Silent Emergency to the Children of Africa

Vera Duarte
Silent Emergency  
To the Children of Africa

Vera Duarte (1952–), Cape Verde

In Africa  
There’s an emergency  
Which  
Silently  
Tragically  
Destroys us

In Africa  
There’s an emergency  
Which  
Irreparably  
Inexorably  
Defeats us

In Africa  
There’s an emergency  
Which is repeated  
Humiliating us  
And annihilating us

They are children  
tender dispossessed  
They are children  
orphans sans defense  
They are children  
sweets abused possessed

Bought  
Sold  
Defiled  
Reviled  
Exploited  
Abused  
Used

They don’t play  
they’re not allowed to
They don’t laugh
they don’t know how
They don’t live
they can’t
They work
and they’re exploited
They fight
and they’re defiled
They flee
and they are beaten

In Africa
There’s an emergency
By the hundreds by the thousands
One by one
Children
Sold
Bought
Beaten
Mutilated
Violated

And this humiliation that endures
This impotence
This defeat

But the children my God!
Why do you cause them such pain
Why do they suffer so?

In Africa there’s an emergency
Of humiliation pain and revulsion
For the destroyed hope
In the sad eyes of a child

Originally published in Poets of Cape Verde (2010); translated from Portuguese into English by Frederick G. Williams