for chamberlain nelson-ebimie

(murdered at dawn)

I have seen the negatives of an unravelling
horror
developing in the darkroom of our hearts
but you won't let the photographer
put the seal to his work

the shattering of wine glasses
swept from shelf and counter
the splintering of the broad mirror
fragmenting our mighty dream
how can i hear your voice
above the jarring fanfare
how can i see your face
so fresh so clear
in a glass of brandy falling to pieces

5:00 am the dutiful cock declares the dawn of a puking day

doors open to deal out the fetor and fume of overcrowded rooms reluctant rooms pour out ill-used children muttering their misgivings 5:00 am popping pistols and cracking rifles frighten a timorous cock cackling unsteadily on a dead telephone wire

lights go out in a balmy bathroom thunder dazzle of a detonating grenade blazes balogun's dreaded dragons automatic gunfire tunnels tariere's tameless heart sold to solon surprised in his steaming tub

hysterical doors shut out the abomination next

door

fear kills the light in every room
fear finds a place for all beneath the bed
behind the couch
fear clears the coast guards the route

who dares rush upon the menacing machete waiting out of sight in the rose bush who dares peep into the muzzle of a barking gun retreating down the empty street retreating into a rousing pitiless dawn the gun returns with a handshake the machete returns with a condolence card iworoko*

new girls in ginger damask and silk blouses emergent queen cuckoo bees supplanting queen bumble bees come with carnations in their hair to speak of sorrow and joy new girls with blossoms on their breasts new girls dancing on bonnets of limousines humming-bird hawk-moths hovering in flight probe pockets for nectar

avoidless afternoon
new girls burst into the sunshine of the funeral
to feel in their exultant throats
the firmness of grieving feet
consecrating this narrow house
without windows without doors
harmattan home of the master drone
stung to death by overworked workers

G. EBINYO OGBOWEI

^{*}Iworoko: popular funeral dance of the Nembe sub-group of the Ijaws. Performed as the major attraction of the wake-keeping, it features mainly women in their prime. The songs, often satirical, and dances are as provocative as the feverish drummings.