

The Last Page

Litany

here along the long white shadow
where I thought where I thought I'd leave the litany of locust
of locust and death I'll always hear the litany of sound

here along the long white shadow
where I grab lustre grab honour that once was lustre and white
the truth I've heard and how to molest it

that I travel I travel along the corn or chaff of my past
that my past crawls forth on its deadly knees without once looking up
that I claw on my knees claw to that place

that light place that does not want to dim
here along the long white shadow of mortal and molested truth
we buried many we buried without shroud or ritual

many we buried and from the graves it sprouts
the shadow sprouts of lustre, burdock and wheat the locusts of sound
here along the long white shadow

and my past sits so well in its teeth all along
its teeth sit well in the shadow of sulphur and lime it's time
the time of assassin and shame and tin

I keep slipping out of truth
while next to me along the long white shadow walks the shudder
that I was walks the long white shudder of ash

set me I who keep slipping in the long white shadow
out of time out of random and lies I want slipping from the shudder
along the emptiness of litany and shadow

set me set me from revenge and loss
from ruin set me from the long white scar the lichen and ash set me
free into remorse oh my hand my hand grabs the sheet like a throat

Antjie Krog

Limits of Forgiveness in the New South Africa, by Antjie Krog, copyright © 1998, 2000 by Antjie Samuel. Used by permission of Crown Books, an imprint of Random House, a division of Penguin Random House LLC. All rights reserved. In the UK and Commonwealth permission is provided courtesy of Random House Struik 1998, 2002. Text © Antjie Samuel 1998, 2002.