

## Dendritic

By Harry Owen

the earth's nerve endings: upright to the air  
bare without their summer salve of leaves  
drongo-rough  
how the breeze thrills how the sunlight the  
courtseying bushes and dancing shadows  
say to me *welcome!*  
something is down here amongst the twigs  
the dead leaves its dim scuttling life  
of birdmouselizard dreaming mine too  
dreaming me: these nerves on the edge  
of perfection in a rustling  
shuffling goingaboutitsbusiness  
-ness of a calm and startling hillside

## Looking East

It's pissing down with Easter, an ocean  
in front of me that's only the sky's cloak-  
tails thrashing, an open door behind, where  
hissing car tyres shuzzle through the downpour  
like a chill, all thick expectoration.

Beyond the windows and deck the sea is  
boiling, a grey-brown soup in a cauldron  
stretching away to where the sky drops off.  
There's life out there but buried like my heart  
and lungs beneath an epidermal rash.

It's a day of white surge and violence,  
squall, mist and incessant drench, a day of  
drowning. Where are the lizards now, the ants?  
Where are the white-fronted plovers? And why  
must I be nagged for answers? Eastward is

lost again within its own dense gasping.  
Sheets of lightning flare, screens of sweeping rain:  
they've waited for darkness to spook the dogs,  
and it works. Something distant and impure  
slinks forward from the Eastern horizon.

### **Parasite Lost**

Last night's monster moon,  
pale as the undead, has faded,  
folded back into mother soil,  
a sky coffin scribbled with silver runes,

its watery relish of serums.

She would not let it in, of course,  
garlicking her windows, doors,  
drawing breeze-plucked curtains across  
and staring at the necklace crucifix  
discarded like a charm

lying prostrate  
as a supplicant beneath the gleam  
of a candle in the glass  
(for there's a warm blush at her throat:  
her breath comes lighter, quicker, free...)

But the monster moon has gone,  
folded into mother sky,  
scribbled with silver clouds  
and an early tracing of rain.

*According to certain astrologers and mystics, the effect of the full moon of 27 March 2013 was to be particularly potent. Although the exact nature of this potency went largely unspecified, the implication was that something powerfully unpleasant was about to happen. Inevitably, therefore, someone with an over-developed sense of the dramatic coined the term 'monster moon' to describe it. Needless to say, nothing happened.*

### Stones for a typical terrorist

*"The ANC is a typical terrorist organisation ... Anyone who thinks it's going to run the government in South Africa is living in cloud cuckoo land"* – Margaret Thatcher

They keep appearing, so the papers say,  
in his Johannesburg garden, popping  
up each morning like mushrooms on the lawn, an  
avalanche of stones – granite, dolerite,  
limestone, slate – to Tata, to Madiba:

'Get well, we love you,' tippexed on a rock;  
'We wish you many more b-days,' scrawled in  
permanent marker. 'I wish him well' (chalked)  
'he's just like a second god to me.'  
'Mr Mandela i wish u the best,

god be with u, know we love u and care  
4 u so be strong, we dnt 4get 2 pray.'

A soapstone heart, a message to the man:

'Hei, tata, we all wish u a speedy  
recovery. Knw that u wil always  
b mzansi no1 icon.' The  
iron lady shrinks, as she surely must,

in front of this terrorist, heaving

her ferrous heart before her to the ground,  
the magnet gone. Where are her filings now?  
Instead, plain stones declare a nation's thanks,  
bright and unyielding as uncut diamonds;  
  
they speak the truth of living legacy,  
of mountainsides to build a world upon.

### **The Teleology of Academe**

Epistemologically questionable, no doubt,  
this affective reification of my need  
to unpack the ontology of my life,  
sublimate the individuated interiority  
of my yearnings (my earnings having long gone)  
and interrogate the non-normative,  
quasi-gendered identificatory parameters  
of the referenced sacred works.  
  
A kind of god?

#### **Bio:**

Harry Owen emigrated to South Africa from England in 2008. His collections are: *Searching for Machynlleth*, *The Music of Ourselves*, *Five Books of Marriage*, *Non-Dog* and a memorial collection for his father, *Worthy*, published in March 2011.

He edited *I Write Who I Am: an anthology of Upstart poetry*, featuring the work of nineteen young poets from disadvantaged township schools in the Grahamstown area of the Eastern

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Cape, and the international anthology *For Rhino in a Shrinking World*, all proceeds of which go toward efforts to save this iconic animal from extinction.

Further details are at <http://rhinoanthology.wordpress.com>