**Vultures**

Chinua Achebe

In the greyness

and drizzle of one despondent

dawn unstirred by harbingers

of sunbreak a vulture

perching high on broken

bones of a dead tree

nestled close to his

mate his smooth

bashed-in head, a pebble

on a stem rooted in

a dump of gross

feathers, inclined affectionately

to hers. Yesterday they picked

the eyes of a swollen

corpse in a water-logged

trench and ate the

things in its bowel. Full

gorged they chose their roost

keeping the hollowed remnant

in easy range of cold

telescopic eyes...

Strange

indeed how love in other

ways so particular

will pick a corner

in that charnel-house

tidy it and coil up there, perhaps

even fall asleep - her face

turned to the wall!

...Thus the Commandant at Belsen

Camp going home for

the day with fumes of

human roast clinging

rebelliously to his hairy

nostrils will stop

at the wayside sweet-shop

and pick up a chocolate

for his tender offspring

waiting at home for Daddy's

return...

Praise bounteous

providence if you will

that grants even an ogre

a tiny glow-worm

tenderness encapsulated

in icy caverns of a cruel

heart or else despair

for in the very germ

of that kindred love is

lodged the perpetuity

of evil.