



# ROOTS & CULTURE



# ROOTS & CULTURE WINTER 2001

Co-Editors-in-Chief:  
La Marr Jurelle Bruce  
Anthony Jason Morales

Literary Editors:  
Marcus Anthony Hunter  
Samirah Umarah Raheem  
Gisela Telis

Visual Art Editors:  
Latham Thomas  
D'Lonra Ellis

Art Direction + Layout:  
D'Lonra Ellis  
Latham Thomas

Business Manager:  
Eric Scott

Cover + Guidance:  
D'Lonra Ellis  
Eugene Lee

End Papers:  
© Rajiah Williams

Production:  
Rolling Press  
15 Denton Place  
Brooklyn, NY 11215  
718 625 0917 T  
718 625 0669 F

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rootsandculture@columbia.edu

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## Editor's Note

La Marr J. Bruce

Imagine, if you will, the warriorpoet: that glorious myth made flesh who designs manifestos in meter. Envision the artist who synthesizes beauty and purpose—and knows, better yet, that there need not be distinction. Listen to the voice that launches men into fury with three words—lulls them to peace in the next clause. Those words leap into men's minds like bullets, lightening, waterfalls: but land like cool mists, butterfly wings, and breastmilk onto newborn's lips. This is the warriorpoet, who speaks our pain and sings our joy until we believe that the words are or pain and joy made flesh. Until we believe we are the poem: we fall in line, fall in rhythm, fall in verse.

But when did this being come to life...? Perhaps when king Solomon wrote love songs to God: faith carved his faith in lightening across sacred scrolls. Maybe it happened when Mohammed's followers declared him to be righteous poet, as he captured Mecca. Surely, it was long before Nina Simone moaned Black Power into onlookers with a voice like an ache...long before Robert Nesta Marley demanded that we chant down Babylon—that we crumble a city with song.

In the midst of war, well-intentioned artists often rush to enlist as warriorpoets. They wonder: should we be congregating in public squares shouting beams of benevolence, or allegedly righteous rage into the sky? Or, instead: should we claim our right to artistic self-indulgence, greedily clutching the privilege to create for self, to disregard what's going on, to recklessly proclaim we don't give a fuck about war...?

Ultimately, we need not choose between some proposed vision of the warrior artist, and a fundamental commitment to self. You see, every breath inhaled, every word uttered or scribbled, is a sort of battle: sometimes effortless, and sometimes hard fought. There is something at stake in each poem, sketch, musing, and expression. Roots ultimately serves as a forum for waging battles in a prolonged war that didn't start in September and won't end until the world does. This is the war to convert that chaos inside these minds into words and images...to lay in all down on the page, or to send it freewheeling into the air. To release it into the universe...Godspeed.



20 of that it  
for your vcr suckface  
c'mon I'll light you

who got it at 2  
thirsty for trees taste of love  
light that ez po

why is anyone  
out this late crawl get lo eat  
drift blend watch time turn

watch for those police  
fuckers don't care roll up to curb  
Tuesday Thursday hot

Keep that on the low  
Popo be on the creep slow  
quick central booking

Tu tiene phosphoro  
I need a light to spark this  
right mm hmm that's it

but on point til roach  
smoked out down to fingernails  
get yellow turn brown

Anthony Morales

# Mission haikus



© Mari Nieves Alba

## For J.T.

Rachel Toliver

1.  
You have dealt your words  
with a flourish:  
careless, careless.  
You shuffle, flicking through  
shimmering, stacked piles  
of possibility.
2.  
A shot glass  
pooling its measure of burning,  
its bright eye of bourbon.  
You are  
still hung over  
or not yet drunk.  
I should not have come here tonight.
3.  
You crack the cards  
and sort to absent players:  
the red-laced backs arch  
and ripple under your curled hands.  
You rifle:  
all the suits quiver  
in a shallow ecstasy.  
There are pairs in that untidy, animated blur;  
stern figures grasping swords with fourfold hands;  
omens of shifting bodies;  
scepters bright with jewels and justice;  
commerces and departures.
4.  
In a moment swift  
as the sliding of a Vegas eye,  
you deal a question, a paradox:  
*How is it that  
the double-bladed knives of poetry  
cut to conceal and cut to reveal?*  
You want each of the two hands,  
a cloaked, trumped truth-  
you want mystery flipped face-up,  
prone on the table.
5.  
You hold a fan of splayed cards:  
its arc smooth as your shoulder,  
smooth as the downy line between forehead and hair,  
smooth as your eyebrow, which frames me  
in the suspension of your question.

6.  
How I hated your game once,  
its rules of cages and symmetry,  
its awkward, bent structures.
7.  
No longer.  
You cannot outbid, you cannot bluff,  
you cannot match your verdict.  
You have revealed your hand.  
And now we deal in love, we deal  
in love.

Willie Perdomo

## Word to Everything I Love

If I told you  
that your woman  
was cheating on you  
and you asked me  
if I was real  
I would say, Word.  
Word to everything  
I love  
Because that's what  
the kids on my block say  
when they want you  
to believe them  
more than you believe  
in life itself

These poets who  
don't even know it  
will not put their palms  
on a stack of bibles  
or swear on the soul  
of their fake dead  
baby cousin

If you find out  
that they're lying  
you can take everything  
they love.

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© Latham Thomas

# summertime

Nisha Mistry

once upon a summertime, i was diagnosed  
with a case of  
'Nisha In Her Element'

a condition that sent me to the moon in my sleep  
and to the sun while awake;  
at which time  
my mind and breath taught each other to dance  
and each became wildly jealous of the other;  
and my heart ballooned to five (six? seven?) times its meager size;  
stars were stuck in my spit;  
my soul-coal was burning and  
soaking up the skyline  
bidding her  
a fated farewell

the ailment forced beats into my skin like damp stamp to ink  
filled my skull with hypnosis  
my throat with loss  
my eyes wet with magma  
...pumped forgiveness through my blood

(do blood and forgiveness abhor each other, like oil and water? well, do they?)

and then somehow i grew raven wings  
...that flew me back to the beat

and i paid no mind to the swelling of my lungs,  
the hot air they held hostage;  
cos i was bein' fed nuthin but love and respect

then! i was free, smiling and so sure!  
*back again and back again and back again*

hey. it was nuthin, man, these cases are curable.  
it was only Lineage juicing the soul, induced by summertime and song;  
and i (of all people!) had been infected; sorely, deeply;

memory bit me on the neck like mosquito poison

*desh aur pardesh aur desh aur pardesh aur desh desh desh*  
all the way till i found home  
and home

is always  
where the beat is

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we're supposed to ressurect some struggle...  
re-assemble some puzzle...  
redeem a people through this music...  
as access to our own shit  
is granted only through cloudy peep-holes  
nature co-opted  
too blind to stop it  
no, not blind  
laaaazy  
vision hazy hidden behind clouds of smoke  
choking on guzzled pipe dreams  
and schemes to make millions  
off ass jigglin  
jigglin  
jigglin (go 'head baby)

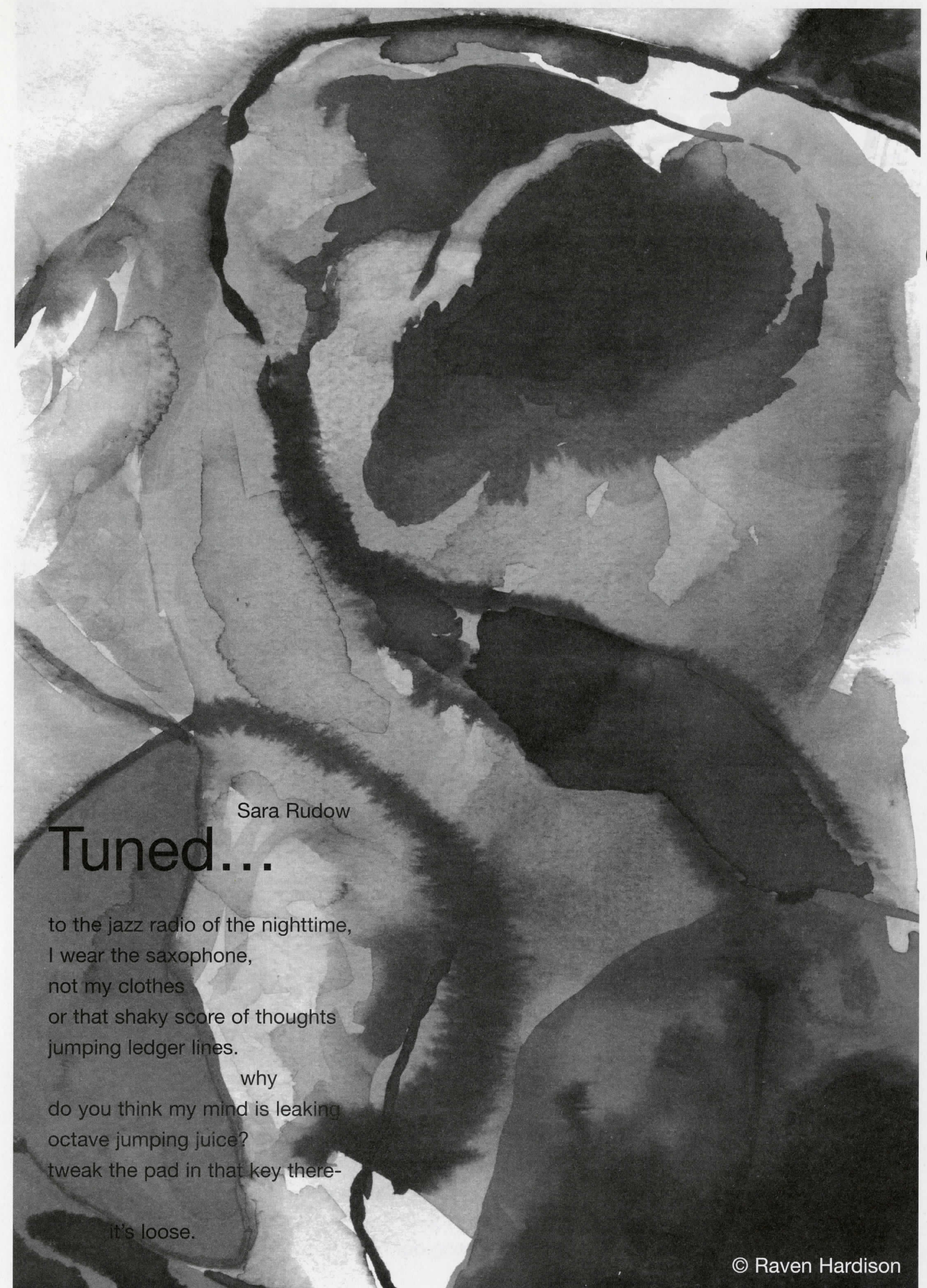
now niggas claimin that  
their guns are loaded...  
what of the shady smiles  
and turning cheeks  
the shuffling feets/  
do yo' stuff  
stumbling like mantan  
moreland  
more problems  
heaped on the backs of baby mamas  
their cries  
denied round midnight  
as men creep from the underground  
cast in moonlight  
against an ominous black back-  
ground...

makes one wanna scream  
when its becoming so eeeeeaaaasy  
to smile  
take invasive presence lightly  
but the joke's on us  
new yoke round that neck  
new boots lickin that ass  
and the whips still lash:  
nigga betta dance  
if ya wanna save yo life  
nickel and diming this reality  
investing in mystic fallacies like  
shared struggle  
when money wouldn't be caught dead  
seated at our table for sunday dinner  
at the conception of this so-called sinner's song

like a light lullaby  
gone dead wrong:  
hip hop's a baby  
snatched from mother's breast  
bounced on its bottom  
and soon to be beaten

people say  
i'm hatin  
cause i  
couldn't cop a  
record deal

Samirah Raheem



Sara Rudow

Tuned...

to the jazz radio of the nighttime,  
I wear the saxophone,  
not my clothes  
or that shaky score of thoughts  
jumping ledger lines.

why  
do you think my mind is leaking  
octave jumping juice?  
tweak the pad in that key there-

it's loose.

© Raven Hardison

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# Consume

Adaoha Hamilton

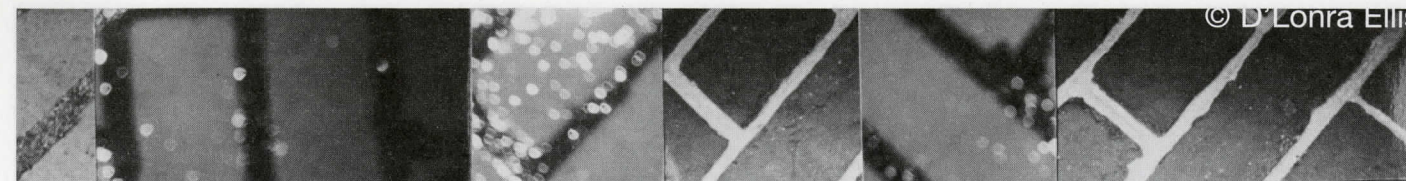
## setting:

Dr. Lechter's office during therapy session

## characters:

Chantel:  
Attractive African-American woman in early twenties.  
Well dressed in contemporary clothing.

Dr. Lechter:  
Middle-Aged European-American male psychiatrist.  
Dressed in suit and tie.  
Remains silent throughout play.



© D'Lonra Ellis

CHANTEL: Sometimes I bite him when we have sex.

*(Lights up. Chantel reclining in armchair, legs crossed and hands clasped. Dr. Lechter is seated across from her, listening intently)*

He thinks it's kinky... or cute. He doesn't realize that I'm trying to draw blood.

I hate him. I hate him in a way that is so passionate that it can only manifest itself in the semblance of love. But it's not the I hate your guts type of thing. It's just not that deep. I don't know if I'm explaining this right, but it's... it's a purely superficial hatred, if that makes any sense. Let me try it this way. I don't hate him as much as I hate things about him, like his skin, his hair, his eyes, nose and those awful thin lips that can't even return my false affection. I guess you can say it was hate at first sight, you know. Did I ever tell you how we met? Ok, so I'm at this bar after work, right. With my co-workers, a pretty mixed group, relatively speaking, and I see this guy. I mean he's gorgeous, in the Greek god sense of the word. This golden boy. So not my type. I mean, excluding tv, I've never even looked twice at white men before, except for maybe Steve in accounting, that's a fine ass white boy. Anyway, something about this one catches my eye, and I guess I was feeling especially angry that day. It doesn't take a lot to get me especially angry. But I'm looking at him, this Adonis, and I'm thinking, "there is a man I would love to hate". And I made up my mind right then. And when I make up my mind, it's over. It's done, right.

So I catch his eye and I smile at him. I smile at him just to give him a preview of the pretty white teeth that will tear into his chest and bite into his pulsating heart. You think I'm being dramatic, but I'm not.

Anyway, I politely excuse myself from my party and make my way over to the bar, very purposeful like. And I know he's watching me as I walk, 'cause remember I caught his eye before, but I'm acting as though I'm too good to return

the gaze, although really, it's not an act. So I finally reach him and I'm standing directly in front of him with my breasts practically touching his chest and I lean into him and say, do you like what you see? But he doesn't answer. He buys me a drink.

That same night I lure him into my bed. It was pretty easy. All white men have these fantasies of black women that they won't admit to during daylight hours. Even you Dr. Lechter. Come on, admit it. When your grunting on top of your wife, you're wishing her moans were mine. It's not your fault really. It predates slavery, the sexualization of the black woman. You can't honestly tell me that of all these sessions you've never once thought of my pretty lips wrapped around your dick. Ok, you're right, this is not about you. So he was average, right. But he thought I was the best thing since chocolate, literally. I think he ate me out expecting me to taste like it. And when its over he's talking that, "oh you're the best I ever had," and I'm

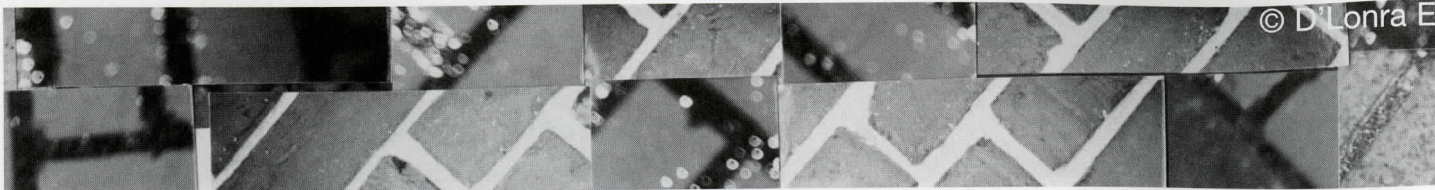
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thinking, "what, 'cause I moved my hips a little." And that's when I realize he wasn't having sex with

me, but all those images he or society had created and has been feigning for since the age of 12. Meanwhile I'm giving it right back

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to him saying, "oh yeah baby that was so good, I never came like that before, blah blah blah," whatever. Where am I going with this? Yeah, so making him want to fuck me was simple. Making him love me to the extent where I could devour his insides and he would scream in agony, beg me to stop, but never attempt to run away, that would prove to be a little more difficult.

*(Stands and begins to pace, speaking with increasing urgency)*

So I put all my energy into it. It was like I was obsessed. I couldn't eat, I couldn't sleep. I couldn't work properly 'cause I was spending all my time thinking about him or rather how to get him. I had him physically, but I had to make it more than that. I mean I know I'm attractive, but it was as if I needed his love as some sort of validation, of I don't know... whatever. Reason was telling me to leave him, this whole situation, alone, that I would get caught up. My girlfriends put in their two cents too. But I had this uncontrollable urge to bring him trembling to his knees to worship me, his exotic goddess in this make believe ceremony of redemption.

Then I would strike. And his blood would taste sweet to me, like revenge. Revenge for all the things and issues I've ever had to deal with in my life. Revenge for the rape of my mothers, for the centuries of oppression, for the sexual objectification and stereotypification, if that's even a word. Revenge for the overwhelming propaganda that whiteness is the only acceptable form of beauty that will force my future daughters to look into mirrors with down-cast eyes and my future sons to pursue the pale flesh of a blue-eyed lover. I would drive each tooth into his skin like a flag of reclamation. Reclamation of my pride, my honor. His carcass would become the land I tread upon and I would wipe my shoes off on his face.

*(Sits and resume composure)*

But I never get that far. Every time I go to sink my white teeth into the taut whiteness of his neck, I taste a bitter-

ness that keeps me from ever breaking the skin.

So instead of devouring his soul in some ancient, savage, cannibalistic ritual, I bite him when we have sex. He calls it making love, but you can't make something you don't feel. Maybe making hatred, no, making memories because he doesn't love me and I'm repeating the history of my mothers. Different scene, same script, updated with the necessary political correctness necessary for any modern interracial relationship. I play the role of a black whore, wishing and waiting for his love so I can dig past his rib cage with my fingernails, rip out the beating mass, and swallow it whole. Then I'll dance around in his flayed skin, praising and singing we have overcome.

*(Pauses thoughtfully. Claps hands)*

So tell me Dr. Lechter, do you think I'm crazy insane or crazy about this white boy. It's one and the same anyway.

*(Start fade out)*

Right, Dr. Lechter?

Dark

© Veronica Liu



## Musings

Sheree Renée Thomas

Under the mapou tree, time flows violently  
 In ancient circles over craggy cliffs  
 then stops and drops  
 like rotten wood  
 in an abandoned arc of shade  
 mami wata's eldest daughter sits  
 avoiding the blistering blaze  
 her thoughts a velvet curve  
 of twinning breasts  
 nestled hard against her  
 heartless chest  
 she remembers when butterflies  
 blessed the wings  
 of an aging wanganegresse  
 remembers the sharp-edged men  
 and their dull, endless desires  
 desires that do not speak  
 petty longings that do not forget  
 man's unclaimed treasures  
 lost, all lost, in her watery depths.

Inspired by Kerry James Marshall's "Black Mermaid" painting

## wanga

Sheree Thomas

under the mapou  
 rain tastes sweet as mangoes  
 tears are tangled roots  
 your kiss burns my tongue

## mapou wine

Sheree Thomas

I wake to hear  
 your breathing  
 a wet whisper  
 where thighs begin  
 your tongue  
 a startled shade of green  
 in the night  
 the Iwa walked along  
 the sleeping curve of our spines  
 they dance  
 as I dance for you now  
 with painted toes  
 digging in the moist earth  
 in these uncovered roots  
 rest the soles of spirit signs  
 sealed with honey dust  
 sprinkled with morning dew  
 I wake  
 to sweet tremors unfolding  
 beneath bare feet  
 my big toe dripping  
 mapou wine  
 down your throat.

bio: Sheree Renée Thomas, a Cave Canem poetry fellow, lives in New York with two daughters, ages four and eleven.

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Rice & Peas

Adoaha Hamilton



© Latham Thomas

What does it mean when you're the only people in the Americas who call it rice and peas unlike backward people who call it peas and rice or worse rice and beans and arroz y frijoles?

It means saying you're going to Jamaica and people think you're staying in a resort with sandy white beaches but really you're going "back a yard," 'cause visiting family's not the same. And there are no sandy beaches in Kingston 9 where gutter water runs green and mad men wear juice boxes on their feet. And when you do go to beaches with people who look like you, the sand is interrupted by jagged rocks and the escovitché fish and festival is better than the water. And instead of staying at a five star hotel you stay at your grandma's house, who random people call grandma—people who aren't your cousins, but call her so out of respect. And she's considered well off because she has electric light in addition to the oil lanterns. And you consider her rich too because she has a ginep tree growing in the backyard, an ackee and panganut tree growing in the front, a dog named Tarzan and plenty kittens to

play with (so you save some of your red herring just for them). And she's rich to you because there is a front and a back veranda with so many places to sit and eat june plums, star apples, and mangoes. And if Daddy is there when the street vendor comes by, he'll buy you spicy shrimp that is so hot and burns your tongue so bad, but you don't drink water to prove how tough you are—just like a yardie. And if you sit on the porch long enough, more vendors will come by selling all sorts of things like gleaners and dry ice as you run into the house, through the beads hanging from the door, past the settees, into the kitchen to ask your aunty how can dry ice be dry if it's made of water. But the answer vanishes in the steam rising from her pot of rice and peas as you race back out into the yard past the stiffening clothes hanging from the line. The same clothes that must come down with the night to be brought into the house, the windows shut and doors locked, because gun men or thieves or both can come over the cement walls topped with broken pieces of colored glass. And the heat is so oppressive. But you still sleep with a bed sheet covering your entire body, even your head, because to you mosquitos are much worse than gun men.

So instead of packing sundresses and sunhats, you pack toilet paper and rice. And when you return to the states you don't fill its place with "yah mon" t-shirts, but rather hard-do bread, Tia Maria, and scotch bonnet peppers which Daddy now grows in a pot in the kitchen. Because you don't go back that often. Because grandma has died and they sold her house in Kingston 9. Because most of the family is abroad now— London, Maryland, New York.

But now you're grown and tired of pasta and don't understand how a meal can be a meal without rice. So now you want to, no, need to learn how to make rice and peas. How much coconut milk to how much water and how much peas to how much rice, spring onion, and thyme. And your aunty tells you this over the phone because you are away at college and you cannot eat another pack of ramen noodles. And no matter how much reggae you play, how many carnivals you attend, or where on your wall you place the flag it's not the same. And your roommate glances up at that same flag and says "I went to Jamaica once, it's so beautiful," as she holds a mental picture exactly like the commercial you've both seen with long, blonde haired Caucasian people running across sandy white beaches bordering a bright blue sea with a manipulated version of Marley's overexploited *One Love* playing in the background:

Come to Jamaica and  
Feel Alright

And you respond "yes, it is beautiful," but you're not talking about a place, but a people, a culture, a way of life that's home to you like rice and peas.

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# Zulu Victory Over the British

Mikael Awake

“it is as if a library has burned to the ground” – an old saying (Alex Haley’s “Roots”)

A dark room  
and a voice.  
I don't know  
how the whole thing  
even like started,  
but probably the  
British and their  
imperial fuck – just  
brought them all the  
way to Africa to  
conquer and shit.

(Stupid fuckers. It just makes me so ashamed, you know.)

Right now, I just feel so informed cause I got all the information still in my head. There was this very interesting PBS documentary about it all. I can't for the life of me remember the name of the battle place though — it wasn't English, so it was pretty much impossible to pronounce. Something Zulu or...

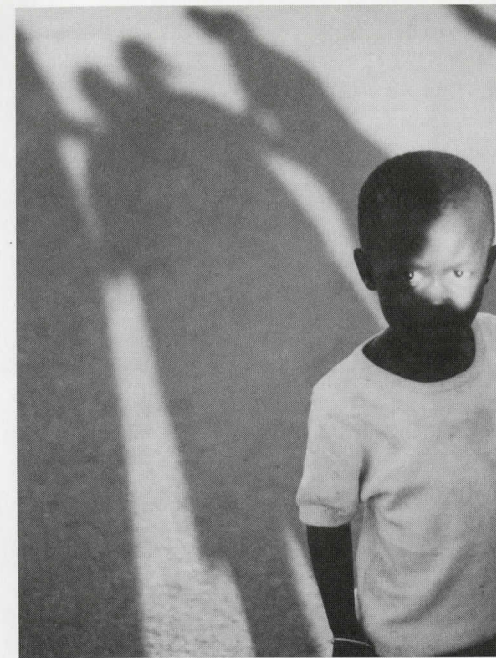
Anyway, so like the British were wearing these stuffy itchy suffocating looking red coats. They were called Redcoats, that's what they called the British, Redcoats, one word. The British thought they were pretty much sitting pretty on their own campgrounds, which were near the base of this like huge elevated plateau.

The ground looked all dead beige grassy desert, and the Zulus (they are such bad-asses) ain't taking no shit from nobody — even though they're all set to fight against the Redcoats with raw hide shields and tiny wooden spears. Can't you just see them tumbling down the hill, ranting and raving and flailing their muscley oily arms and

legs, like in the dramatic reenactment for TV, yelling stuff dubbed in English, like, “You Redcoats'll never win.” Or maybe just like, “Ne-ver!”

And after a few hours of fighting, the British coats stayed red, I guess, not with their own blood, not yet at least, but they got sprayed with the bloody guts of the fucking bad-ass insane Zulus. Ch-click... POW! They used Martini Henry, or maybe Henry Martini, rifles.

The first cling clang biff boom clash was a fucking lopsided Friday the 13th Jason slaughter massacre. The Zulus just threw themselves at the firing line of the British. Row after tribally decorated row — the Redcoats were probably



© Courtney Martin

thinking, like, “Uh, what are these idiot bush people doing? (No offense.) We got it made, you know!”

But yo, this is the best fucking part. The Zulu military wise men Shaman Buddhist yodas were on top of that elevated hill I was just telling you about. Little did the Redcoats know it, but the battle was already over.

The battle was already fucking over.

I swear, when I heard the PBS narrator say that shit I was like,

“Oh shit, these Zulus are bad ass!”

Not that that's surprising or remarkable that they did that or, I mean, just, I mean, very interesting to do a strategy like that. They were basically testing out all along what they were up against, you know, seeing like how much ammo they had and how they were setting up and stuff.

So I guess the test army — which is such a weird idea to think about, to just willingly blindly fucking end your life for the team, taking one for the gipper, like permanently. But the bad-ass Zulus didn't even shake in their boots, didn't even think like, “What good is all this? Why? Like, what does it all mean and shit?” That's why they were such bad asses. Cause now, scientists are finding out that the shit the medicine man was giving the Zulus to make them so fearless in such chaos — well, guess what it was?... A fucking absurd mixture of the basic stuff that's in weed, coke, morphine and shrooms (without all the pesky drowsiness afterwards). Heh-heh! Can't you just see a ripped hard ass Zulu in just his cloths and furs shooting up and hitting a bhong and doing lines all before he picks up his tiny little

spear, with a look in his eyes, like, “Don't fuck with me. I

am not to be fucked with.”

People said their eyes before battle just kind of glazed over like they were dead already.

I'm saying, I want some of that shit. Seriously.

But, anyway, I was saying.

Hmm... yeah —

Pretty much like that same night they attacked the Redcoats and just fucking, Heh-heh, speared the British to oblivion. (Ha!) And the British deserved that shit, man. I just get, like I get so mad when I think of how they could travel to another land and just do that to another obviously human being. I just don't have anything of that in me. It's just so — gosh, so hard for me to express how frustrating it all is. What do you think, like about that whole, uh, thing?

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Some say God be too unreal to believe  
too ordinary to be extraordinary

*So, I invite you to pray at the altar of my verses*

I invite you to engrave your sins upon my brow, singe them upon my chest  
somehow hoping to illuminate your vacant shadows lost in the wilderness...lost in darkness  
Somehow your acidic psalmody will persecute my existence in some breathlessly blue attempt to be red  
I chant for the faithless (x3)  
Your being trapped in this liquid logic moving across you like water  
falling upon your shoulders, piercing your pores and drinking of your soul  
i offer up an altar for lamentation  
let tears burn spaces below your feet , and open up places to discard you sorrows  
let sorrow sing from your eyes

*for, I invite you to pray at the altar of my verses*

See i speak for children who watched their mothers be beat down and sniff some substance to bring herself back  
up  
i speak for the children domesticated through domestic violence  
See I speak from those slums lower than projects, those places on which ghettoes make their homes, cause it is  
only from there can you really see heaven  
from the pavements and streets which are four walls, a bed and a bathroom  
scarred humility across my back, so I would remember the bliss of heaven

*So, i invite you to pray at the altar of my verses*

I breath into you regurgitated light so that redemption may somehow find a way to sacrifice your spirit  
some angelic entity offering up your existence for salvation  
a competition between the ethereal and the real to consume you and reoffer you at the same time  
I speak in dream-like revelations that appear while i am awake

my tongue falling upon my teeth in prophetic strokes that initiate themselves and that form into the gospel that I must offer you now

*I invite you pray at the altar of my verses*

verses which uniformly seek their own sanctification and the salvation of your lost shadow  
This shadow of extreme blackness

See this blackness is not some natural feature, for shadows are never black  
Shadows are colored of the ethereal only manifesting themselves through darkness in a means to demonstrate how God  
follows sharply behind

but your shadow's darkness is the consequence of nothingness, completely devoid of substance, actually consuming you as you walk  
You are imbalanced in some way which prevents your shadow's redemption and your light is lost

I chant for redemptive shadows vacated in illegitimate realities by the faithless (x3)

You have crucified your sin  
somehow lost yourself and are unable find the God which so closely followed your existence

See it is you who is invalid  
your invalidity illuminates my words and compels me

*to invite you to pray at the altar of my verses*

My tongue now swells for I speak of that which is written and soon it will shatter into jezebelian pieces to be consumed by the nothing-  
ness which follows you  
I kneel now to repent,  
to escape your consumption  
I must depart  
I must destroy my altar  
letting my verses disintegrate before you

Selah



The first time I let  
a man take me who was almost  
three times my age, I merely  
moved to the rhythm  
of his vacant moan, lifted  
my ass to his waiting desire,  
and swallowed  
the words  
that came to me as weaponry.

The colors of the room  
making me a little girl again,  
someone else's idea of woman  
and pleasure, and I  
making myself fit in  
with the baby blue beneath me  
and almost feeling sexy  
enough. I understand now  
that nudity and the erotic  
can betray you.

My mother's liquid laugh  
coming through my cracked frame  
as I bend over his cock. His name  
was Travis. We are past  
anonymity and the abstract  
telling of things.

On a cornered table, a camera rests  
along with dildos and wrappers  
and mistakes. I see my ass  
and hips in the tv screen.  
A crooked body reflection.  
I recognize it as my own as I  
improvise breath and think  
over and over again, it's just  
the body, it's not the soul.  
I swallow the burden  
of this brotherhood initiation  
as I leave, unsung and sorry.  
I am hung and gloriously close  
to death.

And all you can think is  
how you want, in a way,  
to be a man. So maybe you  
fucked him for it. To be convinced  
of your validity. To know  
that you can make it. Past the memory  
past recollection, past future  
fast-forward to gather the enemies and  
have them over, bury your name  
and submit to language.  
Your name on his tongue will burn you  
but so will being a woman  
in the world we know. You can  
still survive with this in your blood.

You can still survive  
with this in your blood.  
It's magic, it's war, you're  
a warrior, a trick, never broke  
after a bad decision. And you will  
learn  
that as a white man, there are no  
bad decisions. As a white man  
whose taken off his clothes and  
found himself  
between a colored woman's legs.  
This sort of thing is to be expected,  
it's to be taken in and enjoyed.

I stop him and ask why  
we are doing what we are doing,  
why he is suddenly  
holding his dick in his hand  
and asking me  
to put my mouth on it.  
We all get turned on when it's hot,  
he says. And I admit to myself  
that I hadn't stopped him sooner. I  
settle  
for saying something like,  
I won't put it in my mouth  
without a condom. I half-smile  
for the sake of feeling dignified  
because  
after all, I'd put myself there,  
played the whore.

It's been done. We are familiar  
with being in exile from ourselves.  
It could've been worse.  
It had to be simple and silent  
that night. That night liberty came  
from walking out of a stranger's  
Brooklyn apartment alive.

And, it's amazing, how we can  
still survive with this in our blood.  
That night I watched myself and  
I watched all of us  
become object, split-open fruit  
and no longer believed  
this could ever  
be considered art.

# Allowance

Sherisse Alvarez





When the last shot had been fired  
and he could feel the hot spinning shred  
of metal exit the back of his jaw  
taking shattered slivers of molar  
and planting them firmly in the floor  
below his face  
Luis dozed off

broken ribs and ruptured spleen didn't hurt  
so much anymore and the chafing  
of the handcuffs  
was only distant memory  
even with the blood bright with oxygen  
still leaking slow down his fingers

his right cheek warm  
the bright faces above him  
fading like white noise into the distance  
he only knew he'd been stomped  
one last time

## True Story - Roger Bonair-Agard real visions

because he saw the black boot  
come down on his knee

a peaceful darkness set in as he heard  
the final epithets from their lips

his abuelita had always  
shaken her head when  
his mother beat him as a boy  
he never cried and abuelita  
would suggest some other discipline  
be tried

"the boy is too strong mi'ja - too stubborn  
a beating wont do him nothing"

this day he would end up  
bleeding through four holes  
spirit still dancing to the EKG's slow mambo  
the beeps ages apart now  
as old curanderas burn candles  
and sing for his dancing spirit  
while white hands wring nervously  
outside his hospital door - fingers crossed furiously  
hoping to slow the spirit's dance  
exerting pressure on their own  
strange side of the force - ghouls wrestling  
with the curanderas' flickering candles  
hoping to free this trembling  
evidence to the wind

2.  
At Luis' felony trial for assaulting  
four officers of the law,  
possession of firearms and  
possession of narcotics  
with conspiracy to distribute  
a court-appointed lawyer nods off  
at the defense table, annoyed  
at the client who will not allow him  
his opportunity for a record-breaking  
twenty-fifth consecutive successful plea-bargain  
and the set of steak knives it will get him.

Luis swivels - still stubborn  
shifting in his second-hand wheelchair  
wondering how he will possibly come by  
pain killers and physical therapy in County  
hoping that if he leans a little  
the still lodged metal pressing up  
against his spine will not hurt so much

Ma is staring straight ahead  
she has not eaten in days  
and the austere patterns of wood-grain  
on the judge's bench are starting  
to come alive for her  
abuelita rocks constantly moaning like  
a trapped animal - fingering a rosary  
the disappointing crucifix hanging  
limply on her lap

25 to life is a sentence that echoes  
especially when it comes with an authoritative lec-  
ture  
gavel's rap startling the court-appointee awake  
prosecution smugly accepting  
congratulations like Caesar's laurels  
a cheering phalanx of blue-clad antagonists  
prompting another few gavel swings from the  
bench

Luis turns around to tell abuelita  
he is sorry but she has already fainted  
Ma is still staring. The shapes on the bench  
have started dancing around the courtroom  
it is a grotesque ritual involving fire  
and the eating of human flesh  
and Ma is transfixed

the candles at home flicker  
for an instant and are gone  
he tries to move toward abuelita  
but the handcuffs are tight against  
the wheelchair handles chafing hard  
on the scar tissue at his wrists.  
Besides, the bailiff is already wheeling  
him away down the gauntlet of jeering  
mocking officers snarling at his broken frame  
straining on their legal leashes like dogs.

Behind him the fire and cannibal ritual  
violins along at fever intensity.  
Ma is entranced.

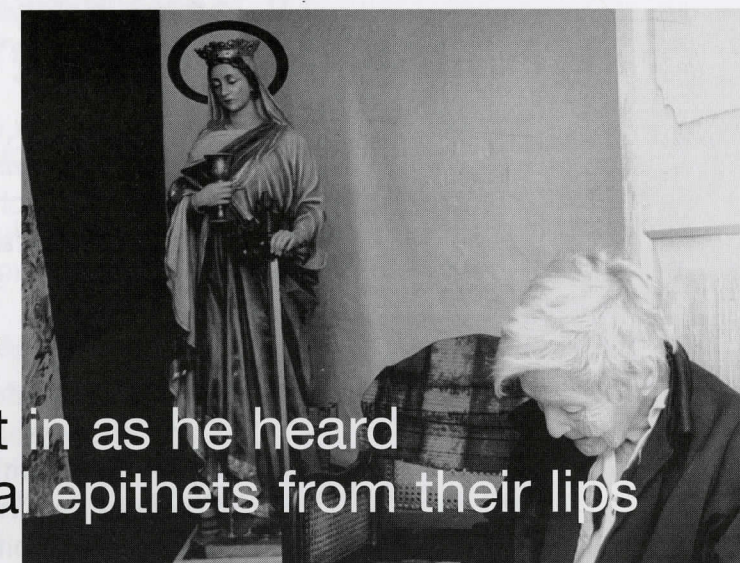
3.  
Sometimes the truth, hidden  
for so long sees the light of day  
and emerges timidly - scared for so long  
of human voices, it flexes slowly  
unaware of its own awesome power.

A District Attorney's investigation, prompted by  
an incumbent's wish for votes and power  
yields scandal and enough pressure to scare  
one police officer to turn state's evidence.  
The testimony of the lone officer frees  
one hundred incarcerated falsely.  
His boot is the last one to come down  
in that dingy hallway seven years before  
36 Assistant District Attorneys and support staff go about the  
work  
of archeologists excavating entire graves  
of skeletons from the closets of the LAPD  
freeing thousands more South Central  
Latino and African spirits.  
Among the hundred, a still young man  
with impossibly muscular arms  
and a wound like starburst  
on his lower jaw goes immediately free  
(so obvious is his innocence) or as free  
as the forearms propelling the state owned

a peaceful darkness set in as he heard  
the final epithets from their lips

wheelchair will allow him  
Later abuelita will tell his son - her great-grandson  
about the smile his father  
wheeled with him out of the press conference  
"como la luna mi'jo" she will say "your papa  
was never bitter, never hated those men"  
no one will talk about his Ma and the  
dancing cannibal spirits hat consumed her visions  
even though abuelita will visit her regularly  
bringing clean underwear, her favorite foods  
and learning a new vocabulary  
'delusional' and 'episodes' and 'progress'  
before she boards the bus to head home  
only abuelita seems to know the grotesque  
dance her daughter sees is real

they will talk about smiles  
and she will teach him  
how to say rosary and light candles  
how to believe and how to make spirits dance  
when the strong do not know  
how to cry



© Latham Thomas

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# Ad for Love

Anthony Morales

What I'm About

Understanding listening  
Unlocking fears honesty flattery  
I'll be a mirror to your beauty  
day or night stand in front of me  
& reflect

Truth be told I'm shy  
much rather write words  
& fantasize than touch right away  
so what's good?

I'm going through revolutions  
like the earth spins see light  
in my future's shadows  
storms in story's mornings

Clouds are my conscience  
If I was cumulus I'd be invisible  
til afternoon school's out push the infrared  
sun to the surface & raindrop symphonies  
to soothe your soul to sleep

Let's conversate  
Can I show you something?  
Open doors with no handles  
City lights are night's fruit  
Orange juice bittersweet news nectar  
Situation selector searches chooses  
paths opportunities  
Heart went from local to express  
to the pharcyde  
*she just passing me by*

Not exactly  
Ms. Right because perfection is empty  
utopian desire like white picket fences on suburb mansion

& I'm gambling  
with slim chances starving pockets  
& a bass heavy heart

so I yearn for the undiscovered doña  
who dances in my dreams

I'm down to experiment  
but a heaven sent yours only queen  
one that's ready to hear *A Love Supreme*  
knows you the underdog still on your team  
refreshing like a morning beam  
through the window shade

or a coco cherry piragua on a summer's day

I could drink your thoughts  
& taste morisoñando  
despues de hablando  
estoy mirando  
tu cintura mas profunda  
than the flower nectars  
I would combine in every line

I'm on some  
inevitable unforgettable

like sun breaking smiles on streets slow strolls in shadows  
like on my back looking at the sky stars remind me of my destiny  
like dulce de leche with rainbow sprinkles  
like blue daffodils forget me not flower petals in your path  
like rainbows after storm  
like the first song in the morning  
like ruffled sheets sticky skin juicy lips  
like notes in class passed around the fifth row  
like Valentine's in Kindergarten Bzz be mine  
I chu chu choose you  
like I could wish to absorb you  
for a few more seconds

moles on cheeks  
nail polish peel  
stray hair from pony tail  
shadow of neck  
ears open/LAUGH/nose scrunch  
RELEASE/exposed ankle  
KISS/lips shine  
LOOK/eyes hope  
toes curlin' arch wrinkles

If we could just talk you'd see it would be so simple

like notes in class  
passed around the  
fifth row

do you like me  
yes? or no?

like Valentine's in  
Kindergarten Bzz be  
mine I chu chu  
choose you

do you like me yes? or no?

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Thursday, November 08, 2001

econometric abstractions cause chain reactions in gray matter neurons shooting shatter false perceptions correcting economic misconceptions heteroskedastic residual plots detection in the variation i try to block a yawn and peak at the clock before these regressions have me stressing to much this is first order boredom autoregressive depressive errors that require autocorrelation for correction with new notation and the creation of new variables this serial sensory perception can't be serious can it

Tuesday, October 30, 2001

its late night laundry and linear algebra for me sweet dreams my sleepytime trio blanket bed and pillow hello vista views of the smiling sun and the moaning moon i return to your red-eyed embrace i wish i could get some shut eye

mer on the cheek goodnight while fall leaves leave branches bare falling at the rate of snowflakes they fellowship with their fallen comrades on fading grass lawns and gray walk ways traveling on breezes and talking in a rustled rustic tongue i wish i knew o' the conversations they must have as they wisk pass my frosty feet

it's not fair but this is pensacola interstate fair

Wednesday, October 17, 2001

i wish we had some more summer left over it's getting cold outside and i'm homesick again each pass-

this morning from my building it looked more like dusk than dawn the height of the structures in the distance made me feel like i was right underneath the clouds like i could reach out and grab them if i wanted or at least jump and touch them i miss the wonder of my southern sunrise there the sky seems worlds away the distance makes you feel so secure though like you're being watched over by a loved one the cool morning air hugs your limbs and the sweet smell of dew drops kiss your nose i miss that embrace and affection

Thursday, October 11, 2001

the pretty colors flutter before my eyes like butterflies, brighter than any highlighter against sky white paper. i paint scenes unseen of an undreamed reality (as if it could be captured by six crayola crayons). each individual object is an individual project. i scribble mostly what my pale

degree days we played in backyards and side lots even when drenched by raindrops we never stopped we talked on long walks by kicking acorns and rocks down quiet streets shadows growing at our young feet as the sun spent less time with my eyes i never cared to remember that brisk november weather when tight sweaters hugged my chest warmly and fall leaves fell and faded like memories we always had to rake up later

interesting...my thoughts for all to see (or not see) or see right through. i haven't much to say except that which could change

# A Southern Boy in a Northern City:

From the Shade of Pines to the Shadows of Highrises Silence is My Solace

Eric Scott

Tuesday, October 23, 2001

i study your quiet gestures quietly catching cursory glances of your likeness in windowpanes my heart feels the widow's pain recently bereaved of your love each transparent movement i monitor motionless mouthing sour somethings to your fading reflection this fantasy is fading into shades of forgetfulness "truth is stranger than fiction" my friend

Saturday, October 20, 2001

leaves trash and plastic bags circle in a whirlwind floating on sidewalks as destination prone pedestrians stroll along to their unknown destinies there is tragedy on these streets bottlenecked by traffic in choked throat thoroughfares too many words for narrow roads to hold or none to say on empty expressways

Friday, October 19, 2001

autumn arrived at dawn with a chilly smile and kissed sum-

ing gust whispers an old memory into my chilled skin it's good to hear about those good old days though i think it'll be time for a trip soon or at least a fall

Sunday, October 14, 2001

insomnia in a northern city i slept so soundly in my southern town time shrinks slowly to the size of silence 'til my eyelids heavy with slumber drown "love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty; open thine eyes..." proverbs 20:13

Saturday, October 13, 2001

i watched a reflection of the sunrise

mind dribbles. separate colors separate attempts i try to confine and confide to my paper. a red blue orange yellow green violet mess. i confess it looks a bit violent but its all mine to not enjoy if i like. i like the possibility of possible enjoyability

Tuesday, October 09, 2001

unpredictable times yield unstable minds asymmetric information cause migraine headaches for brains and heartache just the same when a simple train ride could terminate your line before your destination we're convinced that vice will vindicate the victims but the victors in the end will be the same in the beginning circular logic in illogical times

"may we all make it home safely" tim kinsella

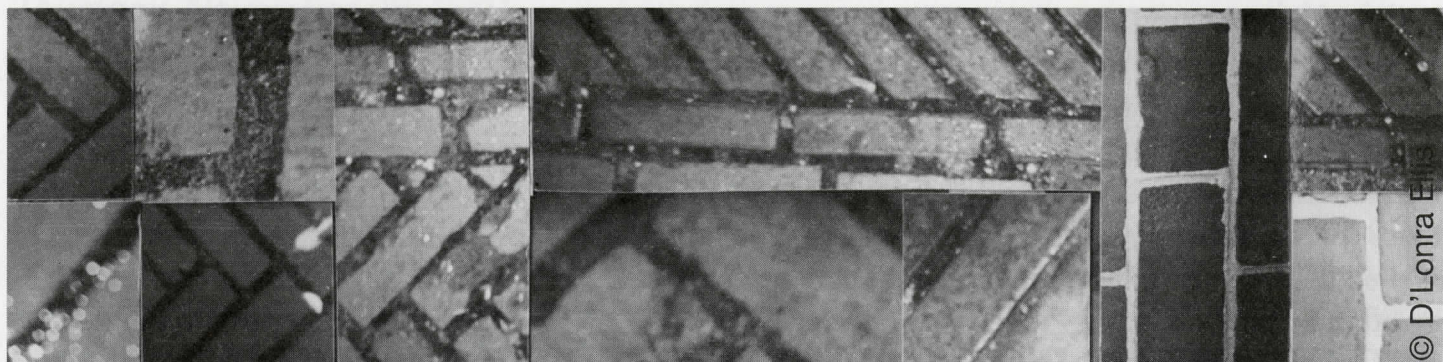
Monday, October 08, 2001

memories fade and fall like fall leaves on trees we use to pass under in summer months on a hunt for adventure we ventured on two wheels as the sun spilled rays on hundred

and/or save your life. i scribble thoughts mostly with a fisted red crayon. looks pretty good right? you can scribble in times new roman too with a little practice. nonetheless, read on if you like. you might forget something you knew or learn something you forgot. be careful though. ideas are like socks; cheap to produce, easy to lose, and hard to find (especially when you need a matching pair).

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# Telling Cuentos

Sherisse Alvarez

Count your tellings. That girl's got a pearl hanging off her necklace. The trees be standing up to the train in a reflection east by the descending sun.

I died my hair pink when I was 18 and couldn't help but think I was becoming more white, when really, I felt more connected to the colors that are beautiful and allowed back home. Not a home I had visited, but a home I know through tradition and ancestry. No, these are no lower-class colors there, not even on the flowers and ornaments at Nana's house. No, there they are like a sanctuary that makes you want to kneel and pray and be humble. Here in the institutions you have to fight the split fight believing you are less without them, their white-only, lower-class, english-only, male-only policies and systems—their approval of your speech, your perspective, and your attitude.

I am tongue-tied and split by the color line, by the anger, by black/white cookie I paid \$1.75 for. The sides that I will never belong to, but will always want to consume...by the price they put on our (other) blood, by the years abuela worked for Liz Claiborne before they sent her away with overworked hands and \$32 a month to quiet them. By mis-diagnosed drug-addicted mother missing the reality of her own life because she's learned that she must, in order to survive. By the hospitals that turn her into a product, a productive citizen, a zombie, a schizophrenic, a bi-polar, a manic-depressive who only eats Hershey's bars and Cheese Doodles and dulces abuela will bring her from home, by this here America, North America, which we often forget to say because we think that America is motherland and it ain't.

We do not join in the jungles of our sameness, in our queerness, within our poetry, out desire to make the world a better place. Because part of my education has been learning how to stand still long enough to hear the insults, mostly quiet so we have to listen real hard, like with a glass

up to the wall. When our grandmothers are the ones dressing your white children, cleaning your white houses and hallways and trying to speak your language while doing it. When hormones are injected into the meat of the slaughtered animal you will buy at your local supermarket in order to make it more white. You have no name for this. We have no language with which to articulate this in your English. You will inevitably correct it, say it does not sound proper, say it does not sound sane.

I come corrected in an attempt to understand displacement. We broken, been broke, continue to have no name for the exiled. This is Taco Bell, the birth of humor to replace namelessness. An advertisement for the Mashantucket Pequot Museum. Indians, Indigenous Peoples, Native Americans. Rooms and glass cases filled with artifacts and abolished his/herstories.

Magnificent. It brings the national Native American story vividly to life. What story is that? I've stopped believing all their stories.

The work that comes, where to begin it.

Over 500 years since the

beginning of colonialism, or at least the tracing of it. This seems to be the most identifiable reference point. Etta James plays as I try and place myself within a historical context. She is singing about trust. And it is confirmed that the political and the personal are always exchanging glances, always rubbing up against each other.

I read the writing of three women who continually guide me and my work around identity, language, the politics of self. I find the parallels in their stories, and it is confirmed that the act of identifying that which is nearly unidentifiable, is the basis for our work together. This collective struggle to name the moments and the work is fueled by many different, sometimes opposing, sources. They come together in ways that might not make sense. Non sense. These contradictions are the closest to truth and trust we can get to.

*...these pronouns [we/they/I] have always coexisted in my mind.*

-Michelle Cliff

Etta James, "At Last." Here we are in heaven, for you are mine at last. The personal moments are fused into the universal experiences. By "universal" I do suggest that we all share the same oppressions. We simply don't. We have oppressions yet to be named. I come, most importantly, with those I have internalized. These are the strongest and most effective and are the ones producing the ills that undermine our efforts. What I think, how I act, react, and interact, this is inevitably what will lead me to my own personal heaven or hell. Because in this day and age, or at this level of my own personal as well as collective consciousness, I have no other words with which to express this. The state of my mind. The body of my work.

*I received the message of anglocentrism, of white supremacy, and I internalized it*

*...[I] struggle to get wholeness from fragmentation, producing work which may find its strength in its depiction of fragmentation...*



Michelle Cliff

I believe in, but struggle with, the idea that our reality is something we are actively creating. I acknowledge the role of karma and reincarnation, the strength of prayer and meditation and dance. I surrender certain powers to the spirit, universal energy and admit against the skin and bone that we, as humans, only have a certain amount of knowledge about ourselves and our abilities. In this body, I am the only child of Cuban exiles. My experiences are shaped by having been born on this side, on this soil. I have witnessed many things; divorce, mental illness, domestic violence, the transition from home to home, death, love. All were influenced by location, but also perception. How we perceive is about as powerful as the occurrence itself. And more importantly, how we translate it into art. This is what I am most interested in. This marriage of the physical and spiritual, or the earthly and the psychic, hard to get into words for it is clumsy and not to be contained by agreement. I seek what lives beneath the surface as I name the moments and the work.

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# Self, in Five Voices

Gisela Telis

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You sprang full-grown into your mother's imagination and from there she willed you into the world. *Uno tiene que pulirse*. Chisel, polish, mold - wrought ecstatic and strong, you would be the greatest statement of artistic prowess, the most finely cut and polished gem. And what were the accidents of creation? *Tuve suerte con tigo*. *Cuando yo tenía tu edad, yo era un dolor de cabeza*. Cut, chisel, blow the debris into the void unknowing. *Like the textbooks are always saying: The beauty and meaning of an artistic work extends beyond that which is obvious to the eye*. Never thought there might be a flaw hidden somewhere outside her view, in the back, in the armpit of masterful creation where no one ever looks. *No seas emotiva como yo, que no sirve para nada*. She executed the project so well. *Vos no vas a ser como yo. Vos tenes mas capacidad que eso*. You, her dream-jewel incarnate, meant to be perfect. But you passed through your childhood in fear of not being the

*Messiah = (love, no) = (God, no) = bringing light into this poor, dirty city so people remember you = bringing light into this world so people write about you = getting outta here like the kids are always saying = forgetting to care when the kids don't believe You? You not the kind of girl who would do those things = getting a scholarship to go to a fancy college because the world is always saying otherwise, you see, you may not be able to go = making them wish they were that smart = triunfar (no tener que preocuparse) = making Mamá proud of you = but what else? what more?*

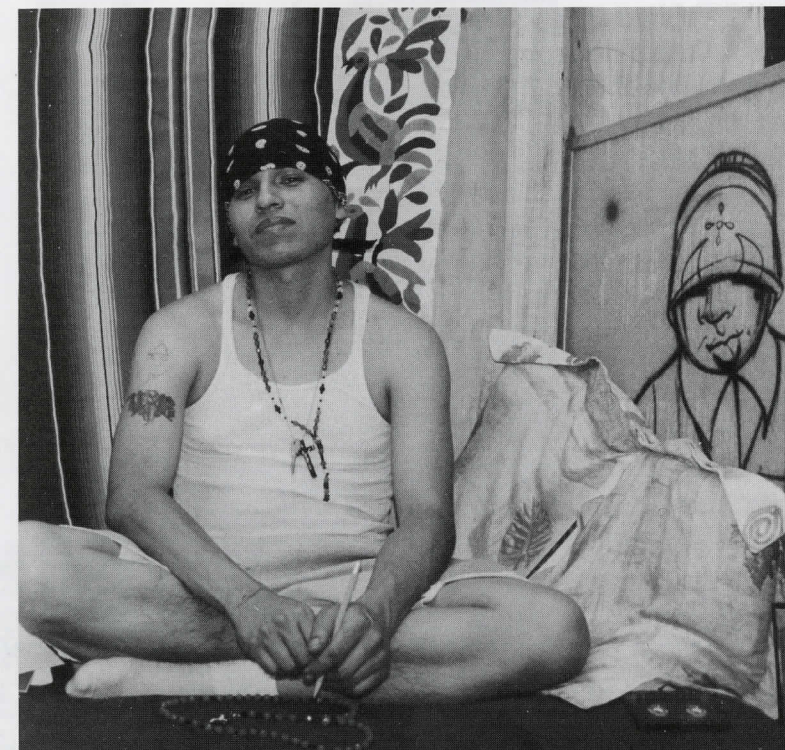
= manifesting your power with every sway of your hips = forgetting the very definition of fear = making Mamá see me, see me = yo no quiero ser mejor, yo quiero ser emotiva, yo quiero doler, yo quiero ser = ohbutlamohbutlamohbutlam...free? = raising mountains from these marshlands with a flick of my pen-wand and

climbing them on my lunch break = I have always climbed but watch me climb now, I climb higher now, I climb stronger now = I tower, majestic, eternal, laughing in Newton's face.

At least she tried. Here the jewel, with a sheen not her own, not anyone's really, and there the creator, valiant, at last seeing the flaw, even loving a failure. *It is often the case that a work containing even minor structural weaknesses will, over time, bend, break, and in extreme cases collapse due to wear and tear and to the powerful pull of gravity*. I bear the weight of years; I am thick with years to hide in, silly in retrospect, yet do not hide, yet will refuse to hide. *Reconstruction is not always possible*. Who required reconstruction? Now a thing made flesh, fearful or -less, strange to think of it, I the dream-jewel, truly now. Yielding, melting, merging - I can redefine, I do not need rebuilding or replacing. *Cada vez nos parecemos mas*. Clambering up to extravagant potential, to the soft familiar, the vivid pulse internal, valid, me laughing. At. My. Self. There's much to be said for trying.

4

5



©Lailan Huen

Victor Cervantes  
"People of Color Box"  
April 2001  
MFA Thesis Project  
Destroyed one week later.

Unbreakable I 1  
Want my heart to be as strong 2  
As my bones can be 3

Impenetrable 4  
My sarcasm is my shield 4  
From all the women 5

Indestructible 6  
My body was worn thin from 6  
All the four seasons (I am 7  
alive) 8

Interrogated 9  
I was under hot lights for 9  
For all of my actions 10

She's heavy on the 11  
soul not a burden more like 12  
a planet to hold. 13

She's light on the mind 14  
feather talk conversations 14  
of clouds and colors. 15

Unquestionable 16  
her reflection reveals that 17  
I have found the one 18

Recuperating 19  
My soul has been hell and back 19  
One thousand times 20

Life is made up of 21  
a cycle of constant I 21  
love you's and fuck you's 22

I wish I could be 23  
Reborn, removed, re-booted 24  
To reprogram me 25

a crash in my time 26  
sixty obsolete minutes 26  
reinvented 27

## Pieces of my tiny soul (haikus)

Bonafide



# Where are My Boricuas?

Anthony Morales

I'm looking for my people  
Have you seen where they went?  
Miro por un lado y por otro  
y no veo nadie

They are not here  
I'm inspired by stoned crazy prophets  
of revolution/giving poetic solutions  
to political pollution of a United Steaks  
nation of eggs cheese and bacon upon wakin'

Monday morning still dealing  
with another Puerto Rican Obituary  
Kevin Michael Hector Luz Maria  
all died today will die again tomorrow  
dreaming bout Miami Beach Memorial Day Weekend  
new Jordans Timbos Clue Tape tattoo on back  
new lease next flip QP on OT  
party @ Latin Quarters and Jimmy's  
and the Parade

La Bodega Sold Dreams  
looseys 40s pantyhose liters of milk Dutches  
I seen my muneca mulatta under moonlight  
this was the making of a cuchifrito love affair  
taking me from Loisaída to Spring Garden Philly  
to Albizu Campos Blvd in Chicago

Young Lords set it off  
sanitation strikes cleaned streets  
claimed Dona Libertad  
ended up in rehab broadcasting the news  
reborn struggle in Vieques  
navy bombing bones of protestors underground  
neighbors surround in vigil of cancer stricken children

population was problem  
police patrol poolrooms poverty plateau  
plantations pulverized families polarize  
Operation Bootstrap  
Pan Tierra Libertad  
Bread Land Liberty  
no confession to sterilization killing spree  
or military state  
Palm Sunday Massacre 1937  
Jayuya to Don Pedro  
everyday's a birthday with America  
We of marinated blood on machete minds  
telenovela nobility  
como pajaros en cielo mobility  
cinquillo salsa boom bap  
mofongo mantequilla melts magic on toasted bread  
halos circle our heads  
151 soaks for the dead  
leather palm slaps skin  
hear miky tito albizu and pun's whispers in the wind

Albizu  
When tyranny's law revolution is order  
Motherland must be loved as a woman is loved  
spiritually physically  
she's not open to discussion  
if so then with bullets

Miky  
It's like the reincarnation of the night  
before when my ashtray became  
a cemetery for all my lost memories

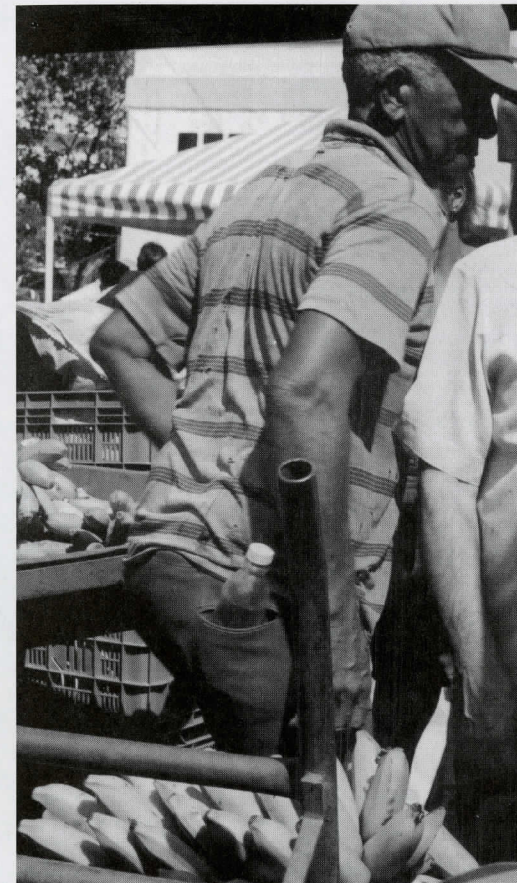
Understand you? If wasn't trying I would have killed  
you  
stone dead punk

Tito  
Oye como va  
Mi ritmo bueno pa gozar mulatta

Pun  
Cash pays and rules/root of all evil/shoot on amigos/  
for loot and perico polluting our people

Enter my world of doom/consume fear feel the panic/  
ram a lightning bolt between Earth Moon Stars  
curl the planet

Where are my Boricuas?!  
Aqui mismo  
Mi gente  
Pa'lante siempre pa'lante



© D'Lonra Ellis

## Tulpehocken Street

The summer sun simmered  
white and sharp as a migraine  
on the kitchen floor  
at the manse on Tulpehocken Street.  
I stared down at the black-webbed linoleum,  
withered yellow  
like old paper  
and scuffed dull by the passage  
of Aunt Grace's  
rubber soles.  
An olive-green refrigerator  
hulked, round-shouldered, in a corner,  
and the table spread its galaxies  
of sparkling formica.

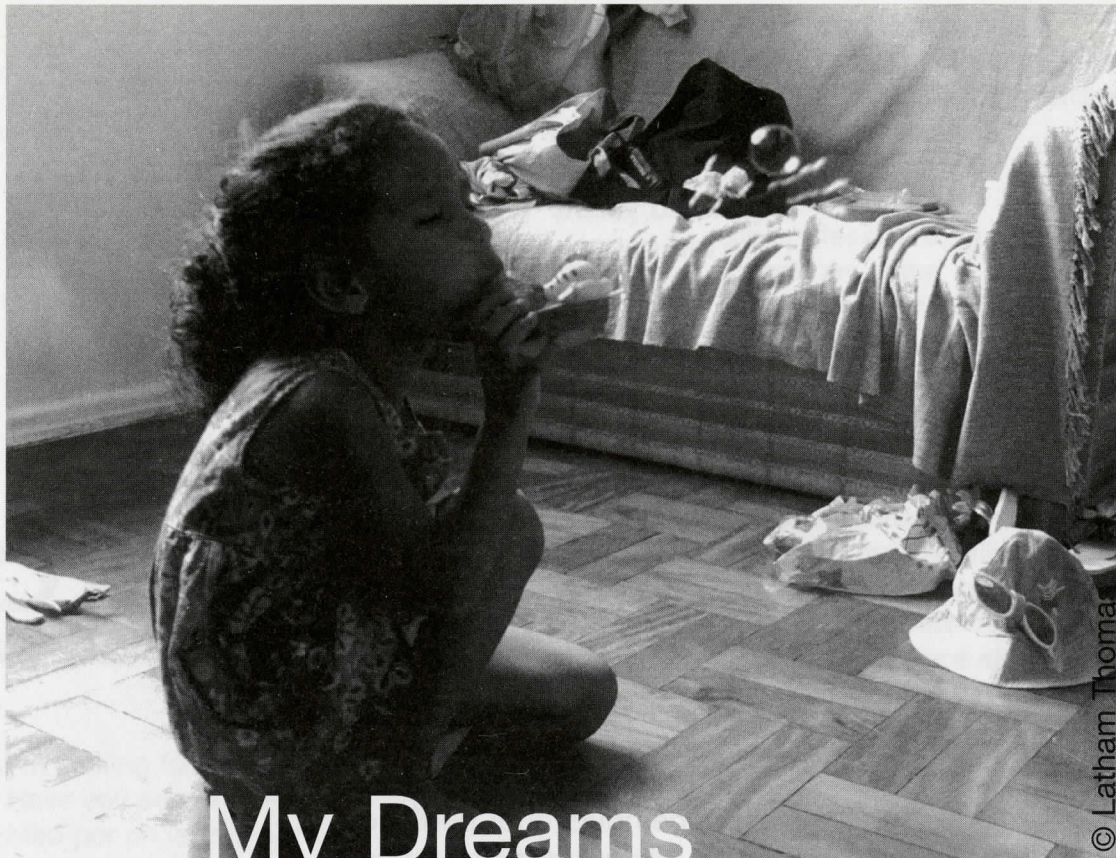
On Sundays, while the golden dusk  
blurred into humid early evening,  
the congregation met in the back yard  
and sang from mildewed hymnals.  
(And what a miracle it was to me  
that the sky stretched lavender  
for huge hours after bedtime!  
In the winter, near Christmas  
and my birthday,  
shades were snapped against the dark  
before dinner-steam shone  
on the cold windows.)

We kids swam upstream  
on the dry-graveled driveway;  
we whispered earnest secrets  
in the long-stretched shadow of the basement.  
And though the leaves  
of the holly tree pricked neat as needles  
we hid there quietly  
from the badguys' squinting glare.

Tulpehocken Street  
sheltered Narnia and Deep Magic  
under its dark jungles of slick ivy.  
We were all there together  
in those oblong summer hours,  
speaking the myths of a family,  
casting bright nets in the wind.

Rachel Toliver





© Latham Thomas

# My Dreams In Bubbles

On a starry night  
where the moon embraced  
the sky, with vibrant light  
Cast for all the world to see  
I blew my dreams into bubbles  
As if an uncanny spirit, over took  
the skin that shelters my soul  
I became a child  
A child summoned by the happi-  
ness  
of life and the thrills of curiosity  
I blew my dreams into bubbles  
I placed the magic wand where  
dreams are made  
Gently removing it from the  
tomb of wishers that pray,  
God would listen for the cost  
of a penny  
I lifted the wand  
as sacred as the ritual of  
cleansing the hands  
before dinner  
I wrapped my fingerprints around  
the handle where others have  
visited before me  
The moon became brighter than  
any other light witness by the  
human eye  
With heavenly hues  
that blinded me shy  
It enveloped me,

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giving me the might of winds  
that carries kites  
I said,  
“Bubbles of the moon, hear me now,  
bubbles of the moon, welcome  
my sound”  
Chants rang from the throat,  
calling mystic Gods  
“I blow my dreams, to you  
and for all”  
The bubbles rose rapidly,  
carrying my dreams,  
Far and beyond, to the heavens  
it seems  
Take a seashell, to hear my voice  
with my throat raw, ready  
and moist  
The stars told me  
“Your dreams have been heard”  
Don’t worry my child, go flutter  
like the birds”  
Content I am, for the bubbles  
told my tales  
With their resurrection,  
I will prevail  
His voice is mighty and songs  
are great  
Bubbles walk beside me  
For all it takes







WINTER 2001