

Spring 2018

## Free Running Brown Legs

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### Recommended Citation

Smiley, Jada E., "Free Running Brown Legs" (2018). *Senior Projects Spring 2018*. 246.  
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# Free Running Brown Legs

A Senior Project submitted to:  
Division of Languages and Literature of Bard  
College



By Jada Smiley

Annandale-On-Hudson, NY May 2018

*I do not regret for a single moment having lived for pleasure. I did it to the full, as one should do everything that one does to the full. There was no pleasure that I did not experience I threw the pearl of my soul in a cup of wine...But to have continued the same life would have been limiting...The other half of the garden had its secrets for me also.*

- Wilde

*A high-yellow lawyer woman  
told me I ought to go to  
Europe to "broaden your per  
spective." This happened at  
a black black cocktail party  
an oil portrait, Andrew Carnegie  
smiling down -*

Ishmael Reed, "What You Mean I cant Irony"

*I would begin by explaining  
that by reason of being  
I am and no other -*

Robert Creeley, "Poem for D.H  
Lawrence"



## FOREWARD

WHAT IS IT? A bone rejection exercise. A scrupulous examination and parsing of irony, glee, poignance, rancor and eroticism in the hyper-corporal, identitarian<sup>1</sup> society in which my thinking (though not my feeling) mind was wrought. A bone exercise, as in, to identify, to jive with, and to transgress, the very ideological foundation which I have most closely aligned myself with.

I began this project as a combatant and an antagonist, necessarily maintaining quixotic intentions for the effect that the work would have on the American reader. It began, in the way of *Citizen*, as a survey and a corrective of American life. I finger-wagged my way through every stanza belonging to “The Black Saint and the Sinner Lady,” for example, upbraiding an infinitely diverse macrocosm of individuals. Green as spring, I was a Buddha in the poem. There were no distinctions made in discerning an audience for the works, except perhaps that any reader, whosoever they were, was a member of a ghastly system, a dumb pixel in the panorama of the spectacle. I was Set as rendered in Mumbo Jumbo, stifling all those life-affirming states of being which I deemed the minutia: bliss, funk, sex, love, *embarrassment!* And I was certainly guilty of that myopia with which Virginia Woolf is charged in Susan Sontag’s “Regarding the Pain of Others.” That is, I positioned myself as a pariah to two orientations toward self-identifying in a society: militant identity making (one which overstates the collectivity of suffering) and vicious “bootstraps” cosmopolitanism (one which ignores the suffering of others). I took the collective for granted. “No “we” Sontag admonishes, “should be taken for granted when the subject is looking at other people’s pain.” I would augment the phrase with the contention that no “we” can be taken for granted when regarding the privilege of others, with privilege acting as that which would mitigate the occasion of pain.

This summation, too, however, eagerly careens toward contradiction. How can we assess the pain of those who are privileged without essentializing? Just as we must ward against seeing sameness in the burning beacon of Tulsa, and the razing of Wilmington, we must not usurp those socio-politically privileged individuals of their right to grieve, not for the sake of sparing delicate sensibilities, but because to deny grief is to *divinize*. Thus, by my self-negotiating between and

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<sup>1</sup> That is, a brand of militant subjectivity which precludes democratic identity negotiation, and thus occasions a devastating counter-effect: if the moment to moment subjectivity of each individual is unassailable and inviolable for its quality of being singular, then not a single subjectivity, valid s it may be, is valuable. Thus:

“If nothing is true, nothing is permitted.”- Camus, *The Rebel*

in states of privilege and pain, reveling in little, individual bliss while tethered to the larger sociological context of suffering, and *incandescent with pride* at sociological triumphs, while I may be submerged in individual suffering, this work has become a different genre of intervention.

## Acknowledgements

I wish to express a most fond thanks to Celia Bland, IWT Associate Director and my senior project advisor, for providing me with all the necessary facilities for execution, revision, transgression, and uninhibited transformation of my work. You have been a venerable mentor, a stern friend, a sagacious confidant, and a slayer of stunting insecurities. Thank you for accepting little pretense, and proffering your unfathomable breadth of knowledge, your keen eye. This collection has come to fruition under your guidance and could not have prevailed in a manner which I would deem dignified without you. I cannot exhaust praise for a moment on your behalf.

“Thus my Grief became the thing it was carried in...” I owe a good deal of the locomotion or “tympanic momentum” of these pieces to Michael Ives. He and his own work have been an unyielding and heartening influence. I extend a most sincere thank you to him.

Thanks to Dominique Townsend, who has been a mentor and an inspiration. None of this Buddhist Business would be available to me without her, and I am infinitely grateful that she has agreed to be a member of my Senior Project Board.

Thank you to Shaundraneka Gills for being the friend who’s always willing give me a kick in the tail and thank you to C Mandler for being one hell of an ideological ally and a confidence reaffirming force in my work.

Thank you, finally, to the love of my life, my little infant, the bald ember and the one who cannot yet read. Without my time with you as a nanny, my work would have suffered a great paucity of sensitivity, compassion, patience and those delicate feelings which you have taught me to exalt.





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# In A Sentimental Mood

## Kabuki Dance

the respiration of an umbrella is ritual,  
so comes an insect in death mantilla,  
preening hands at her ears like castanets  
Enter the Vesuvian: Abortion should be punished by hanging,  
a wire wreathed infant,  
there are equal number of ways to celebrate.

Spectacular: three days dead boot rot lover man  
not siphoned into the monad.  
He is resurrected by good witch with whom,  
because each frame of her hair  
commiserative cilia reaching for shoulder,  
we share want of other witch, bloody Susanna, to be  
slue by an automobile, cleft by a train,  
hair hoodooed into a plume of snakes.

Spectacular: we've ridden the blacks into a maze in a grove  
We've ridden the women into a maze in a grove  
What do we do with the children? Magus maketh it disappear.  
Sibilate legacy: t'aint no danger like a boy  
after whom you'd cross the street, a woman  
after whom you'd stride the Mississippi, a man  
after whom you'd beat your cock  
against the ground in apophenia: colored an astonishment.  
*Say something nice about the dead white man.*

## Exaltation

mei ping woman, break neck break neck  
god-de-inculcate so may vishuddah this tympanic heave

for id to pulse between doors of pleasure rooms  
to sweat the day like an infant  
disgruntled stars, a judder of keys pocketed

shudder screens in august for your stomach  
to become a roof , grid and bookends  
from where you sew your intra-Venus channel shut

there is a lunge in remise at unpeeled glottis  
then, globes of mercury, the green gift in desiccant beads  
staggers forward.

Have I sucked this pit clean of fruit  
already?

## PURE LAND BUDDHISM

Philosophy is good for  
a stride out onto the front lines  
with an upturned pen  
which might herald  
the James Brown bad news.  
I've assimilated in halftones.  
I don't want nobody  
to give me nothing.  
Open up the door  
kick it out of the frame if you want  
but let me through to the bas fond  
where I limbo in the calyx  
to become a man in the Buddhaland.  
Waiting for a cock to supplant these  
unenlightened slipstreams  
behind those channels  
where Pluto carries a sexless heap  
aboveground to womanhood.  
Open up the door  
where I buck or buckle naked and creased.  
Kick it out of its frame if you will  
so that I can receive myself.

Quit flapping your tongue vector and get dismembering,

a Pangloss point:

the Zen's propose that the Buddha not speak:

what difference language from limpid fantasy

of jade round the bole of your neck?

a garland putting on airs?

### Gita

For when he was naked without reason he did not know, and for when he did not know he bore his neck to God and he knew then that his body was nearest to God, and then that his neck could not go on stretching. He knew then why the snake was the most accursed animal—they are necks that he has mangled, and then he knew why they wandered.



### Gita

There is a zenith of the firs, they all converge at one time or another, depending solely on sunlight and slow viciousness, and underneath that paraphasia of sun, the stutter of immanence, Oya sweeping her sliver of a kitchen, under tiger's trundled head, under liberation of the brain through the ears, under liberation of the brain, under a smattering here and there, under is the way to touch the Buddha's hands.

## Gita

A hound after blood is not going to stop pad to ground pad to ground  
For your generosity: Do not stick out that hand.

That man and my man have enough in common to stare down at each other's'  
macerated tusks, colossal heads ringing from outrage of the brain  
Recoil and say: who can know who hit who first?

Drink of this manna like  
the swollen cauls of Mauritania—  
for every meal you will [palm this musk  
and it will move in one shudder down  
through the phloem  
and fatten every withered groove  
with this milk.

## Lover Man

Cesious strobe, my green pith has embered.  
Bala Krishna balances a jade ball in dancing posture.  
He kicks it into your eye socket: my heart which rocks  
green cradle is a kevel on land, so  
how come you don't croon back  
at this pyretic sweetness?  
How come my legs are lonely and vaulted?  
How come when you thumb my ruddy cheek  
I hear nothing but my dumb pulse gabbling?  
Green cathexis shaking me down  
like a gypsy moth.

Petro loa<sup>2</sup>

does it mean that//when he tips his hat at you//you'll vitrify and become useless//to your family?

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<sup>2</sup> A vengeful class of Haitian Loa, a pantheon of the mystical, mythical equivalent of saints or angels. The Petro Loa, if not heeded and offered ample libations, will snake you.

What a day unlike yesterday

Under lamplight the walking cannot be parsed from the tree line.

Low albedo<sup>3</sup> or the scattering of a wave inside the bulb

leaves night to stupor,

albedo-low or high, this is not the way wrought light works,

albedo light is a papier-mache hanging streamer, meant for bridal parties

And what of it?        Let the poem perform.

And how does the poem perform?

Code talking, a flight of hornets with painted thorax in a worker bee's next—gutter hornets  
in the worker bee's nest—

Code talking is a tire iron in the wheel spokes.

How will I trundle on?

Look there: the code-talker can only receive the ambrosia with tongs.

---

<sup>3</sup> The amount of radiation or light which is reflected by a surface; snow, for example, has a high albedo. Dirt, and all that other brown ground filth, does not. Also coincidentally the name of a type of sea-creature-like hanging streamer.

Brutus

How to get to inferiority, generally?

The tag on the nape of neck lolls into view and gawks at passersby so  
it may as well be a fingernail past due for a trim,  
a bill sweat under the arm, advertising your whereabouts, to walk  
into an exhibition and find you too closely resemble the display—whichever it is,  
the Neanderthals we transgressed or the Pollock  
onto which we superimposed white women,  
a calculated delicacy, all the grace of a nymph hip jutting  
vanward in silk and tulle.

Were she to dispatch those moon craters,  
were her brambled hip to fall, the clatter of a haniwa on the gallery floor,  
my Jacobin eye would eat itself.

## IN ORDER

I want nipples round as rivets round as the sundial  
on a pen cap I want cheeks cutting like rudders  
and a cunt like the mercury suits  
I want your ass like the breed  
I want you ass to be the breed if you'd like  
a thread of the reins if you'd like  
not pushing up divots  
keep a vigilant eye  
on that.

Sexless Morning from the Tally Call of a Rooster

The shrill paeon of the rooster  
on a morning unsettled as this  
to proceed  
from the tumult of yesterday  
but symbol not an eye onto his plume.  
Keep your immanence your ashy tears and your own  
mercenary fingers  
out of his feathers.  
He does not call out the grim  
census of all your men gone;  
he dreams  
of wheat or maize heaped at his feet  
and don't care none  
what the vulture eat.



There is shame in disinterest

I know what fleeing  
failure prattles at my feet:  
see something say something  
saccade on the A train to 116<sup>th</sup> to visit  
he who fan dances with his tail,  
he with a Remington for a neck,  
a socket of butane for a skull  
and a leather sole for a tongue  
at the back of which—poised—  
is the fuse suppressor, the chiasmus generator,  
a manual for truss rod adjustment  
and a petroglyph engraved  
with things one no longer says like:  
*...I don't have that much jam....*  
And at this tarred talaiot  
does he offer a dirge of flowers?

For Endymion: as papier-Mache wizards heckle overhead from their totem caravans

Damnato memorie for the cigarette in a poem!  
But, if I must compromise myself  
if I must come out "into the clearing"  
here are my lungs, night sheaths  
supped on the hard-flung pittance of February  
the offal of me hung round them in sarong,  
until this day when they brim the internment, this body  
in sweat-brine of the commons.

The death gape of a storm-drain trills:  
trod on me, trod illimitably, your trod the chorus of the sun dirge,  
a weather vane turning its stony head toward again, the day, tomorrow  
but these beads are a salvo of today,  
and tomorrow to be shepherded, stragglers  
en masse in the beds of unmarked caravans.

Over the beads today unwashed relics tomorrow,  
I hardly hear Hesse in his procession of dread.  
I hardly notice him stepping onto the platform  
over the awe rain-wealth of beads:  
in the aperture, heard in the breath  
of his stride into this day:

Out of the depths  
I have crawled to thee  
oh lord hear my proposition:  
if I don't quit you at the threshing door,  
Do you promise to mark all inscrutable hills  
which turn adust and disappear when the sun-woman  
unpeels her eyes and goes to sleep,  
and reveal which form you had taken in them?  
If thy wrath is so sublime,  
why trod illimitably over the scowl of today,  
and age suffering  
to a heap of boredom?

Oh Lord why, when I sit me down to write  
in the throes of this diesel hum,  
to strain an embolus of ingenuity  
under the crystal wheel of the sun,  
I am vanquished,  
for she needs nary a hand?

Koan

Why is it that when I undress  
the imbricate hive of a pinecone,  
it gives me no joy?

# The Black Saint and The Sinner Lady

Ishmael Reed Responds to the Stealing of Land

Whose side of history are they on?

Well, it just depends on who they is and you is they, too.

Which side of the republic has built the wall of plexiglass?

Etched with the caution:

*For looking though and not beyond,*

*for nostalgia.*

*Don't you want to remember*

*who we left behind?*

## The Swoon at the End of a Noose

### *A Riot*

The Rousing Admonition: Trod not on any crop field unless you're doing the boogaloo, napalm nary a business unless of the sort which sells: "Goody" Pain relievers, Fair and Lovely, entrails or out tails boozed in pickle juice.

I hazard to inform you that we've replaced the noose,  
there on the sidewalk a man relieves his rat brain  
in front of the capital.

*A bloated law*

*A bloated neck*

*Read: a broken law, a broken neck*

*you want to run amok?*

*Go forth to ruin*

He suffered from palinopsia,  
do you too see the gallows resurrected in the winded stutter of your daily commute round?  
Imagine that the pantograph gets word to keep this boy on the trail until he sees the  
noose,  
and all you're seein are bike tires and suns and rims of water left at café tables  
the bronze halo marking the robes of a clay angel  
All which seem to go on being with ease, despite  
your humanity, are suffocating

*A bloated law*

*A bloated neck*

*Read: a broken law, a broken neck*

*you want to run amok?*

*Go forth to ruin*

lest tedium reap your eyes, you must go on looking  
they must see from blue to bone  
they must see from blue to bone

What if it makes its way down the gullet  
no more a weapon than bone?

A Tragedy: On the Death of Charlemagne Péralte

Enter lieutenant with a stream of rope from an unmoored ship.  
He speaks to his comrades over the foul cachinnation of gunfire:

Niggers speaking French?

The dead are all the same all terrible says Jackie O:  
a pearl bandit in silk gloves chuffed up to Ricci elbows—  
silk gloves of a bandit chuffed up to pearl elbows—  
a woman whose memory we borrowed.

What good is a dead body buried,  
one of ours says to me.  
And I say I can't very well bless the nigger with Christian symbology,  
so taut on the unhinged door he goes,  
body grain too large for a sieve,  
and limbs which would bloat with gall  
when Haitian sun grants its reprieve.  
The natives come on the pretense of turning back,  
and marching American style,  
with a chastened prattle of the hips, as if to say:

I am soldier like you with the core of a rattlesnake,  
I've got the gyrus of a crook who sees bills in faces—  
pennies in the macerated noses of drunks,  
and since you see that your legs are America, and mine  
the aghast husks of Marsyas,  
I will tell you what my legs are:

the flippant grace of an ox's tail sweeping away buzzards.

genuflect where, in the dirt, Ayida's two snakes threaten to devour each other's  
heads and begin that samsara the Buddhists are always on about—what would  
happen to you and I if we became entangled with the umbilical thread of suffering?  
You would see my legs, and I would leap out of your head!

My legs are bound to be bound and casked by threshers and coopers, bound to be  
beat—look at my ass,  
it sits high like the bobbling sun in this heat! It taxes like a show mare in the off  
seasons, it avenges the fist of my stomach and bellows malnutrition at the seat of  
your britches: if only for this morning you have cored, I am gorged fat, *for nothing  
can be sole or whole that has not been rent!*<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Penultimate and final lines of *Crazy Jane Talks with the Bishop* – Yeats

Trickster—

A man who eats for a living.

What are you getting at? The whiteness in blackness and the blackness in whiteness and the funk and the jive. You mean the shuck and jive? No, I mean the jive in Janus. Take his antagonist: Phaethon, nipple-reared sun-bastard in the skinny caul of being loved readies himself for the winged glory of the every black is a white gone ripe tea party textbook chariot and proceeds to tar trundle and niggafy all beneath the Ethiopian skyline to slag: to be always wearing another man's shirts.



Hearing Calinda to Claudia Rankine

No one can take care of you—that just isn't the way the rug rolls under your feet.  
But—and I said—he pulled Mara on me!

I let him down with a chain, and he reeked haunt in my house, through my clothes, in the  
buttons of my blouses, 10 times I've had to pull him down from the gutters where he hang  
like kudzu and snake me when I leave.

--it's inevitable that heat should bough that the hyetal give and that I'll turn: *Don't let me  
be lonely*

Fat woman with a gun a glass portico and a portal of brick is my man,  
he pulled Mara on me

--now and then he say *don't let me be lonely*

He is not in it for nonsense, so I am going to be beating my hands across my thighs for a  
while longer, without cigarettes, without rollers, without an iron with which to strike him  
and without a chain or book with which to implicate myself

--*How you let me be lonely*

You're going to drown in that maudlin drivel he says and with no backing, no one to tell  
me whether cheese and honey are alright once in moderation

--*God let me be lonely*

--*God let me be lonely*

## Ishmael Reed's Response to A.F. Mortiz for the Sake of his "Native Woman"

I get the sense that Ms. Millay could conjure all the anxiety of a screen door  
and someone sleeping.  
A woman about the woods, she  
like a willow and a cascade of grizzled moss and the Cadillac whizz of a blue-jay,  
and the curtain of roman feathers that conceal what the vulture done.  
Look at you, look at you,  
would you rather be the robin they pick clean,  
or the cuckoo, would you,  
tar and feather yourself high visible to erase your guilt? Would you  
Rather be a you or a fractal?  
Would you rather be legless or danceless?  
That is, who is you without me?  
A woman about whom whispers swooned like blighted leaves and she,  
the poor beetle, trying to distinguish this frayed leaf from that, anticipating  
the head of a diamondback.  
In the memoir of Ms. Millay, I found the same unbloodied  
rationale that deems a nigger a nigger and a nigger a  
nuisance and a nuisance a hazard and a  
a hazard terminated.  
Who is she, this Native woman with a face like a crater?  
WHO is you? Ms. Jazz identity corroboration in which all hands is  
bloody and a spade is a spade?  
And you, Mr. I cut the umbilical thread of suffering when I  
did sadhana and saw Vajravarahi  
whole and wicked and woman!

Koan

If this be night whose trick is reticence  
to conceal the gunman  
so that you may not shake  
his face with your eye  
then what are all  
these unwinking stars doing here  
sweating the sanguinity of the day?

# Pharaoh's Dance

Captain Deba: She Caught Jesus in the Hawser<sup>5</sup>

Fetter that American flag to the sedation post  
Stop it jiving for one moment—she's going to the humfo to clothe a white man

She's going to oar and old altar new again—she's going to jolt  
Him through the port-mitan like a bone conductor.

And the scepter will redden—no,  
Not the heartlands or bloodletting or passion, girl, a flush of embarrassment!

The folded ear of a dog, the low-eyed  
Toeing back of a cuckoo in a hawk's nest.

I don't need no inherited through the back-channel apology  
If only I can eye that man summoned and stuck,  
Trying to catch an English gale.

---

<sup>5</sup> A relatively new Loa to the Haitian Pantheon, said to be the remnants of an American sailor lost at sea in the Caribbean. His hagiography is honored by the daughter of a fisherman who believed that he had stumbled upon the vessel of the Loa, a stone with two shells clinging to it. Every year the fisherman's daughter possess herself with the spirit, and thusly sits on a designated stool and pretends to row a small boat while singing in English.

## Sermon of the American Renaissance

Before the perforation grid erases them,  
Paul-y the beasts and I will have spoken and slain them,  
will have resuscitated that black mare—  
they will not assimilate, and why would they, with their  
rat fertility? You just wait, and the next wave will be an underground detonation,  
a cataclysmic seismographic end of the right race,  
and we will be punished for our generosity  
by flood!

Yes, you've been cautioned against the lion in your home,  
and yet here it is the full color and bounty of a Blixen doe.  
And if for that you do not move, know that white women  
will never be safe, for in tessellated mud strewn villages  
sprawled across their country by the quick mercy of God's hand  
like all boons bestowed on coons, they lay apocryphal bibles and incents at the feet of an  
exsanguinated Chica Blanca and summon all false holiness in their hebetudic mantra  
to the patron saint, " Oh, Santa Muerte, my skinny, starving white woman, give me alms!"  
like a Brahman without a holy order,  
like a fat Buddha in silk, "give me my alms, and free my husband,  
dear white woman, free him from the prison in which he is entombed for no good reason  
but..."

And here I come,  
I appear from the chasm of the All In One  
bedecked in my vocational mask of Janus,  
my agenda (the ego of a page in brilliant copulation with the primate drive to submission)  
strides in the face of all worldly ill. I promise a crucible  
and will conjure with the whirl of my wrist and the certainty of a pen,  
a mass exodus of immigrants,  
and you believe that so long as I am the father and the sufferer and the specter  
peering down through your suburban kitchen window  
at your dining table from the tri-bridged bough of this supple Oak,  
that so long as this country is a lady,

she will do as I Sybil so long as she is green.

Jive

The other half of my tooth chattel will not be  
covered by St Mary's Academy,  
damp Brixton sojourn, racket ball white  
ingots.



## On the Gentrification of Gentilly

"you're a trooper, you always has been"

through the alcove of one good tooth without patience

I scour for Sylvia at the bottom of the mug, where I imagine you'd find the golden child,  
demurred in porcelain –

your throne your coffin, too

"Although, you probably are a good cook," I heard:

one piddle of the tongue, one incidental paraphasia of the jaw had toppled the foreigner:  
Rosetta stone is nearer and still insufficient in warding against the monkey dualisms

my language is speech, yours is a blather of trafficked headlights on *Tchoupitoulas* and you  
have got to imagine that if everyone in Reany's<sup>6</sup> world had wished to walk, then was there  
any more shame in killing the quiver of a rabbit with the teeth of your car?

and if from that royalized renewal of the funeral pyres in the way of the mall and raw water  
and the cholera and a Colorado white boy under streptococcus siege condemning his  
mother with death, the glittering opacity of the mall, and good white gentrifier of the 3rd  
generation Italian order takes 5 from the chamber to the head and relinquishes a purse in  
the process, and for every instance of that sort, there is a Walmart.

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<sup>6</sup> Alluding to *Klaxon* by James Reaney

Koan

Maya is primordial wool  
sewn round orbital socket of your eye  
in quiet collusion with your I  
we set your eyes there like snakes.

Notes on "The Phenomenology of Spirit" with Interludes

"A simple thing of this kind which is through negation, which is neither This nor That, a not-This, and is with equal indifference This as well as That—such a thing we call a universal. So it is in fact the universal that is the true [content] of sense-certainty."

--there is a ploy here to avoid the word "objectively" because it recalls:  
"to consider so and whatever objectively," the strident oxymoron eagerly careens toward contradiction as a pretense. Here, it beckons, relinquish your eye and supplant yours for mine, or better still, how many eyes are necessary to will the resounding subject-perceived an object-understood?

*Oh, give up the fan dance, will you?*

The rind of a lung buckles, a warbler splays his sex plume for a mate. The individualism works. And then:

my mother and men like my father, tinkers working in and of the most prescient throng (those who fecund most religiously, and those for whom the zealous cloud of patriotism would undermine the pixelated error of conscription) my mother and father, one dearly loved, interpreted the pallor of black actors in technicolor film as a job well-done, and shouldn't I?

*There.*

## Passing Through the Campus Cemetery

as the veins in these stout, toneless rocks  
as the stone gap sluice provided  
by sentry of them before we  
trod a path between the dead,  
so too I find my breath  
is an endless superlative.  
This kind of mentation  
like a bone worm bristling  
through betrayed flesh  
sends cilia of intrigue  
to the bore-channel  
and itch their way into the poem  
as if they were something more interesting:  
regard the tombstones hither  
are we not alike in substance?  
Fettered to unremembrance: they, the rocks  
work on me in secret  
and yet they, even with their quality  
of always having been,  
can admit  
there is nothing to see here today.

What good is a view of the mountains from a dually?

No, “what good” rouses what soul cipher mirrored in a trail of snow? How rousing, how can the rapture of a mountain seize you from steel trap—of the mind, sure, but of the truck, especially, from the parochial reins of the individual and the recycled-like-new Janus of politics and me denying my sex has anything to do with my hands—it does. I know that it does, but how long can the excuse stand to reason my head underwater. The mountains—let’s return to them as if stationary all this time. Scarified—even torn—

breasts pushed out of the earth and into view. They too are subject to these emendations.

If a single thing is misplaced in this abutting day-night, it may as well be fiction

I want to visit the firs, which seem an island to me

but I have been idly walking,

a motorcade jostles past

and I am already there:

from legato dibble of tree branches, vultures have ambled over the rocks

and preened their ossein feathers

in the bourn

## Death Arrives as Himself

Why inlay those green eyes  
in his skull?  
Did he not gouge all sympathy  
When he riddled your aunt  
with mounds like her own soul had tried to liberate itself  
through the end of every vein and never realized  
because it ain't the brain  
that there *was* no end?  
Why would you smother him in skin  
as if he were a sage  
hobbling through a landscape of Corot?  
Don't his tarred cloak and  
powdered bones  
make him us enough?

## American Airlines: A Review

Was it ever any more than a hymn  
For the occasion?  
Perhaps before we had no language  
For the shuddered, stiff neck of the white cremation vault,  
Could we have heard over our market chatter  
The reverb of a warning from the birds riven  
In wind turbines  
From that winged outrage of wronged Hippolytus  
For the infant, thrown in the cabin as a parenthetical,  
Here is what I forgot:  
The airplane, not the infant, is the afterthought.



*I think I am bicycling across an Africa of green and white fields  
Always, to be near you, even in my heart<sup>7</sup>*

Africa is a metonym for aimless vigor  
where through the poet  
passes to find  
the Jutted bone of the earth,  
one lazy eye halved  
down the sliver of a mirror,  
has not righted itself here  
either.

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<sup>7</sup> Dressing down Kenneth Koch's *To You*

I get the sense that you're a slat. Does the word "jive" mean anything to you?

*Jive- A slur used among people who've designated the word as appropriate in the context in which they exist. There is no benediction in speaking with intention then, is there?*

All the sun bayoneted brood

know why the benediction is jive.

It isn't for the butane in the tap.

It isn't that the gourd should have never been a harp.

It isn't what not on earth the Laurel Canyon Cheshires

were singing while they were swaying

and it isn't that I can't count change acceptably

because I can't mind the cunt hair conundrum

of symmetry

and it isn't cuz mind's been sapped by cooler

medium Sinclair imbrication:

It's cuz I'm scared, and I can't see beyond

scales of scares.

FUNK JOY:

Jimmy staccato tiptoeing  
the brash trombone love-push;  
the breath-verve burglar  
into Haitian Fight Song.  
A gallant working-under,  
my dress makes like a leaf  
and I quaver this body's exaltation  
in bone.

## Jive

Helen Keller was a communist cuz  
cauterized nubs at the knees  
the avarice arms of an elevator shaft  
for the promise of mo money at the cubicle  
is common among us.

## AFTERWORD

*To create a painting that appears to be untouched by human hands.*

Such is Rauschenberg's objective in his 1951 series, *White Paintings*. Could it be more plausible that Rauschenberg's Whites could extend themselves more effectively than Pollock's *The Deep*? The quality of infinitude, of God (Rauschenberg himself rushes hastily to this rapture) is a kind of aseptic, autonomous unity: to be without schism, to be without variance, is divine. White space thus achieves an inexorable valance of *potential*. Such is one quality of Myung Mi Kim's *Penury*: excising intention. Rauschenberg offers a piece too unmarred to touch, Kim lays a work of thousands of gaunt, anonymous figures, whose essential characteristic may be "when you come, you start from scratch") As in the gaps and cracks, the doubted right to exist. Though from and not between. In the negative workshop of identity, I imagine something like— like because all discrimination is a concertina— the nigger as an underground enterprise, his very name the shadow of fear, his ashen limbs wrought from New England birch, his knees which give him that leap are Goodyear rubber spindles, his face always an outraged bust of Marsyas, and his feet, I imagine, are cleats to which you fasten your moors.

"An implacably authoritarian, phallogocentric structure *cannot* be disrupted through a straightforward *rejection* of the symbolic order, since such a total failure to enter into human relations would, in Lacanian terms, make us psychotic. We have to accept our position as already inserted into an order that precedes us and from which there is no escape."<sup>8</sup>

"Grin em to death until they bust wide open"—this is the Ellisonian dictum, which Moi weaponizes to evade the counter-factual dissolution of identity—that is, that we have never existed in a pre-identity society. Moi suggests that we settle in socio-political determinism as if it were easy to be *in*. Moi conflates the recognition of difference with the recognition of personhood. Here you are in "position," with a few jobs, small capital accrued, and *in*, sure, but where do you go when you are halted by the police en route to being in? *In* is a tacit denial not that the spectacle "which appears is *good*, and that which is *good* appears"<sup>9</sup> which coincidentally prompts us to believe that the spectacle is just, in is not this. *In* is a tacit denial that the spectacle is endemic, that indeed niggers exist not in our head but sprung from the endless clay beds of Mississippi, gathering like suet. Free Range brown legs: Free Running brown legs.

That the spectacle of order is not moral any longer is the illusion, that the spectacle of order in any epoch was just but has since descended from the fundamental doctrine of righteousness, from that which was "added later." The United States is not a refugee camp but a hotel, in some places the La Quinta, in others the Beekman, but an imbricate sequence of hotels whose interludes may include: legs jostling past one another to work,

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<sup>8</sup> "Moving Beyond "Blank White Spaces": Atwoods Gilead, Postmodernism and Strategic Resistance," Marta Caminero-Santangelo

<sup>9</sup> *Society of the Spectacle*, Guy Debord

the infinite smallness of New York posture, a wave of taxis whose drivers are Indian, Somali, Greek, Haitian, and whose passengers are not. There is simply no place to *put* those who do not pay. We are a people who believe in righteousness in spite of the wool, in spite of the dogs, in spite of Tulsa, in spite of the bloody blustering of Iraq, in spite of having never witnessed the beacon, we believe that the order can support our humanity.

A football stadium, the politician from the proscenium, and a defense contractor walk into a bar. What has been transgressed in the poem? The furniture in the stanzas must not be reupholstered but reneged. I think myself I cannot be stolen. You get the sense that I cannot enjoy a cup of coffee on a slatted lawn chair, or that I, on the chair, have to make a show of not being a slat.

We cannot reason ourselves into existence as well as others can overlook us. This is a confidence I fret, but when I try and mine the science, the data, the numbers of us I think, wrongly: who on earth would believe that my eyes and larynx and the singed nerve at my tailbone in a hot bath qualify you and me as more alike than different? Here is the doctrine of postmodernism: Papers, Please. Here is the doctrine of the alternative: We can overlook...if you'll never need support...if you'll never need anything from me, you can be an individual,

grown like moss and kudzu in the gaps and the cracks.

The war against the master narrative will be conducted in two stages:

Underground

After Ellison black poets were liberated to the shadows,  
to march behind the dais and disappear oneself,  
to de-syncopate few good words that I know—  
neotenic, Bob Kauffman, perspicacity,  
in spite of, recommended works by any black poet of any  
geographical bent, not to nod off and miss the magician building a lattice  
out of fable:

And what of postmodern ethics has allowed us to forget, should we want to unknow? I know more of these free-running brown legs than I had running across harrowed fields in a dust sleeve.

## Having Resurfaced

Let Pound stay swallowed in that short scream of a hollow box, and do not ennoble the poet to swell of breathless mountain peak for necrotized revisions.

*But don't I too try and talk back to skulls?*

