

## MORE IMPRESSIVE ON THE MIND

Njabulo S Ndebele

more impressive on the mind  
than the proffered smiles of babies  
are the horrors of sunshine  
(at least darkness is dark)  
horrors  
round which morning prayers coil  
in pleading smoke  
that merely settles on a dust of hearts  
bleeding with laughter,  
as children float in the sky  
buoyed by bulging tummies  
that echo with years  
clamouring to be lived.  
o children!  
o apparitions of children!  
a child and a breast;  
a child wailing under a drunken breast  
drip drip drip leaks the breast  
drip drip drops the drink on a new head  
a child and a breast  
a child and a breast and flies,  
they make paths to nowhere from the nipple:  
a warm child  
fresh from the perfume of a decayed womb.  
but hearts merely bleed with laughter,  
pausing at some moment  
to unload rich crumbs,  
as a certain man continues to park his car  
in the shadows of a gum tree;  
to brandish a note

and drive off with a certain maid.

it is then that old men  
begin to lament  
the death of those days.  
a child and a breast, drip  
a child and a breast, drip drip  
drip drip drip ...

[Published in *The Classic: Volume three number four*. 1971]