

Breaths, by Birago Diop

Listen more often to things rather than beings.
Hear the fire's voice,
Hear the voice of water.
In the wind hear the sobbing of the trees,
It is our forefathers breathing.

The dead are not gone forever.
They are in the paling shadows,
And in the darkening shadows.
The dead are not beneath the ground,
They are in the rustling tree,
In the murmuring wood,
In the flowing water,
In the still water,
In the lonely place, in the crowd:
The dead are not dead.

Listen more often to things rather than beings.
Hear the fire's voice,
Hear the voice of water.
In the wind hear the sobbing of the trees.
It is the breathing of our forefathers,
Who are not gone, not beneath the ground,
Not dead.

The dead are not gone for ever.
They are in a woman's breast,
A child's crying, a glowing ember.
The dead are not beneath the earth,
They are in the flickering fire,
In the weeping plant, the groaning rock,
The wooded place, the home.
The dead are not dead.

Listen more often to things rather than beings.
Hear the fire's voice,
Hear the voice of water.
In the wind hear the sobbing of the trees.
It is the breath of our forefathers.

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"Senegalese poet and story-teller, who recorded traditional oral folktales of the Wolof people. Birago Diop's work helped to reestablish general interest in the African folktales published in European languages. Diop was also one of the most prominent African francophone writers." (daqui)