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Port Arthur

Shirley Williams

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tucked under arm?
What is this I hear
of your creations—
OUT OF MYTH,
OUT OF INSANITY, OUT OF ILLUSION?
Mr. Booker T.:
were you the green moss
on the trees
leading slaves to Jordan?
were the interpretations of
you purposely distorted;
like our music, literature.
US?

Who carved your mask?
Was it a synthesis of the
African continuum?
Did it fit so tight
brothers questioned/diatribed?

Mr. Booker T. were you an UNCLE TOM?

for James L. Talps

Port Arthur / Shirley Williams

*(from SOMEONE'S SWEET ANGEL CHILE:
BESSIE SMITH)*

what he do you
nonya

(I seed the eye swolled shut)

how much he take
nonya
(I seed this in a dream)

Make yo hand in a fis'

They jes lay there open
in her lap short stump
like fingas curved ova
the callused grey-white palms

his ass go when Time come

gir'—and she can't talk plain 'count
of her lip—gir' I whip
any bitch that got two
legs won't think on it twice

Make yo hand in a fis'

She ain't heard and her hands
is meaty, deep veined wid
red brown lines a little
lighter than her skin her
nails bite down past the quick.

Don't no man jes beat on
me but time I whip my
nigga ass don't care who
right who wrong that's the time
he stop bein my man

what he do you
nonya

(the long lip puffed and black)

how much he take
nonya

(I seed this in a dream)

Boston / George Buggs

Downtown, citizens design destruction.
Black Bostonians bend,
bear the burden of being far from home.
White Boston fears the future.