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Poems

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Poems

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ASPIRATIONS OF A BEEN-TO
FOR A SINGER
BOREDOM

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LIFE AFTER SPÉRACÈDES (FOR DIANA)

'Y'all take care, y'hear!' (Man in a Boston liquor store)

I am writing from a new address.
You, too, are stranger to your apartment. So much has changed since last year. To friends we're apart in much the same way as before, except that a year, coming between us, has allowed ego to burn grey self-consuming, to lie dormant for the rest of a life-time. You disdain such sophistry: absence must mean more than that. And yet I find the hackneyed image of ruined life too close for comfort, anatomy turned to ash, my life as Music Hall: would you, this missing year have put a cool tongue where it burns, with body-shade tamed it for domestic heat? By being here, together, spilling here the juice that makes things grow, couldn't we smother last year's calculation, and defy the new round of tremors?

It is another year without family. Our answer — we have not, will not become strangers — is well known. Too well known.
I write to a house in a street, your new setting, selective as a postcard. We are, for the moment, tourists exchanging notes. More than guilt drives us back to where addresses coincide: I am recalling a walk up the hill to Cabris, our Cezanne village, lived in.

Up the hill from another village we learnt to spell and, for a time, called home. Then, we were envied. That Mediterranean ripening saw us through cooler seasons, separation to others. Across the sea we spoke, we speak of the coup of saying what the foreign tongue allowed, and of knowing the rest. More than a little, that allayed fear that we could be cheated, that had we lived
separated by centuries as well as by sea
we might not know this life together.

So in five days, or ten days, if there is no accident
you will open your envelope
and be on our terrace with a view of the sea;
you will marvel at the oliviers, silvery after rain;
with a friend, defy the sun
up the hill to Cabris — the cicada losing its menace
from the famous poem: in your hand l'asperge
growing into lunch. Somewhere in this letter
will be the early-morning smell of croissants
and a swim, near-by, where people whom the world knows
have swum.

These are not attempts to nudge memory,
not straws that friends glance at, guardedly.
They are yours, without this letter. They speak
of shared address, a suitcase left, a plan for home.

'Why do you want to fight wars? It is not amusing.' (a Stockholm friend)

2
Now this year’s address says nothing to you,
nothing of me to you. I think of postcards:

Wish you were here. All speak
English here. They tell jokes
in the shops. The jokes have
little to do with their lives —
that, perhaps, keeps them
cheerful … Love.

But this is a card to someone encountered
at work, at an amusing party; or perhaps
further back in history — a fellow-sufferer in the Plato
seminar, or in numbing hours transliterating
*Beowulf*; someone defying probability after two decades
rising now to middling eminence. This card

is for such a twice-a-year acquaintance. It is not yours.

‘... Apart from religious ceremonies, triduums, novenas, gardening,
harvesting, vintaging, whippings, slavery, incest, hangings, invasions,
sackings, rape and pestilence, we have had no experience.’ (Sister
Theodora in Italo Calvino’s *The Nonexistent Knight*)

3

We are not the centre of the universe. Do not make
this statement for effect, it will fall flat,
your listeners will accept it. I have learned
to conceal surprise — as you your anger.
I sometimes think to go half-way and meet
those who will write the world’s meaning

into separation — to make you less angry?
I hold the pen, but the voice, insistent, is behind
my ear ... *Dear Comrade, Widow, Fellow-sufferer...*

... they have come again ... in the night ...
and have gone away, like last night
empty-handed.

*Professionals; they will not kill till*
they are ready, rather cannibalize the *Will*
to resist. *They aim to prove me unappetizing*
harvest of the hurricane, the mistral, green-ripening
to no purpose .. Conscious again, I take care
to block out the rest, the coming fear
with, yes, a walk up the hill between our villages
picking l’asperge, safe in private languages
not in this letter.

*My Love.*

(*It is better.*)
They make me say this. I let them.
But no more. You are in a strange place.
You cannot be sure how much of this is cheap revenge

on the past. Do not over-react.

‘Unless you and I fornicate in front of everybody, people aren’t going to think we get along.’ (Barbara Walters to Co-Anchor, Harry Reasoner on the ABC Evening News)

4
You do not recall last year in Spéracèdes, in Cabris.

(..It was not last year, you’re growing literal. Two, three American Presidents have, as they say, risen without trace. Our own obscurity is worse, it has no cushion of sympathy, of gloating, of contempt..)

No, you do not recall that last year in Spéracèdes, in Cabris: I am a messenger, then, with unwelcome news. Those who, like us, sojourned there

have moved on. Unlike us they took care
to drive piles into the stubborn mountain-side
and now sprout children. They, like us

went through the motions, tying up the vines
picking the courgettes, learning ancient craft
with stones on terraces to prevent our patch
of Alpes Maritimes sliding into sea.
That was another life, you say, an address
better to forget: these letters are like children’s balloons running out of air. So my next note
must break a window or pull you up short,
like a terrorist in the body, with a knife. Our life
in the village, I say, is a risk. Others
went through the motions but

unlike us, paused

at a tempting vine
and bruised it, in a private place.  
They packed earth in a hollow stone  
and watered it. They diverted the stream  

to a secret terrace, and with springwater  
wash what now looks like a baby's face. Their public 
lives, only, wear suitcases like ours...  

they leave Spéracèdes, they leave Cabris  
with more than luggage. They have no need  
for letters soggy with memory.  

Let us be angry at the same time, and act together  
united in this annual letter to our friends:  

Dear folks,  

I hope you are well, hope that this year's vin  
rouge still rots the liver. Hope you can  
find contemplation on your hillside  
despite over-building, still see Cannes  
in the distance. Love, as ever, to your summer tide  
of drifters, buoyant with concern for those who starve  
as they slowly, expertly, empty the cave.  

'Having no talent is no longer enough.' Gore Vidal  

'When I hear the word "Culture", I reach for my revolver.' Herman Goering  

'What I fear more than selling out, is wearing out.' Norman Mailer  

(a letter from Albania)  

Some have been returned because of their obviousness.  
Neither of us now is known at his, at her address. It is right  
that fastidiousness drives us into hiding. Stray and fading
memories add indignity, only, to a half-life, misspent. But for the drug which lures me to the more perfect, more remote place from which to say, 'Come home', I would not still bother you. Like any addict needing more to restore the dye of memory, I blunder into secrets:

(Assassinations, Révolutions, far-away wars are part of what those who live live with)

Have I wandered off the map?
**Week Two**

My love,

Here we are back in Durrës, on the Adriatic coast. Sunday. Diplomats, mainly ‘Third World’, on the beach.

A resort, built by Russians before the big breach let China in (& out). Hotel too large for its size; candelabra in the dining-room; on hands and knees women keep it clean. Our guide, Naim, who sees all, finds no contradiction in this ‘Naked Ape’ scene. An alert, intelligent man, he talks of Albanian gold stolen by Britain: what to expect from old capitalists? He is not angry, just vindicated that a country with racism as its leading industry no longer needs him to condemn it in the eyes of History.

**Tuesday**

One of our group, a moody lad who came on a dare, doesn’t like it much. None of it. The Thousand Stairs of Gjirokastra, the famous white cheese, isn’t a patch on his native Leicester. But there are compensations; yesterday’s trip to raw-faced Korca, new flats for its 60,000 inhabitants, uncovered what we long sought, our first dissidents, schoolmaster & (absent) wife defying the Party, calling a halt at two children. And more, allowing the younger to use her ‘dextrous’ left hand to write. But stronger logic than we display — he warns us, he is no ‘wet’ — is needed to resolve the contradictions we call choice: (For what it’s worth, that conversation took place not at Korca where the tourist ‘ruin’ was Turkish, but in leafy Elbasan. Lamb for lunch. Good cognac, too) Would you say
to a child there were two ways to walk? That is to play
with life, the man said. But enough. Talking of play, Look!
right here in the town, you can see Shakespeare,

a shrewd Englishman, to set his Comedy in Illyria,
our homeland, hedging, as you say, his bets. And is it true
that whites in England black their faces, like cheats,

making the real Othellos play out their parts in the streets?
He is sorry, he seeks only information. I am a guest, we must
enjoy the scenery, the War Memorial, Roman Ruins...

‘Lateral Thinking & West Indian Sport’ Essay by A.E.N. Von Hallett on
a proposed Grenada-Albanian Cricket Match.

‘The Art of Government is Pushin’ up you han’, Pushin’ up you han’ and
then bowling a straight ball’ Cricket enthusiast, Sturge Park, Montserrat.

Friday

the country
is like Montserrat of an earlier decade; the hoe, the odd donkey..
but for mountains with Party slogans, the tidiness
of everything, children scrubbed and well-behaved, larger

than their parents. Another success for Comrade Enver Hoxha
breaking the centuries-long cycle of malnutrition.
Thinking we’re a Delegation, people wave; we feel such frauds

and want to help with the harvest. We elude our guards
as they seem; but spring-onion fields are out of bounds
this year. So are the bunkers, each with its gun

to defend Democracy, not for jaded tourists’ fun.
(Be warned, Yugoslavia, and others with dollars and roubles:
heroic soldiers holding hands in the street, strong

and unselfish, know how often Albanian freedom must be won.)
Week Three

A change of driver to the Capital. He’s been abroad but still does his annual spell of ‘productive labour’:

he can drive, but we suspect him of being in High favour.

Tirana. Looking down from the hotel on Skanderbeg square, a Lowry scene. Then to the Atheist Museum where ex-King Zog

vies for ignominy with Popes, U.S. Presidents and other relatives of God.

Unreal without cars; people dwarfed by the Palace of Culture; Chinese bicycles, Chinese jokes .. In time, we see a pram

pushed by a foreign lady, and a non-Albanian man...

Love.

‘We met the enemy, and he was us’ (General William Westmoreland on Vietnam)

6 (a letter not sent)

Why should I tell you that fascists and torturers are alive and well — to divert attention from ourselves?

My love, I hope your new kettle turns itself off.

Our last adventure with a kettle served us privately with such stories as others dine out on.

I should not like you to duplicate such intimacies..

My love, step back from the passing car, my hand on your elbow; cross the square at night, only in dream, to break up the fight. Do not get killed should you cross with your eyes open

as we did at Ebertplatz, adding years to life:

(do you need a decade’s rest after such lunacies together?)

My love, do not stop fights in the street. Unless.

No, fake innocence, selfishness, youth
and deal with the bad conscience at leisure:
it is irresponsible to die while fascists and torturers etc. etc.
So there. Do not read foolish letters. Ignore them.
Change more than your name. Go to live in another century.

My love.
RUNDEBRANDEN BIRD-ROCK
(Norway)

1. Alesund

Gray sky and a sea of surly ripples
among mountains and mists at the world's end.
Beyond's where the Earth loses width
and sharpens to the polar peak. Plateaus
are the ice-giants' anvil. Groaning
they batter the fire-spawn, the frozen conglomerate
rock, crow-baring cornets and ariets apart,
divorcing the fire-stream. This is Manichee country.
You hear only the strain and crack, horn locked
on horn, of opposing primaries. Predatorial ice
leaps on the back of brontesaural lava. In anger
the gray granite rock turns to razor scarps,
Stegosaurus spines, despairing outposts
that shear the advancing ice.

This is a battle whose daily reports
last a million years, will end
when the victim's last bones are broken.

2. Above Alesund

From the high plateau mist swells
and spills, down ice-boulder slopes,
over saddle-backs, flows with a slow
unearthly sigh like a troll's despairing breath,
through gaps between peaks, to a plain
that was once and will be again the floor
of a blue-amber ice-stream, ten fir-trees deep,
drifting North ten metres a year. Here will be white
as Greenland was green.

3. Rundebranden Port

Oyster-catchers, two by two in pall-bearers' suits
dandy and doodle for worms in the sphagnum turf.

On this calm sea that laps on the world's end
the sun at his 10 pm summer squint
has run to the paradoxical North, sinks
on a sloping moor where pure water slides
down an even eighth-inch of sheep manure
softened and steeped to a greasy film.
A harmony of summer skies and men. You sleep
to the sound of a coverlet of streams
dividing the day's takings, and the *scru-unch*
of sheep's-teeth on wiry salt-grass.

Suppliers slide in from the heaving gray
to a plain of ripples gray as desert pebbles,
scales of the long dark oil-greased snake of Ocean,
the scrap-fed one, the turd-disposer, herring-father,
et-filled, eider-breeding, steel-destroying,
all-providing gray.

4. Rundebranden Rock

On this cliff where the thistledown blows up
a thousand feet a minute, the crow's effortless soar
tells all you need to know of mountain winds.
The puffins come spearing in hard, fast strokers whose blows
beat the eye, make two wings seem four, bringing
phosphorus to green the gorse and plump the midge
out of fish-offering ocean.
Fulmars and gannets, those goose-big terns, interweaving
the shuttle of up-draughts, come in like a paratroop drop,
in waves. Then, like powered balsa cut-outs, slide
circling and screaming as they try to hit
the right jut of rock at right height and speed
— those home rocks that pulse and shimmer like haze,
ungraspable from the sober
air. To miss
sends their screaming reptilian brains
on a long retreat and curve with not a wingbeat
wasted, out over the sea that blows from Greenland,
so far that the black wing-patches never show
until they cross a line of foam. The eye
cannot chart a gannet’s course, sees
only direction, not its foreshortened speed,
then they turn for home — a second tumultuous charge
aiming fifty feet below their nest till pull
of the ledges splits the screeching flock.
Closing too fast like doomed ships on those skiey rocks
each turns in a desperate upward stall, rises to its nest,
working more in five feet than the last half mile,
— a frantic flutter to lose speed and settle. The webbed
toes touch, wings raised at the elbows try to fold, but
their unspent speed tips them forward, they tumble and drop
down five hundred feet of cliff, then turn with the flock
in that long swift S-figure over the bay
that six minutes later brings them home.
CLEANING OUT THE ANNEXE
Batignano, Il Convento

(i)
The chapel with ordinary sky roof and camomile paths cannot be cleaned. No spiders yet but watch for vipers. Once, we explored the vestry. It is an annexe now. How to imagine the lost chapel?

(ii)
Tomorrow the young singers from London return another summer of sun and Dido. Dust to be struck up like a tarantella of spidershells. Rotting costumes to be claimed from the floor. Last year ended a rush, bus, shouting, and then this. Nothing moves here except damp. That snuffled upwards. Dust weighted the spidershells down.

(iii)
Each ten minutes I rush out, paste wracked. Ordinary air douses me. The panic is old alarm wiring along corridors. Go away. Each time I forget about the dust; was it always there? How did spiders intrude? I return to work the ideal of clean space beginning at corners. Like moonscapes of surf, dust curls back over.

(iv)
Box of matches, Grosseto postcard curling its dry tongue, drawers I cram with lace, made-up castoffs, royal cardboard and the african straw masks for witches. Go away: that sounds dusty now, theatrical. A full year. I sweep buttons, party corks.
I must believe in cleaning. I am closed off.
Dust makes inefficient paste, good for nothing.
(v)
Nothing to think
nothing to remember
no person I have known, the masks become straw nothings
the programmes list nothing, names less imaginary than olive trees.
The imprint of rush
takes time
and will not willingly be tidied. We are not all paste.
I am cleaning out nothing.
(vi)
Go away.
I am working go away go
to the upstairs gallery out along the loggia
there is a new tiled bathroom go there
go far off go to the olive grove far off, to those last
thickets past the cellar hencoops go far off there is dust here
it clogs nostrils to clay
it filters my eyes to spider shells
killing my tongue I taste nothing I see through broken panes
I hear avalanches of memories melt into rising damp
the chapel roof is sky
I have walls discoloured by too much sky that dark paste
the storms fell silent
the vandals came they left programmes and straw faces
ripping and tearing, soiling walls, curling up neighbour cities
non-sound is not silence
what it means is silence retreats go away
I hear you breathing I will not remember
tomorrow another crowd of young singers one of us
will go away I am dust in your way I hear your breathing
you pick camomile through the door the chapel has no roof
my damp fingers smell everything I hear witch fingers
the orchestra thrumming you turn your straw face to others
on your knees this programme not my name
the chapel annexes silence eardrums finger you
your breathing not my name
my moonscape pulse curls over, not my name
surf, breakers, imprint of rush
measuring my throat and not willing to be paste
not able to go away.

Alison Croggan

TEIRESIAS

You wouldn't read about it:
al all the women in black and the flames like dragons
hissing down on the broken roof and Oedipus
raining blood from his eyes like terrible tears
and his mother and wife in the bedroom hanging herself —

I saw it coming, but no one listened, of course:
you can't cheat fate, I said, and those gods are buggers
if you try to outwit them — but with his usual hubris
Oedipus told me to shut my mouth unless I was going to say
something cheerful, so I just went away, saying
you can wander in the desert by yourself, your majesty —
you can't say much to arrogance like that.

Not that I don't feel sorry for him. He wasn't bad,
a good king and usually fair, except when the famines
and starving people got to him. And he could have taken
Jocasta's way, shrugged the whole thing off his shoulders —
still, there's no satisfaction in being right. You can't say
'I told you so' to a man like that.
ON HAVING LOVERS

‘On’ being the crucial word
’cause mostly it’s ‘off’,
being put off, rained-out, postponed,
when spouse or previous lover or only mother
enters the warming-up pit,
up-staged, out-positioned, delayed,
itl until they can fit you in,
into their dug-out,
ever a ‘home’ game, always playing
at the visiting town.

Does one have an ‘in’ with a lover,
or even favourable ‘innings’,
yet never a home run,
no matter how many times
you knock the ball out of the park.

Lovers are contagious, an addictive sport,
one leads to another, a strike-out,
a new lover helps you
over the last one, a no-hitter,
there seems no cure,
only withdrawal symptoms —
no preventive medicine,
only The pill, just more
of the same bad medicine
repeating in your stomachs,
    and the cold hollowness
with ‘good-bye’ on your lips,
when your batting average is down
down when you can't quite cheer
or wish your lover 'farewell',
as you're always sliding
towards base, never quite touching,
so who's the umpire?
and who's keeping score,
or even the players straight
and waving pennants for the winning side?
but players run for the highest pay,
not for team loyalty.
Even the playing field has fake turf today.

M.L. Kelly

DREAMER IN LIMBO

For such defect and for no other offence
We are lost, and only in so far amerced
That without hope we languish in suspense.

Dante, The Inferno, Canto IV

I.
The memory hangs
on the rim of her mind:
at the bottom of the dream lies
debris, half-buried — sedimented wishes,
random waste, desolate remains
of uncompleted acts and lives stopped short
in the flow of desire's
sweet stream from source
to mouth and back again
that makes the dream come round
and wears down the edges
of the rocks that made them
stumble and fall, mid-stream,
when all they wanted was just once
to see it to the end.

II.
Dante's limbo, this day —
dreamt time and space
without motion, without limit
without walls to define
without windows to see
beyond, the eyes turned
inside out, suspended
like colourless corpuscles
in the blood's clear liquid.

There pain is not sharp but dull,
not the message but the medium in which
vague clouds hang high and cool
across the mind while farther down
the fevered winds lie still
caught in the dream's mute chill.
There living wishes are instantly frozen
like ice-age dinosaurs with undigested
green leaves forever suspended in the hollows
of their mouths and bellies perpetually
awaiting the warm breadth
of a new age in which
to live and move
and have their being.
NOCTURNE

Autumn in the Cotswolds.
Brown-tipped ivy threads its way
Through the stones of the dry wall
That follows the road.
A flock of white gulls pecks
In a bronze field; I wonder
When they're going back to sea.
Two old women behind me on the bus
Count off their dead
Friends like sheep over fences before sleep.
Out there they safely graze, they pass me by,
Tufts of clouds against a sky of green.

Gold leaves line the streets of Oxford.
The seamless gleam of bright young faces
Makes me long for winter's dim withering,
The strangling vine, the wool pulled
Over the eyes, one last time to sink
Deep in dreamless, stone-cold sleep.
LIFE WITH MADAME ROSA

'Make sure your crystal ball has batteries in it…'

1
You never could resist
an invitation to the Fun Fair. You just
love all the excitement of the big
dipper, bumper cars etc.
On one of your many visits there
you notice a good looking boy
selling tickets at a shooting range.
You just keep spending your money there.
When you have no more money left
you find you have fallen in love with him.

2
I see a ring. It has a large
diamond stone. It is not yours.
It is in a shop window which you pass
each morning on your way to school.
Your dream is to have that ring.
One day as you stand looking at it
you hear the voice of a man
who asks you whether you would like it
to be yours. You are scared
and walk off but the same evening
the ring arrives at your house
in a tiny envelope. You never
find out how it got there
or who the man was.
Soon after you marry
you have a dear little baby boy.
Your husband is not earning much
and you have to give up your job
and your flat is small
but you both love the child
and he is jolly and easy, you do not
mind working for his sake.

I see snow and you have fallen a long way.
Your skis have fallen off
and you are stuck in deep snow
unable to move. Someone comes to you.
He is strong, good looking.
He lifts you up
and gets your skis back on.
You ski off together.
He could be your future husband.
One day
you are left a farm by a remote cousin.
At first you are rather horrified
at the prospect of farming
but you try the life for a year,
it is fun and useful and you decide
to make it your career. Your friends
and relations love staying with you.

You are very fond of animals,
especially rare animals threatened
with extinction. Late in your life
you will become involved
in a movement to preserve the tiger.
You will become very famous.
People throughout the world will be proud of you.

You go big game shooting in India.
One day you lie for hours
hoping for a tiger. Quite suddenly
a huge tiger appears apparently
from nowhere and stares straight at you.
He is so magnificent you forget to shoot
and the next moment he is gone.
You are not at all popular.

Many years from now
you will live in India. Your job
will take you for long hikes
through the jungle. On one of these
you come across a tiger cub.
You bring up this cub in your home,
he is small and loveable
and you love him like another human being.
When he is barely one year old
he will go back to the jungle
and lead his own life there forever.
I see a place of great excitement. I think it is a fun fair, there are lights and crowds of people. I see you there but you are unhappy. You have lost your purse with all your money and cannot have much fun. But somebody has seen your plight. He comes to help you, he pays for both of you. There is always darkness for the Queen of Hearts but he could be important in your life, he could be the one.

Madame Rosa is an English children's toy: a battery-operated crystal ball which is accompanied by a book of predictions. Bill Manhire's poem is 'composed' of extracts from the various predictions. The instruction book includes the following salutary advise: 'Remember always that nobody wants to hear a fortune of gloom and misery. Disappointment, hardship and sadness are part of life, but are usually overcome, so make any sad stories end up happily. This is what people like to hear and you want a satisfied customer in the end, don't you?'
Mbulelo Mzamane

ASPIRATIONS OF A BEEN-TO

He studied in the UK, I tell you,
Not America.
Home economics, you know, catering,
Not domestic science.
He learnt to appreciate classical music,
British folksongs, Scottish dancing,
Not mbaqanga,
None of that bodywriggling,
Flipping footstamping,
Fingersnapping
Decadence.
Composure, he has learnt, is a sign of good breeding.
Only the concertos and the operas are worth listening to.
His mind revolts against wallowing in emotion.
He has read about the Kennedys —
Great folks!
Pity they can't be knighted!
He was near enough to have been almost there
At Mark Phillips and Princess Anne's wedding —
The redletter day is marked in his diary.
An experience he values as much
Is when he shook hands and was photographed abroad
With the last British High Commissioner to Botswana.
Back home he joined the Gaborone club
And felt terribly outraged
By the Minister's decision to lower standards
By opening the club's doors to every local.
He is a patron of the Holiday Inn
And deplores the admission of people without ties at the GH.
He feels a deep sense of shame
At his people's ignorance of foreign etiquette.
His wife, who has never been beyond Zeerust,
Has caught on pretty fast
She can do wonders with the potatoes —
Mashed, baked, fried, etcetera,
In the best British tradition.
They can now entertain,
Except for one little snag.
The grimy, slimy atmosphere of Bontleng, his present home.
But he hopes to change quarters soon
And move to New England
Where his puppy, a gift from the Robinsons,
Can grow up in a healthier environment
And he can pin up a notice at the gate:
'Tsaba ntja!' — Beware of the dog!'
FOR A SINGER 1981
(Dedicated to JAM)

I dreaded this moment
When those who might have passed you by in the subway
With no more than a glance or a nod at best
Return in droves with cameras, tape recorders,
And notebooks so that nothing is lost.
I dreaded this moment when
The joy of breaking free from parochial anxieties
Mingles curiously with the fear of the feelers of state
Extending beyond the boundaries of country and race
Converging, as enlarged eyes and ears,
On neutral ground to try a mild from of brain picking.

Yes, I feared the moment
When hearing of nyanda washed abroad,
Ageing lions sharpen their claws,
Rehearse more rumbling roars
And, manes bristling, crouch in wait
For the ill-mannered prodigal
Who must return to his mother's dugs.

Yet, in the uncertainty of such moments
Begins the shoring up of one's defences;
For after Western eyes have picked one clean
A mantle of immunity envelops one's frame,
A second skin boots and bayonets cannot breach
A charm to guide one past snoring guards
When the next witch hunt is on.

BOREDOM

The future unwinds
like soot-stained thread
oil from ruined tombs
glues together
feathers of the newly hatched

The octopus relaxes its hold
only to strengthen it again
depths undermine crests
where the aspiring salmon
might leap from
Sea-weeds that the fisherman
once used to make pumice
now gloat over the drowned
tear raw flesh from bones

The future unwinds
above red-tinged waves
splashes smother the struggle
of a wingless fly in a silk noose.

EXORCISM

May I not see you again
nor dance to your tune
bound by your spell

I have met you before
in another form
your claws betray you

I was a child then
led by the hand in a sleepwalk
blind to the wreck at your feet

These platforms
the luminous dead wood on your face
make no difference!