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Ubuntu strategies in contemporary South African culture

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Appendix

Poems from Antjie Krog's "land van genade en verdriet," discussed in Chapter I in Afrikaans and in English translation (Krog, *Wat de Sterren Zeggen*; Krog, *Down to My Last Skin*).

1

tussen jou en my
hoe verskriklik
hoe wanhopig
hoe vernietig breek dit tussen jou en my

soveel verwonding vir waarheid
soveel verwoesting
so min het oorgebly vir oorlewing

waar gaan ons heen van hier?

jou stem slinger
in woede
langs die kil snerpande sweep van my verlede

hoe lank duur dit
hoe lank vir 'n stem
om 'n ander te bereik

in dié land so bloeiende tussen ons

2

in die begin is sien
sien vir eeue
die kop vul met as
geen suurstof
geen spriet
by sien word eindelijk woord gevoeg
en die oog stort af in die woedende wond

hoor! hoor die opwel van medemenselike taal
in haar sagte weerlose skedel
en hoor die stemme
die talige stemme van die land
almal gedoop in die lettergreep van bloed en hoort
be-hoort die land uiteindelik aan die stemme wat daarin woon
lê die land aan die voete van verhale
van saffraan en amber
engelhaar en kwets
dou en eer en draad

3

woordeloos staan ek
waar sal my woorde vandaan kom?
vir die doeners
die huiweraars
die banges
wat bewend-siek hang
aan die geluidlose ruimte van ons onherbergsame verlede

wat sê 'n mens?
wat de hel dóén 'n mens
met dié drag ontkroonde geraamtes, oorsprong, skande en as

die land van my gewete verdwyn sissend
soos 'n laken in die donker

6

die liggaam beroof
die blind gefolterde keel
die prys van die land van verskrikking
is die grootte van 'n hart

verdriet draal so alleen
as die stemme van die angstiges verdrink op die wind

jy gee nie op nie
jy trap 'n voetpad oop met seer versigtige stappe
jy sny my los

in lig in – liefliker, ligter en kraniger as lied

mag ek jou vashou my suster
in dié brose oopvou van 'n nuwe enkele medewoord

(a)

between you and me
how desperately
how it aches
how desperately it aches between you and me

so much hurt for so much truth
so much destruction
so little left for survival

where do we go from here

your voice slung
in anger
over the solid cold length of our past

how long does it take
for a voice
to reach another

in this country held bleeding between us

(b)

in the beginning is seeing
seeing for ages
filling the head with ash
no air
no tendril
now to seeing speaking is added
and the eye plunges into the wounds of anger
seizing the surge of language by its soft bare skull
hear oh hear
the voices all the voices of the land
all baptised in syllables of blood and belonging
this country belongs to the voices of those who live in it
this landscape lies at the feet at last
of the stories of saffron and amber
angel hair and barbs
dew and hay and hurt

(c)

speechless I stand
whence will words now come?
for us the doers
the hesitant
we who hang quivering and ill
from this soundless space of an Afrikaner past
what does one say?
what the hell does one do
with this load of decrowned skeletons origins shame and ash
the country of my conscience
is disappearing forever like a sheet in the dark

(g)

this body bereft
this blind tortured throat

the price of this country of death
is the size of a heart

grief comes so lonely
as the voices of the anguished drown on the wind

you do not lie down
you open up a pathway with slow sad steps
you cut me loose

into light – lovelier, lighter and braver than song
may I hold you my sister
in this warm fragile unfolding of the word human