Fast Talk Full Volume
An Anthology of Contemporary African American Poetry
Edited by Alan Spears
With a Forward by E. Ethelbert Miller
Right on Time

It was a freedom thing
the lawyer called it
temporary insanity
folks 'round the neighborhood
gossiped maybe the pet was rabid
maybe it had gotten loose
sank some of its evil into him

nobody understood

used to be a time
when him and his buddies
hung tight on the courts
scratchin' each other's asses
talkin' shit
then they'd get a brew
catch prime time
maybe smoke a joint
talk some more shit
'til sleep set into the room

life was easy then

pop and smack
joined the service
bobby got shot
over some petty he say/she say
died a couple of days later
cisco went off to college
came back dashikid
with big words, africa
and revolution on his tongue
her love came right on time

for a while
there was travel, dancing
making love 'til dry mouth
and play-doh muscles begged "no more"
then marriage and the kid
when she said jump
he'd leap right out of his shoes
love's high was that good
he never wanted to come down
it was then that the dream began

he repeatedly feared
he rhythmically dreamed
first month by month
then week after week
until soon whenever eyes closed
he saw it
flesh in flames of confinement
dripping
freedom which would not rest
in the palm of his hands

that night
when he blew his kiss
through the skulls
of their picket fence future
he drowned
in his own pool of dry tears

he had loved them
but not more than life

sometimes if you stay too long
in an escape
it can turn into your prison

nobody understood

it was a freedom thing