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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Michael J. Hudson entitled "Snaps Of Eden." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in English.

Marilyn Kallet, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Ben Lee, Art Smith

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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SNAPS OF EDEN

A Thesis Presented for the
Master of Arts
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Michael J. Hudson
May 2010

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DEDICATION

*This collection is dedicated to my mother,
who never told me something was good when it wasn't,
and my father who was always there to cushion the blow.*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Professors Marilyn Kallet, Art Smith, and Ben Lee, for serving on my committee. I thank Dr. Kallet for always giving me room to grow, and teaching me that poetry can make sense, and touch people even now. I thank Dr. Smith for helping me to smooth my rough edges and take risks, and Dr. Lee for helping me see the beauty in the most confusing and nonsensical of pieces. Thank you all for helping me to be brave.

Also thanks to Dr. Robert Stillman for his infectious love of the Bard, and Leanne Hinkle for smiles, direction, and chocolate when all three were sorely needed.

ABSTRACT

The following poems are an attempt at reclamation and reconciliation. The first section wades through the delicate subject of personal history and is an attempt to show truth as a means of both self and communal healing. The second is plaintive, a brief effort to interlope into and understand worlds outside (but not foreign) to my own. The third is a poetic essay detailing the journey of a young woman facing the horrors of an undeclared, and seemingly eternal war. The fourth and final sections serve as a means of exploration of the self and place; tackling issues of sex, the physical body, and sexuality.

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* Loose pastiche of William Carlos Williams' "The Attic Which is Desire

INTRODUCTION

If you announce what you see, nobody can tell you no.

-Gertrude Stein

As the title suggests the following poems are pieces of a beginning. They are the results of an ongoing process of reclamation and celebration of my body, my home, and my world; they are new beginnings to old conversations and old wishes for new homes. This collection is my world in lyric. These words are the saplings of my own Tree of Knowledge, and within these pages live slight glimpses of my Eden.

Although the practice of poetics often raises more questions than it answers; perhaps, it is in the quest to find even more unanswerable questions and pressing the boundaries of those long-held answered queries that a poet finds voice and innovation. This journey is one that must be addressed each time a poet puts pen to paper or settles down in front of a computer screen, but may be a seemingly insurmountable obstacle for a young (novice) poet who seeks primarily to write and explain the mind and may not know the trails and nuances of producing poems that do the work of great poetry. The following works are the products of new challenges, which, at times, led to more and more stifling limitations and questions.

Ezra Pound once said “Don’t tell in mediocre verse what already been done in good prose,” which of course begs the question: what else is there to say. How does

anyone compete with the great works of the literary cannon, whether it be in verse or in prose? Who can speak of the South like Faulkner, or the black feminine like Morrison? Who can speak of heartache like Dickinson, or alienation like Plath? The love and respect for the literary giants of the past are both a driving force behind and a stifling wall against the production of new and innovative works. Where can the novice find a threshold in which to make a legitimate mark? Tony Morrison suggests looking at the entire history of literature as though it were a diamond, and within that diamond she suggests finding a facet so small and so close to the inherent authenticity of the author, that it would be impossible for any previous writer to have tackled the subject matter of the work before. This line of reasoning replaces the obvious and at times reductive competition between the old and the new with interpersonal innovation, and allows contemporary poets the freedom to simply be. Using this theory, coupled with the quote from Gertrude Stein that serves as epigraph for this introduction, I seek to create not only an authentic self on the page, but also a well- rounded one. I do not wish to be a sad poet, or an angry poet, or even a genius poet; instead I hope in these pages to breathe life into a *human* poet. A poet who thinks about the issues of the world, and protests against atrocities can also be a poet who laughs, fights with a lover, and gets confused about the syllabi of graduate school professors. In my work I explore topics of rape, abuse, racism, and gender conformity, but this is not all I want to do because this is not representative of all that I am. These poems (though not always confessional) are pieces of my psyche, and at times I want to make people laugh while making them think, other times there is an urge within me to shut down and focus solely on my past. The sections of the works are not as explicitly

divided as they seem on the page. I do not see them as separate pieces with distinct vantages of importance; instead I think of them as a body in which each limb is both integral and essential to the whole. Each explores a distinct line, but each line is part of the human/poet whole. This work is my permission to myself to be myself and invite all comers in to take a peek.

The language, work, and bravery of the late Lucille Clifton have long been a source of inspiration for me. The impact of her messages and her ability to convey them in such a small space has influenced my work and form from the beginning of my writing career. Her word choice, subject matter, and lack of sentimentality have driven me toward tighter and cleaner pieces than I thought myself capable of. Her lack of sentimentality also adds to her authorial ethos, and makes her work accessible to people both within and outside of the communities she discusses and dissects; creating in her work not only a sense of beauty, but an overreaching feeling of unity and education. This unifying instinct, along with the discovery of Anne Carson's essays in *Glass, Irony, and God*, have served as touchstones for me in the creation of my own poetic essay on the Congolese War. Carson's essays in *Glass, Irony, and God* explore the possibilities of both poetic meditation and communication and jump from subject matter as grounded as *Wuthering Heights* to issues of philosophy and antiquity. I have been attempting to write a poem detailing the atrocities of the Congo for over a year (the urge to do so has been with me for almost four), and up until reading Carson's work I had trouble finding a method in which I could convey all of the information needed and still maintain poetic integrity. Carson's essay work opened up seemingly limitless possibilities. Not only

would I have the opportunity to explore and educate myself and others on this topic, I would also be able to use different forms in order to reflect the feeling and force of distinct aspects of the conflict. The spare nature of a haiku strategically reflects the cold natures of the killers for hire that ravage the Congo even today. The longer prose pieces details Djany's (the protagonist) mental states. Even the lyrics, poems like "Above" and "Below", breathe life into what would have been a stumbling epic if kept in one piece.

Both Clifton and Carson's work, and hopefully my own, attempt to open up a long forgotten power of poetry. The idea of a poem that teaches and speaks to the masses (as the lyrics and odes of the Greeks and the Romantics) is looked upon by most contemporary poets as dated and didactic and has been discarded in favor of ever more increasingly internal and esoteric works; much to the detriment of poetics as a whole. The key is understanding that this education must be done with a light touch, and it should be noted that this discourse is multi-faceted. The poems often teach and surprise me as I write them, and herein lies one of the greatest beauties of the lyric form. The lyrics in these pages focus and explore a singular moment, and often this exploration leads to unexpected shifts in perspective. This is particularly evident in the poems featured in "Delta". In these works, most obviously in "Dichotomy" and "Pagan Like Pound", the realization of my own feelings and social identification becomes apparent. In both of these poems I began with the assumption that I would explore and work out my pain and sexual frustration over the disintegration of my relationship at the time, but with concluding lines that reference both Kalika and Penelope it is obvious that my frustrations were not so personal. They are the frustrations of subjugation and self-

destruction shared and investigated by most women. The narrative forms would have kept these poems personal and only delved into the meanings behind a particular action or situation, but the lyric movement helped to make these works a communal experience.

Clifton's poem "Homage to My Hips," is one of the largest inspirations behind my poetic project. Her recognition and reclamation of her own body moved me into celebration of my own body, and everything else about me that may have been seen as deficient or faulty before. In this poem she writes:

"these hips are mighty hips.
these hips are magic hips.
i have known them
to put a spell on a man and
spin him like a top"

I read this and knew that I, too, wanted to be mighty. I wanted to claim the hidden power of words and reshape reality (highly un-Lockean). My birthplace, upbringing, even my hair, are all now explored and reclaimed through poems which have in turn added to realizations that create a more realized self. Clifton's work is powerful not only in her reclamation, but also in her admittance of her own battles with herself physically and socially. Her poem, "My Dream About being White" she explores her own fantasies concerning shedding blackness she writes:

"hey music and
me
only white,
hair a flutter of
fall leaves
circling my perfect
line of a nose,
no lips,

no behind, hey
white me
and i'm wearing
white history.”

Had the poem ended here she would have illustrated the most taboo thought of the African- American community without apology, and this alone would have been enough to create a powerful piece. But the poem does not end there. It continues:

“but there’s no future
in those clothes
so i take them off and
wake up
dancing.”

and this is where Clifton is at her most beautiful. She says the most treacherous thing and African- American can say, but ends on a note of acceptance, reclamation, and power. It is this inherent and seemingly unfaltering hope and authority in the face of despair and rejection that serves as a beacon for me and my work.

Born and raised in the South, I am a self- proclaimed “Belle.” As mentioned in “Liberal Lover”, I grew up riding horses, and listening to the stories of cowboys, and yet because of my race I am often excluded from the great Southern tradition; more accurately put, I am excluded from a tradition of personal connection and ownership of the South and placed in a position of subjugation and resentment. This positioning is not always an issue of one race excluding the other, great black writers (Hughes, Ellison, Larsen) have long portrayed the South as nothing more than a dirt bowl of oppression; but their portrayal is just as one-sided, short-sighted, and damaging as the work and

subjugation of white authors. This portrayal is one that I am seeking to work against in the final portion of this text. These poems (“Dear Mr. Hughes,” “Claim,” “New Glory” etc.) are my stake in this conversation, and I believe my greatest contribution, as of yet, to the literary tradition. In these works I seek to create a more realistic and optimistic view of the American South. A South that I consider my home and birthright.

Clifton’s subject matter is not the only place I find inspiration. Clifton is a master of the page, the starkness of the work goes a long way in detracting from over sentimentality and gives the reader the opportunity to completely immerse his or herself in verse. Each word rings in the mind and allows a meditation on the work that is much more difficult in longer works.

I have long believed that poetry should be a communal experience, that uplifts, informs, or challenges societies; and because of this I have always been afraid to write about my mind and my ponderings on how it works. It seemed to me that this form of poetry was only for the poet and should not be published or read by others. It begged the question, who are you and why should I care that you are so sad. Clifton’s skill with the page allows the reader to experience fear, sadness, and in most instances transcendence. It is the experience of reading, and not an inherent message that informs the audience of the mind of the poet. I attempted to exercise my own power of the page in “Interahamwe,” “Djany’s Morning After,” and “Brown Bomber”. The first two are pieces of a series on the Congolese war, and I attempted to use the starkness of the page to convey the coldness of both rape and the pride of men who do such acts. The initial drafts of these works were much longer, and filled with exposition concerning the cruelty

discussed in the pieces. However, in their original forms each of them felt heavy and overstated, and they seemed to question the intelligence of the reader. By shaving them down and using the page as a showcase and companion for the works, each piece seemed to finally take life and perform the work I was aiming for.

But the page does not always have to be used for sparsity, it can also be used to illustrate movement or shape and enhance the meaning through flow and curve. How would readers view and interpret words that originated from margins other than the left? From spacing that allowed lines to float seemingly detached from the rest of the work. Brenda Hillman does this in her work in *Loose Sugar*. She challenges her reader to simply enjoy the movement and moment of words on the page, and allows her audience to interact with the work. Of course, my work does not push the limits of coherency as far as Hillman's, but it is inspired by the joie de vivre and freedom of the open page. "New Glory," "The Ass Speaks," and "Generations" all attempt to reflect the movement of the subject with movement on the page.

Although not every piece of the following was directly influenced by a particular author, the willingness of each of these writers to press boundaries has inspired the work that follows. The prose poets and their grasp of language and time inspired me to test the limits of the lines I had grown overly comfortable with. The storytelling ability of Carson and Clifton allowed me to share my voice and the stories of my family without fear of being judged as overly sentimental. The fearless authorial voice of Gertrude Stein, gave me the courage to write a story that was not my own but needed to be told. Each of these

writers has helped create a community of expanded boundaries and of questioning and challenging what has come before that will continually influence my work.

Family Bricks

Generations

Clearing the weeds from snapdragons
My Gran Eddie May finds pause
“Kudzu,”
 she squints up to tell the time,
 “This shit's more nigra than plant”
She bends, continuing on in her task
 “Sturdy,” she says with a grin,
 “whine all you want about it
 but it is
 truly
 sturdy.”

Brown Bomber

Right hook made Big
Daddy American, first
Joe bought him with
Iron jaw, cut eye, sweat.

Next Joe bought him with suits
city black business
army green Boonies,
then with golf clubs
a smile.

“Di’nt mind being
bought like that,” said he
“fought over like a prize,
steada kicked like a dog.”

The Day of My Mother's Colonic Dissection

I wondered how she learned how to swim. Who pushed warm honey skin in cool blue water, and trusted that she wouldn't breathe in? It didn't happen then; little colored girls stayed on hot concrete playing football with empty bottles of bleach, or foursquare with red rubber balls stolen from Mississippi elementary schools. The smell and burn of chlorine as distant as the tales of great white men doing great white things that never touched young black lives. Who taught her not to panic? To harness water's natural resistance and use it to thrust forward. Did they hold her, give her a hand to latch onto until she grew accustomed to her new power; or did they just let her go.

Ms. Mary

I remember losing countless games of tic tac toe to the smell of jasmine and Clinique while I snuggled up next to her in the biggest bed in the world. Falling asleep grasping her hair so tightly that I would wake up to find its imprint in my palm as a souvenir. That's what I remember most, her hair. My Granny always had beautiful hair. Long and thick, it showed every bloodline that flowed through her, through us. Cherokee for length, African for strength and color, and the shine was all Mary. That's why she waited, somehow she thought hair and memory was all she was to me. And maybe she was right because when they finally told me I was ashamed because I cried for my grandmother's hair.

Afraid to see her outside of my memory and disgraced by my own pride I ventured to her home to be brave for both of us. Without the length to weigh it down her mane became curly framing her face without distracting from it. Her cheek bones were more pronounced and what were once delicate features shadowed by long bangs had become regal and elegant. For the first time I saw the resemblance that she had always been so proud of. I saw her, saw us.

The Good Uncle (performance piece)

*Well I ain't the pretty one
But I'll write these words in
And sing you the song
That beats in my head*

No one told me that he owned her, that the smiles and gifts came from the sweat of a “bottom bitch”. What does a four year old know of quick handed pimps and easy whores? There was only the love of books and the sweetness of a narrating voice. The ugly sister is easy prey, and the predator in him saw the need to protect me. To arm me against men like himself. He instilled in me a love of learning and books and self. A sinless butterscotch world of ladybugs and dinosaurs, of mud pies in little yellow pans. A world bought by degradation and abuse.

But he saved me.
The woman I have become.
Eyes open, proud.

*Oh, I ain't the pretty one
But I'll whisper the muse
And feed you the honey
of the wisdom she posed*

*Well I ain't the pretty one
But I'll write these words in
And sing you the song
That beats in my head*

In Formation

Age 4

Looking back I realize how young she was. I know this now because despite her vigor her breasts never moved, maybe they were better at avoiding her attention than I was. *You're absolutely filthy, fuck! You don't give a shit about anything do you?* Don't cry Michael, only babies cry. I pretend that this is just what mommies do. Remind myself that the heat is just her way. That she likes water that turns fingers red long before they ever go pruny. I breathe in the sweetness of the water and remember that mama loves me as I wait for the scrubbing to end. My sister is hiding for fear that it might, for once, be her turn. *Sometimes my children disgust me.* This is our ritual. This is our special thing.

Age 10

He promised I would like it but I didn't. I didn't like his hands or his breath, and I hated his tongue. It tasted like the last puff of a cigarette and felt like a slug wrapped in wet sandpaper. This is not what "it" is supposed to feel like. It feels so good at school when the girls sneak off and play grown-ups behind the old blue playhouse where no one can see. Girls with mocha skin that smells like coco butter and lips coated in cherry Bonnie Bell. He snaps me back. *This is what pretty girls do.* How did he know? How did he know that would be all the logic my ten year old brain needed to not say no? But I never said yes.

Age 13

What's dat my bother asks as he places a sticky toddler finger on a fresh scar. I ran into a corner, I reply with a little more venom than the question calls for. I shrink back towards the door. *Another "accident"* asks my father, his eyes aging in concern. It's no biggie I tell him with eyes screaming back at him, don't you dare judge me. I look away, "I can do it if I want".

Age 20

Why are you like this he pleads *why can't you just be okay.* Okay is boring, I spit, you are okay enough for the both of us. He tells me to relax as I yell at him to get excited. I give him a piece of me then take, then take, then take. This is our ritual. This is our special thing.

Reason Reaching

Who's on First

If they used the signs would we see them?
Marched on Washington, singing spirituals
Brothers kissing brothers, waving rainbow-gloved fists
Screaming, gay is the new black!
Then would we know them as kin

If they used the stars would we know them?
Became a race of their own, a people
Proclaiming blood over lifestyle, so that others see reason
Screamed, it's happened before, and it always starts small
Then would we know them as pure

If they burned the bras would we respect them?
Refused to conform, claimed freedom from sex
Chanted, "I'll fuck who I please, no need to appease"
Then would we see them as ourselves,
Then would we know them as neighbors

Maggie

The “boy” they called her and she would never think to be anything else. But right before swim time the illusion she created would be shattered and everyone would see her as they thought she was. Unlike so many other things, letting the girls see her change was never a question, so everyday instead of lining up Maggie would sit beside me and wait.

I like your name Ms. Michael she said you don’t hafta be a girl with that name.

I’m pretty sure I hafta be a girl anyway Mags I told her, laughing at an eight year old’s belief in the power of decision and trying to keep an eye on my “queen bees”.

No you don’t, she continued, you could be a boy if you wanted and no one would ever know, but
you can’t be a boy named Margaret.

I stared at her and realized, how pretty she was, lovely really. Bright brown eyes that spoke almost as much as she did, a little rosebud for a mouth, and movie star tresses that highlighted themselves in sunlight. The girls left and Maggie was left alone. Dad says I have to be Margaret now. He says I’m too big for Max.

Maggie didn’t want to be pretty.

Pretty meant a world of unending waiting princesses. Of dependency and wanting. Cinderella wished. Sleeping Beauty dozed. Belle read. Pretty was no place for action. It was no place for Maggie. A boy chooses and Mags was chosed. But today, just now, she would fall back and wait to be her own prince.

Essay on the Congolese War

Interahamwe

This
manner
of
man

exists
to
harvest
his
kind

bone
chaff
in
wind
flow

They Tell Her the War is Over

This is the new heartbeat of her country. Once, it was a steady rhythm, a gallop at sunset created by the slow steady pound of pestles against corn in iron pots.

Now these new “men”, soldiers, come in through the nothing, invading the prayers for survival, with the new truth they have created. Faces like boys and eyes that are not.

Her language cannot keep up with men who would take her virtue with jetsam. When the butts of rifles are no longer enough, they scavenge for anything that will fit, but mostly choose things that will not. Her people have no word for what they do, what they are. The memory of the pain that once stole her consciousness jerks her back to it.

She whispers apologies to the nurse each time she must be cleaned, and asks again why the dripping cannot be stopped.

“There is a hole, where there should not be love,” the Sister answers, “a hole we cannot fix”.

Her eyes travel, she tries to find sleep against the *click swish* of the beads and robes, but only ends up counting. Three new today, she hopes their sobbing will end by mass.

Djany's Morning After

Under Q. Boudice, Britons
ravaged old Londinium
convinced it better gone
than Roman

It would be London
Or dust
London, or
nothing

Primus Sardus spent,
unwalled, unmanned
unfortified, could their
London be, or
truly now lost?

Above

They touch me

They touch me when they have not the right

But they the carry invisible power,
the power to take, to steal, to kill,
but just a little
they have it because they claim it

I cannot claim it

My hair becomes a tangled mass of shit, my skin muddy, the yellow unusable

They make me an inconvenient thing,
an inconvenient thing.

Family Fall

“You’ve made adult decisions,” my father spits, “You have made the decisions of a woman and now it is we who pay.” I rub the tell tale curve, and shudder. He will beat my baby out of me.”We will not feed you both.”

*I begin to stutter, “I can wait and give,”
his force stops me, “There are already two, and we will not feed you both.”*

*My mother says nothing
She has stopped breathing
She will not move while he stands
I spit blood into the dirt at her feet*

*“Leave whore,” he says
“You have made yourself worthless”*

There is quiet after the slam.

*She looks down,
“Are you well?”*

I don’t move.

She grabs my face and asks again “Are you well, did you get it” I move my neck, and her shoulders relax. She kisses me. Her back turns and I remember cutting the pattern for her dress, choosing the golds and blues of the diamonds.

“Then get out”

Below

The sky is still blue
In and out of focus but I can make pictures out the clouds

It is a good planting day

I feel the sunshine, through my eyelids

The sky is still blue

The third one is done now
The next one is louder

The pain is back
I am out again
The world is dark

My ears are wet

The Body With No Purpose

the eyes that
don't see

slaughtered blood
of millions

with no guilt
lower a mouth

and voice
mute

the genocide of
apathy



hands of the
world

shackled in tacit
complicity

all power
in the middle

one body
no heart

Delta

Dichotomy

You are visceral
 Elemental
A human symphony
 of destruction
Your voice hits lower than the ear
Your kiss lower than the mouth
Right... there
Fuck. I don't even like you
Pretentious self serving bastard
God! kiss me
Not one of those bullshit pecky things
One of those pelvic-thrashing, toe-curling, mouth- aerobic, tongue acrobatic soul-searing, kisses
I hate you
 drenched in the salt of sweat, tears
 I crave you
We raze little pieces with each climax
 The peaks make the fall harder
You call me Aphordite
When I am laughing in Kalika's voice

Making

We lay in relief
Dizzy from our own heat, whispering
Soliloquies of reconciliation
Basking in the light of our prowess

Dizzy from our own heat, whispering
Accounts of hard earned ecstasy
Basking in the light of our prowess
Knowing doing isn't being

Whisperings accounts of hard earned ecstasy
Using anything to delay the truth, of
Knowing doing isn't being
Must the sex end as we did

Using anything to delay the truth, of
Soliloquies of reconciliation
Must the sex end as we did
We lay in relief

The "Ass" Speaks

She asks me to talk to her
Give words to the poet

Relinquish the power of my masculine reserve

But each kiss is a sonnet
Her voice, my cannon
Each bite a praise
Issuing hosannas of iambs proclaiming

Her name
My hope
Our love

Each new taste a prayer
She is my revelry
My renewal
I delight in the playground of her skin
Divinity in D-Cups

Of course...
can't tell her that

Pagan Like Pound

He touches me like Odysseus
 explores the nether Charybdis, knowing
 conquer or die.
As Jason he make a brazen fleece of
 legs, lips, breast
and I, as tamed Medusa, bow, head in the lap of great Perseus
he will be my Paris
 abandon, abscond, and hide
 smuggled like gold, but still the thing
My siren call quelled to whisper
 playing Hippolyta to his heroic Eurymachus
Now I lay
 Penelope prone in the chapel of masters
Looking sweetly into the eyes of boy mistresses and misplaced whores
 proclaiming them angels

The South and Myself

Dear Mr. Hughes,

My South is no minstrel show
She teems with vibrancy
 Razes and Breeds
 August in tradition
 The past, the wonder, the growth
She stretches branches laden with fruit
 The citrus of anger, berries of joy
By nature intends no harm
She moves to depths of wondrous darkness
Never forgetting the light of future
Through misguided children
She embraces the peanut butter in my skin
 The lean of my eyes
 Cinnamon kissed raspberry mouth
I love her Langston
She is no whore, no mistress, she is my lady
I claim her over white sheets and rebel yells
 She belongs to me

Claim

My heaven is bathed in the blood of the Glorious Dead
Drenched in sweat fallen from backs forced low, eyes beat lean
A land of too small chains and dirt floors, of walls streaked in shit
 A warm sea of salted whips, ripped flesh, and murmur
The seraphim whisper their loathing to me in my dreams
 Get out they tell me go home
They come at me with teeth made sharp by paper laws
 They eat at me and call it tradition
This ground has earned my fury, but I will not oblige it
I will walk streets of paper bag brown, and wet my feet in ritual
Sing hosannas to the beauty of old Dixie way, and wash her clean with kink filled hair
I will not hate that which kin has created
Cannot put low that which such sacrifice has made
My heaven is bathed in the blood of the glorious dead
And I am their proud descendent

Falling Asleep while Staring at the Orion Nebula, Half-Listening to the Ramblings of an Astronomer

We are the death of the stars
The dust and power of supernovae,
Who unlike Mayan ancients,
do not yet again become stars

We form anew in heat, sweat, gravity.
Each cell, once caressed by force and fire
Now cradled in soft carbon, rests

But perhaps they are that nirvanic end light
Reclaiming substance once lost, once isolated
Now found. Strewn across galaxies alight and bated,
To be broken, and gathered, and revived once more.

First Week

Am I suppose to get this

Unattainable objectives

Eternal cogs wallow

Pedagogy? What the fuck is pedagogy?

Indecipherable syllabi

(That is subject to hourly changes, so stay up!)

Wading through a syllabic sea

I seem to have misplaced the “isms” memo

Truly,

that can't be a word

Four years, no sustenance

What the hell am I doing

Hands up, aching me me me

Neil Armstrong in panties

First in four centuries

No pressure

New Glory

The Nigerian says he loves my hair.

As I lay, listening more to accent than words
he fingers my copper corkscrews
tracing my lineage through their waves.
Only Americans have this hair.

Its free, he says, so individual your hair.

I smile, bullshit sounds better with an accent
*No really, he laughs, an Irishmen is an Irishmen even on English soil
but only American blacks have hair this way*

irony, the glory of oppression in each strand
burnt bent cotton streaked with red
head at war
ebony Sicilian locks wrestling with golden Irish spirals
thick African kinks overcome Germanic roots
American pie

Relaxer

Blanche DuBois knew nothing of suffering
Never got addicted to that creamy crack

The lighter the brighter,

Never sat under heaters for two hours,
dozing off ,burning her forehead over and over and over

Oh for the blush of youth now gone.... HA!

Oh! for white girl hair.

staring at boxes of beaming black women toting “new and improved formulas”

the straighter the better.

Don't wash it for a week

Can't scratch it for three days

Be still for six hours

But it will only burn for a minute

The beauty is worth the pain

Ms. Scarlett, never knew the yearning for “good” hair
Indian and Korean locks adorning the crowns of B*A*P's

Don't grab it, grab the ass

‘cause if you grab the hair the sex is over

Now do I need to base you ‘cus this lye might burn?
My hair now has the chemical properties of a car battery,

But don't you look lovely

Black hair is big business,
southeast India's largest export,
the largest growth industry in every Korea town on US soil
and a rite of passage

But nobody knows what it is

“Liberal” Lover

*He said he wanted a black girl, baby
Oh but all he got was me
Said he wanted a black girl now y'all
Oh but all he got was me
Wanted himself an African priestess
got a girl from Miss'ippi*

He told me he wanted a modern Cleopatra, a woman that blended the mysticism of the Nile with the pragmatism of the American frontier. I told him Cleopatra was Mesopotamian and Greek and the closest she got to the Nile was the view from her summer palace. Asked me to be his Nubian muse, I reminded him I was born in Whitehaven , with lines running deeper in Southern soil than his Irish blood could fathom. I could ride before I could walk. Shot squirrels on horseback with the gun my grandfather used. Cotton patches and tobacco spit now hallowed ground. The vicious land of my kin. She is my home.

*Turned twenty two just yesterday, now
Started thinking to myself
I said I turned twenty two just yesterday, baby
Started talking to myself
Don't want no more liberal lover.
Gonna find somebody else*

Stella Says

*“The actor has to develop his body. The actor has to work on his voice.
But the most important thing the actor has to work on is his mind.”*

-Stella Adler

The beginning of truth is knowing what’s in your pockets, and to be aware of the smell of icing when frosting imaginary cupcakes. To know the bouquet of death is a putrid sweetness filled with the whispers of those who remain, and that gray is a color for amateurs.

Practice feeling until it becomes memory, and life can begin. Remember the “is” must never outweigh the “why”. And the best simply know how to breathe.

How much of this is life.

ASSSSKat Riffs

Take it and run, that's how it all goes forward.
Grab the yellow spotted elephant and play a riff by Yardbird, with the trunk.
Become Bacall for a Bogey that sounds closer Dirty Harry than Humphrey.
Deliver the twin tadpoles of a sixty-year-old man.
The first rule of improv is the "yes/and".

Slow down to can keep up.
The lilt at the finish of a declaration indicates valley girls not queries.
Take no offense when handed the hoe, just bend down and till.
Be prepared for the things not yet known.
The second rule of improv is "actions of others before thoughts of mine".

Don't think.
Be nothing more than they can see.

Leap from the second city into the Babylonian bedlam
And one day, when the show ends, you'll get to say your name.

The LARPerS

They rise
Oozing out of cubicles,
from the basement depths of I.T. departments,
faces aglow with Mac light

They flood the forests of football fields
storm the beaches of high school gymnasiums
transmogrifying Styrofoam into steal, alchemy

I call upon chaos to cause critical wounds

They know the spells of resurrection
The secret formulas of life and death

Five packs of light and I grant thee healing, rise

Their world had rules
Each swing has a number
Each potion a place
They know all the ways to die

I summon the fallen, AWAKEN comrades

Yet we mock their passion
We laugh at those with the bravery to make fantasies real
The ones dissatisfied with dice and paper
Seeking to create the worlds they see in their heads

Worlds of chivalry and valor
of cleverness and guile
Arise sir knight, you are monster no more
worlds where the smart guys win
and the choice to be a monster is your own

A world of their own making
A world that feels like a home

Inkubbus

God-self Loose

I'm wooing you

pulling you down into my page

falling closer

finally

to me

Here where my lyric is law

Where pens do as hands do

Interlaced strokes up peaks, into valleys

In this province of ink

I find you

Create us

blossom

Taste you in rhythm

Imbibe you in prose

Unleashing the divine in the meek

possibility of we

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Vita

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