

Tiny Conclusions

Senior Paper

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For a Degree Bachelor of Arts with
A Major in Literature at
The University of North Carolina at Asheville
Spring 2016

By *Markia Brooks*

Katherine Min
Thesis Director

Deborah James
Thesis Advisor

Skirts kept me out of trees

as did barking sisters and screeching mothers.
My adventurous senses were left on plywood
strapped to thick branches decorated with plastic
barrettes, rainbow hair weave, and wet school chalk.

A sense of adventure rooted in the
warm summer that ended
with every one's gender
spelled out in the color they wrote their
names in, and the pants they couldn't wear
anymore.

Confederate Flag on a house next to my Elementary School

A house can wear a flag.
A house can let it hang
like wind battered siding
like forgotten christmas lights and lost easter eggs.
A home lets it fly.
Tethered like a kite
let loosened by a cautious and capricious child,
it whips and cracks in the wind.

What sisters do

You were there to gather,
collect me and the contents of my backpack-sprawled.
Their clumsy feet ruining my library books,
threatening the integrity of my hot pink pencil case.
It's cover I would have rejected:
too much, too bright, but it was what you gave
to me.

No one found a tooth that day

Red snowflakes took shape on my sister's leg cast as I choked on copper giggles.
We howled in laughter while my tooth vanished in the bed folds.
No tooth no fairy.
What's so funny about blood?
No one found a tooth that day.

Red leaked from the corner of my mother's mouth, like last night's rain shook from a gutter.
Her howls were faint like she was fading.
I laughed and it fit:
His brick fists wringing pathetic tears.
They pooled at my mother's feet and I thought she might float away.
No one found a tooth that day.

Deadnettle and Honeysuckle

What I want is sweet
honeysuckle in spring time,
deadnettle year round.

I was separated from myself

I was separated from myself
Her light skinned skinny arms could not block their blows,
beat back their words.
Accusations made for a polished wit.
She yo sistah? Why you got different last names?

We are not from here.

Every purple hot summer and white christmas spent
home
was mined for colloquial licks and NY minutes
she was quick, or fast depending on who you asked
after a while they didn't bother to differ between the two
that had to make me the other way

I was separated from my sometimes foe.
We fought;
restless soldiers, like boys
because we'd seen blood and we would not be patronized
she was quick or fast depending on the referee
that made me the other way
quiet, a slow stutter
I became her mean passion
a fast learner

We were ripped apart by years and
tastes, they liked to say.
We were separated into the molds made for us.
Fragile and fickle they bit
at our edges till they broke
She was too fast working her way back in
We couldn't match

I Wonder

If she'd asked
Instead of pulling me out of school
for a whole year, for no reason. I wasn't showin.
We were gone like
we stole something on a Sunday night.
Driving so fast with the radio up and the windows
down. Felt like my tears were frozen.
I thought we were going to a place up state;
but them sleep away schools is for white
girls and we got family in Canada.

We got family there.
You don't need to know nobody else.

If she'd asked me.
I didn't know him.
Cept to say "Good Morning Sir. Good Afternoon Sir."
Cept to see he worked at the school, but
I never knew him to teach.
She could've just asked me.
I was ready to tell.
But another girl said so first.
He called a group of us fast and
I couldn't say nothin that wasn't a lie
cause he said somethin first.

She could've just asked me somethin.
I was sick for days after, blood like
I'd never seen come out of me.
I was just plain by myself;
even though she had plenty to say.

Hold on

The Hinges cried out
their hold had become desperate on the door frame
It's a sound that shouts through the house like
lightening.
I count the spaces between
maybe the thunder won't come
like it might forget where to land
or a flash of light is just a flash of light.
but there is a crack on battered wood
and eggshells break away as I
stay in step with the thunder
keeping quiet and still
Their voices roll heavy and hard back and forth
till one fades back
the other is a kinetic glow
ignited by a principal of science I still don't understand
I count the inevitability,
rock with the shaking house
and wait for the hinges to cry out.

I can't wait till Black History Month

They'll play Roots: The New Generation late at night.
I can wear my dashiki on Fridays, maybe I
won't press the girls' hair
Maybe
they'll lecture at the library
On Dr. King, the boycott and something with
peanuts
for the kids with coloring books.
Bring your own crayons or
Douglas gets a yellow fro. The
last page doesn't need much:
Lincoln smiles over children with black cotton ball heads on top
grey scale burlap sacks.
I always stay late.
College kids talk. They marvel at Baldwin some years
shaking their heads at Hughes.
I watch them blow smoke over the same fire pit:
"Back to Africa" "Every month should be Black History Month" "Get rid of it!"
I say I can't wait.

So Help Me God

I might go out
before too long
waiting
is painful
enough
I miss smoking
minty and cold
my hands shake
now
my lips are too weak
to hold one
anyway
best to save it
for a kiss
a dance
a fuck
so help me god
they burrow deep
my core exposed
growing cinereous
tubes and wires
long melted
too many ways
keep me tepid
I can not see
bear silence or
warm whispers
they want peace
peace paid with
impatient fire

Sweeties

I ate them because they were sweet.
What a tense center,
stringy edges, like potted meat
and so sticky underneath.
One little nub, what a terror
Clings to the corner
of your mouth and swings
cavity to caved in molar.

I ate them with side effects looming:
wretched laughter, small-talk, boring
thorough-crowd-shuffling and custom
hand holding.

Oh, they make the night go down.
But the Jibber Jabber; the mean clowns.
They eat them too it keeps their magic
going, their crowd jumping and static
stares. They land on me with mad
paws and I eat more sticky sweets
till I can't move my jaw.

What a Professor said about the African Diaspora

Basic ignorance
in a crooked posture made
moves against the struggle
today. I raised my
hand and swung it out wide to
catch it. Incredulous.

Muse and the Mind

We were good together, yes? We made the best
sisters, Destiny's friends and we knew
all the mysteries of the heart. We saw it as a quest.
Every day it beat red and we met each challenge new.

Along soft hills and deep valleys we did hunt
Heart's treasures; well hidden green, gold and red
jewels made me a greedy lush too nested to see you shunt
our bond, our princely love, you said.

I was for you. A muse sure. You the hip I the joint.
I'm stiff and you ache now. Alone and one way
All for Heart's sake. Dizzy sick, spinning amusement on pointe
We would die before Love. Your breast heavy what would you say?

I would fall on Love like a wolverine, like time
My pen cares for it all as does my mind.

Internal Monologue for Summer

I am not a queen.
I could be.
I am not a Diva.
I have been.
I have nothing for you.
I am not a dog.
My name is not:
Shorty, Baby, or Bitch.
Yes. My thighs clap,
my stretch marks run deep,
my skin is cocoa butter,
my chest is out! So
I beat it like drum and
march on.
Because it's too damn hot.

Fibonacci

A heavy coat is losing feathers;
sitting hard on a carved bench;
Morningside park at its back
while Columbia blots out the Sun.
It looks sort of fat,
swollen like what them boys wear
but, little feathers are flaking away:
they pop out kind of puffy:
floating down in a spiral
some caught in the wind
spinning, spinning, spinning.

She died where no one knew her mother's name

She died on a worn mattress
with scrappy bedding, a squeaky bounce
and a smell she grew not to notice

She died with shoes that were never hers
worn to the ball, the laces splintered
making them harder and harder to tie

She died in a new sweater
green on blue, too small for her
but it was her favorite color

Down the street they cash checks on
loans. She sold lucies outside a liquor store
while her phone charged.

around the corner from a coffee shop
with locked bathrooms and
fragile styrofoam

the church sits too far back
its reserved parking eating up the narrow side street

Where deep quiet sleep and a coroner's guess assumed no pain
She died where no one knew her mother's name

She doesn't dance

Your screams are on a loop. Let
them worry about
time, fresh beats and hammers.

Brag. Brag. Brag.

Brag, brag, brag Black Man with an amplifier in your chest.
I hear “Why rap about what you’ve never had?”
Gold, Girls, Cars, Clothes, Houses.
It sounds like
Home to me. It sounds like
what you got:
old money, oil money, cotton dirty, spicy, salty, blood money.

Brag, brag, brag Black Man
I hear “Pay your dues young man. In my day...”
Yes,
yes they do. With
culture parceled out like nick knacks from an estate,
the heirs left naked-shaking till someone took that.

Brag, brag, brag Black Man.
I hear “It makes no sense” I hear “They have no Respect”
Respect should be a given not the
Holy Grail.
It is muddied and treacherous.
Search my father’s life ten times and find it holds cloudy wine.

Brag, brag, brag Black Man
“Be humble.” I hear “Check your pride.” I hear “Don’t disrespect!”
I hear threats:
look down, cross the street, code slip to supplication.

Brag Man!
I see a culling in my lifetime.
A spooky Rapture.
If you whistle they will come for you.
You can not make too much noise.

Black Girl at a Trump Rally Hashtag

Some girl being shoved through an angry hot white crowd
“I can’t imagine how frightened she must be.”

Comments on her hair, wild and crazy,
her age, old enough to know better,
her youthful abuses of assembly and free speech.

“She had no business being there.”

A student has no business practicing what they’ve learned?
In a stadium made to keep her class entertained,
made to display warrior like abilities and gladiator fame?
No business unless it is dumb with time.
Like hers: noble like old things in practice, yet clichéd when executed.

It is her business to protest.

You can’t imagine her fear?
Join in her work.

So much privilege

So much privilege in this city:
Housing Projects spider-web Out instead of Towering above,
Black Lives Matter so much
not even White Collars keep them from moving on,
so Much Privilege that it Burdens me
with existence and complacency.