

burial of a building

*- upon the implosion of the
J.L. Hudson's Department Store,
Detroit, Michigan*

by Melba Joyce Boyd

When they bring
a building down,
when they make
history absent,
when they implode
a cistern of memories
into a basement grave,
where to the
ghosts go?

Are they given
an eviction notice?
do they read
headlines of
runaway newspapers
tumbling down
the street?
or do they
pass on
a posting
caught on a
jagged nail or

transfixed to
crumbling concrete?

Did the ghost
of the "light-skinned
colored-girl"
who ran elevator
number 5
call a meeting
between floors
to discuss
the demise?
or did the last
of the charmed,
posed mannequins
hiding in the
bridal suite
of dressing rooms,
send out the fatal alarm?

Perhaps, one of the
under-employed,
excavating the remains
for bronze fixtures and
copper veins,
left an echo

so disturbing
it alerted
returning spirits –
disrupted their
eternal shopping
for imported,
after dinner mints,
for that exquisite dress
with the perfect fit,
for that pin-striped suit
for the anniversary
occasion, or for
another matching set
of muffs and scarves
for Xmas past
celebrations.

Did the ghosts
follow our footprints
to sit atop our houses?
or did they hover
next to high rise towers
and likewise, point
translucent fingers
and clink champagne glasses
filled with misty laughter?

or did the blast
call their skeletons
to attention,
disrupt such earth
bound musings
and with the wind
scatter them
with dust, ashes
and disoriented pigeons?

Another landmark gone –
another space left behind,
another hole in a story,
another burial
to collect bone,
another place
from where ghosts
are gone.

the view of blue

urban renewal, or Negro removal?

by Melba Joyce Boyd

The river
was what
they wanted.
they valued
the view
of blue –
a picture
in a window
with white lines
drawn by mini
venetian
blinds.

The corporate state
measured and
maneuvered
the real estate.
they purchased
collusion on
the eve
of elections
in private rooms

where lawyers
convene with
judges,
the lords
of the discourse
of dismemberment.

They protected
the power
of wealth
and the right
of Americans
to shop for
that dream house
by the river
with the "Trial
of Tears" running
through it,
the undercurrents
of city corridors
dislodged and
disassembled
by the law
of pre-eminent
domain.

The land was
remanded with
an eviction
notice.

The view
of blue
was what
they wanted.
they didn't care
how they got it,
or that
under the cover
of dusk,
rats run
the course
of river banks
through hidden
alleys to scour
plastic garbage
bags left
outside entrances
to servant
quarters.