

Aqueduct

From where we stand,
Continuation of rivers, forests;
Rhododendron boughs, and the hopes
We fashion . . . new cities, courtyards—
Ourselves like pillars of salt
And redrawing the boundaries . . .

Faroff cries: ethnics crossing,
Shiploads at a time; Romanesque too;
Others pillaging, the sluiced terrain—
Fish at the end of the line,
This hook of ancestry (if you must know),
Catchment or making amends . . .

We stretch out with skin,
Baffled by the tides, the expression
One of myriad streams really,
History's suspended memory;
Mutterings of custom, heritage; other
Languages we call our own, and are not really . . .

Then disaster with sage brush, acacia;
Water hyacinths at the edge of a storm;
Other pathways: still words without meaning
As we look out for laws, canon, erecting
Monuments, and not recognizing our own
In this blood and meshed skin. Here where
The sun's brightest . . .

So we crown ourselves, crashing
Against the ocean, sea: waves altogether;
Foam no less—all over again; diaphanous too,
Thighs splayed out, all our longings
Or desires; so we acknowledge or accept
Fates more glorious than our own
In this North, coming
To a vague understanding
Of who we are not.

CYRIL DABYDEEN