

Elegy for my husband
by Toi Derricotte

Bruce Derricotte, June 22, 1928 - June 21, 2011

What was there is no longer there:

Not the blood running its wires of flame through the whole length

Not the memories, the texts written in the language of the flat hills

No, not the memories, the porch swing and the father crying

The beautiful kind aunt bleeding out on the highway

(Too black for the white ambulance to pick up)

Who had sent back lacquered plates from China

Who had given away her best ivory comb that one time she was angry

Not the muscles, the ones the white girls longed to touch

But must not (for your mother warned

You would be lynched in that all white Ohio town you grew up in)

Not that same town where you were the only, the one good black boy

All that is gone

Not the muscles running, the baseball flying into your mitt

Not the hand that laid itself over my heart and saved me

Not the eyes that held the long gold tunnel I believed in

Not the restrained hand in love and in anger

Not the holding back

Not the taught holding