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Wake Up We Are All Dead...

...A society only has the art it deserves!

Between the sky and the sea exists a country which self-righteous people like to complain is a ceaselessly spreading "cultural desert.". And backbiters add that there is nothing of any interest except the five star nature, the beaches and easy women for unemployed French people playing at being lords. "Move on, there's nothing to see here."

In Madagascar, art and culture in general suffers from the society that produced it.

...There goes a bastard desperately trying to find a father he can immediately get rid of, demand an identity he can quickly renounce, forge a personality he doesn't know what to do with and that he too will end up selling on the streets. Passea, come this evening.

...Here is the Long-Awaited Beauty who longs to see the silhouette of the Loved-One-Playing-Hard-to-Get appear on the horizon of the setting sun. The right time, the ideal place, but the honeymoon will not necessarily rise between Hope and Desire. Be patient, another time, perhaps.

After 100 years of colonisation and 35 years of independence, it would seem that the people of this country still don't dare see the true reflection of themselves. One would scarcely apologise for being born, for being part of this world. The individual melts into the masses, takes refuge there, fulfils himself by championing commonly accepted values.

“ Izay adala no toa an-drainy ,” “he who is like your father is mad.” It’s not true, it’s incredible that this saying should be part of our tables of wisdom and that we spend our time harping shameless on about what our parents, who copied our grand-parents, who themselves were sometimes messy replicas of our great grandparents, did. The truth is there aren’t enough “madmen” capable of making Madagascan Art take the salutary leap. We are too good, too priggish and too respectable to be respected. Too happy with circumstantial and detailed successes of esteem, we are hesitant to make that step, to go beyond ourselves in order to truly express the quintessence of our Art, our Being. We forget that it’s up to us Artists to be avant-garde and that we have no right to lag behind, for we risk annihilation. Call it conformism or academics, the result is the same: a jumble of “dead Mozarts” that lounge in the comfortable mire of easy copies that kill creation.

Creation! Ah yes, here is the word, the source of all evils. Creating means putting oneself on the same level as the Zanahary, “The Creator.” Creating means aspiring to perfection, to finish. And finishing, “vita,” means the Void. This spiritual, religious dimension to creation makes us falter. We cannot accept being Zanahary’s equal, upsetting both the hierarchy of values and the social order. Creating is a founding act, a self-assertion that upsets the world and metamorphoses its initiator while definitively excluding him from his world. This kind of context does not forgive the daring. If elsewhere “luck smiles at the daring,” here the daring have no luck. This is the price to pay for the order and survival of the world...

...Between Sky and Sea exists a land where the desert abounds with underground riches, where bastard children have found a father and a mother, where the Beloved-Playing-Hard-to-Get and the Long-Awaited Beauty ended up meeting each other during the first quarter of the Alakarbo destiny, a sign of happiness and prosperity. Stay a while, you haven’t seen anything yet.

Some people have consumed their own lives to illuminate the desert and show us the way. Like lighthouses, Rabearivelo beckons writers, and Rakotozafy and his Valiha question musicians. They have always known how to draw deeply from their Madagascan identity while asserting their personalities, tirelessly looking to extend the limits of their Art, drinking from all sources, getting drunk on all the passing

winds. Stay some more. You have come, you have seen, you will be conquered.

...A society has only the Art it deserves!
Twixt sky and sea, a city rises up in the desert:
wake up! We are all dead...
the mists rustle with fixed, paralysed smiles
in the male-stones

...
wake up! We are all dead!
The deaf-and-dumb witnesses of our unabolished past
rise proudly already

...
wake up! We are all dead!
Is there, in all this evanescent splendour,
a glow?

...
wake up!
The Long-Awaited Beauty dances
The Beloved-Playing-Hard-to-Get smiles at here
their children sing soul-splitting songs

...
wake up!
The Alakarabo moon is full
it makes the male-stones shine
and the deaf-and-dumb hum

...
wake up!
Wake up!
The harvest will be good!

...

From
Ranitra
(Antananarivo: Ed. Grand Océan, n/d)

Freedom

You are spoken of
as if a streetwalker
on streets to nowhere
in city markets
so consciences may rest sleep

purposeless obsession
men without hope
you are
the hope of those disarmed

proclaimed in songs
morning noon all night long
reclaimed on the walls
you haunt the times
and the heart...
men kill for you

and you
what did you do at those times?

Freedom
When shall we be delivered
Of your chains?

15. July 1974, Military Academy, Antsirabe

History

Today will make do
Without History, so as to judge
I will make do without Fate
So as to
Deliver and live
Occire and proscribe
...

Today will have to make do without
“singing tomorrows”
The Here and the Now
Are bogged down in blood
I
Will make do
Of the “eternal tomorrow”
...!

For here or elsewhere
All shimmers without the comfort
Of make-believe Edens
We are not patient
Cannot wait for them
and risk Future
the knife is no longer at the throat
Life will pass it
and Prayers are in vain
to crush misery
or save those suffering
...
unable to wait any longer
let us not wait any longer!

History will judge
whether
those used to wait
have been used up in waiting
those abused patiently
have been abusing patience
in hoping for the great Morning
let us hope for the great Morning

History cannot wait
And rise!
Take fate in hand.

13.July .1991, IHEAI, Paris