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SOMETIMES IN THE MIDDLE OF THE STORY (For the drowned Africans of the Middle Passage)

Edward Baugh

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Abstract

Sometimes in the middle of the story something move outside the house, like it could be the wind, but is not the wind and the story-teller hesitate so slight you hardly notice it, and the children hold their breath, and look at one another.

Edward Baugh

SOMETIMES IN THE MIDDLE OF THE STORY (For the drowned Africans of the Middle Passage)

Sometimes in the middle of the story something
move outside the house, like
it could be the wind, but is not the wind
and the story-teller hesitate so slight
you hardly notice it, and the children
hold their breath, and look at one another.
The old people say is Toussaint passing
on his grey horse Bel-Argent, moving
faster than backra-massa timepiece
know to measure, briefing the captains
setting science and strategy to trap the emperor.
But also that sound had something in it
of deep water, salt water, had ocean
the sleep-sigh of a drowned African
turning in his sleep on the ocean-floor
and Toussaint horse was coming from far
his tail trailing the swish of the sea
from secret rendezvous, from councils of war
with those who never completed the journey,
and we below deck heard only the muffled
thud of scuffling feet, could only
guess the quick, fierce tussle, the
stifled gasp, the barrel-chests bursting
the bubbles rising and breaking, the blue
closing over. But their souls shuttle
still the forest-paths of ocean
connecting us still the current unbroken
the circuits kept open, the tireless messengers
the ebony princes of your lost Atlantis
a power of black men rising from the sea.