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The Remembrance

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which harrier of children
 is frozen still
in his leaning over the head of a child
waiting for those
 tiny, prickly stems of eyebrow
to finally fall back into place

and

I am wondering
why his bed-lone wife
 has not come hurrying through the dimly lit hallway
to see what is
 taking him
so long
 again
 tonight

THE REMEMBRANCE

for Displaced Africans Everywhere

In my blood
 there is the rhythm

beating
 stepping out the steady pace
of the journey
 long remembered in my blood

and I can only think of some gritty, sandaled foot
 black by any measure
 patting the sand
beating out the constant flow of stepping
 churning the already beaten and broken grains
further
 into the mist that sand becomes
along

what the spirit and tradition tells the African
is the trail of the fathers . . .
the elders, those who have come
this way before

and all these years later

there is still a rhythm
in my blood

calling me African
from across the long waters
calling me a name—something like Ogotamelli
from across the long waters
sending my desire racing for the sea of sun
across my back
and the hunger for a wry dryness in my throat
the parched rhythm of a heartbeat
from the center of my chest
moving my feet and guiding my eyes
where there is no pavement
no Main street . . . no traffic light or buildings
to seek out on a map

and I am stepping to that rhythm
beating
churning down deep inside of me
I am beating out that timid recall of rhythm
I am dusting the yellow-red pigment
from my flesh

I am striking away the errant desire to be cooled
and rinsed of the sweating
and casting off the piggish appetite
of three full meals a day

I am listening and hearing
the mixtures of blood in my body
hashing out the division
remembering out the naked days
of where my blood first began

I am recounting the hundreds of years and the generations
unfolding the fathers and the mothers
time and again
time and again
tracing the blood back to the rhythm
of the feet
pacing out the
rise and fall of the feet
and the silent swelling and emptying of the chest
with the desert air

(chant) *the rhythm/the rhythm*

rise chest/the rhythm
fall chest/the rhythm

rise foot/the rhythm
fall foot/the rhythm

rise head/the rhythm
fall head/the rhythm

rise arms/the rhythm
fall arms/the rhythm

rise////the rhythm
fall////the rhythm

move///the rhythm
move///the rhythm

step///the rhythm
step///the rhythm

pace//the rhythm *pace//the rhythm*

move/step/pace/the rhythm
rise/fall/step/the rhythm
step/pace/move///the rhythm

In my blood
there is the rhythm

beating
stepping out the path of where I've been
pacing out the remembrance of being African
and dark under the desert sun

moving alongside the camels loaded with desert salt
to be sold in Zaire
moving the steady beat of stepping
clocking the rhythm of the heart inside my chest

beating out the remembrance of being whole
centered in the glory of the rhythm
with the prayers seven times a day

the prayers seven times a day

to a God who heard them
and took me without harm across a sea of sun and sand
heard them
and took me across certain death

and I can still hear that rhythm
beating in my blood
coming back for me
and reclaiming my soul