

## Visitation

After a welcome round the bonfire  
the Great Bear slung above me  
and sleep in a carved, royal Balinese bed,  
morning on a terrace looking down  
the sharp volcanic ribs  
to the last winking lights  
of boats bringing fish  
for my breakfast.

The unhurried patience,  
unembarrassed kindness  
of my hosts showing me  
how to give what we'd brought,  
how to receive thanks

how to pat the boy's crooked shoulder,  
measure to see if the pants fitted,  
eat a biscuit made from roots  
grubbed from the soil of the forest  
grated in a bowl on the beaten earth  
in front of a hovel built of planks and tin  
near the scratching chickens...

how to be concerned,  
not overwhelmed  
by the stench of urine  
in the dark house  
where the crippled boy  
sat slumped all day  
in his lonely wheelchair  
bothered by flies...

how to stroke the bent, discoloured fingers  
of the woman with half-healed gangrene.

Time locked its clapping tongue –  
unmeasured minutes passed  
as I waited for the widow's few sticks  
to boil the coffee in a battered pot,  
accepting the beans  
that had been her meal  
and would be mine  
taking the risk  
of drinking the dark sludge  
in the smudged glass,  
clumsily repeating  
*jaan, suksma, om svastyastu.*