

Contributions

Berette Macaulay

Through trees, over seas, shackled in bars and soft cotton, Running free and wrapped in history and responsibility ...to heal your searching, guiding, stolen soul for those who will come after...

...what we wonder is what cannot be known, except to look on and into this mysterious acrylic lens of time, and rename you with living legacies that continue higher still... that of your own.

On spending a short visit at the museum and upon leaving to continue my journey back to London, the following words found their way to my heart, my mind and then to my pen.

The Merseyside Trade Winds

The Kings and Queens
of all the land

With all the wealth
stretched forth their hand

Who knew the mind
of the things they planned?

Who knew the history
and the length it spanned?

In the manor of the houses
they lived so grand

The words of strife
that passed their lips

On the Merseyside sailed
those ancient slavery ships.

Has the slaves where led
along the Mersey docks

There necks and hands
bound by chains and locks.

However,

When we look
through the family
album book

In these pictures
you will see

A beautiful black
and white family.

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Laila Sumpton

The following short poem was written in the Ben Okri workshop held at the National Portrait Gallery, 17 July 2013.

Did your brothers pick your cotton?
Was it woven into this robe in Northern mills?
Did the painter adjust the folds
as he moved the candles round

whilst you kept your eyes steady
with the crease of a smile?

Emily Midorikawa

The following was written in the Ben Okri workshop held at the National Portrait Gallery, 17 July 2013.

It is a different painting, sitting here, from the one I saw before.
Here, at the back of the room, the shadows of the background fall on everything.
The man's face, the white robes. It is only up close that you can see what a puzzle his expression is.
