

For the Prisoners in South Africa

What squats its vast bulk
at the end of my mind's
shadowy recesses
dominating my thinking like a
legendary bastion, Bastille,
labyrinthinely convoluted
like a basilica upthrust on the
Horn where ages intersect
staring with basilisk-power to
turn my brain to stone
is knowledge of you, thousands,
imprisoned,
(The Fort, Rooi Hel, Pollsmoor, the Island)
and the wound of knowledge
knowledge of my powerlessness.

Dennis Brutus



Christmas 1976

In the Golden City
Sacrifice is once more
At firing hand
Young blood spurts out
Fanatic celebrants
Dressed in camouflage
Extend the rituals
These ceremonies of death
May rage on to another Dingane's day
These rivers of blood
Could flood over the high walls
Not too soon
Into the manicured gardens

Here in New York
Recorded voices croon
A white Christmas
Puppets at Schwartz grow
More human than the Fifth Avenue mobs
That doll in the window
Tagged five-hundred dollars
Smiles mocks
My seven hundred children dead

Snow
White silence
The quiet rain of foreign parts
Cannot powder sunshine memories
Shall not wind a shroud
Round my South Africa yearnings

Barbara Masekela