

Peregrine Falcon

Climbing a crag, I heard a *kwaak-kwaak*,
and looked down and saw you scudding
across a river's crinkle on a bushveld plain.

You looked as small and remote as I felt.
You were a dark speeding speck of a bird,
a faint fury hollering, *Get out of my niche!*

Pulling slowly, up and over warm basalt,
I saw a carcass on a balcony in the sky.
I read you then, raptor. Your meat-hunger,

bunching its wings, had hurtled down, down
from out the glaring white zenith of the sun
at the grey fleck of a rock-pigeon far below.

Thump! A blue-black explosion of wings,
a scrunch of talons. A flapping, a jerking
lugged heavily to this abattoir of a ledge.

I stared and stared, at the parable of a kill,
at the stark, almost cryptic life-in-death art
of a headless squab on the table of a feast.

A spillage of granules, loosed from its crop
was drying already its seeds for a new terrain.
A dust-coloured hunter-ant, a mite's red dot

enacting some earthed, intrinsic narrative
hurried to the manna of a glisten of blood
as a maggot-fly entered the crib of the wound.

I turned and gazed, out over miles of bush,
awed that the plants, the hunger of animals
made such a simmering green Canaan of death.

I began to love you then. You sky-wrote to me
what you signal my species, when you migrate
and float round the earth: *Leave me to my life.*