

SELMA 1965

Amid the ghosts of civil rights marchers
in Selma
in the summer so hot,
the children sang in the paths
of the afternoon showers,
"Before I'd be a slave,
I'd be buried in my grave..."
From the freedom school window
we watched them come
across the lawns of the housing project
down the rain-rutted, dirt roads,
through the puddles waiting cool for bare feet.
(Touch the dripping bush, break a leaf and smell the
pungency of green.)
They were tattered angels of hope,
one plait caught at an odd angle
and standing indignantly,
a ripped hem hanging like a trane,
grey knees poking through denim frames.
Dancing the whole trip,
they performed their historic drama
against the set of
wet brick project homes.

From *Blood River*, Broadside Press, 1983.