

*Patrick Sylvain*



## A Palace of Mourners

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I've tried to store away  
and refrain memories from surfacing,  
but miniature Houdinis escaped  
from opaque brain cells  
that harbored a palace of mourners  
from the country of my birth  
where nightsticks have swung from Columbus  
to modern avarice leaders whose nefarious  
passions have cooked fear into our psyche.

After nights of past memories  
poking needles in my sleep,  
floods of images breached the silence  
of my pen. Joseph, a 26-year-old journalist,  
arrested in August of '92, demanded to speak.  
My head became an echo-chamber  
where the tales of the dead  
and the brutalized reverberated.  
Their screams, exploding  
the coral of memories, forming  
an enormous tapestry of narratives  
and brutal images: like Joseph's blistered buttocks,  
broken right knee, and cicatrices head.

The army wanted to teach his tongue  
the language of silence.  
Thin, glowing wires  
turned his tongue into an eel,  
slapping words to incomprehension.  
Still, he did not swallow fear or confess.  
His tongue trumpeted justice  
despite his scars and inability to move bowels.

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Calabash

In light of this carnival  
of nightsticks and stench,  
I've desperately tried to write  
about the movement of clouds  
and pastoral images, but the screams  
and agonies of a valley of Haitians  
ferociously migrating to the center  
of my pastoral scenes have torn up  
the white lilies and the dandelions.  
Instead of flowers,  
my pen bled an agonizing nation.

