lament
bathes the shroud and
peeps into my ears
like a string band's fife,

while cold pale light
fills the night with shadows—
moving, talking shadows
weeping, shadows—
and juju rides again.

still my ear,
too-long-leashed,
strains for the voice.

Only muffled sounds
strong bare black feet
dancing in clouds of earth;
faster, closer,
we reel, turn faster

reel closer
glowing with the ground
that heaves, scatters
aliens who know
only with their eyes

ancient voices
unknown full
of sea-water fury
shatter shroud and light.

elders chant to ancient
rhythms flowing from
taut skin, knurled hands and
bare black feet muffled
by the silent brown earth

from atop the elderly
mountain
young mahoganies bathed in dew
sway to the chants and rhythms
that have restored the elders

filled our ear—
the voice filling
our souls with
healing melodies of pan
on juve morning.

DRY SEASON

Grey path
beaten hard,
hooves bare feet
an occasional shoe,
stretches like an engorged python
beneath brittle shade—

ginep almond tamarind mahoe
mango gamelamie—
sliding into, through
brown dried beds of
thirsty ghauts
twisting through soft walls, of
dying long grass—as still as
mountain doves —
bat-blind to all but quivering
heat burning their bleaching heads.
retrieved volcanic rocks,
black and pitted, play involuntary
hosts to brown, yellow, speckled
butterflies—for the n'th moment.
Patient bottle-green mountain
balancing wide barren gun-metal-
blue-sky of glinting steely light
swallows the
grey path
beaten hard.

SILVANA GARDNER

The Mountain

The mountain changes place according to the seasons.

If I were a geographer, it would be accurately and permanently situated at so many degrees South and so many degrees East in the State of Queensland in the continent of Australia. But I'm not such a specialist nor can I definitely say that it's a mountain at all.

I've heard people say that it looks like a crooked neck from one angle and a needle from another. There are times when I see it as a huge