

## POETRY

WHISPERS  
(for Jack Mapanje)

My ancestors too  
have been to the mountain top;  
from Kambiri point  
they saw him  
stand sentinel over  
embryonic poets  
scavenging the remains  
of poetic inspiration  
in Chingwe's hole.

They too  
saw him fall into  
the yawning abyss,  
but tell it in broken  
whispers of the dead dawn  
and mime the mute  
in the shifting sands  
of the day.

The thump and tremors,  
felt in Gordon and Red Squares,  
paralysed the subterranean serpent  
to frantic gesticulations  
and impotence,  
still strum the haunting tune  
of question marks.

Was the fall  
nature's making or  
human design?  
Wasn't he circumcised before?  
Didn't he dance chopla  
to need the foxtrot?  
Didn't he immune his lines too,  
from mythical rhapsodies,  
to remain sacrosanct  
and guard the changing  
colours of chameleons?

My ancestors know too  
that the little ones still salivate  
on his pickled metaphors,  
modelling, traversing  
the sand dunes of creativity,  
tossing about the time bomb,  
unsure to survive the censor's noose.

Alfred Idi Matiki