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THE LINING OF THE LAND

Let a place be made for the om who approaches,
Who is cold and has no home.
Yves Bonnefoy

You taught me to cover my tracks,
wipe of finger marks, sweat, saliva, blood,
erase pencil marks, ink stains, lines of flight -
blot out marks of boredom, distress, grief.

But I saw you: smudged rainbow on white,
funereal satin, a seal of white putty for lips.
I recall your voice, smile, laughter.
I can no longer comply.

I never smoked. Like my people, I said
nothing. Wrote nothing. Yet, they left
no trace but the ash of their bodies,
the smoke of their pain. Rumours.

They died mute, under fire,
I rolled into life out of their fire, scarred,
branded. It's time to speak - burn the raft.

I am writing from where the dead turn
to gold. Where voices cry out, reach out spare
nothing. Spend. Become their own wealth, and I
take stock. I dream up a day touch-rich, heavy.

Day at the back of day,
How to redeem so much damage -
the words and the deeds that left
our land lined with ash?
You deemed me poor and dry,  
a weed in a harsh climate.  
Glassy specimen under ash covered glass.

You deemed me cold  
when I was burning beneath  
this golden fleece—sheer wealth of words the child  
in me put as *Thou shalt not shear me.*

Say I followed your ways;  
where would I be  
but sure of myself in the death that aggrieves,  
tames and trivialises my kind?

I love this eerie place where the dead turn  
out to say I need not leave to live.  
Say life is up the sleeve of its own inscription.  
Here I become my own home.

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