**Η ΜΑΥΡΗ ΑΝΑΓΕΝΝΗΣΗ ΚΑΙ Η ΗΧΩ ΤΗΣ—IV**

**Χειμερινό εξάμηνο 2015-16**

**CLAUDIUS FESTUS “CLAUDE” MCKAY (1889–1948)**

1. **After the Winter**

Some day, when trees have shed their leaves

     And against the morning’s white

The shivering birds beneath the eaves

     Have sheltered for the night,

We’ll turn our faces southward, love,

     Toward the summer isle

Where bamboos spire the shafted grove

     And wide-mouthed orchids smile.

And we will seek the quiet hill

     Where towers the cotton tree,

And leaps the laughing crystal rill,

     And works the droning bee.

And we will build a cottage there

     Beside an open glade,

With black-ribbed blue-bells blowing near,

     And ferns that never fade.

Claude McKay, “After the Winter” from *Claude McKay: Complete Poems*. Published by University of Illinois Press. Copyright © 2004 by Claude McKay. Courtesy of the Literary Representative for the Works of Claude McKay, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

1. **America**

Although she feeds me bread of bitterness,

And sinks into my throat her tiger’s tooth,

Stealing my breath of life, I will confess

I love this cultured hell that tests my youth.

Her vigor flows like tides into my blood,

Giving me strength erect against her hate,

Her bigness sweeps my being like a flood.

Yet, as a rebel fronts a king in state,

I stand within her walls with not a shred

Of terror, malice, not a word of jeer.

Darkly I gaze into the days ahead,

And see her might and granite wonders there,

Beneath the touch of Time’s unerring hand,

Like priceless treasures sinking in the sand.

Claude McKay, "America" from *Liberator* (December 1921). Courtesy of the Literary Representative for the Works of Claude McKay, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tildeen Foundations. Source: *Liberator* (The Library of America, 1921)

1. **Harlem Shadows**

I hear the halting footsteps of a lass

      In Negro Harlem when the night lets fall

Its veil. I see the shapes of girls who pass

      To bend and barter at desire's call.

Ah, little dark girls who in slippered feet

Go prowling through the night from street to street!

Through the long night until the silver break

      Of day the little gray feet know no rest;

Through the lone night until the last snow-flake

      Has dropped from heaven upon the earth's white breast,

The dusky, half-clad girls of tired feet

Are trudging, thinly shod, from street to street.

Ah, stern harsh world, that in the wretched way

      Of poverty, dishonor and disgrace,

Has pushed the timid little feet of clay,

      The sacred brown feet of my fallen race!

Ah, heart of me, the weary, weary feet

In Harlem wandering from street to street.

1. **If We Must Die**

If we must die, let it not be like hogs

Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot,

While round us bark the mad and hungry dogs,

Making their mock at our accursèd lot.

If we must die, O let us nobly die,

So that our precious blood may not be shed

In vain; then even the monsters we defy

Shall be constrained to honor us though dead!

O kinsmen! we must meet the common foe!

Though far outnumbered let us show us brave,

And for their thousand blows deal one death-blow!

What though before us lies the open grave?

Like men we’ll face the murderous, cowardly pack,

Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!

1. **The Lynching**

His spirit is smoke ascended to high heaven.

His father, by the cruelest way of pain,

Had bidden him to his bosom once again;

The awful sin remained still unforgiven.

All night a bright and solitary star

(Perchance the one that ever guided him,

Yet gave him up at last to Fate's wild whim)

Hung pitifully o'er the swinging char.

Day dawned, and soon the mixed crowds came to view

The ghastly body swaying in the sun:

The women thronged to look, but never a one

Showed sorrow in her eyes of steely blue;

And little lads, lynchers that were to be,

Danced round the dreadful thing in fiendish glee.

Source: *Harlem Shadows* (Harcourt Brace and Company, 1922)

1. **The Tropics in New York**

Bananas ripe and green, and ginger-root,

      Cocoa in pods and alligator pears,

And tangerines and mangoes and grape fruit,

      Fit for the highest prize at parish fairs,

Set in the window, bringing memories

      Of fruit-trees laden by low-singing rills,

And dewy dawns, and mystical blue skies

      In benediction over nun-like hills.

My eyes grew dim, and I could no more gaze;

      A wave of longing through my body swept,

And, hungry for the old, familiar ways,

      I turned aside and bowed my head and wept.

1. **The White City**

I will not toy with it nor bend an inch.

Deep in the secret chambers of my heart

I muse my life-long hate, and without flinch

I bear it nobly as I live my part.

My being would be a skeleton, a shell,

If this dark Passion that fills my every mood,

And makes my heaven in the white world’s hell,

Did not forever feed me vital blood.

I see the mighty city through a mist—

The strident trains that speed the goaded mass,

The poles and spires and towers vapor-kissed,

The fortressed port through which the great ships pass,

The tides, the wharves, the dens I contemplate,

Are sweet like wanton loves because I hate.

Claude McKay, "The White City" from *Liberator* (October 1921). Courtesy of the Literary Representative for the Works of Claude McKay, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tildeen Foundations. Source: *Liberator* (The Library of America, 2004)

1. **Joy in the Woods**

There is joy in the woods just now,

       The leaves are whispers of song,

And the birds make mirth on the bough

       And music the whole day long,

And God! to dwell in the town

       In these springlike summer days,

On my brow an unfading frown

       And hate in my heart always—

A machine out of gear, aye, tired,

Yet forced to go on—for I’m hired.

Just forced to go on through fear,

       For every day I must eat

And find ugly clothes to wear,

       And bad shoes to hurt my feet

And a shelter for work-drugged sleep!

       A mere drudge! but what can one do?

A man that’s a man cannot weep!

       Suicide? A quitter? Oh, no!

But a slave should never grow tired,

Whom the masters have kindly hired.

But oh! for the woods, the flowers

       Of natural, sweet perfume,

The heartening, summer showers

       And the smiling shrubs in bloom,

Dust-free, dew-tinted at morn,

       The fresh and life-giving air,

The billowing waves of corn

       And the birds’ notes rich and clear:—

For a man-machine toil-tired

May crave beauty too—though he’s hired.

Claude McKay, “Joy in the Woods” from *Claude McKay: Complete Poems*. Published by University of Illinois Press. Copyright © 2004 by Claude McKay. Courtesy of the Literary Representative for the Works of Claude McKay, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

1. **On Broadway**

About me young careless feet

Linger along the garish street;

      Above, a hundred shouting signs

Shed down their bright fantastic glow

      Upon the merry crowd and lines

Of moving carriages below.

Oh wonderful is Broadway — only

My heart, my heart is lonely.

Desire naked, linked with Passion,

Goes trutting by in brazen fashion;

      From playhouse, cabaret and inn

The rainbow lights of Broadway blaze

      All gay without, all glad within;

As in a dream I stand and gaze

At Broadway, shining Broadway — only

My heart, my heart is lonely.

1. **Romance**

To clasp you now and feel your head close-pressed,

Scented and warm against my beating breast;

To whisper soft and quivering your name,

And drink the passion burning in your frame;

To lie at full length, taut, with cheek to cheek,

And tease your mouth with kisses till you speak

Love words, mad words, dream words, sweet senseless words,

Melodious like notes of mating birds;

To hear you ask if I shall love always,

And myself answer: Till the end of days;

To feel your easeful sigh of happiness

When on your trembling lips I murmur: Yes;

It is so sweet. We know it is not true.

What matters it? The night must shed her dew.

We know it is not true, but it is sweet—

The poem with this music is complete.

Claude McKay, "Romance" from *Harlem Shadows: The Poems of Claude McKay* (New York: Harcourt, 1922). Courtesy of the Literary Representative for the Works of Claude McKay, Schombourg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tildeen Foundations.

1. **Subway Wind**

Far down, down through the city’s great gaunt gut

      The gray train rushing bears the weary wind;

In the packed cars the fans the crowd’s breath cut,

      Leaving the sick and heavy air behind.

And pale-cheeked children seek the upper door

      To give their summer jackets to the breeze;

Their laugh is swallowed in the deafening roar

      Of captive wind that moans for fields and seas;

Seas cooling warm where native schooners drift

      Through sleepy waters, while gulls wheel and sweep,

Waiting for windy waves the keels to lift

      Lightly among the islands of the deep;

Islands of lofy palm trees blooming white

      That led their perfume to the tropic sea,

Where fields lie idle in the dew-drenched night,

      And the Trades float above them fresh and free.

Claude McKay, “Subway Wind” from *Claude McKay: Complete Poems*. Published by University of Illinois Press. Copyright © 2004 by Claude McKay. Courtesy of the Literary Representative for the Works of Claude McKay, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

1. **The Snow Fairy**

      I

Throughout the afternoon I watched them there,

Snow-fairies falling, falling from the sky,

Whirling fantastic in the misty air,

Contending fierce for space supremacy.

And they flew down a mightier force at night,

As though in heaven there was revolt and riot,

And they, frail things had taken panic flight

Down to the calm earth seeking peace and quiet.

I went to bed and rose at early dawn

To see them huddled together in a heap,

Each merged into the other upon the lawn,

Worn out by the sharp struggle, fast asleep.

The sun shone brightly on them half the day,

By night they stealthily had stol’n away.

     II

And suddenly my thoughts then turned to you

Who came to me upon a winter’s night,

When snow-sprites round my attic window flew,

Your hair disheveled, eyes aglow with light.

My heart was like the weather when you came,

The wanton winds were blowing loud and long;

But you, with joy and passion all aflame,

You danced and sang a lilting summer song.

I made room for you in my little bed,

Took covers from the closet fresh and warm,

A downful pillow for your scented head,

And lay down with you resting in my arm.

You went with Dawn. You left me ere the day,

The lonely actor of a dreamy play.

Source: *Harlem Shadows* (1922)

1. **December, 1919**

Last night I heard your voice, mother,

      The words you sang to me

When I, a little barefoot boy,

      Knelt down against your knee.

And tears gushed from my heart, mother,

      And passed beyond its wall,

But though the fountain reached my throat

      The drops refused to fall.

'Tis ten years since you died, mother,

      Just ten dark years of pain,

And oh, I only wish that I

      Could weep just once again.

1. **Enslaved**

Oh when I think of my long-suffering race,  
For weary centuries despised, oppressed,  
Enslaved and lynched, denied a human place  
In the great life line of the Christian West;  
And in the Black Land disinherited,  
Robbed in the ancient country of its birth,  
My heart grows sick with hate, becomes as lead,  
For this my race that has no home on earth.  
Then from the dark depths of my soul I cry  
To the avenging angel to consume  
The white man's world of wonders utterly:  
Let it be swallowed up in earth's vast womb,  
Or upward roll as sacrificial smoke  
To liberate my people from its yoke!

1. **In Bondage**

I would be wandering in distant fields   
Where man, and bird, and beast, lives leisurely,   
And the old earth is kind, and ever yields   
Her goodly gifts to all her children free;   
Where life is fairer, lighter, less demanding,   
And boys and girls have time and space for play   
Before they come to years of understanding--   
Somewhere I would be singing, far away.   
For life is greater than the thousand wars   
Men wage for it in their insatiate lust,   
And will remain like the eternal stars,   
When all that shines to-day is drift and dust   
But I am bound with you in your mean graves,   
O black men, simple slaves of ruthless slaves.

1. **Through Agony**

I

All night, through the eternity of night,   
Pain was my potion though I could not feel.   
Deep in my humbled heart you ground your heel,   
Till I was reft of even my inner light,   
Till reason from my mind had taken flight,   
And all my world went whirling in a reel.   
And all my swarthy strength turned cold like steel,   
A passive mass beneath your puny might.   
Last night I gave you triumph over me,   
So I should be myself as once before,   
I marveled at your shallow mystery,   
And haunted hungrily your temple door.   
I gave you sum and substance to be free,   
Oh, you shall never triumph any more!   
  
II   
  
I do not fear to face the fact and say,   
How darkly-dull my living hours have grown,   
My wounded heart sinks heavier than stone,   
Because I loved you longer than a day!   
I do not shame to turn myself away   
From beckoning flowers beautifully blown,   
To mourn your vivid memory alone   
In mountain fastnesses austerely gray.   
The mists will shroud me on the utter height,   
The salty, brimming waters of my breast   
Will mingle with the fresh dews of the night   
To bathe my spirit hankering to rest.   
But after sleep I'll wake with greater might,   
Once more to venture on the eternal quest.

1. **A Red Flower**

Your lips are like a southern lily red,   
Wet with the soft rain-kisses of the night,   
In which the brown bee buries deep its head,   
When still the dawn's a silver sea of light.   
  
Your lips betray the secret of your soul,   
The dark delicious essence that is you,   
A mystery of life, the flaming goal   
I seek through mazy pathways strange and new.   
  
Your lips are the red symbol of a dream,   
What visions of warm lilies they impart,   
That line the green bank of a fair blue stream,   
With butterflies and bees close to each heart!   
  
Brown bees that murmur sounds of music rare,   
That softly fall upon the langourous breeze,   
Wafting them gently on the quiet air   
Among untended avenues of trees.   
  
O were I hovering, a bee, to probe   
Deep down within your scented heart, fair flower,   
Enfolded by your soft vermilion robe,   
Amorous of sweets, for but one perfect hour!

**AMIRI BARAKA (EVERETT LEROI JONES) (1934-2014)**

1. **An Agony. As Now.**

I am inside someone

who hates me. I look

out from his eyes. Smell

what fouled tunes come in

to his breath. Love his

wretched women.

Slits in the metal, for sun. Where

my eyes sit turning, at the cool air

the glance of light, or hard flesh

rubbed against me, a woman, a man,

without shadow, or voice, or meaning.

This is the enclosure (flesh,

where innocence is a weapon. An

abstraction. Touch. (Not mine.

Or yours, if you are the soul I had

and abandoned when I was blind and had

my enemies carry me as a dead man

(if he is beautiful, or pitied.

It can be pain. (As now, as all his

flesh hurts me.) It can be that. Or

pain. As when she ran from me into

that forest.

                Or pain, the mind

silver spiraled whirled against the

sun, higher than even old men thought

God would be. Or pain. And the other. The

yes. (Inside his books, his fingers. They

are withered yellow flowers and were never

beautiful.) The yes. You will, lost soul, say

‘beauty.’ Beauty, practiced, as the tree. The

slow river. A white sun in its wet sentences.

Or, the cold men in their gale. Ecstasy. Flesh

or soul. The yes. (Their robes blown. Their bowls

empty. They chant at my heels, not at yours.) Flesh

or soul, as corrupt. Where the answer moves too quickly.

Where the God is a self, after all.)

Cold air blown through narrow blind eyes. Flesh,

white hot metal. Glows as the day with its sun.

It is a human love, I live inside. A bony skeleton

you recognize as words or simple feeling.

But it has no feeling. As the metal, is hot, it is not,

given to love.

It burns the thing

inside it. And that thing

screams.

Amiri Baraka, “An Agony. As Now.” from *The Dead Lecturer*. Copyright © 1964 by Amiri Baraka. Reprinted by permission of SLL/Sterling Lord Literistic, Inc. Source: *The Dead Lecturer* (Grove/Atlantic Inc., 1964)

1. **Preface to a Twenty Volume Suicide Note**

for Kellie Jones, born 16 May 1959

Lately, I've become accustomed to the way

The ground opens up and envelopes me

Each time I go out to walk the dog.

Or the broad edged silly music the wind

Makes when I run for a bus...

Things have come to that.

And now, each night I count the stars,

And each night I get the same number.

And when they will not come to be counted,

I count the holes they leave.

Nobody sings anymore.

And then last night, I tiptoed up

To my daughter's room and heard her

Talking to someone, and when I opened

The door, there was no one there...

Only she on her knees, peeking into

Her own clasped hands.

“Preface to a Twenty Volume Suicide Note” from *Preface to a Twenty Volume Suicide Note* (1961), reprinted in *S O S: POEMS*, 1961-2013 © 2014 by The Estate of Amiri Baraka; collection edited by Paul Vangelisti; recorded with the permission of the publisher, Grove Press, an imprint of Grove Atlantic, Inc. Previously published in *Transbluesency: The Selected Poetry of Amiri Baraka/LeRoi Jones (1961-1995)* by Marsilio Publishers, 1995. Source: *S O S: Poems, 1961-2013* (Grove/Atlantic Inc., 2015)

1. **Short Speech to My Friends**

1.

A political art, let it be

tenderness, low strings the fingers

touch, or the width of autumn

climbing wider avenues, among the virtue

and dignity of knowing what city

you’re in, who to talk to, what clothes

—even what buttons—to wear. I address

                                                                        / the society

                                                                        the image, of

                                                                        common utopia.

                                                                        / The perversity

                                                                        of separation, isolation,

after so many years of trying to enter their kingdoms,

now they suffer in tears, these others, saxophones whining

through the wooden doors of their less than gracious homes.

The poor have become our creators. The black. The thoroughly

ignorant.

                  Let the combination of morality

and inhumanity

begin.

    2.

Is power, the enemy? (Destroyer

of dawns, cool flesh of valentines, among

the radios, pauses, drunks

of the 19th century. I see it,

as any man's single history. All the possible heroes

dead from heat exhaustion

                                                   at the beach

                                                   or hiding for years from cameras

only to die cheaply in the pages

of our daily lie.

                             One hero

has pretensions toward literature

one toward the cultivation of errors, arrogance,

and constantly changing disguises, as trucker, boxer,

valet, barkeep, in the aging taverns of memory. Making love

to those speedy heroines of masturbation or kicking literal evil

continually down filmy public stairs.

A compromise

would be silence. To shut up, even such risk

as the proper placement

of verbs and nouns. To freeze the spit

in mid-air, as it aims itself

at some valiant intellectual's face.

There would be someone

who would understand, for whatever

fancy reason. Dead, lying, Roi, as your children

cane up, would also rise. As George Armstrong Custer

these 100 years, has never made

a mistake.

“Short Speech to My Friends” from *The Dead Lecturer* (1964), reprinted in S O S: POEMS, 1961-2013 © 2014 by The Estate of Amiri Baraka; collection edited by Paul Vangelisti; recorded with the permission of the publisher, Grove Press, an imprint of Grove Atlantic, Inc. Previously published in Transbluesency: The Selected Poetry of Amiri Baraka/LeRoi Jones (1961-1995) by Marsilio Publishers, 1995. Source: *S O S: Poems, 1961-2013* (Grove/Atlantic Inc., 2015)

1. **Babylon Revisited**

The gaunt thing

with no organs

creeps along the streets

of Europe, she will

commute, in her feathered bat stomach-gown

with no organs

with sores on her insides

even her head

a vast puschamber

of pus(sy) memories

with no organs

nothing to make babies

she will be the great witch of euro-american legend

who sucked the life

from some unknown nigger

whose name will be known

but whose substance will not ever

not even by him

who is dead in a pile of dopeskin

This bitch killed a friend of mine named Bob Thompson

a black painter, a giant, once, she reduced

to a pitiful imitation faggot

full of American holes and a monkey on his back

slapped airplanes

from the empire state building

May this bitch and her sisters, all of them,

receive my words

in all their orifices like lye mixed with

cocola and alaga syrup

feel this shit, bitches, feel it, now laugh your

hysterectic laughs

while your flesh burns

and your eyes peel to red mud

Amiri Baraka, “Babylon Revisited” from *Black Magic* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1969). Copyright © 1969 by Amiri Baraka. Reprinted with the permission of Sll/Sterling Lord Literistic, Inc.

1. **Wise I**

    WHYS (Nobody Knows  
    The Trouble I Seen)  
    Traditional  
  
If you ever find  
yourself, some where  
lost and surrounded  
by enemies  
who won't let you  
speak in your own language  
who destroy your statues  
& instruments, who ban  
your omm bomm ba boom  
then you are in trouble  
deep trouble  
they ban your  
own boom ba boom  
you in deep deep  
trouble  
  
humph!  
  
probably take you several hundred years  
to get   
out!

1. **Black Art**

Poems are bullshit unless they are

teeth or trees or lemons piled

on a step. Or black ladies dying

of men leaving nickel hearts

beating them down. Fuck poems

and they are useful, wd they shoot

come at you, love what you are,

breathe like wrestlers, or shudder

strangely after pissing. We want live

words of the hip world live flesh &

coursing blood. Hearts Brains

Souls splintering fire. We want poems

like fists beating niggers out of Jocks

or dagger poems in the slimy bellies

of the owner-jews. Black poems to

smear on girdlemamma mulatto bitches

whose brains are red jelly stuck

between 'lizabeth taylor's toes. Stinking

Whores! we want "poems that kill."

Assassin poems, Poems that shoot

guns. Poems that wrestle cops into alleys

and take their weapons leaving them dead

with tongues pulled out and sent to Ireland. Knockoff

poems for dope selling wops or slick halfwhite

politicians Airplane poems, rrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr

rrrrrrrrrrrrrrr . . .tuhtuhtuhtuhtuhtuhtuhtuhtuhtuh

. . .rrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr . . . Setting fire and death to

whities ass. Look at the Liberal

Spokesman for the jews clutch his throat

& puke himself into eternity . . . rrrrrrrr

There's a negroleader pinned to

a bar stool in Sardi's eyeballs melting

in hot flame Another negroleader

on the steps of the white house one

kneeling between the sheriff's thighs

negotiating coolly for his people.

Aggh . . . stumbles across the room . . .

Put it on him, poem. Strip him naked

to the world! Another bad poem cracking

steel knuckles in a jewlady's mouth

Poem scream poison gas on beasts in green berets

Clean out the world for virtue and love,

Let there be no love poems written

until love can exist freely and

cleanly. Let Black people understand

that they are the lovers and the sons

of warriors and sons

of warriors Are poems & poets &

all the loveliness here in the world

We want a black poem. And a

Black World.

Let the world be a Black Poem

And Let All Black People Speak This Poem

Silently

or LOUD

Source: *Selected Poetry of Amiri Baraka/LeRoi Jones* (1979)

1. **Death Is Not As Natural As You Fags Seem to Think**

I hunt

the black puritan.

                            (Half-screamer

in dull tones

of another forest.

Respecter of power. That it transform, and enlarge

Hierarchy crawls over earth (change exalting space

Dried mud to mountain, cape and whip, swirled

Walkers, and riders and flyers.

Language spread into darkness. Be Vowel

                                                            and value

                                              Consonant

                                                            and direction.

Rather the lust of the thing

than across to droop at its energies. In melted snows

the leather cracks, and pure men claw at their bodies.

Women laugh delicately, delicately rubbing their thighs.

And the dead king laughs, looking out the hole

in his tomb. Seeing the poor

singing his evil songs.

Amiri Baraka, “Death Is Not As Natural As You Fags Seem to Think” from *Transbluesency: The Selected Poems of Amiri Baraka/LeRoi Jones, 1961-1995* (New York: Marsilio Publishers, 1995). Copyright © 1995 by Amiri Baraka. Reprinted with the permission of Sll/Sterling Lord Literistic, Inc.

1. **Dope**

uuuuuuuuuu

uuuuuuuuuu

uuuuuuuuuu   uuu   ray light morning fire lynch yet

                                     uuuuuuu, yester-pain in dreams

                                     comes again. race-pain, people our people

                                         our people

                                     everywhere . . . yeh . . . uuuuu, yeh

                                     uuuuu. yeh

                                     our people

                                     yes people

                                     every people

                                     most people

                                     uuuuuu, yeh uuuuu, most people

                                     in pain

                                     yester-pain, and pain today

                                     (Screams) ooowow!      ooowow! It must be

                                         the devil

                                     (jumps up like a claw stuck him) oooo

                                         wow! oooowow! (screams)

                                     It must be the devil

                                     It must be the devil

                                     it must be the devil

                                     (shakes like evangelical sanctify

                                     shakes tambourine like evangelical sanctify

                                         in heat)

                                     ooowow! ooowow! yeh, devil, yeh, devil

                                         ooowow!

                                     Must be the devil must be the devil

                                     (waves plate like collection) mus is mus is

                                         mus is

                                     mus is be the devil, cain be rockefeller

                                         (eyes roll

                                     up batting, and jumping all the way around

                                         to face the

                                     other direction) caint be him, no lawd

                                     aint be dupont, no lawd, cain be, no lawd,

                                         no way

                                     noway, naw saw, no way jose — cain be

                                         them rich folks

                                     theys good to us theys good to us theys

                                         good to us theys

                                     good to us theys good to us, i know, the

                                         massa tolt me

                                     so, i seed it on channel 7, i seed it on

                                         channel 9 i seed

                                     it on channel 4 and 2 and 5. Rich folks

                                         good to us

                                     poor folks aint shit, hallelujah, hallelujah,

                                         ooowow! oowow!

                                     must be the devil, going to heaven after i

                                         die, after we die

                                     everything going to be different, after we die

                                         we aint gon be

                                     hungry, ain gon be pain, ain gon be sufferin

                                         wont go thru this

                                     again, after we die, after we die owooo!

                                         owowoooo!

                                     after we die, its all gonna be good, have all

                                         the money we

                                     need after we die, have all the food we

                                         need after we die

                                     have a nice house like the rich folks, after

                                         we die, after we die, after we

                                     die, we can live like rev ike, after we die,

                                         hallelujah, hallelujah, must be

                                     the devil, it ain capitalism, it aint capitalism,

                                         it aint capitalism,

                                     naw it aint that, jimmy carter wdnt lie,

                                         “lifes unfair” but it aint capitalism

                                     must be the devil, owow! it ain the police,

                                         jimmy carter wdnt lie, you

                                     know rosalynn wdnt not lillian, his

                                         drunken racist brother aint no reflection

                                     on jimmy, must be the devil got in im, i tell

                                         you, the devil killed malcolm

                                     and dr king too, even killed both kennedies,

                                         and pablo neruda and overthrew

                                     allende’s govt. killed lumumba, and is

                                         negotiating with step and fetchit,

                                     sleep n eat and birmingham, over there in

                                         “Rhodesia”, goin’ under the name

                                     ian smith, must be the devil, caint be vortser,

                                         caint be apartheid, caint

                                     be imperialism, jimmy carter wdnt lie, didnt

                                         you hear him say in his state

                                     of the union message, i swear on rosalynn’s

                                         face-lifted catatonia, i wdnt lie

                                     nixon lied, haldeman lied, dean lied, hoover

                                         lied hoover sucked (dicks) too

                                     but jimmy dont, jimmy wdnt jimmy aint lying,

                                         must be the devil, put yr

                                     money on the plate, must be the devil, in

                                         heaven we’all all be straight

                                     cain be rockefeller, he gave amos pootbootie a

                                         scholarship to Behavior

                                     Modification Univ, and Genevieve Almoswhite

                                         works for his foundation

                                     Must be niggers! Cain be Mellon, he gave

                                         Winky Suckass, a fellowship in

                                     his bank put him in charge of closing out

                                         mortgages in the lowlife

                                     Pittsburgh Hill nigger section, caint be him.

                                                  (Goes on babbling, and wailing, jerking

                                         in pathocrazy grin stupor)

                                     Yessuh, yessuh, yessuh, yessuh, yessuh, yes-

                                         suh, yessuh, yessuh, yessuh, yessuh,

                                     put yr money in the plate, dont be late, dont

                                         have to wait, you gonna be in

                                     heaven after you die, you gon get all you need

                                         once you gone, yessuh, i heard

                                     it on the jeffersons, i heard it on the rookies,

                                         I swallowed it

                                     whole on roots: wasn’t it nice slavery was so

                                         cool and

                                     all you had to do was wear derbies and vests

                                         and train chickens and buy your

                                     way free if you had a mind to, must be the

                                         devil, wasnt no white folks,

                                     lazy niggers chained theyselves and threw

                                         they own black asses in the bottom

                                     of the boats, [(well now that you mention it King

                                     Assblackuwasi helped throw yr ass in

                                     the bottom of the boat, yo mamma, wife, and

                                         you never seed em no more)] must

                                     a been the devil, gimme your money put your

                                         money on this plate, heaven be here soon,

                                     just got to die, just got to stop living, close yr

                                         eyes stop

                                     breathin and bammm-O heaven be here, you

                                         have all a what you need, Bam-O

                                     all a sudden, heaven be here, you have all you

                                         need, that assembly line

                                     you work on will dissolve in thin air owowoo!

                                         owowoo! Just gotta die

                                     just gotta die, this ol world aint nuthin, must be

                                         the devil got you

                                     thinkin so, it cain be rockefeller, it cain be mor-

                                         gan, it caint be capitalism

                                     it caint be national oppression owow! No Way!

                                         Now go back to work and cool

                                     it, go back to work and lay back, just a little

                                         while longer till you pass

                                     its all gonna be alright once you gone. gimme

                                         that last bitta silver you got

                                     stashed there sister, gimme that dust now broth-

                                         er man, itll be ok on the

                                     other side, yo soul be clean be washed pure

                                         white. yes. yes. yes. owow.

                                     now go back to work, go to sleep, yes, go to

                                         sleep, go back to work, yes

                                     owow. owow. uuuuuuuuuu, uuuuuuuuuuu,

                                         uuuuuuuuuuu. yes, uuuuuuu. yes.

                                         uuuuuuuuuu.

                                     a men.

Source: *The LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka Reader* (Basic Books, 2009)

**9. Incident**

He came back and shot. He shot him. When he came

back, he shot, and he fell, stumbling, past the

shadow wood, down, shot, dying, dead, to full halt.

At the bottom, bleeding, shot dead. He died then, there

after the fall, the speeding bullet, tore his face

and blood sprayed fine over the killer and the grey light.

Pictures of the dead man, are everywhere. And his spirit

sucks up the light. But he died in darkness darker than

his soul and everything tumbled blindly with him dying

down the stairs.

We have no word

on the killer, except he came back, from somewhere

to do what he did. And shot only once into his victim's

stare, and left him quickly when the blood ran out. We know

the killer was skillful, quick, and silent, and that the victim

probably knew him. Other than that, aside from the caked sourness

of the dead man's expression, and the cool surprise in the fixture

of his hands and fingers, we know nothing.

Amiri Baraka, “Incident” from *Black Magic* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1969). Copyright © 1969 by Amiri Baraka. Reprinted with the permission of Sll/Sterling Lord Literistic.

**10. Legacy**

(For Blues People)

In the south, sleeping against

the drugstore, growling under

the trucks and stoves, stumbling

through and over the cluttered eyes

of early mysterious night. Frowning

drunk waving moving a hand or lash.

Dancing kneeling reaching out, letting

a hand rest in shadows. Squatting

to drink or pee. Stretching to climb

pulling themselves onto horses near

where there was sea (the old songs

lead you to believe). Riding out

from this town, to another, where

it is also black. Down a road

where people are asleep. Towards

the moon or the shadows of houses.

Towards the songs’ pretended sea.

Amiri Baraka, “Legacy” from *Black Magic* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1969). Copyright © 1969 by Amiri Baraka. Reprinted with the permission of Sll/Sterling Lord Literistic,

**11. Like Rousseau**

She stands beside me, stands away,

the vague indifference

of her dreams. Dreaming, to go on,

and go on there, like animals fleeing

the rise of the earth. But standing

intangible, my lust a worked anger

a sweating close covering, for the crudely salty soul.

Then back off, and where you go? Box of words

and pictures. Steel balloons tied to our mouths.

The room fills up, and the house. Street tilts.

City slides, and buildings slide into the river.

What is there left, to destroy? That is not close,

or closer. Leaning away in the angle of language.

Pumping and pumping, all our eyes criss cross

and flash. It is the lovers pulling down empty structures.

They wait and touch and watch their dreams

eat the morning.

Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones), “Like Rousseau” from *Poetry* (December 1964). Copyright © 1964 by Amiri Baraka. Reprinted with the permission of Sll/Sterling Lord Literistic, Inc.

**12. Political Poem**

Luxury, then, is a way of

being ignorant, comfortably

An approach to the open market

of least information. Where theories

can thrive, under heavy tarpaulins

without being cracked by ideas.

(I have not seen the earth for years

and think now possibly “dirt” is

negative, positive, but clearly

social. I cannot plant a seed, cannot

recognize the root with clearer dent

than indifference. Though I eat

and shit as a natural man ( Getting up

from the desk to secure a turkey sandwich

and answer the phone: the poem undone

undone by my station, by my station,

and the bad words of Newark.) Raised up

to the breech, we seek to fill for this

crumbling century. The darkness of love,

in whose sweating memory all error is forced.

Undone by the logic of any specific death. (Old gentlemen

who still follow fires, tho are quieter

and less punctual. It is a polite truth

we are left with. Who are you? What are you

saying? Something to be dealt with, as easily.

The noxious game of reason, saying, “No, No,

you cannot feel,” like my dead lecturer

lamenting thru gipsies his fast suicide.

Amiri Baraka, “Political Poem” from *Transbluesency: The Selected Poems of Amiri Baraka/LeRoi Jones, 1961-1995* (New York: Marsilio Publishers, 1995). Copyright © 1995 by Amiri Baraka. Reprinted with the permission of Sll/Sterling Lord Literistic, Inc.

**13. Snake-Eyes**

That force is lost

which shaped me, spent

in its image, battered, an old brown thing

swept off the streets

where it sucked its

gentle living.

And what is meat

to do, that is driven to its end

by words? The frailest gestures

grow like skirts around breathing.

We take

unholy risks to prove

we are what we cannot be. For instance,

I am not even crazy.

**14. Ka'Ba**

"A closed window looks down  
on a dirty courtyard, and Black people  
call across or scream across or walk across  
defying physics in the stream of their will.   
  
Our world is full of sound  
Our world is more lovely than anyone's  
tho we suffer, and kill each other  
and sometimes fail to walk the air.   
  
We are beautiful people  
With African imaginations  
full of masks and dances and swelling chants  
with African eyes, and noses, and arms  
tho we sprawl in gray chains in a place  
full of winters, when what we want is sun.   
  
We have been captured,  
and we labor to make our getaway, into  
the ancient image; into a new   
  
Correspondence with ourselves  
and our Black family. We need magic  
now we need the spells, to raise up  
return, destroy,and create. What will be   
  
the sacred word?

**15. Somebody Blew Up America**

They say its some terrorist, some barbaric A Rab, in Afghanistan It wasn’t our American terrorists It wasn’t the Klan or the Skin heads Or the them that blows up nigger Churches, or reincarnates us on Death Row It wasn’t Trent Lott Or David Duke or Giuliani Or Schundler, Helms retiring

It wasn’t The gonorrhea in costume The white sheet diseases That have murdered black people Terrorized reason and sanity Most of humanity, as they pleases

They say (who say?) Who do the saying Who is them paying Who tell the lies Who in disguise Who had the slaves Who got the bux out the Bucks

Who got fat from plantations Who genocided Indians Tried to waste the Black nation

Who live on Wall Street The first plantation Who cut your nuts off Who rape your ma Who lynched your pa

Who got the tar, who got the feathers Who had the match, who set the fires Who killed and hired Who say they God & still be the Devil

Who the biggest only Who the most goodest Who do Jesus resemble

Who created everything Who the smartest Who the greatest Who the richest Who say you ugly and they the goodlookingest

Who define art Who define science

Who made the bombs Who made the guns

Who bought the slaves, who sold them

Who called you them names Who say Dahmer wasn’t insane

Who? Who? Who?

Who stole Puerto Rico Who stole the Indies, the Philipines, Manhattan Australia & The Hebrides Who forced opium on the Chinese

Who own them buildings Who got the money Who think you funny Who locked you up Who own the papers

Who owned the slave ship Who run the army

Who the fake president Who the ruler Who the banker

Who? Who? Who?

Who own the mine Who twist your mind Who got bread Who need peace Who you think need war

Who own the oil Who do no toil Who own the soil Who is not a nigger Who is so great ain’t nobody bigger

Who own this city

Who own the air Who own the water

Who own your crib Who rob and steal and cheat and murder and make lies the truth Who call you uncouth

Who live in the biggest house Who do the biggest crime Who go on vacation anytime

Who killed the most niggers Who killed the most Jews Who killed the most Italians Who killed the most Irish Who killed the most Africans Who killed the most Japanese Who killed the most Latinos

Who? Who? Who?

Who own the ocean

Who own the airplanes Who own the malls Who own television Who own radio

Who own what ain’t even known to be owned Who own the owners that ain’t the real owners

Who own the suburbs Who suck the cities Who make the laws

Who made Bush president Who believe the confederate flag need to be flying Who talk about democracy and be lying

Who the Beast in Revelations Who 666 Who know who decide Jesus get crucified

Who the Devil on the real side Who got rich from Armenian genocide

Who the biggest terrorist Who change the bible Who killed the most people Who do the most evil Who don’t worry about survival

Who have the colonies Who stole the most land Who rule the world Who say they good but only do evil Who the biggest executioner

Who? Who? Who?

Who own the oil Who want more oil Who told you what you think that later you find out a lie

Who? Who? Who?

Who found Bin Laden, maybe they Satan Who pay the CIA, Who knew the bomb was gonna blow Who know why the terrorists Learned to fly in Florida, San Diego

Who know why Five Israelis was filming the explosion And cracking they sides at the notion

Who need fossil fuel when the sun ain’t goin’ nowhere

Who make the credit cards Who get the biggest tax cut Who walked out of the Conference Against Racism Who killed Malcolm, Kennedy & his Brother Who killed Dr King, Who would want such a thing? Are they linked to the murder of Lincoln?

Who invaded Grenada Who made money from apartheid Who keep the Irish a colony Who overthrow Chile and Nicaragua later

Who killed David Sibeko, Chris Hani, the same ones who killed Biko, Cabral, Neruda, Allende, Che Guevara, Sandino,

Who killed Kabila, the ones who wasted Lumumba, Mondlane, Betty Shabazz, Die, Princess Di, Ralph Featherstone, Little Bobby

Who locked up Mandela, Dhoruba, Geronimo, Assata, Mumia, Garvey, Dashiell Hammett, Alphaeus Hutton

Who killed Huey Newton, Fred Hampton, Medgar Evers, Mikey Smith, Walter Rodney, Was it the ones who tried to poison Fidel Who tried to keep the Vietnamese Oppressed

Who put a price on Lenin’s head

Who put the Jews in ovens, and who helped them do it Who said “America First” and ok’d the yellow stars

Who killed Rosa Luxembourg, Liebneckt Who murdered the Rosenbergs And all the good people iced, tortured, assassinated, vanished

Who got rich from Algeria, Libya, Haiti, Iran, Iraq, Saudi, Kuwait, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Jordan, Palestine,

Who cut off peoples hands in the Congo Who invented Aids Who put the germs In the Indians’ blankets Who thought up “The Trail of Tears”

Who blew up the Maine & started the Spanish American War Who got Sharon back in Power Who backed Batista, Hitler, Bilbo, Chiang kai Chek

Who decided Affirmative Action had to go Reconstruction, The New Deal, The New Frontier, The Great Society,

Who do Tom Ass Clarence Work for Who doo doo come out the Colon’s mouth Who know what kind of Skeeza is a Condoleeza Who pay Connelly to be a wooden negro Who give Genius Awards to Homo Locus Subsidere

Who overthrew Nkrumah, Bishop, Who poison Robeson, who try to put DuBois in Jail Who frame Rap Jamil al Amin, Who frame the Rosenbergs, Garvey, The Scottsboro Boys, The Hollywood Ten

Who set the Reichstag Fire

Who knew the World Trade Center was gonna get bombed Who told 4000 Israeli workers at the Twin Towers To stay home that day Why did Sharon stay away?

Who? Who? Who?

Explosion of Owl the newspaper say The devil face cd be seen

Who make money from war Who make dough from fear and lies Who want the world like it is Who want the world to be ruled by imperialism and national oppression and terror violence, and hunger and poverty.

Who is the ruler of Hell? Who is the most powerful

Who you know ever Seen God?

But everybody seen The Devil

Like an Owl exploding In your life in your brain in your self Like an Owl who know the devil All night, all day if you listen, Like an Owl Exploding in fire. We hear the questions rise In terrible flame like the whistle of a crazy dog

Like the acid vomit of the fire of Hell Who and Who and WHO who who Whoooo and Whooooooooooooooooooooo!

Source: *CounterPunch* October 3, 2002.