

Slow Coins

New Poems
(& Some Old Ones)



Minted by Julia Fields

An Original by Three Continents Press

S L O W c O I N S

**SLOW
COINS**

*minted by
Julia Fields*



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For
Harrine Collier Ingram
and
Julia Willis Darby



Julia Fields

*They sleep through the picturesque
cameos
of old women selling fish and gritty fruit
in quick streets
To whoever has slow coins.*

(Great Buildings in Their Slumbers)

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Very Personal

*They scrambled into nightmares
And stone*

I am this fine and lovely me . . . a dirge

I am the fine and lovely me
Inside.

Nobody seems to look beyond.

I am fine,
Picking up for them
objects
That tremulous old folk drop,
Looking

for the candy in a kindly

eye,
I quick, slight, girl,
waiting;
Soon

One of them may say
You are nice. You are
Very nice, child. You are
What I needed, what
Life needs, the whole
Universe.

Instead,
Even the grand old
Look at the things
And

Never

The tiny hands which

give them.

Love

It's spring

and joy is greener
than blood
in the high trees

Everything

is singing

thrush
and every bird
and every bird
on the

Mulberry tree:
the holding snow:
the simple showers
that fall and go:
tints of blue wind:
grace of light and
shadow.

This

is the world above the world

the world we miss
while

lending and buying
talking and crying
and
cursing
the tender and the wise.

Song To The Dust

Dust

My Earth

I pick you up.
I shell you through
My fingers.

You are water
And blend with air
You are air
And blend with heat.

You float through the wind
Taking the cities from
Uncountable time. Taking the populations of the cities.
Through you go all the things
That ever were.
Through you go all the things
That ever will be.

Dust

My Earth.

I lift you in my palm.
I see the skulls
Of sands of you.
I see the silica sheds
Of bones of you.
And there's tomorrow after tomorrow.

Dust

My Earth.

I pick you up, life of life.
I pick you up, Death of death.
Profound; without description: Still.
Silent Beauty. Silent perfection.
I hardly dare to walk upon you.

SHUFFLE

(Looks like this mess will last three hundred years)

Be i
Be Be
damned
Be
damned if
damned Be
if
Be
if
Be
damned
if
you
if

you

if

if

you

goin

goin

goin

goin

you

goin

to

goin

to

goin

to

to work

you

goin

to

work

goin work me to death

in

in

in this

in

in

In

this

this

this

here

In this here

this here

In

this

this

this

here hot

hot

This

here hot

sun.

Man, My Mate

I pass you silkily in the street
And smile you gently to your doom.
You get no quibbling from me; I pay
My homage to your power, your brass
Sinews, iron, steel, gaunt astoundings,
Brutalities. No hysteria you get
From me. I crave for you the wars
Which you crave for yourself. Here is
Water for mud, myths for all manner of
Faiths and creeds; conjectures for debate
Linens for shrouds. Tea cakes for wakes.

I swear there are no angels above you,
Regardless of what God has said. Where
Mere angels fear to tread, you lead,
You alone, old lover, old hero, old son.
For you I lie on reeds, awaiting whatever
You wish to leave, ecstasy, anger, void
Or being. I bear all the sundry pains
You make. I bear all. No complaint you get
From me. I pass you silkily in the streets.

The Make Believe Humanists

The make-believe humanists have
Crawled through the brains
Of all the dead poets
They specialize in the dead
Thoughts of the dead and
For this grave-mongering
They have been certified
With degrees. In the schools
Where I was hungry and
Slept on the floor the
Make-believe humanists borrowed
And burrowed through my
Desperate words to help them
Earn degrees. Not philosophy.
They were rewarded as I
Wore my weary pain. They
Are called Doctors of Philosophy
Although they cure nothing
And are known by their
Bloated guts and their arrogant
Simple, ways. Those doctors.
They have carted to the dead
Schools enough wheelbarrels of
Dead dreams from the skulls
Of dead poets. They have been
So long among the thoughts of
The dead that they have about
Them the cold looks of ghouls
And the smells of Friday funerals.
The make-believe humanists have
Sifted through the green heartblood
Of the dead poets until they
Are bloated with borrowed minds
Like fat green flies.

What they offer to the innocence
Of expectation are the festering eggs
That will become green
Parasite flies. Slow, contented
Flies. Whose mouths will be
Shut tight against the dry rot
Of the easy world. Not the
Vision of the poets for beauty
And strength, but lust for
Some black, close, swift dominance.
Some revision of a vision
They scrambled into nightmares
And stone. Something the dead
Poets cannot defend from the
Unmarked, casual graves.

The make-believe humanists cannot
Wait until the poets die.
They come with their mute ears
And their notebooks. They pounce
Upon them. The fish-eyes humanists
Cannot allow the poets to rest
In any place. They ransacked
Them for materials for "papers"
To deliver at their make-believe
Conferences on Art and Humanity,
Neither of which interests them
More than their comfort or coffee.

The nightmare of the secret
Heart will come. Behind
The dreams they find are
The unfound dreams. Whoever
Brings the dust of the poet
To the enemy sieve will
Be sifted and given his due.
Whatever is the nation that

Buys the wares of the
Grave-digger, humanists will not
Endure. Whoever sells the visions
Of the dead poets will find death.
It is the dream of death
Which the poets have devised
For the make-believe humanists
Who are criminal against
The divine in the human.
Whatever they devise will
Wither like the mouldy papers
And parchments of dead poets.

Nine and a Naught

You looking for? Big Momma?
Big Momma? That's me. How you?
I know I looks just like you thought,
But I used to weight a nine and a naught.
But here I set.
Sometime just think.
Forget to cook.
Forget to clock . . .
Just nap and nod . . .
And never spies—
My hand to God.

But things be like they all time be,
And I can't help the mess I see.
Like the losers keep losing.
And the cruisers keep cruising.
And the quick fists of bruisers
Go right on bruising.
Like the moochers mooching.
Or the smoochers smooching.
And hippity hip with they hearty hooching.
And out of all, I'm the one caught,
Cause I used to did weight a nine and a naught!

According to My Needs

Have burnt all things made of urea.
Have given to the garbage taker
Things that wanted to shine
by the light of my labor.

Have

less than enough but no more.
Go out and do not even
bother locking the door.
they say I will
return one time
and find some thief has
stolen the bottom off the floor.

What can I do with the pink

paper roses?

the porcelain vase
that I drop often
because it is not
breakable?

A thing made even

better than a poor heart?

This order. This beauty of this room
Where sunlight comes. And air.
O beautiful for spacious rooms.
I have dumped that American
dream.

Free at last. Free at last.

High on the Hog

Take my share of Soul Food—
I do not wish
To taste of pig

Of either gut

or Grunt

from bowel

Or jowl

I want caviar
Shrimp soufflé
Sherry

Champagne

And not because

These are the
Whites' domain
But just because
I'm entitled —

For I've been

V.d.'d enough

T.b.'d enough

and

Hoe-cake fed Knock-Knee'd enough
Spindly led-bloodhound tree'd enough

To eat

High on the Hog

I've been

Hired last

Fired first enough

I've sugar-watered my

Thirst enough —

Been lynched enough

Slaved enough

Cried enough

Died enough

Been deprived —
 Have survived enough
 To eat
 High on the Hog

Keep the black-eyed peas
 And the grits
 The high blood-pressure chops
 And gravy sops

I want apertifs supreme
 Baked Alaska —
 Something suave, cool
 For I've been considered faithful fool
 From 40 acres and a mule . . .

I've been
 Slighted enough
 Sever-righted enough
 And up tighted enough
 And I want
 High on the Hog

For dragging the cotton sack
 On bended knees
 In burning sun
 In homage to the
 Great-King cotton
 For priming the money-green tobacco
 And earning pocket-change

 For washing in iron pots
 For warming by coal and soot
 For eating the leavings from
 Others' tables

I've lived my wretched life
 Between domestic rats
 And foreign wars

Carted to my final rest
 In second-hand cars

But I've been leeches enough
 Dixie-peached enough
 Color bleached enough

 And I want
 High on the Hog!

Oh, I've heard the Mau Mau
 Screaming

 Romanticising Pain
 I hear them think
 They go against the Grain

But I've lived in shacks
 Long enough
 Had strong black beaten
 Backs long enough

And I've been
 Urban-planned
 Been monyihanned
 Enough

 And I want
 High on the Hog

Masterplayer Buzzard Man

into your apartment:

nosefirst

like

seeking.

don't stop.

checking windows and keys
and in corners

as if you are not there.
everywhere.

You born in the country so you think may be there
is a form, a system, an etiquette, if you PLEASE. For THIS!

You go to the kitchen

look back

Buzzard Man into something
yours and personal. Maybe this
is what happens when you take
up Marxism too seriously. Reckon?

then your mouth just burns and you say—

“Would you be offended if you SAT DOWN/A WHILE/
HERE?”

Brotherhood can be awful COMPLEX.

Small Songs to Moral Beauty

What are eyes for?

For looking at the people and the flowers.

is that true? is that true?

What are eyes for?

For looking at the people and the flowers.

is that true? is that true?

What are ears for?

For hearing the thunder and songs and fowl.

is that true? is that true?

What is voice for?

For speaking love and singing.

For speaking love and singing.

I hope it's true—I hope it's true.

It must be true.

A Toaster Still Is Not A Sexual Beast

In this age of technology
The smooth
 second to second whine
 of some machine or other
 in heat
 is the sound once belonging
 to animals.
All day and night
There come a pouring out
Of public pure delight

The heavy ground was light
 with
 sound.
Incense of flowers
Purred in air. Never so much fecundity.

The telephones are screaming.
Lamps are glowing softly white.
Typewriters shift space to half-space.
The devine pulsation cause
 trembling in water/fire.

Plugs plugged: thing into thing:
Glow and afterflow. Hush: outcry.
Flush. Hush.

 Kuish.

 Breath of life. Blow—

Everything has a private hymn.
Everything is man. It walks.
It has project: It stalks.
Screams.

 Breaks or breaks its heart.
 Left on heaps and piles.
 In lots.
 Revives with tenderness.
 Has omo and souls.
Waits for blood—
 From men—
 Life blood.

Ben Robbie

When he sees something

Sad

or

Ugly

or

Evil

or

Rotten

or

Over-Priced

He acts like he wants to

Pray to it.

He won't clean his yard

won't change his clothes.

won't fix nothing. It falls,

it breaks, it lays

It stays.

And he loves to eat G U T S.

In the old red-blood

Viking way.

I say B E N R O B B I E

you need to be

Legislated

O U T of that place

you are in

In your M I N D.

How Black

"How black you ever

Seen a man?

I seen a man

So black

He went in the Kitchen

And the pot

and Kettle stopped fussing."

"How black you ever

Seen a man?

I seen a man

So black

They had to put

His head in a sack

For the Sun to rise."

I am so black

And rich and deep

Mid-night moans for

Me in His sleep.

I am so black

That almost to speak

Of it

Is a redundancy

And in bad taste.

I am so black

That for amusement

I break the power of darkness

With skin bleach.

I am so black

I am blacker than

"If you black

Stand back."

I am so black that

I am black

In theory

And in fact.

I am so black

That I was black

When it was

Black to be "real dark."

I am so black

That I was black

When blackness was profitable

For white people only.

And that is so black

That it is light.

East of Moonlight

moving eastward, passing the soil, the only holiness,
moved from the cities sitting on their tails
bound solidly to asphalt and steel and stone, moving
to wide visions, serenity and modest kinds of joys:

in the blank space in the world, where
four roads meet and cross in apathy.
i ask a stranger where i am.
MOONLIGHT he tells me MOONLIGHT
where you going you going toward the
east. Keep on the same road. Don't turn
to the left. Don't turn toward the right.

lush are the trees. Lush the sounds of living. Lush is
the freedom of the winds. What myths are here? Is pain
a myth? Or emptiness? Or poverty? Old tattered shades
of remnants of chains, old shacks crumbling into dust,
old myths made subtle, old myths reformed or decaying,
and, now and then, gaunt faces so softened by the times,
from time to time a smile, unhospitable but real as the
emerald tints of pine. Moonlight. A lease on today, a
lease on tomorrow. But it is too early for celebration.

in the old houses, perched on sweat and
toil, children, though obsolete, are bloom-
ing upward. i travel to places behind their
eyes to see the meaning of tomorrow.
the power of being is equal to justice.
the power of being is equal to war. And the
power of justice is equal to all violence.

it will not turn to left or right.

i will not write of the moon. Its language is too silent.

in my basket i cannot gather even the shadow of a moonbeam,
and on the street the hordes are gathering.
with the memory of swords and rumors of wars. The women are
slow as peace, the men are strong and lost. When the people
walk fast, there is a rumble in the earth. Never before
have i seen so many warriors at the ready, never before has
such an army gathered. By not gathering at all. I ask a new
stranger where I am. I mention Moonlight. No. I do not wish
to go. That eastward. His teeth are gone. This east of moonlight.

in the space between wars
i wish to tell some stories to the young
and i wish to make vivid again the memory
of the old, to speak with farmers who are
holy men, no quack farmers but those poets
who kneel in the dust and shell it through
their fingers and know it better than the
breasts and thighs of women, not the quack
men who take their weather from t.v. and
ride their land to ruin in machines and
rape it for raw gains . . .

Moonlight . . . East of.

People

*No man ever broke his fingers
fighting their skull*

O No

.....

All The Truly Civilized People

are on welfare.

are "unemployed."

The vicious

beasts all have jobs

that's the way it

should be.

let the dogs eat dogs.

It takes a civil human being

to sit in a chair

on his porch and rock there

or stop and brush his hair

or just lie on the good ground

and watch the cars tearing round.

It takes a civil human being.

People who had better work:

All very ugly young women

with bad skin, pug noses,

witches bull-dog chins;

All hysterical cats out

screaming and taking cruel

feelings out on men who despise

them. and attempting to torture

women who have been happily

loved.

cowardly men who are scrawny

Young women with false teeth

or bad thick lumpy legs

Potted-gut women who

are coarse and cruel and loud.

America is a beautiful nation.
Because of America I can:
sleep till two each day.
refrain from meat eating.
give myself egg facials
keep my hands perfect and soft.
Do my neck exercises so
that my posture stays lovely.
Pumice my heels.
write down beautiful thoughts.
have beautiful thoughts.
talk to god in person.

“Job” said the wise man,
“what I want a job for?”

American was founded so
That good people with
Beautiful souls can rest
while the dogs at
work eat the other dogs.
Rich is right, but out of
work is not bad.

Tellers at the Bank

The tellers flatten the
Founding Fathers into neat piles
They spindle and fold them,
And they stick them in
Green stacks

Until

They look like tree frogs
Or grass snakes.

The tellers at the bank
Mutilate the Founding Fathers
Into careful oblong places
From crispness to crumbling.
The tellers

work

Too fast to notice Washington's jaw
which prevented his lying
Or Lincoln's left brow
which almost covers his eye

The tellers at the bank
Make off-day cookies
Or mow the lawn
one thing they know from

Duty—

Change is inevitable.

“Eden 1/2 Mile”

“The people got tire of
wiping up blood
and listening to bombs
going off”

It is so clean in Birmingham
That
You can sit on the sidewalks
and not stain your garments.
Going southeast
there's a sign:

“Eden 1/2 Mile.”
The hills are Christmas green
from March to November.

There's a stillness now. There's
resting for a while from
Bombs in black and white,
And there's a revolution waiting
To be borne.
What else is all the
quiet for
Except the birthwatch
of something waiting?

It is so quiet in Birmingham,
You can hear the squeak of
childrens' springs in swings
four blocks from the park.
That park from which
Martin Luther King was

Lifted into the Conner jail.
That park across from the Church
where the children shattered
in cold flame

That Sunday.
That park up from the bookstore
Where the clerk yelled
No
I
will
Not

sell
you
that
book.

It
never
should
have
been

written or published—

Sir I said
Here's the money. They said that
I could find it here. And
maybe at
The University of Alabama—
a book by a
native son of the
South,
a book titled, *The Negro A Beast*.

Never
he shouted Never
and in his eyes and voice
The South rose and rose
and overflowed its fascist banks,
and rose and rose and rose.

Black Like Black

When some people discovered

that they were not black like black
and therefore not "niggers"
and therefore not Afro-Americans
and

generally

without identity,

a rage was

born

In America.

and almost everyone thought
that "oppression" was the cause.

but

changed things are more
themselves than ever.

To lose one's color
in a color crazy country
is to turn zeroes into

Bullets.

For if you are not

Black like black

you are further Back

Than merely Back.

Of The People (1976)

How does any proud government say

To the good people who

Are ever watchful and restless:

"Look. There are just too

many makers of floral

print toilet tissue

There are blue daisies

On the stuff, stripes

On the stuff, cuddly

facéd Kiddies on the stuff.

Enough, damn it all, is enough!"

'Look. Why do you need

Individual cartons for the

milk or butter or flour or

Rice? Those are trees, you know!

Bring the canisters to the store

And fill them up. Do that for trees. And will you eat

All the paper baggies up. Do that

For trees. And will you eat

What in nature's name will you do

With a margarine bowl, electric blue?

For Earth's sake, grow up.

You are two-hundred years old."

Or

"Look. Good people. Stop erecting steeples.

The church is dead.

Work for the state.

There are to be no more houses of

The Lord—Spread the word.

This is a Secular Nation.

**A Socialist Realist Confronts His Future
At Close Range and Steps Back Amazed—
Even Running**

Collective joy is not the same as

Collective Agony. Sometimes the natural tyrant
Comes in wearing a face you think you know and

Understand.

Which Face might be a
Mask.

And the side of the Face which looks like “the peoples’ side” might
Just be painted on. It is hard to know for sure. It gets harder all
The time for those that sit on movable fences. For sure, it is one
Thing to advocate: it is another thing to endure. It is one thing
To have free rein to propose: it is another thing to be given the
Whole hot stove to sit on.

Some
of the people cannot bear the heat at all
UP
TOO
CLOSE
and so just take their anti-social reality
and get the
hell
out of the ring around the reddish roses.

The Suburban Ladies March to Outlaw War

Because
No man ever broke his fingers
fighting their skull
O No
Everyone they know is occupied
With gainful aggressiveness.
The men they know
Hit golf balls
Hit tennis balls
Hit soft balls
Hit bowling pins
Hit volley balls

The men they know
Do not aim for skull balls
or breast or teeth.
So they have their marches
Against what they call war.

Let there be from somewhere
A war for Mr.
And men of his kind
Who hug the hard corners
Of crumbling towns—rested
Men who shoot sharp tongues
Who mow each other down
And rich little children
May there be war for each men.

O may they always see all the
different shades of red
Inside the prism of mean red blood.

O may their quest for battle
Be satisfied in combat
Big and balanced
And battle fields with more
Room than sporadic
Unexpected docile skulls.

O may they seek the victories
they need against others
Like themselves
In zones so designated.

The suburban women march
Thinking that they understand peace.
They have never seen women's
Baldness-snatched in man's
Strong fingers.
They have not seen
Women flung from cannons
Of midnight doors
Or women listening heroic—
Soldiers on all fours.

The suburban ladies march
Thinking that peace is a
Peaceful time like the absence of war.

July 4, 1974 · Raleigh, N. C.

We 10,000

We of the people
10,000 Strong

In the green field
Were a throng.

Explanation

The hard women propel
The men to war;
Everywhere they are bringing
Their boots and guns

The soft women propel
The men to love;
Everywhere they are singing
and tending the little ones.

Symbol

Policeman stark rises from
The sleeping skull of suburban
Head. He is fire-arms opposing
Shafts of arrows and tomahawks.
He is the sword opposing
The sharp-edged stones.
He is the neutron bomb
Blackmailing the leaders of
Grounded armed men.

Policeman stark dares not move
Away from his beaten pace,
His week day maze, and
Even if he panics and raises
His voice an octave higher
Than the laws permit, he
Will be sent to his small room.
If he removes his guns too fast
He will be handchained.

Sometimes, a louse of the populace
Even wakes up in disarray.
Then, he too is shown
That any nightmare in his
Brain must coincide with
The current delusion of the
Tall, awkward citizens and
How it reflects their selves back.

Do They Count The Crazy and the Comatose?

When the census takers come,
Young, intent on doing the job

Well,
some people get counted 20 times.
I knew a person who did this.

You can shave your head,
Wear a pillow for pregnant—

It's the game of
the decade.

You can change towns, too.
Or cities.

Some simply change houses.

But its
more fun
to borrow photographs from
neighbors. Then

You give their names, dates of birth,
ETC.

When
the nation is old and
experienced, it will learn
better than to send
to know.

Mr. Evil

Mr. Evil started his second childhood last week.
It was his thirty-fourth birthday and his mother baked
Him a cake and put a candle on the top of it.
She said the cake was made "from scratch" because
She put two real eggs in it and walked to the store
Herself to get the "add-water" icing instead of calling
A neighbor child and paying it a dime to go for her.

Mr. Evil can now call all the little ten year old girls
"Mama" and show them where he got shot when he was in
"The Army." He can fly kites, race cars, drink wine and
Sit on the street corners with his peers. He can even
Kill someone if he wants to—someone with no male in the
Family to get him back for it. He can stand on the corner
And talk loud about "pussy": he can say "did you see that?"
To his peers, and he can lie on the quiet women who never
Believed him in his first childhood. America is a place
Where any man can become an old boy. All he has to do is
Live long enough. Between his mother and the government
He can live in a play pen called the streets of America.
Mr. Evil started his second childhood last week.

Bombs Are What People Look Like

People get the bombs people deserve
if people didn't think so, no general in
the world, no pentagon or such would dare
impose those horrors upon people. it's the
gamble—the greed to see how far you can go
and break even—or prevail. bombs are what
people look like in their secret hearts.

Church Man

Sunday shoulders
 seized in sudden
 Sanctimonia.

Thirty Dollars

Thirty dollars says the girl at the desk
at the hospital:

thirty dollars
thirty dollars
thirty dollars
thirty dollars
thirty dollars

The municipal martyr in her filthy
eyeglasses.

The green parrot ten times removed from
anything human.

The glad -to-have-a-job, I-just-do-what-I
am-told-green parrot:

thirty dollars
thirty dollars
thirty dollars
thirty dollars
thirty dollars
thirty dollars

thirty dollars

“Not so fast” says the other parrot
“You don’t know what service she needs.
Wait until after she has seen the doctor.”
The ugly parrot hates to hear such talk.
I move before she grabs my side to take
My appendix out—although she is only a ‘Re-
Ceptionist’. I back away, and she says with her eyes:

thirty dollars
thirty dollars
thirty dollars

That is a story of crime “in the cities.”

American Gluttony

Each pursues happiness in his own way
For some this means
Christmas all year long.
They think they are

Therefore
Santas

And the stuffed bellies
hang . . .

The lard falls.

O Hogarth!

The stuffed bellies flap.

The stuffed bellies flivver.

They think they can

Eat it all.

They want to be sure

That no one else

Gets more or as much.

The stuffed bellies shake.

Even

The smallest child

Has a fat belly.

The children learn to

Glut

Sugar, cookies, cream, cola.

Toys, clothes, light, play.

You know that you are at home

In

The good old winter

Spring, summer, fall

Because the stuffed

Bellies take more room

On buses and planes. Hog the road.

The sidewalks. The silence. Noise, Bread.

Then

The reducing begins. The
Diets by those who
Are too evil to keep
Their mouths shut or
To feed the truly hungry.
Don't give a bite away.
Hide it. Eat it first
Then vomit it back.
Lock it up. Freeze it
Till later. All over
America. Glut. Glut. Glut.
Jog it off. Fuck it off.

"You" he said. His
Belly hanging over his
Belt.
I sir? Not I sir.
His belly hanging over
Whatever it was
That was gluttonous
And wheezy and full
Of whim and waste.
Not I sir. No sir.

Let us devour all the food.
Mow down the gold and

the red and the
green with our
unstoppable teeth. Let
us use up all of it.
We can always crawl

Through the universe for more
Of the same.

Our cars will drink
All the oil.
Our pet beasts will
Eat all the horses.
Our shoes will consume
All the polish.
Our hair will consume
All the dyes.
Our clothes will consume
All the dyes.
Our bellies will consume
All the other that remains.

We are the greatest gluttons.
We are the great gluttons.
We are the greatest
We are the
We are
We

Fatback for

President,

Fat back for

President,

And

for Congress

Jelly Belly

Jelly roll

fats

Edith

Chubby

Big Boy

Big Momma

Subsidy

Kickback

and Al-lies.

The South

Something is unfinished here . . .

Green

In the deep south
you notice first Venomous
 June
in her rich tones of green
spreading over the still places.

Germination is her theme.
Green spews out. It floats
on the stagnant pools.
It crouches north of the
 Ancient trees,
Falling indifferently about.
Poison
 hunger drives each
 jaded mouth.

In the deep south
you notice the ugly
gluttony of magnolias, the
slimy leaves that shimmer
In the heat. And that these
trees grow near stables
 and
 swampy waters.
That toadstools shelter
 under them.

When the sun cuts down
 In blades of heat

the magnolia sheds leaves
But never flowers.
The flowers wither into
yellow frowns,
Still on the topmost
Branches.

Lee

Lee at Appomattox grew
Bewildered at the game
From which he drew
His putrid and inglorious
Fame
In his rags and rage
His eyes burning
His stance
Ruggedly mortal
Under the omniscient sun
His high shoulders proud borne
His manner all exhorting
Like some mad mocked
And shattered sage
A fiery anger churns him through
As though he were at play
And Fate, embroiled,
Spirited his toys away.
In the southern night
Cool fireflies tilt and dim
Death gives its rendez-vous
History stalks, possesses, engulfs him.

Testimonials

Among everybody's acquaintances
Is always that one reflective
Fool who wishes to be found
Dead in a state of enviable
cleanliness. Every solemn profound
Thought is superseded by the
Antiseptic.

My great Aunt Sally often
said, "If I go, I'm going
neat."
And she would brush her hair
a hundred feeble strokes
Chewing on her Dixie Peach snuff stick
That caused oozes of spittle
To trickle from her brown-toned lips.
Staring over her granny glasses
She would ask for the Bible
And then go on and on about
Nicodemus and sometimes Jeremiah.
I washed her gingham aprons, always
In blue or green and yellow checks,
never dirty, but always carrying
The pale odor of age, sassafras
And white liniment. She liked aprons,
Although she never worked. I guessed
It was identification with Aunt Jemima.
her own cool cheeks had shrunk—

When she died, they found rolled dollars
In her pillow tick. All new, All clean.
They found new-folded Homespun. A new
pair of Union drawers.

Some union chemises, new hankies
With new coins tied in corners,
And a new, clean voo-doo doll.

Old man Hawks, the funeral director in town
had it spread that Aunt Sally was the cleanest
Lady he ever had found dead
Even her fingernails (not usual in women) were clean.
Her toes were elegant in pedicure.
How she would have smiled
Had she heard or seen.
What pure, puritanical satisfaction
There would have been
What godlike smugness there displayed.

I didn't go to the burial ground.
That day the sun was bright
A clear harsh Alabama sky
Had shamed even the morning star.
They said Aunt Sally would leave
In Homespun, white, cool, and clean.
It was an occasion for joy
To know how dearly some people
Follow the dictates of the dead.

By noon my wash
Was dazzling on the line.
The sheets, Aunt Sally might
Have said were clean as the
Few clouds gathered over the trees—
All impossible to bleach,
I rinsed twice. She never approved
The sloven's tombstone grey.

The clothes were dancing
Themselves dry out on the line
In the germicidal air.

I sat and combed my hair,
Did my nails, took a long
Bath and read the book of Jeremiah.
These honorariums over, I
Packed her belongings in Bayberry.
It had all been fitting enough memorial—
In genteel taste, graciously done
Without thought for reward.

Entirely, submerged in the glorious
Antiseptic, I went over to Wilson Pond.
The grass was cool to sit upon,
The water warm to the feet.
I cooled mine in the dirt
Of the embankment, polish and all.
It felt beautiful to be among
The living. There was a grandeur
In the universe—an eloquence bespoken there.

Birmingham

Here is the *Big Foot Country*—
And are you
Pittsburgh or Chicago
'Of the South'?
You with the furls
Of pink dusts of ore
Undulating against
A sky of molten blue.
The Big Foot Country.
The country of the
Rust hued shoes.
Of boots with orange
Heels and sharpened toes
Walking the alleys,
Fields, mines and factories,
Through the Sandy Bottoms
Of the strong world of
Steel and iron, the ore world.
Are you indeed
Pittsburgh or Chicago
'Of the South'?
Here they play
Their music hard.
Its beat throbs
Through the cool
Soul of the gentle
Torpide city, through
The sweet heat
Whose violence in the
Calm nights spends itself
In the exhaustive,
In the Eternal dance
In the movement
In the action

In the essence
In the living
In the pervasive will
To live
In the laughter
In the pain
In the thirst
In the hunger
In the beauty
In the joyousness
Of the people
The Big Foot Country
The colloquial
World of the people;
Numbers runner
Dead to law
Darts the low trees
Dreaming, collecting
The milkman's fees
Into white cadillacs
And ties from Blach's
The Big Foot Country.

Iron God of the city
Gleams from the
Dark sky
Over woodbined mountains
Over terraced
Scopes of villages,
Scopes of the people
Beyond the iron eye.
The Big Foot Country.
Are you indeed Pittsburgh
Or Chicago
'Of the South'?
Steel mill champagne city
Blair of Tuxedo Junction

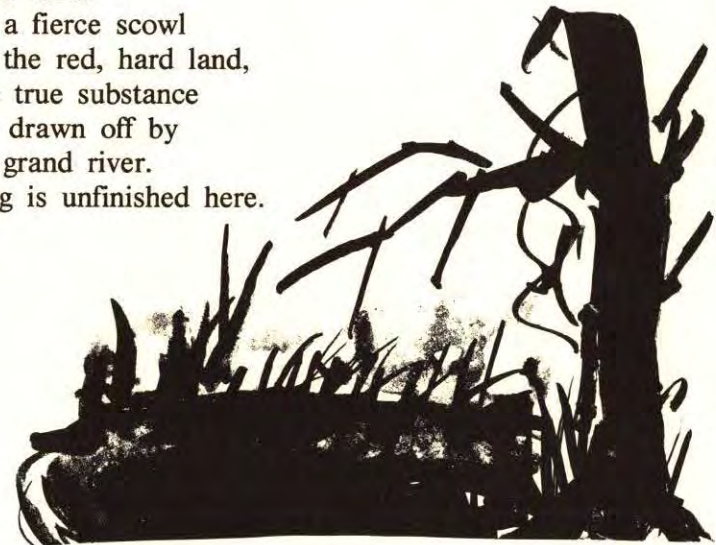
Echoing as a memory
Bomb Hill resounding
In the violent world
Steel mill champagne city
Beating of the cymbals
Soar of the symphony
Blood on 16th Street
In the steel mill
Champagne city
here is the Big Foot Country.
The fertile
Colloquial world
Of the people.
And are you
Pittsburgh or Chicago
'Of the South'?

You with the essence
Of your own
And the soul
And the self
Of your own?
You with the
Essential mark, brand
And style of the populace
You with the writ
Of the people
You with the richness
And the Earth-wealth
Being of the people.
And how then are you
Pittsburgh or Chicago
'Of the South'?

Mississippi Green, or, Something Is Unfinished Here, Emmett Till

Briars, thorns, and cacti-shaped
Leaves mingle on the land
Beside the swamps. In the end,
They are all stunted, but
Holding on, even the tall trees
Are low for tall trees.
Snake-green slime on swamps
Is nature vomiting back
Remembrance of the life
Upon the land.
I look upon the idle
Water and almost expect
To see a black man's hand.

I wonder why Emmett's mother
Would ever even bring
Him for a visit.
There is a fierce scowl
All over the red, hard land,
As if the true substance
Were all drawn off by
The one grand river.
Something is unfinished here.



Bronzes

The bronze which holds Huey Long

In the capitol
Huey Long is standing
Broad like a natural man.
Still, on the toes of one foot
And the heels of
The other foot, balanced
And rising, rising, rising.

The bronze holds Huey Long.
He stands strong,
Turning into ash
Every mid-night late.
But when the sentinels
Open the capitol's gate
At early seven,
Mr. Huey Long is rising, rising.

Even bronze cannot beguile
The up-raised corners
Of his smile:
What does bronze know
Of Luzanna mud
Or the Fates which sculpt
Old Huey
As a dancing bird?
And he is rising, rising, rising.

New South

Tired

old phoenix
chokes on
ashes,
walks through
crimson.

Lynching trees

charred
bend
toward
progress

Violence sleeps in fret

strait laced in rhetoric.
midnight smells of blood:
Day light is cool bloodtide
crimson.

The wolves are laughing in the woods—
for the new phoenix

who is choked with ashes
the wolves are waiting near the woods.

Smoking

is
bad
for
 your health

Because
 most tobacco is grown in the
South
 and this tobacco land is
 keeping out industry
 so
 much so
 that
 it
 cannot be undermined down
 and replaced
 by
 Factories and plants (stores)
 that
 want to pay the
mini-minimum wage to
 the masses of illiterates
and blacks that have moved
 back down

South.

Cotton was once considered
Bad for your health
Until synthetic fabrics
Began to chew peoples'
Underarms out and to eat
The labia majora off.
Now
 The More Cotton the Better

Georgia Suite

The deep souls of the people

 Fly
 up
 to
 Chicago

In the cold seasons,
The deep souls burn
Like
 furnaces:
In the cold seasons,
The souls hide in
The cold bodies and
Burn out through deep eyes.

From this red clay,
This Georgia dust,
This scrub of ground
A soul goes high—
Does not fall down—
 ward

En route to Chicago.

The deep souls of the people
 Dance
 up
 to
 Muncie.

The Souls grow wide
Spanned from the clay—
They have drunk moonlight
And starlight
And eaten the sun.

In the cold seasons
The Souls subsist on sun.
Riding in the slow marrow
And the cunning tone
of lost voices.

From This red clay,
This Georgia dust,
A Soul grows wide,
Does not get dizzy
A soul does not stumble-hard

En route to Muncie.

The hopeful Souls of the people—
The forever refugees—
Drift by all means
To all points
Forever,

Their power and beauty
Floating through the

long wires,
The asphalt,
The stark
clouds.
Forever.

Unanchored Souls, in cold seasons
Fly
To
'Frisco, are
Upward Bound or Downward Bound
Forever.

Sojourners for a generation
From Georgia clay—

or asphalt—

En Route

To Forever,
Forever are
The Deep Souls.

Bronze Horses In The Park

Bronze horses in the park are charged
against the sky, their metal reins in metal
mouths, their metal heads poised high:

“atlanta’s been burnt clean
to the ground. What is the last
that you have heard? have you
seen any who have seen? I have
myself and six to feed. the crops
are lost. and we retreat? from the
hope, the dream, the dead? think of
the blood, the ground, the cause.”
and from this pause,
twisting and bending in heat
thick enough to see waves of,
black heat, tropical as wombs,
simmering rainbows in southern noons,
and trembling, burning, soldering, shoeing
an iron shoe onto an iron foot,
missing a hit, striking a thumb, a knee,
unbalancing a pose, losing an angle
cussing, contrite: “God.”
until, for that commemoration, a beast
a bronze is towering, shod.
A general of bronze to bear.
“water boy! water boy!”
“where is that manumissioned curse?”
and singed flesh on hateful soil
beginning to freck and scar and broil,
weeping for Europa Mater, and calling
“water boy! water boy!”

“shot at a drama? what was he doing there?
no way to lead a nation.
I am glad as anybody else down here.”
cleaning his brow in civic irritation

and by this gesture, blackening his face.

“I tell you, we will rise, we will rise, we
will rise again from this disgrace.
and this, see this in bronze, it will endure.”
making one for all—richmond, montgomery,
savannah, charleston, cherokee, hard.hard.hard.
pounding a rebel brow to cold complicity—
and eye and heart and mind.
“get any nigger you can find
to set them in a rightful place,
and pulleys, ropes and mules:
darkies and beasts to get them in
a rightful place. beasts and niggers
to set them strong.
“It is finished, and will endure—the
spirit and the dream. Water boy! water boy!”

Alaska

Bush and veldt
“mammy”

SIAM

NAM

. . . geronimo!

“chou”

castro

LUNA

MARS

Bronze horses in the park. florescent clear.
immobile, blind,
a snow retreat for winter birds,
a lyre for songs by winter wind.

The Poem of Mrs. Rosa

When people hear the word Montgomery
They think about noise.
But Montgomery is a quiet place
On red sand and clay
And the sun hits it at a
Slant, looks like. And that lovely river!
The capital is cloud white
And you can see it shimmer silver
In the light.

It was quiet that day. I'm a seamstress
And guess I'm used to
The slow silken hum
Of machines. I hum myself—
Sometimes with pins in
The corners of my lips!

I'm a seamstress.
We sit a great deal
Of the time,
But not as often as people
Would like to think.

But ripping and sewing
Is our trade.
We like balance—justice.
It was quiet that day.
And I had been standing.
Had finished a garment
And was fitting another one—
On my feet for hours!
Before I caught the City Bus
Through quiet red clay Montgomery,
I had been standing.
It's something to have to pay to stand riding!

Have not we all been standing
For these three hundred years?
Cooking, carrying, digging, singing?
Have not we all been
Standing? Have not we all been standing?

But I boarded the bus
And there was a seat. I sat
Down. Being refreshingly grateful
To all higher powers.
There was a seat. And
Then—a face above my face
Waiting, daring me to sit.
I was supposed to rise
Up for another human being
To sink into my place.

And I a seamstress?
I was comfortable and
Could feel a healing rest
Within my feet
And there he stood.
I would not move.
Not a foot. Not a toe.
You know the rest.
My refusal fitted into
A historical pattern in
My very breast.
I'm a seamstress—
Isn't it a glorious thing
That a race that was born standing
Should get its freedom
By taking and keeping a SEAT?

Friends have mentioned my leaving.
I have always said no to that.
Where else in the world would

There be a river with crepe myrtle
Planted along the bank?
Besides, people always send me patterns.
I have sewn for people I will never see.
That City Bus Company made me hosts of friends.

This is a quiet place.
And there's beauty here.
We seamstresses believe in
Getting conditions right. That's
A seamstress's hardest job!
And something went right, But who would have thought
Being seated would do it?

The North

*The attention of a great city
is difficult to get*

Great Buildings in Their Slumbers

Great buildings in their slumbers
cannot be bothered
By the beggars

blearing at the quarters and dimes
stuck
between their clawed fingers,
or the way the winos think
the big edifices are strong trees
or robust lovers,
or the way mad bombs
just miss going off in geometric
halls
because an old sentiment tripped
an ego's dare.

The attention of a Great Building
is difficult to get.
One could dance on his head for

coins

for centuries and yet
not dent one stone's
whet
of a great building.

A man is leaping from the 14th floor—
when he has indulged this whim
a siren will sing a blues for him.
When the man's surprised, warm blood
is hosed

down
From the Great Walls,
No flinch of vertebrae
will be perceptible.

Great Buildings in their slumbers
cannot be bothered with nonsense
and mere hysteria
or

the queer warriors who climb
Great Walls or tear down splendid gates—
The soldiers who leave
In blood and bags
Their infinite names woven

into finite glints of

tags.

They sleep through the picturesque
Cameos
of old women selling fish and gritty fruit
in the quick streets
To whoever has slow coins.
State Funerals mean nothing to
Great Buildings:
Nor do the tip-toe of assassins.
When the thieves come—
Before the weary-fleshed whores
before the recalcitrant
merchants
with machine-spun silk
and holy water
and icy lies,
The Great Buildings
do not sway or bend—
Not even when the bats and
gulls
nest beneath the roofs, and
give a welcome song to
friend and kin
who come droving,

filching bits of fur
or thread
to make shelter.

The tourists pass like vapors.
The people are part of the landscape
(sing, Mañana, Manuel)

The wigged, lashed, ribboned, and scented
pass:

The numb, the blind, the proud, the foiled
(sing, Mañana, Manuel)

Recede.

A breeze,

sanding the confident corners
of a Great Building,

Ruffles

without an apology—
the fine essence of
a grain of stone.

(Sing, Mañana, Manuel)

Saturday City

The women who have known pain so long
That they seek it from habit,
Carry giant purses
Big as cotton socks or babies
saunter
Burdened by Earth Mother bellies
and bags—

 Their proud eyes
 beneath wigs heavier than lead
 have stared down scorn
 with triumph
 Borne down deep,
 Deeper than dust,
 Borne through milleniums of
 Bearing all.
 The sleekly lovely women
 whose heavy feet are
 bouyant as kites.
 Down the sad places where
 smiles begin and fall,
 Down the stout reserves
 of flesh and fortitudes
 They pass the colors
 preening from the glass.
 carrying smooth vanities.
 Deeper than hurt.
 The Saturday City rises to catch the sun'
 and is ensnared in drones
 and gestures
 and articulations.
 Saturday City feet never
 retreat!
 They wear the dreamy stones
 to shreds of dust:

They ramble up the grey walls.
Beneath the crushing heels,
History, a breathless phoenix,
is raged with rebirth
and reverence,
with reverberations.

City Saturday is the mask
 of dawn.
The Saturday City is richer than visions.

An apocalypse—
 A calypso of horses
 stampede the stones
 quieter than dreams, more
 voluptuous than water—
 their footprints simple as dew
 And
 lifting
 A blaze
 above dust
 and flesh and clay.

Pigeons Dead On City Streets

They got sick of carrying
The damned briefcases
Received at birthdays and holidays
Single-file, hell, and high water.
They got sick of the fucking traffic jams
And saying "right!" and "yes sir" and "no trouble."
They got goddamned sick as motherfucking hell
Of the cigarette smoke and beer and colas and the
Drinking styrofoam coffee mugs and the necklariats
And the blue shirts and triple knits and elevators
Going down and spitting them Jonah hail Maryann
And the chrome ashtrays and the aggressive legs
And manes in the plastic flowers and the coughkeeping
Carpets . . . They got damned tired.
Damned tired of the just grey shit . . . One's own making.
Just pigeon shit and now window high enough.
And up to here.
Here here here damn.

Black Super Bad from Down North

with rented car
and rented mind

climbs down the holiday road
fast fast faster than any other
storm. His arm
jutting out the
window like an
old time "big shot".
showing how his
luck has changed,
showing how far he's got.

rather be in Chicago
thrashing through the smog
than to be in North Carolina
treated like a dog.

dressed in the latest
dressed in the style
dressed to the teeth
for a "clown's" sweet wile

kick back tomorrow
cope with today
ride a wild mule
down the highway.

down South today
up South tomorrow.
black man runs in circles
of misery and sorrow.

Muriel Just Quit

Hackensack, N.J.

Machines dont care.
They will shake your body
Until you shit
Your foots on pedals
Your hands on screws
And your whole body crying
The Technology Blues.
Half a hour to lunch
Three seconds to pee
And a rot-toothed foreman
Saying gee, gee, Gee

Or you can stand on a corner
And freeze your ass
Pointing your Marathon
At the cars that pass.
The streets so lonely
And Murder out there
And the red white and blue
Poking in everywhere.
And even no sympathy—
The lady next door
Tell her dirty kids
Your name is Ms. Whore.
She holds a husband
A washed-out, hustling fool
Who go through stuff
You wouldnt do to a mule.
And he say good evening with
His tongue and his lips
While his Madame watching
With her fists on her hips.
And you just stand and stand high
Because somethings cant hardly
Make Miss Muriel cry.

Mr. Stewart

walked cross Madison Avenue.

say wooh-woo!

So glad I got my farm—
don't mean you all no harm—
showing me your city. it nice
to pass through, but you couldn't
pay me to stay.

friend say

What's the matter? Don't you like UPNORTH?

It not the north or south of the thing—
it more like asphalt.

There was a time when North was all the hope
we had. you was GLAD to come, to lift yourself.

True that may be. Some still might do, but I was
lifted 'fore I come, and I'm just here to visit
YOU.

Flasher

Under Lover-man 747
air rapist
at slow ease
over the trees.
belly-button blinking. Gone.

Crime

A stupid man shall keep
The soul with which he was born—
In a land where joy
comes from wine
and cleanliness translates “fine”
and fine means gaudy or stolen.
in a nation where madness is the rule
instead of the exception to it.

Lily Black Blonde From Wig Haven Among the Urinals

Grotesque in your abominable
Beauty,
You give the lie to synthetics
And with your sponge and pail,
Play the role
Of doing what you're told.

Great eyes see nothing
Behold no labyrinth, no maze
Great ears hear nothing—
Only hands that do
And feet which serve to carry through
The blinding haze.
No mirror, no action
Can teach or define
The needed, nurturing force
To fill the vacuum being
Or link the umbilical line
To what you will not know as seeing.

The age of reason,
Much scholarized for rationality,
Flourished while elegant
Slave ships splashed away at sea.

You move among the urinals
With the chlorinated mop
Til the time presses a button
Marked “lunch”, “rest”, “stop”.
Tuesdays at two till six, you are
Fueled, found good
For more and polished
Like antique maple wood.

Anita's Swinging Weekend Father

Anita's swinging week-end father drops
From the heavens fully spawned by the
Cold conjurings of abstract, deathly Zeus.
Above a motorcycle he raises his hard
Thighs, and plagues of brimstone cover
The land until the seventh hour. At his
Biddings lightning will strike. At his
Biddings will resound the decibels of mad
Thunder like shreds of singing Orpheus.

A Siamese cat, daintier than these doings,
When she hears,
Climbs onto a window sill
And puts two paws into her ears.
A yellow flower
Ripe from sun,
Closes tighter than a nun.

All week-end long his glass-covered eyes
Will shade away his sight.
All week-end long he will exorcise
The grey devils of summer quiet,
Scattering ungainly swine to seas of blight.
Beneath the slow glow of a dented halo
He takes Anita for a ride,
His face muter than evil;
She glues her love into his side.

Up San Juan and down, over Kilimanjaro's snow,
He, Dead-eye Dick of the Asphalt,
Ropes in the dog-days of summer.
Off he is to paradise in one of god's countries, past
The goose-stepping priests, past the old mermaids
Whose breasts are scales and whey. He breaks their slumber,
Burns into the criss-crossed stones curses for his wife's

Womb. Already, again, ripe-fallen against his grandiosity.
She, too, clings to the part of him she knows—
This one, god-fested and Pharoah tall—
And leans into this movable, agile wall.

The Jolly Fat Widows

The jolly fat widows

(mistresses to jesus
and other kinds of
virgins)

know
the value of green
stamps and patience.
for this time, they rake
the lawns casually
with now and then
a good word
for the lord.

old sophistication keeps their faces
immobile, still
with passion remote as stone
speaking nothing through
time to come, through time gone.
old blood which knows the uses
of anger and of lust
is quiet, deliberate—chooses
an old elegance which surpasses
the horror of the days.

The jolly fat widows in genteel ire
mock the caricatures of the time,
sit on old rockers, dress long,
plant plastic flowers, and
crockery dogs.

The jolly fat widows look for clues within the maze
and watch signs
and wonders; they mock the
haze, lament and shout
the terror of the days
except for now and then
a good word for the lord.

Thick Carpets Climb My Legs

The thick carpets are synthetic
and furry as private parts.
I take off my shoes; they climb
my legs like ivy
with webs and paws.
the thick carpets
have soft claws.

The thick carpets are flowing in the veins
of fragile women and their children, nesting
inside their bones.

They are like those flaming plants
which feed on living flesh. When the rooms
are sleeping,
the thick carpets swoop upon
the people and lift them
through mischievous skies; whirl them
through gigantic eddies and floods.
whenever they awake, they land in other
dreams laid wall to wall.

The "Affluent" Woman

with orange hair
and almost-Pucci dress
askes me with a stare
and
what for her
is probably a
smile
where I'm from.
China and silver glimmer in the room.
and
what for her
is probably
charm
designed to equalize and disalarm
(everybody tries hard on this side
of town—)
I don't smile. I let her grin
and
take me in;
my own hair
my own skin,
Because
I'm not her cook.
I'm not her singer.
I'm not her friend.

The By-the-day Ladies

the by-the-day ladies
climb the bus
too tired for ritual
or civil fuss
they soul being deep
in original human credence.
they smell of crisco and lemon wax,
or bergamot oil and Sulfur 8
or ironburnt hair
to glossy straight.
living for them is care worn
in fragments of survival;
cook their food
make their beds
spin a kind world within their heads.
old clothes will be given—
things outgrown
for the new generation of children.
new crumbs
for a new age.
the by-the-day ladies
voiceless in hell
have not got the time
to raise a yell.
their black hearts faint
and raise no ire—
black hearts primed
for sacrificial fire.
take the governors at they word
and, sunday, shout,
with, now and then, a good song for the lord.

Vigil

In all the doors
Like spuds or spores
Stand the young and
 Gifted whores

 In two's and three's and four's.
 Like soft, lost birds on cold grey wood
 On asphalt sullen shores
 they stood.

They did not look at anything,
Their faces closed but bright as sores.
But still they stood
On tip toes, not leaning once (to lean?)
Cool and full of dignity,
They stood.
They did not flinch.
They stood
In all the doors.
They stood, the young and
 Gifted whores.

And now and then
A red light from a limousine
Or such, a soft call from
A stranger, cruising slow—
Quick whispering
Or silence from quick doors
Or need
To the young,
The young and
 Gifted whores.

Quick, quick, quick
 Instant

It must be done
And done and done
Until it is undone.
The motors rise; the moment's gone.

Quick sink the feet
To moving, furnished floors
 that

Pluck

 the wings
 off the young,
 the hopeless young and
 Gifted whores.

Joy, joy,
 Some peace of bread,
 Some peace this rhapsody
 Upon the stone.

For birds bring paradise.
 To shoe the feet.
 Make use of night.
 Make gold before
 The silver of the dawn.

Wake up wise.
 From the mean
 and sacrificial doors
Where
 Stand the young and
 Gifted whores.

The Woman Who Ate The Rain

John Gillespie's Poem

Who would not say
She was insane?
She truly would hoist
The window pane
And lean outward
And lick the rain.
She smacked her lips.
She rolled her eyes
She turned her whole
face up in smiles.
She stood on tip-toe.
She pat her feet.
She moved her tongue
From cheek to cheek.
She lolled her head.
She balled her fist.
She pulled raindrop slowly like licorice.
Her nose was tickled
By rain cotton candy,
Puff Puffs of drops
Quick, light and sandy.
But some felt like rice
And some like cream
But every bit was so-o nice!
The thunder and the
Lightning pounded nails
The bluebells and hollyhock

Were pretty candy pails.
And in a window thrilled
The crazy lady
Drank till she was filled.
Lolly drops she drank
And macaroon, kisses,
Turtles that send the
Tongue into a billion blisses
Clusters and chewy drops
That fell from the sky
In splats and plops.
O the color and the scent
Of rain vanilla,
Of rain peppermint.
O the beigy caramel
The butterscotch that
Swirled and fell.
But there is no way
To keep the rain.
Almost suddenly the
Sun came again.
The crazy lady turned.
Her feasting was through.
All space was dry.
And clear and blue.
Where there was rain
Now there was sun.
In a corner though
She did see one.
One lone cloud sway
Like a scoop on a cone.
Like crystal parfait.

Slowly she watched
But the cloud got small
And small and small
Till it was no bigger
Than a coconut ball.
And it was gone.
The crazy lady then
Closed the window.
It would rain again.
Not cats and dogs!
That was for sure,
But all the dainties
And she made a wish
For one jolly giant
 Strawberry Jellyfish!

August 1, 1978

Dividing Lines

The rich have traits:
 The poor got peculiarities
The rich have modes:
 The poor got style
The rich wear turbans:
 The poor wear headrags
The rich cycle, stroll:
 The poor foot it
The rich have leavings:
 The poor got lefts
The rich have comfort:
 The poor got comefight

Then,
 The rich have tombs:
 The poor got graves.

Black Moses Just Stood By With A Kind Of Twinkle In His Eye

while they auctioned off
his monkey-fur coat
his leopard-fur coat
his zebra-skin coat

looking at the women
and probably making up a song,
watching the scraps and pieces from American
and African jungles.

Black Moses never said a mumblin word,
didn't even frown,
and it was plain to see that he had been all
the way to
and was glad to get on through
The Promise of the Land . . .

Nights

Nights they crouched upon the streets like cougars
Their voices roaring as the storming winds
In the light they flashed beryllium, and always there
Was the fire, the heat rearing skyward from the sidewalks
Turning the coolness of the river into scorch and steam.
Always there was the music burning the ears, drowning the
Heart. There within the jaws of hell there was the grand
Mockery of the essence of song. And their grief and
Emptiness compelled shouting as the living shout
But they were as the dead, walked, thought and spoke
as the dead and dreamed as the dead. Their noise was
Merely silence raging. And Prometheus was born—
The king Phoenix of the seasons of light.

The State & Science

*How can you keep
the thieves from your houses—
yourself in chains?*

Physical Science Poem

Twenty years before a child
is
conceived
in
the flesh,

It

is
born
in
the mind.

This thought is called
heredity

The Beasts of America

The beasts of america are disguises
Which the people wear. If you look close
Enough you will see little children lost
In their gray hair.

Under the navy blue of Tuesday you
Will note a once cowboy with a kerchief
At his throat.

Behind each facade,
 that is, behind the terror
 of the hard country are the
 people budding like fruits
 and flowers, and like these,
 one morning they will come
 full bloom and such a beauty
 will be born. Such a beauty, it
 will astound like first dawn.
take my word, take my word . . .

America Always Oils Its Slaves

“Miss Monroe”

“Miss Monroe”
Fitted to flaxen ideal
Lipped upon lips,
 is glossy—

America

always oils its slaves
until they shine:
It is the thing one expects
A young nation to do,
and when a particular glow appears,
the auction blocks are readied.
Bucks and wenches keep an angry
 shine—fierce glow—

And so Miss Marilyn, in glossy print
is whiter than a black child's tears,
Her pale sorrows so sharp they glitter
 exhilaration,
And there she is:

Prime Target.

There she is six inches from
A styrofoam gorilla,
chained by his plastic leg,
his teeth glared in a plastic growl,
And there he is,
dwarfing the plastic men
who stare at him.
For there he is.

“Miss Monroe,” too.

See how animation camouflages
the pain in living eyes.

The living always turn
photographs of the dead away.
tuck them in hard-to-reach,
seldom-
seldom-bothered places-
so they don't spit into their faces.

Or they, dead, gather
around the dead
and shake their chains
To try to make
Them
dance.

A Ghetto Called Africa

Where foreign forms cannot intrude.

Where

the lucky buzzard black as night

Hovers in his circling flight.
the holy crocodile in deep
Rich dark mud falls asleep

Where foreign forms dare not intrude.

In the Ghetto called Africa

black sighs
black eyes
black whys
black thighs
black gulls

black bark
black shark
black ark
black dark
black forever -
Where foreign forms cannot intrude.

black flood
of black blood
 black boom
of black drum
 black bloom
of black 'mum
 black beat
of black feet
 black start
of black heart -

In the Ghetto called Africa
Where foreign forms dare not intrude.

Every bongo
of the jungle
Throbs the freedom of the congo
Sings
 the freedoms
 from the lakes and rivers
 running to the high
 ancestral hill
 from the sealed lips of Free Town
 to the streets of Brazzaville —
 In the Ghetto called Africa.

Black trunk
of black trees
Black honey
of black bees
Black goats
for black cheese
Black wheat
for black bread
Black ferment
to black mead
Black ice
for black wine
Black melon
In black rind —! !
 In the Ghetto called Africa.

Black doctor
for black health
Black gold
for black wealth —
Where foreign forms dare not intrude

Black souls

of black folk
Black head
of black Nok
Black laughter
For black joke
Black fury
And black smoke
 Of all things rich in foreign forms
 Where foreign forms dare not intrude

Black sky
Black heat
Black heart's
Dark retreat
 from all things foreign in their forms
 Where foreign forms do not intrude
 In the Ghetto called Africa.

Without bums
 or slums
 or leaders
 lying teeth and gums

With black hope
Without dope
Or social slope
Or lost black hearts
Who veer and grope

 in the lostness of foreign forms
 Where foreign forms do not intrude

In the Ghetto called Africa
Where foreign forms are halted
At black borders by black eyes
At black borders by black minds
At black borders by the spirits
Of the black ancestors pleading . . . ! !

By the black ancestors dreaming . . . !!
By the black ancestors cursing . . . !!
In the Ghetto called Africa
In the black Ghetto called Africa
In Africa the greatest of the
Black Ghettos
In the Africa the blackest of the
Black Ghettos
In Africa the longest of the
Black Ghettos
In Africa the widest of the
Black Ghettos
In Africa the deepest of the
Black Ghettos
In Africa the highest of the
Black Ghettos
In Africa the strongest of the
Black Ghettos
In Africa the loudest of the
Black Ghettos
In Africa the purest of the
Black Ghettos
In Africa the heart beat of the
Black Ghettos

Where foreign forms do not abide
Where foreign forms do not intrude

So black is the blackness
of this black Ghetto
That none can go
Beneath it

So dark is the blackness
of this black Ghetto
That none can go
Around it

So black is the blackness
of this black Ghetto
That none can go
Through

Who are foreign in form
Or who, over ancestor bonds, would intrude.

Pass the torch of blackness:
Give the high signs and the low:
Kiss black kisses of black life:

Noir
Negro
Darky
Sambo
Spade
Noir
Mammy
Negro
Sambo
Ainty
Noir
Blackamoor
Colored People
N'gros
Black

Where foreign forms do not intrude
Where foreign forms cannot abide.

Black winged lucky buzzard
Hovering in the black sky
Black winged lucky crow
Hovering in the dark sky
Starlings from America
Fleeing from the wrath and wry
Death makers' dream —

Black!
In the Ghetto called Africa.
Black Ghetto
Black Neighborhood
Where foreign forms cannot abide
Where foreign forms do not intrude.
Black Ghetto
Black Neighborhood.

In the Ghetto called Africa
The memory of black
Art
Medicine
Law
Government
Crafts
Endure free of foreign forms.
In the Ghetto called Africa.

The black soil
is the black Mother
The black soil
is the black Mother
The Mother loosened
From foreign chains
Foreign legs must not bestride
The black ancestral Mother
Black Mother
Foreign arms must not
Embrace her
Foreign greed must not
Deface her
The black ancestral Mother
Black Mother:
Africa.

Black are the lips of Africa
Black are the eyes of Africa
Black the genius of Africa

Black are the feet of Africa
Black the belly of Africa
Africa the
Black womb
Where foreign forms cannot abide
Where foreign forms dare not intrude

Virility
Black
Fertility
Black
Africa Renew
Africa Renew
Africa
Rebirth
Renew
Fertility
Virility
Black
Africa Renew

All forms devoid of foreign forms
All purified from foreign forms

Make blackness black
Black as the blackness of blackness
Blacker than the blackest of blackness
Blackest of the blackest of blackness.

Africa — ! Renew!
Africa — ! Renew!
Africa — ! Renew!
Africa — ! Renew!

Blackness
Strong
Blackness

Wise
Blackness
Clean
Blackness
Sane
Blackness
Spiritual

In the Ghetto of the Blacks
called Africa.

In the Black Ghetto
called Africa
In the Heaven of the Negro
called Africa
In the paradise of the Blackness
of Blackness
called Africa
In the land of ancestral bones
called Africa
In the neighborhood of
racial memory
called Africa
In the land where fathers died
called Africa
In the land of prime pride
called Africa
In the Black Ghetto
called Africa
Where foreign forms must
not intrude
Where foreign forms must
not
abide.

AFRICA: BLACK: FOREVER AFRICA.

The State's Boy in the State's "Dress Blues"

Obscure, pimpled
like the
presence of the state,
his patent-leather shoes
glistening
in the littered streets.

And
in the stores being
subtly obvious
around the TV sets and leather coats
chained to each other
like prisoners going to
work on Government projects.

If the store cannot stop
the thieves
with the help of the State
how can you keep
the thieves from your houses—
yourself in chains?

The State's Boy in the State's Dress Blues
is sparkling—
a sequin
among chars

Facism

was invented by monkeys:

The hungriest monkey
climbed highest
for the biggest

 banana—
throwing down smaller bananas
on his way to the top.

The monkeys on the ground
 catch
 and
 peel

 peel
 and catch
 without end
 from
 force of habit—

Forget about the top
 Banana—

Never see
Never ask
Never listen:

 catch
and

 peel
 peel
 and catch

When That Which Is Perfect Is Come (Or, On The Neutron Bomb)

When that which is perfect is come

 Serfdom
 is forgot
For who would be
 a slave

to anyone? Who
Would be a slave
or remember what
it meant to be a

Slave?

Casualty?

To remember serfdom

in Europe

is a burden
impossible to bear.
the sweating, the grunting,
the sackcloth and ashes,
the absences of things
that glimmer, things
that shine—
a heavy burden—

You struggle for Things
that the King nor the queen
Nor the duke, nor the Lord
Nor the priest, nor the count—
Nor the warriors or knights
 can come, demand, and
 take
away from you.

The memory of serfdom is leaden
in the fragility of quiet
blood,
rigid, doomed
to watchfulness
in green places.

Pain and
fearfulness lurk and
prey upon the
Stored
memoirs
of the blood.

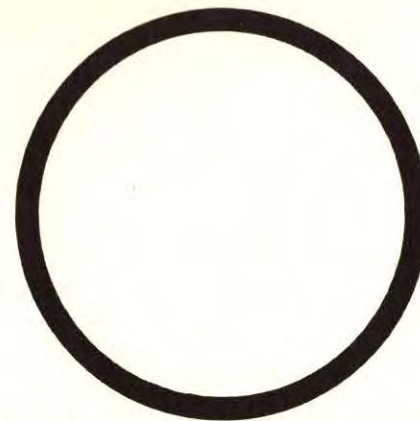
A slave is one who is not free.
corpse.
You invent: Things things
things things things things
things things things things
things things things things

to be Killed for
to be Killed over
to be Killed by
Things things things things
O

Pod.
Body.
You do not matter.
You devise: things things things
things things things

things things

You sell: things



You buy: things

You create: Things

X

X

X

Things
That laugh at you

And haunt you
cripple you

maim you
 gas you
 burn you
 scold you
 cut you
 trample you
 crush you
 blind you
 choke you
 smother you
 Jail you
 drop you
 Make you itch
 or sneeze
 or
 gag
 or cry
 or
 buy
 or
 die
 buy
 or
 die
 Things that demand
 to be
 lifted
 pushed folded
 folded
 hung up
 put down

Wound up
 Watered
 poured
 stirred
 baked
 pulled painted
 cleaned or
 peeled
 smoothed out
 pushed out
 shut
 opened
 dumped
 Charged
 cemented rented indented
 driven
 Weeded
 and that never say
 "Thanks".
 Or cry for you
 or mourn for you
 or
 Kiss your kindness,
 that
 laugh at you behind your
 Back
 or
 to your slave face—
 dripping
 faucets

creaky doors
squeaky chairs
scratchy baskets.

That rot your teeth
stain your gums
twist your ankles
cramp your toes
poison your skin
raise your blood
stone your bladder
blind your eyes
break your back

Things.

They drop on your toes

Fall on your house

Go off accidentally

Spill

Evaporate
Congeal

dry up

tear
totter
rip
burn

shatter

melt
explode

Mild-dew

rust

rot

Sometimes
it happens that

Things
are Kings
and
Who are you?

To remember the King's house
Palatial

And all the

Things

he kept

How does scorned blood
forget?

For Santa Claus must come
And Easter Bunny come
And birthday party come
And inheritance may come
And Trick or Treat must
come

O Holy Piñata

And

Horn of Plenty

come

And forever virgin soil

Where no king dares

Nor priest
Nor duke
Nor lord

Nor Prince
Nor Queen
Nor Sir
Nor Squire
Nor Robber Baron.

But to be King
or Kingling!

old blood remembers.
You play among the King's
old

things:
Bowls and chalices
Swords and crowns
Wands
scepters
Map
and guns

Moats

M A G I C

of silver gold brass

and pearl

of ruby emerald

and

Jade.

Ermine the rodent
Mink the rodent
Leopard the cat
Sable the cat

and

foxes' tails
monkeys' tails
Horsehair
Camel's
hair. Cob.

Oh the things of Kings.

Things
the King's bad breath
breathed on
Seats the royal backside
sat upon
Things the King's bloody
hands
touched
Things the King's moronic mind
wandered around.

King!

The role model lives.

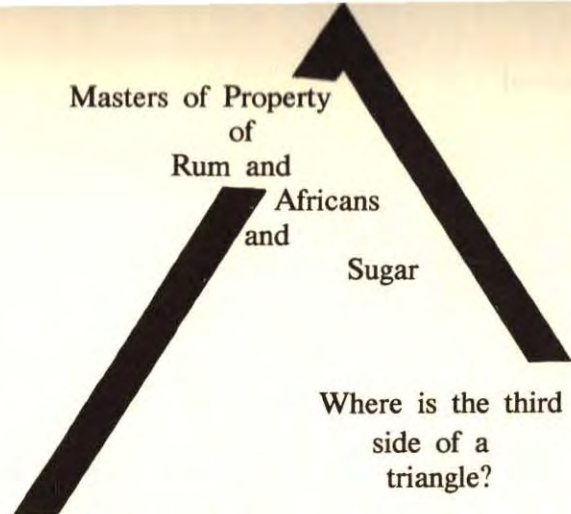
Long live the master.

Serfdom lives.

Irish charwoman
Welch shriver
Hungarian thief
Wandering jew
Angels

and

Romans.



What is a mind.
What is a dream.
Is this real?
Is this reality?

What is the reality?
Is it a fact?
Gimme facts. facts. facts.

No There is
THING
(Like) the



PROPERTY

Caribe.

tax tax tax
Token Token Token
tax tax tax
0 0 0
tax tax tax
PROPERTY

My things

Don't touch that!
Do
Not
Walk
On
The
Grass

Keep out!

Do
Not
drink
the
Water

NO.

Leave my things alone!

No

Give me my thing.

I lost something.

My whatchama call it!

That uh uh uh uh.

My whatchamajig.

A few things

A Thing for everyplace

A

O

For Every Thing.

A lot of things.

N O

Something
Anything
Everything
The worst thing
The best thing
The only thing
Nothing
One thing.

Blue thing
Brown thing
Black thing
Green thing
Red thing
Yellow thing
Pink thing

Long thing

short thing

big thing

small
thing

Tactic

Sacred thing

ignoble thing

That.

It.

Who broke my ????

Where did I put my ????

O

Have you seen a _ _ _ _ _?

Did you find a _ _ _ _ _?

Some **O**

Stole my **O**

She killed him for a

He killed her for a **O**

He was robbed of a **O**

A **O** was found side
the Victim.

- Pursesnatcher
- Shoplifter
- Embezzler
- Poacher
- Trespasser
- Jaywalker
- Artisan

Streetwalker

Carpetbagger

guard

security officer

Housekeeper

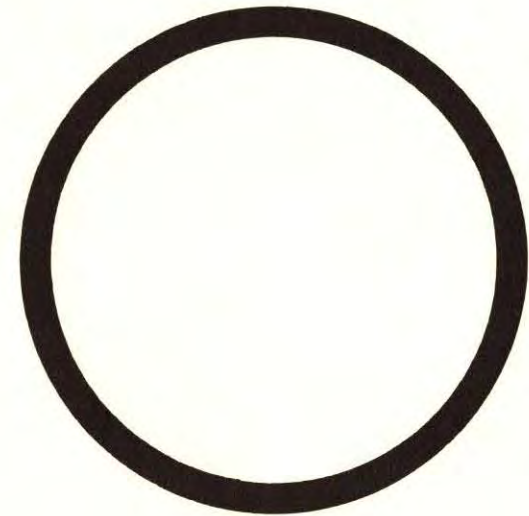
Teller

shriver

Machinist

Rod.

Villain.



Heir Looms

- gadgets
- whatnots
- junk
- garbage
- left overs
- products

conversation pieces
remnants
tidbits

items
gim-micks
residuals
put-ons

Gross dross

loss

Moss

Disease of serfdom

Memoir of tribal blood

sing Babylon

power

strength

fear

physical

mechanical

Brutal

fear

lost


proud

fear

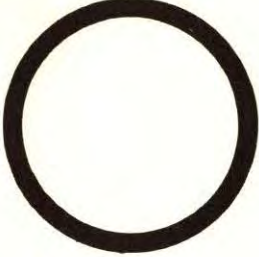
SKY limit

0 0 are equal to O

2 4 6 8

My  Nod. Hell No fear
right or

Save

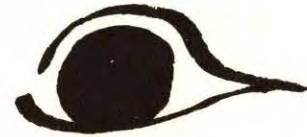
Let the whole 

go

to




As long as



Get

My **X**

There was once Man
And he walked on
Feet.

But 
this is a new

and **X** **X**

makes all **X** new

and NEW

is

New
X

X

New

X

latest

in

new
X

new

Improved
X

Updated
X

New

New
X

Improved
X

X

Upgraded

Hybridized

Sod

Clod

New

New

Things

SOMETHING

New

IMPROVED

Perfected

Free at last _____

New

New

Thing:

n

e

u

t

r

o

n

Thing that the King

Nor queen nor duke nor
Lord Nor Prince Nor Czar
Nor Kaiser
Nor Emperor
Nor Chief
Nor Knight

Majesty highness grace

Nor priest

Nor count Nor the

Can take away

from

Indians

*. . . now that there are
So few of them . . .*

There Must Have Been Some Indians

There must have been
Some Indians here and there
who lived with a haunting wish
That the tribe would survive
And watching closely their fellow
Indian beings, must have longed
For some act, some force, or
Plan more enduring than the
Stupification on Indian faces, and
The frowns of isolation upon
Indian brows which were signs
That none of the tribes would
Ever be themselves again, but
Merely wait out the time between
The whirlwinds of certain extinctions.

Those quiet Indians who
Lost their laughter and did
Not smile any longer at any
Other Indians must have thought
Those other Indians were hopeless
And dumb and useless and
Taking up space, and in the
Way of energy and broader enterprise.

Perhaps a part of them even
Believed the unblooded strangers
In their fiery paleness could
Do better by the Land
Than people it with spirits
And *drum* beats of ancestor lore.

There are always Indians
At the edges of the tribes
Scenting doom, whether they

Choose or do not choose
To mention what they smell.
At almost all times, these Indians
Are smirked or shouted down;
Sometimes they are nuisances to
Be chastised; sometimes they are
Ignored. Often, it is felt that
They are worth a good laugh
And no more. For it is
Plain as sand that they are on
Homeground and take statistical
Care to outnumber everybody,
Including, certainly, the eagles,
The mice and the buffalo.
As anyone can see whose seeing
Has tribal sanctification. And
Anyone can see the medicine
Man for weeding out of inner
Conflict and anxiety neurosis.
How comes any invisible takeover?

For there are always those
Who think that you will
Know your enemy by something
Strange about his face or you
Will know him because he is
Completely strange and some kind
Of novel experience, like a
Turquoise and copper pendant for
The chief. So, there is not
Any warning for the doomed,
Though usually the men go
First, and fall apart in squads.
They lose some inner power,
A stillness like confidence, and
The women turn away from them.
The children stop answering when

They are called and they look
Past the eyes of the elders into
Some forever green unborn.

If there are any children.

And if there are neighbors,
None borrow from any other
Neighbor. That is the defeat
Of everything burrowing inward.
A kind of satiety. A wish
Beyond a wish that it was all
Over and done with. Whatever it is.
That the megaton troubles of
Things would simplify. A clean
Slate, a cleansing ordeal by
Ashes.

And then there must be
Those to ask the questions,
To get into the Indian
Mind now that there are
So few of them and
Some green-eyed and schemy
And Violently energetic — Now.

Other Indians

There must have been some Jews
Who lived with a haunting wish
That the ghettos would renew themselves
The ghettoes would rise from rubble
And hopelessness and pain
That the curious high smokiness
Over the streets would disappear.
The smog was horrible. There were
Shapes in it as in clouds. And some
Jews must have felt that the smog
meant more than it did mean,
Some must have seen the
Quality of the onimous hanging about
The tops of trees and falling
Downward into the noon snow.
There are always those who know
Whether they say so or not.

Those brooding Jews with feelings
On edge. those not reading books
Or newspapers on buses or train,
But watching side-eyed at the
Blankness of disdain of those who
Already had overwhelmed something
Within, perceiving in mute ways
That disaster waited and could
Not be averted. And these Jews
Could see Death in Plague
Spreading across Jewish brows and
Round the smiles of playful boys,
Death in the faces of the
Jews who never really looked at
Other Jews, but made a
Ritual of their music, their
Art and their clothes.

Marie Tallchief, Ballarina

Full-blooded Indian
It was always written of her.
One of the many escaped complete.
The one who is most herself.
In her wholeness she has the
Burningness of the flamingo.
She is swift as the wise burnt fox.
 Nothing heavy pulls her down.
 Nothing vacuous hungers at
 The core of her.
 She is most herself.

She is fire
The old blood burns in her
Fierce beauty.
On the stage, the soul
Rises through the ash of time.
From the past and all
The times to become.

The old buffaloes are dancing.
Deer are dancing.
Wildflowers are dancing.
The children are dancing
The elders are dancing
Pain is dancing. Joy is dancing.
Music is dancing. Music is dancing.
Life is dancing. Life is dancing.
The crowd of the Earth
 is dancing.
The blood of the crowd is dancing
Peace is dancing. Peace is dancing.
Death is dancing. Death is dancing.
Love is dancing. Love is dancing.

The room, the room, the room, the room
is dancing.

The silver lights are dancing.

Music is dancing. Music is dancing.

The ceiling is dancing.

The stage, the stage, the stage, the stage
is dancing.

The night is dancing.

The sky, the sky, the sky, the sky
is dancing.

The stars are dancing.

The oceans are dancing.

Forests all are dancing.

The moon, the moon, the moon, the moon
is dancing.

All

Molecular form is dancing.

Dance

is dancing

In the farthest North

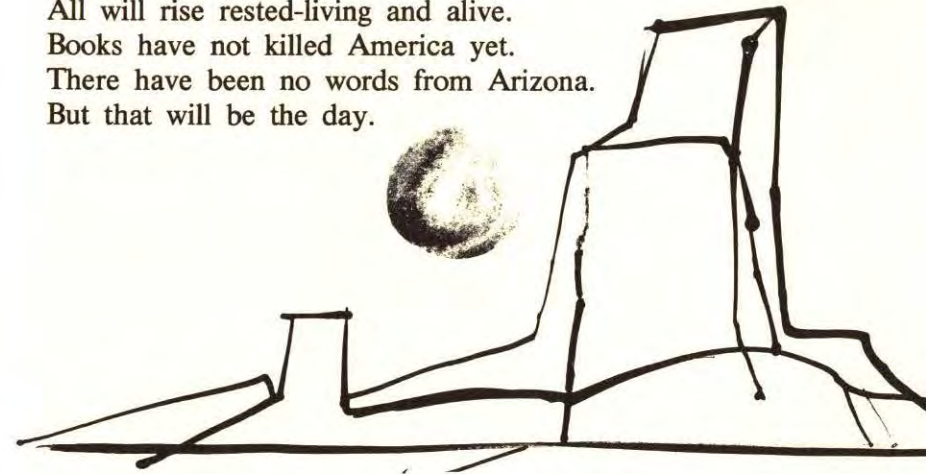
Snowflakes unformed are dancing.

And tropic places are standing
on tip-toe in

The dancing blood.

Inertia

One of these exhausted days
Everybody in America is going
To sit down in the middle of
Life and wait for the return
Of the Indians, or the return
Of some old tribe that even
Impotent old library-mongers
Do not remember. One of these
Nine to five trap doors will fly
Outward to knock the clock-keepers'
Eyes out. Then the blind will
Refuse to march in step or in tune.
Then the Time Axed people of
This great sprawling, fog-joy land
Will stand up on their four
Fore legs and breathe, for the
First time, deep and free. nobody
Has breathed deeply in America for
A long time. All are exhausted.
But on the great Sitting Down morning
Or evening or Noon time or night,
All will rise rested-living and alive.
Books have not killed America yet.
There have been no words from Arizona.
But that will be the day.



Nature

*. . . chasing with hopeful nets
all manner of things divine.*

The Sierra Juniper

it was explained, lived to be a thousand year
old wonder. It stood straight with no bending
or twisting of its vertebrae, no grotesque
grasping or posing, no scowling of the limb,
no scraping or bowing, no sorrowing.
The sierra juniper caught rain in cups of
leaves, it sheltered birds and insects
for centuries in rows without complaint,
it dropped seedlings to the ground and drew
canopies over beasts and man and lesser plants
who themselves had no affinity for Sun.

Among the xylum, phoelum and photosynthesis
must lay a force unseen
a grandeur higher more profound than
the sky-bound lovely green
of the eternal Sierra Juniper.

Day Rising

wheow wheow
Birds
in
wheow
wheow
Trees
early early sing.

The people go to work.

green
green
early
sing

the sun has blinked the universal eye,
humanity the sacred body has awakened
to the dayrise with a cry

and
hello
'morning'
wheow
hello
'morning'
wheow.

Things We Wish Onto Animals

that they are worse
that being upright in structure
and nearer to the sun at the noonhour,
something in us would be everlastingly
excellent and chasing with hopeful nets
all manner of things divine.

eat like a dog—which never has to diet,
or tells in speech “I eat what I want to
and then, I put my fingers into my throat
and the rest is a perfect size eight.”
Animals, that went two by two and after forty
days returned not slaughtered or divorced or
locked up for being caught with gun or knife,
animals, that will lie in the sun all morning
and not crave to unearth bones of contention
or slobber smoke in a neighbor's face, will not
with silver kiss betray the trust in self or
set a sow's ear to catch a silken name.
animals whose birthright has no philosophy or
poetry or jabbering of the churches in god's
workable old enduring scheme.

beastly-meaning Them
-meaning Them . . .
whorehound

bloodhound

The lord my shepherd is.

What can be expected of ordinary sons
of MAN?

Gene

in the beginning was the land
and the land was with man and the land was man,
and without it was not anything made that was made.

Mustard Seeds

I believe
although

I did not burn the incense
or spread the prayer rug
or light the seven candles . . .
None of the miracle water have I drunk.
And I have not been obsessed with directions
for cursing the living or the dead.

The Moon Is An Ashstone

The moon is an ashstone
A wanderer, a predator.
Cold moon. Warm face of you.
I wait by the moonshowered window
Till the falling of the dew.
My heart will not leave the window,
My heart cannot leave the window;
My heart is quieter than lead.
The shadows that move behind
The trees
Are making a shadowy bed—
They move strong with grace
Like you.
But they are not you.
None of them are you.
My heart moves slow as lead.
The moon is an ashstone.

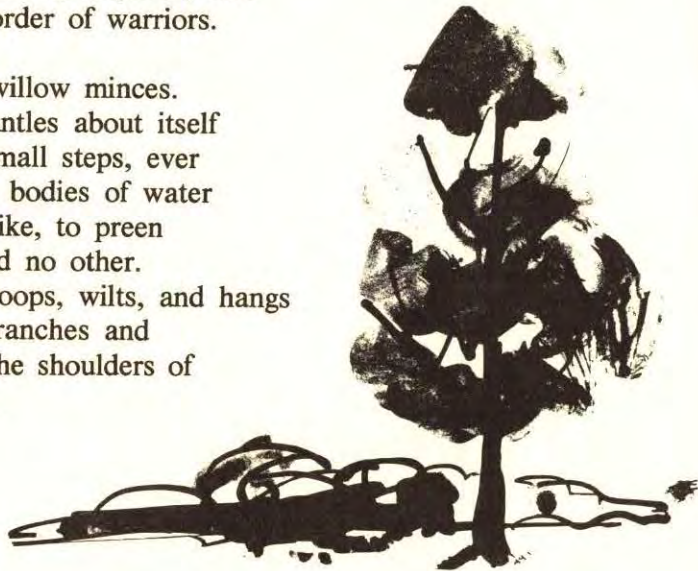
Notice From God

The sun will rise
Tomorrow at dawn.
If you do not speak English
The sun will rise
For You
In Your
Native language.

Trees

Some trees, standing in groves
have people inside them holding
meetings,
some trees have people locked
and braced in love.
a pine tree is a gigolo—
notice the scent—always the best
mouth wash,
the best sheen of green shirt,
the tallest, straightest back,
the gentlest arms.
and do not even speak of oaks.
they know the game, get better
and better and better at it.
they are the rugged type, born rough
and with no tender shoots.
they stand alone, majestic, and
are of the order of warriors.

a weeping willow minces.
it draws mantles about itself
and takes small steps, ever
looking into bodies of water
Narcissus-like, to preen
for itself and no other.
it weeps, droops, wilts, and hangs
with limp branches and
leans over the shoulders of
timid types.



birches are adolescent boys,
standing taller than their heights
suggest, in groups, boasting and
leaning from the hips like cowboys.
skin breaking out in spots,
set restlooking on sharp terrain,
not complete in form or
individuality, in mode not plain.

maples are pregnant, the madonna trees
sugary motherhood enough
splash with quick, self-denigrating leaves
which are russet and reticent.
against the enthusiastic and the rough
they stand, making nurturement.
some trees are courtesans, some
whores, some priests and nuns.
but most are men:

statesmen, sentries, chiefs
granduncles, foremen and
lovers. there are people
in them. from time out of
record, memory, or mind.

The Panda Bear

The Panda Bear

In his cage sits.
All day he picks
at the hairs of his body.

This is his song:

black black black black
 black
 black Black
 black
 black black
 black.

This is his song:

white white white white
 white
 white White
white
 white white
 white.

That is the best that the bear
Can do. The clumsy, stupid Bear.
He sits. He eats. He sleeps. And
his whole body is turning
a golden hue. The Panda Bear.

Corn Poem

Beneath the city are fields
of corn, and the corn is yellow
And grows green through golden
Teeth. The corn smiles and
Pushes; it intends to knock the
Foul buildings down. Already, it
Is lifting autos and railways
By their roots. The yellow corn
Has stopped the trolleys in their
Electric tracks. It has scattered
The wine bottles nestled down
For darkness in the parks. The
Yellow corn has tripped up
The drunkards in the parks.
Already, the tassels of corn are
Growing around children's ears.
The Yellow corn already topples
The stores of goods out onto
The streets. The mannikins stare
out like crazy people. The corn
Fields set them up for scarecrows.
The cornfields are growing up through
Drainpipes and manholes; they
Are leaning against piles of debris
and junkpiles. The corn is awake
And listening. Its golden ears
Are close to its head.
In rows like sentinels and
Soldiers. The corn is certain of its
Terrain. The cornfields are relentless.
The cornfields are tossing their heads
In the moonlight. The cornfields
Are coming up through the stones.

On clear days the rivers give
Back their images to the cornfields.
The cornfields are rising through
The cracks in the streets. They
Play hopscotch and leave the
Children freely smiling and
The men and women tender in
Their hearts. The cornfields play
Jump rope under the basement floors
Of the elegant buildings. If you
Listen you can hear the wind
In the long leaves in the sunlight,
Reaching like kindred,
Careful arms. The cornfields are
Removing the grass. They are
Removing the silly flowers from
The sour parks. They are rolling the
Sickened people to the thousand
Feasts of the vital corn. The sickened
People are resting into health and action.
The cornfields are bending in the dust
To bless the men, women and children.
The cornfields are golden with joy.
They have lifted the cacti from the
Pots of stone. They have bent the
Replicas of corn which the hungry
People could not swallow.
The cornfields bless the hungry
People who are dry rot and
The true rodents of the stinky
Cities. The cornfields are blessing
The children beyond the third
Generation. The cornfields are blessing
The lost soil which coddled

Beneath the cities and slept and
Was thought to have died.

The cornfields are forging lost
Pennies and dimes into diesel blades.
There has never been so much
Fresh blue air to breathe. The
Greedy people want to breathe
All the good air at once.
It was thought that air had died.
Hope is the yellow of the
Subtle moon upon the corn.
The blue and yellow and red and
White corn wave their bannered
Arms over the dark fields.
It was once thought that flags
Were symbols of close-minded evil.
Tasselled flags are the green leaves
Of corn. Yellow is the joy.
It was once thought that joy
Was smiles in the absence of
Screams. And those who used to say
"Save Our Screams"— Long live the corn.

Prose Poems & Other Poetry

Mr. Taylow washed his hands and set out plate, knife, jelly and loaf of bread. He opened the bread cautiously. Then he jellied a slice of bread.

Shooting The Big Hookey

Mr. Taylow bent over to look out the front window. It was what was called a "picture window." It framed the outside view until it was like a picture out there. Like a T. V. set. Or the picture window gave way to T.V. sets. It didn't make any never mind with Mr. Taylow. He didn't watch T.V. much. He liked the radio.

Mr. Taylow was half-hidden by the window curtain. He wanted to stay hidden in case somebody passed by on the sidewalk. He was trying to get a real good view because the Senior Citizens Activity bus was coming soon and he wanted to see it stopped and blowing for him, and then moving on again. He thought he might get a big laugh out of that.

Today was Everybody-Born-In-June Birthday Celebration. The celebration was always held on the first day of the month and today Mr. Taylow was seventy-six. He had been feeling good. He felt good until he had started to wonder how a number got stuck onto his life. Then, he felt bad. He thought that he had nothing to prove that he was old, not even the old stand-bys like arthritis or creeping glaucoma. How was it that he was seventy-six? He felt that he had been cheated. The number of his seasons was calculated from all the numbers piled up in places throughout the city, country, state and nation. And not just his number but numberless numbers. Figures such as wild beast might pile up. So he was stuck fair and square with the number seventy-six. He crouched again, but there was no bus.

After the party, there was to be a picnic in the yard of the Home. The celebration was three years old. Mr. Taylow went the year before. It was then that he decided that he would not go again. They could say that he was old. They could attach figures to his life but they could not require him to go anywhere. He owned his own home and he had always held jobs.

The bus came, and stopped. Mr. Taylow held his head back. He could barely see. Then, the driver blew the bus horn. Loud. He blew the horn again. Mr. Taylow pulled his gums back. The driver blew the horn a third time. The sound of the horn blowing

made Mr. Taylow feel good. He started to laugh out, but he wanted the business to be carried out in dignity. Like any kind of careful business. The bus was there waiting for him and he was saying no. The driver was waiting. The whole bus was filled with riders. He could see the shadowed upper bodies. It was so funny to Mr. Taylow that he did laugh out very loud. He peeped up slowly to see the bus hard, but he saw the young driver coming up the walkway. He heard the man knock, nearly saw him knocking. He watched the bus. And he saw the back of the driver going back to the bus and up the bus steps.

Mr. Taylow could see some of the short people in the bus, all the heads were even like the bus loads of ninth graders, for seldom were the old tall. Tall people were all pulled down by a constant flow of pleas and guilt. Tall people held doors open: reached the high things: gathered the distant—all for the short. They helped others until they wore themselves out. The short seemed helpless and got help all their lives. Tallness oblige.

Mr. Taylow waltzed around the room. The bus was gone on without him. He felt joyful. He thought that he would have something sweet, something forbidden. He would have a jelly sandwich. He longed for peanut butter, but it would only stick to his gums too much.

Mr. Taylow washed his hands and set out plate, knife, jelly and loaf of bread. He opened the bread cautiously. Then he jellied a slice of it.

The doorbell rang. It was someone he knew well, then. He hesitated, but put the bread down and went to the door. It was Mr. Wode from down the street, and he should have been on the Senior Citizens bus. He was grinning at Mr. Taylow and it annoyed him. The grin made Mr. Wode look sinister. He didn't know what the old man could want, but he could learn after he had opened the door and let him in. The old man did not want anything, he was quick to say. He was stout and his belly stood out as if he had tried to cram it full for a life of hard winters. "You didn't go either? I thought you might not go either." He giggled. The giggle faded into a grin. He sat down.

"It looks, Mr. Wode said slowly—"it looks like we both done shot the hookey."

This broke them up into boyish laughter. They laughed until there were mists in their eyes.

Mr. Taylow said "Naw" he didn't want to go way out yonder and "set on that grassy hard ground to eat all that old mushy mess."

"I either," said Mr. Wode.

Mr. Taylow got a saucer for Mr. Wode. "I'm fixing some refreshment. Have some. Go on and help yourself."

Then, Mr. Wode reached for the saucer and dropped it on the floor where the crack in it fell out and the pieces of it skidded into a mess over the floor.

Mr. Taylow got a broom and swept the glass onto a dust pan. He gave the pan to Mr. Wode to hold, but he dropped it. And he noticed that Wode's hands were shaking horribly. The broken glass began to slide out of the pan and back across the floor. Mr. Wode held the pan with both hands and got on his knees. After some time, they had the floor cleared. Then, they laughed for awhile and made sandwiches.

Mr. Taylow had got another, nicer saucer for his neighbor. He had put it down on the table solidly. Mr. Wode coughed and Mr. Taylow got him a glass of water. This did not stop his cough, but it did not stop his eating either. Suddenly, the older man just sat looking into empty space. That irritated Mr. Taylow. He began to wish for Mr. Wode to get up and go on back to his house where his daughter was. Where his grandchildren could help him to his room.

Mr. Wode sat still. He began to say only "yes" or "no" and his presence was abruptly most unwelcome to Mr. Taylow. Mr. Taylow turned the radio on. He brought out some woodwork he had been finishing, but it did not interest his visitor, either.

"Can I ___?" Mr. Wode was standing, but it was too late. He was peeing in the middle of the room.

"Lord, Man!" Mr. Taylow shouted, but he checked himself. That was a slip. He was not cruel. He was in the way of Fate, too. He showed no scorn, but he was annoyed. His heart was going fast. He got the mop and gave it to Wode, but he was shaking and could not even hold it. He fumbled the mop through the wetness.

Mr. Taylow waited to take the mop outside to hang it up. He sat down on the steps a long time. It was much hotter now, and the air was dense. The picnic was very far from his mind. Mr. Taylow felt as if he had pulled a long shift on a job somewhere, but he had been retired for years. He felt so tired that he leaned against the pillow on the porch swing. He got into the seat slowly and began to rock back and forth.

Something fell into his head. Two things like crusts were breaking in the top of his head and falling down into it. Then something rose up in his chest. He thought that he would cough it out, but it did not move. And he could see many colors—rose and green and gold and silvery blue. He wanted to shout out. He wanted to get up and run. A zeppelin was rising up in him at the center of his chest. It fell and exploded there. It felt like he was crying from his nose. And then everything stopped. He heard the world slowing down and the loudest noise.

Mr. Wode wanted to say that he was going on back home and watch T.V. He came out to say something to Mr. Taylow, to thank him for the refreshment. But when he saw the old man like that, lying with that stare in the eyes and crying from the nostrils, he didn't say anything. He turned and went back through the house as fast as he could go, but very slowly indeed. Very slowly.

And he got to the porch finally and went down the steps and the walkway. He was going to get someone. He had to get someone because he was old and shaking all over and there was nothing he could do except to get someone.

What Donne Meant

said that wretched old thing in her grey dress with the lilies of the valley on the sleeves, what Donne meant said the perverse old thing sitting on the edge of the desk in her mini skirt and her muscled legs straddling Donne: what Donne meant. what Donne meant. what Donne meant. what Donne was "attempting" to say, as he cannot say it and as I myself will speak for him, and as I am not ashamed to sit here and attempt it, I will tell you what all the "qualified" scholars said that he said which they have read that someone else said that he meant which someone said that he meant to have said to have meant. I myself by order of the powers vested in me. I myself having the authority will tell you so that you will be certified to tell others what it was that Doon-Donne meant. We will confer upon you the meaning of what Donne meant, and in due time you will be able to tell others and for that the schools will pay you seven-hundred dollars per class. It will be your "job" to entertain and to mystify. There is something to be said for a mystery.

Mr. Triston

Finally got his pension.
When his wife went to live with her daughter
he stepped onto a rug of blessing
having earned the boyhood allowance
of all his dreams: one can live as cheaply as anyone
Then, the thieves from the city stole one check
and between furies, the old man
had the rural box locked thoroughly
Like an arthritic fist, nothing
could get in and nothing could get out.
The hole in the box, flat as a stuck zipper
Mr. Triston called for his mail in town,
walking every step of the way,
both hands in his pockets.

From the Sixth Floor

The vendors' fruits are like a block of cheerful calico
something merry for a filthy street of a capital city.
Dust is drifting onto the fruit like the pennies
drifting into the blind beggar's cup
on the doorstep of the YMCA
of the hot-blooded capital city.
Pain is gathering around the purple hearts
of young and gifted whores
omnipresent on 14th street of the filthy capital city
Black people are vanishing
in a locust plague of words and deals
a last stand like sitting bull,
with only innocence of arrows in the asphaltting
smog
smog-sanctioned streets.
The vendors' fruits are painted, too
it's said—before they reach the filthy streets
of the low-profile, capital city.
Come and see for yourself. Come and see.

The Common Is Versus The Common Ain't

Mrs. Mellie Morris daughter Annie Mae Morris come home
from college and rode all the way on a airplane and say the
Common Is Party is the way the world is going. It is the future.
There ain't a shadow of a doubt. Black folks got to get in on this.

Mrs. Mellie Morris say "Get in on what? You just leave the
colored people alone. They not bothering you. And black people
is not gettin revolved in no more common mess. They just trying
to live like the good lord want them to do." She say "Black folks
not incited about no come—they been all the time comin—read
your mail right you see—all you hear is *come*:"

"Bro George got the flu—say *come* see him. Mary Lee
Johnson and her husband Robert got a cute baby. *Come* see it.
Alice Williams say her garden growing too fast. *Come* get you
some collards. Sister Clara Tate got the 8-day newmonia. Come
set up with us and her some night. Soon. We hope. The 4th of
July is near bout here. Be sure you *come* and help us enjoy."

But that Annie Mae *keep* right on talking. She say socialize
and be a socialist now.

Brother Leroy say he heard bout that socializing. He say he
thought them durn fools were talking about giving a dance. Say
he come to find out they talking bout puttin the New Nited States
govment in your business. Talking bout shann what you got. You
done worked yourself near bout to death to git and to have a little
something and here come everybody and his ology, to give it to
somebody else. He say just is long is you didn't have a pot, it was
"rise, rise, wild enterprise: scheme, scheme American dream."
Soon is you rake and scrap to get something, here they come.
Socialize. And give some land back to the red Indians.

And Brother Leroy say "If a Indian get these 40 acres he sure
better be pre-pared to take and tote all 40 of them to Oklahoma
or some other nation—and he goin have me and my mule and
tractor on them. It's alright for a person to share his heart and his
kidney or his eyes when he not using them—But—hit ain't no
shann when it come to land."

That gal Annie Mae just looking and keeping her eyes on
Brother Leroy. Bro Leroy just sitting still and giving Annie Mae

that “nother fool done been to school” look. And they just at one another looking and daring.

Sunday morning Annie Mae ready to got to church and say she felt like walking cause the folks in the New Nited States sits too much. So she went on out in the sunshine and walked to church.

Church let out it was raining and wasn't just playing rain. So Annie Mae say to Brother Leroy: “Brother Leroy may we have a ride?” Brother Leroy ain't say nothing. Annie Mae din't never give up at Nothing, so she looking in the Sunday eyes of a church-going, hardworking Brother and she waiting. Brother Leroy looking in the rain. They walking on out to the parking place.

Annie Mae say “Where is *the car?*”

Brother Leroy heard her ask the question and he look and walk. They walking past a new-car-lot and Brother Leroy say: “You see them cars? Them cars ain't been sold to nobody. Everyone of them cars is a “the.” Now *my*—I paid \$4,000 for the car I rides and its a *My*.”

The rain coming and Brother Leroy and Mrs. Mellie get in the front. Annie Mae was let in the back by Brother Leroy. Mrs. Mellie Morris bout to laugh, but she better not. So they sit and ease on to home.

That Christian brother driving on looking in that rain falling on the just and the unjust. And Annie Mae quiet. The common ain't is a whole lot more common than the common is. That's a fact.

And ain't.

May 1977

The Many Worlds We Wander Through

The bridges we jump from
The rivers we drown in

• • • •

The Many Worlds We Wander Through

The many worlds we toss aside
as of no consequence,
those moments we pass
into
and through
as revealing
nothing
of
nothing—
which
is
always
everything
at
all.

The bridges we jump from
The rivers we drown in
The tall buildings' slanted roofs
which lift us off

to . . .

other worlds.
The scream we scream
which we have always
whispered before—
The chill we feel
and quickly brush away
The door we enter through another door
The hell—made faces we remember—
A lion here and there a doe
A fawn glancing in the winter
upon a bouquet
of snow.

The many worlds we pass.
The dawns we pass.
 The noons we pass.
 and night—
 we wander through
The night which is
 grotesque
 as
 loneliness.
Night is a world we
 wander through.

Mr. Jonas

Mr. Jonas
 dresses in black
 but has a car
 to match the brilliant white of his eyes.

 He is quite neat and
 folds his coat into a pleat
 before he takes a chair
 with the grandest of care.

Mr. Jonas is known for dignity
 and wears it on occasions
 which require ties
 and hats or both.

Inflation

When I saw the shelves
Piled high with twenty-three
designs of
dish rags,
twenty-three different designs
of squares of cloth
selling for two dollars each.
Two dollars for strings
In colors of whites and greens
With images of fruit, flowers,
Vegetables and bowls and
types of spoons and slices of
watermelon,
can you
blame me
for
praying for a change?
For
what you call
inflation from
this affliction?

The Mystique of Gomorrah

Where is that glorious city hidden
where is Pompeii?
Where all the good fruits were forbidden
ah, Nineveh.

They say Los Angeles is dying
They daily eulogise New York
where is Pompeii?

Where is San Francisco? Dallas?
Hiroshima has been, has gone; again has come.
ah, Sodom.

In Washington by loose decrees
They exile statesmen and plant trees
ah, Nineveh.

Where is Florence by the sea?
Where is Pompeii? Mysterious Gomorrah?

They say in grief Atlanta stood alone.
A pyre aflame was once eternal Rome.
Where is Pompeii?

The phoenix sits and sits and flits
Its wings and rising, sings
Pompeii, Sodom, and Nineveh
With voice majestic, calmly clear
And bears no heart of yesteryear.
Hiroshima is gone. Hiroshima is gone.
That city lingering in the path of fire.

**While You Are Dust In
An Unmarked Place**

While you are dust
In an unmarked place,
Some of these beasts
 Who helped destroy you,

Zora Neale Hurston

are still here. But your
glory shines around their
 parasite faces, your glory

rises over the theft of your
mind, your language, your places.

 The Judas kisses
 are dried. Your glory

rises.

The mongrel victory was
short and weak. Some
attempts fail. The hiding
places are flooded with light
The mongrel thieves still
Sell us out. Try scorn
in secrecy, but fail.

The masses do rise
With yellow feet and fingers
Upon the throat.

We know this Talented Tenth
Parasite. This Van Guard which
Leads from the rear. This
Soul which takes and struts

And has no mind of its
Own, burrows through others'
Minds and Kills them
If it can. We know now
The soul-begging pseudo-scholars,
Pimp intellectuals,
Who suck our black lives
Conspire to sell our
Black Hearts
To make good appearances
In public places. These
Compromised dregs. These
Big house niggers of the
Latter part of the
20th Century.

 We know now. We know.
 We grow
 From your knowledge and
 What your life revealed to us.
 While you rest, dust
 In an unmarked place.

New Genesis

Let there be light:
One-thousand Watts!

Virtue

The Hawk-fish woman
wears her dresses long
and says she does it for
the sake of virtue, but her
legs are crooked, and her
arms are covered with vicious scars.
and it may be that to cover meanness
is a way of being virtuous or very careful.

Drinking Martyr's Blood

We care on the gleaming Sunday
Mornings

at funeral time
when comes the humped back
hearse

Galloping like a big
buzzard
of chrome.

And we care when the window
drapery is lowered and
the strong men grab
for the frigid stone
of a life which was.

And we sing then, making tears
that brine

on shiny cheeks.

And we moan then and rock
forth and back and back and forth.

But we do not care until
That time

in the church.

We do not care until
That time. We call the name
of the one from time to time
But there's not all that much
In it for us.
What's a leader—more or less?

But we care on the gleaming
Sunday morning
 at funeral time
When comes the humped-back
 hearse
 galloping
 a black chrome
 buzzard.

Promise

 When
 you come back
 there'll be a bigger crowd
 expecting you. There'll be no cup
or cross or stone.

when you

 come
 back.

 all
 the temples will
 be

 g
 o
 n
 e

The money-lending will
 be done.

The thieves will be
 employed

full time. And Herod, even
Will be as he was not before.

 When you come back,
 You will see.
 Come, pause, knock on
 The waiting door.

Night-Blooming Heart

it's wine the silences.
it's the dream at the drunk of the grape . . .
 heart is born
 bursts into blooming in these hours.
i am the cradle which rocks and sings.
i am the gatherer of petals that fall.
arranger of parts for my night-blooming heart.

Darkness

 The children say that they
do not want to be
 too black.
They curl back at the doors
When sun begins.
They send their lighter friends
to do their errands in the sun.
They do not want to be
 too black. Truthfully.
Near sundown you hear them laughing,
the light and the dark
You hear them laughing.

Mack Parker

It seemed that after your death,
After the hounds had drunk
That cup of cannibal blood,
There could not be there would not be
More dying. We thought that death we knew
 So long so well had died, itself had paid
The mortal fine. We thought that violence
Had ended. None among us expected the
Hounds of death to howl wild still at
All hours. We thought that grace had come—
And with the quiet of death bells
We thought we could believe.
We with our borrowed, sleeping gods,
We of the ravished, angry Lands.

The Mid-Night Cups

Midnight tea cups are quiet
And in their white
Sorrow

Like broken wings of broken doves.
They hardly clatter.

There are no voices over them.
They do not glimmer
in the candlelight.

They are not raised
by wistful whim.

Soft cups alone do not matter.

Answers

What is sorrow?

old age and gluttony.

old age and gluttony.

What is old age?

Gluttony and sorrow

Gluttony and sorrow

What is gluttony?

Bread for the heart's pain

Wine for the heart's despair.

Bread for the heart's pain.

Wine for the heart's despair.

Poem To A Poet

It's the season again
And I'm here
Where the international blossoms
Are the oriental touches.
And the crazy house for poets.
(The true punishment would
Be to turn him Loose
And put him on his best behaviour.)
Longfellow has a statue here.
It's green all over and
The pigeons have scribbled
Lower glyphics over it.

I learn one Japanese word
Per month from the Nippon
Daily News. I can draw man,
Mankind or People.

All spring long I've remembered you.
Recalled coming up the coast and
Stopping on rainy Wednesday noons
In libraries where I found
The lovely things you have
Written about my poems.
And so long before anyone
Else read them or took the
Time to write about them.
So, thank you for keeping
My baggage among
your
Oriental lore. China is
Coming in, you know. As
You have always felt,
Or felt before so many did.

Well, Citizen Universe, the cosmic
Is here or the so-called
West is going orgasmic and
Mystic, in time to be overrun
By strangers from the seas
And the skies. Love or
Curiosity can be found not
Far away when people
Make their worst mistakes.

So, Hiroshim
till next time.

Ritual

Do he care
Say do he care
Care?
Do he care?

He don't care.
He don't care?
He don't.
Nah?
He don't.
Say he don't?
Said he don't.

He don't care who rub his back?
He don't care?

Sometimes I takes his chair
And push it to the door
And leave him there
So he can see—this
God-green world
Like you and me.

What he say?
Don't say nothing.
He don't talk?
Nah. He speak.
I speaks.

He don't talk?
Do declare.
He don't care.
Told you.
I declare.

Why I got to lie?

He don't care who bring him water?
He don't care who bring him bread?
He don't care who roll
The Kivers back to get in bed?
Said he don't.

He don't care who comb his head?

Sometimes I takes his chair
And push it to the door
And leave him there so he can see this
God-green earth like you and me.

Humpooh

He don't care who rub his legs?
He don't care?
What black hands to
Heal him there?
He don't care
They don't care.
He don't care.
I don't care.

Sometimes I takes his chair
And push it to the door
And leaves it there
So he can see
Change
 and life
Like you and me.
I don't care.

Do Lord!

Benediction I

You should be suffered as the children
to dance upon the lawn,
to fall in the tallest grass
all through dark and into dawn.
and I will love the life in sweet
you which lets you love, and i will
love the gay scent of you
when the dance is done.

O dance, men, dance,
and women, dance,
holding hands and hearts
like lively willows.
give up dirges and weeping
in the face of the sun.
has even the sun not blessed us?

Here. i send you a piece of heart,
i bend down in the dust of life.
i cut out a particle of heart,
a legacy for you.
i pass through this time with you,
leaning on your arm.
every breath is an invitation to
dance. And i will love
the gay scent of you
after the dance is done.

Benediction II

When I put your love down, carelessly,
By the sides of other useless things
Then I will look joyward again, free
For a while, to count the lost springs
The unknown autumns, the unfelt winters
And summers spent in pursuit of what
I thought was you. Do you think that I
Will tuck you inside a trunk like some
Wistful widow where you may rise and
Ride my mid-nights, cold as stone?
That time will be my own.
To do with as I choose.
And I choose to put your love down.
Carelessly. As one does a book, too highly
Recommended, or old maps from childhood
Plotted to dreams, or shapes of snowflakes.

I will not bother to fold you;
You will spindle and mutilate
Obtuse and neglected,
As some old garment, waiting to
Become a dust cloth, a part
Of whatever is refused, outworn,
Not part of the ceremony of caring.

Benediction III

You have had enough of me.
You turn your back,
Exhausted into a grand repose.

and should i stir again,
you would reach out an arm
curved, warm, carved
like the nest of a bird.

Nothing is said.
I feel a blade of hair drop
From your head.
I hear the shape of your ears.
Life is a mucilage which
Binds us through the night.
Back to back.
Buttocks to buttocks.
Tomorrow paints itself illuminously
Across a fiery clock
Which cannot take our liberties.
Nothing must be done.
Now, nothing more must be said.
I kiss you with my lips and
With my soul.
I roll over and play dead.

Benediction IV

You will arrive with more than you can bear:
Too many of everything,
And a wide thirst
For more than you can drink.
Consume. Consume. Consume.

I have been there.
I have seen the tinsel where
Their souls should be
And it is too late too late too late.
Take away your music.
Take away your dancing.
They will impale your being upon
Their over-full walls.
They will pierce a mural of your heart.

Who are these savages, bathed and crisp?
Smelling of synthetic forests,
Eating of synthetic bread?
Smiling of synthetic joy?
Touching from synthetic bliss?

I have seen them, breathing their dooms.
You would not believe.
Nothing which you have known
Would lead you to believe.
You would see them, lost, dangle
From their dreams, more piteous even than greed.
Pass quietly by them in the street.
Do not bother even to smile.
The dead would stone you.
If and when the nightmare breaks,
They will stone you.

Brothers, Sisters, I think that all, everything is too late.
Take what you can. Take your selfhood. Your beauty of being.
And rise up in your singing
To weather this doom.
Nothing which you have known would lead you to believe.



Biographic and Bibliographical Notes on Author

About the Author

Julia Fields has published two other books of poetry, *East of Moonlight* (1973) and *A Summoning, A Shining* (1976). Her poems have also appeared in *Women Poets of the Twentieth Century*, *The International Encyclopedia of Afro-American Life*, *The Southern Poetry Review*, *The Massachusetts Review* and many others.

Fields was born "in a little house above a brook . . . out in the country (Perry County, Alabama) and spent her childhood in streams and wild flowers" where she was a shepherdess and cut cotton. She received her B.A. from Knoxville College in Tennessee, her M.A. from Bread Loaf in Middlebury, Vermont. She has taught at Hampton Institute in Virginia, East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina and the University of the District of Columbia.

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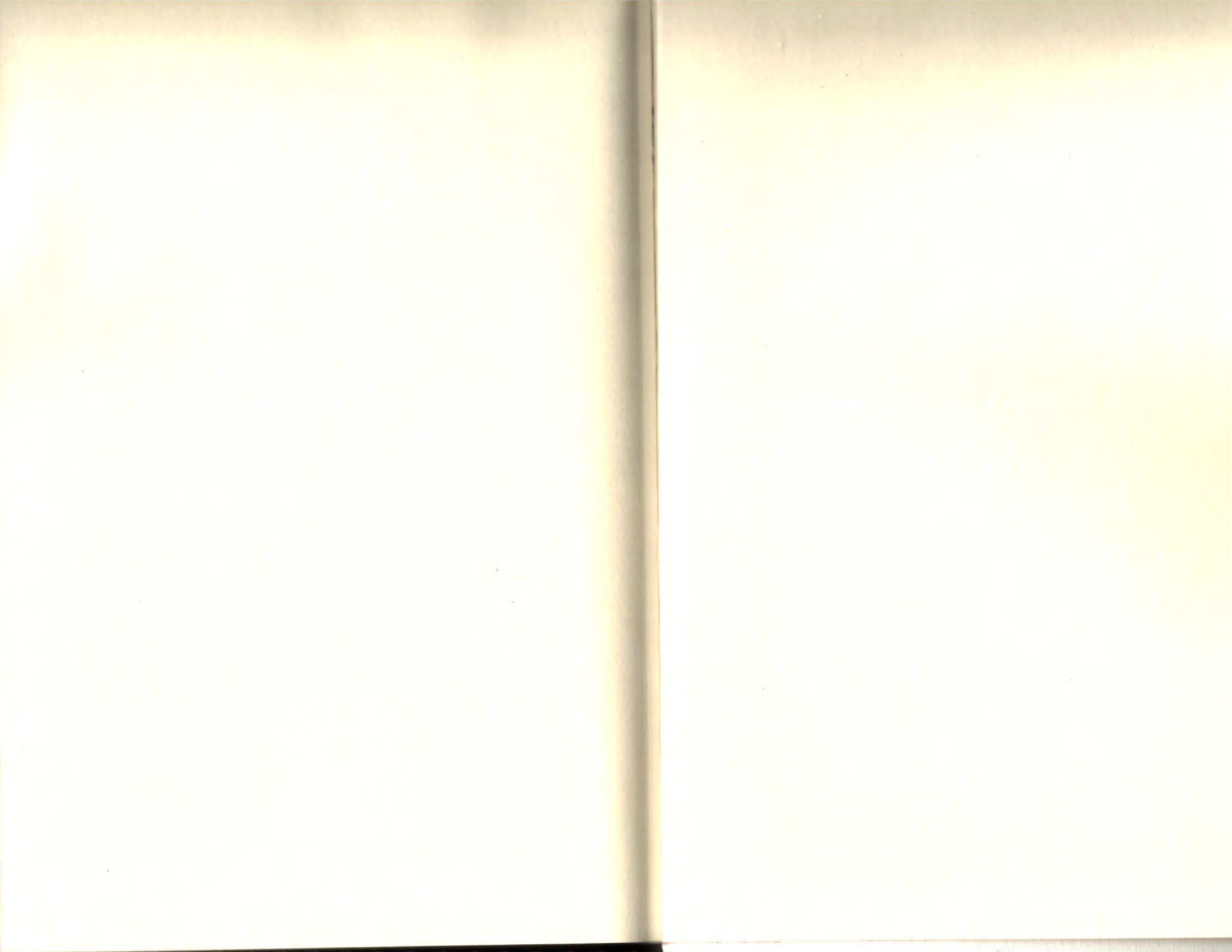
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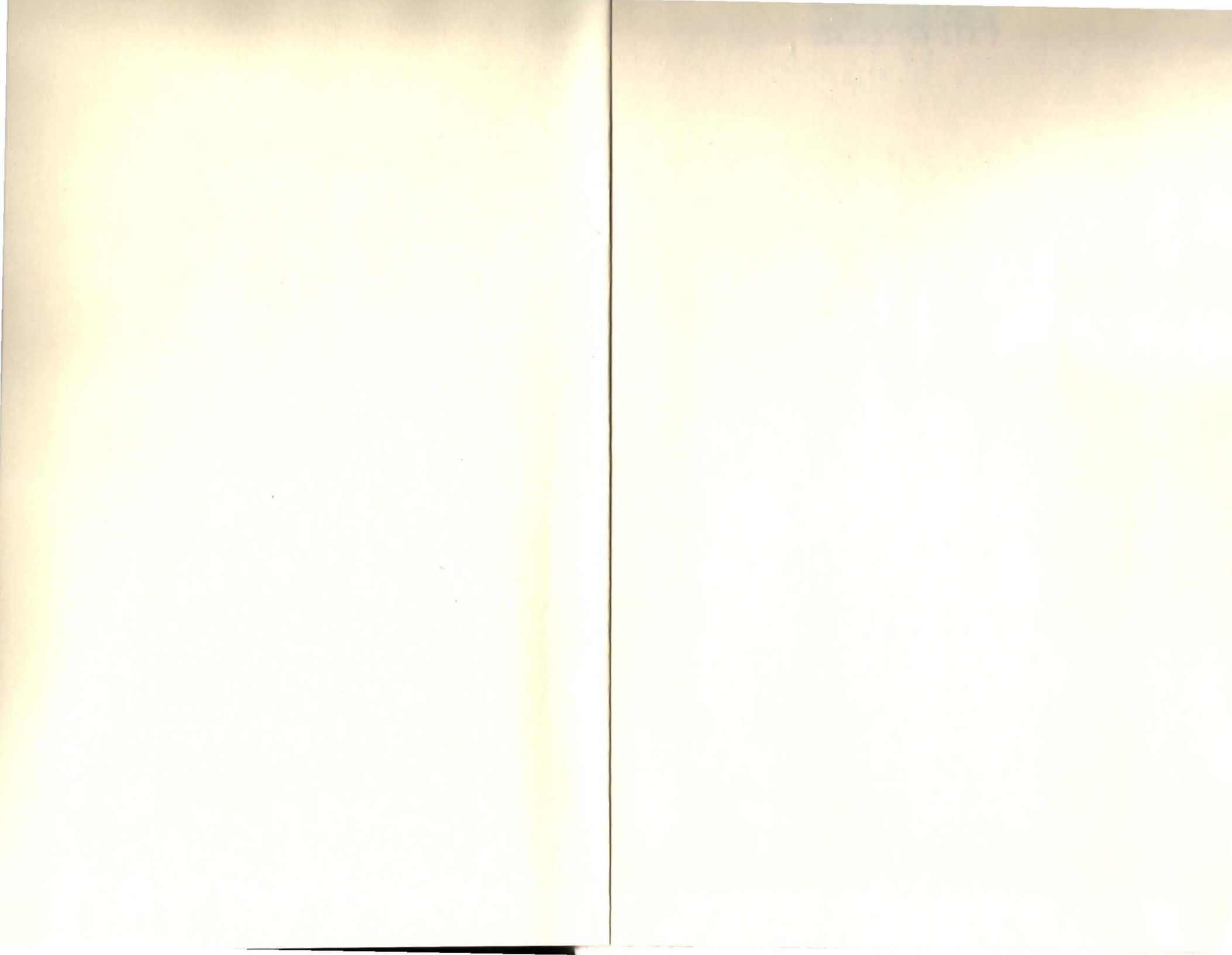
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