

In praise of conspiracy theory

Con-spiring
etymologically breathing together.
Thus question number one:
Don't our masters share
the same sighs
at our all too poor performance?
And don't they in the same oval rooms
plan and plot
how to squeeze
that last drop of blood
and devise appropriate punishment
should the carrot dangled in front of us
fail to convince us that
god himself designed
their productivity charts?

Conspiracy, dreadful word
full of ominous reverberations;
glimpses of closed doors
silently dispatched orders
evil intents.
Impossible, you say,
don't let that right wing propaganda
con you.
That bullet that goes right
through your head
was planned for you and me
since the beginning of
capital's time.
And that paycut,
so deep it went through
our pockets
tearing our pants apart,
is all in the logic of the system.
So beware of the
conspiracy theory of history.
No suspicion is fit for us,
brothers and sisters,
no stretching of the eyes
to read between the lines
or to follow a trail of blood
beneath our masters' footsteps.
We talk stocks, bonds and profits.
The price of gold goes down?
There is shooting in South Africa.
Interest rates go up?
We starve in Nigeria.
What you see is what you get
and they tell us so.

But I know that stocks carry no guns
and paper bonds can't decide
that price tag on a can of milk
that will cause children to starve
in the shantytowns of the empire.
And no company chart sends
hands dripping with blood
to hunt at night
the alleys of El Salvador
for that wound in the flesh
that will square their profits.

Between the stocks and the unemployment line
the bonds and the torture chambers
fall the consultations
of scores of men,
some ferociously bold
others cringing in the daylight
like worms under a lifted brick.
Restless pilgrims
in bullet-proof limousines
they congregate to
the Meccas of their murders,
New York, London, Geneva,
where decisions are made
that will spread ripples of fear
in the four corners
of capital's world.

No conspiracy, you say?
By what linguistic invention
should I name the act and moment
when crushing cigarette butts
some men convene on that 100% increase
that will take food off our tables
and keep us turning in bed at night
endlessly calculating
our chance to survive.

Come, then,
let us sing praises
to the conspiracy theory of history.
For as long as there are men
who sit and plan deeds
that cause any of us to die,
no conceptual flight
or verbal trick
will stop me from concluding
they are conspiring against us.

*Silvia
Port Harcourt, 1985*