

Bougainvillea

Late spring, the bougainvilleas
in lank, thorn-spined clusters
of purple, crimson and orange
sprout in Grahamstown's streets.

The rains gone, a berg wind
gushes dry heat through town,
wilting bean-shoots and roses,
sealing the soil to baked clay.

This is the season of dread,
when frontier fears revive.
Touching the window-bars,
you wince at the shoot-outs

and rape on the midday news
and watch across the street
a slow shadow whose young
live overseas chain her gate.

What is indigenous endures,
you think, but what endures
becomes like bougainvillea
indigenous within its niche.

Beside your crust of a lawn
a cycad's armoured innards,
an ant-heap's domed vitals
tortoise through the hours.