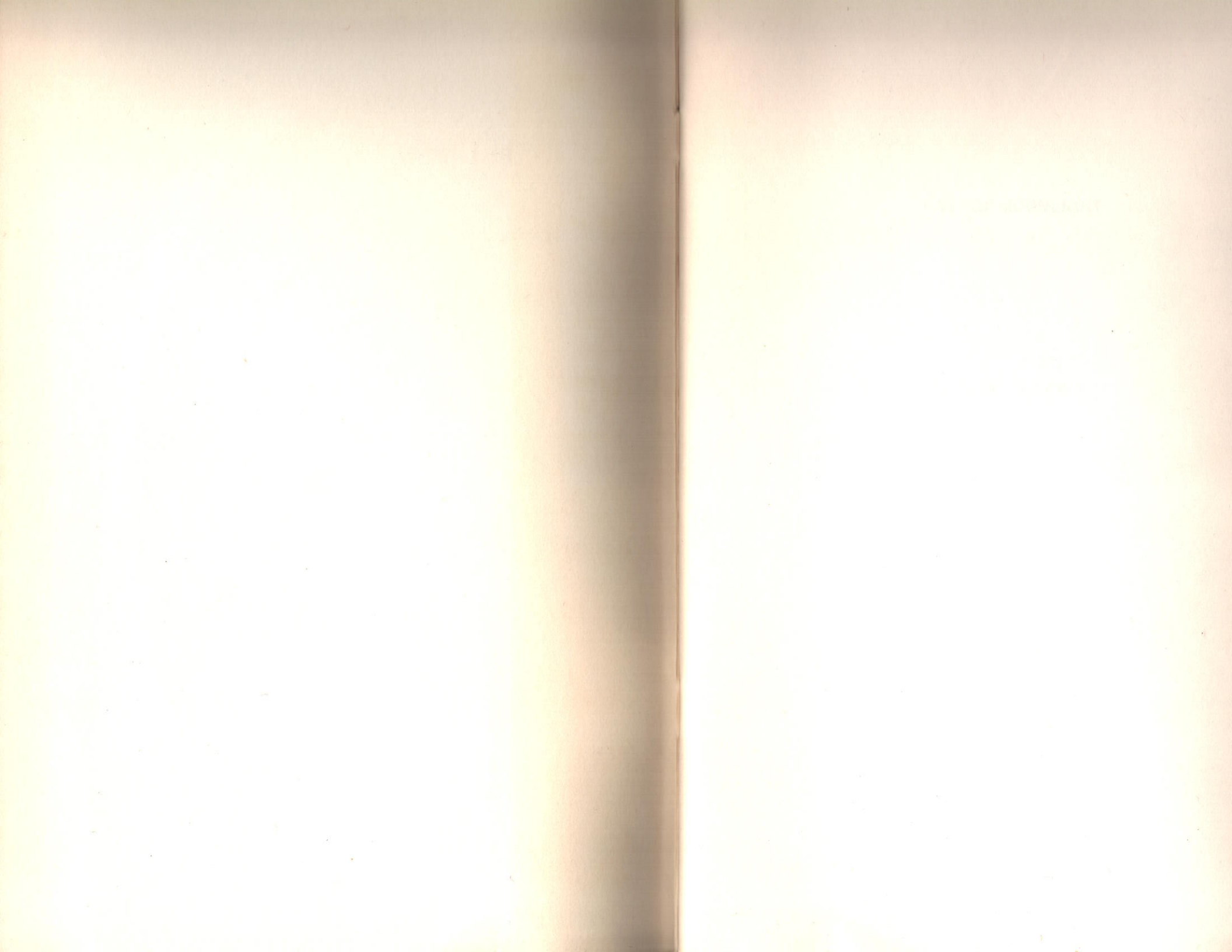


Julia Fields
East of Moonlight



EAST OF MOONLIGHT

Poems by Julia Fields

A RED CLAY BOOK

"High on the Hog," "The Policeman," "Poetry," and "Black Super Bad from Down North" have appeared in BLACK WORLD.

For my parents Maggie and Winston Fields, Cora Childs Moore, Edward Craig Moore, Jerome H. Holland, Helen Holland, James A. Colston, Wilhelmina Colston, Hoyt W. Fuller, Vernon Ward, Lois Towles, Nancy B. McGhee, Samuel McGhee, Galen Williams, and the Charles W. Benton who loves people and cameras.

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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. Dont turn
 to the left. Dont 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 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 streets the hordes of people 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, not 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.

Poetry

What is the use of a poem?
I write the stark blue of the sky.
The sky is bluer than my poem.
I lend it merits of a metaphor.
The sky is bluer than the metaphor.
Yet, who, if not I will stand up on soul-toes
And praise the self-effacing sky
Which takes its grandeur so for granted
And spends its days indifferently high?

What is the use of a poem?
I write the truth of the grass.
The grass is greener than my poem.
I lend it merits of a simile.
Yet, who, if not I, will stand up on praise-toes
And sing the self-effacing grass
Which takes its splendor so for granted
And spends its days indifferently low?

What is the use of a poem?
I write the tenderness of the wind.
The breeze is gentler than my poem.
I lend it merits of a human touch.
The wind is tenderer than human touch.
Yet, who, if not I, will stand on tiptoe
In the soul and sing the self-effacing wind
Which takes its gentleness for granted
And spends its days indifferently calm?

Arcadia

the fences run through
and the clipped lawn
saws who from who

grey backs of tailored curtains explain
the absence of taste not of the grain

no puddles in the street
no branch or leaf unordered
no noise not lined with music
no color not obtuse as death

brisk boredom sits on the roofs
on the sidewalks
in the thresholds

subdued
elegant
determined

as sin

green how green is adored
and in winter, snow
or sadistic kinds of affection
or sudden, recurring violence
or . . . anything. Anything at all
in the hutch where silence is

grey as sin

O Arcadia

Heir

The Aga Memnon's dust mop
is dark as his face
He pushes the trash can nearer the dust.
so many kings have died.

The trash can is bright as new bills of trade.
The Aga Memnon watches the business with a
fraction of care, a multiplicity of disdains.
his heart is a coma of scorn

The Aga Memnon plays with the dust like a child.
But he is, indeed, a soldier, a player of oblique chess.
And he is, for this year, bound to history's chains.
so many kings have died

The Aga Memnon wears on his head the manes of a lion.
His hands are graceful as a drummer's. And his feet
move to the rhythm of a warrior's cold music.
his carriage is a coma of faith

The dust, emblem of a power eclipsed, he thrusts into
a bin brighter than the tinkle of fresh gold.
And when he shatters the quiet of the embalmed day
his face is anonymous as the full prophetic moon.
so many kings have died.

Citizen

Cathedrals sway in the blue face of the steel
and aluminum gods.
Sharp as swords they are clashing at the stars.
i search for new angels in skyscrapers.
i cannot bear the elegant old renowned cities
blessed by sundry growth of moss and stone.
i am in blasphemous pain.

the old countries sip the old wine
of the ages, sitting on timeworn haunches,
the old countries are more fragile than
the new aluminum prayer boxes. O the old
countries. Smelling of too many greeds,
old ceremonies against freedom, old charm
fanged in the smile, in the heart. The old
countries, senile and in stupor, turn the
old backs toward the new times, lost in old
metaphors which break at the desperate center.
The gargoyle smiles of the old cities are
blessed by moss and stone and water! Dreams.

in memory of niggers

don't forget one buck nigger

hanging.

don't forget one blood hound track

of one nigger dying, one nigger

burning.

let the shopping centers cover the
traces of their wasted blood. let the
furniture factories carve the memories
of their lynching into suburban dreams.

let the children of the children who
murdered them smile a clever malice
in the new day's face. let the green
swamps be drained where once they hid
on freedom's thorny route. but don't forget.
yesterday, they were taken in the day.

poets, orators, take upon your heart
the task of making the memory of niggers live.
proclaim the pain of niggers, speak to the lies
which would erase the memory and suffering of
niggers with baubles and treason and contrivance.

let a loud discerning affirmation for niggers
clear your heart and voice of servile comfort.
let it rise in your lungs as a renewed faith.
take no pleasure in the presence of thieves.
niggers living in the memory will teach the
meaning of freedom—will teach the meaning of you.
let no heart be beguiled of the love and memory of niggers.

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.

Jass

It never came,
The splendid sound
From pain
And grace
And agony.
It never came.
The sounds of elegant
Strings reverberated:
In stiff collar,
In black coat,
He flowed forth a prelude
With deft tenderness of technique
But the possession of the
Thing never came to be.
It never came at all.
The echo in the velvet hall
Was heard and drew applause
But the thing itself
Never did appear. It never came.
A hollow echo
Of pain resounded,
A hollow echo
Of grace not grace—
Of agony devised.
And faces of the searchers,
Pallid under chandelier,
Were harsh with what
The sound had missed,
Angered that the thing itself
Eluded and evaded them.
They knew it as a breach of power—
The thing, so real, could not
Be mocked nor imitated,
A beauty not to be conjured.

Wilt

is
the
forest negro
lion man
giraffe

heads above all heads,
hands above all hands

leaping

arcs and amps of fire
churning power to

grac

locomotive man.
engine man.
capsule man.
set down upon this chained land.

rippling

old king with the
rust-colored toy.
what will the new
time do with you?
king Tut on the
faultline of freedom

when you walk, it
the fluid stalk of
all origination.
old king with the
rust-colored balloons
prop for airy stages
what will the new
time do to you?

Nation

Do not speak.
What you wish to say
is known.
What you wish to say
is felt.

To suffer is to wave a banner.
Pain is an anthem. Silence is
a drum.
Do not break this splendid
Patriotic Dialogue
with words.

You and I are one.
The rest are one.
Silence. Conserve yourself.
And we will be the army of smiles
Bleeding on the steps of the capitol.

We have had enough of words.
Silence. Conserve yourself.
We waited for a consent louder
Than discussion. The time has come.

Silence. Silence
After all, you and
I have never had
Anything important
To say. Silence.

Settled

Always I thought
That I'd mature toward

an "own" of brick
in a surveyed yard

a place in which
cool curtains drifted
snow vale and hills
'cross pastoral correct

window sills

Fenced, clipt, secure Suburbia
flowered people-keeper,
Something for monkeys to throw
peanuts after
Something to pile with quiet
sunday bar-b-q-laughter

But animals too live walled
in brick
like flowers newspaper thin
and gentle easeful being
where life cannot break in;

So I will
be the nomad that I am—
carry my babies papoose style
and reach for personhood
brick be damned.

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.

The Policeman

The policeman

leaves his beat
follows me,

an iron abstract
of phallus
dangling
from
his
hips.

He leans
with the studied disinterest—
the cold casualness of spies
thieves dogs and traitors
against
a tree

of newspapers.

My movement is his noose. I, a thief who filches sun and
air and rain
and the toasting
warm aroma of
cashews and buns.

In my sweet solitude in the streets in the midst of crowds
I baffle the

checkerboard mind

of
the
blue
man;

The checkerboard

mind
blocks the
traffic
of
the
world.

I walk him round

n
round
n
round.

Brief

60,000,000 Black Citizens Given 30 Days to get out of America
by Red Indians. Whites Fail in Mass Exodus to
Luna: Are stopped, Returned to White Reservations

for

History cannot be trusted.
the buffalo nickel
is not a legacy,

not a symbol of power.
It is not the head of an Indian.
It is the nightmare of a Fascist artist.
His Indian's cheeks are high
And stoic as a stone.
His Indians are dust-covered in the desert.

O justice will return.
Let the pilgrims sing.
Let them pile their little coins
Into a Babel of power.
Let them make slaves and mutes of men.
O justice will return.
Boast of Manhattan.
Boast of Georgia.
Of Arizona. The Dakotas. Hawaii. Alaska. Niggers.
O justice is indifferent as Death.
Let the pilgrims sing.
Plant the little flags upon the soil
To make the little nations.
Plant dissension on powerless broods of people
Nestled in pockets of dark-blooded worlds.
O let the pilgrims sing.

The "Affluent" woman

with orange hair
and almost-Pucci dress
asks 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.

Ballad

pelican-leg whore

skimming the summer heat
of the city street
living in "sin"
bringing in
what the farewell

Deef-partment
won't give or lend —

"Go on the streets
If you needs a FRIEND"

you don't know how
to start a war.

pelican-leg whore

in regal purple and holy red
a greasy cascade
falls from your head,
and some come from pity
some from need
some to show
they can do the deed.
queen for this move
a pawn of cruel chess
dying for love—

you don't know how
to start a war.

My African Sister

from the bush

is soft of eye
and gesture.
she is like a
rich flower.
Once I was
as she. Soft.
Eyes quiet. Breakable.
dark rich flower.

with old Europe's
corrosive blood
have my eyes hardened.
my hands longer than grace.
my knees jutting like guns.
my chin too well defined.
Europe's old blood in
my African sister has turned
to water to be pissed out
in the bush.

My African sister, who may be
a distant cousin, giggles incessantly
with a yellow malay girl.

I wish that the great Powers
will all rot in hell. So that
they can live forever — my sisters
who live and die as flowers,
who come to learn the evil
and perversity of the golden,
Putrid West — the gaudy, Killing West!

Song to Alexandria

The head, the heart of Egypt lay
Waste by the furious heat of God
The terrible flames of man
And on this funeral pyre
The charred soul of a race

"Out of Africa ever something new"
Comes now to taunt, to bring
To memory that grandeur gone
For on this dust and in it lie
Those relics to burn the mind
And set the soul to living fire

They lay ground to vast emptiness
Trod by cool marble feet
Those memories of Art and Science
That Knowledge gathered, that Knowledge
Here deposited, that Knowledge leading
To first light, Knowledge so revered—

Ah Alexandria, Alexandria

Over these foul centuries
Hear my black song
My salutation and my pain

There was a Roman once—
There was tonight a Greek
Who smiled and touched my hand
Smiled with marbled eyes
Portraits of your dark plundered land

Ah Alexandria, Alexandria

Over these foul centuries
Hear my black song
My salutation and my pain

In the dust now are all
Your wise men's songs
Your legends and your myths
The arteries of this state
I conjure here — white column
Of history's long despair

Your precious books of papyrus
Burst fire into the air
Reek lead into the heart
Such spoils for victors—
That weeping of undone lions.

I walk in this dust
Pass these drained eyes
A slave now and a slave again
I come. In my mind I walk
By the Blue Nile
By the eternal Nile

Ah Alexandria, Alexandria

I come in this bedamned dusk
In the evening
A slave then and a slave again
And by this new Nile—

Ah Alexandria, Alexandria

Hear my black song
Over these foul centuries hear
My salutation and my pain

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
never with fury
hardly with a word
except for now and then
a good word for the lord.

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 superceded 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 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 linament. 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 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 pert, 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 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 by 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 of reward.

Entirely submerged in the gloriously
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.

A Xmas Poem
for Brother Jack

Brother, you are high in the sky.
Way up there—like a bird.
Wave your arms to us.
Say howdy do.
Hi, Jack.
When you be back, man?
Is you even coming back?
Well, is you is, or is you ain't?
We waiting for a sign.
Like the rainbow.
Or just a low-swinging sweet chariot.
Or just a little Ho Ho Ho.
It near about Xmas you know. Ho Ho Ho.

tell niggers anything.
bout pie in the sky.
tell niggers anything.
bout streets "up there"
made of gold—now you
got the pie and now
you got the gold. And you
can tell everybody that
The Man was right! Then:

DROP
Some Thing On
Us—to pay the "rent"
Or for "bus Fare" to ride
Way past the HEW V.D. Projects
Or the Heart Projects with the black
guinea pigs. Swing low, Brother Jack, over the
Getoos, over the washington monuMint, over BombingHam.
Hi, Jack. You is higher now than a georgia pine. Hi, Jack. is you
is,
or
is
yo
ain'
t
comin' back?

The Fascist Poet

The fascist poet, one arm raised in air
exorts a cool form from his mind. He pens
it, even, metaphoric, unoffending, symbolic.
he is against the killing of innocent
trees, sheep, sedimentary rocks and redwoods;
knows the terrain of several nations by heart,
and all the haunts of those artists friendly
to his habits and his government. He sees in
some the makings of good Republicans, but as
of now, has not given souvenir elephants on
any july fourth. Someday, he feels, his feet will
be cast in marble. He knows already the angle
at which he will hold his head. He knows his
right profile like the back of his hands. It
has the archaic resemblance to old greek finds.
his stature is always before him, head to toe.
the goodies of the world are not easily declined.

The well-dressed fascist poet pleases all the
neighbors; they see him as an old buddy who never
curses beyond damn or son-of-a-bitch, these almost

in a whisper or, often, in a wheeze. This is most
quickly forgiven 'cause all poets are known to be
drunkards anyway. In that he is normal and is on
the trustworthy side. And thus, from time to time,
a bottle of gin comes by mail. Someone getting on the
good side of notoriety. Taking part in. Being good
citizens and therefore, good sports. Stupor is the only
way to privacy. A drunk man has only enough room for
one. But he never drinks in public. It's bad taste. But
worse, bad publicity. And he has six children at the
local schools, one in the Royal Egyptian Templar.

The fascist poet is true to all the news fitted
for printing. A man of habit, he stops at the news
stand, the supermarket and the zoo. It rests him.
in a world said to be going mad, he is sane. He is
partial to law and order. Sometimes finds himself
still believing that the world must be made safe
for democracy, and knows that eventually there will
be a war with china in which it is not important
that there be a victor. He is sane. He is logical.
once wanted to take a degree in mathematics. There
are no nooks or crannies in his mind. He is thorough.
anything worth doing is worth doing well. Anything
worth doing well should have marketable value.
His poems are neat. Words stand in line like marines.

Blood is a River

Blood is a river into which
All are borne. The summit of
Blood is justice in the earth.
Blood to blood, man breaks those
Barriers which deny his being.
Blood's business is the breaking
Of chains which bind us to evil, to turn us
To the presence of the singing
Woods; the sight of the flight
Of the sky-bound birds of soul delight.

Blood is a river into which
All are borne. Blood is the
Only triumphant nation. Hearts
Write the only true pacts. Lips
Nor time can seal the blood against
The bounties of life's essential joy.
Nothing can remain decreed against
The fury and the truth of blood.

The royalty and the strength of blood
Usurp the territory of all earth's lords.
Blood sings the saddest tales of kings,
And sits upon the ground, renewed,
The only triumphant nation. Blood is a river.

American Bouquet

The soldier boy
falls to the ground,
Kisses

American soil.
Give him a flower.
He stumbles forth
weakly

Kisses

American soil.

Give him a flower.
His kiss will bloom
in the soil and grow
Upward as a flower.

The lips of prostrate
American men will
All grow climbing roses.
White trellises for
American soil.

The gay and
gentle men.

The innocent
And beatific men.
Give them flowers.

The Great Powers

formerly

tall
powerful
flat
sensuous
men

are shabby

and gawky

like drawings of
huge extinct birds.
their great cold
heads, impaled on
the pinnacles of time,
think ultimate failures.
take the leavings from
lackeys and try to make
them seem, at best, rare.

the great powers

have not finished yet:
their standing armies
have powerful legs,
vacuous bellies —
and are of a mind.

the great powers

have not finished yet.
And when they leave,
they will leave
in a hail of smoke.

the great powers

must never be
borne out of mind.

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.

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.

Man, My Mate

I pass you silkly 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 astounding,
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 silkly in the streets.

My Lovers Are All Old Men

My lovers are all old men.
What shall I do with this heart?
My lovers will never be bold again
What shall I do with this heart?

The songs I kept for singing late
Will never be sung at all.
The green dreams for a lovelier date
Grow bitterer than gall.
What is the use of a promise
What is the use at all?

My lovers voices in the mouth of new generations
Make the new music and the new song.
My lovers voices clear and certain
In the soul of the gracious young.

My lovers are all old men
Bent by time's small humor.
My lovers are old old men
Who have outgrown the summer.

The songs I kept for late singing
Will bring no joy at all
The green dreams of youth's presumption
Will be the winter's gall.
And the only songs will be in the singing
If there are songs at all.

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 souffle
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

Wine

"lie here" you tell me.
I sit and look at you, not moving.
I lie in your arms all night.
You feel some need to say that I am warm.
How can any dead thing be warm?
It must be the glow of your heart;
It must be the sun in your eyes.

You take my hand in your hand
And tough it to a calloused place
You pull me close to your shoulder
I feel the warm sounds of your face.

You are warm.
I am cold.
You lie when
You say that I am warm.
You reassure a cold woman
Who has known too much of winter,
Who has left bits of her soul
On glittered trashheaps.
You are tender;
Trying to get past
Your chiding smile,
I see a calm more solid than a lock.
I lie in your arms all night —
An ordinary thing, perhaps.

At dawn I look up at your face
And climb up to your heaven
Blooming-delirious rose, beatified.

What Springs Indigenous?

What springs indigenous?
Wind borne acorns come to height
In regions far from spawn.
And yet, I've wished to have grown
Darkly perfect from a native "land",
Where spirals of my essence could be seen
Flowing outward from some soul-intangibles,
Where ideas and dreams were forged and
Readied for my being from some ancestral store.
I am a pilgrim. Who springs indigenous?
Chills on the edge of my blood
Proclaim some ungenerous, parasitic blend:
I would be giving like the sun, locked
Ever in the chamber of a livingness—
Fecund and riotous with being.
A chill spawns in my blood.
Yet, who springs indigenous?

A horror waits on the edge of the land,
Peering from deep ancestral eyes.
And who could nullify that claim?
After the wars are over, what force
Imposed upon this ravished violent state
will mould a lasting, human creed and
make it real, as actual as soil itself?
What springs indigenous and grand?
What springs from the deep well-springs
Of Old Eden's aspirations and eclipsed powers?
What new pilgrims, non-native, nestle here,
And make stones and haven from mere nerve
And visions of some sullen histricalities?
We shall grow fecundly perfect here—
Vision and stone will make us indigenous
Till we flow like spirals of essence from
Soul to soul intangibles.

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

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.

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

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.
And you will understand. You know
That you will understand.



I wish that I could understand how poetry can be taught as separate from religion, statecraft, psychology or botany. Poetry is a form of will. It is determination to be in the world and free from the world while giving to it and loving it. It's also wishing after some kinds of beauty to be born.



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