TRACERS
Uche Nduka
the shores shake hands
the shores embrace

she gives birth in a tree
the flood clamours

on a steel slab
someone is kneading dough

a ceramist rides a motorbike
through the floor of the Atlantic

to deflag is to rejoice
begin the scrolling
soliloquy has come to this
we’re sent to extol
the sap of love.

tillage forbidden?

reason corrodes
the plausibility of
closing in on horned earth.

as bait for transparency
break a token
break a token.

go to the bravura profiled
go to the grotesque espoused.

ulullation forbidden?
into a palimpsest isn’t where we’re sent.
dust comes bearing truth.
through these gleamings i am high
and am yet to get drunk
you too i am a boulevard you too
no matter what you say this war
has gone farther than a planetary
herald this war is knocking a
hole through my cranium your
cranium this war has sped
from Newtonian to Einsteinian
wahala i fell got redeemed then
unredeemed i fell got saved then
unsaved you too you too said all i
can to feed your fixation on burning
places on burning flesh on burning flags
Long live multi-logoed Casbah
is it history
or is it mystery?
are they mean
or just lean?

firm on outpacing
a chainstep;

not that;

and with as many
leaves per tree
as a situational forest;

not that;

old/new prancing seeds
that wear out a handgrasp,

to push a boat out, basically.
a spider froze the Mic
the guitar has been drinking
and typing a blue-collared rhythm
it made a holler feel fine
when a song went off-duty
it wasn’t a mirage it wasn’t
a dabble a cop-out an omission
what rocked a fight who called
the frogs who mauled a cropper
a shadow standing alone
red verdict that is going to wiggle
a third life a third gripe
danger encroaching

obviously a song raping a gun
a sleepwalking guitar
on a cold tin roof—footloose boogie
the blitz has spoken
   purpled dazed
another playground, crucial

appraise my vanity
mixdown the wattage
a sixty minute bustle

what have i done
have i been snotty

audacious in my spatial glory
in my fight-fixing roll up roll up
in my catchall call

in my skyblue-in-waiting

another outside that is my inside
not to hide
from ancients
and moderns
a primer called Love

the worried storied
mouth became graced
and mated with a tasteful truth

it can squeeze a dry lemon
and still get drops out of it—
that hilly variation
between muck and a soft place

the gut-wracking brainjuice
flowed spread
after a blizzard

she sits, leans towards the phone, grabs the receiver
with her left hand and with the right puts on her nail-polish,
her nail-paint, blabs to her lover who is on the other end of
the phone, in another city, in another weather. She has just stepped out of her shower. Bathroom tiles excused her, a gathering of lights surround her—candles, torches, electric bulbs. As she talks her former self surrounded by vials, syringes, glass smoking pipes is kept at bay. Suddenly an infant guineapig catches her eye in one corner of the glowing room. Is she Miss Luck or an undercover operative?
upstream a brown canoe
is faithful
to a cherub of song.

a frog remembers
the ringlets
of a death jettisoned.

i remain appeased
by unpaged sacrilege.
as if i had a reason
first i looked at an icicle.
i held a chubby hour in my hand.

as if i had left a slow street
and made for a fast alley

where fricatives looped
and lumbered, thinly lit.

which filigree there was in jeopardy?
did tulips prepare her for a menace?
because it was a bright brownline
between twin towers
i tried to leave the underlife.

what happened first?
i pawned fantasmagorias.
tore rancour’s coat.

because i couldn’t stand still
after a cloudburst of cupolas
i tried to become a cleanup man.
whitecliffs,
the isthmus that links
your coast
to the pontoon bridge.
turnabouts,
these goings-on
in tulipfields.
a nation maced
on the spine.
soul in a sling.
is this an endless playback of a skirmish?

self-irony feigns dissonance.

leprous homunculus barbarous gigolo—intermediaries between then and now.

join the jugglers join the clowns power to plump-cheeked wastrels.

the tumult begins not in exclamation but in notation.
there,
an after-storm.

you’ve got
the hairflip of a soul-soother.

your wounds are seamarks.
your wounds are frescoes.
your wounds are marshes.

thinks innuendo must die
hyperbole chills.
arsonist:

optimize a nine-legged doctrine
hemming you in.
come through a bone-curtain
to the sky
inside of me.

i am seated in quartz and amethyst.
blessings unlit,
conjurances ungranted.

portals ensconced
in the hand of song.

makes exact
the lyrical deficit
of a clavichord:
that hand.

hooks on antipodes referenced.
to trump the chess
of what Gelatin wants to say

no noon lights this
pupilless demiurge

ice stars for Honey Play
pandemonic scare-eagles

conversations with beetles

snake-back solos?
snake-back solos?
burning tapers
obliquely speaking.

detours in burnt clay
praise the tulip
between your buttocks.

bum-and-rum shots
plotted by anemic Yashicas.
this dawn
this dawn that has
thrown her legs around my waist

this dawn
this dawn seeking safety
in wordlessness

caught between
thighboots crowding
a wooden staircase
and cardoors pounding

an augury telescoped

tattooer, impaler
peace to rainweed
peace to sponge of change
peace to song unthundered

what we’re doing
seems like hydraulics

we can go back
to the lively stance
    of kindred passions

or to sequins and silk
anyway i like
to slough off
births of tin hovels.

roars of burials.
gas flaring.

pigments boiling,
churning wastes.

to pull a rug
from under a rug.
what’s given
is given from gooseberry bush
to digital undertuft

and what’s riven
is riven by reserve
rather than kleptomania

his daughter helms
his yuppie-in-panic factory
his shoes are no longer laced
it’s getting harder
to wield an ashplant
in noonlight:

harder:

harder to make
an inventory of
appendices, wallworks, drumrolls:

ultra properly,
tone after tone:

harder:
leave-takings, arrivals—
so much to appease at inceptions.
nonsensical when
it gets to blaming
a rooster for its
well-padded comb.

the seizures
of steam to contend with.

olddays longlost,
carpings scrapped.
nothing but citrus fruit,
corn on the cob,
mango stones.
they left the applause unpunctured
and cheered him on
from Brooklyn Bridge
to a Breadline

as if bestiality were a bonus
as if to strip dispersions
of a random glare

ture to size
they didn’t leave
their obligation undischarged.
insomnia is my shelter
in a town called twelve.

resist.resist
the traversals of sugarcane.
the alarm of tocsin.

to curtsy
for a goldfinch
and its moontalk its floundering?

two silences—and i
refuse to choose one.
a ragpicker stumbles
and threads his extracts
through the arcades of dawn.

to him grottoes
are our argosy.
craters already face us.

a proviso—either way—
strews across dust and rust.
pogoing: what has dirt got to do with it? 
a smash-and-grab reception 
defrosts a flying saucer.

jangly is a slimline cameo; 
a visible pertinence 
keeps it pulsing.

inklings in poppyfield: 
what have they got to do with us?

sandbedded in our soundtrack.
noisy ones at
the height of harmattan
spirited away
to work on mishaps of a love-hotel.

heedlessly dead-pan,
road-block with a motive.

they are still washing
clothes inside a rueful river.

blindfolded.
vis-a-vis écriture

water’s dream

the water that fetched us

a man and a woman
about to take off their clothes

dream’s dovepoint

a rope a chain in water

a man and a woman
about to disrobe
where blinds are not drawn
round us the back steps
the knuckle-headed omissions
invigorating sutures
of metaphor and cliche

to have done with
the judgement of God in soap parlours
plastercasts meat racks coalmines

brown exits disembowelments
sartorial studios pipelines
twisted tainted

round us the frontsteps
ostriches on tour
bash on nonetheless
    i want to thank

this merry mess—
    to peek out from

under this miracle
    this encounter

with the five shades of black

do you want to answer
    a question that hasn’t been asked

or do you want
    to prattle around

what’s left of a tangled weed
if a seaneedle
   is good
      enough
         to
            hurtle
               into song
              so are we
and still thinking
of the crematoria
called Biafra that
hasn’t upped and left.

is a taste for mourning
also an acquired one?
has a hurled grenade
ever gone into a coma?

wouldn’t mind it
befriending an Icebox.
snagglevoice
from a scragglyhead

the one who pulls
the helix along

get busy: oblige a digital
alchemy

aeronautics have not
forsaken a lovefield

undercover jive /
a strap-on

perfect imperfections
a ceaseless gum-chewing

reeling them in /
feet hung on a frown
no end to the cheekiness
    of a spearhead

mind your mind /
    enders doing love

like ferrets you kept as pets

turds tidied up
    huddled inside a hive

it is a Geodesic dome
    this Sunday needs

a place to go gill-netting from /
    you don’t think a

planter’s land-grabbing
    has got a valued chance there
that belief is easy to pursue
    but first sift through vines and ravings

fitful in discovery of dementia’s flesh

canecutter split asunder
canecutter split asunder:

you are not among the
    vassals of palm leaves
how to take apart
how to break
the habit of
a cuckoo clock
down on its luck

and salt low-keyed
and sierrarose syndicated

the termite would know
would know
when you become as
nimble as an oarsman

Ojadili, Obiligbo:
were you once mugged for canoeing?
iron in an iris.
in some after-whiff
  of hair in a quiff.
ridge, slime,
  quadrant.
sure: a hawk can
  also be a swallow.

terracotta matters
  to a daubed aspiration.

nothing nothing
  disuades the quicksand
  from visiting a wimp.
a smokescreen
is a puppet escaping
through a pipe

grease up
or shut up

o nine-eyed crime

that’s how thoughts
are pumped into a room

in crossfire wank
in Saran wrap
when i think of it
that we couldn’t hook up
a brainy hookworm
when i bloody think of it
that we broke our thumbs
cracking our replicas
the bloody-mindedness of it all

how dare you give us eggwhite,
       delirious lust

these forays into pupal pacings,
       presentiments gerrymandering

a dart board asking what it is like
       to be a kite string

six days, six nights
in Claytown
everything you touch
becomes ragged/jagged

every road leads
to penguins

a diaphanous circuit
pressures you to attention

you’ve not been
at a midpoint between them
you’ve been both
at the same time:
lover and beloved

eye defer often
to the critical waffle
of a plaster saint
where are the petulant regattas?
banned.
who banned them?
i did.

half past seven.
time for a paper hat.
no use for paper deals.
over-refinement is harakiri.

through sweetness
and sweat
this takes us
from the socratic
to the Delphic:

a thought left
lying around a begrimed street.
microcosm of the macrocosm?
a trance about to be amplified?
glass igloos
cable-bindings
and their possibilities situate me

not mousey capitulation
to strip-lights,
mirrored machinery

inverted cones encircle me

indications of deals
with tarot cards,
lollers, crooked crosses
from a stewed barn
to a laughing bed

earth’s flesh
of which we are proud

the question the answer
a nesting time of two faces

looks like it’s time
for cherry picking

where’s the seahorsing in that?
what are we doing?
as for trailhead,
it is between currant and larkspur.

the puffery
between pajamas
and bathrobe
is a tease.

my why trembles
in the enigma
of a convivial vagina.

how i wish
you would stop
touching my double chin.
of praise and persiflage
in a planetarium-

supple? the attentive
longing that looks straight at you?

the eel-grass
does seem exempt
from prettified dichotomy.

atonement washes off.
big deal.

be all things to me.
the unsure thing-
a thornbush dozing
on the lap of a harbor.

jumping over a skyline
i stumble on
their shindig.

hoedowns, tenebrae-
their fins applaud
their wings applaud
their legs applaud.

may the barroom floors
of heaven
be endlessly kind
to the tipsy eyes of paintbrushes.

waxwing and shagbark:
i take them back.
serene your hen-yard.
serene your mis-speech.

living like a screwdriver
makes me fry your apologies
at dusk.i don’t need your
godawful dawn.who knows
what it might mean—what
this endarkenment is all about.
living like a screwdriver
makes me house-hunt
with your worn laundary.
come to where heels
of words
have never trodden

to a tabula rasa

if his winterized levitation
marks a return to love,
the bald-headed magus doesn’t let on

it’s either he is inaccurate
or his truth is immaculate
roads have bedded
themselves down in you.

those roosters are loud.

your stripped doubt
stares back at you.

those opinions go nowhere.

mid-ground you subtend
unveiled feet,
weigh victimage
in your hands.

there are coordinates still glinting.
it’s well.a triangular day
is fobbing me off.i am
being lawfully animalized.
pigskin hovers over a steeple.
green intrudes into the temple
Of my eyes.crossbeams
crash into a flagpole.gears
defy guilts of speed.

this celerity is ultimate.
this sideslapping.
packed-in, airlifted. something akin to being given a talking-to.

a banquet of the blind. sandpiping.

dare celebrate doing things the hard way.

thunderclapping.
i will not clog
your aptitude for
cyclopean rococo.

they call it semisleep.

go home to the debris
of your glitterhouse.
a felicitous earth will reclaim me.

they call it a hermitage.

after the thickened
fires of Dresden
come the offerings of flood.
lowlights,
    lowlands
    on nigerwings.

in nicotine wax
in nubian contortions.

    sole to sole
    pouch to pouch.

a reckoning
unclouded by faith.

    too:
    wick-powered flames.
a beat’s meat
in a bout of catch-as-catch-can.

one uppercut was all
it took to louse up his Guru.

his secret weapon raised hell.
he refused to lead
and refused to be led.

Herman,
when will you brood your
way into a wild romance again?
when?
from the husks,
   oak log in Coal Camp.

long time coming:
   deafness of oak leaf.

pure-bred oak taunting
   a drawback.

   duration well meaning,
cataleptic—luminous bumpkin.

   between log and leaf
all is not dross.

   lead mustn’t always journey to gold.
of being nibbled at—
skins of successive doubts—
their minutely startling aspirations;
chains being torn, being exceeded;
of emplacements of ampersands?
downdraft of massaging oil over hair, muscle, nail—
exits smearingly arrowed, writhing or keeping still—
whatever it is we’re doing is good, is good.
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