

"Flame-Heart"

by Claude McKay

So much have I forgotten in ten years,
 So much in ten brief years! I have forgot
What time the purple apples come to juice,
 And what month brings the shy forget-me-not.
I have forgot the special, startling season
 Of the pimento's flowering and fruiting;
What time of year the ground doves brown the fields
 And fill the noonday with their curious fluting.
I have forgotten much, but still remember
The poinsettia's red, blood-red in warm December.

I still recall the honey-fever grass,
 But cannot recollect the high days when
We rooted them out of the ping-wing path
 To stop the mad bees in the rabbit pen.
I often try to think in what sweet month
 The languid painted ladies used to dapple
The yellow by-road mazing from the main,
 Sweet with the golden threads of the rose-apple.
I have forgotten—strange—but quite remember
The poinsettia's red, blood-red in warm December.

What weeks, what months, what time of the mild year
 We cheated school to have our fling at tops?
What days our wine-thrilled bodies pulsed with joy
 Feasting upon blackberries in the copse?
Oh some I know! I have embalmed the days,
 Even the sacred moments when we played,
All innocent of passion, uncorrupt,
 At noon and evening in the flame-heart's shade.
We were so happy, happy, I remember,
Beneath the poinsettia's red in warm December.