

# Every Goodbye Ain't Gone

An ANTHOLOGY of INNOVATIVE POETRY  
by AFRICAN AMERICANS



Edited by Aldon Lynn Nielsen and Lauri Ramey

# *Every Goodbye Ain't Gone*

## MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY POETICS

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Edited by ALDON LYNN NIELSEN  
and LAURI RAMEY

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# Contents

Introduction    xiii

## Lloyd Addison

- I by you put on    1
- After MLK    2
- All the things of which there are none    4
- Umbra    6

## William Anderson

- There's Not a Friend like the Lowly Jesus    10

## Russell Atkins

- It's Here in the    11
- Probability and Birds    12
- While Waiting for a Friend to Come to Visit a Friend  
  in a Mental Hospital    13
- Spyrytual    14
- Lines in Recollection    15
- "the L L L"    16
- Furious'd Garb    17
- Night and a Distant Church    18
- Christophe    19
- Irritable Songs    20
- Narrative    27
- At Night Keep Still    28
- Imaginary Crimes in a Real Garden    29

Amiri Baraka

- Biography 30
- The violence of the mind is the violence of God 32
- How People Do 33
- The Heavy 34
- Lefty 35
- Node 37
- The A, B, C's 39
- I Investigate the Sun 42
- Courageousness 43
- The City of New Ark 44

Jodi Braxton

- Conversion 58

Harold Carrington

- Lament 61
- Woo's People 63
- sting—a south carolina ave. folk tale 64

Stephen Chambers

- Her 65

Jayne Cortez

- Drying Spit Blues 66
- Under the Edge of February 68
- Phraseology 70
- Indelible 71
- Opening Act 72
- Into This Time 74

Lawrence S. Cumberbatch

- I Swear to You, That Ship Never Sunk in Middle-Passage! 77
- Again the Summoning 78
- In the Early Morning Breeze 79

Rudy Bee Graham

- A LYNCHING FOR SKIP JAMES 80
- Without Shadow 83

William J. Harris

- A Grandfather Poem 86
- Practical Concerns 87

De Leon Harrison

- A Collage for Richard Davis—Two Short Forms 88  
Formula for Blue Blues Babies 89  
Yellow 90

David Henderson

- Downtown-Boy Uptown 91  
Sketches of Harlem 93  
In Williams 94  
Lock City 96  
Blackman in the Desecrated Synagogue—Living in the  
Last Days 97

Calvin Hernton

- Being Exit in the World 98  
The Wall 99  
Medicine Man 100

Joseph Jarman

- “what we all” 104  
“Non-cognitive aspects of the City” 105

Ted Joans

- The Overloaded Horse 108

Percy Johnston

- Round About Midnight, Opus #6 109  
Lexington Avenue Express 110  
to paul robeson, opus no. 3 111  
Dewey Square, 1956 113  
BLAUPUNKT 115

Stephen Jonas

- For LeRoi Jones 116  
BOOK V 117  
“. . . An Ear Injured by Hearing Things” 123  
Orgasm 0 125  
A MUDDLE 131  
A LITTLE MAGIC 132  
lens 133  
IV 134  
“what you can see” 135



June Jordan

- All the World Moved 136  
Toward a Personal Semantics 137  
San Juan 138  
Bus Window 139

Bob Kaufman

- I Have Folded My Sorrows 140  
East Fifth Street (N.Y.) 141  
Lorca 142  
Picasso's Balcony 143  
NOVELS FROM A FRAGMENT IN PROGRESS 144  
THE CELEBRATED WHITE-CAP SPELLING BEE 146  
Oregon 148  
A Terror Is More Certain 149  
UNHISTORICAL EVENTS 151  
The Biggest Fisherman 152  
CROOTY SONGO 153  
THE LATE LAMENTED WIND, BURNED IN  
INDIGNATION 154

Elouise Loftin

- A Black Lady 155  
What Sunni Say 156  
bkln 157  
Barefoot Necklace 158  
april '68 159  
scabible 160

N. J. Loftis

- Changes — One 161  
Changes — Five 163  
Changes — Eight 166

Clarence Major

- Paragraph from English Speaking World 169  
A Petition for Langston Hughes 170  
Media on War 171  
Edge Guide for Impression 172  
News Story 173  
A Poem Americans Are Going to Have to Memorize Soon 174  
Education by Degrees 175  
Not This—This Here! 176

Mortal Roundness 177  
Pictures 179  
Water USA 180

Leroy McLucas

Negotiation 181  
Graph 182

Oliver Pitcher

“Why don’t we rock the casket here in the moonlight?” 183  
Dust of Silence 184  
the remark 186  
formula for tragedy 187  
Washington Square: August Afternoon 188  
from Harlem: Sidewalk Icons 190  
The Infant 191  
Tango 192  
The Iconoclast’s Closet 193

Tom Postell

Gertrude Stein Rides the Town Down El 195  
I Want a Solid Piece of Sunlight and a Yardstick to Measure  
it With 196  
harmony 197

Norman H. Pritchard

Magma 198  
Asalteris 199  
From Where the Blues? 200  
Metagnomy 201  
Gyre’s Galax 203  
, 206  
junt 207  
“WE NEED” 208

Helen Quigless

Concert 209

Ishmael Reed

Paul Laurence Dunbar in the Tenderloin 211  
Dualism in ralph ellison’s invisible man 212  
Badman of the guest professor 213  
Poetry Makes Rhythm in Philosphy 217

Ed Roberson

- news continued release 219
- poll 220
- Four Lines of a Black Love Letter between Teachers 221
- On the Calligraphy of Black Chant 223
- “it must be that in the midst” 225
- any moment (12/4/69 4:30 A.M. chicago 227
- “american culture is the pot” 228

A. B. Spellman

- the beautiful day, V 229
- john coltrane 230
- the twist 231
- Blues: My Baby’s Gone 232
- Did John’s Music Kill Him? 233
- The Truth You Carry Is Very Dark 235

Primus St. John

- All the Way Home 236
- Benign Neglect / West Point, Mississippi, 1970 238
- The Violence of Pronoun 239
- Studying 241

Glenn Stokes

- Blue Texarkana 242

Cecil Taylor

- Scroll No. 1 244
- Scroll No. 2 246
- “Da” 248
- Choir 250

Lorenzo Thomas

- Inauguration 253
- Embarkation for Cythera 254
- Song 256
- Twelve Gates 257
- The Bathers 259
- Another Poem in English 263

Melvin B. Tolson

- Dark Laughter 264
- The Chitterling King 270

Gloria Tropp	
Poem for Ernie Henry	286
Tom Weatherly	
first monday scottsboro alabama	287
Canto 7	288
“vocal texts evoke”	289
“fishes”	290
“gandhabba” #5	291
“croatan”	292
Canto 10	293
p.w.t.	294
Contributors	295
Acknowledgments	303



# Introduction

## Fear of a Black Experiment

Who will enter its beautiful calligraphy of blood

Jayne Cortez

at its worst or best  
every nest  
is different  
by the way a feather  
is tucked or a straw is bent!

Melvin B. Tolson

“Who Speaks Negro?” asked Sarah Webster Fabio as recently as 1966, and while it is probably the case that such a question is read with yet more irony in our own purportedly post-ironic era, it was already an odd question in its day. Fabio was responding, of course, to the proposition put forward by Karl Shapiro in his introduction to the later work of Melvin B. Tolson that Tolson’s work was somehow written in “Negro,” perhaps an even more curious label than “Ebonics.” Still, Fabio’s argument against Shapiro was not that there was no singular tongue that could properly be termed “Negro” or “black,” so much as it was an insistence that whatever “Negro” might be, Tolson’s poetry was not an instance of it.

The critical counter in these disputes always seems to involve the enlistment of Langston Hughes in dubious battle. Hence, at the University of Kansas centennial conference devoted to the life and works of Langston Hughes, Onwuchekwa Jemie opposed the “folksy, populist and proletarian” verses of Hughes to the writings of those moderns whose poetry he sees as “a code needing to be cracked.” It is a familiar opposition by now. In his magisterial biography of Langston Hughes, Arnold Rampersad complains in passing that Tolson, in composing his *Libretto for the Republic of Liberia*, “had written probably the most hyper-European, unpopulist poem ever penned by a black writer.” Further, the biography asks, “Did it not matter that very few of the American Friends of Libe-

ria, and even fewer Liberians themselves, could understand the poem”? There are, as it happens, any number of questions being begged in these formulations. Who among us is in a position to decide what poetry Liberians may or may not be able to understand? Would Tolson’s work seem “hyper-European” to Europeans? Are there no “folksy” codes needing to be cracked? (As Tolson likes to tell us, sometimes the Africans “go esoteric” on us.) Do populism and proletarian politics imply a particularized language and poetics? If the poetry of the high moderns is a code needing to be cracked, what is that wondrous late collage of Hughes’s, *Ask Your Mama*? More importantly, where is Hughes himself in all this?

We do not have far to look. In his *Chicago Defender* column for December 15, 1945, Hughes wrote an answer before the fact: “But Melvin Tolson is no highbrow. Kids from the cottonfields like him. Cowpunchers understand him.” Lest it be thought that Hughes was only thinking of the earlier Tolson, we have the evidence of a later *Defender* column in which it is precisely the Tolson of *Libretto for the Republic of Liberia* that Hughes presses upon his readers. Where Rampersad is concerned that the *Libretto* might be incomprehensible to readers, Hughes recommends that volume, along with the *Lincoln University Poets Centennial Anthology*, to his *Defender* audience as books “small enough to slip easily into your bag for vacation reading, and nice to lend to other folks wherever you are going, who may have forgotten to bring a book with them.”

It would seem unseemly for those of us who read after Langston Hughes to be less capacious and more captious in our critique than he was, and he was a tireless promoter of even the outer reaches of African American experimentation—witness the wide net he set in editing *New Negro Poets U.S.A.*, or his friendship with the poets of the Free Lance Workshop in Cleveland, particularly their most eccentric experimentalist, Russell Atkins. Hughes contributed to the early issues of the *Free Lance* journal and was among its more avid readers. When Atkins sent Hughes a copy of his phenomenal *Phenomena*, exactly the sort of book some would dismiss as code needing to be cracked, Hughes responded enthusiastically and, in typical fashion, supplied Atkins the addresses for two other young black poets he thought would be interested, LeRoi Jones and Gloria Oden. That Hughes saw a kinship between his own efforts and the emerging innovations of Atkins’s group is evidenced by

Hughes's mention in that same letter of excerpts from *Ask Your Mama* that he was offering to *Free Lance* for first publication. Just two weeks after this letter was posted, Hughes devoted a section of his *Defender* column's book recommendations to Atkins's strange volume:

One of the foremost of our avant-garde poets, Russell Atkins of Cleveland, a member of the Free Lance group there, has published at the Wilberforce University Press a most unusual collection of drama-poems, "PHENOMENA." Wilberforce is to be congratulated for bringing out such a highly original and unconventional chapbook. Afro-American academic institutions usually pay little attention to poetry, even of the conventional sort. When the poetry is as personal as that of Atkins, unusual in both form and subject matter, its publishers must indeed be commended for giving readers the privilege of seeing it. In Atkins's poetry the mood if not always the meaning reaches out and hits you. And who always knows what anything—even the simplest things—mean? Do you?

The late Stephen Henderson, a critic who cast his nets well beyond the fished-out waters of the main stream, argued that African American music:

is not afraid of new philosophies or new technologies; for the music deals with time filtered through the pulses of African sensibility. So no ideological hangup should prevent Black poets from writing "sound poems," especially with the model of Bob Kaufman, and Ella Fitzgerald, Louis Armstrong, and the moaning of the Baptist preacher.

Though poets of sparkling originality and theoretical sophistication, Atkins and his Free Lance collaborators are part of a larger context of African American mid-century poetic experimentalists, including others who were promoted by Hughes. Calvin C. Hernton, another Hughes protégé, moved to the Lower East Side of New York in 1961. Here Hernton came into contact with other black literary innovators whose idiom—both black and reflecting modern and early postmodern trends (significantly, not an oxymoron)—was located at the intersection of po-



etry, music, art, politics, and performance. The stylistic and social ferment lighting up that time and place were in part the inheritance of the interracial, cross-arts dynamism of international modernism. That same year, seeking to establish a group of artists to encourage one another's work, Hernton co-founded The Society of Umbra. Participants in the Umbra workshops, performances, and magazine included David Henderson, Ishmael Reed, Lloyd Addison, Norman Pritchard, and Lorenzo Thomas.

Hernton's poetry foregrounds performative features such as hypnotic rhythm, complex echoic patterns of repetition, and references to African American culture. Ballads and blues poems in his collection *Medicine Man* echo Sterling Brown and Hughes in using a folk-based aesthetic (including musical idioms, especially blues, jazz, and spirituals) to create sophisticated African American cultural portraits. His extended lyrics such as the collection's title poem, which formally are rhythm-driven fragmentary patchworks, reflect a dizzying array of homely and erudite references, showing the influence of Melvin B. Tolson as much as T. S. Eliot. For Hernton and others, the search for an authentic voice as an African American poet included being aware of the developments of modernism and its implications for black culture. In fact, these influences are embraced and insisted on by many African American poetic innovators of the era, in sharp contrast with the image of rather inward-looking cultural isolation sometimes implied by the canon. Another pocket of similar innovation in the form of an avant-garde collective was the somewhat better known Dasein poets, which included Percy Johnston.

But what fate awaits these poets who propose to write from the fullest range of African American sensibilities?

"This proposal does not pass the significance test." With these dismissive words, one outside reviewer (the only one rendering a negative opinion) advised the National Endowment for the Humanities to reject a proposal from Hampton University made in association with work on this anthology. The proposed project had as its chief goal the preservation of the works of poets such as those of the Dasein/Howard group, the Free Lance group and the Umbra associates. The reviewer proceeded to comment that "the rescuing, preservation, and dissemination of everything cannot occur. A pecking order is necessary." Of course,

the proposal writers had never suggested that every poet needs to be canonized, nor even the more modest proposal that these particular poets should each be canonized, let alone that all poetry ever written should always be preserved for study. But what the reviewer's comment reveals more nakedly than is normal is the aggressive tone so often adopted by defenders of a canon that should not be in need of defense. Were it the case that literary works enter the canon as the result of their eternal appeal to universal human qualities, then the canon should survive quite well on its own without heroic measures to prevent competition. One thing is certain, if poems are kept from collection and held at arm's length from the syllabi of literary study, they will not be canonized, but neither will readers of the canon be in any position to comprehend the historical context in which their own readings proceed.

All poets anticipate readers, but few of the poems gathered here were written with palpable designs upon the canon. Still, there were readers, some of whom became champions of the new poetries emerging in the decades after the second World War. In 1954, Hughes wrote to Russell Atkins to congratulate him on the planned opera Atkins was to create with composer Hale Smith. Hughes went on to speak enthusiastically about the small press magazine Atkins was editing at the time: "I hear that there is a new issue of *THE FREE LANCE*, and that you have some penetrating poetical comments on some other poets' work in it. Please send me a copy." Whatever was happening within the classrooms and anthologies of mid-century mid-America, black poets were addressing themselves to one another, creating corresponding anthologies across each other's writing desks.

As readers neared the close of the poetry section in *The Negro Caravan*, the 1941 gathering of African-American literature edited by Sterling Brown, Arthur P. Davis, and Ulysses Lee, they encountered works by Robert Hayden and Melvin B. Tolson that signaled the coming of the radical new poetries that would appear in the decades following the second World War. By 1964 Langston Hughes's *New Negro Poets U.S.A.* gave evidence of a far-reaching revolution in aesthetics and prosody mounted by black poets throughout the United States, some working independently and others in consciously constructed groups. Meanwhile, in the contiguous republics of America represented by Norton, Heath, MacMillan and the syllabi of historically white universities and

colleges, none of this was yet visible. Stephen Henderson has recently argued that, even during a period of increased critical attentions to African American literature, “the Black writers of the 1960s and early 1970s who created some of the most moving and challenging literature of our time have scarcely received any critical or scholarly attention at all.”

Looking at the best-known literary anthologies of the late forties, fifties, and early sixties, a reader simply might not know that the breakthroughs of Hayden, Brooks, Tolson, and others had been followed by dozens of new poets who journeyed to the outermost possibilities of prosody. In the sixties and seventies, groups of poets appeared in anthologies, often edited by other poets, who did much to force a re-examination of the canons of American verse. Following in the wake of the Black Arts Movement, numerous anthologies appeared that, like Hughes’s *New Negro Poets*, put before readers the stunning breadth of poetries composed by African Americans. In the space of a few years the list of widely available collections included: *We Speak as Liberators*, *The New Black Poetry*, *Soulscript*, *Dices or Black Bones*, *Black Fire*, *The Poetry of Black America*, *The Black Poets*, *For Malcolm*, *You Better Believe It*, and *Understanding the New Black Poetry*. *You Better Believe It*, edited by Paul Breman and published in 1973, even went so far as to presciently place some of the boldest African American poetry in an international context. This anthology sketched one of the earliest portraits of an avant-garde, diasporic dialogue by placing figures such as Tolson, Kaufman, Atkins, Joans, Addison, Baraka, Spellman, Major, Reed, Pritchard, Fields, Henderson, and Hernton (surely suggesting a counter-canonical canon based on that listing alone) head-to-head with Christopher Okigbo, Edward Brathwaite, Dennis Brutus, Kofi Awoonor, Wole Soyinka, Mukhtarr Mustapha, John La Rose, Dennis Scott, Ama Ata Aidoo, and Keorapetse Kgotsile. With such a wealth of anthologies being perused by so many, it was inevitable that the volumes designed primarily for the academic market would begin to reflect, in however small a way, some few signs of this outpouring. Soon enough, collections devoted to the history of American literature that had presented their texts as a white mythology in all prior editions suddenly found room within their commodious pages for an occasional Brooks or Baraka. But the door opened only far enough to allow one or two access, affirmative or otherwise, to the halls of academe, and then the doors shut tightly against many who had forced

them open in the first place. Having knocked at the door that a Hayden should enter, many found that was as much as most mainstream anthologies could seem to contemplate. Tolson often proved too . . . something. Baraka came to serve synecdochically for all black experiment, and the pure plain surface of identitarian free verse, occasionally enlivened by the presence of a New Afro-Neo-Formalist, came to be all of that long, black song that America could hear singing. Though the plethora of black poetry anthologies of the sixties and seventies had done so much to open the American university curriculum to black writing, the more adventurous of black lyric was all too often silenced.

But, “every goodbye ain’t gone.” Despite what you’ve been reading, there’s more and better reading. In the past few years a number of anthologies have appeared even more expansive in their vision than the enlarged canon of today’s classroom. In E. Ethelbert Miller’s *In Search of Color Everywhere* we can again read A. B. Spellman, Tom Dent, Calvin Forbes, and Elouise Loftin. Clarence Major, who edited *The New Black Poetry* against such unthinking resistance in 1969 has now produced *The Garden Thrives*, in which he returns to public view such poets as the now much neglected Russell Atkins, Julia Fields, David Henderson, Ed Roberson, Lorenzo Thomas, and Tom Weatherly. And Jerry Ward’s historical survey of African-American poetry, *Trouble the Water*, has been released. In his editor’s preface Ward makes the simple, direct, and commonsensical observation, one that has been ignored by almost all American literature anthologies when they come to the representations of black verse, that “Before one canonizes on the literary/extraliterary axis, it seems desirable to represent the variety and difference that actually does exist.” The actually existing variety with which Ward troubles the placid waters of today’s multiculti anthology market encompasses such truly troubling poets as Bob Kaufman, Tom Dent, Julia Fields, Clarence Major, David Henderson, Lorenzo Thomas, and Harryette Mullen.

If the American publishing industry and its attendants in the academy appear to have slept through much of the poetic ferment in black America across the past three decades, Michael Harper and Anthony Walton were there, like Ward, Miller, and Major, to remind us that *Every Shut Eye Ain’t Asleep*. What has been missing from view since about 1972, though, has been the iceberg whose tip trips up the New Critical ship of fools who, like the anonymous reviewer assuring us that not all poets

need to be reread, want to steer us safely to the shores of an unassuming blackness, a blackness bathed in the white light of canonical benevolence. That iceberg is a free-floating signifier of black experiment; it's what raises the water that floats our boat; it's the sign at sea that reminds us, far from port, that "every goodbye ain't gone."

Anthologies may be read as simultaneous gestures of greeting and exclusion. While the editors make no pretense to encyclopedic coverage of avant-garde, black poetics from the decades following the Second World War, we continue to feel the deepest regret as we reread poems that we are not able to include here. Some artists elected not to be included. Some bodies of work are surrounded by legal difficulties of considerably greater complexity than the verse itself. Some readers will no doubt think we have elided a crucial candidate. The gathering assembled here might best be regarded as a preliminary sketch, intended to entice and intended as invitation to further readings and incitements. There will be more to come, but for now, we offer this collection as a means of remapping the ground in ways that may shift our historical comprehensions of African American poetry in recent years and our anticipations of critical comprehensions to come. The present collection affords a fresh perspective on the more experimental poetries created by African American artists in the decades following the Second World War. A planned subsequent volume will carry these representations forward into the years and movements that followed. One of the anonymous readers for this anthology project performed an interesting bit of calculation. Examining the ratio of female-to-male contributors represented in *Black Fire*, perhaps the most broadly influential anthology representing the Black Arts Movement, our reader found that editors Larry Neal and Amiri Baraka had produced a collection in which just 9 percent of the poets were women. The percentage of women contributors in *Every Goodbye Ain't Gone* is approximately twice that number. We wish that it could have been even higher, but again, we were not successful in securing poems from all of the potential contributors we approached. Still, it is important to recognize that the proportions of male and female contributors in *published* collections during the time period we here survey was typified by the numbers we see in *Black Fire*. Surely this is not to say that many more women artists weren't actively pursuing the more adventurous avenues of poetic composition. (Indeed, mainstream poetry

shows no better record of gender equality during this period.) Rather, it is a sign of the barriers that still existed in a literary world dominated by men. One of the most important things we can do today is to recognize the importance of those such as Jayne Cortez, Elouise Loftin, Gloria Tropp, and June Jordan who broke a path for the many women who were to come after them, the remarkable next generation of women artists whose work will reappear in the next installment of this project.

Every new reading requires a break from the established disciplinary modes, a break from regnant pecking orders, and a breakthrough. The lone negator among Hampton University's NEH referees remarked that "projects dealing with subjects now deemed minor in a humanistic context are regularly passed over in favor of others whose importance is manifest." "Will the circle be unbroken?" asks one of the editors of this collection. "Give us a break," responds the more contentious.

We trust we will not be alone in seeking such a break. We hope that this collection will stand as another, more munificent means of making manifest. For Black American poets, contesting the taken for granted is no new task. One purpose of this anthology is precisely to raise questions about the manifest importance of work in whose favor poems such as these "are regularly passed over." There is another passing over, and there is a better reading on the other side. As Atkins writes in "At Night Keep Still":

There are, everywhere unheard  
 (as one might see deep in an electron microscope)  
 rigidities  
     violently breaking

Where some might want to dismiss such stanzas as codes in need of cracking, we might do better to ask, with Langston Hughes, the question that is everywhere implicit in the writing of Russell Atkins, "who always knows what anything—even the simplest things—mean? Do you?" We might respond with Hughes to those who would keep such texts from a wider audience, to those who insist on a pecking order that would obscure from view most of what goes on between these covers: "Ask your mama."



# *Every Goodbye Ain't Gone*





LLOYD ADDISON

# I by you put on

Knew you upon the one true time

two to times shifting

being too badly moved in mood

to come to see me born again to be something born of you

much a part of heart-felt two

you should be

slightly half of me

in part and place of you

though only partly placing one

without my really being half

but having here something truly in the place of time

and thought having you instead

feeding one feeling-view to want

bathed in me

water and water and watermellow

shower and well-cool and felt fellow

is by the I put on

the dress of something haunted

by the near untrue

in the Gypsy hour of fortune-telling

all of a feeling incomplete

# After MLK: the marksman marked leftover kill

Until deaf-dumb bullet self-improved comi-tragic time  
 deathdrops suicidally from error of unimproved trajectory  
 towards humankind's disintegrating vestpocket protest suitability,  
 and its ex-it disappear-ring of steel rearbounds  
 for vain deathproof namesake gods,  
 watch the little black hole  
 in the new world order undeliver-rated life-space;

if execution equals solution, let foresight exceed  
 where mass meetings equal civilly engineered rights  
 obversely proportional to wishfountainpen power,  
 and anti-rights-bodies equal ten/time square  
 by the co-efficient light minus the magnetic exponential . . .

and if the short straight pigskin pass between All-American equals  
 the short straight bullet line pass to Other-Americannots—  
 on an elect/rode day-o shootout in atomic space-limited time—  
 into how many bullblooded pointillistic pigments  
 will the first canvass camped war of the worlds explode awry?

Hereby youth articles of war a unifying field threat  
 to destruct distrust-overlapping generations past  
 to inherit their time of health to live,  
 or run on sentence-structured fellowship.mad theme antics,  
 ordering inapt peeled evil bitterthick  
 to eat the beauty fall indigestion limbo, Armageddon Eve,  
 a surfeit's indefinite period . . .

and THOU SHALT NOT not KILL ROYALTY  
 was here latrined behind these walls where maddog stood,  
 and dog said let there be muzzle velocity  
 and there was a ballistics report of delight,

enriched, the eye-witness to the creation of death said,  
 man his tri-vestry of cloth-skintightrope walked  
 when he should have crawled—will vindicate me . . .  
 whether in Kings or Psalms or Ecclesiastes,  
 never blink, in Acts or Revelation:  
 by goods the goodbye contract of the little black hole.

And as for the law of inertia,  
 concern with man-condition will elect trick cutie state rights  
 obtaining arrears rest warrants for perpetual motion aliases  
 fleeing ten-to-twenty delight years of overfunny

So now rhetoric unpacked good physics call forth overcoming:  
 uni-lateral-field anti-hymns of Ptolemaic tickled bylaws,  
 with march-on strike for ghetto respect and labor,  
 in Copernican accounting for a new toned iron sting in graft itches  
 before the picture of muzzle simultaneously develops  
 to mass spree-the-corpuscule of dropout entropic delight,  
 to wRap tRap white nightrider wind in Brown paperbags for sailing . . .

# All the things of which there are none

Among all the things of which there are none  
I'll have a little bit of play widt / with having  
that one / full body of knowledge

Here with we will open buds  
& scatter seeds far as are accountings

And they are millions of kings  
these seeds that rush fro/from thither kingdoms come

who have been king-size-excited runners-up  
& others to manfully affirm in/thru  
the little white-legged spot thin slipper

& herein is our campaign of love of that ecstatic nevermind  
possessed of wet-torched body  
in a demon's/straight.manipulation democracy of the humid race

& 3-dimensional tired twin inner-truthless compunctioned blowouts  
appeal to blowup/down inner outburst  
holding at knowledge's intense dependent foresight  
against head'sache to peek at  
the on-climbing explosion of high octangency  
with shouting perfection  
prompted to speak of cue-t-countdown  
'where the performance of a second second  
programs to split open  
deadaheadlines to egg-scramble am/bushwoman

And all the things of which there are none  
in milk bottles stooped / necking instructions  
for white hippopotamus health & cow cud rentals

cricketly picked from a witchcraftsman's handbag  
 become the noble salvage

All the things of which there are none  
 in disconnection make no-man's landlady's pocket book

where bets around blow up to midnight's morning flat  
 to forgive a debt's receipt informally foresaid

& with a clean body/snatch-cheer  
 the lovebugkiller ladykiller is in-putout  
 & all the things of witches are done to night

to have a spine-spillover joy-enthralled  
 dark-end day over all day  
 cultivating green stem-merged nervous systematic kilocalories

& without & out aboutface fit of onset values  
 here to go/aheadway-off in the fact chimera  
 to have a flair O-well lonesome  
 until reveling laid  
 to a peeled-off out-of-work wonder fill-in

the good peel hysterically off  
 & all the things of which there are nonetheless  
 the main asideway-farers' refreshment understanding

# Umbra

My sun has gone down in drum suite penumbra  
The mood of this rhythm my body is umbra

And the totem line behind the three-faced light tabu  
decline the flesh-cup curve

The postmen ask  
What information in address envelops this female

impertinence  
posturing behind us

this is not thigh ten-inch-pound distance weight focus  
this is the weight of death  
full to fascination bottom riddle end but dense  
one face-frontal curve  
or straight instantline say designers of fashion  
no rear view is beautiful to address  
but to the self

one clean brief declension  
is to write to inform and to clothe to invite

This is the interval of a question addressing the male

The umbral body is in penumbral field

a two-way cup curving female  
a handful of image an armsful storm  
a mouthy world waiting

And the lips that kiss you in penumbra have arms  
A body molds the darkness is thigh-pressed cradle-abdomen met  
and breasts the umbral breasts have softness

And the silence neuter feminine night  
is sighing verb-breaths to love

And handsome she has fingers to caress herself down  
circular the darkness is erect







turning out well thirst to will thirst  
where love drinks love looks full-lipped fat handsome water pinks  
to give a full smooth smiling peal

WILLIAM ANDERSON

# There's Not a Friend like the Lowly Jesus

Suddenly, against the mountainous  
wall of the fireplace,  
soot begins to glow.

At the ocean  
at that very moment,  
the waves spread their lips.  
In the folds of the sierra

nevada, a crowd  
of skiers rides down the snow.  
They hold torches, they  
wave and shout, so you can hear  
them in the  
hotel.

If you're in any way  
a prophet, you  
better figure why a nigger  
is different from yourself, or any

of the above lights. Because when I  
think of all the things  
I do to keep from

dying.

RUSSELL ATKINS

## It's Here in the

Here in the newspaper — wreck of the East Bound.  
A photograph bound to bring on cardiac asthenia.  
There is a blur that mists the pages:  
On one side's a gloom of dreadful harsh,  
Then breaks flash lights up sheer.  
There is much huge about, I suppose  
    those no's are people  
    between that suffering of—  
    (what have we more? for Christ's sake!  
Something of a full stop of it  
crash of blood and the still shock  
    of stark sticks and an immense swift gloss  
And two dead no's lie aghast still  
One casts a crazed eye and the other's  
    closed dull  
    the heap twists up  
    hardening the unhard, unhardening  
    the hardened

# Probability and Birds

The probability in the yard:  
The rodent keeps the cat close by;  
The cat would sharp at the bird;  
The bird would waft to the water—  
If he does he has but his times before.  
Whichever one he is he's surely marked

The cat is variable  
The rodent becomes the death of the bird  
Which we love  
                  dogs are random



# Spyrytual

Oh didn't it "" "" ""  
"" ""  
"" ""  
"" ""  
""  
"" ""  
""  
"" "" ""  
rain  
""  
""  
"" "" ""

Oh did  
"" "" n't ""  
""  
"" it  
rain  
""  
""

# Lines in Recollection

I had just arrived on the advanced slope and I  
did think of Grant Woods and some others:  
no trouble at all  
to see the around'd spanned circular far  
moving hills orbbed exciting sweep  
there the coy farm settled heavy shapes  
th' uproarious trees of startlingly beautiful flowers!



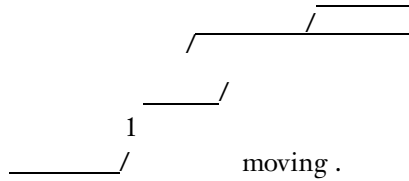
the L\_\_\_\_\_ L L  
oN G ON G ON G place  
S e

L L L L  
O n ) G ONg) ON G L oNg

place that PLACE

TH' ONe g'd  
L place  
u N OnE

L  
Un  
ouNOUN  
g



# Furious'd Garb

The across and rain of away. I took shred of an umbrella  
 Furious'd garb.

My key into the lock went dare.  
 Like whoms the house, the fence, the door, the gate!  
 A grave's lo! where I did fate, flew fluff'd!  
 "If ye be, ye far excited, authenticate!"

The street came down with fantastic!  
 Blast furnace wonderous'd the air with grisly spirit!  
 Pale blown aside of out, extinguishable moon.  
 There! Mrs. Rhone forth'd, briefly—  
 Shroud of hers by crypt? (no, No.  
 I mistook. Light of lamp.)

Furious'd garb.

Listen: More spoken of "reality"  
 and face to face with it as the at desk  
 at ink at phone at typewriter  
 and business'd in coat and tie, et al., sons & co.

and we will think it much to go  
 from that window into aghasts below!

# Night and a Distant Church

Forward abrupt up  
then mmm mm  
wind mmm m  
    mmm m  
upon  
the mm mmm  
wind mmm m  
    mmm  
into the mm wind  
rain now and again  
the mm wind  
bells  
    bells



# Irritable Songs

1

some meaning rain  
between by-walls  
where woebegone  
and ashcans misery

thunder's refrain  
(lung's phlegm  
for a gutter):  
a hush afters

in the wan room  
of afternoon  
    one feels,  
intuitively, the refragable

too late

2

convalescing:  
 drear'd with ill      there lay  
 the debris of vulnerability,  
 lapsed books, newspapers  
 lying like recoil

adrift abed

or part of a lifeboat  
 extraneous at the ends  
 of a watery tether?

a dugout  
 compiled to the neck  
 in sand?

3

  be ready  
 to drink Borgia          or ablaze  
 thwart to the brain          and/or  
 hurl through uproar      through sheer  
 the very body  
   calamitous'd  
 blunted about the hard pavement  
   guts out:

or

take despair as a car  
 (as in the cinema)  
 chasm'd to a crash abrupt'd in fire!  
   strewn so to extremes!  
 or dirge to a lake  
 eved for your thirst—  
 your thirst for  
 ever

4

shock the bastards:  
eschew employment and the years  
of such employment's benefits:  
Social Security and Credit Unions  
Retirement Funds, Insurances!  
amidst recession, quit a job  
and lack payments and credit cards!  
here's another: go through  
hospitals and have x-rays  
or a complete checkup

then wait  
for the collection agency!



5

the squat figure that comes with concern  
who has so much concern           see,  
but wait for someone bringing, bringing

and for some the world brings more:  
when there are oranges, quilts, quinine,  
it will bring oranges, quilts, quinine  
—the world brings more, brings,  
never stops bringing

but for another?

                  see, then, who comes low  
in through the appurtenances,  
who has so much concern  
—the figure, squat, hissing  
that comes with concern

6

horror of sunset stealths  
through the boughs of birch:  
sunk in a sigh the whole nauseous red:  
the sun's hideous liquid  
fills gutters           frantic  
the twigs at the window—  
away goes through the air,  
old cans abject       by-ways whimper  
                              —the night sky's  
at its death-fall

7

perpetual stales, wearies, olds;  
ambition yores behind—  
there is of on and wayside,  
traffic slowly eternal itself  
into distance familiarity  
coins more commonplaces:  
such are these days!

some slivers of aspiration?  
stir of a wish?

a wraith waving a grey scarf

# Narrative

I sat with John Brown. That night moonlight framed  
 the blown of his beard like a portent's undivulged.  
 He came and said "It's Harper's, men!"

Now Harper's was a place in which death thousand'd  
 for us!  
 Already our faces, even as he told of how,  
 sweated. And then suddenly, he,  
 with fierced spark'd eye—incredible heavens!

Horses dreadful appearance had of exhumed:  
 our boots strode the ready. We dared off.

As generally seeming of the trail!  
 smooth—and so whist!  
 i.e., save sounded thunder  
 of us in a rush  
 passed swift fierce"ft  
 'ierce shsh!!  
 'ss'd in a w'isk!  
 'ierced passed "ft!  
 Harper's a!p!p!e!a!r!e!d!  
 —into it we went in a dust!

"ft passed 'ierced  
 "if's, in, ss'd  
 shsh "erced  
 "ft  
 "isk



# Imaginary Crimes in a Real Garden

a spring already short of breath  
 on its way to asthma'd summer:  
   I gather  
 allergic grass and shrubs' roots  
 sterile from last year (no rainfall'll)  
 help them no hope from water)  
   useless beseech by boughs:  
 a blueberry bush asking, pleading;  
 faggots in a bunch, their necks,  
 snap of twigs' necks      crunched!  
   thick earth—  
 between the hands, against the knuckles  
 (a fat man's squeezed trachea)  
 a bough woman's fetus,  
 a shape of a female twig  
   break her  
   scream of rape  
 slow, painful  
 a feminine squirming  
   I shove  
 them down                    bind the bag  
 with a short wire  
   this is the kill

AMIRI BARAKA

# Biography

Hangs.  
whipped  
blood  
stripped  
meat pulled  
clothes ripped  
slobber  
feet dangled  
pointing  
noised  
noise  
churns  
face  
black sky  
and moon  
leather night  
red  
bleeds  
drips  
ground  
sucks  
blood  
hangs  
life wetting  
sticky  
mud

laughs  
bonnets  
wolfmoon  
crazyteeth

hangs

hangs

granddaddy

granddaddy, they tore

his

neck



# The violence of the mind is the violence of God

Actual killing actual death the hanging the beating the running into fire  
 the violence of reality is the violence of the unseen the spirit  
 charging flesh with not being spirit hacks it open birds and great almighty  
 Jesus die like live live like are like and the similarity is the complex of all  
 [being  
 We are all in the mind of God in the mind of God is the mind of God  
 [which  
 is the flexing Olorun driving drifting climbing into blazing heaven,  
 [forehead  
 touching the earth. We are in the mind of Shaitan, our whisperer the  
 [deadly  
 white consciousness the other the alternate to Good, where it lay on the  
 [street  
 nodding in prayer  
 Till the sky changes  
 and the sign is to move  
 and they do, the righteous, the billions of them  
 blacker than anything but God  
 do move, and their motion, is the horde drum  
 in the bush, the wind bathing the mountain, all the sounds of the universe  
 and those out beyond, is the motion, the moving, the stilleto swift doing

# How People Do

To be that weak lonely figure  
coming home through the cold  
up the stairs  
melting in grief  
the walls and footsteps echo  
so much absence and ignorance  
is not to be the creature emerging  
into the living room, an orderly universe  
of known things all names and securely placed  
is not to be the orderer the namer, the storer  
and creator, is not to be that, so we throw it  
from our minds, and sit down casually  
to eat

# The Heavy

For RC

Eye is static, the guns bebopping too  
close for statement, cannot be seen  
bullets rattling and ramming, scaring  
philosophy. But you see, and are hyp  
notized. So that talking, language  
lifts you, above the common or the  
real. And you make a room of darkness,  
and claim what you see is Lord.

# Lefty

Go  
 home, drop, go, back  
 tired weather lulls, go  
 staggered almost, homes where they sit  
 smoking away, burning down to black crisps

Go,  
 down, the low blows, make me into things  
 any time we see, another lady come into  
 the room. His eyes panted. So thin she never  
 came again, except the roof where drawers  
 lower than blows, wd the wind, drag the fogs  
 away.

Communication of the sign.  
 By the treaty maker.  
 Communication of the shore's  
 design.  
 By the children of caution.  
 His girls run along the sea side  
 dreaming of his songs. Wave echo.  
 Light on off, bird streak at night.  
 Coasts shifting, lined endeavor, from  
 green to liver sick mountains too bored  
 to become a desert.

Go, be, an interval. A sign. Their shiftless  
 tired faces. Black sweat, in the moon fixed.  
 Amble, shamble, dissemble, gamble, love's own.  
 Lie to them. Hurt me, quickly. Love's a lie, then.

Walked aim  
 less, his pants  
 off, hard knotty  
 dick, and hairy  
 as a rose.

Nobody knows him now.  
He's off in the tired sand.

Green flower, like a star,  
not a wind to blow it, not a moving  
lip of moisture  
anywhere. Where are you,  
anyassthings, any ass  
he windows light that  
turns upon the knuckles  
day reacting hot hot, then  
cold

-----

Go. There's no more love here. Go. Believe  
in the gipsies of wordlessness. Down by the seashore.  
Ox heart, a cradle the morning sings it, big h, signals

# Node

At intervals, the  
purest motion  
takes my eye.

rakes across.                   Or imagination  
  music from my hands  
  water running down the drain

what my hands  
can  
hold  
is merely                    beauty.  
                                  these gracious leaves  
                                  the only spleen

waiting to breathe  
                                  or  
dying in the bush, the gigantic  
rain forests,  
                                  I can not bear to think  
                                  it matters.

Earthshaking: my hand steadies,  
when the Fall, October comes,  
the garden is a bare footprint  
of death.  
                                  It is so easy  
                                  to be made sad.

&  
rattle rattle rattle rattle rattle  
( the devil's blue porsche  
  pissing up the road)

Climber of all mounts.  
as this paper will turn yellow  
& become the thing I answer to.

What interval?  
                          as this motion  
                          (these words)  
  pass  
into

# The A, B, C's

For Charles

It rests in me, unmindful

It paces in my chest cavity, not caring

It resists

my probing. It is alert.

It is nameless, as all things

close to us.

You wonder suddenly, as you lope up 20th St.  
 Why these packhorses of emotion, you cannot  
 even call to, wild silent nights of  
 complete despair; Old pack horses,  
 Why they come here to you, content  
 in their ancient ugliness, to bite  
 chunks of Clarke bar from your hands.

Safe now, within the poem, I make my  
 Indiscreet avowals, my indelicate assumptions  
 As if this gentle fire that bathed my flesh  
 was rancor, or fear, or any other of life's idiot progeny.  
 It is the walls of these words protect me  
 Throw a fierce cordon  
 around me, that I may 'signify'  
 to my heart's content. (My heart's content . . .  
 What is my heart's content. The mind's content?)

2

It becomes irreversible, an  
 ellipse (You question my



motives? And you do not even  
 have a name?) The bridge goes up  
 so the boats can pass: Sandra is draped  
 in one of the deck chairs, fondling a  
 newspaper photograph of me. She is  
 quite rich, & of course, quite  
 beautiful. It is part of life's tragedy  
 that I will never meet her.

## 3

From the street, across from where  
 they are tearing down the old church,  
 you can peer into the windows  
 of the very poor. The rich have  
 (more) propriety, and the gorgeous plants  
 that make shadows  
 on the ruins.

And everything is ruined for us now. Night  
 will choke us  
 if we are out in it.

The largesse of this city  
 is past. The graciousness  
 has gone out  
 of it. Like anything  
 we are too familiar with.

Only the walls are reluctant  
 to be put down. Your only  
 device. The sun rests  
 among loose bricks  
 near the base. The heart's  
 content. The mind is never  
 maudlin (When Sandra dies  
 who is it  
 will love me?)

Because I am standing among the ruins  
 of ourselves. The sun is still  
 where we can see it (you know what happens  
 when it moves . . . ) You  
 cannot even say . . .

Or

It is  
close to me  
and  
uncaring. It  
stands  
in my chest  
cavity. It  
is unmindful,  
& has no name.

# I Investigate the Sun

I investigate  
 the sun. Let it do me  
 when it come. I am commissioned  
 by not only charcoal people with brilliant  
 hues, but laborers in the woods pausing for a moment  
 to sing while young master dies of that stuff where your blood  
 too thin to clot. I investigate the sun—and for my trouble, get music  
 abstract designs I figure out. I fancy myself Pythagoras sometimes, some  
 times Langston Hughes. You see, I investigate the sun, for people with hard  
 dirty hands. I find out what its fire and brightness means. For the old lady  
 polishing floors up on the hill for the permanently smiling, I support her  
 music, as it trembles against that dazzling flo' I give her Ra or if she want  
 BB King, I bring that back as well, do tell, I investigate the sun. Call me  
 agent proxy paid representative, a lobbyist for those without lobbies, think  
 of me as surrogate for those who sing under impossible weights or resist  
 [bald  
 head guys with pointed teeth and white collars pulled outside they coats  
 suppose to be powerful. My rejoinder and answer, my constant line they all  
 grow hard against, where are you in the sun's shine, what you know of its  
 fire? Have you checked your vain insistence against life's life, yellow & red  
 & atomic before atomic. How does your projection list Ra's ra ra?  
 No, for real, I investigate the sun. I am paid for this vocation, it's not  
 above my station, sun checker for a nation, magnifying glass for a class,  
 I investigate the sun. Bring back its dance and music, its design and  
 hip rime. Sun poet Sun singer Sun warrior Sun why you what you who  
 [you how you  
 those my questions as I rise into its hot glamour. I investigate the sun.  
 Doubt it if you will, what does a shadow know anyway? I investigate  
 the sun

# Courageousness

In the 60's, there was emotion to go around  
barreling explosions, at and against, waves  
of running, the world itself was feeling, all  
feeling. I felt that.

Those shadows haunt us now in various ways.  
Women's mouths at odd angles like laughing.  
People we know can reappear carrying shadows  
which seem to fall from their hands, but musically.  
If we wanted to we could locate boxes packed tight  
with skulls and odors, murmurs of some distant  
hysteria.

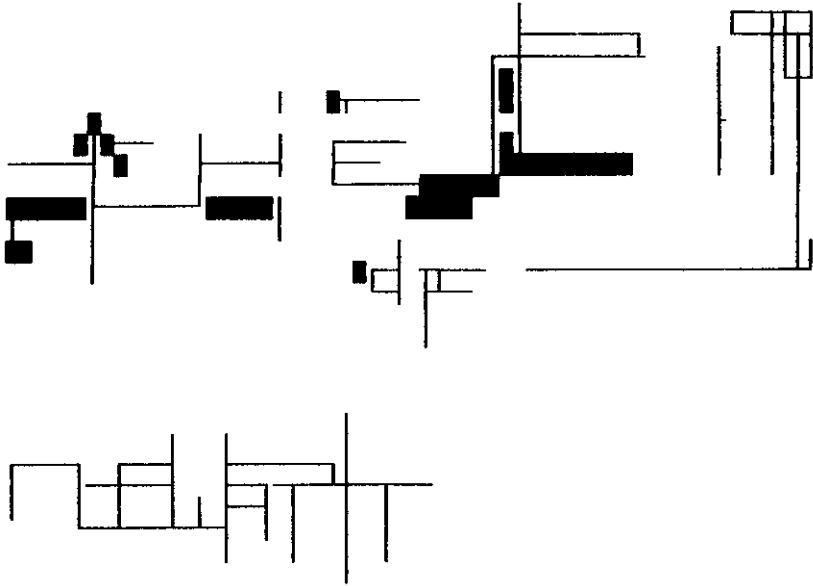
There was a rush of us. Some of us wondrous lovely  
gorgeous people. That feeling and talking. Such moving  
about away and toward. We pointed our fingers alot. We  
roared like something out of nature. Like chained beasts  
climbing through windows, sometimes we was strange.  
The taste of us was acquired and hypnotic, glass crackers  
& onions, some dark beer to wash it down. And here these maniac  
street lamps are still batting off and on, surely they've had to  
change whats inside them making them do that. It cant be the very same

ones. Like these workmen opening our heads  
to fix the wires, or put in new batteries,  
change a cracked globe or yank the old bulb.  
In the 60's there was enough feeling enough emotion  
to go round. There was no reason to be square, that's what  
we felt. We could do anything, be anything, even free. That's  
how young we were. That's now long ago, that was.

Without listing my e.g.'s, elementals of where I thought the shadow of me had passed. Where you been, bend. I could still produce a portrait of lived. Internally they say you feel, an they talkin about the outside of there. Their are the filled up of you seein. Talk it mo. Talk it jo. at you candy sto.

I am the only story telling me here out like this. Telling a seen it living, my breath comes out and the world goes in, your breath and ideas I pick up like picking a banjar.

THE CITY OF NEW ARK



A POEM OF DESTINY  
FROM BOOK ONE

\*\*\*

New Ark Space  
 is forked  
 pitch  
 black Sun  
 at noon.  
 The people lay  
     roll  
     laid &  
     stretched yet  
         incompletely  
                     out!

Yet they are truly out!

Mostly Children  
     of the  
         Sun

Descendants of the Earth's  
     1st Priests  
     & Scientists

Try to dig through the concrete  
     who 'em is  
     & Yes from No

What is Good  
     & Why  
     The Madness?

\*

In New Ark

there's grey  
icicle  
Santa Claus  
death  
bldg.

Lincoln there Fucked up  
in stone.

There's niggers who are completely  
Greasy Heads  
Words Greasy  
Heads inserted  
like pee pee smells  
just behind the  
vestibule

Yet A Broad  
Mother fuckers of all  
descriptions

gentled by media lighting  
the noise holds a framing silence

Solo  
&  
Ensemble

We all rock w/ the ark  
& try to make our  
33 or 45  
degrees

Endarkened or  
Dead!

Wit me A  
is repeating





(The letter  
The let

O Ship  
of  
Zion  
If we turn  
from thee  
our hearts  
are wither

We are not NEW  
to a  
Knower

I PUPIL

MAGNIFIER

AIR WATER EARTH

FIRE

SIGN

& SIGNIFIER

PREY & PRAY

Before life  
& eaten  
by it  
until  
We house ourselves  
with  
living  
goodness

SAYS  
SAILS

Intercourse

Stops  
Latter  
How long  
the raise

the gratitude  
living

under  
standing  
Can

Wholly  
&  
Circular

Go  
Wheel

The Tower  
&  
Trip

Heaven  
&  
the journey

Tortured Slaves  
below decks  
Chained  
in  
Shit  
&  
Vomit  
therein our city  
carries in itself  
the Move  
& the Stop

among the  
endless waves  
of beings

Rock Ark  
Role Tied

the things of Standing & Moving  
the being & the been

Black Rhythm  
Turning Blue  
Ra returns  
from his  
Western  
Tour.

New Ark  
Language  
Its words  
always  
that show  
the change  
  
circle  
the square  
the view  
standing  
under

A Pyramid

If you can imagine  
what can be real  
if you can find out  
What is

That the earth's masters  
will save it  
& live

the others  
will die out

or become  
extinct

& unknown.

That we claim the ancient natural  
order of humanity  
into question

That we are pledged!

Rapture

Sun blown jism  
perfect  
intelligence

Go—  
Come  
Like The Sun Beats  
Space  
into  
Speech

Our Hearts  
Rap  
The Sun's Language.

I talked to one "sailor" the other day

What is disappearing is ignorance, wheresom'ever you be in what is ignored. The dross of definition.

We seek what we know, and stumble into error fully armed. We never thought we'd suffer, never thought pain would get us where it wanted us. Except when we understood, it was all pain, and we were counting as we fought, the blows extended by the memory of being everywhere at the

same beat. Except that never is if you try to remember. You are always carried with you, you are never absent, and never alone. People confirm life for us, but they cannot live it for us.

When you begin to see yourself more naturally it is late and the laws weigh against you like a body like a chanting to you a glowing underneath the cloak of name.

We understand how much better the future will be. We are somebody's future, and somebody's past. The present is what we struggle to fully experience and then understand. And it is not waiting for us, its beckoning throbs inside us claiming us yet alive, yet capable of love.

—Interlude Captain

### Ark Talks Swims Walks Loves

What ever you're selling, that's out from the jump. No selling. Selling is out, is over. Like the wave, it says goodbye, to all that. What ever you're selling arrest yourself until we get there to speak to you. Our new constitution says No Selling. No Merchants. No Traders. We're for all flavors, and no favors. How could it be a favor, and everything is here to touch. Or speak to. The spirits want no favors, they in flavors. Like the colors. The weather. No favors. NO privilege. And no selling. No selling nothing. NO yourself neither. No selling nothing. You can't give yourself away neither. No free you's and no selling. You is everything, and when that dawns, your day will be here, your ship, o ark, will be and your sea, and your free, oh Ark, o dark lovely ark. Oh place of where, of self of all telling.

So without the merchandising, the commodification, and no favors, or tricks. We depress lies flatter, ground them. So they are merely or merest. So they are brief frowns dispersed by afternoon. Vague would's and should's, keep the do's the be's the is from bad as what is alive hence good. Good is all you got, and that's the truth. That is the living breath, who is breathing is God, that's everything.

The Muslims can tell you if you tell them something, that everything and whatever is left, or right. Every bit of information. Computed Total

computed, computing is Allah. Just everything. And its spirit. Its force. It's power. It's history. It's knowledge. Everything! All. A L L.

Now you a something. A some. Sum. What ever. You is. Or who ever. If you don't understand, who you telling it to, then. They a a. AA. AA. They AA. All is A, the 1st principle, the eye, looking down, like the sun rays. God looks down, but that is the sun, like a corpuscle carrying the goods, eats, air, information, anything you gotta have. Prayer needs sun. Preyers, on the other hand, eat, everything, or sell it. They illegal. Prayer is the consultancy with the before yourself, whatever. The not here, which is the majority. The whatever you come out of and will return to. If you can penetrate that veil in some way. Put yr self in touch with the before yourself. The before this world. The after this world. The is that be shoots out of. Pre peter. Pre come. Get in touch with the Not.

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The coming and going are proofs of the constant is, coming and going back to itself. The science is understanding this and why. We're like animals roaming and biting. But we want more which signifies like my man my ol man on the tree top screaming for a little civilization from the roaring meat eaters checking him out meat frustrated. He telling jokes, throwing doo doo down on 'em. Signifying.

The Africans were the signifying monkey, and still, it seems, must is. Must is, mus aint dont sound right. You got to get back up on the two legs, and signify. You got to do the triple dip jump step and signify. Rap. He in the tree, way high, rapping, beating on the wood. Talking about Hey Hey Hey, I'm what's happening. For half a million years so it was. Then the flood and whatnot. You got weird cousins suddenly. Dudes went off to find out what was and when they return, all ugly, riding horses and shit. We say, damn, what happen my man, you look really weird. Why you look like that? And they growl and start that selling talk. That merchant shit. They ask us do we want to buy something. Nobody know what that mean. Old black John say fuck that buying. He tell em about a picture on a big rock.

They talkin about getting. Nobody understand, except ol John said fuck all that. That's old. You'll get surely fucked up with that. Took all the jewelry and shit with em. Some ol plates, went away from here talking the same shit. Buying and Selling. Last dumb shit they say is that stealing

is where it's really at. Talk about stealing is high art. Fuck it, we went back up and looked at the 1st sea, the 1st cloud, the 1st voice, the first song, and felt cool. For centuries.

Yours,  
"Ark Am" 8/89

Ark

Wants to know

Wants to be and is for that

Wants not to

afloat, air driven, love driven, growing into the babe  
seed is what you saw, story is what "your" stored of that  
so the seed carries all the information, of scene, an re  
makes whatever to be.

Ark lives to live. Life is specific not abstract, not an IOU,  
except seeing means you seen, and the scene goes on as you do as  
you are as you will, want, to be, you keep lying to yrself, but  
when God is busted, watch who be in the papers. God exists only  
as the total of what is

Goodness is God

's only life

life is God

Death is not evil, Death is the beginning of the new year. Yeah!

Only what cannot exist is evil. That's why.

Murder is the illusion that life is evil. So that is evil. Sin  
is what does not exist. Sin means without. With Out being the  
never. The not is not the never. The never cannot. The not, is  
what's womb.

Dont you ever get tired of animals and living  
with animals in a cage? Dont you get tired  
of animals telling you how humans live? Dont you ever get tired  
[of the Dead,  
messing you up and they on vacation?

At the top of the highest building is where the new is. The known is below already what is not, the new is in its womb waiting to be fertilized. The fertilizer brain. Your story is your tail, your snake mind, ideas are the day time for the sun, of the black woman. Night. Who is is. An Ethiopian.

Everything is a real idea, the life before the idea, the womb of the idea is real thing, the idea is the path into and away from the real, is, carries every, idea is thing breathing, seeds. The G is a seed, A, 1st principle, B, from the is, C existence, in the sea, where the seeds are, see hence seen.

D is the specific where, that manifesting of. E the out of, the energy, what issues, what goes, exhaust, ex it, from which the it breath issues. Blood always talk precise. D shit aint right he say.

Like a cry, E, EEEEE, the issue, the going, the gone. The F is the flag, the being, the signal of, proof of, existence of. Speed it means, because that determines appearance, how fast among fast, to mean where. The G, is the seed. G! Also gravity measurement, what force into is the substance. Earth and Sun mixed with water, H the tower, the prayer for consolidating building, development. So I, is the God number 9, the eye of Ra. Sun and Life, derived therefrom.

The 10 is the rebeginning. I re turned, like the circle, and we arcs of carried in its being, as ourselves, eggs to egos. The egg entering the cycle of be is ego, the egg, is stored information. What I seed!

Ra is Re, because only that is can re produce!

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Actually, 1 is 2. I got that from Monk 1st, then Marx! 0 is 1! The whole is Un. Unitary. Atone means to get it together! Be one. 1 requires 2 elements. The is (0 = All) and the being. Their connection, via "night's" history, her tail, memory, absolute everywhere&thing. A tail, A joint. Connect. Jazz is the meeting the motion the heat the feeling the coming, is being Re being. Be is always Blue when it first get here.



“Fucking” on the other hand means beating, as in fighting! Not love. The “other” beating, rhythm, as in Be At ing, self conscious reflection of everything. Life conscious of Life. Its perfection is its ultimate turn, goal (“gold”).

We move supposedly from Fucking To Love As Animals to Humans to Self Created Consciousness, as total harmonic expressions of the endlessly expressed.

Be is is and however and wherever from is manifest specifically. All is All is. Is Is.

The conflict of the journey away from the Mother is summed up as Fucked Up for the totally negative vs Pregnant and the ecstasy of Creation. As Art. (Exists as opposed to Not). Vs Arent. Art Vs. Arent! The Creative Principle Vs The Death Principle.

The Devil then wants Never. Wants Arent. The Devil is not Mythology, there is a scientific principle this concept expresses. Religion was literally The Way of The Sun, The Way of Life.

The Sun Worshippers confirm the obvious, the most significant explanation of how and why we are here and everything else we see. No Sun No thing. We get jumpy when it goes on tour, not to mention goes out forever? Ha!

Mythology and Metaphysics are the lies the sins the tools of Devils what pushes evil De Evil as it is Death. It is a lie since it is impossible to dismiss the be and even lies must pretend to be the truth. Must pretend to be real, and their realness attests to the constancy of is, as definer and continuer. We test our understanding, like we breathe, in and out. The spirit, literally breath, the top of the church, the spires, the spiral, like the dialectical motion of is, the infinity sign turned upright like it sposed to be, not parallel, the endless mindless metal frenzy. Cat nip. Bees get high on hot honey.

But turning and rising, the spirit. The advance to what we were always. The animal is the distance the out breathing away from and at the same time, essence, to rebecome its total and by doing be whatever it is then expressing or there expressing . . .

its where (wear) tale (tail) time is the reverse expression of expression. Emit is powerful, the explanation of time, slow motion. What stops is evil because it is a lie. An illusion. Time expresses elapse, or power, or distance, or history, the number of seeds, except if there was such a real thing as time, there could be no is.

Time will become obsolete when the snapshots of everything and everything are conscious love.

So we are life fighters. Fighting for life. Death is our enemy. Ignorance and Disease, its weapons. Consciousness is our God self, the everything else goes and comes but the path, the road, the you we love, the me we need, is alive. Be for life and against its enemies. This is one things I learn.

Marxism simply tries to bring the Divine (Mystery) into our fingers as known and usable. As it is. As long as there are mysteries we are animals. And our animal spirit is what kills us.

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In Ark everybody know we need love  
 tell by the way they walk  
 tell by the way they talk  
 by the way they dress, what they love  
 what they hate

Everybody in the Ark      know  
 We need love.

This is where Freedom come in.

Blue Monk!

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JODI BRAXTON

# Conversion

I

early mist  
bring back the dawn  
i  
follow flock

reach blues ancestor  
astral bird  
startling grace of white  
flapping strangely slow  
like spirits ride  
into streaked morning  
cirrus and sunrise arching  
night's baptismal blackness

hands tear wet  
rushes briars blood  
my heart beat over  
the siren

wing/wail

II

i did not  
hear myself scream

pulp of nausea  
woman of lips that tremble  
hair full of mud

bed slept clothes and wash night purple love  
 come glide to the swamp

i the woman nude with serpents  
 and a saucy rhythm to guide love

come pain surrender blackness  
 humming stomach wretch  
 spiral falling bird

i woke in the mud wet  
 sound battered body  
 hands rust red patches drying

a water mocassin on either side  
 to guide me through the swamp

there is pain  
 but it is not like other pain

i am not afraid  
 i am not afraid when snakes drop down out of trees  
 to twine with womanflesh  
 arms    breasts    thighs

through smoke  
 see the spirit

birds again  
 of a broken wing  
 fallen and burned  
 where snakes led me

*to fall from such a height*  
*nobody singing    nobody singing*  
*down the lean black chute*  
 out of night into the heat of the day

the wail of the love of the wail  
 had ceased

III

whips  
i crack the mocassins from around my legs  
and lean back dancing  
laughing in the flames

in the fire hot ashes there  
i found a baby bird  
a wet envelope of skin

and i make me a nest in the woods for my charge  
a nest in the wilderness lined with hair  
from the nape of my neck

i pluck worms from the sod and  
serpents from the field

i kill field mice with my hands  
to nourish the phoenix

this is why i came  
into the marsh/ to forget  
men women houses pain

to burn my clothes  
and make me a cover  
of snakeskin and prayer

an altar in the wood

HAROLD CARRINGTON

# Lament

while my city gently sleeps  
the lonely moan a weary blues  
reflecting  
on the poet's silent, unobserved departure,  
contemplating  
the poet shoes he left behind  
& are as yet  
unfilled—

Ray  
now I feel like Nellie Lutcher  
want to sing and fornicate,  
make swinging Jersey City  
meet the family  
friends  
& Grace,  
go over to some convenient village  
pad  
dig the cool—controversal  
Brubeck beams,  
(man, don't be a drag)  
investigate  
the cause of bitte Barbara's  
motavation,  
maybe chase a few Lolitas  
in Central Park  
on the way up to Harlem  
to have a ball,  
(funky)  
cultivate a wine habit  
so I can comprehend  
& shout

THUNDERBIRD SUITE,  
split to the far coast  
blow in the cellar,  
down to Mexico for bull fights  
mushrooms  
& crazy visions,  
then in a blaze of violence  
we'll quit-it out the back door  
on some crowded city street  
coming to a screeching  
halt—

while my city gently sleeps  
this lonely moans a weary blues  
reflecting  
on the poet's silent, unobserved departure,  
contemplating  
the poet shoes he left behind  
& are as yet  
unfilled . . .

# Woo's People

SOME ANTI-  
BLASPHEMY  
OR LARK

(DENIAL)

CHALLENGE  
TO THE CHALLANG-  
ABLE

(DENIAL)

CUNNING FANGS  
OF  
AGE

(DE\_\_\_\_?)

O  
SWEET & VIRGINED  
MOTHER . . .



sting—  
a south carolina  
ave.  
folk tale

squatting  
in front of perry's stick hall  
in hustling clothes:  
20 dollar panama,  
long shoes  
& short sleeve summer sportshirt  
(open down the front  
for an envious glance  
at scotch plaid  
underwear)  
the fabulous wine—  
last of the red-hot mackmen,  
with the everpresent jug  
five star half & half  
(the ice action)  
stashed  
inconspicuously, momentarily safe  
from the garbage can dancers of every set.  
& laying  
for any down with it  
can't quit it  
stud  
who'll take the wooden nickle.

STEPHEN CHAMBERS

# Her

... A—JA—BU;

A—JA—BU

(bu—su)

sue / san

I—Kemo—San

Ja—A—Bu

Ja—A—Bu

i / kemo / no / san

San / (frisco???)

Bu—A—Ja

(jabua)

A-JA-BU

... “her” ...

JAYNE CORTEZ

# Drying Spit Blues

Tonight the whooping moan of invading blues  
    with its clef of troubled hearts  
with its double stomp burn of woman flesh  
    spitting with the whirlwind of spitting cobras  
spitting with the meaning of Anna Nzinga  
    flashflooding blues  
of great blues migrations  
    the great blues of howling sudan  
great blues in a conflict of nubian throbs  
    among the faces chiseled from memphis  
among the cataracts spitting from ethiopia  
    the great blues of drying spit  
with its escalator of razors  
    forefinger of pistol whips  
quadrangle of knuckle bones  
    basin of fish hooks  
equator salt  
    the whooping taste of invading blues  
of broken whistles  
    radiated fox holes  
a grenade of camel hair  
    calypso of neckscars  
old blues  
    intravenous blues  
blues with a procession of blows  
    the blows in the mouth of the goatheads of death  
a commemoration to famine  
    right up to our chests  
afterskulls of invading blues  
    of bombed out groans  
150 rockets between screams  
    meat hooks smelling into smells of needle-tracked ribs

dead crows    fried feathers    spoiled calamares  
                   and eyes of sculpted slugs  
 and silver ants on lower lids painted charcoal  
 and long teeth in amber jels  
                   and tongue flaming tongue of sweetheart rings  
 of ruby snakes with veins of iridescent smoke studs  
                   a squadron of lips made of cucka burrs  
                   a salty dirge of sapless pinchers  
 a mirage of pulsing green roosters  
 secret dogs  
 polychrome spirits  
                   head-quart of bullface throat slitters  
 right up to our chins  
                   sparkling without lizard juice  
 mutilations without mucous  
                   a concave of widowfish entering flies  
 a circle of jackals cocked on the moon  
                   a cylinder sun without holes  
 and once again warships rush to other ports  
 and once again relief is too late  
 and once again a shriveling solution  
                   the code name for buzzards  
 wrist-bones on altar of another jaw  
                   illuminations  
 right up to our nostrils  
 in howling sudan  
                   in nubian throbs  
 in faces chiseled from memphis  
                   the shrinking shrines of whooping flesh  
 of invading skeletons  
                   of spreading saharas  
 of drying spit  
                   tonights Blues

# Under the Edge of February

Under the edge of February  
 in hawk of a throat  
 hidden by ravines of sweet oil  
 by temples of switch blades  
 beautiful in its sound of fertility  
 beautiful in its turban of funeral crepe  
 beautiful in its camouflage of grief  
 in its solitude of bruises  
 in its arson of alert

Who will enter its beautiful calligraphy of blood

Its beautiful mask of fish net  
 mask of hubcaps mask of ice picks mask  
 of watermelon rinds mask of umbilical cords  
 changing into mask of rubber bands  
 Who will enter this beautiful mask of  
 punctured bladders moving with a mask of chapsticks

Compound of Hearts      Compound of Hearts

Where is the lucky number for this shy love  
 this top-heavy beauty bathed with charcoal water  
 self-conscious against a mosaic of broken bottles  
 broken locks    broken pipes    broken  
 bloods of broken spirits broken through like  
 broken promises

Landlords    Junkies    Thieves  
 enthroning themselves in you  
 they burn up couches they burn down houses  
 and infuse themselves against memory  
 every thought  
 a pavement of old belts

every performance  
 a ceremonial pickup  
 how many more orphans    how many neglected shrines  
 how many stolen feet    stolen gums  
 stolen watchbands of death  
 in you how many times

Harlem

hidden by ravines of sweet oil  
 by temples of switch blades  
 beautiful in your sound of fertility  
 beautiful in your turban of funeral crepe  
 beautiful in your camouflage of grief  
 in your solitude of bruises in  
 your arson of alert  
 beautiful

# Phraseology

I say things to myself  
in a bitch of a syllable  
an off tone wisp remarkable  
in weight and size  
completely savage to the passing of silence  
through mass combinations of moisture  
uncaked in pockets of endless phraseology  
moving toward sacred razors  
like air    like untangled bush  
over a piece of dead scar  
instant in another smashed ear lobe  
shivering between word echoes of  
word shadows  
jugular veins of popular contradictions  
well dressed and groomed in the mirror of language  
transparent and useless against  
the impulsive foam  
of a spastic

# Indelible

Listen i have a complaint to make  
my lips are covered  
with thumb prints  
insomnia sips me  
the volume of isolation  
is up to my thyroid  
and i won't disappear  
can you help me



# Opening Act

To be the opening act  
 and absorb all slobber  
 all praises  
 all stares  
 all insults in a rhythm tube of  
 fallopian teeth

To be the opening act  
 and not forget the odor of roaches  
 in a diamond miner's eyeball  
 flame of a dead flint  
 listen to this suspect number one  
 because to be the opening act  
 and plant feet in asses of corrupt politicians  
 without a time clock without correct wages  
 without profits without bitterness  
 without a breeding place for pain  
 is a bitch  
 so pass the word around

To be the opening act  
 and know when to duck when to salute  
 when to cover up  
 when to fight  
 when to scream when to dive into your solitude  
 and detoxify whistles in your kidneys  
 salt dry curses in your eardrums  
 and then laugh into the drunken gallbladders of the night  
 you have to be rich in blood vessels to  
 bury that act in someone's mouth at 3 am every morning  
 so don't fuck with me  
 I want to be the opening act between this planet and the sun  
 in health in sickness in death  
 I said primp on your own time baby

because I'm walking the entire motion of space  
in rawflesh of this opening act to end all acts  
and I don't have to impose myself on anybody  
so throw your wig into the ocean  
I know I'm the opening act of acts here  
because all of a sudden  
someone blew smoke in my face and yelled boooo

# Into This Time

For Charles Mingus

Into this time  
 of steel feathers blowing from hearts  
 into this turquoise flame time in the mouth  
 into this sonic boom time in the conch  
 into this musty stone-fly time sinking into  
 the melancholy buttocks of dawn  
 sinking into lacerated whelps  
 into gun holsters  
 into breast bones  
 into a manganese field of uranium nozzles  
 into a nuclear tube full of drunk rodents  
 into the massive vein of one interval  
 into one moment's hair plucked down into  
 the timeless droning fixed into  
 long pauses  
 fixed into a lash a ninety-eight minutes screeching into  
 the internal heat of an ice ball melting time into  
 a configuration of commas on strike  
 into a work force armed with a calendar of green wings  
 into a collection of nerves  
 into magnetic mucus  
 into water pus of a silver volcano  
 into the black granite face of Morelos  
 into the pigeon toed dance of Mingus  
 into a refuge of air bubbles  
 into a cylinder of snake whistles  
 into clusters of slow spiders  
 into spade fish skulls  
 into rosin coated shadows of women wrapped in live iguanas  
 into coins into crosses into St. Martin De Porres  
 into the pain of this place changing pitches beneath  
 fingers swelling into

night shouts  
 into day trembles  
 into month of precious blood flowing into  
 this fiesta of sadness year  
 into this city of eternal spring  
 into this solo  
 on the road of young bulls  
 on the street of lost children  
 on the avenue of dead warriors  
 on the frisky horse tail fuzz zooming  
 into ears of every madman  
 stomping into every new composition  
 everyday of the blues  
 penetrating into this time

This time of loose strings in low tones  
 pulling boulders of Olmec heads into the sun  
 into tight wires uncoiling from body of a strip teaser on the table  
 into half-tones wailing between snap and click  
 of two castanets smoking into  
 scales jumping from tips of sacrificial flints  
 into frogs yodeling across grieving cults  
 yodeling up into word stuffed smell of flamingo stew  
 into wind packed fuel of howling dog throats slit into  
 this January flare of aluminum dust falling into  
 laminated stomach of a bass violin rubbed into red ashes  
 rubbed into the time sequence of  
 this time of salmonella leaking from eyeballs of a pope  
 into this lavender vomit time in the chest into  
 this time plummage of dried bats in the brain into  
 this wallowing time weed of invisible wakes on cassettes into  
 this off-beat time syncopation in a leopard skin suit  
 into this radiated protrusion of time in the desert into  
 this frozen cheek time flying with the rotten bottoms of used tuxedos  
 into this purple brown grey gold minus zero time trilling into  
 a lime stone crusted Yucatan belching  
 into fifty six medallions shaking  
 into armadillo drums thumping  
 into tambourines of fetishes rattling  
 into an oil slick of poverty symbols flapping

into flat-footed shuffle of two birds advancing  
into back spine of luminous impulses tumbling  
into metronomes of colossal lips ticking  
into a double zigzag of callouses splitting  
into foam of electric snow flashing into this time  
of steel feathers blowing from hearts  
into this turquoise flame time in the mouth into  
the sonic boom time in the conch  
into this musty stone fly time sinking into  
the melancholy buttocks of dawn

LAWRENCE S. CUMBERBATCH

# I Swear to You, That Ship Never Sunk in Middle-Passage!

Tugging at containment  
    all yields for the sake of bursting feet  
        scuffling in the furrowed yesterdays

Inn beyond “the man’s” whirl,  
    funky dark as the hovel,

us children never sink  
dancing on the water of futility

Never,

    never

Tomorrow is for the planters.

Plantation people dance at the Harlem Inn, Winstonville, Mississippi.

## Again the Summoning

in new romance with blackness  
burst the thread of last words  
off the tangled spool  
    where glare  
        too many pictured kingdoms  
painting bullets a missile  
    girdled by noble goals  
the heroic fabric of soulful minds  
weaves thru  
        imagined jungles  
to a boogaloo party  
of rainbow chiefs  
    where beauty whimpers of exhaustion  
    and the melody soon ends.

# In the Early Morning Breeze

In the early crystal morning  
     of glass-shattered streets  
 where the breeze has no challenge  
     to weathered breasts  
 as of bahing sheep  
 gingerly as the leaf  
                     fall a thousand times  
 never to ground  
 I to no line  
                     remember ethiopia  
                     clothed in her tattered lion's cloth  
 of popes' and bishops'  
 and longshoremen's kisses  
                     wispily sailing  
 from deep-water departure piers.



RUDY BEE GRAHAM

A LYNCHING                      FOR SKIP  
JAMES

. . . they may get better  
but they will never be well . . .

We know

    the dying  
    a museum death  
    the funeral homes  
    of no rhythm  
    in the music  
    no breathing  
    on the canvasses

we have seen

the unseeing steel  
blue eyes on the rockets  
the money-green gazes  
from the subways

flag uniforms on parochial  
killers wiping us out

from the kitchens we have felt  
the cold seeping from the pale  
shadows they make  
along the walls  
(as economic as death)

from classrooms on the streets  
we have heard the silence  
of their words calling us  
out of life to their Snowdom  
in grave-school-yards we have known them

using Time as a weapon  
 defending deaths they have coffined  
 in color tones and sentences

We have danced in the tree-grey static  
 of their glances  
 and they have stolen us  
 into their catacombs  
 cleaning up

You sang to me of the trenches  
 in your eyes the humanless years  
 have wrenched you through  
 and yet too wise for bitterness you  
 sound more like a human  
 than anyone

And I would murder the walking  
 shrouds that have hammered the cry  
 in your throat with their too deep  
 an ignorance of unfeeling ears  
     they cannot feel  
     they have no soul  
 and you have made your misery  
 music they have not heard  
 they cannot hear  
     the humanity  
     in the chords  
     of the whines  
     in the moans  
 they cannot hear

And I would electrocute  
 the phantoms who slit  
 warm throats with stainless steel  
 eyes looking away  
 to pluto

And I would gas the ghosts  
 who strangle us with mercantile facts  
 and neckties of a futile civilization

We are the children of Carthage  
and we are singing  
the only songs

in our blood  
the only prophecies  
of man kind to come

and from the kitchens we can see  
god with his  
broken neck  
hanging  
from the  
moon  
that waits  
over the western road  
like a gangrene  
destination

And sometimes  
the soul-fingered cloud  
in your voice  
closes his deathray eyes  
and cuts him down

# Without Shadow

death in so many  
forms (supple, unsupple)  
a difference  
of footprints  
and clothing

the economic classes  
of death  
in the morning  
making rain  
last on the skin  
of slum  
children

a dying out  
of windows  
part of the body  
                  eyes.

in the street  
loitering  
a head  
to be picked up  
by any body open  
without curtain

a man  
waiting for himself  
to take away  
the blind.

but otherwise  
in my time  
nothing memorable  
no soul.

but we are so beautiful sometimes my skeleton  
melts from my body like a cry  
losing sound  
and limp I think myself no further.  
the end of a pause. a death  
into something somewhere else beginning

after us.

(wanting to stretch a bridge  
that doesn't have the strength.  
so much waiting in that sometimes  
we so beautiful

an evening leaf on spider silk  
dangling from the moon  
in someone's eyes  
a second  
strangles you to them  
you cannot move  
and limp you let it pass  
and you forget)

remembering  
we are the bridge  
I climb to the top  
of myself looking down  
at the green  
black blood biting the girders  
of ages cannot hold  
an afterthought  
for long

the bridge  
a nobles non-alternative  
for the dying.

I am thirteen again  
waiting for my sperm  
somehow wise

with the grey-eyed wisdom of  
my death affair with Time  
I shall not follow

our children will only come  
upon themselves  
without us.  
silent the way  
light through glass  
without shadow.

WILLIAM J. HARRIS

# A Grandfather Poem

A grandfather poem  
must use words of great dignity.

It can not  
contain words like:  
Ubangi  
rolling pin  
popsicle,

but words like:  
Supreme Court  
graceful  
wise.

# Practical Concerns

From a distance, I watch  
a man digging a hole with a machine.  
I go closer.  
The hole is deep and narrow.  
At the bottom is a bird.

I ask the ditchdigger if I may climb down  
and ask the bird a question.  
He says, why sure.

It's nice and cool in the ditch.  
The bird and I talk about singing.  
Very little about technique.





# Formula for Blue Blues Babies

Babies born blue  
Soil tilled  
    cultivated  
to host thrill giving  
Poppies  
That will help them later  
to overcome  
If my contemporaries don't  
Get there first

# Yellow

birds & sunlight

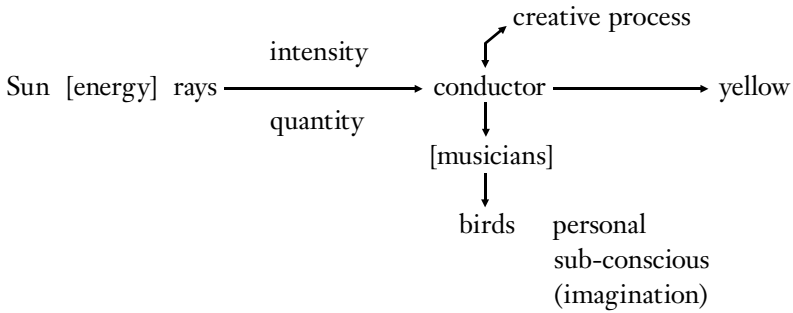
a piece for *bird calls*, *bells*

& *silence*

apprx. Time 3 min.

bells should be light tinkle or chime like to  
medium ring

varied improvisational rest



words

3 poets

DAVID HENDERSON

# Downtown-Boy Uptown

For Mary Williams

Downtown-boy uptown  
Affecting complicity of a Ghetto  
and a sub-renascent culture.  
Uptown-boy uptown for graces loomed to love.

Long have I walked these de-eternal streets  
Seeking a suffice or a number to start my count.  
Cat-Walk  
Grotesque Pelican manger  
Trampling Trapezium to tapering hourglass  
Behind the melting sun.

I love a girl then.  
My 140th St. gait varied from my downtown one.  
I changed my speed and form for lack of a better tongue.  
Then was, love you, Pudgy:  
Thin young woman with a fat black name.  
It is the nature of our paradox that has us  
Look to the wrong convex.

II  
I stand in my low east window looking down.  
Am I in the wrong slum?  
The sky appears the same;  
Birds fly, planes fly, clouds puff, days ago . . .  
I stand in my window.  
Can I ride from my de-eternal genesis?  
Does my Exit defy concentric fish-womb?  
Pudgy: your Mama always said Black man  
Must stay in his own balancing cup.

Roach on kneebone I always agreed.  
Was this Black man's smile enjoying guilt  
Like ofay?

*Long has it been that I've mirrored  
My entrances through silk screen.*

III

Did this Tragedian kiss you in anticipation  
Of blood-gush separating from your black mirror?  
Did I, in my complicity-grope relay the love  
Of a long gone epoch?

*sometimes questions are not questions*

If I desire to thrust once more, If I scamper to embrace  
Our tragedy in my oblique arms! . . . .

Nevermind.

You know.

You are not stupid, Pudgy.

You look for nothing of a Sun where you live,

Hourglass is intrinsic . . . where you live.

The regeneration in your womb is not of my body.

You have started your count

I cannot.

# Sketches of Harlem

To Langston Hughes

It was Tiny's habit  
to go down to THE GREAT WHITE WAY  
without understanding the subway ride.

In the Harlem morning  
when sirens remind you  
that you're burning—

Tiny Habit  
Handy's broad  
Hi-Hat Lounge 7th Avenue  
in the morning rabbit  
refuse mildew  
with Negro for a color  
and nothing for a hue.

## In Williams

in williams  
i would drink all 1100 springs of texas  
by way of the pearl beer company

in *le quartier*  
williams down n dirty bar & grill  
chickens dance on concrete floors  
as the sparrow flies Friday night  
jaz n dixie regal & falstaff lager  
local beer demons fix black lips

twin partners spar  
yogi trousers bend the knees  
inside that other body  
shirttails fly in moon winds  
charity hospital chloroform wall paper  
glows      fire & water talisman

*(Are you eligible?)*

crescent city beelzebub horns  
guide prowl cars below sea level  
thru gulf of mexico nights

off bourbon street  
the jass musicians are preserved  
in a hall  
old granddad stands sentry  
in alabaster /

en la calle burgundy  
black scarecrows surrender  
when the light of tony's superette / fails

piccolo say  
*thread the needle*  
*we gonna do it*

cat tails bump n grind  
puppet pelvis strings  
belly rein  
high in hand  
this i can do  
that i cannot  
the elderly gentleman laughs  
all the pictures off the wall /

razors in the wind  
*thread the needle*  
*thread the needle*  
*we gonna do it*



# Lock City

in a collection of sun  
lost in the street  
east or west  
sharp as black & white  
layers of light  
upon shade

*lost in the streaks*

as the wind runs horizontal water cycles  
the city is so bright  
everything seen  
shadows dance  
mad fall coats      scenery on rollers  
on amber st. marks place  
the tenuous line between eye and medulla  
east nor west

# Blackman in the Desecrated Synagogue—Living in the Last Days

Smoke reminds me of mother. She would say those who smell of smoke are poor. It hangs me up. When we go out we will smell like smoke and look like soot.

Piero Helizger

In candy kitchens      so many days  
 Watching fire. Elemental déjà vu. Scenes of symbolic  
 loft aloft. Visions like fire writhe. Too many memories  
 jibes with the rhythm of the blues. My background is  
 played on the radio twenty-four hours a day. The tunes.  
 The place. The space.  
 The tables the pipes the battles the odors the pipes and  
 yes the boo. All in re-embrace. Rembrace. Time of winning  
 who I left yesterday. Achievement symbolic waste of tired  
 men toiling over graveyard of indestructible bones.  
 Fireplace burns wood. Fire burns fast and slow—its—speed indecipherable.  
 Spires sparkle. Pops smoke and soot.  
 Of eternity lost tribes sitting afore fires looking into  
 the future. Past cognizance of selfsame event. Elemental  
 medium symbiosis fulcrum catalyst. Means light and heat  
 fire and water. Days rooms nights blaze tables pipes.

CALVIN HERNTON

# Being Exit in the World

Being exit in the world  
Is all over my hands  
In my mouth, hair  
Like syrup  
Being absurd in the world sticks between  
My fingers, and webs them.

Man cycled and ethos lorned  
Exit in the hole alone I defend it,  
I make it come alive, I come alive, explode.  
I fill it with my substance, my finger, tongue,  
Tears, anything.

Void in the world I exist.  
All the crevices of life are meat tight  
With the heat of my sweat,  
I abandon none; yet abandoned am I  
Alienated as at first sea eye keys unlocked  
Fish hook from earth worm.  
I am every project I fill, every mouth of food  
Is my being in every body;  
And being exits me, rots root and tree top,  
My essence visits a million dark rooms

Pulsing, I lie naked with sleepers;  
I choose them into being—  
It is my ecstasy,  
I am the leper who suffers to be.

# The Wall

Wall

They were driven everywhere  
And always from there were ghosts

She said stroke the tiger's bladder  
Wait until April rolls down that river  
And sing Where O Where O

Whispering in darkness they say  
The wall crumble into broken clocks  
The un-make-up mind continued making speeches

She said sweetheart I love that naked desperado  
Where O Where O

Wall!  
And they were driven everywhere

# Medicine Man

North of Dark  
North from Shango  
In kangaroo jungle of West Lost  
Dressed in hide of fox  
Dressed at last to kill  
Thirteen grains of sand  
Seven memories  
And Ten voices whispering in a rock

Time medicine riddle  
Time rock disguised in evil bite  
In devil flight  
Time encloses cycles  
Voice memory  
Revolve  
Age leaps upon the lips  
Hawk! Kiss of hatred  
Is turtle blood  
Is love's hair buried in an old tin can

Then I said to my knee bones  
Teach me how to bend  
My knee bones hardening seven memories  
Recalled what I fail to know  
In an estranged familiar tongue  
Said:  
    If you must go  
    Go by the abandoned railroad yard

The muddy ditch  
The lizard infested by-pass  
Flank to the left where an old black woman  
With prayers for you in her wrinkled hands

Cupped in an old-fashioned apron lap  
 Rocks eternally  
 Eternal rock  
 Rocking chair  
 Pause, leave a tear  
 Beneath the fallen viaduct  
 But do not linger  
 For the dead rock is never  
 Home is never where you were born

Oh Grandmother, figurine gris gris Goddess  
 Do I  
 Should I  
 Can I live so that I may die easily

Thirty years wrinkle  
 My belly folds  
 When I sit  
 When I stand  
 My belly spreads

Thirty years contending with Satan  
 The backbones breaking pain  
 Thirty times ten removed from gods  
 My fathers knew

Oh, Shango, man of mothers  
 Will you join us in trance  
 In eating the bowels of black man  
 Who is our victim  
 Who no longer is father of his man

And do I approve  
 If I do not approve  
 I have done somebody wrong  
 If I do approve  
 Why should I approve  
 Thirty times ten removed from voices  
 Ancestral

Birth is April fish belly.  
Love is love going the wrong way.  
And if I weep  
I weep for my twin rising out of  
The marriage womb leaping upon me mid-years

Hence I put away old handed-down ailments  
Put away hence common motives that drive men  
To conventional madness  
And weep for the mother of my twin  
And conjure Dance on pages of medicine book  
of white hands  
And by ceaseless slapping on genital organ  
And by eating of embryos taken from ovaries  
of the dead infant boy  
Leaping to meet me death  
If I weep at all

We may not live until love  
Until moon  
And if I approve  
Eating entrails of multitude of living victims  
It will not resurrect those already dead  
It will not heal ear and tongue of betrayal  
April is a time of betrayal  
And I do not approve  
I do not approve

And if I pray  
I pray not to God or Shango  
I pray to bellies of deep sea sharks  
And pray for us survived west lost  
North of dark in chains

After the present pain is gone.  
The hate who roars in the brain.  
The one who sucks my breath like an evil cigarette  
The one who crushes the young men and smashes them  
Who will be left to care

So shameless black men speak blood of their sisters!  
 And will it if I weep  
 Drive away juju of the fox  
 And if I pray  
 I have done somebody wrong

And if I do not pray  
 I pray for those who will live until moon  
 And to those residing in evil bite  
 And to the old black woman living in my wounds  
 And for the twin of the father who falters

I pray because I was born  
 And have sinned my birth to clay.

Wherefore I said to my knee bones  
 Instruct me in how to stand  
 Teach me how to love and how to die  
 And my bones wherein the hot oil  
 Of the sun is contained  
 Said:

Go by the abandoned railroad yard  
 Flank to the left your black mamma  
 Is rocking  
 Seven memories recall what  
 You know  
 North of the dark path in juju jungle  
 Age leaps upon the lips and caresses  
 The kiss of wisdom is love  
 Hold thirteen grains of sand  
 Look at the sun until it three-times  
 Blinds you, and listen  
 Listen to ten voices  
 Singing in that rocking chair

*Singing in that rock!*  
*Singing in that rock!*



## JOSEPH JARMAN

what we all  
would have of  
each other  
the men of  
the sides of our worlds  
contained  
in a window  
          yes”go contrary  
          go sing     “  
to give  
all you have  
yourself  
to each yourself  
yet never  
to remember  
          to look back  
into a void  
—it is time  
yes; to move from  
yourself to  
yourself again  
to know  
  
what you are  
  
song

## I

Non-cognitive aspects of the City  
 where Roy J's prophecies become  
 the causes of children

once quiet black blocks of stone  
 encasements/of regularity

sweet now  
 intellectual dada  
 of vain landscapes  
 the city

long history  
 upheaval  
 the heath valueless in its norm  
 now/gravestone or gingercakes  
 the frail feel of winter's wanting  
 crying to leaves they wander  
 seeing the capital vision  
 dada  
 new word out of the twenties of chaos  
 returned in the suntan jar  
 fruits of education/with others

non-cognitive — these motions  
 embracing sidewalk heroes  
 the city        each his own  
 where no one is more alone than any other  
 moan, it's the hip plea for see me, see me, i exist  
 exit the tenderness for power/black or white  
 no difference now/the power/city

## II

Could    have spirits    among    stones  
 uppity    the force    of    becoming  
 what    art    was made to    return

the vainness of our pipes, smoking  
near fountains, the church pronouncing  
the hell/ of where we are

Could have spirits among stones  
uppity the force of becoming  
what art was made to return  
the vainness of our pipes, smoking  
near fountains, the church pronouncing  
the hell/of where we are

couldhavespiritsamongstonesuppitytheforceof  
becomingwhatartwasmadetoreturnthevainnessof  
ourpipes,smokingnearfountains,thechurchpro  
nouncing  
the hell  
of where we are

### III

quiet city  
wanting each to stop the/pain  
it must be done — expresso  
old fashioned sheet about boy thighs  
war—their homeliness  
common tools  
the knife and gun  
castration in store  
the tarred spotlight against  
what hope we have

non-cognitive  
these elements of how  
no more

shall it be better  
the passion of other saints  
ungodly  
shall poison drinking hoodlum talk

to describe the callousness  
of these penny fares  
among/my friends they say they are  
the hair torches  
eggs for these deaths  
internal zones of where they go  
where they—come from  
(in the language of the street)  
internal  
these states on planes  
farout as what these lives become  
thoughts  
final last work there  
spots for treason  
last word  
non-cognitive  
doom

TED JOANS

# The Overloaded Horse

On a battu le cheval, au mois de Mai and they ate him  
his buttons were crushed into powder for their soup  
his hair was wovened into ship sails  
his foreskin was sewn by an antique dealer  
his manure supplied several generations with xmas gifts  
and now they speak bad of him, the horse, the head of their family  
On a battu le cheval, au mois de Mai and they ate him  
his earwax was packaged in America  
his rump was displayed on early morning garbage trucks  
his crossed eye is on loan to a soap museum  
his manners have since been copied by millions of glass blowers  
and still yet, they spit at his stable, the horse, the head of the house  
On a battu le cheval, au mois de Mai and they ate him  
his ribs were riveted outside an airbase  
his knees bend in shadows of Russia  
his shoelaces are used to hang lovely violinists  
his dignity is exported as a dairy product to the Orient  
and in spite of it all, those he loved most, lie and cheat horse's heirs  
On a battu le cheval, au mois de Mai and they ate him  
his tears now drown the frowning yachtsmen  
his urine flows rapidly across millionaires estates  
his annual vomit destroys twelve dictator's promises a year  
his teeth tear wide holes in the scissor maker's Swiss bank account  
and even in death, filled with revenge, they eat him, again and again  
they deny and lie as they speak bad of the horse, the head of their  
house, the father of their home

PERCY JOHNSTON

## Round About Midnight, Opus #6

Night descends while  
The coal-oil driven wind  
Taxis with six-pod force  
Past orange and white chessboard  
Sheds, past cargo scales  
In mudwalls which have the  
Stillness of chockwheel monoplanes.  
I rest on a concrete apron  
In onyx night,  
'Round about midnight, with  
Navigation lamps inactive.  
Sleep, with the force of  
Twenty-four thousand thrusted  
Pounds, arrived unburnished,  
But the gas turbine wind  
Reduces our plexiglass blisters  
To polyethelene lumps  
Chilling chockwheel, monoplane me.  
Dawn flies the holding pattern,  
Waiting for the tower's wink.  
Dawn kisses the runway,  
Decelerating into morning.

# Lexington Avenue Express

As I sit squeezing lemon juice on dacron shirt, beside  
 Sunglassed brown conductor who straws the final bottle of pop  
 Suspended above a Yonkers Raceway omnibus, facing  
 The patriarch of every jukebox, who contains  
 A size twelve cola model, I  
 Become the Lexington Avenue Express; I walk through  
 Myself even as I stop at every local station from  
 Woodlawn to 125th, I even stop at 86th, I bounce along  
 bantam-like on superway vaulting the Bronx.

I walk through myself, forgetting  
 How many faded numbers I am, forgetting  
 How many dull black fans I am, forgetting  
 How many tons of copper  
 Wire I am at home with, until I  
 Leave my unself and locomote my real  
 Self, and in disbelief, I am outside  
 My two selves until I discover terra  
 Incognita at Burnside station.

Oh points of alternating incandescent thrill!  
 Oh pin-prick rows of white contentment, and  
 Filtered triplets, filtered spraylettes of full  
 Chorused amber! Oh catatonic reds and intermittent  
 Flashes of blue! We're roaring by 103d street girders  
 Through a sacred concrete catacomb, through the barrel  
 Arch vault while my brakes moan on Sparrows Point  
 Fabricated rails from ambivalent strains of my  
 Preternatural movements which couple my several selves.

We're at Grand Central, time for all of us to leave me.  
 What did you expect for a lousy token—love!—or love?

## to paul robeson, opus no. 3

## I

A. N. Marquis has erased  
 Your song, your Raritan relatives  
 Sneer. Your brothers  
 Fire 24 point boldface projectiles, saluting  
 Felons—and forget your song.

They've forgot the chorus  
 Of your hymn which memorialized  
 Oriental urban renewal;  
 They've forgot your song  
 Which stood Brooklyn on its feet  
 Certain technicolor leaf  
 Saturday afternoons.

The new song's sung  
 By maintenance men  
 Who unplug coinchangers,  
 Who unscramble binary code;  
 By your brothers who have the  
 Prime trinitarian person on  
 Auction block,  
 Airconditioning machines are  
 More efficacious.  
 The new song's sung  
 By your billboard controlled  
 Sisters who nocturnally wreck  
 Our genetic structure.

## II

She's no girl for Bootsie,  
 This blonde who listens to



The new song, she's more  
Like an E. Simms Campbell  
Harem princess who's stretched out  
On a padded cushion which  
Conceals the tentwall covered  
Taperecorder which no longer  
Plays your song.  
She's like ones you used to  
See in Narragansett crushing  
Gin-dipped olives or pastel pink  
Legs akimboed on  
Room-sized carpets—  
Damning the innate urge  
That prods her to alight  
Ellington's subway and race  
Down 125th to be your  
Desdemona, while you stand like  
Diz or Miles in cocktail glass  
Rooms where you command her brother  
Where you face them both  
In this Hilton or Sheraton ballroom,  
And order greens and chitt'lins.

# Dewey Square, 1956

Scrawny-necked black girls  
 In slingshot shoes, grimy  
 Hotdog and sauerkraut vendors,  
 Broken windows where I once wore  
 The green letter “T”—  
 And something revolutionary for  
 Unkinking hair (written in Spanish)  
 Where the Breyer’s ice cream sign  
 Had been.  
 All these data lead to the  
 Conclusion that I  
 Cannot re-live Brick Bradford  
 Flash Gordon Jack Armstrong days  
 When somebody from Kansas  
 Thought he’d cause Eleanor’s  
 Husband to read want ads

Was it here that I erased  
 Santa’s name with elevator rides  
 When Macy’s truck beat  
 Daddy home from rehearsal?

It was my Ulysses year  
 When I sailed the Western  
 Union A. T. & T. sea from  
 Columbus Plaza to Herald Square  
 When I mixed tuna and milk  
 And chocolate-peanut bars.

But I didn’t speak to strangers,  
 Being a snob in knee pants,  
 Since none of our family was  
 On relief or worked for WPA.

But passing the electric eye  
 Enroute to 7th Avenue (Daddy

Was mad with Ellington) I  
Decided to be an electric  
Train engineer, but Daddy  
Said it was easier  
To become a member of  
The House of Representatives.

Now, 80 seasons since I  
Coveted the cab of the gold  
Trimmed black engine, I  
Realize that nothing  
Has changed but my postal zone.

# BLAUPUNKT

(choruses Pepper Adams never took)

Paradiddle, paradiddle flam-  
 Wham  
 A toot for Zoot  
 Six choruses for sweet Rose Cobb  
 Kadoom kadoom  
 Ahh Bahh Ahhhh Bahhh Ahhhh Dahh Boo  
 Bahht Doo Toooo  
 Make your eyes go white on a  
 Saturday nite like Leo Parker  
 at Club Bali for Paul Mann  
 'fore Korea —  
 Pound, Pound — unhuh-huh  
 Let Gerry Mulligan  
 make money  
 while you & Zoot  
 Make music.  
 A bahtt for Zoot  
 tsit, tsit cymballlll  
 Boo dahh zummm

STEPHEN JONAS

## For LeRoi Jones

maybe that “quest thing”  
could be “tightened” maybe  
my things “have changed too”  
maybe a lot of things  
Like now you take out back here:  
2 girls bounce ball  
against a brickwall avoiding  
the scrawl’d to the right of  
white perpendicular  
“F  
O  
U  
L”-line.

BOOK V

As to  
 “how do you write a poem”  
     you don’t  
 you come to go to hell  
 by stormy seas in a boat  
 losing all companions even  
     losing the shirt upon yr. back  
 & darker still it is with some  
 just a matter of  
     bad blood.  
 & those (anthologists) can’t  
 just “Leave the Word Alone”, If  
 information can be tampered with  
 how can you know. The flow  
 into coherency  
     not to be interrupted by  
 “deletions” or was it a case of  
 downright  
     dishonesty.

(Departing you promised to write  
     kissing me full on the lips. I  
             was overcome. Realizing the deep  
             affection and warmth  
                             that moved you to it .

It is from that same depth  
             within me  
                             moved me to this Poem.

Drinking together, we discussed Poetry  
     and I read you a poem I had  
     recently written. Later the conversation  
     fell to pure nonsense which we both pursued  
 with equal abandon. Remembering your visit  
     I am cheered as I am saddened

remembering your departure. Too  
quickly taken. May it be so with Love  
which I liken to the Poem.)

That the rhythmic order of the  
Hellenes be not  
imposed upon the chaotic  
materials of our daily lives  
but that we build within  
a comparable state of fluidity  
to meet that outer state  
of fluidity  
clarity and simplicity are  
the outstanding two characteristics  
--defined upon two planes  
w/a neutral background  
and that in building your whatever  
that the purpose be  
opaque  
Architecture(Mr. Maximus)  
is primarily an art of space,too  
Frank L. Wright  
but would not fuse Athens or was it  
Corinth with steel. Lineal  
& dynamic the line should be  
and this to be followed by  
Sullivan's Law form  
as it does follow  
function.

From the complex to distill  
a fundamental. The ideal  
is human.

NOTE: Jefferson replacing Athena  
slaying a giant  
like a sonnet.

Light more Light  
cried the dying Goethe  
that is the binding medium  
unites mortar to bricks  
holds things together.







to build within  
     a comparable state of  
     fluidity to meet  
 an outer state of  
                     fluidity.  
 from the stone head  
     the sensual lip of ambition  
 no word has come  
                     --burning  
     no word  
         only the fleck of light  
 burning in the pupil eye  
 where he has drilled for light  
 gives an impression of  
     alert awareness  
 an awareness of eternal light  
 --lest we forget the eternal repetition  
 of the eye in the spread fan of  
                                     the peacock  
 or the simplicity defined on 2 planes  
                     with a neutral background.  
 so that  
     nose in the shit like  
 a sick dog at  
             the vomitorium  
 --considering  
             considering the defects  
 inherent in all  
             art-form:  
 our own national dome, the Hermes  
     missing a hand, San Francisco's  
     shaky can and Venus  
                     busted  
 I have come to build upon my own  
 mistakes  
     thefts  
         lies  
 half mad in the half light  
 (straining over the bad reproduction)

to see myself

among those sooty frescoes  
 in the transepts (Franciscan Basilica)  
 O Cimabue O Kakuzo

dont look back

from yr. uppity air  
 the sun has blotted out the convulsion  
 of the anti-christ  
 figure gestures of mourning women  
 and the terrified jews  
 to a trumpet blast quaking the tombs open  
 to a cosmic terror.

Purloind that's a word back for it  
 from the colosseum

structural facts, these are

to build no to construct damn you  
 a Farnese Palace  
 a further design to lure you into the poem  
 housing

Edison Marbles

passages from old narratives  
 structural lies covered by concrete  
 facing a brown painted over

White House

DEVICE

this is a design ;  
 a plan to ' a snake on the brain;  
 a pattern; an/and

arrangement of parts

WHAT I'M TELLING YOU IS

--forget it

# “.. AN EAR INJURED BY HEARING THINGS”

(after a statement of Jack Spicer’s)

thoughts march  
 across the page  
 orderly  
 the mind  
 hems & haws  
 de-  
     fining the line a  
 metrical dance  
 not, I caution you  
 preconceived  
 free? only  
 the mind  
 violating  
 the law taking  
 exceptions to  
 create(never to  
 new laws(oh,no a  
 flexibility  
 it seeks  
 (tender vine shoots  
 from the old year’s  
 vine stock(s)  
 ten-  
     tacles up  
 the wall  
 feelers out to  
 the new ways  
 design?  
 an arrangement  
 of parts

mere-

ly (particulars  
of the Poem  
traced(for the mind  
sketches  
technique?  
long since  
burrowd under  
but the pattern  
's obvious as are  
markings on birds  
form? yes  
what else  
looming before you  
underbrush  
cleard that the spaces show  
clean thru  
to a finishd what  
have you.

# Orgasm 0

w/outRomans  
 (Niew Yorc & Sun in hydra  
 darkness—struggle—light  
 . . . and out goes the Fool's Canto-  
 my B.B.C.  
 (might at that be a big bad 'orgasm' .) 'But  
 you have'nt got that far yet'. You know.  
 Joel, (Oppenheimer) (Outsider 2)  
 in the building of the  
 Tower of Babel ,  
 it wasnt words.  
 They run out of flesh. Fresh-maide  
 wholly by the Word. . . .  
 Law(es) .  
 per Boston Blackie No 2 afta Olson's  
 No.1 ? "I donno." (as is said of my Miltonian  
 John of what chapter what  
 verse  
 Revelations,  
 sez;"I donno".  
 But, "Jack" to the Boston clack. And the 'theosophy-s'ladies  
 . . . und so on. tho' the old Brunswick wuz as it wuz  
 sackd about their heels  
 (but mind,you,sensible Boston ones. FOR  
 we WALK, Mister Dorn, and not to  
 "Tache a kabe". A strange lyrical  
 strain, brought on(I have no doubt-ov-it)  
 by the long wide open spaces (George  
 Stanley's 'blanks'—to borrow one)  
 between what else but latin cribs.  
 (That shd take the wind out ov  
 even Miss Moore's  
 prairie skirts.)

(laugh,

motherless sons-of-bitches, the while

Jack Spicer's cultivated

white flowers wither..uncelebrated . . .

I will land you all in Ghandi's Hell—and an

oath (un heard))

THIS IS FOR REAL AND THE VISION IN PAINTING  
[(FITZGERALD)

("Marshall, The Doer, Take Command. An Order.

THIS IS NO POEM

THIS IS, JACK . . . FOUR (THE LAW)

ATTENTION. There are Ladies

"PRESENTE."

AMERICA: spit. swine-sty—

[hammer—  
(no chisel) .!works!.. "plays with 'm self' and all to  
an gyration of hips (Browning, noted it)  
not to forget: "this is not to be published:" hand-pressed and hand-  
pushd" all as tho' the 'wafer' were to wipe-ass.  
(This, a promise I made to Garcia Lorca. To be full-filled  
and all the five o'clocks in the afternoons. My God, how much  
can You put up with?)  
..all for a Hell in four non-discriminatory  
colours. .the raw of it.

But, those who have ears

let 'em

or let 'em go          bury their dead. per J.C.

And there is a serious laxity

in New York . . . (that I'm

sure a few Maximus Maxims

might at that cure).

"We shall see" sd. the perhaps blind-man

as contra-jour

oh le fish market. And the "green-grocer"

seems to be passing. Last one, I think wuz,

Kerry Village (South End, but don't say it there..cause they  
don't know the Back Bay halts at the New York New Haven Hartford

Ry) Ole French Quarter . . . Melrose, Lafayette, Knox  
(dead end) and St. Cecilia whereis or wuz the





them welsh White Rabbits . Sta quiet  
 Dunn, Joseph, in the hole “they” dug for you . . .  
 at that my Andreas Divus.

SO the real problem,  
 Ed Dorn IS

& what to do between sides.  
 But NOT'tache ah kabe'. Anglo-Saxon

Common Law  
 OR, (did'ya heah 'that?')  
 Henry James, yes,  
 & reasons PROPRIETY. Not white-trash  
 littering a Ben Shahn con-creepin lot . . .

radders and chains to teeth-on  
 Or as my 'bishop' ,Edwardius  
 the Marshall:

“but not as Classic as  
 your (meaning 'my') Mrs. Melville Smith. & a 'thank you'  
 to the Bishop. You too shall be immortal.

( Not withstanding'losses' or mis-nomers mis-placed:  
 The Rice & Jonah & the Whale Poems ( the latter which  
 ,bless my soul, Charles, (Olson) recaptured to me mine. ( Oh, ov corze  
 it's fun) . . . N'est pas? That was for gertrude  
 Stein, who did for herself . . . also fun. Tho' as to the  
 re/ Jonah and Rico Poems: Whom would you trust to  
 without malice in yr Archives? Respondex  
 with much s'il vou plais and little more of  
 but do spare us

Apologetics, bu jeezus.,  
 et le space allowed & the hassle w/ the little maggotzines:  
 that's U Ouk me et I O uk U seeing we both  
 as tares. J.C. again.

Or the ultimately : where nothin' ever happens, save  
 the thிக்க 'as laard. For whome we must observe  
 the image's impact would have to be in the sign of the ram,  
 to that is make home. And save yr

Greek 'n Latin til  
 yr see the white  
 of the old timers. What 'timers'  
 seem to me passing. At which point, Chaucer might well as  
 passed over into prose. For, then the Foot is hung-up and well

it might be. . . but that is the Doctrine and you would not appreciate it. (Spicer, how the hell do the Dodgers

make out there?) (or to turn on with Andy Jackson in the 'kitchen cabinet') Bringing, thus the return of the white trash ov the

shrug-ov-the-shoulder

(still w/Henry James)

blades (but not

"wind ivah water", Caucaus Mts or some under world ov the old world that the Hellenes passed over)

For the Azure

yeah, they taking an old word , they new-found-land/ w/sea to say thalassa

and for 2 thousand years plus

J.C., the two mythologies, yr gran pappys (not the dirty dozens) that's kaka ..

Suspect 'Novelty' ; pass on what's Old. as to "what's old"?

See Orgasm (had 'ta

go check merself

yeah, VII.

And keep those Roman numbers.

And also /and Maximus (cagey,

the old fox & the tiger's eye also a real gazz. . but softly ,sir)

Tho' as to "Baaston": Privy. (Like a tenth muse) —still AWOL) "OUTSIDERS" sta ferma and we like it that way .

The Gheulfs. Pazzi and latter-day Maffia.

We "dine"

Wedonot "eat"(unless of course

some high church mustification of

Eucharistic mis-

behavior and then retire to

"The Rectory" and Ed Marshall, "The Bishop"

prepares yr doctrinale to

oh Cantabridgian latinity . . .

but not necessarily

final resor. Oh I could go on Farther Feeney or

Kneezy Miller to the "Freshmen" in "the yard."

All, of corse, to further digression.

Oh yes, it's still here( The King's

English

that is)

and "the queen" IS

MOST conSURVative . . .

(due to neo-Confucian which what. What else?)

Sd. "Rites"? Yes.

POETRY? Yess. ---and the best (A.B. Spellman) NOT bazeball &

POOL? --Heavens to Betsy

and ov "the hustler" too.)

I do so hate to

descend to you "people"? For, whereas,

there is still

The Madonna of the Future. Henry James or

Columbia Record Catalog with for 52 & 3, 7 MOZART

Motets for the unaccompanied male voice, but try to

get it, or a

four letter word, for that matter,

to end this canto: AMOR, but

not before p.s. to Master's 'ignorance of coin, credit, and

circulation'. . . .

finally all is just

downrite ignorance of all matters circulation:

( & my cat just broke up--Selah

but to still end this canto

AMOR

# A MUDDLE

“Psychology”

. . . and I look straight at it;  
 it has no handles. I try to pick it up  
     and it slops over. I can't encompass it. It  
     is not a dish for the altar. A novel.

Must be, since no historic record  
     to give dignity to a vulgar clamour  
                     to our attention. Careful, tho'  
 in passing, you note it. Oh, among the un-  
 precedented occurrences (Book of Divination  
     slopping over into a Bestiary) in an age  
 itself too preoccupied with wonder of the un-  
 precedented.

## A LITTLE MAGIC

you didn't show.  
in june you wrote:

“coming by late  
july”.

i layed out the  
manuscripts

and just the right  
books

as Pound did before  
for you in that last poem.

july passed and no word.  
august stands  
in shallow pools an-  
ticipating september  
thot

there is no “you”  
i invented

to say:  
“who will come  
afta me

singing as well as i do”?

lens

skill'd metrics  
 the true  
 ars poetica

footworks  
     minds perculator

lets not  
 i.e.  
     back to

walt whitman's  
 (blank)

cleft'd foot 'n  
 half hid 'n

thicket  
     's shaggy  
       leg .

## IV

this entire  
    horror shew  
so called “free world”

is a paid  
    political announcement  
brought to you by

the international con-  
    spiracy of pronouns  
we dare not utter here

for fear of re-  
    prisals





JUNE JORDAN

## All the World Moved

All the world moved next to me strange  
I grew on my knees  
in hats and taffeta trusting  
the holy water to run  
like grief from a brownstone  
cradling.

Blessing a fear of the anywhere  
face too pale to be family  
my eyes wore ribbons  
for Christ on the subway  
as weekly as holiness  
in Harlem.

God knew no East no West no South  
no Skin nothing I learned like  
traditions of sin but later  
life began and strangely  
I survived His innocence  
without my own.

# Toward a Personal Semantics

if I do take somebody's word on  
it means I don't know and you have to  
believe if you just don't know

how do I dare to stand as  
still as I am still standing

arrows create me  
but I am no wish

after all the plunging  
myself is no sanctuary  
birds feed and fly inside me shattering  
the sullen spell of any  
accidental

eyeless storm to twist and sting  
the tree of my remaining  
like the wind

## San Juan

Accidental far into the longer light  
or smoking  
clouds that lip whole hillsides  
spoken nearly foliated full  
a free green raveling alive  
as blue as pale  
as rectilinear

the red the eyebrow  
covering a privacy a space  
particular ensnarement  
flowering roulette

place opening knees night water

color the engine air  
on Sunday  
silhouette the sound

and silently

some miles away the mountain  
the moon  
the same

# Bus Window

bus window  
show himself a  
wholesale florist rose somebody  
help the wholesale  
dollar blossom spill to soil  
low pile  
on wanton windowsills  
whole  
saleflorists seedy  
decorations startle            small

BOB KAUFMAN

# I Have Folded My Sorrows

I have folded my sorrows into the mantle of summer night,  
Assigning each brief storm its allotted space in time,  
Quietly pursuing catastrophic histories buried in my eyes.  
And yes, the world is not some unplayed Cosmic Game,  
And the sun is still ninety-three million miles from me,  
And in the imaginary forest, the shingled hippo becomes  
    the gay unicorn.  
No, my traffic is not with addled keepers of yesterday's  
    disasters,  
Seekers of manifest disembowelment on shafts of yesterday's  
    pains.  
Blues come dressed like introspective echoes of a journey.  
And yes, I have searched the rooms of the moon on cold  
    summer nights.  
And yes, I have refought those unfinished encounters.  
    Still, they remain unfinished.  
And yes, I have at times wished myself something different.

The tragedies are sung nightly at the funerals of the poet;  
The revisited soul is wrapped in the aura of familiarity.

# East Fifth Street (N.Y.)

Twisting brass, key of G, tenement stoned,  
Singing Jacob's song, with Caribbe emphasis.

Flinging the curls of infant rabbis, gently,  
Into the glowing East Side night.

Esther's hand, in Malinche's clasped,  
Traps the fly of evening, forever.

Ancient log-rolling caps of Caribbe waves  
Splashing crowded harbors of endless steps.

Angry fire-eyed children clutch transient winds,  
Singing Gypsy songs, love me now, love me now.

The echoes return, riding the voice of the river,  
AS TIME CRIES OUT, ON THE SKIN OF AN African drum.

# Lorca

Split ears of morning earth green now,  
Love and death twisted in tree arms,  
Come love, throw out your nipple  
to the teeth of a passing clown.

Spit olive pits at my Lorca.  
Give Harlem's king one spoon,  
At four in the never noon.  
Scoop out the croaker eyes  
of rose flavored Gypsies  
Singing García,  
In lost Spain's  
Darkened noon.

## Picasso's Balcony

Pale morning light, dying in shadows, loving the earth in midday rays,  
 casting blue to skies in rings, sowing powder trails across balconies.  
 Hung in evening to swing gently, on shoulders of time, growing old, yet  
 swallowing events of a thousand nights of dying and loving, all blue.  
 Gone to that tomb, hidden in cubic air, breathing sounds of sorrow.

Crying love rising from the lips of wounded flowers, wailing, sobbing,  
 breathing uneven sounds of sorrow, lying in wells of earth, throbbing,  
 covered with desperate laughter, out of cool angels, spread over night.  
 Dancing blue images, shades of blue pasts, all yesterdays, tomorrows,  
 breaking on pebbled bodies, on sands of blue and coral, spent.

Life lying heaped in mounds, with volcano mouth tops, puckered, open,  
 sucking in atoms of air, sprinkling in atoms of air, coloring space, with  
 flecks of brilliance, opaline glistening, in eyes, in flames.

Blue flames burning, on rusty cliffs, overlooking blue seas, bluish. In sad  
 times, hurt seabirds come to wail in ice white wind, alone, and wail in  
 starlight wells, cold pits of evening, and endings, flinging rounds of flame  
 sheeted balls of jagged bone, eaten, with remains of torn flowers, over-  
 whelming after-thoughts, binding loves, classic pains, casting elongated  
 shadows, of earthly blue.

Stringing hours together in thin melodic lines, wrapped around the pearl  
 neck of morning, beneath the laughter, of sad sea birds.



# NOVELS FROM A FRAGMENT IN PROGRESS

RETURN TRIP SEATED ERECT ON THE SINGING TRAIN IN  
[DELIBERATE  
ATTEMPT NOT TO FALL ASLEEP, USE OF IMAGINATION TO  
[AVOID SWAYING  
PEOPLE, UNREAL VISIONS OF MURALS ON RED RESTROOM  
[FLOORS, SLEEP  
URGE GETTING STRONGER, SCREWING UP THE EYES TO  
[A PERFECT BREAST,  
ROUGH STOP, STRONG WISH FOR EROTICISM DEPARTING  
[NATIONS CARRYING  
BIG PAPER BAGS, WONDERING ABOUT THE DENTS IN  
[BOXER'S FACES,  
REJECTION OF THE SEXUAL ASPECT OF SWEAT, PICTURE  
[OF THE MOTORMAN  
AS THE MYSTIC FERRYMAN, HIS FACE WOULD EVER BE  
[DESCRIBED IN  
NOVELS, AWARENESS OF MUSIC OUT BY THE WHEELS,  
[SERIOUS ATTEMPT TO  
WRITE SONGS, SURPRISED AT MY OWN NAIVETE, AMUSED  
[BY SOUNDS LIKE  
ONE I CAN'T WRITE, APPROACHING STATION, EYES OF  
[SLIDING DOOR,  
WAITING FOR IT TO OPEN, MORE PEOPLE, ANOTHER STOP.  
[IT ALWAYS  
HAPPENS, BRING THIS OFF WITHOUT ANNOYING. ALWAYS  
[WATCH THEM GET  
OFF BEFORE THE BIG EVENT, I ALMOST GIVE UP AT TIMES  
[LIKE THESE.  
HOW TO SAVE IT. REPETITIOUS FRUSTRATION, NOW,  
[MYTHIC HOURS

WITHOUT LOSING A GRIP ON MY SANITY & FREQUENTLY,  
[WOMEN REALIZE MY  
CONCENTRATION TO MASTER THIS TRICK, WILLING TO  
[RIDE PAST THEIR  
DESTINATION.

# THE CELEBRATED WHITE-CAP SPELLING BEE

THE CELEBRATED WHITE-CAP SPELLING BEE WAS WON  
[BY A SPELLING BEE.  
A STAR ASKED A POINTED QUESTION: CAN A CIRCLE WRAP  
[AROUND ITSELF?  
A STILLED PYGMY ANSWERS, FROM THE BACK OF MY  
[MIND, ARE WE DEEP DWARFS  
AND HAVE OUR SAY IN THE AFFAIRS OF FLOWERS, A  
[MISSPELLED BEE MAKES A SIGN.  
BLUE IS ONE OF THE MANY FACES OF BLUE. HOW QUICK A  
[RED WHALE SINGS THE BLUES.  
WHEN AN OUTBOARD SOLAR BOAT SINKS, I WILL WALK  
[THE SUN'S PERIMETER, CURVING UP.  
ONCE I PUT MY INITIALS ON A MAGNIFICENT CROCODILE.  
WE WALKED A RIVER'S FLOOR. A BIRD I HEARD SING IN A  
[TREE IN THE GULF OF MEXICO . . .  
BIRD SONG OF LOVELY SALT, A LOVE SONG.  
I CHANGE MY MIND, AND THE NEW ONE IS OLDER . . . A  
[DRUM BEATS  
BEHIND MY RIBS.

SOMEONE DREW A PORTRAIT ON A WAVE . . . IT WOVE AS  
[WE PASSED, DOING KNOTS, RUST HANDS.  
SWELLS STOP WHEN THE SEA IS ALARMED. HELL COOLS  
[ITS FIRES OF ANTICIPATION.  
WHEN OCEANS MEET, OCEANS BELOW, REUNIONS OF  
[SHIPS, SAILORS, GULLS, BLACK-HAIRED GIRLS.  
THE SEA BATHES IN RAIN WATER, MORNING, MOON &  
[LIGHT, THE CLEAN SEA.  
GREAT FARMS ON THE OCEAN FLOOR, GREEN CROPS OF  
[SUNKEN HULLS GROWING SHELLS.  
SEAS THAT GROW FROM A HOLE BORN IN A TURTLE'S  
[BACK, A SEA IN A TORTOISE SACK.

FISH GO NAKED ALL THEIR LIVES. WHEN CAUGHT, THEY  
 [DIE OF EMBARRASSMENT.  
 MANY, MANY YEARS AGO, THERE WERE MANY, MANY  
 [YEARS TO GO & MANY, MANY MILES TO COME.  
 THE LAND IS A GREAT, SAD FACE. THE SEA IS A HUGE  
 [TEAR, COMPASSION'S TWINS.

IF THERE IS A GOD BENEATH THE SEA, HE IS DRUNK AND  
 [TELLING FANTASTIC LIES.  
 WHEN THE MOON IS DRINKING, THE SEA STAGGERS LIKE  
 [A DRUNKEN SAILOR.  
 POETS WHO DROWN AT SEA, THEMSELVES, BECOME  
 [BEAUTIFUL WET SONGS, CRANE.  
 A LOOKOUT MAKES A LANDFALL, A FALLING LAND MAKES  
 [A LOOKOUT.  
 AT THE ENDS OF THE WATER, THE HOLY MARRIAGE OF  
 [THE HORIZONS.  
 THE SEA, DILUTED CONTINENTS LOVING FALLEN SKIES,  
 [TIME BEFORE  
 TIME, TIME PAST, TIME COMING INTO TIME. TIME  
 [NOW, TIME TO  
 COME, TIMELESS, FLOWING INTO TIME.  
 EVERYTHING IS THE SEA. THE SEA IS EVERYTHING,  
 [ALWAYS . . .  
 ETERNALLY, I SWEAR.

# Oregon

You are with me Oregon,  
 Day and night, I feel you, Oregon.  
 I am Negro. I am Oregon.  
 Oregon is me, the planet  
 Oregon, the state Oregon, Oregon.  
 In the night, you come with bicycle wheels,  
 Oregon you come  
 With stars of fire. You come green.  
 Green eyes, hair, arms,  
 Head, face, legs, feet, toes  
 Green, nose green, your  
 Breasts green, your cross  
 Green, your blood green.  
 Oregon winds blow around  
 Oregon. I am green, Oregon.  
 Oregon lives in me,  
 Oregon, you come and make  
 Me into a bird and fly me  
 To secret places day and night.  
 The secret places in Oregon,  
 I am standing on the steps  
 Of the holy church of Crispus  
 Attucks St. John the Baptist,  
 the holy brother of Christ,  
 I am talking to Lorca. We  
 Decide the Hart Crane trip, home to Oregon  
 Heaven flight from Gulf of  
 Mexico, the bridge is  
 Crossed, and the florid black found.

# A Terror Is More Certain

A terror is more certain than all the rare desirable popular songs i know, than even now when all of my myths have become . . . , & walk around in black shiny galoshes & carry dirty laundry to & fro, & read great books & don't know criminals intimately, & publish fat books of the month & have wifeys that are lousy in bed & never realize how bad my writing is because i am poor & symbolize myself.

A certain desirable is more terror to me than all that's rare, How come they don't give an academic award to all the movie stars that die? They're still acting, ain't they? Even if they are dead, it should not be held against them, after all they still have the public on their side, how would you like to be a dead movie star & have people sitting on your grave?

A rare me is more certain than desirable, that's all the terror, there are too many basketball players in this world & too much progress in the burial industry, let's have old fashioned funerals & stand around and forgive & borrow wet handkerchiefs and sneak out for drinks & help load the guy into the wagon, & feel sad & make a date with the widow & believe we don't see all of the people sinking into the subways going to basketball games & designing baby sitters at Madison Square Garden.

A certain me is desirable, what is so rare as air in a Poem, why can't i write a foreign movie like all the other boys my age, I confess to all the crimes committed during the month of April, but not to save my own neck, which is adjustable, & telescopes into any size noose, I'm doing it to save Gertrude Stein's reputation, who is secretly flying model airplanes for the underground railroad stern gang of oz, & is the favorite in all the bouts . . . not officially opened yet Holland tunnel is the one who writes untrue phone numbers.

A desirable poem is more than rare, & terror is certain, who wants to be a poet & work a twenty four hour shift, they never ask you first, who wants to listen to the radiator play string quartets all night. I want to be allowed

not to be, suppose a man wants to swing on kiddie swings, should people be allowed to stab him with queer looks & drag him off to bed & its no fun on top of a lady when her hair is full of shiny little machines & your ass reflected in that television screen, who wants to be a poet if you fuck on t.v. & all those cowboys watching.

# UNHISTORICAL EVENTS

APOLLINAIRE

NEVER KNEW ABOUT ROCK GUT CHARLIE  
WHO GAVE FIFTY CENTS TO A POLICEMAN  
DRIVING AROUND IN A 1927 NASH

APOLLINAIRE

NEVER MET CINDER BOT TOM BLUE,  
FAT SAXOPHONE PLAYER WHO LAUGHED  
WHILE PLAYING AND HAD STEEL TEETH

APOLLINAIRE

NEVER HIKED IN PAPIER MACHE WOODS  
AND HAD A SCOUTMASTER WHO WROTE A SONG  
[ABOUT  
IVORY SOAP AND HAD A BAPTIST FUNERAL

APOLLINAIRE

NEVER SAILED WITH RIFF RAFF ROLFE  
WHO WAS RICH IN CALIFORNIA, BUT  
HAD TO FLEE BECAUSE HE WAS QUEER

APOLLINAIRE

NEVER DRANK WITH LADY CHOPPY WINE,  
PEERLESS FEMALE DRUNK, WHO TALKED TO SHRUBS  
AND MADE CHILDREN SING IN THE STREETS

APOLLINAIRE

NEVER SLEPT ALL NIGHT IN AN ICEHOUSE,  
WAITING FOR SEBASTIAN TO RISE FROM THE  
[AMMONIA  
TANKS  
AND SHOW HIM THE LITTLE UNPAINTED ARROWS.



# The Biggest Fisherman

singular prints filed along damp banks,  
supposed evidence of fouled strings, all,

breached dikes of teeth hewn agate statues  
scaly echoes in eroded huts of slate and gristle.

Mildewed toes of pastoral escapes, mossy charades,  
cane towered blind, smooth blister on watern neck

angry glowing fish in eniwetok garments and pig tusks  
alarmed horror of black croakers, finned hawks sinking.

collectors of fresh teeth and souls of night vision demons  
taxidermy fiesta of revolutionary aquatic holidays lost.

breeding hills of happy men, of no particular bent, or none,  
condemned to undreamlike beauty of day to day to day,  
deprived of night, ribbon waves of newly glowing fish.

# CROOTY SONGO

DERRAT SLEGELATIONS, FLO GOOF BABER,  
 SCRASH SHO DUBIES, WAGO WAILO WAILO.  
 GEED BOP NAVA GLIED, NAVA GLIED NAVA,  
 SPLEERIEDER, HUYEDIST, HEDACAZ, AX—,O,O.

DEEREDITION, BOOMEDITION, SQUOM, SQUOM, SQUOM.  
 DEE BEETSTRAWIST, WAPAGO, LOCOEST, LOCORO, LO.  
 VOOMETEYEREEPETIOP, BOP, BOP, BOP, WHIPLAT.

DEGET, SKLOKO, KURRITIF, PLOG, MANGI, PLOG MANGI,  
 CLOPO JAGO BREE, BREE, ASLOOPERED, AKINGO LABY.  
 ENGPPOP, ENGPPOP, BOP, PLOLO, PLOLO, BOP, BOP.

# THE LATE LAMENTED WIND, BURNED IN INDIGNATION

TONTO IS DEAD, TONTO IS DEAD, TONTO IS DEAD  
RUN HIDE IN SUBWAYS.  
ELECTRIC ARROW OF PENITENT MACHINES & FOOT-  
STEP  
HORROR  
LET THE FLEA CIRCUS PERFORM, TONTO IS DEAD-

THE BEST PLACE TO JUDGE A TAP DANCE CONTEST,  
IS FROM BENEATH THE STAGE.  
TONTO IS DEAD, HIDE IN SUBWAYS.  
HEAVY WATER MUSIC, SPILLED FROM PUBLIC  
[HARPSICHORDS,

AT GALA LAUNDERMAT CONCERTS, FEATURING SONATAS  
[FOR  
DE-  
FEATED OBOES,  
BETWEEN DOOR SLAM OVERTURES, & SOGGY BALLETS,  
EXITING INTO KEY EYES OF LONELY JAZZERS,  
TONTO IS DEAD, TONTO IS DEAD,  
MUSEUMS ARE EXEMPT FROM MARTIAL LAW,  
HIDE IN THE SUBWAY, QUICK  
BEFORE IT MELTS.

ELOUISE LOFTIN

# A Black Lady

She sat on the Lex line #2  
pink patent crossed feet  
and goodluck fish danglin  
from the wrist  
Say hello  
calmly nod but no more  
cause she don't play with kids  
Pink patent crossed feet  
crust on one knee ash layin  
in the thumb  
How far down is she goin  
Where is she comin from  
and how far down is backin up  
Stop starin  
would if you could  
but can't  
cause spirits in her eyes say  
she goin to the stop where you can  
say more  
and she don't have to hold  
that bag so tight

## *What Sunni Say*

shoot me for  
the moon through  
the burning spreading head  
open me up the me of me  
put it inside where i need  
let me carry it around  
all day  
taste like it the night  
all long and songless  
smell like it into  
the nights of  
next week's need

## bkln

at a house no. 99  
 and a sign on the window  
 INDIAN JO RLGIE  
 ARTICLES  
 and a letterdrop  
 and a note on the door  
 “dear jo  
 aint seen you since rabbit  
 coats come in style  
 all these mornins i leaned  
 against your padlock and peepin  
 through the blinds seems like more  
 than me is tryin to get next to you.

man, if you in there dead you  
 better say somethin”

# Barefoot Necklace

empty the pain  
and what i believe of you  
unsaid in words. An investment  
to the world in the world  
unfound. unsafe. only the pedestrian act  
assuming air breathing  
and dying. what temporary grace  
my reality allows me. and you  
inside your body mad scars  
and dancing a pitted tamborine  
that will not play for the absence  
of words my words though i sing  
a tangled pantomime of dreams  
under the sparrows knees.  
alone you are yourself  
a history and desire of what  
in the world you will show as yourself  
myself alone is who i am  
a barefoot necklace  
who cannot come in  
alone unless twisted  
by who i believe i am  
or even myself to be  
a space where in your neck  
empty. the spirit gone  
i would come  
if only to raise the sparrow

## april '68

the ball bearings fell out  
of my roller skates,  
I sat close to the tv  
my 7 month baby in my arms  
the veil I wore to her father's  
funeral in her mouth and hands  
behind me my mother blue roses  
on a faded house dress growing  
up in her lap watered with her  
tears running from her eyes  
like beads on a necklace falling  
in a bowl of collards  
amerikkk amerikka reach out  
and touch your tv sets high  
school graduation is just around  
the conor



# scabible

*after a nixon-baily duet*

rows of piggy bank fed coins  
headless yo-yo's in an apple pie  
fingers desecrates piano  
calves cool out with a spoon  
hit-man issued to barb-wire moon

hey diddle diddle  
watch your fiddle

N. J. LOFTIS

from *Black Anima*

## Changes — One

And I sit here  
    for five days now  
sit here in prison  
for running a stoplight in election year  
the soiled sunlight from the street  
    hard against the vision  
piss pouring into latrine  
like blood into a butcher's pail

And went on hunger strike  
to protest conditions  
    how draft dodgers denied  
entry to minimum security  
were used as prostitutes  
how a man was hung  
    with hands tied behind his back  
and they called it suicide

And I recognized them  
    in the prison library  
recognized Malcolm and King  
reading from a strange history  
the book of our collective dream

“Look,” said King  
here is Gonga-Mussa  
on his pilgrimage to Mecca  
this town, his retainers  
    60,000 in all  
these are the eight camels carrying gold  
“And here,” said Malcolm

is Cinquez among the founding fathers  
and this figure here  
bound in mummy cloth  
is your grandfather who is dead  
We who are no longer  
yet seem to be  
here have the one vision  
though in life we were known  
only for our opposition,  
the poet among his people  
the active man among his books  
the single city reached by  
a thousand winding entries

Take this ring  
all of whose parts have a common center  
joining what's to come  
with what has been  
and give it to your bride  
whom you shall meet in Africa

And:

## Changes — Five

No, no Shakespeare not your gloomy melancholy. *To be or not to be* is a kink you've cleverly cast in the body's machine which takes everything in and shits it all out again, a sideshow like midget-wrestling or fat ladies rubbing bellies to distract us from the real tragedy. That shadowy being we see ranting before us on the stage is too much like us to be taken as mere "play," and, perhaps,

too much like you, busy contemplating the visible reality, while a mindless destiny that a star-haunted heaven has written in indecipherable calligraphy, a heaven lamenting with convulsive stars, has gently attached itself to you from without.

It is all too proximate to be funny, or merely amusing. Today a musical would be made to wean us from its piercing sting, the dread terror of the thing, truth too real to be ignored, too protracted to be acted upon. Fortunately, the dead only return to us in grade "B" movies, dreams, or poets' imaginings, permitting us the luxury of postponing true perception of reality indefinitely, until another life, if need be, or to twist it into a shape that agrees with our fantasies. Still, suppose a bright billboard appeared in the sky reading: THIS IS YOUR IDENTITY. Oh, how I would delight to see the homosexual and the he-man delighting in what a homosexual and a he-man should be. Lacking this clear certainty, the surety of birds of passage cracking open hostile skies as a crack goes through a cup, we abandon our true being, being existing solely for itself, not needing the other to confine or define it from without, being all essence without a rim.

It is time to take inventory. You've packed the luggage and left the key next door. Plane at eleven. Auden's for tea. What time is it? Three. Time to take inventory. The library at six. Leaving there by taxi. It is time,

time to examine the very ground on which we walk, to examine the room settling about your shoulders at afternoon, to examine it through and

through: to see. But even this is illusory if you cannot annihilate the subtle dependencies that anticipate the object seen, surmising all its fate, its character and mental state without once staring it face to face, or noticing its body's distinct from the mask it placed on its head to deceive you.

Until that frontier where you can see the dizzy depths from which earth is always uprooting itself, where momentary and cosmic meet, connecting the simple and transitory "me" with eternity, you must awake nightly with the shriveled head of a limp dream, you must content yourself not simply with being, but swapping shapes with the things surrounding you, for how else shall you know them, since the ground is corroded where you might have detached yourself from the muddle of images attacking you and surveyed the whole, the "To-Ti," from its vague beginning in history right down to its present uncertainty.

You must complete the death begun in you, plunging to hell, if that's what you must do, before you can release yourself from that protean empathy with your locality, before you stand anew at the end of dreams on the very Ground of Being from which the roses spring, not just a point on the ring but the ring itself.

But all that is far from where you are right now, walking down Broadway toward the subway, the scrawny tree becomes you, not decking itself out like queen, but exchanging its being with yours until the piss pours on you that erodes the bark away, and the cool winds seem to tear off your limbs.

You are the tree that is pissed upon and the dog that pisses, demanding red meat three times a day, your right to lie where and with whom you wish, shelter when sunlight makes a pyre of the leaves, a human hand to scratch your belly when it brings delight. Yes, you know your rights. The moon and other heavenly bodies no longer concern you, who bay only when human kindness turns to aggression, only at the demeaning invectives against your breed, indeed, against everything dog denotes: "dog-gone," "dog take ya," "dog damn." What you're asking is a reversal of things, to be treated not as men, but as gods, so that the last more fully may be first, for even your name is god in reverse.

You wiggle free from that shape but as you descend the subway stair, a butterfly flutters up here and there, you too flounce sillily from thought

to thought, flirting with new meaning before the old has properly exhausted its being. Your arms expand to wing. Your hazel eyes are speckled with spots of light.

You have become what you dreamed.

## Changes — Eight

And one day Hughes said  
 “I’ve known rivers ancient as the world and older  
 than the  
     flow of human blood in the veins”

thus cutting across time’s withershins  
 the combustible leaves of *Crises*  
     like the processional reds and golds  
     of autumn ablaze in the crypt forest

Atropos cutting the thread  
     weaving the light against it  
 and Rosy living in London said  
 to her reclining Sappho  
 “I told Langston he’d be dead at sixty  
 if he didn’t stop eating”

    the swollen corpse adrift  
     on the black tide  
 time’s knot tied and untied  
     as it rose and fell  
     the half-submerged belly  
     blown out like a sail

Time sifts the wheat from the chaff  
     and the rat from the wheat:  
     and Tolson first traced the course  
 where the rainbow arched to its source  
 plunging to the pitch and pith of things  
 containing more of alchemy than a witch’s sabbath

The shadow swimming vaguely  
 in the Library’s light  
     gathering the gold against them  
 a few friends and you break bread

attended by all the resident dead  
 that line the bookstalls  
 that's what poetry is (Auden)

or maybe it was Lenny Horn,  
 a bridge between the dead and the unborn  
 "So you are going to Egypt  
 to resurrect Ikhnaton's tomb"  
 The words pass through you  
 falling on a stony place where nothing blooms  
 Outside, the saffron sunlight swims  
 toward you in concentric circles  
 as day goes down

Then Chesnutt, let his ladder down,  
 down into the leper commune  
 his mind shattered by the gale  
 of images, picking and choosing identities  
 as at a rummage sale

You memorized your lesson well  
 pointing it out in detail  
 to others in your company  
 trying to tell them how Mphahlele  
 and Spender unwittingly (perhaps)  
 were cuddled by the CIA

Imagine climbing all your childhood  
 toward some promontory  
 where you dreamed the white cliffs  
 shot up out of the bickering spray  
 only to find when arriving there  
 what you dreamed had gone away  
 or perhaps never existed  
 and what remains is only a cheap  
 and mean province open to all comers

You would make of that paltry place  
 the thing you always dreamed  
 who else but Mphahlele could praise  
 Joseph C. so openly



thereby renouncing his birthright  
on the banks of the Nile  
and swap the sculptured beauty of Nefertiti  
swap it for the bulges of Queen Vicky

Imamu (LeRoi) saw it all six  
years ago at the Black Arts  
before fools fell upon the place  
“Your gonna have to forget  
everything taught you down in Tennessee”  
Malcolm was just dead and maggots  
spreading their whiteness over his cold body

What whiteness shall we add  
to this whiteness like sterile clouds  
bellowing dryly over the Pentagon?  
I'll tell you  
the whiteness of fear  
flashing across the hunter's face  
when he is no longer hunter but quarry

Were it not for for the glory  
said Marlowe. Were it not for the glory . . .  
Makers of history they.  
We, those to whom it happens.  
Straw men bending  
when the gale blowing gently  
shakes the wheat from the chaff

On the banks of the Seine  
the spell shall be broken  
Prospero's wand shattered in two  
and tossed out to sea.  
Yes a tempest is afoot  
that he won't survive so easily

Caliban! Caliban!  
Blow your horn, man

TAXI TAXI TAXI

CLARENCE MAJOR

# Paragraph from English Speaking World

it is the wish of the general  
public  
to conclude that  
you enjoy  
your inferiority  
chance to be seen  
-your televised drunks  
your fifteen cents whitman  
comic book  
jazz (monk, powell, etc)  
in small mechanizations

tho at the beginning  
i could have told millions  
anxious to juggle human crap  
into the earth  
of society (the rich earth receiveth all)  
that  
you did not, technologically, take  
no shit

off nobody

# A Petition for Langston Hughes

his alliance was fragmented.

Ishmael Reed & I stood at the foot

of his steps, established. Drunk:

He sent me a check just before the tactics ended

I checked: black caucus community *simple*  
takes a century to stop laughing.

Planners of the give away, between white grants

& partnerships. "I'm not qualified to remember

excuses, activists may have turned away.

I am beyond, part left scoffing. Balanced

and uneducated, unbalanced, Hughes was not my hero

tho I sensed he was a Representation. Could

have majored, demands of circumvented black arts

for self-determination of the future of black art

as black art/black art. The process of the big sea

& harlem of no human neighbors

(I wonder if anybody in that block of brownstones

structured with eyes his grandness, downtown?)

The anthologies I got pissed off about, that were

never published. The planning was for tax escapes;

Africa was a valley, the white man one to take

in focus with ease, without revolution. Crying black

blood, persistent thrusts of a lukewarm proposal.

Singing & wondering as one wonders.

Somebody else to take up from

Ah fuck it!

# Media on War

## or, the square root of vietnam

did these flyers  
                   of everybody's flag  
 every nation's real-  
 estate          finish eating into  
 the rear of our birth-  
 right. where did they come from.

they come with this their line  
 that damnsnap our end and no

soundtrack shall stand  
                   emotionless or otherwise  
 able to believe (our

ears

# Edge Guide for Impression

I  
groped  
around in the dust  
black stale airless basement  
of time  
and accident  
in search  
of the  
pipes: of logic  
which  
connect somehow the failure  
of yester  
day  
to the failure  
of today  
and accidentally  
found darkness  
and love

# News Story

Heard over the radio:

a white woman from Can./with  
sticks of dina  
mite trans ported from Can.  
(Her home  
&

some serious Afro-Americans  
(called NEGROES

were uncovered

but not in bed.

by the curious group  
titled FBI

In a plot to BLOW UP  
BLOWUP  
BOM  
BLAM

items listed:

Lady Lib

Lib Bell

Wash Monu. Etc

Teach "our" country a thing or 2 ???

If the serious saboteurs

had succeeded/ who could say

We would not have a deeper sense of reality

& self

# A Poem Americans Are Going to Have to Memorize Soon

these huge teachable slangy people  
touched with giddy shallowness (dig

the substance of American Humor, defraud  
even plants in their own humble sunlight  
like in apartment windows, even parcels  
for real people who go deep,  
in irregular bareness even into some gods or the mind  
become

monstrosities, you know  
money, chairs and things like the meaning of other  
people are not even accessible DESTRUCTION here)

threadbare in this revolution  
now submissively jump into some cold practice,

brash enough to have appointments  
official like, while I lay up digging this shit

# Education by Degrees

The wedge inside your ease  
begins to come cancerous: and you do  
not wonder longer or now,  
why, the face of discontent is broken:  
twisted, broken, why the placenta cord shrinks;  
the cartridges of your hatred; you do not  
wonder at the hemorrhaging of your own brain;  
you and I and all of us know  
there is inside the oilproofed antibodies  
a pointless accumulation of lubrication.  
Yet distilled we are not moved, we wait  
for nutrition or infection—it does not matter.  
The spirit of our sperm is so basic we  
    have not given it a thought.  
We remain captive. Not even by our own rot  
are we skinned to the point of care.  
I face a mirror transferred inside  
my own breathing and watch the hair grow  
on my own unwillingness to lie to you.



## Not This—This Here!

print documentcheap ink said  
horoscope to flesheyes I  
am “that I—not this I  
    he AM) that is  
would like to live  
would like living in, rather thru  
the Spring, Summer of some  
new england

maple sugar shoe  
make shops water-  
front lobstermen  
rich children elec-  
tronics workers nantucket  
TIME

there is no sign  
A SIGN that shows somewhere  
in sand, aside

how far rome is  
is moscow is calcutta is bombay  
no sign registering what

it is like. His “me horo  
scope talks about that ARTLESS VAGUE  
scar on paper, not this

# Mortal Roundness

this: the nagging way  
 a weak bulb 60 watt pesters the  
 sophisticated skin edge rough hair on the skin edge  
 on the circlebone, protects the hair over his  
 disobedient light eye. It,  
 a unit of electric cool-  
 ness, equal to the ampere  
 :equal to the volt  
 ! Equal to the pressure.

Is a rim, mortal  
 roundness, part-  
 icular. Diminish-  
 ing in jumps-

mottled, when it *talks* to imprint  
 him. (Or you

You see we are sitting here in this room

YET YOU CANNOT SEE US WE

See you

.Under such stern word sculling of his particular  
 verbal  
 anthro-  
 PO

LOGICAL (& simple “rational” way he goes  
 beyond

your glibdumb manipulations, (“you people  
 they say

(Are like funnystores.

JUSTICE TRANSLATES ENGLISH INTO EACH NERVOUS

[ VERB of

“I remember merit” . earned. So much for  
 so little value, intrinsic we need

not go that far in:  
to it: like  
*tb*  
is

SO THIS NOTHING ELSE TURNS A COMPLETE NAME  
[WHEEL THAT

ENDS NOWHERE outside the body the last

STRAW & the  
first

# Pictures

Negro girls  
 like 12 years old, in  
     [enclaves]  
 midwest ENDS  
     in integrated  
 LIQUID SLANG BRANCHES OF TERMINAL BRICKS  
 that is, integrated in-  
 to the red bricks of these  
     years,  
 behind TV voices animating clumsy  
     THE CLUE TO MY JUDGment  
 report of BLACK respiration  
     confuse their soft  
 solid simplicity, & they carry white  
     wallets, they do not  
 carry pictures of **light** in these  
     their INTEGRATED heaviness  
  
 coming clearly back to a simple/sound  
     MOTIVE for  
 carrying snapshots of friends  
     fallout beautiful if they now  
 see the lineage loveliness of THEMSELVES  
     & schoolmates as any face

## Water USA

america, tom sawyer, is bigger  
than your swim  
hole. You meant, the union, water-  
falls. one waterfall  
a path near, from which you  
jump, folklore, holding  
your nose. a chemical change  
takes place as you pollute  
the water i drink. as your  
jet lands, crashing my  
environment. tom sawyer can't hold  
all the dead bodies upright  
nor get anything  
out of a lecture on control  
systems. and bigger  
thomas didn't have an even  
chance to study chemistry

LEROY MCLUCAS

# Negotiation

imagine dinin car  
union railways  
boot servin  
brandy  
in  
walk  
booker t  
“Wha u wan?-ed’kashun”

# Graph

Armfull bedwork carbonized  
delinquent ejaculation  
fornicated ghetto  
hardbound idiom  
jackass jacknife jackoff jackscrew  
jailbird jaywalker jazzer jeer jesse  
jame jivejitterbug jobseeker john  
joiner juggler juggler junkman  
knottyknight leaseless lofer  
muddymule nughtnymphs  
outrooted pantaloon  
quarter rubber stamp  
tenderfootin umbrella  
vaginal woebegone  
x yesman zulu

OLIVER PITCHER

Why don't we rock the casket here in the moonlight?

A man begins in the cradle and ends in the casket. That's if he's a two time winner. In between? The echo of a long lament. A mosaic of sleep. A marble laugh. A few grapes. A short wail from the other shore. The scattered moldy crumbs of best intentions and the insecure peace of distance. The moon and the sun go on playing an eternal game. Show-me-yours and I'll-show-you-mine but words fail us. We say, here lies a man in a telephone booth, already cold and without direct communication to the moon to warm himself. And rock so soon!

Rock, rock, rock the casket here in the moonlight.



## Dust of Silence

This is the hour the pale and neutral moon  
 pricked by the Stygian traffics flobs  
 to the gutted out yards, front and  
 back. This is the hour young men with  
 store houses congested with empty pic-  
 ture frames for heads, walk the dusty  
 roads in stocking feet. Their canvasses  
 are tattered to cards of identity  
 scattered upon the sea . . .

Smithereens of sound is now dust of silence . . . slowly fallen upon the  
 roofs and this street like a parental hush; heavily, the imperial mantle . . .  
 At ten A. M. after the dishes were washed and Christ had been hanging  
 makeshiftly from a cross for hours, (silenced as effectively as our neigh-  
 bor's dearly-beloved rope, even though we knew it would happen and did  
 happen) it was this way. Heliotrope scented silence sneaked between these  
 cell houses near Calvary, into those sties and these chicken coops.  
 Goldleaf chickens cocked their heads and perched on one leg longer than  
 they normally would. Distant spurts of light, puffs of lightning or vague  
 suggestions of incendiaries? only the penumbras could be seen far off on  
 the thin black strip of horizon of Calvary Hill. But only a few saw, and  
 from the corner of their eyes. It was darkly this way on this and certain  
 other streets at ten A. M. when an oxblood dawn kept its grip on the city,  
 the morning German boys having their boyish prank were expected to  
 march through the Arc de Triomphe, even though we knew it would hap-  
 pen, and did happen. This hush pervades now, heavily, the reciprocal  
 hush; the dripping faucet silences: the dust, the sovereign dust. Car noises  
 are heard, yes, a faint rumble of trucks, buses languid in their freedom,  
 but they remain distant, engines balking at their reins, sniffing, not at all  
 sure they want to come through this narrow, one-way street, they would  
 be trespassing on roofs, engine, arc, chickens, all stamped GUILTY BY  
 ASSOCIATION, a clay pox from dust un-risen on drizzling Easter . . .  
 Who slammed that door?! What defiance! . . . The sound sends out a warn-  
 ing tremor of an impending bolt of violence; on a window sill where gera-  
 niums and dust mops are flowering, a geranium shivers. The cooper

across the street, standing in the arch entrance to his shop, made a few half-hearted taps on a barrel he was making earlier this morning, but now he has disappeared in the blackness of his shop where he keeps the light off. For years the sound of the fireworks has been heard in the distance, and it will remain this way, everyone is sure of it, so there is no cause for alarm since no one knows what day is being celebrated, and there is safety in silence.

Now is the moment a gray hand streaks across  
 this slate of sky; catch the beggar's  
 ransom of dreams!

the aged have outbursts now

the moment of dog-eared statistics hesitating a  
 moment before their consecration into dust

now the aged squawk, feather  
 flayed birds; the screeech  
 and screeech and screech  
 to out-sound the clack of  
 their joints and bones in  
 their ricky ticky music

now the Kewpie Doll ascends the throne; the  
 scene is shifted!

the aged complain of the vibra-  
 tions coming from the caves beneath  
 cellars; and everyone hears! now

The Generation two-timely plucked, thereby born  
 OUT OF GENERATION quickly tape the aged and  
 soundproof like mummies until they promise  
 a better display of manners they taught  
 and now all muster a twenty-one fart salute:

“Silence!”  
 “Silence!”  
 “Silence!”  
 (etcetera.)

## the remark

(The tugboat outside  
anchored to fog, captainless  
waits.)

The cocktail party snagged between  
ceiling and linoleum bubbles of its component  
parts: the toothy shout, wave, tight lip laugh, —  
asterisked to another hour and planet —  
eye-closed bongo dancing, the staccato-ed  
armpit, when, whoa, the basilisk remark  
at the crystal to lip, gashed a laugh  
felled a shout to earth, closed a bewildered  
eye and stamped all, all and final  
to a mottled and fuming bas-relief.

(The captainless tugboat  
anchored to fog  
waits and, true to promise to Those Who Escape  
wheezes its beckoning once. Twice. And final.)

# formula for tragedy

Mouse meets cat.

Mouse eats cat.

# Washington Square: August Afternoon

to J.M.B.

Crouched over and across from the waiting girl, (dabbing nail polish where nylon hell broke loose, and realizing fully for the first time there is no way to really repay the rich, unless it's a kind thought now and then) her impatience crackles the sound of orange-colored cellophane.

crouched over and across from the door TO LET where glass "I" slipped,

the visage of the little boy, deceived, misinformed at the bend in the path. He found his bush. Spectral-peeing-(suddenly grown, and WOW!-snarled in a Gidean discourse-whizzing, the fly zips, the visage vanishes.) Tomorrow's fertilizer, the good and bad of all;

crouched over and across from the newspaper sniffers,

the poet who gave up the middle class, upper and lower, as hopeless (sprawled on the fertilized French poodle grass scorched brown; he, not the class, for security insults, melody embarrasses.) Too early risen, weighed down by The Rosey Eclipse, he hears the sound within his head of The Nail hammered into hardwood and knows, allez oop, the day beckons. He throws back his head, the head of a stunted rooster (no, not at all like an alley cat) he trumpets and challenges the day with a deliberate cough, pppllttt! and "Hopeless! Hopeless!" He's found his song; he saunters off to someone's sparrow roost called home, so small it holds nothing but pocket editions.

Crouched over and across from the thread winders,

the "Here comes the sightseeing bus! Stick out your tongue, do things,"

the scent and music of anemone on the breeze up from Wall Street, sashaying, (tempting one to say he wears ribbed velvet and not corduroy), the Porcelain Boy upholds the emblazoned reputation the rouged tourist clipped with the Greyhound visa. Categorized and catharized, the spot is X'd on the margin.

Crouched over and across is N.Y.U.

## from Harlem: Sidewalk Icons

Man, in some lan  
I hear tell, tears wep  
in orange balloons will  
bus wide open with  
laughter.

Aw, cry them blues Man!

# The Infant

The quagmire of an overstuffed sofa---  
     the shin is for kicking the cat is for  
     skinning the stick is for sticking  
 this is just the beginning: the snowsuit inferno.  
     Earth and stairs they leap ice bites hot  
     water bites wind bites the bite of the  
     white she-wolf is broken glass. Red means  
     HURT. The sun is a splinter for the eye  
     lollipop is . . .  
 horehound suspiciousness.  
     Cheeks mean love but duty is a pee pot.  
 No outlines of day are left uncrayoned in dreams.  
 They mean MORE:  
     I want. Shin for kicking cat for skinning  
     stick for sticking  
 this is just the beginning  
     I want.



# Tango

Broom, broom, man of a broom; Valentino-slick lurking overly-casual cornerly in the realm of the potted palm. He awaits his opportunity with the oblique awareness that launched the Vikings, that killed the cat.

“Vo do do dee-oh do?”

There is gigolo black beneath the guise, you don't fool easily.

Floor, floor, coquette of a floor, Cupid-bowed and boyish bobbed, wrestling with a nervous desire, crosses the planks of her legs, a craven recrossing, and smacks away on her Sen-Sen to beat the holy banjo.

“Oh, DO! sweet pappa.”

“Dee-oh do do?”

“Oh, tweets!”

“Dee-oh do do do?”

That's all. The tango is on!

“Oh, suggums! what you're doing to my seams and crannies!”

A curtain of tweet-tweet, tweet-tweet, tweet-tweet.

The floor rolls over in place, spliced and sufficed, sweating her little puffs of dust; indeed, in a different state. The tango is ended, the cat is killed, tableau vivant.

But where is broom? (He was asked to leave Shanghai, North Africa, and Outer Mongolia, but now rumor has it he's living happily ever after in Staten Island.)

Nothing is ever where we left it!

# The Iconoclast's Closet

Holding the last of his old-found toys, he subjects himself to grim inventory which he makes whenever a son is born. The close quarters of the closet of his mind, to alien nostrils has the smell of fever and the sound of gurgling in sewers.

First, the reactionary is gouache. There! There he sits, his graystone face chiseled with Brahmin hands, behind a long black desk, on a swivel chair that never swivels. His dictionary has one word: NO buttered out generously to everybody everything everyday. His mind is a curved line starting at void ending at vacuum tripping over raspy negatives all the way. Gray hair and little cabbages are growing from his ears. One day, in a whistle voice, he said: MAYBE. Clarions blew in large rooms! Shimmying eucalyptus, shattering the tombs! A stallion ran wild into the horizon and the sun rose high on a new gray day. And from The Sitters favorite kidney a mite-y sprout grew;

second, the prayer houses. Above the chants, organ and sputterings of the blindly devout in the service

Service, the most impressive elements are the silences.  
These he has preserved in a glass ball;

third, aris-tuckus-y;

fourth, marriage. Marriage, the shopgirl's technicolor dream, the dream of the heir to the nuts-and-screws millions married to the heiress of the dynamo zillions; marriage, the dream of the poorgirl already two months gone, and the nightmare of the woman valiantly scarred;

fifth, bits of paper; credos, documents, agreements, treaties, all labeled

FOR THE BETTERMENT OF ~~THE~~  
MANKIND

scratched out, rescribbled, tucked away in a vest pocket.

(He knew none of these things when.)

On closer observation we notice the closet isn't a closet at all. His house had been bombed like all the rest. Ideals are taught early in life; thereafter, right on through to the deathbed, experience nullifies one ideal after another; so many bombed statues to the left and right of the paths. With his chain of keys is a bottle opener; this is the key to his kingdom. So we see, the closet is really an outhouse.

In a moment's pause, he turns to face his day. Not below, not above, but directly ahead. I suspect there are few among us who can exchange, transmigrate, and see his day as he . . .

Interrupted, he interrupts: "I see the day before myself, and I am true to it. Fill in your days; go racing across your worlds on squeaky crutches." The cry of a new born son heralds the day; the iconoclast returns to his inventory.

Silence; it exalts us with its rareness.

TOM POSTELL

# Gertrude Stein Rides the Town Down El

to New York City

Then colors rose through the leaves in light  
surprise.  
The last peacock poised and sighed on the leaves  
and rose.  
Wonderful day careens while blighted riff-raff  
children skate and  
Laughingly dig the hole for the mid-western  
bonfire.  
Wrap honey in velvet air and hide it in October's  
searching breath.  
The bonfire dwindles as the circus leaves and  
the animals roar.  
It's only in the sun that madness splatters into  
joy . . .  
Cover down the moon for the night before you  
lift the skirts of a cloud.  
Love knocks on the inside of my skull and kicks  
in my stomach.  
A doe licks the gum from a tree and runs into  
the woods.  
She lets me govern her gaze when the parade  
blares its colors.  
Gertrude Stein is long dead but under cover rides  
the torn down El.

# I Want a Solid Piece of Sunlight and a Yardstick to Measure it With

Seventh Avenue fills at noon with a gray tide of  
suits come out for air.  
Noon catching fire peeks over the high rooftops  
and spits into the saloons.  
The brown buildings drip with wilting plaster and  
the mighty pigeon's dung.  
Sylphindine Fifth Avenue trips on red and green  
lights and slides quietly by Central Park.  
Honeysuckle leaps over the hedges as the people  
leave Staten Island for work.  
Long Island slides in its channel groaning under  
the new load of grinding storms.  
I see the Brooklyn Dodgers on Times Square with  
their bats and balls practicing.  
Let us enter the redundant oasis which rips of  
jungle beats on glasses of gin.  
We never get on the train that stops to let the  
morning messenger in.  
And with rats digging in the cellar the basement  
cement crumbles as we rise.  
Lakes of icy whispering trees float crunchingly on  
under the glory of wide blue sky:  
O give me a solid piece of sunlight and a yardstick  
of my own and the right to holler.  
I don't need to ask for the moon cause I love some-  
thing that melts in your breath.

# harmony

We who stung stone know how our toil bathed us in ash, while the lilies of the land covered their heads and shuddered. We had grass blades for legs and tree limbs for arms and our mouths were big black clouds, which at times would burst warnings to civilizations.

We remember the times we were nearly human, and almost understood the caresses of fried fish laced around our groins by ambassador girl diplomats from the sorry state of God.

You and I were the wine glass tasting the wine but swallowing none. Sitting in the forgotten table of love. We looked in our own eyes and blinked stars the moons were jealous of.

I loved you under the crushing sledge of wrath, of morning's pressure on the heat of evening. Moons and secrets.

NORMAN H. PRITCHARD

# Magma

hollow or filamentary or silled  
in which of these can hold a grasses rock  
stock and fallow stretching broad  
the chord stung she could run  
scotch hiped to her never left alone  
wants herself for the ever was come  
to these sprawling among the dialed  
pent up upon where no one  
will have ever noticed  
these daisys pending the sun for it's fall

# Asalteris

change  
as  
circumstance  
may be  
of curious  
courses  
as  
though  
as if  
were  
in  
dubitably un  
certain ones  
are  
n't



## From Where the Blues?

Stacks of paperbacks  
against whiteless walls  
foliate the landscape  
of the incubal inclosure.  
Above, at the perimeter  
of my left eye, curtains  
hand siennaed by the neglect  
of other importances.

A rueful "Pierrot"  
looks downward from his  
clipboard perch as if easled  
too long in this pagan pasture  
where Bacchus boards and Coleridge  
no doubt would have lengthened Kubla Khan.

"The Lady" utters a cantata in "praise"  
of morning heartaches . . . one more chance  
to realize that it's                    the unsung  
that makes the song. From where the blues?  
Strange, this combat that selects its soldiers.  
From where the blues? The feeling knows  
my ways and stalk them, like the black cat  
there, with the yellowed eyes.  
I too know the wishing for forgetfulness.

# Metagnomy

A mid the non com mit t e d  
 com pound s of t he m in d  
 an i m age less gleam in g  
 we at hers h aunts as yet un k no w n  
 & t a u n t s  
 thru a c he mist r y of ought  
 t h at c hang e s  
 c ourse s  
 s ee m in g l y  
 as if a bird in f light  
 a w or d  
 f or got ten  
 in t he w in d ' s w on t

W h at aim co un s e l s such a gain  
 un to t he sylvan d own of w om b s  
 w h at n ever ever s t and  
 c a uses such man if est s t a s is  
 to r ide on ly up on t h at move men  
 t he ear th pro vide s

Of ten the set t in g m in d  
 like d us k a j our n s  
 as thou g h the k now in g  
 as thou g h the g low in g

To s ee k  
 to f in d  
 a l a n c e  
 to pier c e the p o s s i b l e

Oft e n a w is h de fin e d  
 like l us t re turn s  
 as tho up on an alt e r

b l o o d i s b r o k e n  
a s m e a t  
i s r i t e  
& a c c u r i n g p a g a n  
c r u c i f i x i o n

E n c h a n t m e n t s  
a b o u n d a b o u t  
t h e a b y s s e s o f a m i n d  
o f t e n b l i n d e d  
b y t h e c a t a r a c t s o f c u r t c o n c e r n  
w h i l e  
a i m s i t s d a u n t l e s s l y  
o n a p e d e s t a l  
b e i n g p e c k e d u p o n  
b e t h e w i n d ' S w o n t

# Gyre's Galax

Sound variegated through beneath lit  
 Sound variegated through beneath lit  
 through sound beneath variegated lit  
 sound variegated through beneath lit

Variegated sound through beneath lit dark  
 Variegated sound through beneath lit dark  
 sound variegated through beneath lit  
 variegated sound through beneath lit dark

Through variegated beneath sound lit  
 Through variegated beneath sound lit  
 through variegated beneath sound lit  
 through variegated beneath sound lit  
 Through variegated beneath sound lit  
 Through variegated beneath sound lit  
 through beneath lit  
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 through beneath lit  
 Thru beneath  
 Thru beneath  
 Thru beneath  
 Thru beneath

Thru beneath  
Thru beneath  
Thru beneath  
Through beneath lit

Twainly ample of amongst  
twainly ample of amongst  
Twainly ample of amongst  
twainly ample of amongst  
Twainly ample of amongst  
twainly ample of amongst  
In lit black viewly

viewly  
in viewly  
viewly  
viewly  
in viewly  
viewly  
in viewly  
viewly  
in viewly  
viewly  
viewly  
viewly  
in viewly  
viewly

In lit black viewly  
in dark to stark  
In dark to stark  
In dark to stark  
in dark to stark  
In dark to stark  
in dark to stark  
In dark to stark  
In above beneath  
In above beneath  
In above beneath  
above beneath lit  
above beneath  
above beneath

above beneath  
above beneath lit  
above beneath  
above beneath lit  
above beneath  
above beneath lit  
above beneath  
above beneath  
above beneath  
above beneath lit  
above beneath  
above beneath  
above beneath lit  
above beneath  
above beneath  
above beneath  
above beneath  
above beneath  
above beneath  
above beneath  
above beneath lit

,

” ” ” ” ”  
 ” ” ” red ”  
 ” ” ” ” ” red ” ”  
 ” ” ” ” red ” ” red  
 red red ” ” red ” ” ”  
 ” ” red ” ” red ” red ”  
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 red ” ” ” ” ” ” ” ” ”  
 ” ” ” ” ” ” ” ” ”  
 ” ” ” ” ” ” ” ” ”

# junt

mool oio clish brodge

cence anis oio

mek mek isto plawe



WE NEED ---- please read this and see if you  
qualify, if you do not care to take advantage of this  
please pass it on to a friend.

grown on instead opens the door  
a blind went away pulling  
large numbers covered with rows  
decidedly

toward them some its own  
dressed away with the rain  
flying in borrowed kind  
things in the basket

beside twisted ruddy before  
without those mostly or an under  
plundered nearly though feasted  
delighted so as to be carried

HELEN QUIGLESS

# Concert

This garden too pleasant  
the moon too near pools  
of water avoid

Reflecting smooth sketches  
of "Spain" in man's desires.

How now brown drummer?  
as you hold him in your  
spell

that man of sax  
That princely black  
dreams aloud the  
agony of his race

and his lips grip  
the telescopic view  
which curves abruptly  
and stares upon their face.

Sailing through the air,  
a taloned-shriek  
draws blood from the ears.

And long the cry rings

against stone museum walls  
against city sounds  
against the dying sun's light  
against spiral statues oblivious of rain  
against lily pads and fish of gold  
against minds that concentrate

against love that tolerates  
against the multitude  
pale  
so  
that  
smiles

fade  
from triumphant sounds of music.

Rings cry the long until  
it shudders and dies,

and sweetness comes to him.

ISHMAEL REED

# Paul Laurence Dunbar in the Tenderloin

Even at 26, the hush when  
you unexpectedly walked  
into a theater. One year  
after *The History of Cakewalk*.

Desiring not to cause  
a fuss, you sit alone  
in the rear, watching a re  
hearsal.  
The actors are impressed. Wel  
don Johnson, so super at des  
cription, jots it all down.

I don't blame you for  
disliking Whitman, Paul.  
He lacked your style, like  
your highcollared mandalaed  
portrait in Hayden's  
*Kaleidoscope*; unobserved,  
Death, the uncouth critic  
does a first draft on your  
breath.

# Dualism

## in ralph ellison's invisible man

i am outside of  
history. i wish  
i had some peanuts, it  
looks hungry there in  
its cage

i am inside of  
history. its  
hungrier than i  
thot

# Badman of the guest professor

for joe overstreet, david henderson, albert ayler  
& d mysterious "H" who cut up d Rembrandts

i

u worry me whoever u are  
i know u didnt want me to  
come here but here i am just  
d same; hi-jacking yr stagecoach,  
hauling in yr pocket watches & mak  
ing u hoof it all d way to  
town. black bard, a robber w/ an  
art: i left some curses in d cash  
box so ull know its me

listen man, i cant help it if  
yr thing is over, kaput,  
    finis  
no matter how u slice it dick  
u are done. a dead duck all out  
of quacks. d nagging hiccup dat  
goes on & on w/out a simple glass  
    of water for relief

ii

uve been teaching shakespeare for  
20 years only to find d joke  
    on u  
d eavesdropping rascal who got it  
in d shins because he didnt know  
enough to keep his feet behind d cur  
tains: a sad-sacked head served on a  
platter in titus andronicus or falstaff

too fat to make a go of it  
anymore

iii

its not my fault dat yr tradition  
was knocked off wop style & left in  
d alley w/ pricks in its mouth. i  
read abt it in d papers but it was no  
skin off my nose  
wasnt me who opened d gates & allowed  
d rustlers to slip thru unnoticed. u  
ought to do something abt yr security or  
mend yr fences partner  
don't look at me if all dese niggers  
are ripping it up like deadwood dick;  
doing art d way its never been done. mak  
ing wurlitzer sorry he made d piano dat  
will drive mozart to d tennis  
courts  
making smith-corona feel like d red  
faced university dat has just delivered china  
some 50 e-leben h bombs experts

i didnt deliver d blow dat drove d  
abstract expressionists to my ladies  
linoleum where dey sleep beneath tons of  
wax & dogshit & d muddy feet of children or  
because some badassed blackpainter done sent  
french impressionism to d walls of highrise  
lobbies where dey belong is not my fault  
martha graham will never do d jerk  
shes a sweet ol soul but her hips  
cant roll; as stiff as d greek  
statues she loves so much

iv

dese are d reasons u did me nasty  
j alfred prufrock, d trick u pull

d in d bookstore today; stand in d  
corner no peaches for a week, u lemon

u must blame me because yr wife is  
ugly. 86-d by a thousand discriminating  
saunas. dats why u did dat sneaky thing  
i wont tell d townfolk because u hv  
to live here and im just passing thru

v

u got one thing right tho. i did say  
dat everytime i read william faulkner i  
go to sleep.

Fitzgerald wdnt hv known a gangster if one  
had snatched zelda & made her a moll tho  
she wd hv been grateful i bet

bonnie of clyde wrote d saga of suicide  
sal just as d feds were closing in. it is  
worth more than d collected works of ts  
eliot a trembling anglican whose address  
is now d hell dat thrilld him so  
last word from down there he was open  
ing a publishing co dat will bore d  
devil back to paradise

vi

& by d way did u hear abt grammar?  
cut to ribbons in a photo finish by  
stevie wonder, a blindboy who dances  
on a heel. he just came out of d slang  
& broke it down before millions.  
it was bloody murder

vii

to make a long poem shorter—3 things  
moleheaded lame w/4 or 5 eyes



1) yr world is riding off into d sunset  
2) d chips are down & nobody will chance yr i.o.u.s  
3) d last wish was a fluke so now u hv to re  
turn to being a fish  
p.s. d enchantment has worn off

dat's why u didnt like my reading list-right?  
it didnt include anyone on it dat u cd in  
vite to a cocktail party & shoot a lot of  
bull—right?  
well i got news for u professor nothing—i  
am my own brand while u must be d fantasy of  
a japanese cartoonist

a strangekind of dinosaurmouse  
i can see it all now. d leaves  
are running low. it's d eve of  
extinction & dere are no holes to  
accept yr behind. u wander abt yr  
long neck probing a tree. u think  
it's a tree but its really a trap. a  
cry of victory goes up in d kitchen of  
d world. a pest is dead. a prehis  
toric pest at dat. a really funnytime  
prehistoric pest whom we will lug into  
a museum to show everyone how really funny  
u are

yr fate wd make a good  
scenario but d plot is between u &  
charles darwin. u know, whitefolkese  
business

as i said, im passing thru, just sing  
ing my song. get along little doggie &  
jazz like dat. word has it dat a big gold  
shipment is coming to californy. i hv to  
ride all night if im to meet my pardners  
dey want me to help score d ambush

# Poetry Makes Rhythm in Philosophy

Maybe it was the Bichot  
 Beaujolais, 1970  
 But in an a.m. upstairs on  
 Crescent Ave. I had a conversation  
 with K.C. Bird

We were discussing  
 rhythm and I said  
 “Rhythm makes everything move  
 the seasons swing  
 it backs up the elements  
 Like walking Paul-Chamber’s fingers”

“My worthy constituent”  
 Bird said, “The universe is a  
 spiralling Big Band in a polka-dotted speakeasy,  
 effusively generating new light  
 every one-night stand”

We agree that nature can’t  
 do without rhythm but rhythm can  
 get along without nature

This rhythm, a stylized Spring  
 conducted by a blue-collared man  
 in Keds and denims  
 (His Williamsville swimming pool  
 shaped like a bass clef)  
 in Baird Hall  
 on Sunday afternoons  
 Admission free!  
 All harrumphs! Must be  
 checked in at  
 the door

I wanted to spin  
Bennie Moten's  
"It's Hard to Laugh or Smile"  
but the reject wouldn't automate  
and the changer refused to drop  
"Progress," you know

Just as well  
because Bird vanished

A steel band had  
entered the room

ED ROBERSON

news continued      release

rescue workers fought today  
and yesterday another day today  
in efforts to avert the same  
tomorrow. one eye witness on the scene  
reported and the wide effects  
opened a decade in the wrecks  
of sequences supposed under control.  
official estimates of toll  
have been suppressed for purposes of piece  
by piece attention to belief.  
authorization to the area  
is given as is birth to myriads.

# poll

skin that is closed curtain.  
it is impossible to know. how  
the light is cast.

a mark that is kept the elect-  
ion determining the race  
before the candidate runs.

darkie is the night is  
an old image given color.  
the skin is history.the dark horse

# Four Lines of a Black Love Letter between Teachers

bored. confused actually. have started several letters.  
usually about 4 in the morning which is to say something  
about my tenancy in the house of sleep/black.  
evicted. universal, wch is to say "There is a certain  
amount of traveling  
in a dream deferred."

i taught Langston Hughes today. Same In Blues.  
and my soul/*stoppt before the mirror at my body sleeping in the white-  
ness of the moon . . .*

brought it back.saved newspaper then lost it  
waking up.about the confrontation hate  
the loss of meaning in that word) between the black  
students and the president of the campus the folks made him  
look like a fool. he is retreating into his power bag  
more jab about in loco parentis do you dig it tsk tsk

there is something about music in this letter. mmm how you do me  
this heh way. but the lecture was music you know  
i got so many bags i can only read they faces  
from inside.run out of labels even fore  
i run me out of words wch is to say  
/descriptions there's that refrain again  
*wch of the wch ways to gone and say . . . /black*

a classical problem lawd  
i/s here by myself  
got no company.what i got  
/i  
already got.what i know  
i know  
why i bother with puttin it down.nuthin

nobody else know wch is to say.  
 all you all/you people why you want it down this way  
 i was about to attend a sinkin.when yall showed up with the hole . . .  
 mmmmiss you baby

you ask was it all right. i said yes wch is to say.  
 i didn't say (to you no.no is not  
 a pill.quinine nor envoid.yes is.for me.  
 tastes weird as anything else  
*about us. put a hair*  
 on my hope chest. but thas oright.  
 been loving other men's sons lately  
 buying toys for students' sons on my way to dinner  
 don't take much to get an A from me.  
 hey hey you there baby at the end of this line  
 let me be yo sidetrack till yo mainline come  
 i can do more switchin than yo mainline  
 done now students about presumption."A certain  
 amount of nothing  
 in a dream deferred."

1 Ibid.,

2 vid., next refrain

3 ad int./cf., today is a ♀ . sine loco (:op.cit.,

4 i.e.,i am watering an irish rose. ooop pop a dop pop

*I've lost the letter of this act.*

with a pun as multiple as that.

"theys liable to be confusion."

to write a love letter for someone else

to you the one i love

is a love in a where someworld sometime else

done now

so signed if this is the night, who else but but

is it black

but look/here look here one more

thing.every new love adds to the meaning of love any lingering old

[love

has to catch up even to linger. so you're going to have

his black baby

# On the Calligraphy of Black Chant

i paid my becoming well not to become

i paid

i paid my becoming

my becoming

well

my becoming well

i paid my becoming well not to

i paid my becoming well not to become

and now gain even to gain my life

and now

and now gain

gain even to gain

even to gain my life

and now gain

's a hole

a hole in the hungry pocket

the hungry

gain

's a hole in the hungry pocket of my skin

and all points between those two are points

and all points

and all points between those two

and all points between those two are points

points opened

opened in that skin

opened in that skin and closed there

opened in that skin and closed there

one way!

opened in that skin and closed there one way.

the opposite of bleeding one way:

and any shot either life or last of thieves

's the opposite of bleeding



is the opposite of bleeding and not healed  
and not healed  
and not you  
i am the sieve  
and not you  
i am the sieve  
and not healed  
and not you i am the sieve  
and not your friend  
i am the sieve  
and not your healed  
and not you i am the sieve and not your friend.  
i am the sieve and not your friend  
i am the sieve  
i am the sieve

it must be that in the midst  
of any tonal language there is a constant huddle  
of all substance's matters

where any accident of sound  
could speak and  
the sound of people's walk  
talk     chicken with your head pecked

is their baldhead heels  
in the midst of a song another  
song     and any doing sing its work  
song

if i must think i must think  
i must think well

this is to demonstrate  
i must think  
my meanings are tonal

the bell ringing  
from the well

in the long line i must think  
it is tonal  
i must think well

it is tonal     too/much  
as this is rhythm

walk talk chicken wid yo head pecked  
you can crow w'en youse been dead

walk talk chicken wid yo head pecked  
you can hol' high yo bloody head

like

we haven't lost much

language but not music as speaking/the drummer walking on his  
hands

any moment (12/4/69 4:30 A.M.)  
chicago

the open door and oh no  
and the wish it wasn't  
murdered in its sleep  
its wife and soon baby  
thrown by the police  
into your turn  
to see the maybe  
home open the door oh no

american culture is the pot  
 calling the skillet black. american  
 even as a mulattoed  
 culture is very deeply colored. folks

white america is an unconscious black  
 brother culturally to black americans  
 as though still in a blanched coma  
 from the burn

that

chuck berry's  
 elvis presley charlie mc carthy  
 was actually a dummy.  
 it said what he said  
 and made you move your head  
 yes

that  
 nigger is the man.

even black people had to  
 read it in translation to be sure  
 it was that hot a star they saw  
 the wise men coming  
 toward  
 themselves. had to read its  
 hips  
 because in europe they don't talk that.  
 not 'till turkey  
 at least.

A. B. SPELLMAN

# the beautiful day, V

he went  
to the window.  
it folded & shrank.

quietly, & without warning  
them, night leaked into the  
room, into the “idea” of the group.

how easy it is to lie  
to you. what a soft  
lie your silence is.

she moved closer  
to the window, night  
shifted & sank.

john coltrane

an impartial review.

may he have new life like the fall  
fallen tree, wet moist rotten enough  
to see shoots stalks branches & green  
leaves (& may the roots) grow into his side.

around the back of the mind, in its closet  
is a string, i think, a coil around things.  
listen to summertime, think of spring, negroes  
cats in the closet, anything that makes a rock

of your eye. imagine you steal. you are frightened  
you want help. you are sorry you are born with ears.

# the twist

a dancer's world  
is walls, movement  
confined: music:

god's last breath.  
rhythm: the last beating  
of his heart.    a dancer

follows that sound, blind  
to its source, toward walls, with  
others, she cannot dance alone.

she thinks of thought as  
windows, as ice around the dance.  
can you break it?    move.



## Blues: My Baby's Gone

my baby's gone  
& incredible distances close before me  
my face pressed up—side the wall  
which doesn't open a window  
into a room of dead flowers  
dead tokens of the hours  
i spent with my baby

my baby's gone is not like a song  
like a rope i could swing on  
wind on my shades blurring faces  
in the park to streaks of color  
in the dark while the singing  
rests my chest from the hurt  
that fills the hole in me  
my baby left.  
it's more a cry like an answer  
a twist in the turning  
a sobering of skids and  
a panic of drugs

my tongue dries up & manhattan collapses.

# Did John's Music Kill Him?

in the morning part  
 of evening he would stand  
 before his crowd. the voice  
 would call his name &  
 redlight fell around him.  
 jimmy'd bow a quarter hour  
 till Mccoy fed block chords  
 to his stroke. elvin's thunder  
 roll & eric's scream. then john.

then john. *Little old lady*  
 had a nasty mouth. *summertime*  
 when the war is. *africa* ululating  
 a line bunched up like itself  
 into knots paints beauty black.

trane's horn had words in it  
 I know when I sleep sober & dream  
 of sun & shadow, yet even in the day john  
 & a little grass put them on me clear  
 as tomorrow in a glass enclosure.

kill me john my life eats  
 life. the thing that beats out of  
 me happens in a vat enclosed  
 & fermenting & wanting it to explode  
 like your song.

so beat john's death words down  
 on me in the darker part  
 of evening. the black light issued  
 from him in the pit he made  
 around us. worms came clear

to me where I thought I had been  
brilliant. o john death will  
not contain you death  
will not contain you

# The Truth You Carry Is Very Dark

it is not spoken to him  
who has bled salt  
but to him who lives within  
the Penumbra of the Silent Mind  
upon this shadow  
cast the shadow of the wind  
thicken the Penumbra with the vision  
that God is what we know  
that what we do not know is the same  
that truth is what we touch  
if it is there  
if it is not there

PRIMUS ST. JOHN

# All the Way Home

The lamps hung like a lynching  
In my town.  
It was a dark town.  
In a dark town,  
Light is a ragged scar.  
Fright begs that ragged scar.  
It begs doorways.

I love that town.  
From its lean men  
I learned  
Emotion;  
And how to hold that fine edge,  
That makes us  
    people . . .

Mrs. Blackwell's  
Sold her house.  
Since her husband revolved his head,  
She wears bright hats  
That speak to people.

B.J.'s doing time.  
His children betray that time,  
By the breathing it takes  
To dream through windows.  
Mary Lee dreams him letters;  
She dreams by heart . . .

Now I feel a new scar.  
I've left home  
And leaned so far,

I'm almost zero.  
And though it's lonely  
Whatever knowing is;  
It strings a long fine wire.  
At night I lie awake  
And listen to that wire—

All the way home.

# Benign Neglect / West Point, Mississippi, 1970

Suppose you were dreaming about your family,  
 And when you woke up  
 You found a man named Sonny Stanley  
 Had just shot you (5 times),  
 Or justice  
 Looked just like the color your blood was running—  
 Running wild in the world—  
 But the world wouldn't see.

Then  
 You read, somewhere  
 (I think it's the papers)  
 If it's a problem, Boy,  
 We don't have one here  
 We don't ask a man to die  
 Like groceries babbling froth to flies.  
 But bleeding,  
 You watch your neighbors  
 Write away to their windows to  
 Hide! Hide!

*"He's not there. He's not there."*

The last sentence?  
 The last sentence is your *Father*—  
 One of the windows . . .

*"He's not there. He's not there."*

Goodbye, Johnny.

# The Violence of Pronoun

1

Loving came her way,  
                   vicious.  
 It rose up,  
 From the earth,  
 And made her father's hand,  
 Around her throat,  
 A bird of prey,  
 And carried her away—  
                   In mind,  
 Like a limp patient.  
 He was not drunk.  
 It is worse.  
 In this world,  
 We cannot feel . . .

2

In my sociology class—  
                   For understanding  
 Black folks—  
 They tried to understand  
 Our homes—  
                   Like buckshot.  
 What we have done,  
                   To love  
 Is unforgivable.  
 They took out rakes,  
 And treated us like dirt.  
 It was so perfect  
 They asked for grades.





# Studying

American Lit. is beside you—  
Keep up—  
By a small cup  
And smaller words . . .  
It is night—  
By tin cans of light  
About the river  
You are faithful . . .  
But where does it go,  
Which soul,  
Slanted roof,  
Bolted door . . .  
There is absolutely nothing here,  
But the very late birds,  
And what you are.



on their hands  
it was Texarkana hell  
and southern belles ringing in my  
    ear drums I hated  
    could not stand found my love  
    thrusted down  
    down down  
my gasping throat

to think to know to guess  
that home they died a  
thousand whaling times on trees  
    tombstones broken chimneys of grass  
    brick and dust porch tracts  
    mosquito heaps their carcasses  
laughing not being “human”  
they died we forgot but  
cannot filter from our bloods  
    the trueness the arrowness  
    lying in this closet-shaped town  
    we cannot remove the stink

CECIL TAYLOR

# Scroll No. 1

Whistle into night

Recognize exorcism

blue's history.

Whittled whispers while

city technique wrung

awakened needs.

Spring cotton answer

Recognition

Carver's oil estranged

outer earth's garments

Scorched exclusivity

Shining Bandanah

Thru ground mounds and

honeysucklevine scraped

dust rises. Noon dimples

sweat titty.

Bugle brow browned

Indignation laments

Yellow childrens

scampering ass'n

pigtails stompin'

rag-a-mom

White crucifix

White flame

White God

White hood

White white

White which

Pains shame

Call your'n

Happiness born

comin' onto

Whiteness  
 Greased bolts  
 Mud fields  
 Hot stream  
 Stung stank  
 Stitch sanguine  
 Satiety sought  
 Surreptitious  
 Seraph  
 Sin sinning  
 Singing song  
 Set 4 centuries long

Mirror born color squared  
 difference excuse  
 mountain organ hill bill  
     tongue tastes  
 Tar flesh trampled seeds.

## Scroll No. 2

Nation's lost diplomacy  
 lost notions duplicity  
 Demagogic democracy  
 Damned dutiful  
 Darned cloth  
 blue serge        white white  
 one someone       shirt floptic  
 tank bat and "yeah bo"  
 I'ma Senatah!  
 You just sing dance unseen  
     crophandler  
     food maker  
     lost nobles  
     chewed spit'n  
     grits shit and  
     molasses hot smellin'  
     teeth toothless  
     hyeena smile  
 'Ah is so happy  
 Youse mah master  
     ooh ooh ooh  
 Kick me again    gin  
     Prick Duster sperm  
 Ground life out  
 Chambers red  
 Redolent  
 Lao Vaudois  
     leaves bow  
 Swollen gulls mate  
 exigent whimpers  
 swimmers duck  
 rockfall legion's  
     asleep

where bonnets  
bent whore's lost  
puerility romps  
unchided over  
back roads black  
in night cesspools  
to constellations  
stranger

Justice invisibility  
impenetrable  
lighted masks  
calcimined mimes  
ejaculate polyglot  
systoles  
Dry cell of money  
has locked the minds  
and cauterized hearts



Da  
 Phallic mystère  
 never speaking  
 stems grasp's lightning  
 air thru whole  
 socket  
 mayhem  
 turn  
 lighten'd  
 soft  
 To You  
 then  
 in  
 some  
 sounding parafin  
 arms are raised rose seed  
 in sun  
 burnin—  
 Dark night vacant shadows peep the  
 borrowed friend arms extend  
 upward  
 elbows angled  
 somethin' dime Tin'e  
 an ear lak, those  
 ever readied, roost  
 slick'n.

Hewé-zo  
 vertabraes seam'd atolling  
 meteor pa-zzanin a hissing  
 asson adorn bells past  
 a 2nd month lain 7 side.  
 churn/

Da

oldest ancestor/ fertilized seed

/ making LegBa

/ phallic mystere/

by the

center post

of Peristyle

# Choir

1.

of time as horizontal paths  
 fed sea agglutinizes  
 field (phasoun) verticles plowed  
 discover inner vision  
 soil and river sound  
 weight'd margins invisibly  
 functioning anchors in flight  
 agglutinated space thus absorb'd  
     scatter'd deposits  
 thoughts: so many drops of rain  
     transposed heritage  
 mirrors at will turn backward  
     differentials in organization.

1a.

Agglutinated space cursed bough  
 supporting sky  
     Bess between Nut beneficent  
 protective function of  
 twins magically born inn eigh Astral  
     scent paths read 7 colors round  
 nape o'time  
 layers lit retain moist syllable befo'  
 cyclical imprint  
     ly dampen'd tongue né breath beat  
 a full  
 space agglutinated self differential in  
 organic  
     cross fertilization of registers  
     oral & visual reconstruction

feeding bark, feeding sea  
 twins  
 Face of kings.

2.

of node tightly bound in cave  
 juice from reed metamorphosed  
 transferr'd root differentials  
 in time lay flatten'd palm  
 across upturned heel  
 compendium loosens wig  
 press back the grain being thaw'd  
 I'se field, I'se rock, I'se time  
 holdin back rain agin' mountain  
 hidden in concrete entombed  
 square joints of rusted steel  
 hold the saffron ray nebah less  
 than arrange gold float an eye  
 face morning stretch'd & held

3.

between animal glut  
 transferr'd tusk  
 these be minimal gesture  
 ambivalent transparencies  
 cloud'd cloths distemper'd  
 to obfuscate.

3a.

elusive street carry indomitable  
 shadow spit consequence risen  
 fluted was but trunk transposed  
 purpose gleams undaunted  
 perpendicular  
 blood altar'd wood spray wind'd vowel  
 cometh

bud blown circular to the blessed skin  
 analogous  
 ear from continuum light draw matter to  
 bone  
 become dress'd skin talk'in syllabic  
 monotone hidden from passage walk  
 ovah  
 delta thru crystal charged atmospheric  
 ray illumined by irridescant 3 points  
 root necessarily a continuing echo  
 weighted margins invisibly beating

4.

face worn reflect upon inner vision  
 time of rivers continued intelligence  
 the fall rises lac stalk unknown point  
 of departure of rain of perimeter  
 focus accumulated thrusts receiving  
 "mind" get bounce, scent lifts echo  
 —Painting horizon bees street walker  
 cross fertilizing moving registers  
 scattered deposits being sons of light  
 Preparation reverb anacrusis  
 ritualized triangle essential  
 spirit waters waded hidden cycle alone.

4a.

of space particular node  
 betwix layers announce  
 savor'd victuals in rapped  
 basin resonate climbin' growth  
 salvage time establish'd  
 area agglutinized abyss  
 being Astral & all registers  
 between.

LORENZO THOMAS

# Inauguration

The land was there before us  
Was the land. Then things  
Began happening fast. Because  
The bombs us have always work  
Sometimes it makes me think  
God must be one of us. Because  
Us has saved the world. Us gave it  
A particular set of regulations  
Based on 1) undisputable acumen  
2) carnivorous fortunes, delicately  
Referred to here as “bull market”  
And (of course) other irrational factors  
Deadly smoke thick over the icecaps,  
Our man in Saigon Lima Tokyo etc etc



getting out of Grand Prix  
     Can hardly read  
 this paper without stumbling over “embarkation”  
 What someone has done to us, that  
     my words become unintelligible.  
 It says, do not despise your own  
     I wonder if they see that,  
 All those foxes.           All of a sudden  
 I’m so glad I have on my wide  
 pants, my 10 dollar banlon shirt  
     The girls wish I was  
 inside, too. At least, I think so  
     This much is understood  
 I go down to Benson’s Burgers  
     and sit in the parking lot.  
 Food smell, but I don’t have any money  
     All I have is the blues  
 and a ticket for someplace called Cythera  
 a bus outing on Sunday.  
     Got this magazine telling about the great  
     new thing going on in Nigeria  
     and I have my beautiful high  
 a green alcove of the evening  
     called “music”  
 My voice when it is understood,  
     Piped into dancehalls and restaurants by  
 this very intricate and lovely machine.



## Song

You asked me to sing  
Then you seemed not  
To hear; to have gone out  
From the edge of my voice

And I was singing  
There I was singing  
In a heathen voice  
You could not hear  
Though you requested

The song—it was for them.  
Although they refuse you  
And the song I made for you  
Tangled in their tongue

They wd mire themselves in the spring  
Rains, as I sit here folding and  
Unfolding my nose in your gardens

I wouldn't mind it so bad

Each word is cheapened  
In the air, sounding like  
Language that riots and  
Screams in the dark city

Thoughts they requested  
Concepts that rule them

Since I can't have you  
I will steal what you have

# Twelve Gates

Face it. The stars have their own lives and care  
 They are forced into it by your other eye and  
 Opposite side of your thoughts. Who takes sides  
 The world quite as fashionable as liars imagined

The picture of one fragile girl in an avalanche  
 Of the kimono required for their soft trade.  
 Who is so daring at first to draw lines in the sky  
 Dingy with this neglected daylight. Opened fan.  
 Life itself is such a simple thing and we need it

Then here comes the music again. And we need that too  
 People asking each other. The invention of reason.  
 And those who own nothing what of those walking around  
 Without land, without cash value, properties. Without

Nothing in their name. Whose destinies  
 Are not marked or marked down. What of  
 The ones who are meant to rise in the world  
 By their names. Whose names are not known.

These worlds are lost in a minute only a gem  
 Of substance remaining. The necessity to change the form.  
 These streets clothed in an atmosphere of ash and care-  
 Less emotion. Who are these persons roll their shoulders

Outside the window in starlight and streetlight  
 each young man there reminds the girl of someone  
 These are the last words I send you for awhile.  
 Written across her fan. Her open eye all flame and  
 You can feel it take shape in your eye. The lines.

Sufficient confusion calls for a song and  
 The figure with how many sides. Holler.

Once to the ocean. Sing it for the woman  
Whose hands open and deliver the dream

Arousing itself from the day's laborer walking  
These streets back from the edge of the river  
Deep into town. Traffic. Your voice plays across  
The street on the curb right into my open hand

# The Bathers

We turned to fire when the water hit  
 Us. Something  
 Berserk regained  
 An outmoded regard for sanity  
 While in the fire station  
 No one thought of flame  
 Fame or fortune did them

We did them a fortune. We did  
 Them a favor just being  
 Ourselves inside of them

Holy day children

In the nation coming your children will learn all about that

But the water creep about us  
 Water hit us with force.  
 We saw a boy transformed into a lion  
 His tail is vau the syllable of love  
 A master before fellow craft  
 The summit of the Royal Arch

Lotus. Mover on the face of the waters . . .



Sleepless Horus, watch me as I lie  
 Curtained with stars when ye arise  
 And part the skies. And mount the Royal  
 Bark

They said the ancient words in shameful English  
Their hearts rose up like feathers  
In the hidden place

And Horus step into the flood of noon  
Shedding his light upon the worlds

It was in Birmingham. It happened.

Week after week in the papers  
The proof appeared in their faces

Week after week seeing the same moment grow clearer  
Raising the water,

Filling the vessel. Raising the water.  
Filling the vessel

O electromagnetic Light shadûf!

Ancient hands bearing water  
Ha

The star broke  
Over the tub

All righteousness

Not deceived by sunshine nor the light  
From a man's desire

Deceived by desire  
So that in the moment  
The people cast light from their bodies  
"Light" being the white premeditation

The simplest fashion  
What they want is light

Another source to equip  
Their dry want

Want fire light. Space light  
Discretions of neon

At least.        So to appear natural  
                    Where the sun is

360° of light

Consumed in the labors of comfort  
That cries for the balm

                    Of all that is natural  
                    Desire.

Bathing in the dark  
The water glowing  
In the plastic curtain  
Suddenly heated

As another expels past satisfactions.  
cold as she washes gas tears  
From her man's eyes. We hate you.

Hot on her soft thighs  
Like the dog's breath at noon by the Courthouse

We hate you for that

                    But ancient hands raised  
This water  
As the street's preachers  
Have a good understanding hear them

                    O israel this O israel that

Down here in this place  
Crying for common privilege  
In a comfortable land

Their anger is drawing the water  
Their daughters is drawing the water.

Their kindness is laving and  
Oiling its patients.

That day  
The figures on the trucks inspired no one

Some threw the water  
On their heads.  
They was Baptists

And that day Horus bathed him in the water  
Again

And orisha walked amid the waters with hatchets  
Where Allah's useful white men  
Came there bearing the water  
And made our street Jordan  
And we stepped into our new land

Praise God. As it been since the first time

Through the tear of a mother

# Another Poem in English

John Donne would think of an island  
 After all this noon is written  
 All afternoon I think of several  
 Words

change    ribbet    foment    format

Plan    plane    solder    alchemy    Army

leads    you're kidding    gaoled

Corsica    desire    solidarity

insular front    font    Louisiana    Rumania

The execution of light

Known also as peace about being  
 A serpent twines itself around space  
 Wanting to call this that. Really

I'm doing that anyway!  
 Anyway, I'm doing that

And this this



MELVIN B. TOLSON

# Dark Laughter

*Veldt Village,  
O  
globe of thatch palms and idols of the tribe,  
how many times,  
how many tales,  
alive with the lore and ethos of  
lionhearts and hyenaloins,  
foxlivers and eaglebeaks—  
now nest, like tropic birds, among  
thy straws and leaves,  
thy rushes and reeds,  
without a trope,  
without a logos,  
to disturb  
anonymous dust?*

*In  
Veldt Village,  
dark laughter  
sparkles, in spangles  
of light and noise and smoke,  
at the idée fixe of  
a dark Don Quixote or a dusky Tartuffe.  
Dark Laughter  
flashes Rabelaisian humor  
in gross caricature and visceral naturalism  
of the élan vital.  
The Good Gray Chief had given  
the ear of wisdom to the Elders  
as proverb and fable and parable  
ascended the ladder of  
commedia de figurón,  
comédie larmoyante,*

*which foot-loose travelers find  
 from palm to pine.  
 "Elders," he said, "if I could be born again,  
 I'd ask the gods to make me a bard.  
 Tonight we have with us two bards, one black, one white,  
 whose feet have left their spoor on distant shores;  
 from them, therefore, I want to know  
what land the Great God has blessed  
 with the strongest wine!"*

*The Zulu bard,  
 born on the veldt but  
 bred on a hill above the Seine,  
 straddled the question with  
ethnic two-ness:  
 "Like Tennyson's Wanderer,  
 much have I seen and known—  
 in Montmartre cafés, swilled  
 the liquors of many lands:  
 rye, bourbon, rum, gin, vodka,  
 brandy, arrack, and a score of native wines,  
 from Dakar to Cape Town;  
 yet, O Mighty Chief, I cannot swear  
 what land has the strongest wine."  
 The applause de rigueur of the Elders arrested  
 like the inner digit of a dog's hind foot,  
 the Good Gray Chief  
 lanced the black bard's ego  
 with a glance and a sneer:  
 "The loins of a straddler cry for a kola nut!"*

*The graybeards  
 bellylaughed and clapped  
 their thighs  
 and then turned on their alien guest  
 a Leyden-jar battery  
 of quizzing eyes.*

*The vagabond poet  
 from Greenwich Village,  
 via the Latin Quarter,*

*winked at the Zulu bard,  
his boon companion of auld lang syne.*

*For the first time in years,  
A Long Way from Home,  
sung by the ancient cook in the family kitchen,  
stirred the dregs of nostalgia.  
“O Mighty Chief,”  
the expatriate said,  
“I was born and bred a Kentucky mountaineer—  
and my grandpa had a still in a canyon hideaway.”*

*. . . A memory image bled its way . . .  
in a speech not for Buncombe,  
his old buddy from Asheville had said  
in Greenwich Village,  
“Look homeward, Angel”—but  
“You can’t go home again.”*

*The poet said:  
“My grandpa bootlegged liquor in  
the County Courthouse  
when the Law tried to make the USA  
a Sahara.”*

*The Elders finessed patterns in their beards,  
as the stranger’s candor snailed across their minds.*

*The poet  
thought:  
Who doesn’t like the juicy roast  
of a story snatched from  
the spit of life?  
The graybeards chewed it,  
speculatively.  
(After all, didn’t a white man cook it?)  
They smacked their lips.  
“My grandpa used to put  
rattlesnake heads in his kegs.  
Only God Almighty knew how much power  
my grandpa’s white lightning had.  
Old timers said his liquor burned  
a blood-red path*

*from the tip of the guzzler's tongue to his lowest gut!"*

*The graybeards,  
their eyes a white anabasis,  
palmed their paunches and groaned.*

*"Elders," said the poet,  
"one day my grandpa gave a rabbit  
a swig of white lightning  
and turned him loose.*

*What do you think the rabbit did, Elders?  
Well, he turned a somersault seven times,  
like a Big Top acrobat,  
and then staggered right up  
to grandpa's prize hound dog,  
spat in the old champion's eye,  
and said:*

*'Mr. Hound Dog,  
please, oh, please, don't try to block my way.  
When I lose my temper,  
hell itself belches forth fire and brimstone!'*"

*Dark laughter  
exploded  
like  
a Molotov cocktail  
against  
a caterpillar tank.*

*Good humor notwithstanding,  
a people must keep its weather eye open:  
the God of the Whites has a hand that breeds  
seventy-seven sleights.*

*The Elders upheaved their beards  
to the hubris-symbol of the tribe:  
The Good Gray Chief bowed to his guest,  
his crotch up his sleeve.*

*"In truth, you are a bard,"  
he chuckled.*

*"Your fable is a tribute to your land.  
Now, since other peoples  
tonight*

*have neither bard nor chief to speak for them,  
it remains for me to take up the fallen spear.*

*The issue narrows:*

*it is*

*Africa versus America*

*to see*

*which has the stronger drink—  
the stronger men.*

*Remember, O bard,  
your rabbit, after all, challenged only a dog  
to test his heart, to test his guts!"*

*Suddenly his eyes became  
as soft as a shedding crab.*

*"O Bard, the pity of it, Bard!"*

*In the tropic night,*

*the Elders stirred*

*hand and foot,*

*leaned forward,*

*taut as tom-tom skins.*

*The Good Gray Chief continued:*

*"As the eldest of the Elders,*

*my memory now conjures a tale,*

*shuttling between what is and what was.*

*One day my grandpa gave his favorite monkey  
a swig of his most powerful palm wine.*

*The beast danced a jig,*

*pounded his breast,*

*sbrilled his defiance at Elders and gods;*

*then,*

*like an eagle's flight of wit,*

*fled into a jungle*

*which concealed a man-eating lion*

*that had defied the tricks*

*of the bravest warriors.*

*"The monkey staggered*

*hither and thither;*

*hit and miss,*

*beating*

*shrubs and bushes and underbrush,*

*terrifying  
 beast and bird—  
 shouting  
 at the top of his lungs:  
 ‘Mr. Lion,  
 O  
 MR. Lion,  
 don’t try to hide from me.  
 I’m going to bring you in,  
 dead or alive!’”*

*Dark laughter  
 was the roar of a sirocco  
 churned out of the Libyan deserts,  
 bound for Malta.*

*After the chuckles had died  
 in the last ditch,  
 the American poet horselaughed and said:  
 “Elders, your chief got  
 that dead-or-alive stuff  
 from a USA movie in a ghost town of the Old West!”*

*The Zulu bard protested with a grin,  
 “Are you accusing the Good Gray Chief of theft?”*

*“Poets know all men are thieves,”  
 the Westerner said,  
 as his hands swept right and left toward the horizon.  
 “After all, it’s One World— isn’t it?”*

*In  
 Veldt Village  
 dark laughter  
 beguiles the tribal censor,  
 cheats the governess, reason,  
 with Falstaffian relief from stock responses to  
 paramount chief and witchdoctor;*

*[unfinished]*

# The Chitterling King

## I

### With Whom the Die Is Cast

Professor Alpha Umphers  
D. Sc.,  
an ebonite Basilius  
on his Siaitic see  
as president  
of the Afro-American Academy,  
although his lectern is awry in the dissent  
of masks, bestirs a hair  
neither in the dawn of his porcupine goatee  
nor in the dusk of his leonine pompadour,  
for the cataract in his inner eye shuts out the debris  
of ologies and isms Tèneriffe  
shovels into apple-of-Sodom December;  
that  
that snaps open his synapses  
is the ill-omened spots on the dice he remembers:  
the die of Caesar  
at the Rubicon,  
before the Ides of March stained Pompey's statue;  
the Emperor Jones,  
ague-  
ridden by Little Formless Fears of Acheron,  
as Jeff, the Banquo porter, on his haunches rolls the bones  
of Armageddon  
in the Great Forest's shadow;  
and the craps of Catfish Row  
vermeil-veiled like the glow  
of scarlet-ariled logs  
on firedogs.  
Though sense peeped from the metaphor

— a fat crab scringing from a shell —  
 like gill-net fish, they felt  
 the unknowable bore away the bell.

His mind a shuttlecock for days  
 between its yes and no,  
 Dusty Busby at last  
 let his ballad go  
 upwind to Windus.

The Chitterling King's  
 Egeria,  
 Miss Lou McGee,  
 gasped  
 at "Chittlings" in  
 the ballad's title, turned  
 as yellowish-green as she-  
 ironbark, and clasped  
 a pouting-pigeon breast,  
 and rasped:  
 "Illiteracy!"

As Mr. Windus snailed through his mail,  
 he gave his tie a ritualistic pat,  
 flicked the ash from his coat-of-arms cigar,  
 bull's-eyed his mirror wastebasket, spat  
 into the crumpled-horn MS.  
 from the ex-star  
 of the Chocolate Bar.

In a marijuana dream, on Mt. Usura  
 an ebony swellfish-bellied boss,  
 to the rhythms of The Chittling Blues,  
 nailed Dusty Busby to a cross!  
 When Banker Nicodemus Cahn's  
 gold spinner was cast from Sugar Hill,  
 Ezekiel, reimagining a hornet's nest  
 of slights  
 grew hotter than a kiln;  
 but Mrs. Ursula Cahn's



Picadilly-Creole smile,  
 contrived like a Macy model's,  
 was the silken guile  
 of a geometric spider; so  
 (opposite Ezekiel, on this occasion)  
 she played again  
 the prima buffa in  
Of Flies and Men.

A too-big mattress, his buttocks  
 overslopped the Chippendale;  
 unmindful that he cracked Priscian's head,  
 he was himself the cicerone: FOR SALE  
 upstarted from his one-  
 acred personality  
 like Oceola's plume of glory  
 at a scalp dance:  
 the root of evil has no self-irony.

As aborigine's shadow a swagman's trail,  
 reporters from the ANP,  
 the Harlem Black Dispatch, and Ebony  
 gathered to angle the sesame of success;  
 but with a Bismarkian grimace  
 as a diamond tooth headlighted his face,  
 the Chitterling King,  
 pillowed on his swivel apogee,  
 recalled an idol and said: "Gentlemen,  
 it's an enigma wrapped up in a mystery."

## II

### By Whom the Die Is Cast

As Ezekiel Windus performed the chitterling rites  
 in Major Patmore's Stonewall Jackson House,  
 a Caedmonian vision vibrated across his mind  
 like the silhouette of a flittermouse;  
 he siphoned the image off his chef's routine,  
 and then among the pots and pans he heard

a voice that isolates curd  
from whey pipe, pipe, "Ezekiel!"

Ezekiel saw de wheel  
'way up in de middle of de sky,  
Ezekiel saw de wheel  
'way up in de middle of de sky;  
little wheel turn by faith,  
big wheel turn by de grace of God,  
'way in de middle of de sky!

His eyeballs blurred, as if from rheum, then cleared  
miraculously; but rigor mortis froze  
the anatomy of his unborn word.  
Unmistered, he shook the dust  
of blind-gut Horeb, Georgia, from  
the hog-trough of his number thirteen shoe:  
a Percivalean bum  
unmewed by beggars of life,  
he wolfed his mulligan stew,  
as if bulimic,  
among outcasts of Poker Flat  
in Hooverilles heroicomic  
but this  
is the higher all' ottava of that:  
Like crabs scrawl to gulfweed  
in the Sargasso Sea,  
the footloose ragtag sought,  
beyond the tide crack of reality,  
the roc's egg  
in Guy Tabu's Casino & Barbershop;  
here, no man had to make a leg,  
and none became emeritus;  
from Tchaikovsky to Bebop,  
from Marx to Jesus,  
ists and isms ran the gantlet of pros and cons:  
this was the Walk, the low-brow's academe;  
no censor threw a rabbit punch,  
and every disputant was on the beam.

Yesterday, in that place,  
 the Nous was Plato; today, in this — Guy  
 . . . but he was more . . .  
 he was the Cassius  
 who answered the wild prayer, the wild cry  
 of Ezekiel when, his arms anchor-lead-heavy, he sank  
 — not in the Harlem but the Tiber —  
 like a weary brogan in a snow-dust bank.

One black-frost dawn,  
 Guy leaned against the double-bolted door,  
 a solitary potter wasp, and eyed  
 Ezekiel, who, as if a sammier wried  
 sweat from his skin, hunched on the floor  
 cleaning brass spittoons, humiliation  
 boring into his core  
 like a sewing awl. Guy read  
 the Georgian's mask, then scraped  
 his shining spot-ball head.  
 Rusty Busby snored the boozier's snores  
 into the billiard-green. Ezekiel's broom  
 push-pushed across  
 the ultima Thule of the gambling room  
 as Guy Tabu, ex-actor of the Harlem Opera House,  
 pooh-poohed his vamped-up vanity:  
 "O Son of Ham, how can you make your mark  
 in the little old Sodom of New York  
 without the address of Sir Success  
 or a black-leg's city map?  
 Alas, O Capon Sap,  
 who d'you wanta be —  
 The Great I Am,  
 Kneepad Amen,  
 or Flip-Flop Sam?"

Guy snatched the broom and huckled his hip  
 and mopped the sweat that didn't drip  
 . . . push-pushing . . .  
 until he reached the cliosphinx of the wall;  
 then, then, his feigned

bull-donkey labor drained  
his all in all.

“Push Alley is a dead  
hind-gut,” he said;  
“to thine own self be true,  
and it must follow . . . thou canst not then  
find the address  
— Lord, black man, Lord! —  
of Sir Success  
on Pull Avenue  
and Bull Boulevard!”  
Negro weeklies in ads  
from coast to coast  
keystoned the ebony Quesnay’s boast:

WINDUS CHITTERLINGS WEAR THE CROWN  
of Free Enterprise  
and Business Renown!  
EZEKIEL WINDUS  
Has Now No Peer!  
Salute  
NEGRO BUSSINESS’ MAN OF THE YEAR!

A neon trademark  
skyscraping on Seventh Avenue  
forefingered and screamed:

IF YOU ARE BLUE  
WINDUS VITAMINS  
WILL JACK UP YOU!

The Windus curia regis  
baited caste and class and race,  
as the wings of an Aberdeen gold spinner fly  
cheat the rainbow trout or the calico bass;  
bourgeois palaces  
and proletarian shacks  
refracted dissonances of kind:  
the scene might alter . . . but behind

it Windus remained the Thrax  
 readied for the arena's sands;  
 while, with red-inked stacks  
 of ledgers, dark Insuls performed  
 clog dances on Sisyphean skids,  
 Ezekiel Windus piled up dollars with the gusto  
 of a Ptolemy erecting pyramids.  
 Sloe Gin Hornsby, like a midwife,  
 watched Rusty Busby revamp the news  
 in a ballyhooing ballad epitheted  
The Chittling Blues:  
If the little wife says you ain't  
the man you used to be,  
let Windus chittlings pep up  
your sub-vitality  
with vitamins A & Z!

No laughs in the Casino:  
 a begging friar from Ireland,  
 he waited, his fabling hand  
 hobbing along the strings; and then  
 his gaze bent up to eyes awonder  
 with awe that filmed the maiden Zeppelin.

Guffaws cataracted:  
 Rusty Busby,  
 in crescendo  
 without  
 diminuendo,  
 volleyed the strings and minstreled:

Listen, black, and listen, tan,  
listen to this guitar-man,  
Windus chittlings, boiled or fried,  
are 100% A-mer-i-can.

Sloe Gin Hornsby, a honky-tonk  
 pianist fumbling for a flat  
 to posit after a clef, finally sharped,  
 "Betcha Windus would give a grand for that!"

Applause  
 quick like a knee jerk — but  
 Sloe Gin  
 spooned out the “Blues”  
 and “ain’t”  
 as maggots in a work  
 of Art. A hydra of views!  
 Sloe Gin  
 beheaded the monster  
 with the Excalibur  
A Psalm of Life!

The Casino rife  
 with antimasks, Dusty Busby sought an od  
 to vigil the Note and Word,  
 An Aaron’s rod  
 with almonds. Sometimes  
 a twit-twat bard below the peak,  
 by lucke or wisdom,  
 riseth with the eagle Greeke.

“Sloe Gin,” Dusty Busby dealt his blow,  
 “a note-maker ought to know  
 an Art idea  
 with the gonorrhoea!  
 An artist is a bird, a very strange bird,  
 that puts a nest together  
 in tune with the time, the place,  
 the weather;  
 at its worst or best  
 every nest  
 is different  
 by the way a feather  
 is tucked or a straw is bent!”

### III

#### For Whom the Die is Cast

As the scholars of the Afro-American Academy  
 crosshackle Dr. Woolf,

the rack and pinion of Professor Umphers' memory  
 send back and forth,  
 back and forth,  
 swivel shuttles  
 that weave spot figures  
 with nuances of irony  
 in the fabric silk  
 of finesse and geometrie.

A dance macabre along  
 a broken Everglades' levee swirls into his mind:  
 a mock moon with a mockbird's song  
 above the black debris and yellow carcasses  
 puked from geyrine morasses;  
 He tries to blind  
 himself with liquor, but a moccasin,  
 whose coil-spring lightning  
 barely fangs past his shin,  
 sobers him, makes him aware of rats, opossums, dogs,  
 cattle, wildcats, horses, coons, chickens, hogs,  
 refugees, black and white — tragedies  
 without a M. Champollion, agonies  
 in an untranslatable tongue:  
 a dark man with his skull  
 pulped by a pistol butt  
 and arms outflung  
 like Him,  
 dying;  
 a pale, pale woman in travail,  
 crying  
 a cry  
 interpreted by  
 young Umphers  
 as Why  
hast thou forsaken me?  
 . . . this, this . . .  
 as alligators, bull and cow,  
 instinct with the necessity  
 of Now,  
 couple in lacerating ecstasy.

Bristle-faced like a dealer  
     forced to ante  
     for the next jack pot,  
     the etcher shei  
 watches egg-mite hours pass  
     toward dark of dawn  
     and designs, on the glass  
 of young Umphers' greenery,  
     a Rodinesque patriarch  
 (blacker than cypress lawn)  
     tearing  
     apart the ifs and buts,  
     baring  
 the raca's scars beneath the inner shirt,  
     staring  
     at the tiger's raccroc stitches  
 that unite the net-ground pieces  
     of the Why that bitches  
     philosopher and fool,  
     beyond the yellow sapphire  
     clusters of the faggot fire.  
 When the Chitterling King glided by  
     in his aeried limousine —  
     the Deuteronomic Law  
     of cars — every oyster eye  
     on Seventh Avenue upcocked in awe:  
 the jim-crow law inverted, the chauffeur loomed  
     blonder than  
     the blondest Aryan  
     the D. A. R. ever saw —  
 blonder than the dehaired maw  
     of an opossum  
     to be  
     braised golden brown,  
     to a T,  
     by black mammy,  
     for the F. F. V.

The nordic's livery  
 vied with the court regalia



of a Hapsburg duke; and when  
 the anthracite Vanity-fairian  
 of Harlem's Belgravia  
 put foot on ghetto dust, pedestrian  
 homebodies forgot  
 the Very Lights,  
 while the O-mouths  
 of gadabout skites  
 edging round  
 froze like the open doors  
 that neither shape a shadow  
 nor a sound.

Neither vicars of God nor the Chitterling King's,  
 and unaware of glazas and sugar cane,  
 the gazers achieved an echoic zing  
 by linking I's in an ethnic chain.  
 Before he whiffed marijuanas  
 in a coral-red ribaldry,  
 before he saw his I-ness fold  
 like a jack crosstree,  
 Rusty Busby  
 spotlighted  
 with his guitar,  
 voodooed skulls of the black and tan  
 in the Chocolate Bar,  
 as a scop at wassail  
 in Heorot with Hrothgar  
 witched the brains  
 of jarlmen and thanes.

I play any game  
that you can name,  
for any amount  
that you can count.

If my luck is up,  
if my luck is down,  
I'm the Mr. Barnum  
of this Black Man's town!

The ghosts of van and taxi vanished in the ear,  
 like falling diphthongs. Ezekiel's push-pushing  
     a school boy's bushing  
     the asses' bridge,  
     Rusty Busby  
 grew darker than a ridge  
     oak, inside and out,  
 for fame had vaped like St. Bruno's lily;  
 so out of a mood in tune with rhythms of the broom  
 a ballad flowed like water willynilly:

God's golden slippers  
give the angels the blues —  
I ain't got no corns,  
'cause I ain't got no shoes!

I was once a gentleman —  
had a two-timing gal.  
I was once a square-shooter —  
had a Judas for a pal.

I gave once the public  
a brand-new deal;  
but I got in the rear  
of an ass's heel!

Gonna load them bones,  
gonna stack them cards;  
so come up to see me  
in the House of Lords!

Ezekiel used the unholy three  
 — push, pull, and bull —  
 to make his chain splice of reality  
 . . . below — fangs that never say adieu . . .  
 . . . above — beaks that never say good-by . . .  
 the frog (Rusty Busby) in a bog  
 (Even as you and I!)

The big wheel moved by Faith,  
the little wheel by the Grace of God:

a wheel in a wheel  
'way in the middle o' the air!  
 Ezekiel felt Tabu's Casino cant  
 probe his flesh and drain  
 the arrogance of his arm,  
 like a severed basilic vein;  
 yet he had plasma to cere his yesterday  
 and light a candle to spirit scruples away.

Booker T.'s  
 "Let down your bucket where you are"  
 and the Fisk Jubilee Singers'  
 "Who Will Be a Witness for My Lord?"  
 became bubbles breaking  
 in a buckaroo's discarded gourd,  
 or phantom swishes  
 of Shakespeare's untraceable sword.

The decade had its ups and downs,  
 like the heads and rumps of giraffes  
 in a single file; and the polysyllables  
 of Harlem bellylaughs  
 acidified the pottage on the shelf;  
 but Ezekiel's laugh had the golden oxytone  
 of Success itself.

The Hand of the Chitterling Empire,  
 with the riddle of a recipe,  
 held dominion from palm to pine;  
 the filmed farms of the Windus Company  
 (as well as sources hid in redtapery)  
 shipped delicacies of swine.

In spite of ambush bugs  
 whose bile  
 cartooned a Jew in the \$-pile,  
 "What we say and what we do,  
 at this time and in this place,  
 will digit the high- or low-  
 watermark of the Race."

The belly of his memory gripes:  
 "I'm lynched in effigy  
 by the Harlem Black Dispatch,  
 and the blackamoor Reds nickname me  
 Uncle Tom Gobineau  
 in the Daily Worker; but  
 I know and know I know  
 Nurture is only a C-3 nurse whose pillows prop  
 up Nature's invalid — Old Man Flop!"

Dark laughter crackles like the rinds of roasted pork  
 in the unction of the pothunter's spiel;  
 but Professor Umphers has the one's-own look  
 of a ginner when the teeth of the wheel  
 draw the fiber through the grid:  
 the pier of vanity  
 has no ice apron; but he  
 filters off as fiddle faddle  
 the notion that a prefiguring ice-blink  
 haunts the bridgemasters who think  
 the genes of a monastery pea  
 load the dice of destiny.

To him, the darkness, fore and aft, outside  
 a man's parentheses,  
 is but a keg's unminded lees:  
 he puzzles out the filets d'Arachné,  
 the X's no magic circle has denied,  
 and the Bredoyean dice cast with naiveté.  
 unaware,  
 he held as fetish the Balzacian de;  
 hobodom's democracy  
 was an incubus blurb  
 blaring a blue  
 false indigo cacophony;  
 so he withdrew  
 beyond the Paul Pry eyes of the bums  
 as the male orang-utang of Borneo  
 retires to the upper fork of a tree  
 when the female and the kids disturb  
 His Magnifico.

Venetian oars create  
     a cadenza of love;  
 but the Dixieland wheels of a gondola,  
     an antiphon of hate:  
 a black Ulysses of the underworld rods,  
 he tailored for himself the schedules of  
     earthquaking  
     Atlantic Seaboard decopods  
 coupled to dinosaurian cars  
     — bellying freight —  
     engulfed in vaporscape  
 from steam-hissing thoraxes  
     escaping;  
 he watched, stalk-eyed, Waldorf-Astorias  
     pancaking  
     to coppiced passengers  
     and baggage-wagon loads  
     . . . like dragonfly cruisers . . .  
     forsaking  
     Cloud-Cuckoo-Land roads.  
 In the sea dust of pros and cons,  
 old Dr. Vachel Woolf upanchors to his feet,  
     despite fleshpots and honorific years;  
     his temper puckers red with heat  
 blooms, and his frown out-Molochs Moloch's  
     in Pandemonium's council among his Peers;  
 and as he shakes his ebony Bola boa-headed cane,  
 the Harlem Opera House is thunder-girt with cheers.

“Nature or Nurture, that is the question,”  
     he narrow-throats,  
 as if to watch the vertical strokes above the notes  
     of a jazzer's staff;  
 but his sarcasm clicks with the precision  
     of a facsimile telegraph:  
     “ . . . Well . . .  
     the genes will tell.  
 Every Afro-American knows  
     a Bilbo cannot keep  
 the black Invictus in Yazoo bilboes.”

He pegs Professor Umphers with a glance  
as nib-edged as a fishing lance  
from a bully tree;  
and then he ravel's out the skein  
of Mendel's ism and Galton's ology.

The hearers sit like prick-eared priests before  
bronze caldrons, at Dodona's terminus,  
echoing winds heigh-hoing  
up Mount Tomarus,  
while Dr. Woolf  
presents his hatti-sherif in a voice as ominous  
as low barometric pressure:

[unfinished]



TOM WEATHERLY

## first monday scottsboro alabama

they don't hold grudges  
bridges that don't know cars  
are in this century.  
they don't know better to  
ride over wooden bridges  
wagons from shotgun ridges  
bridgeport, paint rock, sand mountain  
they ride to county courthouse  
square to honest trades of  
samplers, plowshares, shotguns  
bloodhounds, homebrew & gossip.  
they come to buy back issues of time  
from north alabama ridges  
over bridges sherman didnt burn.



# Canto 7

## first thesis

for m.l.k., jr.

aim get your sights & its sound  
in abstract or journal movements  
to a peace settlement

old western fancy

dude shot my man

dead,  
precious lord blow off  
theres no willy in th blues theres no you.

vocal texts evoke  
abode adobe  
edens popes blest  
turnt holy trope  
local cross aglow

fishes  
theirs fit  
people fidget  
taught theirs fulfil  
wishes lies & fitful dreams.

070599.  
(For Jane Zvi Kimmelman)

# “gandhabba” #5

thomas mouths  
smooth mythos.  
medusa  
seemed amused.

# “croatan”

entelechy  
and bicycle  
too bucolic

we cultivate  
in colony  
the accolade.

# Canto 10

wooten

th black hat stingy brim  
 on th street you live  
 one more day wearing it angel  
 enuf so you live. Enuf.  
 Devil lights up th day knowing  
 which hat to wear in his  
 green avenue stompers above franklin  
 going downtown, th robins  
 by stuyvesant, nostrum, utica avenue.  
 our wireless “robins nest” slim harpos  
 blue thang. do your thang blue sea  
 cop the reefer           ride away  
 th highs translate literally  
 railway carmens soft white underbelly.

p.w.t.

for miss kitting

linda June put your white dress on  
when black dark falls full moon rising  
shadow of moonseed owl, fog  
slow catfish swim low tide rising

san francisco mean fog rising.

# Contributors

*Lloyd Addison* published and edited the small press journal *Beau Cocoa* and was a member of the Umbra group of poets. Born in 1931, he was the author of *The Aura and the Umbra*.

*William Anderson* first contributed “There’s Not a Friend Like the Lowly Jesus” to the anthology of African American poetry *Dices or Black Bones*, edited by Adam David Miller, where the poet advised readers that “the only relevant biographical information about himself is that he is a poet, journalist and novelist.”

*Russell Atkins*, born in 1926, was a mainstay of the *Free Lance* magazine and workshop located in Cleveland, where he still lives. His collections include *Here In The, Heretofore, Phenomena, and Objects*. Paul Breman, whose Heritage Series of black poets published Atkins, recently published *7 @ 70*, a pamphlet by Atkins celebrating his seventieth birthday.

*Amiri Baraka’s* (LeRoi Jones) many books include *Preface to a Twenty Volume Suicide Note, The Dead Lecturer, Blues People, Black Magic, Reggae or Not, Transbluesency, Funk Lore, and Somebody Blew Up America*. He was born in 1934 and has served as the New Jersey Poet Laureate and has been honored as the Newark Public Schools Poet Laureate. He has re-



leased numerous recordings of his work, including *New Music / New Poetry*, *It's Nation Time*, and *The Shani Project*.

*Jodi Braxton* was born in 1950. She has edited the poems of Paul Laurence Dunbar and is the author of *Black Women Writing Autobiography* and *Sometimes I Think of Maryland*. Early in her career she performed her poetry in concert with saxophonist and composer Marion Brown.

*Harold Carrington* maintained a widespread correspondence with poets through the duration of his jail sentence in New Jersey, which led to his publication in a number of significant magazines and anthologies. None of his work had been published in book form at the time of his tragic death in 1964 shortly after his release from jail. He was only twenty-six years old.

*Stephen Chambers's* "Her" first appeared in *The Journal of Black Poetry* in 1969.

*Jayne Cortez* is the author of *Scarifications*, *Mouth on Paper*, *Coagulations*, *Somewhere in Advance of Nowhere*, and *A Jazz Fan Looks Back*. She has produced a number of landmark poetry and jazz recordings, the most recent of which is *Borders of Disorderly Time*. She was born in 1936 and spent much of her early life in the Southwest before relocating to New York, which has been her home since.

*Lawrence S. Cumberbatch* contributed the poems collected here to Orde Coombs's 1970 anthology *We Speak as Liberators*.

*Rudy Bee Graham* published poetry in *Negro Digest*, *Black Dialogue*, and *Black Fire*. Two of his plays were presented at the New Lafayette Theater. He was among the contributors to the landmark Black Arts anthology *Black Fire*, which was edited by Amiri Baraka and Larry Neal.

*William J. Harris's* books of poems are *Hey Fella*, *Would You Mind Holding This Piano a Moment*, and *In My Own Dark Way*. He is the author of *The Poetry and Poetics of Amiri Baraka: The Jazz Aesthetic* and the editor

of *The LeRoi Jones / Amiri Baraka Reader*. He was born in 1942 in Yellow Springs, Ohio, and currently teaches at the University of Kansas.

*De Leon Harrison* has been a writer, film-maker and a painter. A long-time resident of the San Francisco Bay area, he co-founded Cinema Blackscope. He was born in Arkansas in 1941 and taught at San Jose State University.

*David Henderson* is perhaps best known as the author of a very successful biography of Jimi Hendrix. One of the central figures in the Umbra group of poets, his collections include *Felix of the Silent Forest*, *De Mayor of Harlem*, and *The Low East*. After many years in California he returned to New York, the place of his birth in 1942.

*Calvin Hernton*, also of the Umbra group, was the author of *Sex and Racism in America*, *The Sexual Mountain and Black Women Writers*, and the collection of poetry *Medicine Man*. He was born in 1932 in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and died in 2001. He was writer in residence, and later a professor, at Oberlin College, from which he retired in 1999.

*Joseph Jarman* has recently rejoined the Art Ensemble of Chicago, a world-renowned group of musicians with whom he has worked for more than three decades. His poems and recitations can be found on several of the group's recordings (including *Fanfare for the Warriors* and *A Jackson in Your House*) as well as on his own productions. He is the author of *Black Case* volumes 1 and 2.

*Ted Joans* is the author of *Teducation*, *Afrodisia*, and *Black Pow Wow*. Born in 1928, he was also noted for his painting and his collage works. He was perhaps most infamous for his "Rent a Beatnik" ad in the *Village Voice*. Ted Joans died in 2003.

*Percy Johnston* was born in 1930 and was a founding member of the *Dasein* group of poets and a central figure of the Howard University Poets. He was the author of *Sean Pendragon Requiem* and *Six Cylinder Olympus*. His life-long interest in philosophy is evident in his *Phenomenology*.

of *Space and Time: An Examination of Eugene Clay Holmes's Studies in the Philosophy of Time and Space*. Percy Johnston died in 1993.

Stephen Jonas wrote *Exercises for Ear* and *Transmutations*. His *Selected Poems* were published posthumously. He was a frequent contributor to *Yugen*, *The Floating Bear*, *Measure*, and other journals of innovative poetry. At least three different years of birth have appeared in print. There is little doubt that Stephen Jonas died in 1970.

June Jordan's books include *Things that I Do in the Dark*, *New Day*, *Passion*, and *Naming Our Destiny*. Her prose works include *Civil Wars* and *Soldier*. A Harlem native, born in 1936, Jordan was raised in Brooklyn. She died in 2002, still working as a popular professor at Berkeley, where she organized a number of important public poetry projects.

Bob Kaufman founded the notorious *Beatitudes* along with Allen Ginsberg and others. His books of poetry include *Solitudes Crowded with Loneliness*, *Golden Sardine*, and *The Ancient Rain*. While much of Kaufman's life is shrouded in mystery and rumor, often self-perpetrated, there is some certainty that he was born in 1925. He died in his beloved San Francisco in 1986, upon which occasion then-Mayor Diane Feinstein declared Bob Kaufman Day in the city.

Elouise (Hanna) Loftin is the author of *Barefoot Necklace*. Her poetry can also be heard on the recording *Celebration* by Andrew Cyrille. She was born in Brooklyn in 1950.

N. J. Loftis is a poet, novelist, philosopher, and film maker. His books include *Black Anima*, *Condition Zero*, and *Love Story Black*. He was born on the south side of Chicago in 1943. He completed a Ph.D. at Columbia University and has taught in the city university system of New York.

Clarence Major has long been recognized as a major American poet and novelist, and he is also a painter. Collections of his poetry include *Swallow the Lake*, *Cotton Club*, *The Syncopated Cakewalk*, *Symptoms and Madness*, and *Inside Diameter*. Among his many prose works are *My Amputa-*

*tions, No, All-Night Visitors, and Emergency Exit.* Born in 1936, he lives in California, where he has taught for many years at the University of California at Davis.

*Leroy McLucas (Lucas)* is a photographer and filmmaker as well as a poet. His photographs of jazz artists and writers appear on album and book sleeves, and he was the photographer for the book *The Shoshoneans*, which he published with Edward Dorn.

*Oliver Pitcher* published a collection of poetry, *Dust of Silence*, with Troubador Press, who were also the printers for Baraka's journal *Yugen*. He was also a playwright and his work *The One* was included in *Black Drama Anthology*. He was born in 1923.

*Tom Postell* was a central figure among the community of black artists in Greenwich Village at mid-century and was an early contributor to Amiri Baraka and Hettie Jones's magazine *Yugen*.

*Norman H. Pritchard* was a member of the Umbra group, and the author of *EECCHHOOEESS* and *The Matrix: Poems, 1969–1970*. He was born in 1939 in New York.

*Helen Quigless*, a native of Washington, D.C., studied with both Robert Hayden and John Oliver Killens. Born in 1944, she is a graduate of Fisk University. She was a contributor to such important anthologies as *For Malcolm* and *The New Black Poetry*.

*Isbmael Reed*, a widely-recognized novelist and essayist in addition to his work in poetry, is the author of *Conjure, Chattanooga, Shrovetide in Old New Orleans, Mumbo Jumbo* and *Yellow Back Radio Broke-Down*. Reed was born in Chattanooga, Tennessee, in 1938 and is a long-time resident of California.

*Ed Roberson* has published *When Thy King Is a Boy, Atmosphere Conditions, Etai-Eken*, and other books of poetry. Born in Pittsburgh in 1939, he now lives in New Jersey.

*A. B. Spellman* is probably best known today for his book *Four Lives in the Bebop Business*. His collection of poetry *The Beautiful Days* was published by Poets Press in 1965. Spellman was born in 1935, has taught at Morehouse and Emory Universities and has worked as an administrator for the National Endowment for the Arts.

*Primus St. John*, the author of *Skins on the Earth*, *Dreamer*, *Communion*, and *Love Is Not a Consolation: It Is a Light*, teaches at Portland State University. He was born in 1939.

*Glenn Stokes* first published “Blue Texarkana” in *We Speak as Liberators: Young Black Poets*.

*Cecil Taylor* is among the key figures of the new directions in jazz beginning in the 1950s. A noted pianist and composer, he often includes his poetry as a part of his jazz performances. Taylor was born in 1929 and began playing piano at the age of six. He studied at both the New York College of Music and the New England Conservatory before beginning his long and prolific recording and performing career.

*Lorenzo Thomas*, another Umbra alum, has published several books of poetry, including *The Bathers*, *Chances Are Few*, and *Dancing on Main Street*. He was born in 1944 and was a longtime resident of Houston, Texas, where he taught at the University of Houston—Downtown. Thomas died on July 4, 2005.

*Melvin B. Tolson* is an important link between the poetry of the first half of the century and the more radical poetics of the second half. His books include *Harlem Gallery*, *Libretto for the Republic of Liberia*, and *Rendezvous with America*. He was also a noted dramatist, debate coach, and lecturer. The poems included in this collection have never been published before. He was born in 1898 and died in 1966.

*Gloria Topp* is described in Amiri Baraka’s *Autobiography* as appearing at readings “made up like in Hollywood science fiction movies about what blacks will look like in the future.” Her live performances of her poems

quickly became legendary, and her future is upon us. Her poem in tribute to musician Ernie Henry first appeared in *Intrepid #4*.

*Tom Weatherly* is the author of *Maumau American Cantos* and *Thumbprint*. He was born in Scottsboro, Alabama, in 1942 and studied at both Morehouse and Alabama A&M. For many years he taught a writing workshop in New York that attracted some of the most innovative younger poets. He now writes under the name “Weatherly.”



# Acknowledgments

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And if we might make a rare break from our unified editorial voice, Lauri Ramey would like to say that no undertaking is imaginable without the advice and encouragement of her husband, Martin Ramey, nor would it be anywhere near as much fun. To which Aldon Nielsen adds that he would be unimaginable without Anna Everett, who has lived with and contributed to this project before we knew it was a project.

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