

Edison Mpina · *Malawi*

NAPHIRI

I have not been worried about you, I  
was sure you understood. I have been worried  
about your school fees, for  
which I phoned your headmistress. She understood;  
but things changed today.

Along Gilbert Street, I saw a girl like you  
but white, unlike you, walking with black  
disconsolation, like worn out springs in her legs.  
I thought about you. Is this how  
you have kept in my absence?

She wore a denim as knife-edged as yours  
dipping and shuffling her feet, innocent as yours  
in the dead leaves which have surrendered to the fall  
fight here. She was as dismal as the owl at daybreak.  
Is this how you are?

Karla walked with hardship along the street, like  
you did in your youth walking upstream the Chimbamera River.  
Tell me, this is not the way you are keeping  
in my absence, is it? Couch ears each day now  
to the landing planes.