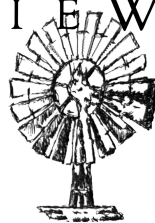


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Africa

Joanne Lowery

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SWOSUTM

Africa

by Joanne Lowery

Its west coast is the profile of a skull
with a weak chin. Inside that continental head
is every human possibility plus desert
where even camels stumble
and jungles that still eat explorers alive.
Each birth is complicated by disease and war
as countries invent new names
and only birds fly in unison
with white wings and black bodies,

with black bodies and white wings.
Dark continent, why are your night rivers
lit by the red eyes of crocodiles?
What are our ancestors trying to tell us
as they swing screeching tree to tree?
Here where a floating log
can open its mouth and swallow
a man whole, it is easy to disappear.
There go the Arab, the Boer, the Congo slave.
Deep in the bush a boy in a ragged tee shirt
knows who wants him as he kneels at the river.
From cupped hands he sips the end of the rainy season.

