

# The Soweto I Love

(1977)

by Siphso Sepamla



*Liberated from  
capitalist control  
to educate the masses  
by  
Socialist Stories*

# I SAW THIS MORNING

I saw this morning  
panic in the location  
little children clasping schoolbags  
put to flight  
I saw them run across an open veld  
up and down the streets  
they were seeking the refuge of their homes  
I saw terror whirl around and about the  
location  
little children fleeing from an unseen monster  
I heard the screams of a child  
he was a crippled little boy  
yelling  
tears furrowing his cheeks  
he was wheeling around his teacher  
held tight  
no words reached him  
no bullying cowed him  
his mind was gripped by this fear

I saw this morning  
what it is like  
to be scared by rumour

## A CHILD DIES

He was a mere kid  
consumed by curiosity  
which brought him one morning  
to a burning scene of a shop  
the fire raged before his eyes  
it was angry  
eating up every article  
then came an alarm  
because a monster was known to stalk the streets  
unthinking  
the child fled  
he just ran and ran  
away from the fire  
but his mind was engrossed by the fascination  
his eyes fixed on the burning scene  
unthinking  
the child ran and ran  
until he fell smack  
into the hands of a towering giant  
he was grabbed  
he was hurled to the ground  
like grain  
he was pounded and pounded  
with a gun-butt  
  
we buried the mess  
another day  
  
may his soul rest in peace

## LIKE A HIPPO

how nature sees this creature  
the devil only knows  
it is a combination  
of all nature's ugliest monsters  
four-legged  
a front mouse-like  
a back as rugged as it is fearful  
its colour is like a hippo's  
a dirty something  
unlike a hippo  
it shoots shit all around  
like a hippo  
its lumbering forward  
serves the human flesh creeps  
as if a crab were crawling on it  
it doesn't bite  
nor does it claw  
but it mows down  
like a prehistoric monster  
as it is meant to destroy history  
it is deadly, deadly to kids  
they scream in the night  
as they see it in dreams  
a menace of the age  
it tries  
to take us all  
back in time

## AT SUNSET

the sun went to rest in the west  
escaping the role of scavenger  
the night carried in the scaffolding  
for more heads to sacrifice  
trains dislodged thousands of people  
rodents that picked their way home  
disappearing behind mousefaced houses  
they were fearful of the laughter between tears  
for there was a laughter of sorts abroad  
an intoxicating urge now in command

like from veld-fires fanned afresh  
flames leaped into the air  
as offices, banks, libraries, shops,  
buses, trucks, kombis, cars belched  
billows that rose hurriedly into the blackened sky  
empty tins and bin-lids clattering desperately  
amidst a maddened triumph

it was a moving moment  
when youth embraced in unity  
shouting a delirious cry  
Power! Power! Power!

the guns were in ominous retreat  
no trace of a new tragedy signalled  
until the dawn of another day

brought news of the dead

our hearts stood like lumps in our throats

heavy with the pain of death,

we swallowed bitter gall

as we cursed the turn of events

and swore to pay the debt with defiance



exploding the lie

take away

your teachings

take away

your promises

take away

your hope

take away

your language

give

me

this

day

myself

i shall learn myself anew

i shall read myself from the trees

i shall glean myself from all others

i shall wean myself of you

in the course of that day

luncheons were left uncompleted

the businessman stood dead on his tracks

blood drained from his face

all instructions poised midair

at the dawn of another day

we might have asked for reasons



but what for  
when dogs have been made to live better

we might have asked for witnesses  
but what witness for a gunshot  
when the sun stares down upon the act

at the dawn of another day

rat-tat-tat rat-tat-tat  
said the guns as they deplored the moment  
gunners sweating smoke swaying drunkenly

rat-tat-tat rat-tat-tat  
the nuisance must be contained  
by all means law and order

rat-tat-tat rat-tat-tat  
rat-tat-tat rat-tat-tat

the noise went on for so long  
we could never begin to count our dead  
at the dawn of another day

wave upon wave of human power  
rose before the might of gun-fire  
that the gunners began to sweat fear

there was a stampede here  
there was a scampering there

but over there was a regrouping of young might

at the dawn of another day

oh yes i have known hurt

the kind that binds the head to unreasoning hands

i have known hurt

to wring the heart of all blood

for my body has often been left without rhythm or  
beat

i have known cruelty

the kind that makes me cry without tears

i have known cruelty

to pinch the loud cries of pain

leaving my body to limp along numb

take away

your smiles

give me back

the snarls

take away

your morality

give me back

my humanity

at the dawn of another day

## HOW A BROTHER DIED

I want to remember these things  
that I may tell them to my little brother  
I want to speak from this mouth only the truth  
that I may walk the street tall

I remember the morning  
elder brother walked out of the house  
heading for his place of work  
where he had been for the last five years  
I can still see his white shirt  
and grey suit lately dry-cleaned  
fitted well on strong limbs and sturdy shoulders  
for he stood well            good in health

of his thoughts I didn't know much  
but he loved his neighbour (whatever that means)  
he harboured no grudges  
he flew no flags  
albeit he was no coward  
he could look anyone in the eye  
because his hands were not soiled  
by the blood of others

when they came to tell us brother  
had met with an accident at the train station  
our hearts thumped madly on our sides  
and we had to pillar mother to the scene

when we saw the body shrouded with newspapers  
its undug grave splattered with blood  
as if a hateful madman had let it gush furiously  
knees buckled with the loss of strength

I want to remember these things  
because I had never known such hate before  
I remember the click of my tongue  
my muscles tightening round my chest  
I looked at his covered face  
feeling the crush of pain as he was being felled  
by that bullet

## BULLETS

bullets

are never nice things really

bullets

are made to scare      to injure      to kill

bullets

made by humans      are inhuman

bullets

are cowardly persuaders      them vs hands

bullets

brutalize the user      murderer by moral  
definition

bullets

rip the flesh open      leave the heart inert

bullets

pierced the backs of kids      killed and  
killed and killed

## FOR A LAUGH

i had begun to have a laugh  
honest to goodness  
i had begun to ha-ha about how  
some people draw lines

they put me in a fenced-in location to live happily  
had my coloured brother in a park of sorts  
and set themselves up in a suburb of avenues and  
trees

i was beginning to say  
the whole idea was too grand  
it deserved a hard laugh

but came the riots  
they shot us down with violent bullets  
they baton-charged my coloured brother rioter  
then warned off their own riotous kids

now i've begun to wonder about  
the human eye-sight  
and man's sense of justice

## MEASURE FOR MEASURE

go measure the distance from cape town to pretoria  
and tell me the prescribed area i can work in

count the number of days in a year  
and say how many of them i can be contracted  
around

calculate the size of house you think good for me  
and ensure the shape suits tribal tastes

measure the amount of light into the window  
known to guarantee my traditional ways

count me enough wages to make certain that i  
grovel in the mud for more food

teach me just so much of the world that i  
can fit into certain types of labour

show me only those kinds of love  
which will make me aware of my place at all times

and when all that is done  
let me tell you this  
you'll never know how far i stand from you

# HOME

There's a time yes a time  
I would have liked to say home  
home even to rugged mountains  
and trees huddled on hill sides  
home to cupped lands but

how can I say this is home  
when mother has to plug wounds dripping blood  
with sweat-stained hands  
when sister has to shield from bullets  
breasts drooping squirting pain

how can I say home  
where father sits with his head  
dipped in despair  
his vision blurred by indecision

how can I call this home  
when others call it Doornkop Thornhill  
Limehill or Vergenoeg

how come this home  
has become a dungeon  
rewombing its children without qualms



how can this be home  
where graves grow fast  
and the people's minds are stunted by intrigue

I seek a care-less home  
home to my heart's content  
home

## THIS LAND

There's a man fooling around with himself  
and in trying to make his tomfoolery  
look the real thing  
fools around with me

I was born by the stroke of wars  
I was born by the ravages of disease  
by the events of plagues  
I know the stench of this land

I have never had to say  
this land is mine  
this land has always been me  
it is named after me

This land defines its texture by me  
its sweat and blood are salted by me  
I've strained muscles yoked  
on the turning wheel of this land

I am this land of mine  
I've never asked for a portion  
there's never been a need to  
I am the land

## WHEN I LOST SLUM LIFE

I will have to ask for my slum location again  
I feel a lot went wrong when I was moved from it  
a lot died in the process  
I lost my stance for standing up straight  
I lost the rhythm of walking right  
I lost my sense of humour  
I lost the feel for loving  
I lost my sense of smell  
I lost the sense of discriminating  
I lost my pride of not caring for smart things  
I lost that heart for sharing  
I lost Sofasonke Mpanza's guts  
but to understand my real plight you've got to know  
I lost the gum-tree which was my shade  
my lean-to and a lovers' lean-on  
I began to grasp for real all illusions  
I began to love charity  
I began to think comfort was real  
I began to worry about the hygiene of toothpaste  
I began to wear clean clothes as if that's wearing a  
golden watch  
I began to seek a light complexion as if that was a  
reality  
I began to despise the smell of life  
I went in for imitations  
I bought second-hand as if that wasn't paying for  
cheap class

I need to hold on to something  
like the shine of corrugated-iron roofs or the rusted  
coating

I need to take in something  
less obnoxious than the billowing smoke from  
nearby factories

I need a big wide yard  
in which to dance in prayer or do the jive  
I need a roofing that can resound  
with hard hand-clapping soulful singing and foot-  
stamping  
or just the thud of drunken brawls

I know I don't just want fresh air  
I need the smell of sweaty life  
oh yes I want to live colourfully once more

## QUEENS/KINGS

we declare  
's true's living god  
we declare  
us  
the association of the largest distributors  
unlicensed  
shebeen queens and kings  
gathered this evening  
for this momentous purpose  
a stand on the call of students  
to observe the mourning period  
by not selling from our hide-outs  
we declare  
we will abide by it  
after all  
we are on his side  
we suffer the same  
we are hounded  
we starve  
we want proper education for our kids  
we declare  
we are united

but sis' rosie  
the one with the biggest business  
she declares  
in the presence of her customers

i'm not mad  
i must live  
i must pay rent  
i must pay school-fees  
i have no husband  
i swear  
i won't sell on tick  
only take-away

# SOWETO

I have watched you grow  
like fermented dough  
and now that you overflow the bowl  
I'm witness to the panic you have wrought

you were born an afterthought  
on the by-paths of highways  
and have lived a foster child  
whose wayward ways have broken hearts  
the myths attending your name  
have been spooks in the minds of many

your sons have been legendaries  
whose strength of character  
has been a cause of pride  
but you too have known shadows of men  
who scurry and scuttle at every beck and call  
in search of substantials

you have been a huge quiet cemetery  
where many have been buried by day  
resurrected by night  
to make calls at night-vigils

of mothers you have made widows  
who had to gird loins  
to take on men's tasks

you have made of mourning  
a way of life  
the flowers that adorn your face  
were born by mothers in grief

you have been a bad dream  
which has gnawed at the conscience of some  
until averted eyes looked on  
at the teeming mass of beings

there have been times  
the incisions on your ear-lobes were misread.  
and those on your wrists abused  
there have been times  
the song from a thousand of your voices  
was heard as a discord  
and the dance of a million of your feet  
was said to be off the beat

on your neck was placed a yoke of laws  
which have tried to strangle your life  
and once you strained muscles  
to shake off the restraints  
a great roar went up abroad

I love you Soweto  
I've done so long before  
the summer swallow deserted you  
I have bemoaned the smell of death



hanging on your other neck like an albatross  
I have hated the stench of your blood  
blood made to flow in every street

but I have taken courage  
in the thought that  
those who mother your back  
will carry on with the job  
of building anew  
a body of being  
from the ashes in the ground

## ON JUDGEMENT DAY

black people are born singers  
black people are born runners  
black people are peace-loving  
these myths make of us naivete

we have been sipped with bubbles of champagne  
we have known choking dust  
and have writhed with the pain of humiliation

singers  
runners  
peace-loving

nobody really sees the storm raging within us  
nobody cares to know that we've reached our own  
bottom  
laughing has become agonizing

singers  
runners  
peace-loving  
my foot

I fear we will all sing at night-vigils  
and as I see things we will all run for cover  
what I don't know is which peace will still be lovable

## ONE NIGHT

I feel the night air settling my ruffled make-up  
there is a cool breeze flitting past me  
enlarging specks of yellow and white lights  
that trim the skyline  
up above I see clouds floating in formation  
like a regiment  
they drift hurriedly towards an unseen point  
I stand below as one taking the salute  
at a fly-past  
it is a gracious movement they make  
as they sail across towards the unseen point  
as if tribesmen hurrying to converge at a kgotla

then it dawns upon me the night is quiet  
there are no grinding, rumbling and coughing  
machines  
no metallic sounds beating on the night silence

I am elated by this presence washing over me  
and I take a bow in the star-less night

# CIVILIZATION AHA

i thought of eden

the first time i ate a fig

i thought of a whiteman

the first time i saw god's  
portrait

i thought of a blackman

the first time i met satan on  
earth

i must be honest

it wasn't only bantu education  
it was all part of what they say is western  
civilization

## ALL THAT GOLD

So much blood has spilled from  
the moment the rush for gold began  
whipping up our hopes to horizons unknown  
that we remain this day with a joy choked midair

no wonder I hate the Carlton Centre  
with its winding stairs dipping into a pit  
a dome peeping stealthily into the sky  
and the Connection imposing its own illusion of  
harmony

for us death weighs heavy on the conscience  
numbering has ceased to matter  
only memory can count  
can score the debt to settle

## IN MY NAME

While I sit here  
seeming to enjoy the golden sun  
eating yellow margarine in place of butter  
pissing in a toilet  
and not a stinking bucket meant to keep me  
company

I might dream of the jewels at Stern's  
transferred somehow to my pondokkie  
I might meet Sidney Poitier at the street corner  
demanding to see my passbook

I can slip a hand  
into the warmth of a petticoat underneath  
far from the reach of matron-like eyes  
I can babble a lot of bullshit  
between the levels of sobriety and frothful  
drunkenness

I could do all these things  
and more

but I do know my thoughts will rest  
within four darkened walls  
from time to time

and ponder the lot of men

confined within under Section 6 or 10 or

whathaveyou

in my name

these are criminals only by definition  
and their being in a cell is my undoing

## TELL ME NEWS

Tell me of a brother  
who hanged himself in prison  
with a blanket  
was he punchdrunk

Tell me of a brother  
who flung himself to death  
from the ninth floor of a building  
did his grip fumble with the loneliness up there

Tell me of a hooded man  
who picked out others of his blood on parade  
was his skin beginning  
to turn with solitude

Oh, tell me of a sister  
who returned home pregnant  
from a prison cell  
has she been charged under the Immorality Act

Tell me of a brother  
who hanged himself in jail  
with a piece of his torn pair of jeans  
was he hiding a pair of scissors in the cell

Tell me, tell me sir  
has the gruesome sight  
of a mangled corpse  
not begun to sit on your conscience



## FOR W.T.

I didn't hear no screams      not even yours  
I heard whispers choke      with your name  
I guess time comes when nothing said  
amounts to more than some of the tributes we pay  
the dead

I've tried in vain  
to suppress the pain  
that went with the writing of that note  
the so-called confession of suicide

Exactly where was the pain  
why do I believe you didn't feel nothing  
how do I know you didn't care for nothing

It ain't your life snuffed  
that I'm sure of      you cheated again  
spirits can never be hanged  
with torn blankets      shirts      or whathaveyou

Ash to ash wasn't meant for your kind

We filed past your coffin to receive the message

# THE LATE, LATE SHOW

I watch with a grin  
a bit of laughter is in my pocket  
how they jostle about me  
the victims of fits  
they are doing their damndest  
to repair the damage done  
for long I've stood dazed  
by their insensibilities  
awake at all times  
to the scramble for my parts  
I've never taken from them  
even as they dismembered my body  
I've seen their arrogance  
tease the fibre of my courage  
it's as if they knew always  
it will come to this some day  
I would show the tolerance  
gnawed at bit by bit  
I see them scurry about me  
paving my streets with gold  
I hear the little noises they make  
wanting to share with me the moon's dark  
side  
I can feel my grin turn to a grimace  
my patience has been wearing thin

## TALK TO THE PEACH TREE

Let's talk to the swallows visiting us in summer  
ask how it is in other countries

Let's talk to the afternoon shadow  
ask how the day has been so far

Let's raise our pets to our level  
ask them what they don't know of us

words have lost meaning  
like all notations they've been misused

most people will admit  
a whining woman can overstate her case

Talk to the paralysing heat in the air  
inquire how long the mercilessness will last

Let's pick out items from the rubbish heap  
ask how the stench is like down there

Let's talk to the peach tree  
find out how it feels to be in the ground

Let's talk to the moon going down  
ask if it isn't enough eyeing what's been going on

come on

let's talk to the devil himself

it's about time

## THE EXILE

Father of my thoughts  
sinew of my being  
I relate to you as the moon to the sun

I've stood at the door  
scanning the horizon for your return  
unmindful of the load on my lone shoulders  
I carry the scars of your wrenching  
feeding hope with your homecoming

In those distant places  
where my voice might not reach  
know that I'm tanning a melody for you

They tell me  
those lands have seasons too  
but do the winters drag bodies through the snow  
are summers meant for mourning  
our past spring walked death a long way  
leaving our spirits to droop long before the coming  
autumn

I remember once  
you spoke of a man's willpower  
for me all that remains  
some highfalutin balderdash  
my life offers no alternatives  
as I stand on shifting sands

but strength to your elbow  
mother's child

# THE ISLAND

And so said the island

I am strong  
no-one nears me without a tremble  
I have for many years dared the sea  
to swallow me and my innards

I am strong  
the whole world knows of me  
men talk loudly of their wishes for me  
but none can walk on my shores

I am strong  
I've for long held great secrets in my heart  
I've known men of royal blood as well  
but it's been the common man I've always feared

I am strong  
I've broken the backs of many men  
I've even tampered with their sanity  
but as many have left me defiant

I am strong  
my grip will drain the blood of anyone  
see how Mandela & Sisulu have grown grey  
but their spirits still defy me

**I am strong**

**I wear wrinkles of age on my face**

**yet my eyes have been known not to blink**

**but rumour has it I'll be deserted one day**

**I am strong**

**but my courage has begun to seep out**



## WORDS, WORDS, WORDS

We don't speak of tribal wars anymore  
we say simply faction fights  
there are no tribes around here  
only nations  
it makes sense you see  
'cause from there  
one moves to multinational  
it makes sense you get me  
'cause from there  
one gets one's homeland  
which is a reasonable idea  
'cause from there  
one can dabble with independence  
which deserves warm applause  
— the bloodless revolution

we are talking of words  
words tossed around as if  
denied location by the wind  
we mean those words some spit  
others grab  
dress them up for the occasion  
fling them on the lap of an audience  
we are talking of those words  
that stalk our lives like policemen  
words no dictionary can embrace  
words that change sooner than seasons

we mean words  
that spell out our lives  
words, words, words  
for there's a kind of poetic licence  
doing the rounds in these parts

## A CHILDHOOD MEMORY

I was going to say childhood is fun  
going to say a child's memories are a pleasant store  
but my own false start  
would tend to belie such claim  
I know I stormed into manhood  
beginning with those childhood scenes  
I'd rather forget

I remember as a small boy  
unhappy Friday afternoons  
at the Randfontein market place  
I would be waiting my turn on a queue  
for a rationed basket of potatoes  
it was one of those things which unhappily  
reminded us of World War 2  
there was this man with long arms  
and I would see him stretch them over my head  
to serve a rationer behind me

When I came to understand this act  
which served notice for many more like it  
separating me from other human beings  
my chest would fill up with bitterness  
tears of impotence would well up into my eyes  
and I grew up to hate the sight of the market place  
even this day I don't want to know where it used to  
stand

and as for that man I've met many of his kind

I see with pride today's child  
take the bull by the horns  
for Africa has grown up  
how I wish to re-trace my life's step

## IF

If you still have bacon and eggs for breakfast

If you donate freely to welfare societies that serve  
the needy and underprivileged

If your standards are such that they are measured  
by the number of servants you keep

If you believe in granting to others opportunities  
open to you

If you have once said: it is madness to separate  
people on colour lines

If you kneel down hands cupped for the body and  
blood of Christ

If you travel to Kenya and other places for  
conferences on Christian fellowship

If you sometimes take a plane from Jan Smuts to  
European and American cities for  
dinner and conversations

If you have sat at table with servants of other people  
to talk of building bridges

If you have once said: I don't believe in being unjust  
to anyone

If you insist that you are of the 20th century

Then for God's sake match word with deed always

## SHOP ASSISTANT

The lady showed me a distance

stand back boy

i don't know what

you smell

She made me think of

sunlight and

palmolive soap

My mind raced back postwar to

big ben and

lifebuoy

I saw visions of men armpits raised for

right guard

and

mum for

men

To her superior airs I said

helena rubinstein and

eau de cologne i've tried

She wagged a finger at me singing

don't-be-rude-

boy

i'll-call-the-

police

I said to her burning eyes

go ahead

your time runs out

The lady broke down in tears

## ON FEAR

for days  
we were run on fear  
a fear of the unknown  
we would turn day and night around  
only to find  
fear stares us in the eye  
those were the days  
when we walked through dense suspense  
fearing the rustle of trees even  
for leaves have been known to be ears  
those days  
fear spun us around her finger  
unleashing us at will  
tightening the grip unfeelingly  
at night  
each footfall in the yard  
was a cold treading on our souls  
each knock on the door  
a hammering on our spirits  
at the height of the detentions  
whispered conversations marked our associations  
for we heard of gruelling interrogations  
where vulgar words  
like unbridled horses  
galloped one after another  
from lips brutalized by abuse  
we heard of searing screams

inhuman proceedings  
being legalized articles  
our comfort then  
was in the thought that  
fear is all-pervasive  
burrowing here today  
and there tomorrow  
like a mole  
and as we swear to loathe fear  
it is our belief  
we'll yet triumph over all fear.



## A LOVER'S DIARY

Monday we rested heads on each other's shoulders  
Tuesday we bulldozed our way through town with  
bundles of washing  
Wednesday we held hands into a movie  
Thursday we watched Auntie Betty strutting in  
Eloff Street  
Friday we clasped hands over our hearts for the  
return of our fathers  
Saturday we crowded town for the week's groceries  
Sunday we exchanged furtive smiles in church  
but that was before the law took over our love-life  
now we must make love in our minds  
we must look for the future in dreams  
our hearts have been exiled from each other  
but carry on girlie  
it isn't over yet with us  
those that have banned me from living  
cannot banish love that easily  
I remain fumbling in your breast as always  
I seek your lips in the dark as always  
my house-arrest doesn't reach my touching you  
in a way  
I've only been taught the cruelty of loneliness  
but our love must never bear the marks of the unjust

## THE OUTRAGE

When brother was slotted  
in a rough-hewn hostel  
to masturbate  
no-one spoke of the animal breeding

at the height of the location outcry  
he was fed half-a-loaf of bread  
given thirty pieces of silver  
to jingle in his pocket  
and let loose

he went about grazing with a panga  
hacked his way into Mzimhlophe  
soon shrill screams leered into the night

brother sprayed sperms  
all over sister's tender tissue  
she strained her muscles  
she bled internally

brother caught a whiff of blood in the air  
he strangled mother's guilt  
and raped her savagely

father cupped his hands  
to let bitterness and blood to drip in  
he gasped his last command

'rip off his penis  
and foul up the women's wombs'

the outrage pierced the night  
broken windows shattered its silence  
they stood gaping to bear witness to the ignominy

I've tried to piece together  
fragments of the night's act  
but the mind's searing pain refuses

I want to cancel off this night from  
the calendar of our deeds  
but the seeds have germinated

## DRUM BEAT

Given the night I could count the stars  
I know I would end up dizzy  
but the number would be there  
given the day I could number wounds  
inflicted in the name of justice  
but the pain of it all  
would be enough to leave me numb  
that's it, numb — a condition of existence  
a reward for being so dumb  
I am innocuously dumb  
I've counted before  
I've said for 300 years  
life has been shit  
freedom in my lifetime, in my lifetime  
and it hasn't been for sheer sensationalism  
I've beaten these drums  
my batteries have charged rage to an unbridled  
pitch  
if I should stop to rant and rave  
I know I won't be counting for long  
but I know I'm going to hate my own ruthlessness

## IN SEARCH OF ROOTS

We will have to use animal fat  
and not bother with cosmetics and so on

we will have to spill blood  
just so that we keep contact with our ancestors

we will have to read time from the sun  
and stop hurting our wrists

we will have to drink home beer  
and give up potent spirits and things

we will have to seek out  
black, green and golden flowers

we will have to speak up  
because for too long others have spoken for us

we will have to laugh hard  
even if it is at our own illusions

we will need to do all these things  
just to show the world Africa was never discovered

## A WISH

I have rivalled the birds in the air  
enfolded by clouds even

I've been given to bend the sky at night

I am an atlas in my own right  
holding back mighty rivers or changing their course

I defy distance reducing it to a point  
as little as my hand

listen, I have pulled myself out of  
the earth's warm womb glittering

I am that kind of man

but a wish of mine remains  
peace at all times with all men