

i. The Friendly Neighbour.

In the glare of the bright full moon
these eyes are close to the ground,
as I calmly emerge with a slurping sound
and with delicate skill
I remain quite still
like plaster calmly waiting to be set
in the mud of the ancient lagoon.

I watch the stooping silhouette
of strangers driven by fear -
the howling face in the flaming night –
and I shed an unavoidable tear
in the grey half-light,
unobtrusive and discreet,
close to their trembling mud clogged feet.

May they sleep with unclenched fist
and in their dreaming find
new innocence.
May the friendly morning mist
soothingly unwind
all shadow of malevolence.

Here may they find true rest.
May they proudly raise,
a practised hand
to the brow and gaze
at broken bits of land
endlessly caressed
by lapping water, swathing sky
and the bleak barbarous cry
of seagulls swerving with agility -
loudly at home.

May they thrive in domesticity -
food abundant, offspring numerous -
and, beneath the great arched dome,
where every prayer ascends
in hopefulness,
may we all be friends

and if some friendly neighbour disappears –

as may happen periodically –
enfolded by the shifting mud
or carried off by the flood
of the tide, I call to mind,
with lavish sympathy,
the grief, the anguish and the tears
of loved ones left behind.