

Pitika Ntuli





MARIKANA*

by Ari Sitas

The digital images fold as the TV screen tires
The cops, rifles in cabinet, past their third beer are
edging towards bed
The night is quiet as the smelter has been closed,
the only music is of the wind on razor wire
the ears are too shut to hear the ancestral thuds on goatskin
humanity has somehow died in Marikana
who said what to whom remains a detailed trifle
the fury of the day has to congeal, the blood has to congeal
I reverse the footage bringing the miners back to life
in vain, the footage surges back and the first bullet
reappears and the next and the next and the next
and I reverse the footage in vain, again and again in vain

The image of the man in the green shroud endures
Who wove the blanket and what was his name?
There are no subtitles under the clump of bodies, no names
stapled on their unformed skull
A mist of ignorance also endures, a winter fog
woven into the fabric of the kill
The loom endures too, the weaver is asleep

The land of the high winds will receive the man naked
The earth will eat the stitch back to a thread
What will remain is the image and I in vain
Reversing him back to life to lead the hill to song
In vain, the footage surges back
another Mpondo, another Nguza Hill, another Wonder Hill
the shooting quietens: another anthill

My love, did I not gift you a necklace with a wondrous bird
pure royal platinum to mark our bond?- was it not the work of the
most reckless angel of craft and ingenuity? Was it not pretty?
Didn't the bird have an enticing beak of orange with green tint?
Throw it away quickly, tonight it will turn nasty and gouge
a shaft into your slender neck
And it will hurt because our metals are the hardest- gold, pig iron, manganese
yes, platinum
Humanity has somehow died in Marikana
What is that uMzimu staring back at us tonight?
Darken the mirrors
Switch off the moon
Asphalt the lakes

At dawn, the driveway to the Master's mansion
Is aflame with flower, so radiant from the superphosphates
of bone
of surplus oxygen and cash,
such flames, such a raw sun
such mourning by the shacks that squat in sulphur's bracken
and I wait for the storm, the torrent, the lava of restitution
the avenger spirits that blunt the helicopter blades in vain

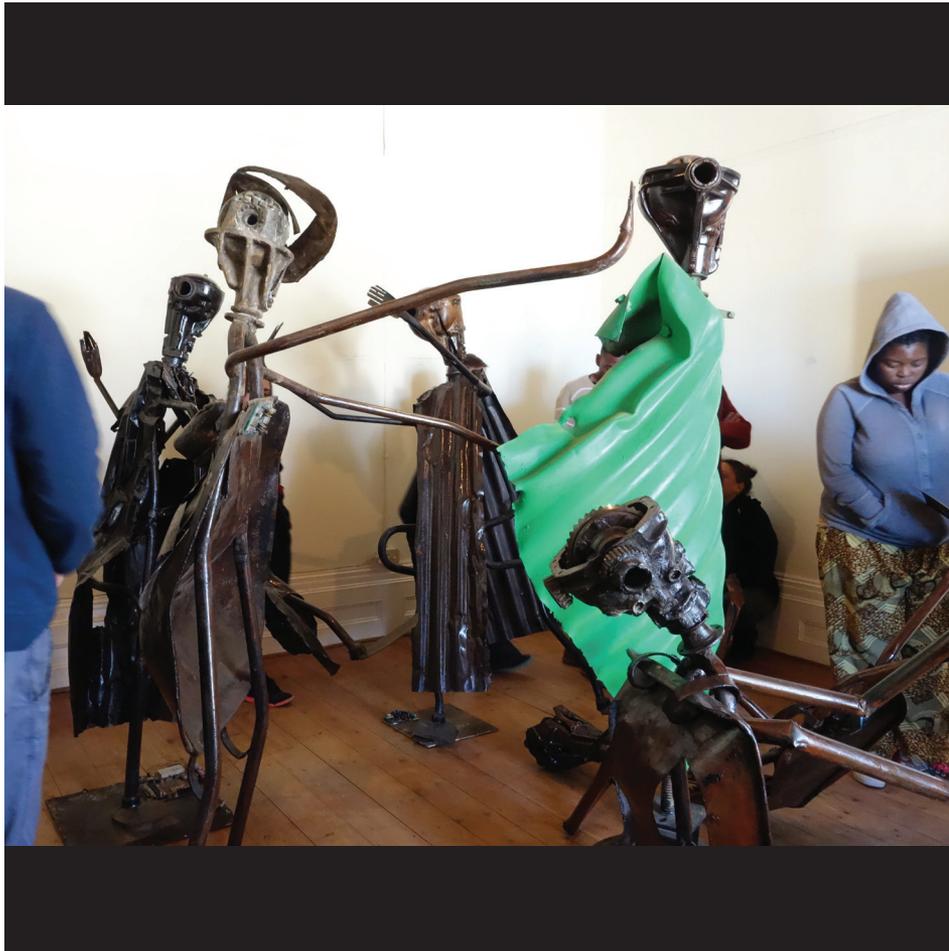
these also endure: the game and trout fishing of their elective chores
the auctions of diamond, art and share
the prized stallions of their dreams
their supple fingers fingering oriental skins and their silver crystals
counting the scalps of politicians in their vault

The meerkat paces through the scent of blood
I want it to pace through the scent of blood,
she is the mascot, the living totem
of the mine's deep rock,
the one who guards the clans from the night's devil
she is there as the restless ghosts of ancestors
by the rock-face
feeding her sinew and pap

goadng her on:
the women who have loved the dead alive
the homesteads that have earned their sweat and glands
impassive nature that has heard their songs
the miners of our daily wealth that still defy
the harsh landscape of new furies
the meerkat endures-
torn certainties of class endure
the weaver also endures: there-
green blankets of our shrouded dreams
humanity has died in Marikana

The strike is over
The dead must return
to work.

*(after a tough two weeks and seeing Pitika Ntuli's miner sculpture
with the green corrugated iron blanket)



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