

Days of Malaria

Dr. Giglioli on the forest floor or the flat coastland,
the Anopheles mosquito laying claim to territory:
whose sun or sudden squall of rain?

The insects buzz without weariness,
their sounds always too mute for all to hear.
You, Doctor, unearthing stones like a landscape artist
or surveyor with antennae or stethoscope—

You began to know all other maladies,
the pain of yesterday too crucial to ignore.
The tropics has its limit with quinine in the sun,
the voice of a child, man or woman, always crying.

You came to us amidst the rain's further squall,
the puddles or rainsoaked ditches hardly dried out.
The mosquito alights and ponders with large luminous eyes,
making stranger shapes as you consider

A time of less pain, or the poison dart of death!
Itch, twist and turn. This too is living on the threshold
as I contemplate history; Dr. Giglioli, your turn

To make your mark on soil, with memory too vivid
at day's end. The month is long, extending to years—
commitment or dedication—you served best!

CYRIL DABYDEEN