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SNAPPOEMS

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 unforesaid 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!

* Popular Japanese wine made from rice.
** Japanese word meaning sunrise, dawn.