

## J. Tarwood

### A HIGH VELD BATHSHEBA

Brown as creamy coffee,  
the Awash river smooths those boulders.  
Midstream, a white woman floats,  
just her face above water,  
and that barely.  
She drifts,  
clouds dimming the twilight  
like a bathroom curtain.

A mauve bat glides past the baobob tree,  
misty wings outstretched.  
The white woman stands now, soaping her breasts,  
melons roped with silky knotted hair.  
The bar is small and pink  
as her nibbled nails.  
Suds soon crisscross her like chains.

The sisal parts. On white rock  
an African boy stares,  
whipping a rubbery branch.  
Her face is pale as his footsole.  
Her hair plunges like a root  
when it should soar like a vine.

Blushing, she flips to a float,  
He claps and giggles.  
She stands. Her eyes narrow.  
A bearded lady without a hair on her chin,  
she goes back to scrubbing  
the way normal people do —  
as if that could fool anybody.