

LAST AFFAIR: BESSIE'S BLUES SONG

Disarticulated
arm torn out,
large veins cross
her shoulder intact,
her tourniquet
her blood in all white big bands:

*"Can't you see what love
and romance has done to me?
I'm not the same as I used to be,
this is my last affair."*

Mailtruck or parked car
in the fast lane,
afloat at forty-three
on a Mississippi road,
200 pound muscle on her ham bone,
'nother nigger dead 'fore noon:

*"Can't you see what love
and romance has done to me?
I'm not the same as I used to be,
this is my last affair."*

Fifty dollar record
cut the vein in her neck,
fool about her money
toll her black trainwreck,
white press missed her fun'ral
in the same stacked deck:

*"Can't you see what love
and romance has done to me?
I'm not the same as I used to be,
this is my last affair."*

Loved a little blackbird
heard she could sing,
Martha in her vineyard
pestle in her spring,
Bessie had a bad mouth
made my chimes ring:

*"Can't you see what love
and romance has done to me?
I'm not the same as I used to be,
this is my last affair."*

Michael S. Harper
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THE BURIED SWORD

at the place where two rivers meet I am alone
I am always by myself
I am like a captain dancing in the night sky
saying aye-aye to himself
I am like a mourning ship in the waters of dead horses
my blade is a mirror where no one stands
I open my eyes and I see a cavalry of ghost riders
looking for their ring fingers and feet
and the boots falling out of the stirrups at dawn
and the plumed hats of battle drifting away
I only led the dead
the brave that don't sing
know not to pick me up again
I only want to sleep where there is no saluting
the moon is a bullet the night is a pistol
and death is a horse and silence the rider

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