

SNAPOEMS

I The butterfly of Hiroshima
Came dallying on the flowers of Hiro Jima
A scar on one wing
Fluttering in a fragile wind

II (For Miho Mizutani, kind escort)
Your gentle voice sings songs
About the nationality of the grape
The passport of pubescent apples
The mammary miracle of the pomegranate

III A cushioned mat, intelligent tables
Hot sake* down the chilly spring of the throat
Then the delicious laughter of seasoned shrimps
Njabulo raises a song, Fujio responds

IV (For Jiro Onoda)
I made friends with
Too many books
Now my forehead is an encyclopaedia
Of rainbow letters.

V The early morning sun
Breaks on the Fuji mountain
Like the yolk of an ancient egg
Pacific waters are yellow with fertile dreams.

VI Sanyo and Akai hold the wind
Between their fingers
Toyota has a foot whose toes
Raise the dust in every street

VII The deadly mushrooms of Hiroshima
The burning umbrella of Nagasaki
Polyglot scars on the brow of the sky
Enrapturing symphony of PEACE songs.

VIII A burning gas rises in the tube
Like the miasma of unfortold apocalypse
Squeezed breaths, surprised stares
My heart goes to martyrs of the sarin plague

IX Kole came here just before dawn
Micere clenches fists with Dedan Kimathi
Paul pens clear lines on African origins
Njabulo sings so wisely about winning fools

ASAHI**

(For Koji Yamane)

You stretch a gentle hand
across the Pacific waters,
your smile rich and deep
like a gem straight

From the ocean's belly.
Swapping heady tales about
ancient emperors, our memories
pen haikus about once-upon-a-times

When power had one mouth
and the sword was honed each morning
on the grinding bones of severe honour.
Your generous handshake brings down

A thousand walls. In your soft,
intelligent voice I see a song
which echoes the word.
I shout asahi!

August, 1995.

* Popular Japanese wine made from rice.

** Japanese word meaning sunrise, dawn.