Forbidden Stitches

What Congolese thumb-chopping was to missionaries,
Female circumcision is to luminaries

Such as Alice Walker, although as now reckoned
The blame cannot be placed on Leopold II.

But neither can the amputations, being mere
Continuance of folk tradition in Zaire.

De-digitation was the tribal punishment;
And if the Free State rubber shipments were not sent

Its agents had reprisal, so to say, at hand.
The King was at Cap Ferrat, head not stuck in sand

But not concerned with method either. Since before
Nabokov's Humbert none was more obsessed with, more

Adept in the pursuit of nymphets than the Coburg,
Be they at La Monnaie, or, speaking Vlaams, the Schouwburg.

The Audrey Hepburn of her time, Cleo de Merode,
Enabled him as pervert to out-Herod Herod.

He clearly never would have sanctioned tucks and stitches,
Unless, of course, they added to his riches.

You have to take the avalanches with the Alp;
The basket weaver may appropriate the scalp,

The lace purveyor let the tatting nuns go blind,
A silk exporter, early, put into a bind

The girl-child foot. Le Roi at least did not pretend
To knowledge of Ituri carvings, or defend

Their worth as anything but so much ivory.
The knife that cut them may have cut some "joy" away.

Tiens, Alice. If you want the hands of butchers stayed,
You'll have to be prepared to call a blade a blade.