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Poems

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In the Communities

(a.k.a. the ghetto)

There is happiness here too,
Transient gladness
In fullest bloom/
Because life
The battered and the beautiful,
Goes on
Right here
Like everywhere else/
Time chants of procreativity
Without charming hesitation/
Men and Women
Loving and laboring
Making ways for bettering days,
Some winning
Some losing in step
But none stopping/
This is beyond blind hoping
and fearful faith/thing

But insisting life,
In a partness with the dull and
the doomed
Which will surely come to pass
After the warring and wearing-
And for surety
The sisters and brothers
Will dwell together in unity and love . . .

And there is always laughter here,
Specially come summer/
When our children are out. . .

Lasana M. Sekou
Washington, D.C.

For Marvin Gaye

Another bloodspot on the ground . . .
another voice stilled.
In the deafening silence
strains of remembered songs played.

A piece of my childhood
has been chipped off . . .
it can't be glued back on.

And in blaring, boisterous Motowns
just for a moment,
we paused to listen

36 but the music has stopped.

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Washington, D.C.

The Niger Greets the Mississippi

Between i and i
there runs a river
saltier than the Atlantic
and a thousand times
more treacherous.
As primeval and
prohibitive and powerful
as original sin.

A river of
blood and history
which i
have tried to
ignore
out of existence.
But it remains:
Haunting,
like the phantoms of
murdered kinsmen.
With each denial,
the waves grow,
more demanding.

A river links our shores
apart:
our middle passage.
This river lined with
bones and spirits,
with which each shore
must make
a separate peace.
Through which each i
must wade
to find myself,
in the other,
and be whole
again.

© Carl Patrick Burrowes
Chicago, Ill.

The Trunk of a Dead Tree

There were days
When we thought like
Free individuals
A sudden seize
Of desire was
Instantly fulfilled
An imagined want
Was satisfied immediately.

But we've lost the
Habit of thinking like
Free individuals
Our thoughts live
Like compelled souls
Trapped in the trunk
Of a dead tree.

We see through
The roof of the tree
Patches of sky
Clumps of clouds
And schools of birds
Soaring by

We reminisce
About what used to be
Plagued by desires
Obsessed by wild thoughts
Crowded by ghosts
Of yesteryears.

Because now we
Are walled in
By the trunk
Of a dead tree
Old faces,
Old passions
Serve only to
Kill time

Now we know
Only oasis of silence
When the sky is gray
And the birds
Cease to chirp
As our gaze
Falls on no human's eyes.

The habit of thinking
Like a free individual
Has slipped through
The trunk of a dead tree
There is no noise
Conversation, laughter
Only hollow undertones.

We create the narrowness
Of our own tree trunk
We pen in our thoughts
Degree by degree by degree.

We are cruelly
Trapped in the
Trunk of a dead tree
We are prisoners
Of mental privation
Deprived of mental freedom.

We're lost
The craving
To think
We've made
Friends with
Our jailers
And what's so sad
We've gotten
Used
To
It.

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