

Poetry

8 things no longer on the dining room table

The cracked brown vase
that held plastic flowers
from long before I learned to sit still at the table.

The high-heel glass ashtray
that was always filled
with old grocery slips.

The blanket-like tablecloth
that came with the cows.
(It must have died with them too.)

Her, dancing and laughing
on the table
when we were alone at home.
(Now she lies in the garden between our uncle and
great-grandparents.)

The chairs that accompanied the table.

My uncle dancing to some ancient song,
looking at me, asking, then saying,
“Wawuphi Ndweza? Wawufile Ndweza.”
Then laughing.

The Tupperware lunchbox
that grandmother lent to her sister.
(Its loss accompanies her to the dinner table.)

The video cassettes of her funeral and my uncle's funeral
and of his unveiling
when she read aloud the words on his tombstone,
and her unveiling
where I carried the sheet that covered her tombstone.

- Nondwe Mpuma