

Teardrops on the Weser (Excerpts)

Amatoritsero Ede
Artist, Canada
aede@mta.ca

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t
the morning after
the day is hungover
the river dull drunk

from so much liquid

languid
immobile and
dead of current

the weser's inner engine
broken
life sapped

from the water
maiden
soggy from much weeping

already a wretched sop
the night before
as the tired river floated

devoid of current

like a thing dead
belly up
in the dark

lit only by port
lights
from docked boats

the hanseat
das schiff
admiral nelson –

that river restaurant
rollicking and gay in daylight
this boat
decked out
by decked-up folks
and forks

but at night
when the sky shuts heavy brow
upon its lower earthly lid

it is a dark ghostly hulk
and wooden silhouette
made more hoary

by shadowy port lights
dancing
on the greasy oil-like flow

beautiful
nightmare
on brackish tides

u
the day is shrunken
to a squeezed rag
after yesterday's high

my window
now picture-dull
becomes sober lens

for refracting
and re-framing
the scene

to
minimalist fractions
of larger or smaller

human designs

behind this once postcard façade
of church architecture
opposite

at eye level

oblong frosty windows
ranged regularly
painted on the brown church walls

in a children's picture book

high above them
church tower and gothic spire
sharp triangular

and atop the dizzy zenith
a lone shiny brass weathercock
standing on one leg

etched
against the clouds
crowing in silence

into the four winds
in turn
as it turns eyes tinsel neck

and glossy head

north-west-north
east-south
west-south-west-east

v
this hung morning
the immobile
weser is

sluggish with memories
of dead water
on the niger river delta

in nigeria

after shell shat
shocked oil impurities
in it

till choked full
of poisoned fish
and algae

the creek reeks
of dead things
and people

like the ogoni
nine

a hung boat nation
unable to swim
pollution and politics

and thus was
strung short and
hung from killer nooses

the vertical nine

were long dead
long before the long drop

by the life-stained hands
of abacha's henchmen hangmen
hitlerites

nine necks cracked
life's spine popped, broken
nine lives shell-ed

the niger delta
shell-shocked
into haunted silence

stifled wailing
along waterways and
amongst mangrove swamp

and fauna

muffled wailing
unlike
the silence on the weser

a portentous silence
the quiet of still graves
sunk real deep

w
german waters
not unlike
the niger or benue

which slaked
saro-wiwa's
infant thirst ...

did maria rilke
that master poet
with the most girlish of names

ever from the weser drink?
like another capital poet
who pines for the ethiope

singing his thirst

“go water
go rivering
where the eyes that look

becomes a brook...”

the niger and the benue

both
troubled nigerian waters
flowing together

as one into the atlantic

like
the fulda and the wera
into the weser and the rhine

...the fulda and werra
both differently
plumbed
by time

not roughly charted
but deep in different degrees
and not discovered

from far away
by a stranger from england
called mungo park

not waterways
to ferry and ship black bodies
to a europe-poisoned new world

that trafficking of black souls
in rotten ship holds
across the cursed atlantic