

Freemise: no police
(no rhyme) just rhythm

sympathy
expressed

a capebra
wrench
"huddled masses"
gospel
hustling

raucous
cascading
resolution
mounting
rhapsochy

Harlem: A Poem
By Walter Dean Myers

African
Americans

They took the road in Waycross, Georgia
Shipped over the tracks in East St. Louis
Took the bus from Holly Springs
Hitched a ride from Gee's Bend
Took the long way through Memphis
The third deck down from Trinidad
A wrench of heart from Goree Island
A wrench of heart from Goree Island
To a place called
Harlem

Carribean Island
House of Slaves "Door of no return"
20 million went through (West Africa)
off coast of Senegal

Harlem was a promise
Of a better life,
of a place where a man
Didn't have to know his place
Simply because
He was Black

They brought a call
A song
First heard in the villages of
Ghana/Mali/Senegal
Calls and songs and shouts
Heavy hearted tambourine rhythms
Loosed in the hard city
Like a scream torn from the throat
Of an ancient clarinet

Africa - most slave trade from those caravans

Jazz music

A new sound, raucous and sassy
Cascading over the asphalt village
Breaking against the black sky over
1-2-5 Street
Announcing Hallelujah
Riffing past resolution
Yellow, tan, brown, black, red
Green, gray, bright
Colors loud enough to be heard
Light on asphalt streets
Sun yellow shirts on burnt umber
Bodies
Demanding to be heard

Seen
Sending out warriors
From streets known to be
Mourning still as a lone radio tells us how
Jack Johnson
Joe Louis
Sugar Ray
Is doing with our hopes.

Boxers

We hope
We pray
Our black skins
Reflecting the face of God
In storefront temples

Jive and Jehovah artists
Lay out the human canvas
The mood indigo

A chorus of summer herbs
Of mangoes and bar-b-que
Of perfumed sisters
Hip strutting past
Fried fish joints
On Lenox Avenue in steamy August

A carnival of children
People in the daytime streets
Ring-a-levio warriors
Stickball heroes
Hide-and-seek knights and ladies
Waiting to sing their own sweet songs
Living out their own slam-dunk dreams
Listening
For the coming of the blues

A weary blues that Langston knew
And Countee sung
A river of blues
Where Du Bois waded
And Baldwin preached

There is lit
Tempo
Cadence

Writers

A language of darkness
Darkness known
Darkness sharpened at Mintons
Darkness lightened at the Cotton Club
Sent flying from Abyssinian Baptist
To the Apollo.

The uptown A
Rattles past 110th Street
Unreal to real
Relaxing the soul

Shango and Jesus
Asante and Wende

One people
A hundred different people
Fluddled masses
And crowded dreams

Squares
Blocks, bricks
Fat, round woman in a rectangle
Sunday night gospel
"Precious Lord... Take my hand,
Lead me on, let me stand..."

Caught by a full lipped
Full hipped Saint
Washing collar and greens
In a cracked porcelain sink
Backing up Lady Day on the radio

Brother so black and blue
Patting a wide foot outside the
Too hot Walk-up
"Boy,
You ought to find the guys who told you
you could play some checkers
'cause he done lied to you!"

Cracked reed and soprano sax laughter
Floats over
a fleet of funeral cars

In Harlem
Sparrows sit on fire escapes

Outside rent parties
To learn the tunes.

In Harlem
The wind doesn't blow past Smalls,
It stops to listen to the sounds

Serious business
A poem, Chapbook, tripping along
Striver's Row
Not getting it's metric feel soiled
On the well-swept walks
Flushing through the hard rain at two o'clock
In the morning to its next gig.

A huddle of horns
And a tinkle of glass
A note
Handed down from Marcus to Malcolm
To a brother
Too bad and too cool to give his name.

Sometimes despair
Makes the stoops shudder
Sometimes there are endless depths of pain
Singing a capella on street corners
And sometimes not.

Sometimes it is the artist
looking into the mirror
Painting a portrait of his own heart.

Place
Sound
Celebration
Memories of feelings
Of place

A journey on the A train
That started on the banks of the Niger
And has not ended
Harlem.