

Dana Gilkes

WOE AND REDEMPTION



In the brooding light of the evening
a man and a woman stood in the gap talking
though not too close
for appearance sake,
because you know how people are...

Somebody had slapped somebody with a cutlass
a little earlier before
for I-don't-know-what,
so the air was still charged
and begging for a reprieve
from the wilful and malicious damage
that was caused.

My mother cast her shadow in the doorway
(I was still pretty small)
and called me in
so as not to be looking
in grown people's faces
when they were discoursing.

Also just in case
(and under dark breath)
the man's wife came home sudden,
saw him lounging about the gap
with the *pai-pai* woman
and decide to take recourse in a rock
for clarification purposes.

*And the good Lord knows
that rock-stones
have a bad landing policy...*

Even from inside we rent-house
you could smell a bitter, humid earth
somebody burning stuff
and a couple of houses down from ours
hear a neighbour studiously singing
or if you would prefer,
minding her own business
out loud as possible.

Jesu meek and gentle...

Her rendition was a cross
between *pampalam* and a hymn
and enough to set the Saviour weeping
with the fine warble
and the range –

thorough expiation
for the soul.