KOFI AWOONOR

Summary Information
Poems from Latin American and Caribbean Notebook I

In Memoriam

For friends gone ahead: Joe de Graft, Ellis Komey, Paa Kayper, Camara Laye, Chris Okigbo, Alex La Guma, Robert Serumaga, and Geombeyi Adali-Mortty, all the brothers who sang our song, and went home to the ancestors.

This single line honour roll
weakens, sags, yet longs
for the heady exhilarating hour
of friends and comrades.

Some visit irregularly
like Joe who points out
all the stars in the brightening firmament
to a mumbling recitation
of one recollected evening

Today Israeli soldiers killed a 3-year-old boy in Gaza for throwing stones at military vehicles

And who said that the drama of the dying
wipes out the consequences
and the central theatre of death?

Brothers, your tombs are the verses you carved
on granitic memories;
oh, how I grieve over the tempests
that blew away the young poets

singers of all our songs in this land of fetters.

We promise we shall build the new cities

© FonTomFrom: Contemporary Ghanaian Literature, Theatre and Film, ed. Kofi Anyidoho & James Gibbs (Matatu 21-22; Amsterdam & Atlanta GA: Editions Rodopi, 2000).
over your bones,
that your mortuaries shall become the birthplace
that our land and people
shall rise again
from the ashes of your articulate sacrifices!

A Death Foretold

Sometimes, the pain and the sorrow return
particularly at night.
I will grieve again tomorrow
for the memory of a death foretold.
I grieve again tomorrow
cull a flower across the yard
listen to the birds in the tree.
I grieve again tomorrow
for a pain the grows on
a pain a friend of my solitude
in a bed long emptied by choice;
I grieve again this grievance
immemorial for
this pain
this load under which I wreath and grieve
Yesterday I could not go
for my obligatory walk,
instead I used the hour
to recall the lanes, the trees
the birds, the occasional snarling dog
the brown sheep in a penned field
the dwarf mango tree heavy with fruit
the martian palms tall and erect
the sentry-pines swaying
in the distant field.
I believe in the possibility of freedom
in the coming of the bees in summer
in mild winters and furious hurricanes;