Poems

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Poems

Abstract
A SCHOOLED FATHERHOOD, LETTER TO MY FATHER FROM LONDON, BLUEFOOT TRAVELLER
A Schooled Fatherhood

James Berry

A SCHOOLED FATHERHOOD

There in my small-boy years that day couldn’t believe the shock, the blow that undid me, seeing him abused, reduced, suddenly. Helpless, without honour without respect, he stood indistinct, called ‘boy’ by the white child in the parents’ look-away, ‘don’t-care’ faces. Lost, in a peculiar smile – being an error, a denial of the man I copied, that big-big man I’m one day to be – he made a black history I didn’t know swamp me, hurt me, terror-hands of a dreaded ghost.

Two men apart, from now – with him not able to see, not able to keep pace with time or know my secret eye watchful – I began to see educated voices charging his guts like invisible pellets of a gun imbedding in him, daytime, nighttime. And soon, he clean forgot who he was. Then with his roots and person’s rights wiped away he knew he’d known nothing always, His deep man-structure dismantled, a tamed dog came in him and gave him face gave him readiness for his job – delivering shot birds between his teeth to get a patting beside high boots – my father my first lord my inviolable king.
LETTER TO MY FATHER FROM LONDON

Over the horizon here
you say I told you
animals are groomed like babies
and shops hang wares
like a world of flame trees in bloom

Lambs and calves and pigs hang empty
and ships crowd the port

You say no one arrives back
for the breath once mixed becomes
an eternal entanglement

You say unreason eats up the youth
and rage defeats him

Elders cannot be heroes
when the young wakes up centrally
ragged or inflated on the world
and the ideal of leisure does
not mean a bushman’s pocketless time

An enchanter has the face of cash
without sweat
and does not appear barefooted
bursting at elbows and bottom

He has the connections and craft
to claim the sun in gold
and the moon in diamond

You cannot measure the twig-man
image you launched before me
with bloated belly
with bulged eyes of famine
insistent from hoardings and walls
here on world highstreets
holding a bowl to every passerby

You still don’t understand
how a victim is guilty as accomplice
BLUEFOOT TRAVELLER

Man
who the hell is you?
What hole you drag from
and follah railway line
pass plenty settlement
sleep under trees
eat dry bread and water
sweat like a carthorse
to come and put body
and bundle down in we village?
How we to feel you not obeah-man
t’ief
Judas with lice
and a dirty mout?
Why you stop here? Get news
Mericans open up dollar place
in we districk?
Here we got woman givin away
to follah-line man –
and water an donkey and lan?
Bluefoot
I considerin you hard hard
I point out to you –
move!
It in my bones deep deep –
pick up possessions
walk again
An you don’t call out
a battalion of fists
don’t pull down
hills of rockstone
don’t bring out
woods of lickle bumpy sticks
to drop on your head-top
an crack it up.

obeah-man: witchcraft man