

BRAMBLE.

by

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A THESIS

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Duel

My brother yells, *How the hell
you think I helped Nicole out, bought Christian
them shoes, paid for my apartment? I
hustled. Wasn't workin, cuttin hair—that
ain't no real job.* We're face-
to-face in a gravel parking lot. Tenor
talk out each tenement
falls on grave ears. I'm calm before
the change in pitch, the stand we take:

*I know where I went wrong. I done
been to prison.* Our conversation turns
silent. *But I gotta do this.* There's drama
in stopping him. I don't. *I won't
visit you behind bars, white noise.*

Corn-tax: A History.

Our history is a field of corn.
Our mothers comb the iron gates.
Our fathers break the green husk.
Our children sacrifice their tongues.
Our Master is our ear of corn.
Our ears of corn shade from the sun.
Our darkness swells the corn.
Our faces shoulder shade.
Our children's eyes light up at night.
Our burlap corns and collar bone.
Our sugared ears of corn.
Our Master in between the rows.
Our ears of corn shade from the sun.
Our starchy dirt corn pipes, a field.
Our mouth-sweet plot of elder grass.
Our crickets drum the corn.
Our Master's singe the corn silk sac.
Our strangled-leafy heirs.
Our hands of kernel cash.
Our children's ear worm lash.
Our moonlight splits a field.
Our dark hands limb the corn.
Our bristles neck the fibrous cob.
Our brothers bury wind.
Our sisters dance between the stalks.
Our widows web the corn.
Our breath of shuck piano mourns.
Our field of bending boughs.
Our dead embalm her hem.
Our corn turns under rows.
Our soil hungers for the sun.
Our wrathful corn afield.
Our tourniquet of yield.

Shell Food Mart #6
Thursday June 1, 2006

4:16 pm

Can I have an IOU?

Precisely and just like
that, a woman came into
the convenience store,
her hands out.

Funny thing is
she didn't seem the least
bit disturbed
by her actions (i.e.

free, natural
to her, et cetera).

Money, and the need
for it, forces a hand

she controls from her body
to move involuntarily.

I tell her sorry
to be careful

then commence
to straighten up
the pile of old receipts
with notes written all
over them

in scribblese. Memoranda
per: Management.

Heavy-Set Male Dancer
Dance Alabama 2006

Cover Me playing. As he spins, beads
sweat off his forehead, hock limbs
fall roll the stage nimble forearms, trim
the fat. So benign, the free admission
must play into the way I watch him
(as a friend of a friend, of dramatic
sensibility) toe the stage, tumble.

On my left a friend shouts, *Okaaay*
go head, boy! On my right, a friend stares
blankly.

Shell Food Mart #6
Sunday June 11-Monday June 12,
2006

2:16 pm

shift change climate noticeably
 more arid temps precipitation
 black bag lady not exactly soiled

clothing matches lighter counter
 red clouds

touch ash tender sand
 paper hands brown bag
 nappy braid

11:33 pm

auto plant germinates sexual
 frustration ten-hour-day
 shift means cowry shells

trade auto parts need
 busted speakers rattle
 on the way to work

lovers wife braids Lamont's
 hair sprawl affairs endowed
 low marital somnambulance

3:48 am

hear say traffic counterfeit
 clause tender gossip icee
 machine chirp four am birds

Manlove Street

I'm crossing Manlove Street in Texas. I run into a Mexican male. He asks me about the bus schedule in English. I don't know, I say. I'm not from here. He tells me he's thirty-six and ready to get out of here. It's 12 am and I'm hungry. I'm gay, he says. I'm gay, too. The story. He says I should be careful walking on this side of town. He says other Mexicans have fucked with him. The bend in the road now. He wants to move back to New York. He says I'm unhappy. A lover will make him happy. A relationship will make him happy. I guess, he says. What's a chocolate man like you doing without a lover. I'm laughing at Man and Love and Drive. He thinks I'm laughing at him. I'm thinking about climate. How I'm in George Bush's state. How Mexican immigrants make up fifty percent of the population in Austin. How he was 19 when he first crossed the border. I'm bigger and darker than he is. How blacks absorb light. It's dark out. We end up at a leather bar. I meet his Hawaiian Puerto Rican friend. He insists that race matters. Mexicans and Puerto Ricans are different. Si, los Puertorriquenos de Nueva York are salty with us Mexicanos. They think they're better than us. The bar takes everyone in. Come and go as we please. Traffic. Bus drivers, artists, teachers, roofers. Discuss geography, parents, lovers. Black cocks, white cocks, lies. How to love a man. Bum a cigarette. Look both ways before crossing.

Letter C, once my father was dead.

Whose lonely office, whose dust thumb
Prints labor for black fowls, a terrible figure
Of public offense, all light and heating bills,
Your tarred invoices, all pinned to your bed
Room wall with little red push pins, adjoining

The illegible short hand notes, evasion
A banana republic. My hand in what
Seems finally to spell out a word—
I manage to cross out certain
Metaphors. Instead asking you what
Completely made you, you the alias

Country of your birth, dead on
A trumpet flower in morning, a reason
To refuse the autopsy on grounds that it
Cost. You the designer your whole life,
A pixilated drop in the bucket, a hammer

Toad blue chip of graven import
Book jackets, letters all dusted and
Finally lost, when flash light combs

Your closet tax schema in pieces
That I could assay for resonance, that I
Could leave the reader this text.

**Ashbery was right, *I cannot decide in which
direction to walk***

I've even left
work, writing this poem

(the beginnings of it down
on a napkin). Going home

there's a stop I have to make
along the way to Wing Zone

I stop for fuel. Who doesn't
think about the rising costs

of living? What else is there:
stuff in a two-bedroom apartment,

a single man with a single
vision wasting time and space

on what the future holds.
Nothing could be more true

than fate, choosing remains
what's left after a grow season:

bolting crowns of cauliflower
spinach, and kale greens

gone to seed in bio-
dynamic plots, double-dug.

Outlining that chicken.

In kindergarten some things
just stick with you.
Miss Elias and her class

rules. Being taught
to outline the picture
first. An immigrant boy

sitting next to me
is coloring a bird bright
yellow with orange.

I'm taught to watch
out for those who hate
me. *Those Cuban*

sons-of-bitches, my father
says, *whose houses smell*
like day-old rice and beans.

But the boy has hair
like me, not exactly
but close. It's coarse

nappy in certain places
where he is most
likely tender-headed

where he won't let
his nanny or abuelita,
his daddy or hermano

comb his hair. The bird's
wing catches my eye,
orange polka dots

flecking his white skin

not fully colored
yet. I shouldn't

be looking over
my shoulder
drinking in the

brutal silence
as the colors of
his chicken

feathers,
as the ruler
raps my knuckles.

I find my way
to the corner,
address Miss Elias

for the whipping
I'd receive
at home

for not
letting this
bitch have it.

**Shell Food Mart #1 (main
office) Saturday July 1-Sunday
July 2, 2006**

10:21 pm

sweep cash-drop regular pump
white male:: bellies
print shift report check

id tank tops white:: niggas
print ad black ink register
tape ice ben completely

full syrupy slurpee solution
astringent absorb leakage lever
sticky mess black MAGNUMS pitch

black horsemen baggy crotchets
print White-Men-Only repeat
History Channel reports receipt

2:14 am

cash cow petty thief leather
belly no pasteurized milk
for the young

Bramble.

“What is a Poet?”: I think. The most important thing (to write). Bramble root. A rose underneath the chiffon curtains the house, everything gradations of red. 1979. Impression. Venus and Adonis truly felt dumb when read aloud, coyly courting each others’ violent sides. My Aunt Margaret Ann (also known as ‘Money Ann’) sitting-post-disco, cocked legs on the couch next to Reginald, her son. (What year did he become a Monster, also known as Boog). Pressured for time, I do make sense. Vacuum my room for the fifth instance this morning. Obfuscate is one word I keep repeating which leaves an impression. While in Oregon, summers ago, I pressed flowers into a writing life, the mountains up against the sea, against the fog. Jersey was such a dirty place that I had to write about it, exactly what I fail to remember. Why, I wonder, we never let Boog in with his doom doom rage. What does any boy want rapping owl dance on his mother’s windows and doors. Answers were sometimes in a book, neatly folded. Reread Price of the Ticket and remembered what it cost to live in my economy’s mono-kiss-ass-throat syrup, critical mass and other rose hip dragons. Keep in mind there always another method. A bard—thought of scotch and Burns:

Alas! My roupet Muse is haerse!
 Your Honors’ hearts wi’ grief ’twad pierce,
 To see her sittan on her arse
 Low I’ the dust,
 And screachan out prosaic verse,
 An’ like to brust!

Word count spoke accent marks, try. A careful eye and one could identify *Hypericum Perforatum* (also known as St. Johnswort) its perforated yellow flowering tops, coming-of-age scent. When Venus threatens to pluck Adonis from his horse, I think, what a shag must have cost, Ginsberg eyeing the avocados.

Boog grew mean, disappeared. Who could argue there was too much brandy around the house?

Outside—

dirt plots where a girl's bicycle training wheels turned and turned.

Sea otters rose from seaweed kelp along the shore, mussels groping near the amoebas.

Every five years, then back. Black scalding, water fly. No one paid Boog any mind, as always, the fig tree down south grew to an enormous size. King and me were allies after being let out the alley where he guarded my father's tavern. Even after he bit me, chased me around the pool tables. I cried like a lyric. Poet of atrocities, without protection from the state police force drunk like fish at the bar. Speak of the tragedy, speak of the lean heart beating pulse. The current, some of my life, (means) some things count, mnemonic, manic half. The memory, gain.

Sitting tin roof, slides make-shift. Rose buds. Our mud mouths and ankle bruise. Of the endives off corner factory buildings grow wild. City defense team makes impostor salad. Nothing the we couldn't shave. Leaves green and felt white hairs of lamb's ear. Close to the ground. As children, feel for the dark. Take up a hand-made museum on its offer. Measure. The cold gray spaces. The thick stench a piss-old white man slept in for the night. Looking for cardboard boxes now to rip up and splay for head spins. Pop-lock. Military camp for boys, upstate New York. Circle jerk in the showers. Circle the general look of mess hall, mint ice cream lopped, swimming in a bowl. They put my brother in a gravel ring thousands of taunting Jewish white boys, spittle hanging off their mouths, to duke it out. The we were out numbered. The tears wet, my brother literally made to feel like an animal. Re-write it as insurgent acts? We were marching in formation. Singing

war hymnals. Altar boys. Frankincense coaled and smoke through the brass. Me singing hail Marys underneath the choir robe: strobe lights, whistles. Gnawing on the bone, a place at grandma's table. The ignorant fly, landing a plate of neck bones and pig feet. Grandma would always say it "don't believe lard is greasy," singing, singing. Ma is under the bed when my father arrives, bends the corner on our way home from school.

I'm near clipped grass. A writer says, you'll eventually tell a story where a 20-something male kills his father over and over and over again. The plot, he says, is driven by the protagonists's insatiable desire to exact revenge. Towards what end, I'm thinking. Do we as writers live to kill our parents? A student tells me she'd never publish anything her parents didn't approve of. I thought that was a murderous statement. A dead body decomposes. My father died two days before his birthday January 15, 2003.

I'm near clipped grass, smelling a coffin's national flag. I discover something new about dead bodies:

Of my father, hazardous oil
bins and die-off aboard dump trucks,
life amid maggots transmogrifies
the wormy stench of human waste our eyes

all mired in LUV pampers, diarrhea, TIME magazine, centerfolds, cellophane, hamburgers, OXY-twin, Cedaphil, ear wax, hair follicles, dried blood, banana peels, sweet-n-low, suppressants, contact solution, fingernail polish remover, coke, cotton balls, bloodstains, salted peanuts, ginger ale, cigarette butts, junk mail, beer cans, cell phones, blood oranges

The chickens come home to roost. The rhythms of my life are important to me. "Let freedom ring," bears a certain veracity, an unequivocal sound. A ringing in the ear and for a moment, I turn to a letter I always praised. How Dr. King

turned a phrase in that Birmingham jail or on a bridge with thousands of others.

1966 Texas Prison Song

Boss, there's no way I'd chop
off my foot, stem the rise and fall
of this year's timber. No way I'd
betray Leadbelly and the clan
of convicts. *Steady, here. Stop
all that bleeding, you tell me, hold
that blood hand against your white
shirt.* Yes Boss, won't get nothing on
your sash, your starch uniform,
stick. Men in swinging fits
white pines, and their' swollen
ankles slip. It was an accident, not
on account of no plan to resist, Boss.
I'd swear on a horses' dear life.

Shell Food Mart #8
Friday July 14, 2006

10:06 pm

How I Could Go to Sea
for Margarie

My grandma's wake, a coffin
of warm affection. I was born this way

down there swimming with dark
bones, lighthouses

near the shore.

In another life, I speak to my ex-husband

Banjo, flowers, vase, harmonica, hand
Drums, before you give up in (call it
Quits) your red pants, lying face down
On the palette, the way I whisper
Clearing my throat of something,
Frog-like and desperate (but still,
The way we need each other's
Weight), the stillness of the log
Cabin walls, you say, as the fire
Builds in the wood stove, how
Tender this should be, hold me—
Not too tight you say as I knead
The fat of your back, the sound
About the cabin, here and there
Inside my head are crickets, frail
Rubbings, leaving their coming
And going noises, the pitch black
Lovely dark lights the uncertainty,
Litter about the room, hand-sewn
Garments. Your instruments all
Of them making a motley music
Resting still on the wood floor
Boards, water for tea boiling
Down, an egg white smoke
When I tell you nothing could
Make me think differently, not
That I couldn't love you, but as
It stands, the flowing creek and
Straw bales told me, I could only
Living play dead once, go on
Telling myself to remove the
Impediment, shut up and off
The growing heart murmur
Relocates. I'm down finding
A couple matches, some incense
Candle wax running onto
A plate, the fire growing

More dead. No more talk
I say when the moon clouds
The room, I say good night
As the wind nips, leaves
Our bodies stiff, gradations
Of grave light, graying
Starts, budding darkly.

Alabama Inmate Notes

For Moses

1

The job is taxing clanking on the bars we all agree we need some new work boots and yet and more over we need a new outlook Sir it is one hundred degrees in here and the air is obscene as well as our knees hurt where our heavenly body speaks to us and nothing Sir to scratch our dreams on the wall with and there Sir is another rape another fucking suicide goes underreported and guards scream *bust your head if you buck* and some of us live Sir in San Francisco where the smells are all kind brown and blue musk that in our dreams fuses railroad a chain of events Sir that lead here and suppose us dead and deserving we all agree we have families we hurt in real life we step out of line we talk shit eat watermelon on Independence Day as well as find our handcuffs birdcalls women or booze until the sun goes down our feet bar after bar Sir as the clanking renews itself as we take lint from the laundry room to cot with us we all agree as we ink we blot out we meld we murder we assemble for chow with each clanking bar our heavenly body speaks of.

2

Bench press now to find the right
words like *if I can't have
champagne, red wine is fine.*

3

Here by green—*Green, how I love
you, green. Green wind. Green
branches—inside the poem—the
flesh on their hands was green—he
means wet—she dreams by her
railing—as in virginal—green hair,
green flesh—*¹

4

Drive dat spike—steady bo. Drive
dat spike—steady bo. Take your
time, there's a long, long line. Driver
hit his—smashed his thumb. Driver
hit his—smashed his thumb. Boy,
it's numb. Been dat way *all* day.
Tote dem ties—don't drop a one.
Tote dem ties—don't drop a one.
Won't be long yet. Cuz—we—
almost done.²

5

My first wreck was at least
humbling.

6

Instead of publishing us in obscure psychiatric journals that nobody reads why don't they place us in public restrooms near the condom dispensers?

7

Most people out there think we're a bunch of animals.

8

Please give me my flowers while I'm
still here.

9

We don't have access to the internet.

10

We have typewriters.

11

I'm from Van Dyke's home city. My
family's blue-collar.

12

Her red wine spreading across a perfectly white paper towel. I'd forgotten our, my family's relocation South the night the corn and stalled green Ford truck emerges west of here near Waverly, AL.

I'd prefer to write love poems.

Measures.

My sweet, sweet heart/how much I loved her.

13

Mine my *very valentine*³ is.

14

All those loops and repetitions come
straight out a child's mouth.

15

Laugh. Everyday. Dark. Pride
Saddens. Smile. Believe. Shine.
Laugh. Past. Joy. Dance. Blinded.
Clown. Look. Past. Foolishness.
Laugh.⁴

16

I write about the sea the sod when
Snicker wags a tail at me and chases
anything that moves among the
monkey grass and tea when good old
Snicker loses sight the sun the
buzzing of a bee become the tail old
Snicker rides until the land becomes
the sea a buzzing brackish little sea
old Snicker jumps from tree to tree
and happy wags along the grass and
fast he trails the buzz the bee just as
a sailor would the sea he catches
hold and nabs the bee and in the
happy buzz his glee old Snicker loses
sight of thee and celebrates a victory
as any sailor would asea but under
some great mystery zips out from
under Snicker's paw and whirs about
his angry maw while squinting
sniffing mowing grass til buzz and
bee are on his tail and stings poor
Snicker on the ass.⁵

17

Lay me down, Frog. In the valley of
my shadow. In the alley, for the
valley of my shadow of death. For
the whole of my youth. Lay down,
Frog. Rest.

18

Please read "Please Call Me by My
True Names."⁶

19

I like rhythm and blues.

20

The curve fast approaching.

21

Tomorrow arriving, arriving. Branch
wings. Nest flower. Stone. Cry hope,
death. Alive. Metamorphosing river
bird. Mayfly, happily. Pond. Grass-
snake. Frog. Bones. Sticks. Merchant
Uganda. Girl boat. Ocean pirate.
Pirate. Capable, loving. Politburo
hands. Pay people. Camp. Warm
earth, tears. Oceans. Names once
one. Names. Up. Heart. Open
compassion.⁷

Voiceless, the inept. for Tetsuko

Wail!

Even though it withers
 me your breath
 the stench of sun soaked
 die-off your swollen heart
 on my chest
 let go

 of him.

Wail a dirge!

Damn Freddy come creepin
 into your bunker an old love
 won't hunker down with you
 in your wheel chair
 on your deathbed.

Wail and moan!

Even though it pierces my _____.
 I can't take it
 I can't take it

the fucker bled on my chest
 after all I've given him.

Wail, slap hands with Rinpoche!

Embrace Trungpa, the teaching:
 desire is the cause of all
 suffering. Remember, listen
 and burn away this yellow sickness.

Wail, inspire the bereaved!

ahhhhhhhhh!

ahhhhhhhhh!

Wail, and if you pass

the fire of intimacy
on your breast

the taste of death
in my mouth,
we'll toast our achievements:

Paralysis behind you. Diabetes behind you. Glaucoma
behind you. Wail! Boulder behind you. Your selfish
fucking children behind you. Capital drain behind you.
Wail! Dylan behind you. Your father behind you. Love
behind you and the word before us. A sentence-free life
before us. And I'm wailing! Breath before us

wail!

wail!

wail

ourselves anew.

The sound the trucker man makes

Green on the counter top. It's his head
on my table of content not telling the truth

slant. It is my frayed pronoun bic razors plot
development. It doesn't have a voice, so it

weaves toupee cakes and stutters, wigs out
rush-hour traffic, breaks bottle of wintergreen

on the carport near entrance of the book
arts studio in Gordo, Alabama. Helping move

letterpress broadsides, eventually smaller type
spills out onto truck bed. Many different plate

sizes slow the process. Our next
leg of work: sorting type-face, raising

money in the Black-Belt, living in a one-room
efficiency with bath, heating, water, sewage

system. Will do raised beds. Will grow
some type of green.

Blood Hand

He is in jail again. I'm sick.
He is my brother. It doesn't matter.
I try to shave the fact from sensitive skin
each morning. He remains the same
brother I fought as a child
held a dinner fork to, cried as the pitch
fork pierces his hand and our father
loses his temper on another day in July
as my brother bleeding hand
of male pride bends to find his youth
a moment of *told you so*. In the race class
gender mirror, I hate you.
Want you back desirous.
Want the fight.

**Shell Food Mart #8
Sunday August 6, 2006**

5:10 pm

Immigrant Encounter

At the gas station, a Mexican male noticeably bruised. He came looking for an indicator. A tool which measures the pressure in his tires. The crusted black blood on his chin. Fresh in places like his forehead, above his eye. Almost wet from where I stand. What are you looking for I say? He keeps rummaging through the candy isle. What are you lookin' for? I don't speak a very good English he says. A bang combed over the wound. Estas buscando para que? My Spanish is poor. He comprehends. Llantas, llantas por my tires, amigo. Si, tenemos alla I say. At the counter with his hands. Tall, I say? Si, si four black. Tall black? Si hombres, he says, beat me up. Taka mi dinero. 500 dolares, amigo. Where? Donde? En la ciudad Alberta. You gotta be careful I say. He doesn't respond. Cuidado I say. He's mean-mugging me with his eyes. I grab his hand. As if I could apologize. The wrong hand. The bruised hand. He shrieks. Leaves the store with his tool.

I imagine the red counter. The moment I grimaced. Him and me.

Factory Bloodroot

In a line
 at the root
 of all
 evil
 I garble
 splay
 dried bloodroot,
 shake dirt, beat it
 on the holed-
 mesh-skirt-
 net, on the clock

timed for efficient
 free market success,
 as it (and I) pre-pares to go

in bundles to
 the plant facility
 where vats as big
 as any life-size, stain-

less steel turns into
 each other in a line
 out-spinning the next, contents
 against the silver
 blade, red gut
 juice particulars.

Spinning, a
 vertical pan
 or misnomer (cut)
 a volatile oil
 an alkaloid musk,

(the train
 of thought)

inconsistent with
the initial turn
I took in the line
to gibber
to gut-lib
to pundit lie
to oval office
to plant species
to consumer tomb
to discursive party
of red blue and neutral
states.

In half the time
and room temperature

one circles,
one paces,
one bottles,
one labels,
one stands-by

as the up turn
as the upheaval
confluence—

(albeit, in a lonely state-
of-the-art facility)

I prepare to garble
some more.

**Shell Food Mart #1 (main office)
Sunday July 30, 2006**

2:01 am

baby daddy cheap red
lipstick line receipt
indicator card decline
paper change

dis da cheapest milk
in town please hold it
for me curls curdle

2 in the morning
canned milk tuna cash
splenda Sunday rhythm &
blues

3:14 am

Detroit cassinova hey baby
Holla atcha baby Come spit
atcha baby hey baby

Figure Skate

Russia's tight fitting bottoms. Swan dives
triple axles. Loop. A soldier wanders. Do birds fuck
each other's brains out? Origami fold during the Winter
Games.

Is it a material representation, love? Ice-
cream rims the side of a monk's mouth. Dairy sours
on the floor in an arena. Perversions?

Police me from the rear of this performance. In other words
I couldn't express.

Here's the stain of pink flesh, the Alabama
private says,
Russia, swing your arms. Wander

each bend of the arena beating your wings. I could
eat your heart beat or let your wrists

grow pale. Sun light, though,

will enter the anal canal
will sleep in caves and know how red
the rosiest mantra is

a broken bed post.

Moral sex is a television from God. *O Russia*,
let's sleep and wake. One black one
red tonight,

comrades who stretch each other's limbs
twist and turn each other over
to morning.

Re-write (based on my love for chocolate)

What's a friend if they don't tell you
to revise, re-write, reset, relive
your work. Get out your dirty laundry
list of things you've always wanted
to do. Smell that? It was five before
five today when I realized I'd been
smelling brownies, chocolate brownies
on the floor at work. Looks like if some
one wants to cause a stir on the job
on Valentine's Day, one needs only to warm-
up some brownies in the microwave, tease us
all with piping hot chocolate. Smell that?
I mean I was chocola-tayed, roaming about, open-
nosed, trying to get to the bottom of it.
Ask my co-workers. They all thought I was insane
sniffing, at first, for french fries then insisting
that someone had, without guilt, sallied about the floor
with a pan of freshly baked brownies, knowing good well
it was Valentine's Day, and we all had chocolate on
our minds, flowers and roses up our patooties, if not
for something more than a gooey center. Love
pushed us to the edge with versions of heart-shaped red,
metallic boxes of chocolates at the check out
counter, at the kissing booth hung-over with sponsors
from this sorority or that fraternity. Everyone woo-woo—
it was an awfully sweet thing to do, leave us all wishing
we had brownies on Valentine's Day. At five o'clock
someone opens our noses, and on the smoochingest
day of the year. Smell that? I'm stretching it
a bit, reaching for something a friend once told me to
revise, re-write, reset, relive. Flowers, chocolate brownies:
Once, on the job, a West African waiter loved to say
chocola-tay to me.

Whale Song Sestina

Hump-back
 whale,
 blubber coon
 Arctic male,
 sing:
 the harpoon

whalers lo,
 the harpoon
 hump-back
 whale,
 an Arctic
 coon song

albino tail,
 and horizon
 war bride
 fluke song
 sing:
 lo,

ale at HARPOON's
 boon-dock
 row, one male
 quells *Antarctica* (!)
 foe, looming

bride

of hump-back
 row, come back
 be that, mottled
 lo
 whale,
 fugue tail
 fluke song
 Arctic fin,

be lo

bin,

gunners oil

(bah!) boondoggle, mottled row
sing low war song bride and
foe, fluke o, hump-back
whale and sow.

What not, *not* a song?

Love,
 if I smack, stink of my own
 body. If as if all things matter most
 to me: The Golden Gate Bridge, but two golden
 arches, the long walk on lunch time

peering thru shop windows
 not *not* for me, but this
 song that is not a
 song, leaves me singing.

And Love, at all intervals,
 you (spanakopita on bed of green
 lettuce) please the sound negative
 heart string of fire inside

us. Love,
 if as if all
 the leaves felling
 the sky were blue, and being

being not a cause for celebration,
 not a song but song
 within a song not *not* a
 song.

Shell Food Mart #6
Saturday August 12-Sunday August
13, 2006

2:58 am

lines pick up sonar customary
wave trailer talk carrier
truck porno flicks for sale

"what you need
Sunday night-
"any men-on-men

car wash sir out
of order gas discount
purchase quick wax

1:02 pm

in walks green three
piece dirt underneath
the nail collar sweat

peculiar lean funk
100 degrees a petit woman
purse lips tight peers

over shoulder black derby
black fingers clutching
moon pies mucous air
conditioned space

paranoia milk chocolate
white patron eyes Ala.
News front page story

If that's 'my new hat?'

"This black thing?" (Baby,
too big for my head, though matches
my shirt, the party's Scottish dark
brew and compliments, in part,

the fact that I'm bald
you know, and that it's Fall
and a nigga (and Negro and Black to
the reader) should protect his skin

from exposure to shifting winds
accompanied by rain and rail
road trains which rumble through night.
(No, sweetie, this thing trite,

new serves a purpose.)
Spangled as is with old
rumination's self-loathe
and petty findings is just

something to keep my egg
head warm this October
night underneath the black
mushroom cap.

NOTES

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- ¹. The writing in italics is an epigraph to Cyress Cassell's poem, "Luna Verde" and is a variation on a line from the poem "Sleep Walking Ballad" by Federico Garcia Lorca.
- ². This stanza is a variation on Dale Little's poem, "Untitled Work-Song." At the time of this project, Dale Little was serving time at the Bibb County Correctional Facility in Brent, AL.
- ³. This sentence is a variation on a line from Gertrude Stein's poem, "A Very Valentine."
- ⁴. Each word comes from a different line in Moses Wingate's poem, "I Can Laugh." At the time of this project, Moses was serving time at the Bibb County Correctional Facility.
- ⁵. This song is inspired by Richard Sandlin's poem, "Snicker Chased the Bee." At the time of this project, Richard was serving time at the Bibb County Correctional Facility in Brent, AL.
- ⁶. "Please Call Me by My True Names" is the title of a poem written by the Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh.
- ⁷. This prayer was composed using the last word of each line in Thich Nhat Hanh's poem, "Please Call Me by My True Names."