

Song of the Waterside

I've returned from the war
 from the mismanagement sector
gassed and wounded
am trapped in a ward of collapsing dreams
bombed by politicians and soldiers
foul birds out of the dispensary of greed

I've returned from the war
 from the ethnicity sector
hanging from my feet
in my kitchen
roasting like a pig over the hearth
waiting to be carved up by the majorities in the dining-room

I've returned from the war
 from the unemployment sector
mugged by revenue collectors
mobbed by contractors and auditors
crabbed by structuralists
napped by bribe-eaters

denied should I dance round and round
like a distraught hammerkop
unable to dislodge the eagle owl
landlord in another's nest

or like a plover
do the broken-wing dance
before a sagacious crow
digging up dry-season eggs

or like a jacana
walk the back of a wallowing hippo
picking its ears and eyelids
as it overturns eggs well-laid on water-lettuce and lilies

Listen to the swamp warbler
sing the moon-night song
Listen to the swamp warbler
query clamorous palace frogs

Listen to the song of the waterside
to the burblings of shanties
mocking the tug-boat melody
the phosphorous impermanence of government's presence

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