

THE IMMEASURABLE WANT OF LIGHT



A Play by
Daaimah Mubashshir

Illustrations by
Nell Painter



Introduction by
Amauta M. Firmino



- 3
- HOLE
- PRESS

THE IMMEASURABLE WANT OF LIGHT

Copyright © 2018 Daaimah Mubashshir

Image copyrights © 2018 Nell Painter

Introduction copyright © 2018 Amauta M. Firmino

Performances from this book for non-commercial personal or educational purposes are encouraged, provided the Author and Publisher are acknowledged.

For associated rights, permissions inquiries, and other media rights, please contact **3 Hole Press**.

For all professional and production rights, please contact the Author.

Second printing, 2019

ISBN: 978-0-9982763-3-5

Edited by Rachel Kauder Nalebuff & Tessa Lee

Design by Omnivore

Printed in the USA on recycled paper

Distributed by Small Press Distribution

3 Hole Press is grateful to Raquel Almazan, Amauta M. Firmino, Desiree Hable, Roman Kané, and Jutta Keenan for their assistance with translation, as well as to the Brooklyn Arts Council and the New York State Council on the Arts Literature Program for their support.

3 Hole Press
Brooklyn NY
3holepress.org

A Play by
Daaimah Mubashshir

Introduction

by Amauta M. Firmino

What if we fess up to the fact that most of the universe is made of dark matter? That everything is suspended in an imperceptible essential blackness we'll never see.

The Immeasurable Want of Light meditates on the material entanglements of Black bodies through the poetics of darkness and light. In a series of associative episodes, Daaimah Mubashshir's intergalactic cast of characters call their bodies into question and trouble the idea that visibility is a political end. Are our bodies inescapable? What are the material realities of these bodies? What are we made of that isn't already stardust held together by dark matter? What if the question of being seen, from a Black or Brown body to the universe, is the wrong question? Or at least, phrased as it has been—Can you see me for what I am?—will always produce the wrong answer. There's power in the silent gravitational attraction of dark matter. It's a downwards pull, to the depths of darkest space, deepest ocean, an imperceptible force that's too much to deny. Here's a law for lawless space: there's more nothing than anything after all.

How can historically oppressed bodies—those bodies that have historically been bought and sold—find their reflections in the stars? I'm reminded of Frantz Fanon's assertion, that "our only hope [...] is to pose the problem correctly [...] to get man to admit he is nothing, absolutely nothing."¹ But maybe the stars have a burning hunger for more self. I mean, what is that audacity to burn in the dark, to emit light where there is none? Fred Moten's offering is "*Mu*," to inhabit "nothing itself in its fullness."² There's something alluring about the invisible possibility of dark matter's vastness. *The Immeasurable Want of Light* invites us to imagine the possibilities of emitting no light, sitting contemplatively in the void: "Gravitational / And black / And heavy."

—Amauta M. Firmino
New Haven 2018

¹ Fanon, Frantz. Trans. Richard Philcox. *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove, 2008

² Moten, Fred. *Blackness and Nothingness (Mysticism in the Flesh)*. South Atlantic Quarterly, Fall 2013

Playwright's Note

The Immeasurable Want of Light is a new work made from a selection of plays called *Everyday Afroplay*.

Everyday Afroplay, which began in 2016, is a daily theatrical writing meditation on Blackness or the black body. This practice is a text-based response to Chris Ofili's portrait series *Afro Muses*, in which depictions and shades of Blackness are so expansive that any attempt to define a single identity confutes itself. Ofili's *Afro Muses* opened a portal to the infinite, thus liberating me to create a cauldron of text that can exist outside industry constraints.

When collaborating with other theatre artists using text from *Everyday Afroplay*, that work becomes an entirely new work, specific to that collaboration. With each opportunity, I take into careful consideration the space the new work will fill—time, location and duration or book form (in the case of this text)—as well as the collaborators, their practice, and aesthetics. This “energy data” serves as both container and compass that molds and pushes the work forward into existence.

HERE ARE SOME GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS ON SYMBOLS YOU MAY FIND THROUGHOUT THE TEXT

BOLD CAPS = NARRATOR OR STAGE DIRECTIONS

- < > this can be translated into physical gesture
- [] a loose stage direction/guide within a block of text
- ? , . line breaks are used to punctuate versus symbols
- Tt capitalized words indicate emphasis or the beginning of a new thought
- ||||||| a scene break

**OUR LOCATION OR “THE SETTING”
IS CALLED CAPAURISCES
PRONOUNCED—KUH-POUR-I-CES**

**THIS IS A MASH UP OF A GALAXY SIMILAR TO DRAGONFLY 44
[A GALAXY MADE OF 99.99 PERCENT DARK MATTER]
AND AN ARTIST COLONY
LIKE IN NEW HAMPSHIRE OR SOMETHING**

**THIS IS NOT A REGULAR
OR TRADITIONAL PLAY**

**ONE WAY TO THINK OF THIS WORK
IS “EPISODIC”
WHERE THE MOMENTUM
ESCALATES IN A SPIRAL VERSUS
A LINEAR FASHION**

CONSIDER THIS

"Form should not be looked at askance and held suspect—form is not something that gets in the way of the story but is an integral part of the story... as I write along, the container dictates what sort of substance will fill it and at the same time the substance is dictating the size and shape of the container."

—Suzan Lori Parks, *Elements of Style*

"The family is like the forest. If you are outside, it is dense; if you are inside, you see that each tree has its own position."

—Nigerian proverb

SOME OF THE PEOPLE YOU'LL ENCOUNTER MAY SEEM RECOGNIZABLE

**HOPEFULLY IT IS EVIDENT THAT EACH CHARACTER
YOU ENCOUNTER IS REGARDED WITH
THE HIGHEST RESPECT
AND THE PUREST LOVE**

**YOU MAY FIND THAT DIALECTS
SHIFT DRAMATICALLY AT CERTAIN
POINTS THROUGHOUT THE TEXT
SEE THE BACK OF THIS BOOK
FOR SELECT TRANSLATIONS**

THIS WRAPS UP OUR HOUSEKEEPING SESSION

Personae are Listed According to Zodiac Sun Sign

RUSS	FRED MOTEN
EIN SCHWARZER STUDENT	DER BERÜHMTE ONKOLOGIST
PENNSY	AFRODILLE
HILTON ALS	RASHEEDAH
CHIOMA	BROCK
THE BLACK JOURNALISTS	THE DARK-SKINNED BODY
MAKER	NELL PAINTER
THE DAHOMEY QUEEN	SHELLE
BOY	MS COINCOIN
TRESS	LEROY
BLACK PERSON 1	BLACK PERSON 3
HOMEM EM TERNO	CELLO
JAANA	DE BOTTE VAN 419
BLACK PERSON 2	AFRIKANEN
CHILD	BLACK BODY
WOMAN	ELLA FITZGERALD

A BLACK BODY UNDRESSES
SLIPS INTO A POND OF A LIQUID SUBSTANCE
TINY LETTER SHAPED LIGHTS
BLINK OUT OF THEIR FACE
NECK AND ARMS
WORDS BUBBLE
INTO SENTENCES
INTO WHOLE MERCURIAL TEXTS
UNTIL THE ENTIRE
POND IS OVERFLOWING
WITH VISCOUS LUMINESCENCE

THE BODY EXHALES



**ASSUME THAT
YOU ARE REFRESHED
DESPITE BEING IN
COMPLETE DARKNESS**

MAKER

2
2
2
6
6
3
decimal point
6
4

This is the number
of
the weight of mass
that I carry
to be here
to be visible
to you
in
this
space

This is the number
now
Right now
today
tomorrow
or next week
next month

Next year
the number will
have increased

Let's go backwards a bit

In 2016
the number was

2
1
3
0
8
0
decimal point
3
6

So that means
the weight has
accrued at an interest
rate of 4.5 percent
which added

9
5
8
3
decimal point
2
8

times

My question is how do I
exist
underneath
that weight
and still
be visible

Am I visible
to you

Can you see me

Do you know
how I appear

But there isn't
yet

any light
I think it's because of the weight

Let's go forward a bit
or maybe out

Dark Matter is invisible to the entire
electromagnetic spectrum
it emits no light itself
but it's where light is made

This substance takes
up 80 percent of the universe
but we actually can't measure it yet

Undetectable yet essential
Massive
Only observable
by watching other celestial bodies

act and react
in relation

Ok stepping back on course
we'll go over how this happened

I signed up for this

I sought an escape from
serving other people food

Hopefully many many
people on a Monday
Tuesday
Wednesday
Thursday
Friday
Saturday
Sunday
Night
The more
people I made happy
through my undying love
for making them happy
the closer I would get
to

1
0
0

which is a good number
when you add it up
it's

7
0
0
dollars
after 7 days
of making people happy
by showing that you are happy
serving them

The only downside
to this math is that it costs
me more than
1
0
0
to be happy making other people happy

Do I need to explain that

The taxation

The debits

The subtraction

The division

The separation

Energy divested from itself
and rerouted to another source

Sadly mimicking the sun with warm fluorescence
as I hand you your delicious plate
Monkfish and Manila Clams with
Hubbard Squash Chorizo and Parmesan Broth

Maybe it was simple
work rage
flint against stone
with the right amount of
force at just the right angle

An explosion happened
to me inside me
quiet undetectable
to the simple human eye

I got heavier

I gained weight
Mass
No longer able to radiate
enough light to serve
food

Despite warnings
from people

I leaned
into this reversal

I grabbed at it forcefully
with a desperation

Gaining mass exponentially
should have been a deterrent

Failing wardrobe
misshapen body getting
out of sorts

I kept reaching and falling back
and down

Now I am here

With this Mass
of

2

2

2

6

6

3

decimal point

6

4

This number
is the weight
I carry
to be here
to be visible
to you
in
this
space

Did I make the right choice

Because what I carry
is debt

A financial albatross

Nelnet
Sallie Mae
Chase Bank
Bank of America

It doesn't matter the name

Of the debt
but the size of that number
sure does mean something

I mean it's almost the weight of a sun
or 3

Oh sunshine

I could no longer
emit any light

To make other people happy
by pretending that I was happy
serving them

Dark matter that I am
that I have become

I chose to carry this weight
To emit no light
To be instead
Gravitational
And Black
And heavy
Looking more like
Octavia Butler
Or Audre Lorde

Or better still
Maya Angelou
Not Fuckable
What So Ever

Don't get me wrong
I feel all the love
that they bring
I should never
even compare myself
to them
at all
because
I am not

never will amount
to their
weight in the universe

They hold sway in their own
galaxy

It's just that
on days when

I must choose between
buying a tube of toothpaste
or a loaf of bread

I re realize that
being fuckable is
Required to be funded

I still chose the weight

This debt
over emitting

sunshine

I like my Invisibility

I see you but
you can't see me

Yes

Actually, this is fun

Don't worry
I'm used to the weight now

Learning to carry it gracefully

Here I can observe and work
And speak
And be true
Truest Black
The Truest Dark
The Truest Matter
Ever
Ever expanding

**MS COINCOIN APPEARS
SURVEYS THE SPACESCAPE WHILE CHIOMA
BREATHES IN AND OUT**

**MAKER IN HELMUT LANG HALF BRA COAT NEON
BRA TOP ELASTIC STRAP TROUSER**

**FLOATS UP UNCONSCIOUS TO THE
SERVICE PORCH**



**ELLA FITZGERALD PULLS UP IN A
CADILLAC ESCALADE
MADE PRIMARILY OF STAINED GLASS
EXCEPT FOR THE SEATS
WHICH ARE RED ALCANTARA**

**NELL PAINTER, HILTON ALS,
FRED MOTEN JUST
SO HAPPEN TO BE INSIDE**

ELLA
Everybody in

HILTON
We've all been IN
for about Ten Minutes now

ELLA
Why Thank you
What is your name baby

HILTON
It's Hilton Als

ELLA
Well that is a sweet name
Okaaaay
Welcome everyone
To the historic tour of Capaurisces

During take off
Don't be afraid
Relax

Just let yourself feel dumb and blank
Like you got a surprise kiss [with tongue]
From that secret crush
That's been dragging on for months

Or maybe stoned like there was something else in the bowl

HILTON
<Really>

NELL
Do you need a drink?

ELLA
Capaurisces is The Milky Way's darker twin
hehehe and boy is she special

FRED
He needs more than a drink

NELL
You ain't even lying

HILTON
Let me move seats
I just don't need this

ELLA
During your stay give yourself
a big treat and skinny dip in
The DragonFly Pond
Trust me there is NO
Jacuzzi in God's universe that compares

You must must spend time in Ofili's Chapel
Sometimes performances happen
or you can just sit and enjoy the view
and while you're there
Don't forget to contribute
to Ballard's Journal

NELL
Ballard's Journal

ELLA

It's the guestbook
Leave a word or phrase
or maybe even a doodle
Doesn't have to be much

As we exit the complex
Look to your left there is
Carthage Library which houses a comprehensive and
multimedia collection of work
of past visitors
Well that's enough talking out of me
How about some music

HILTON

Or how about
just silence

FRED

<Damn>
Here we go

ELLA

Let's do my favorite rendition
of We Three Kings of Orient Are

HILTON

Listen
I'm not on this trip
for Christmas Carols

NELL [whispered]
Hilton Just be Quiet

FRED

Hey Ms. Ella which version
you talking about

ELLA

Ralph Carmichael & Orchestra
Capitol Records 1967

FRED

Yaaaaas!
That's one of THE
best Christmas Albums
Ms. Fitzgerald
Hilton, man, quality music
A mature artistic statement

ELLA

Why
Thank you Fred
Please call me Ella

FRED

<omgomgomg>

HILTON

No uh uh
I did not pay all
this money to GET AWAY
only to be subjected to

NELL [whispered]

Stop it!
Don't you know Ella's
Ancestor status

HILTON [not quite a whisper]

It must be
hella low if she a
bus driver

FRED

<SALTY!>

NELL

No you fool
She Rivendale Level

FRED

Oooh!
What's that

NELL

She has no earthly
obligations for
eternity

HILTON

Then why she

ELLA

Because I like
Being a tour guide

FRED

<See>

NELL

Please excuse him
Ma'am

ELLA

Not to worry
Earth tends to
kill the joy in us all
Right Hilly baby

HILTON

It's Hilton

ELLA

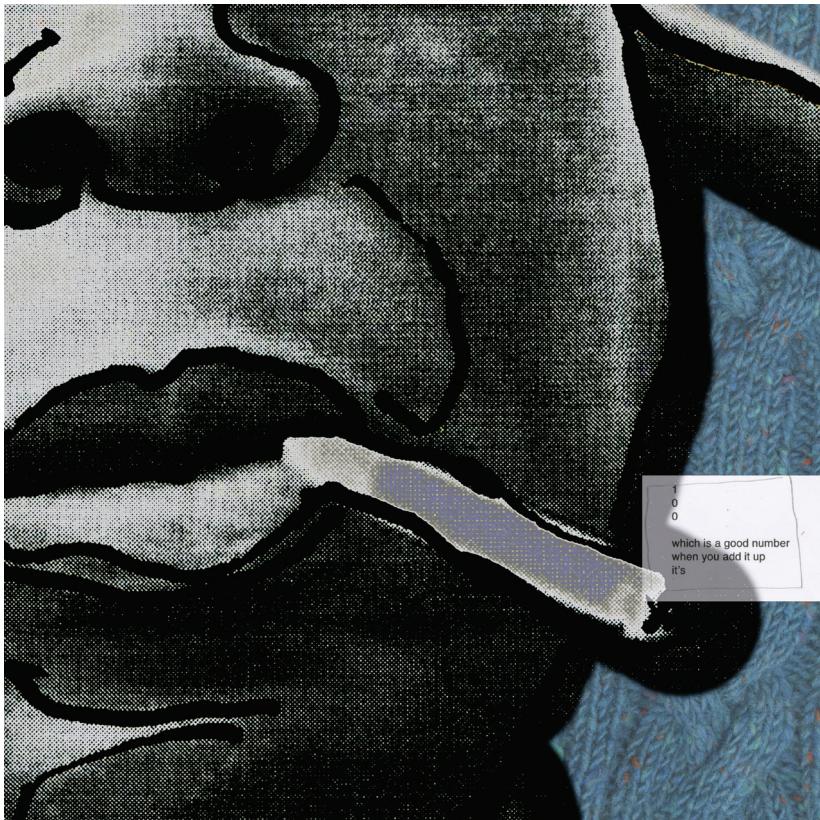
All Right everyone
We have time for one song
and Nell, Fred, and Hilton
have volunteered to be my chorus

MUSIC STARTS

ELLA SINGS THE SONG

FRED AND HILTON OOOH AND AAAH
HILTON GETS IN A FEW EYE ROLLS





Als is a good number when you add it up
Digital Collage on paper, 8 x 8"
Nell Painter, 2018

**A WOMAN OF ROYAL BIRTH FROM
16TH CENTURY DAHOMEY CARRIES A CELLO
TO A CORNER OF THE STAGE**

CELLO [singing]

God is
God is God is God is God is God is God is God is God is
God is God is God is God is God is god is God is gOg is god
is god is god gois God is God is God is God is Go god is go
god is go god id god id god is god is gOis goes goes gors god
is go god is goes Goes is god god goes god is going god is
going goid id going going id god gog is gos goes goes goes
goes god is

**MEANWHILE
A MAN IN A SUIT WALKS TO THE CORNER**

**HE TAKES OUT A LARGE WAD OF PAPER AND
COUNTS IT**
[OUT LOUD OR SOFTLY TO HIMSELF
WHICHEVER]

**A CHILD WATCHES THE MAN INTENSELY
AS HE WALKS AWAY**

CHILD

What is he going to do with all that paper
Will he buy a person
I mean will he make somebody get something for him to
make him happy
Maybe he will make another person clean his room
Or make him some food or lay down with him

If I had paper I would cut it up into tiny tiny pieces
and paste them on yellow walls with macaroni pasta gold
stars and sea shells

THE DAHOMEY QUEEN DROPS THE CELLO
WHISKS THE CHILD AWAY
CELLO CONTINUES TO SING
DESPITE THERE BEING
NO HUMAN TO DRAW
A BOW ACROSS ITS STRINGS

#####

A DARK-SKINNED BOY OF SEVEN YEARS
LOOKS UP TO A TALLER DARK-SKINNED WOMAN
JUST OVER TWENTY

BOY

But if we go down that road
right here
we may find the Black River of Joy

WOMAN

Sure
you can go down
that road if you want

BOY

I can feel it
my instincts
say that if we
part the trees
hide from the bears
and mountain lions
that we will find the
river

WOMAN

What do think
a river will do for you

BOY

Because
water?

WOMAN

You can get water
from this thermos
that I brought

BOY

But I'm looking for
the Black River of Joy

WOMAN

It doesn't exist

BOY

If we find it
then we can drink the water
and fill our whole bodies
with the river
so when we come back
home
we will be protected
from

WOMAN

It won't work

BOY

But didn't you hear
about the danger of being us

WOMAN

It's always been like that

BOY

Danger is bigger this time
they said

WOMAN

Danger is Danger is Danger
either you live or die
you just keep walking
down the path

BOY

The book I read
said the Black River of Joy
would

WOMAN

Sure kid
and there are other books
that say the opposite

BOY

But

WOMAN

Go
Go find the Black River of Joy
but guess what
there is also Lake White Supreme
that people are searching for

BOY

I've heard of that

The book I was reading
said if I found the Black River of Joy
then I could swim
in Lake White Supreme
without drowning

WOMAN

That lake
also
doesn't exist

BOY

How can that be true
So many people have died

Are dying
in Lake White Supreme

WOMAN
Not really

But I see where you are going

Look, if that is fact
then people can technically die
in the Black River of Joy

BOY
No

WOMAN
Yes

BOY
<You're wrong>

WOMAN
I looked for these
bodies of water
studied them
even made maps
as I was looking

BOY
And?

WOMAN
Now, I just know where the
roads turn
which berries not to eat
and sometimes I can keep from getting lost
Either way
I just keep walking

BOY
But this book said

WOMAN
That's an old book
with old ideas
Trust me
there are new books out
<a new one every minute>
keep looking
And you'll find ideas
far more sophisticated
far more complicated

Are you crying?

BOY
No

WOMAN
<Yes you are>

Listen
If you need to find the river
find the river
When you find said river
drink all that you can
then go jump in the LAKE

Or you can walk with me
I don't care

BOY
Ummm

WOMAN
Whichever way
you go
Just don't let the water
get in your lungs

THE DARK-SKINNED WOMAN CONTINUES
TO WALK

THE YOUNG BOY LOOKS BACK BETWEEN
THE BRANCHES
MAKING UP HIS MIND

#####

FRED MOTEN WALKS WITH A CHAIR ONTO A
BRIGHTLY LIT BLACK BOX THEATRE STAGE

HE PLACES THE CHAIR IN THE MIDDLE OF THE
STAGE THEN SITS IN SILENCE FOR EXACTLY
4 MINUTES AND 33 SECONDS

AFTERWARDS, HE STANDS UP AND WALKS
AWAY, LEAVING THE CHAIR BEHIND

#####

**LEROY IS A LARGE STOCKY BLACK MAN WITH
SHOULDERS THAT ROLL UP AND OVER
CURVING HIS FRAME
HIS TEETH ARE GAPPED AND WHITE**

LEROY

Hey baby girl I just wanna give you some good life advice as I won't be around as you grow up I'm sorry So sorry about being absent on you The one thing that saddens my heart most is that I can't see those pretty eyes

Let's just say things didn't go in our favor being born where we were born
Maybe in our next lifetime both of us will have better luck

Here are a couple tips before
Ok look regarding men Men like me men in general Even maybe some women too Maybe I'm talking about how you need to be on the planet This is about protection Protecting you The most important thing is to keep your spirit in such a way that you can look a man in the eye and hold yourself on the ready

If a man cuts in front of you in line then elbow your way back to your place in line Look at him dead in the eye and dare him to do something about it If he belittles you in any way then spit in his face If you can knee him in the balls and ask him what did he just say Be prepared to fight to the death

If you are in a meeting presenting something and a man interrupts you You should immediately counter-interrupt him with a degrading comment about the size of his dick It may be helpful to direct this comment to the ones he considers his closest colleagues of the group Don't worry if everyone is stunned or non responsive This just means you are now in charge

If a man encounters you and either asks, demands, or mentions anything about smiling ask what he is willing to give up in exchange for obliging his request If he turns that into a sexual joke or reference [And he will] Pull out this knife and say you're willing to exchange any body part for a smile Say that it is only just good business Nothing in man's world is free

If God forbid you are on a date with a man Actually I think it might be better if you were a lady lover A lesbian Seriously you should at least try it But if you're on a date with a man he better pay for everything and I mean everything Not because you can't pay <because I know you're going to be rich on your own steam> This is only to weed out riff-raff and trouble This man needs to prove himself to be worthy

I have more for you So much more for you but I must finish this later

LEROY REGARDS THE MEN APPROACHING



**AN EMPTY SPACE FILLED WITH MANY MANY
SMALL AND MEDIUM SIZE DARK AND SILENT
TELEVISION SCREENS**

**TWO BLACK PERSONS COME IN AND MAKE THE
SPACE GORGEOUS
THEY ARE JOYOUS AND PASSIONATE ABOUT
THE TASK**

**THEIR VERY LIVES DEPEND ON
MANUFACTURING GOOD FEELINGS AND BEAUTY**

**BEAUTY IS FLOWERS
OR LASER LIGHTS
OR PAINT**

**MAYBE THEY ARE MAKING
AN ABSTRACT PAINTING
OR
MAYBE THE ROOM FILLS WITH THE
SMELL OF WARM OATMEAL COOKIES**

**ONE TV SCREEN COMES ON WITH GENERIC
TV STATIC**

TV STATIC MAY SOUND LIKE THIS:

"whether i use checks, credit cards or cash,
i can be sure my skin color not to work
against the appearance of financial reliability
attribute these choices to the bad morals i can swear,
the poverty or the illiteracy of my race or dress in
second hand clothes
i can count on my skin color"

**ANOTHER TV SCREEN
THEN ANOTHER**

**WHEN IT BECOMES OVERWHELMING
BLACK PERSON 1 CRUMBLES**

BLACK PERSON 3 EXHIBITS FITS OF ANGER

**BLACK PERSON 2 CONTINUES UNAFFECTED
FOR A WHILE UNTIL THEY HEAR WHAT
BLACK PERSON 1 AND 3 HEAR**



**HOMEM EM UM TERNO SOB MEDIDA MISTURA
LATAS DE PINTURA VERMELHA
AZUL E AMARELA PARA CRIAR VERDE
E ROXO***

HOMEM EM TERNO

Sua proximidade com a estrela
Vai nos dizer a quantidade de África que você traz

Amorenada
Bem morena
Branca-suja
Branca-queimada
Corada
Bronzeada
Morena-clara
Morena-bronzeada
Morena-trigueira
Parda
Morenão
Moreninha
Queimada
Queimada de sol
Rosa queimada
Tostada

Se o peso da África
que você traz faz quebrar seu coração
ajoelhe-se ante Santa Anastásia
e rogue-lhe que te abrace
com aqueles braços curativos

#####

*SEE TRANSLATION PAGE 105

THE COLONY GYM

**RASHEEDAH IS A LARGE BLACK WOMAN WITH
LARGE FACIAL FEATURES AND EXPRESSIONS**

**PENNSY IS NOT LIKE RASHEEDAH AT ALL,
IN ANY WAY SHAPE SOUND OR FORM**

PENNSY

So
What are your fitness goals

RASHEEDAH

I want to find Rainbow Brite
and a white man
to love me
for exactly who am

PENNSY

Ok so
is that more about
getting stronger
and toning muscle
or

RASHEEDAH

He can't smoke crack

PENNSY

No

RASHEEDAH

The white man who loves me
can't have smoked crack
at any point in his life

PENNSY
Right
Good

RASHEEDAH
You know white people smoke crack

PENNSY
Yes of course

RASHEEDAH
I don't want that kind of white man

PENNSY
Don't you think
maybe focusing the goal
on your self
might be

RASHEEDAH
That's what myself wants

PENNSY
A white man

RASHEEDAH
Yes a white man
who loves me
for exactly who I am

PENNSY
Once you start our
Fitness Program
you might find that your
desires
will change

RASHEEDAH
You don't think
a white man
could love me

PENNSY
That's not what I said

RASHEEDAH
Is it my size?
Or my

PENNSY
I have no
knowledge base on match making
or any dating advice
to give you

RASHEEDAH
You don't think it's
possible

PENNSY
Is getting fit
getting in shape
a goal that you have

RASHEEDAH
Getting a white man
to love me is my goal

PENNSY
This is a Fitness Center
I can't broker relationships!

RASHEEDAH

Your slogan says
“Get what you want—
Be what you want!”

PENNSY

That's referring to your body
“Get what you want
for your body”

RASHEEDAH

What I want for my body
is for a white man
to look at me
and love me



AN ARTIST COLONY IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

**NELL SITS ON A LEATHER COUCH READING
A NEWSPAPER**

THREE LOGS BURN AT A PERFECT HEIGHT

THIS IS HEAVEN

**OCCASIONALLY THE SOUND OF AN EVENING
BIRD WILL DISRUPT THE QUIET**

**NELL PUTS DOWN THE NEWSPAPER AND WALKS
INTO THE DINING HALL**

**SHE COMES BACK WITH A HIGHBALL OF AGED
BOURBON WITH HALF AN ICE CUBE**

NELL SITS AND PONDERS THE FIRE

THAT'S IT

NELL DOESN'T OWE US SHIT

**SO WE'RE JUST FINE WATCHING HER
DRINK BOURBON**



PENNSY STUDIES
A CARDIO ROUTINE
VIA A TELEVISION

PENNSY COPIES THE MOVEMENT
SHE SEES ON THE SCREEN

JAANA*

Estás lista para conquistár
Estás lista para quemar el exceso indeseado
Hacer que todo desaparezca
Yo te voy a enseñar
la fundación de todo mi sistema quemador de grasa

Muévete así
Muévete así
Haz una vuelta
Muévete así

Estámos hechos de ADN
heredado de nuestros padres
El ADN es un mapa de códigos
de información
que descifra quienes sómos
y cómo nos mantenemos

El código es el mismo
para todas las personas
Es como el abecedario
formando palabras y frases

Mis Padres eran gordos y desagradables
Pero yo conquisté mi ADN
con éstos movimientos

Hazlos conmigo

Muévete así
Muévete así

*SEE TRANSLATION PAGE 106

Haz una vuelta
Muévete así

Tengo aqui un dato chistoso
Estudios demuestran que los Españoles
Griegos e Italianos
Tienen una profunda conección genética
con la población subSahariana

Através el Norte de Africa

Fortalece correctamente el torso
los abdominales frontales
éos difíciles de alcanzar, los abdominales profundos
tus oblicuos laterales y los lumbares

Muévete así
Muévete así
Haz una vuelta
Muévete así

Piensa en el conflicto en el año 264 AC entre
el Imperio Romano y
los Africanos Cartaginenses
También en el año 711, cuando el imperio Islámico del
Norte de África conquistó
la Península Ibérica y la sostuvo con agarre firme
Por más de 700 años

Y aún, con todo ese ADN compartido
puedes todavía conquistar
toda tu historia
con éstos movimientos simples

Muévete así
Muévete así
Haz una vuelta
Muévete así



A DARK-SKINNED BODY DIPS A TINY BRUSH
IN A FIVE GALLON BUCKET OF GREEN PAINT
ALL THE WAY PAST THEIR ELBOW

THE DARK BODY MOVES TOWARDS THE WALL
WITH A LOVER'S PURPOSE AND
A GREEN ARM

UTTER SILENCE

A GREEN BRUSH MARKS THE WHITE WALL
WITH A VERY THIN LINE

THE DARK-SKINNED BODY IS SO PRECISE
THAT PAINT FROM THE GREEN ARM
NEVER GETS ON THE WHITE WALL

HOWEVER

PAINT

DRIPS

ONTO

THE

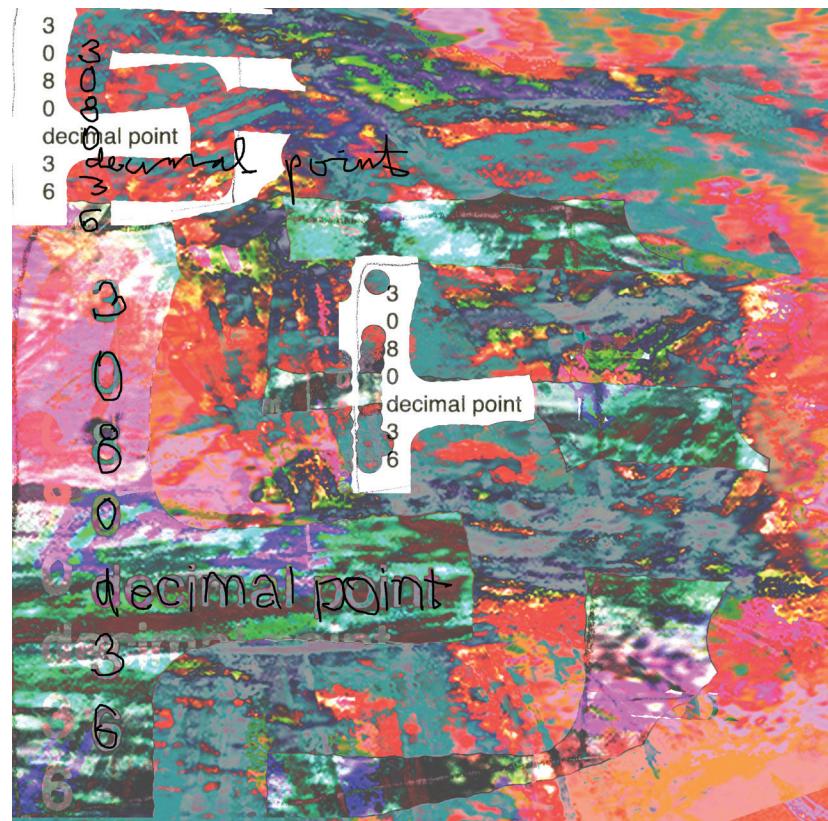
BLACK

MARLEY

FLOOR

THEY ONCE AGAIN DIP THEIR ENTIRE ARM
INTO THE FIVE GALLON BUCKET OF GREEN

#####



3080 Decimal Point Colored
Digital Collage on paper, 8×8"
Nell Painter, 2018

HILTON WALKS

FROM HIS COTTAGE AND HAPPENS UPON

A SMALL POND WITH STEAM LEVITATING
FROM THE SURFACE

AS IF ANSWERING A CALL

HILTON UNDRESSES

SLIPS INTO THE LIQUID

TINY LETTER SHAPED LIGHTS

BLINK OUT OF HIS FACE

NECK AND ARMS

WORDS BUBBLE

INTO SENTENCES

INTO WHOLE MERCURIAL TEXTS

UNTIL THE ENTIRE

POND IS OVERFLOWING

WITH VISCOUS LUMINESCENCE

HILTON EXHALES

#####

EIN SCHWARZER STUDENT, IN BOBBY
KOLADE GEKLEIDET
SITZT WEINEND AUF DER KANTE
DES TODESBETTES
DES BERÜHMTESTEN ONKOLOGEN, DER
SEINEN LETZTEN ATEMZUG
AN DEN KREBS VERLIERT*

DER STUDENT

Ich habe Dich studiert
Um mich selbst zu retten

Ist diese

Die Konsequenz dafür, daß ich
Meine eigenen Lügen geglaubt habe

Der Tod schlüpft und
Grinst durch die Spalten
Der Täuschungen
Diese lausigen Schutzschilder
Die wir fabrizieren

Nur um uns dann
An die Kehle zu gehen
Und uns mit unseren eigenen
Worten zu erwürgen

Wenn es niemals
Hoffnung für Dich gab
Was soll ich denn dann
Dagegen tun

DER SCHWARZE STUDENT
REIBT SICH AN SEINEM ARM

DER ONKOLOGE RICHTET SICH PLÖTZLICH AUF

*SEE TRANSLATION PAGE 108

DER ONKOLOGE

Wann ist ein schwarzes Loch nicht schwarz?

DER SCHWARZE STUDENT

Wann?

DER ONKOLOGE

Wenn es explodiert.

**DIE DAHOMEY KOENIGIN TRITT EIN
UND BRINGT DAS SINGENDE CELLO**

**GEFOLGT VON EINER MIT GRÜNER FARBE
BESCHMIERTEN
SCHARZEN GESTALT, AN DER TROMPETE**

**DIE MUSIK DES DUOS IST SEHR FRÖHLICH
DER ONKOLOGE SPRINGT AUF
UND TANZT MIT SEINEM STUDENTEN**

#####

WE ARE STILL IN ABJECT DARKNESS

MAKER

I can feel that
like it's in the air

This want

Desire to expose me

I mean that's why we came
here right

Is not theatre a show
something that is visible

You want something
to move around in the light for you

SLOWLY VERY SLOWLY PAINFULLY SLOW

THE HOUSE LIGHTS COME UP TO FULL DURING:

You want to see me
you want to look at me

Why don't you look

I am right here
right here in front of you

**TURNS OUT WE ARE IN
OFILI'S CHAPEL**

**IN THE AUDIENCE
TRESS, A THIN WOMAN OF EUROPEAN DESCENT
HOLDS A MICROPHONE**

**TRESS IS IN HELMUT LANG WHITE OPEN BLAZER
BLACK BRA BAG BLACK SCUBA FLARE PANT
STUD SLIPPER**

**TRESS'S LIPS ARE MOVING, AND WE HEAR STUFF
BUT SOMETHING IS OFF**

feel better now—now that you— I'm right here— Bid Em In!— she worked so hard— <loud cackle>— up at 7am— yesterday's coffee grounds still good— protein in the boiled— lifesaver is a cheese sandwich— volunteer— she always said Jesus loved a giver— it's the line that makes you tired— <loud cackle>— not the light— the back of his head was so smooth— Bid Em In!— to get here you see— her great grandmammy was a Dahomey queen— oh god— you see me better when I smile— so happy— tennis shoes make good boots for the snow— but happy when— times I late— 26 degrees at noon— gonna smile for ya— might bright up the room— Get Em In!— but eager to serve— <loud cackle>— money poor thing never had— the dad was a real nigga— yeah eyes like bullets— no love— <loud cackle>— no deadbeat not me— this one is oh— a hustler a real model— she— yeah— She's full up front and ample behind!— Bid Em In!— oh yeah— he taught her to scrape real good— not— the light— blazing starlight— history burns the skin— oh god— <loud cackle>— not funny— really depressed— <loud cackle>— in November she goes down— kinda likes it if you ask me— might bright up the room— dark and sad

**MAKER HAS BEEN QUIET FOR AN ABNORMAL
AMOUNT OF TIME**

**TRESS STANDS UP AND LEAVES AUDIENCE
YES, IT'S AWKWARD**

TRESS
Please excuse us

**TRESS DISAPPEARS BACKSTAGE
MAKER AND TRESS DON'T REALIZE
THE MIC IS STILL ON**

WE CAN HEAR EVERYTHING

TRESS
Are you ok

MAKER
No
The truth is
nothing will change

TRESS
That's defeatist

MAKER
Between us

TRESS
There has been
<so much change>

MAKER
<How so?>

TRESS
Micro Us
or Macro Us?

MAKER
Is there a difference?

TRESS
Yes

MAKER
<For you there
can be>

TRESS
Not Really

MAKER
Yes Really

TRESS
<You are
making this
difficult>

MAKER
Remember in
the beginning

TRESS
Beginning of what

MAKER
I was sliding toward
you and I couldn't stop
as if I were

We were both particles
in a molecular cloud
being pushed together

TRESS
<Yeah>
You kept leaving
and avoiding

MAKER
You asked
too many questions

TRESS
That's what people
do to get to know each other

MAKER
Questions are
just struck matches
too close to one's clothes

TRESS
Questions uncover
information
which leads to a reveal
of some sort of truth

MAKER
Visibility leads to death

TRESS
All the way
to death huh
Why

MAKER

From invisible to visible
is a sort of change
or a breaking
which in turn
is death
All change is death

TRESS

Transformation is
a better way to look at it

MAKER

What if

What if you can't tell the difference
between "truth"
and something made up

TRESS

Maybe see a therapist

MAKER

I felt it
You were seeking
me out

TRESS

Seeking
Maybe Yes No
Well wait

MAKER

What did you
want with me

TRESS

That is a heavy question

MAKER

And truth
requires trust

TRESS

<too intense>

MAKER

When I tried
to answer your
questions

TRESS**MAKER**

When I sought you
back

TRESS**MAKER****TRESS****TRESS IS GONE**

**HILTON IS STROLLING AND FINDS
NELL SITTING ON A ROCK**

FRED, ON A RUN, STOPS BY FOR A VISIT

HILTON
That was a full
lovers' spat

FRED
No voices were raised

HILTON
I did hear a little shrill
coming out of the white one

NELL
Why you always
gotta be stupid

HILTON
Loosen up Nell

FRED
Come on Man
Her name is Tress

HILTON
What was the
other one's name

FRED
Maker!
Don't you read
<the program?>
Jesus

HILTON
I'm on break

NELL
What was the
fight about

FRED
Who knows

HILTON
They need to just
go ahead and have sex

FRED
Yeah you right
you right they need to just

HILTON
bump tacos
a couple of times

FRED
Get those
juices flowin

NELL
I can't wit y'all

NELL GETS UP AND WALKS AWAY

**FRED AND HILTON ARE DOUBLED OVER
WITH GLEE**



A BOW IS DRAGGED ACROSS A STRINGED INSTRUMENT SLOW AND HARD BACK AND FORTH UNTIL ONE OF THE STRINGS BREAKS

RASHEEDAH

&&&&&&&& how was your summer

PENNSY

It's been a summer Relaxing

RASHEEDAH

Like lay back and blow smoke rings relaxing

PENNSY

Um

RASHEEDAH

Or was it like pool parties and fireworks and frolicking or was it like "I have all my bills paid and I'm doing this internship at this ridiculously cool theatre" kind of relaxing

PENNSY

I've been working hard so not like that

RASHEEDAH

Working hard like manual labor hard like moving large bricks hard like asking everyone you know can you walk their dog hard or scrub their floor hard or wash their dishes hard or scraping the rust from a 100 year old fence hard

PENNSY

No working hard like smiling while a man with tight pants and an expensive tee shirt stood over my shoulder and instructed me how to check people in to see a stupid play

hard Even after I told him that I had done this three summers in a row for better plays than this I didn't say the better play bit because it was his play that he wrote it's the third time he's putting it up so he directed it as well and I couldn't just couldn't come off as rude even though I thought it was rude that he didn't even look at me during the interview and rude to micromanage me

RASHEEDAH

Well why did you take that job

PENNSY

Because the stage manager is super hot like nerd hot and usually works at a big theatre on Lafayette AND it paid me twice as much as all the other jobs I was offered

RASHEEDAH

Oh

PENNSY

So I have to smile because I'm lucky I smile because that's what people want to see People need to see smiling Or else it hurts them It hurts them when they see that I am not happy So I show them a happy smiling face I never ever ever never ever want to be associated with not happy sadness being upset because then they will be reminded of being hurt Then they will think Pennsy Yucky Yucky Pennsy Bad Pennsy So therefore must smile all the time even when I don't feel like smiling When smiling doesn't even go in the same emotional realm of what I might be feeling I am pretending that my only emotion is smiling Every day all day Smiling

RASHEEDAH

Smiling is hard work when you don't mean it

PENNSY

Yes, it is Have you done it Have you lived your life smiling
Have you logged those kinds of miles

RASHEEDAH

No I haven't but my mother told me stories about how she used to do it and how my grandmother and great grandmother used to do it all the time In fact, she is always telling me that I should smile more because she never would have gotten where she got to if she hadn't smiled so much especially when she didn't want to She is afraid that I will never get anywhere because I let my face rest where it wants to rests on whatever feeling I'm feeling

PENNSY

Is your mother right

RASHEEDAH

I don't know Sometimes the light's all shining on me Other times I can barely see Lately it occurs to me, what a long strange trip it's been

#####

LEROY SLOWLY WALKS

A PATH LIT UP WITH MERCURIAL TEXT

THERE IS A SONG IN THE AIR
HE LOOKS UP

IS THAT COMING FROM HIS HEAD
OR FROM FAR AWAY?

LEROY JOINS IN

LEROY
Bid 'em in!
Get 'em in!
Bid 'em in!

LEROY PICKS UP LETTERS AND WORDS
PEBBLES FOR HIS POCKET

#####

ON THE SERVICE PORCH

**MS COINCOIN IN MARQUES ALMEIDA SATIN
RIPPLE TURTLE NECK DRESS WITH CUFFS**

**IF SHE CARED ANY
SHE COULD TAKE OVER SEVERAL
GALAXIES WITH
ONE FINGER WAVE BUT SHE, BEING
A PERMANENT RESIDENT OF CAPAURICES
DOESN'T NEED TO CARE**

**ANOTHER WOMAN APPEARS OUT OF THIN AIR
IN MARQUES ALMEIDA FEATHER LONG SLEEVE
TOP FEATHER MAXI SKIRT**

**SHE IS
ALMOST
GOD**

**HER BREATH IS A GIFT
LOOKING AT HER IS ALSO A GIFT
THAT ONE DIDN'T KNOW
ONE NEEDED**

MAKER FLOATS UNCONSCIOUS BEFORE THEM

MS COINCOIN
Well look what we
have here

CHIOMA
Hey Now!
Dis one been
soakin in dark matter so long
dat she mirror the cosmos

Jus drip drip drip
wit the unknowable

MS COINCOIN
But Do she know it

CHIOMA
Nah I reckon she
ain't figured herself
out like that

MS COINCOIN
Hmm well the way
these dow jones rates
adjusting to navigate uncertainty
She want to capitalize

CHIOMA
reachin back cross time and space
embracin gravity's pull

MS COINCOIN
On these market changes

CHIOMA
She straight up
on the axis of inevitability

MS COINCOIN
Yeah
this climate is
well,
Volatile

CHIOMA
The inevitable gone happen
And gone stay on

Repeat and
Repeat

MS COINCOIN
That is correct

She could be
Should be working
in her own favor

CHIOMA
da tools used to prevent
da inevitable are da same damn
tools dat bring on the inevitable

MS COINCOIN
She need that data
Those numbers are too good

CHIOMA
Good numbers sometimes
predict painful outcomes

MS COINCOIN
Painful outcomes produce good numbers

CHIOMA
Stay woke on her worth

MS COINCOIN
Worth commodities valued at
One dollar per word

CHIOMA
Is da baseline requirement

MS COINCOIN
Sentence structure
is the new income stream

CHIOMA
To reverse that fortune
Of hers

**MS COINCOIN BEGINS TO HUM OUT A
FAMILIAR RHYTHM
CHIOMA JOINS IN WITH WORDS**

Bid 'em in!

Bid 'em in! Get 'em in!
Bid 'em in!

That sun is hot and plenty bright.
Let's get down to business and get home tonight.
Bid 'em in!

**MAKER IS AFFECTED THROUGH HER
UNCONSCIOUSNESS**



OFILI'S CHAPEL

A BLACK BODY STANDS AT THE EDGE OF THE
SPACE FACING A GREEN WALL

THERE IS A THICK STILLNESS PULSATING
FROM THIS BODY

WE CAN ONLY SEE THE BACK OF HIM, BUT WE
CAN FEEL THE ETERNITY HE IS HOLDING

HE IS CONTROLLING US CONTROLLING
OUR FOCUS

WE WAIT

THERE IS STILL NO MOTION

IF YOU HAVE BECOME ANXIOUS THAT IS OK

BE OK WITH BEING ANXIOUS

OR YOU CAN LEAVE
THE PERSON THAT TOOK YOUR MONEY WILL
GIVE IT BACK TO YOU

NO PROBLEM, NO HARM, NO FOUL

THE ONLY MOTION NOW IS THE AUDIENCE
FIDGETING COUGHING WHISPERING

THE BLACK BODY IS HOLDING STILLNESS LIKE
AN EXPERT INSURANCE EXAMINER REFUSING
TO PAY A CLAIM

IF YOU LOOK CLOSELY AT THE WALL YOU CAN
TELL ITS BEEN PAINTED IN THE LAST 15 MINUTES
THERE IS A THIN LINE OF GREEN PAINT ROLLING
DOWN THE WALL JUST TO THE RIGHT OF
HIS ARM

IT'S EASIER TO WATCH THE PAINT ROLL DOWN
THE WALL

THAT'S A PRETTY SHADE OF GREEN ACTUALLY
TASTEFUL NOT LIKE STANDARD ACRYLIC GREEN
FOR AMATEUR PAINTERS

RELAXATION SETS IN FOR A FEW PEOPLE

IT IS
NOT THAT BAD

THE BLACK BODY IS ACTUALLY EYE CANDY

THERE IS FIDGETING ON THE LEFT

AND IT GETS LOUDER

WHISPERS TURN TO AUDIBLE WORDS

GREAT
SOMEONE JUST LEFT UPSET

THE BLACK BODY IS THE SAME
UNAFFECTED BY OUR DRAMA



**THIS IS A ROOM WITH A PRESS CONFERENCE
SET-UP**

**A HANDSOME A-LIST “POWER” GAY IN A
HARTWIST STRIPED HIGHLAND TWEED BLAZER
WITH POLKA DOT KERCHIEF SITS BEFORE
FLASHING LIGHTS HIS NAME IS RUSS**

**THE FRONT ROW OF “THE AUDIENCE” IS FILLED
WITH EAGER BLACK JOURNALISTS**

RUSS

A madman killed nine victims at an academic gathering
We covered every horrible development of the story at
Magazine.com

It's so heartbreak to think how many times over the
years we've done this—
Reaching out to victims' families and survivors of mass
shootings, gathering details about the fallen—

Our responses have become routine

At Magazine.com we ask ourselves “How could it happen
again What are we going to do about gun violence?”

There are no easy answers
Some call for stricter gun laws. Others say we should focus
on mental health issues. Some point to a culture that
celebrates violence

But we all know we aren't doing enough and political
conversations usually end up in rhetoric and spin

Today we have come to pay tribute to the nine victims as
well as 22 other men, women, and children who've lost
their lives in mass shootings—incidents where a murderer
has opened fire on a crowd

That's actually a pretty narrow definition of mass shooting
don't you think

The number of victims skyrocket if we count other
types of multiple shooting like domestic violence,
murder-suicides and

RUSS IS AFFECTED

So far this year, according to the Gun Violence Archive,
there have been 10,000 gun related deaths in our country
And
And the authorities say that firearm injuries are a
significant public health problem

When I go to the theatre or when I am on a train when
I see children in a classroom

I think about Mass Shootings

We need our representatives in government to know
that we are looking to them

They need to know that routine responses won't cut it

To that end we are posting phone numbers to all 535 voting
members of the House and Senate on our website

Call them

**ALL OF THE BLACK JOURNALISTS ARE QUIET
SOME ARE TAKING NOTES**

**MOSTLY IT'S JUST THE JOURNALISTS STARING
AT RUSS WHO IS STARING BACK AT THE
JOURNALISTS STARING BACK AT HIM**

HE WONDERS IF IT MEANS SOMETHING
THERE IS THIS
UNIDENTIFIABLE TWINGE



UNE PETITE FILLE VÊTUÉE D'UNE
ROBE CHLOE AQUARELLE AVEC
DENTELLE ÉBOURIFFÉE*

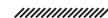
AFRODILLE

Il y a quelque chose en moi
que je ne peux pas atteindre
ou transmettre

une poussière d'étoile
la couleur d'un trop plein de soleil
et d'une santé sans borne

Flotante dans une cage de verre
au dessus du visage de Dieu
Ce sourire de l'Afrique s'étirant
de l'Atlantique à l'Indien
Récitant le nom de ses 56 pays

Je m'attache aux parcelles de mon être
qui vivent là
Où je n'ai jamais eu
l'intention d'approcher



*SEE TRANSLATION PAGE 110

**MAKER AND TRESS ARE ON
OPPOSITE ENDS OF CAPAURISCES
IN DIFFERENT SPHERES
DOING THE SAME THING**

MAKER & TRESS

Afraid

MAKER

What if

TRESS

What if

MAKER

you are mainly
just curious

TRESS

the current pulls
me under

MAKER

feeling your way
around an experiment

TRESS

drowning in all
your impossible
realness

MAKER

Afraid that

TRESS

Afraid that

MAKER
my misshapen
body is too much
for you

TRESS

I'm empty
vapid
and wanting

MAKER

I want to
touch your face

TRESS

to float away
begin again

MAKER

but I would
rather

TRESS

Disappear

MAKER

Burn

TRESS

into monotonous living

MAKER

Day to day death

TRESS

Than hear you

MAKER
Say no

TRESS
Ask

#####

**AN EMPTY SPACE FILLED WITH MANY MANY
SMALL AND MEDIUM SIZE DARK AND SILENT
TV SCREENS**

**BLACK PERSON 2 DESPONDENTLY CLEANSES
THE SPACE
OF BEAUTY**

BLACK PERSON 2
remain oblivious I can
customs of persons I remain oblivious
I of who constitute the world's majority
do not feel in culture
there is no penalty for such oblivion

**BLACK PERSON 3 IN A FIT OF ADRENALINE
DESTROYS A TV
THE STATIC GETS LOUDER**

**BLACK PERSON 1 UNcurls FROM A
FETAL POSITION
TAKES IT ALL IN THEN CURLS BACK UP**

BLACK PERSON 2
there is no penalty for such oblivion
there is no penalty for such oblivion

**BLACK PERSON 3 DESTROYS ANOTHER
TELEVISION
THE STATIC GETS LOUDER AND LOUDER**

**THE FLOOR OPENS BEGINNING AS A CRACK
UNTIL IT'S A WIDE FAULT LINE**

**ELLA FITZGERALD RISES UP IN HER STAINED
GLASS ESCALADE SINGING**

AIR MAIL SPECIAL THROUGH THE DRIVER
SIDE WINDOW
ACCOMPANIED BY OSCAR PETERSON ON
HIS KORG PA 300

THE STATIC PETERS OUT LIKE A WET MATCH

ELLA

Which one of you turned on these TV's

ALL THREE BLACK PERSONS LOOK AT EACH
OTHER SHRUGGING CONFUSEDLY

ELLA

Uh Huh Well

You know the rules

when you play with antiques

you're gonna get antiquated results

BLACK PERSON 1 AND BLACK PERSON 2
HURRIEDLY SWEEP UP THE
BROKEN TELEVISION DEBRIS

BLACK PERSON 3 JOINS THE EFFORT

ELLA

You're welcome

BLACK PERSONS

Thank you, Ms. Fitzgerald

THE THREE BLACK PERSONS
GO BACK TO BEAUTIFYING THE SPACE

#####

A GORGEOUS BLACK WOMAN LAYS EFFORTLESS
ACROSS THE LENGTH OF AN ELEGANT
CHAISE LOUNGE AN EQUALY GORGEOUS
BLACK MAN LEANS THE BACK OF HIS HEAD
AGAINST THE WOMAN

BROCK

I opened an account yesterday and put money in it

SHELLE

I got promoted at my job and my salary doubled

BROCK

Today I'm going to buy some commercial property and
start a few businesses near our home

SHELLE

That's cool honey why don't I invest some of my salary into
your business

BROCK

You don't have to but if you insist you'll just get a
51 percent share of the profits

SHELLE

Honey

BROCK

Yes, my Love

SHELLE

Instead of me taking 51 percent of the profits, why don't we
use that money to fund a private school where our kids
can be shaped and molded

BROCK

We're having kids

SHELLE

Well yes

BROCK

I am so so

SHELLE

Oh! Wait—not right now but soon
Let's get the school funded

BROCK

Whew ok

I was excited but I'm glad we're waiting

SHELLE

BROCK

SHELLE

I was thinking

BROCK

You're going to say

SHELLE

What

BROCK

Go ahead say it

SHELLE

It's about

BROCK

The building I just bought

SHELLE

What do you think of gifting one of the storefronts
to the Police Academy

BROCK

The Police

SHELLE

Yes

BROCK

You're right baby
Gift some space to the police
While we're chatting about it why not rent to
City Aldermen as well

SHELLE

At a low price

BROCK

What a team! Love you

SHELLE

Love you back

#####

HET ONMETELIJK GEBREK AAN LICHT

VOOR DE CARTHAGE BIBLIOTHEEK STAAT TRESS
OP HET KRUISPUNT VAN DE PEARL EN
WALL STRAAT
NIET ZEKER WELKE KANT ZE OP MOET

DE BOTTONEN VAN 419 AFRIKANEN DIE UIT
NIEUW AMSTERDAM ZIJN OPGESTAAN
ZINGEN DIDO'S LAMENT*

DE AFRIKANEN

Uw hand, Belinda, donkerheid werpt schaduw
Laat mij op uw boezem rusten
Ik zou meer willen, maar de dood valt binnen
Dood is nu een gewilde gast

ALS DE BRANDSTAPEL GROEIT
WORDT TRESS GETROOST DOOR DE GEDACHTE
AAN WARMTE

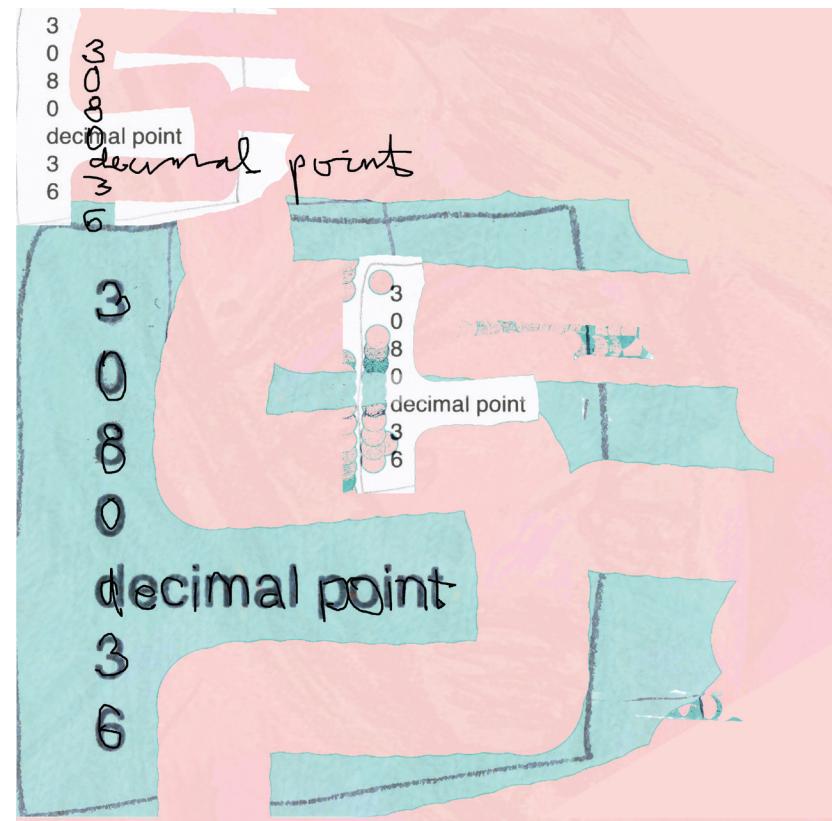
DE AFRIKANEN

Toen ik ben ontstaan, ontstaan op de aarde, moge
mijn onrecht gemaakt zijn
Geen zorgen, geen zorgen in uw borst
Denk aan mij, denk aan mij, maar ah! Vergeet
mijn bestemming
Denk aan mij, maar ah! Vergeet mijn bestemming

TRESS VENTURES GAAT VERDER OM ERGENS
ANDERS EEN BESTEMMING TE VINDEN



*SEE TRANSLATION PAGE 111



3080 Decimal Point Pale
Digital Collage on paper, 8 x 8"
Nell Painter, 2018

CARTHAGE LIBRARY

THERE IS A PERSON CURLED ON THE GROUND

IT'S MAKER
CRYING PROFUSELY

MS COINCOIN AND CHIOMA
APPEARS AS IF CALLED
SINGING THAT FAMILIAR SONG

MS COINCOIN AND CHIOMA

Bid 'em in
Get 'em in
Bid 'em in

FOLKS BEGAN TO GATHER AROUND
THE SHOW IS STARTING

MS COINCOIN AND CHIOMA

Auctioning slaves is a real high art
Bring that young gal, Roy She's good for a start
Bid 'em in Get 'em in

LEROY PICKS UP MAKER
AND PUTS HER ON A WOODEN BLOCK
MAKER RESISTS

MS COINCOIN AND CHIOMA

Now here's a real good buy only about 15
Her great Grandmammy was a Dahomey queen
Bid 'em in Get 'em in

MAKER
You're fucking kidding right
Stop this

MAKER STRUGGLES HARDER

CHIOMA
You asked for dis

MAKER
I never chose
THIS
Why would I
You're being
Ridiculous

MS COINCOIN
When you chase something

CHIOMA
Speak on it

MS COINCOIN
or Someone

CHIOMA
Dat be blind
to yo value

MS COINCOIN
You choose bondage
over partnership

CHIMOA
Jes desperate
to prove
yo self and

LEROY [in MAKER's ear]
Remember if you change
the words
you change the song

MAKER

What

MS COINCOIN

Bid 'em in Get 'em in
She's full up front and ample behind
Examine her teeth if you've got a mind
Bid 'em in! Get 'em in!

LEROY HANDS MAKER A PEBBLE

LEROY

Change your mind

**RASHEEDAH AND PENNSY APPROACH
THEY CHANT ALONG WITH
MS COINCOIN AND CHIOMA**

RASHEEDAH AND PENNSY

Bid 'em in Get 'em in Bid 'em in

MAKER STILL CRYING JOINS IN THE CHANT

MAKER

All you gotta do is
Bid me in Get me in
Bid me in

Look at those tears, that's one of your tricks
Nine fifty's bid, we know it's fixed
I'm stealthy and sharp and well equipped
Make a billion dollars as I sharpen these sticks

**MAKER WITH NEW ENERGY
STEPS DOWN OFF THE BLOCK**

SHE KICKS IT

REPEATEDLY

**THE BLOCK BREAKS
INTO THOUSANDS OF TINY ROCKS**

MAKER

Light is truth Light is illuminating
are we shining our lights
don't hide your light under a bushel
be a beacon of light
show your people the way

Well light travels at 300,000 kilometers
per second Time and distance divided by speed

Sunlight takes 8 minutes to get to earth
I'm always going to be 8 minutes late

other stars are even farther away
Proxima Centauri it's 43 light years away
43 years behind

How far away are you Tress

Now

Right Now

How about now

Becoming the light is outdated

That's all
no valuation necessary

The thing I am reaching for is already gone

I have lost time

I will lose energy

This universe is still expanding

It's fine really

It'll happen

regardless of my efforts to stop it

It's inevitable

another gas cloud is being formed

gas particles and molecular cloud run into each other heat

energy is created until

the young star will make strong winds pushing away the surrounding gas and molecules the young star will

reach hydrostatic equilibrium giving it a solid shape then the core will collapse on itself, the star will expand

and EXPAND expand and ex until it explodes

back into dark matter so

What I want doesn't exist

I lost it in the looking

light is just future memories

Let it burn out and die

Extinguish it Lose it

Lose those numbers

4.5 percent of 0

is ZERO

Lose it

Lose it

I'm ok with

This immeasurable want of light

Losing it

The light

I'm Ok

I'm ok

I'm ok

Ok

AND WALKS AWAY

THE CHANT HAS CHANGED INTO A NEW SONG

MAKER UNDRESSES

SLIPS INTO THE LIQUID

TINY LETTER SHAPED LIGHTS

BLINK OUT OF HER FACE

NECK AND ARMS

WORDS BUBBLE

INTO SENTENCES

INTO WHOLE MERCURIAL TEXTS

UNTIL THE ENTIRE

POND IS OVERFLOWING

WITH VISCOUS LUMINESCENCE

MAKER EXHALES

#####

OFILI'S CHAPEL

**THE SOUNDS OF NEW HAMPSHIRE WOODS
IS CALMING**

**MAKER APPEARS FROM BEHIND A TREE
WITH A MICROPHONE**

NELL, HILTON, AND FRED SIT TOWARD THE TOP

HILTON

Oh Shit
Do you think I owe
her an apology

FRED

Nah Baby
Ella will love you
for forever

NELL

Yeah she done
forgot what a bitch you can be

HILTON

<Damn Nell>

FRED

Tell me about this
painting you're working on

NELL

I'm actually trying
something new
wood-cutting
for a new self-portrait

HILTON
Wood-cutting

NELL
There is magic in the process
You get to play with repetition thus serendipity
It's thrilling to not be in control

What about you Fred

FRED
I'm just listening to music

HILTON
Speaking of Music

FRED
Yeah do you hear that

HILTON
She's not singing
It's more like she is speaking the words

NELL
She is talking about the formation of a star

FRED
No I mean from somewhere else
Don't you hear that

NELL AND HILTON ARE POLITELY QUIET

FRED TURNS HIS HEAD TO THE RIGHT A BIT
HIS PERIPHERAL VISION LEADS HIM TO
A BLACK BODY APPEARING BETWEEN
THE TREES

THE BLACK BODY, SPLATTERED WITH GREEN PAINT, IS DANCING A FORMLESS DANCE

LEAPING AND TWIRLING

BEYOND COMPREHENSION

FROM A DIFFERENT TREE APPEARS A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT BLACK BODY

WITH A DIFFERENT SHAPE AND A DIFFERENT COMPLEXION
WIELDING TWO BUCKETS OF PURPLE PAINT

AS THE GREEN SPLATTERED BODY ARTICULATES WITH SHARP MOVEMENT

PURPLE PAINT IS LAUNCHED INTO MID AIR WITH NO REGARD

STREAKS OF BROWN APPEAR AS THE GREEN HAD NEVER QUITE BECOME DRY





Moten + Fitzgerald Need to Just Go Ahead and Have Sex
Digital Collage on paper, 8 x 8"
Nell Painter, 2018

Translations

FROM PORTUGUESE ON PAGE 42

MAN IN A TAILORED SUIT MIXES BUCKETS OF RED, BLUE, AND YELLOW PAINT INTO GREEN AND PURPLE

MAN IN SUIT

Your proximity to a star
Will tell how much Africa you brought with you

Darkish or brownish

Very brown

White-brown

Burnt-white

Stained, blushed, flushed

Tanned, bronzed

Light brown

Bronzed or tanned brunette

Half brown

Swarthy-brown

Big brown

Little brown

Burned, burnt

Burned by sun, sunburned

Burned Rose

Toasted

If the weight of the Africa
you carry is breaking your heart then
kneel before Saint Anastasia
and beg her to fold you into her
healing arms



PENNSY STUDIES
A CARDIO ROUTINE
VIA A TELEVISION

PENNSY COPIES THE MOVEMENT
SHE SEES ON THE SCREEN

JAANA

Are you ready to conquer?
Are you ready to burn the unwanted
excess? Make it all go away!
I'll teach you
the foundation of my entire fat burning system

Move like this
Move like this
Turn around
Move like that

We are made of DNA
passed down from our parents
This DNA is a code map
of information
spelling out who we are
and how we are maintained

The code is the same
for all people
It's like letters of the alphabet
forming words and sentences

My parents were fat and disgusting
But I conquered my DNA
with these movements
Do them with me

Move like this
Move like this

Turn around
Move like that

Here is a fun fact
Studies show that Spaniards,
Greeks and Italians
had deep genetic connection
to sub-Saharan populations

That's like North Africa

Properly ignite all your core muscles
front abs
those hard to reach deep abs
your side obliques and lower back

Move like this
Move like this
Turn around
Move like that

Think about the 264 BC conflict between
the Roman Empire and
the African Carthaginians
Also in 711, Islamic North Africa took control
of the Iberian peninsula and held it with a firm grip
for more than 700 years

Even with all that shared DNA
you can still conquer
your whole history
with these simple movements

Move like this
Move like this
Turn around
Move like that



A BLACK STUDENT DRESSED IN BOBBY KOLADE
SITS CRYING AT THE EDGE
OF THE DEATH BED
OF A FAMED ONCOLOGIST WHO
IS LOSING HIS LAST BREATH
TO CANCER

THE STUDENT
I studied you
To save myself

Is this the
consequence of believing
our own lies

death slipping and
grinning through the cracks
of delusion
these shoddy shields
we fashion

only to catch us
by the throat
choking us with our
own words

If there was never
hope for you
then what am
I to do about this

THE BLACK STUDENT
RUBS HIM ARM

THE ONCOLOGIST SITS UP SUDDENLY

THE ONCOLOGIST
When is a black hole not black

THE BLACK STUDENT
When

THE ONCOLOGIST
When it explodes

THE DAHOMEY QUEEN ENTERS
CARRYING THE SINGING CELLO
FOLLOWED BY A BLACK BODY COVERED
IN GREEN PAINT ON THE TRUMPET

THE DUO'S MUSIC IS SO UPBEAT
THE ONCOLOGIST LEAPS UP
TO DANCE WITH HIS STUDENT



**A CHILD DRESSED IN A
CHLOE COUTURE WATERCOLOR AND
RUFFLE-TRIM DRESS**

AFRODILLE

There is something in me
that I cannot access
nor transmit

an inner stardust
the colour of too much sun
and boundless wealth

Floating in a glass case
over the face of God
That smile of Africa stretching
from Atlantic to Indian
Reciting the names of its 56 countries

I grasp at the piece of myself
that lives down
Where I've never had
the means to approach.

#####

**IN FRONT OF CARTHAGE LIBRARY
TRESS STANDS AT THE CROSSROADS
OF PEARL AND WALL STREET
UNCERTAIN WHETHER TO MOVE
FORWARD OR BACK**

**THE BONES OF 419 AFRICANS RISE UP OUT
OF NEW AMSTERDAM
SINGING DIDO'S LAMENT**

THE AFRICANS

Thy hand, Belinda, darkness shades me
On thy bosom let me rest
More I would, but Death invades me
Death is now a welcome guest

**AS THE PYRE LIFTS TRESS IS COMFORTED BY
THE MEMORY OF WARMTH**

THE AFRICANS

When I am laid, am laid in earth, May my wrongs create
No trouble, no trouble in thy breast
Remember me, remember me, but ah! forget my fate
Remember me, but ah! forget my fate

**TRESS VENTURES ONWARD COMMITTING
HERSELF TO A FATE ELSEWHERE**

#####

Special Thanks

To Stephen Christensen for the countless hours as resident dramaturg of *Everyday Afroplay* and all its forms and iterations.

To those who have supported and shaped this text: Dara Malina, Kenard Jackson, Iliana Paris, Claire Dean, Brandon Weber, Toni Ann De Noble, Paul Ketchum, Lindsey Ackerman, Jordan Baum, Melissa Mickens, Alex J. Pucci, Abby Rosebrock and all the folks at Clubbed Thumb's Early Career Writers Group.

To Rachel Kauder Nalebuff for saying yes and deftly steering the way.

And personal gratitude to Sakeenah Mubashshir, Diana Lewis, Annette Moore, and Bridget Morrison.

DAAIMAH MUBASHSHIR is based in NYC. Awards include a 2019 Core Writer Fellowship at The Playwrights Center (MN), a 2018 Audrey Residency (New Georges), a MacDowell Colony Fellowship, a Catwalk Institute Residency, and a Foundation of Contemporary Arts Emergency Grant. Other published works include *The Zero Loop* (No Tokens Journal), “Come with Me—Solve for X” in the *Occasional No. 2*, edited by Will Arbery (53rd State Press), and *Molasses and A Blue Coat* (Kenyon Review).

3 Hole Press titles:

IS GOD IS—Aleshea Harris, 2017

BRIEF CHRONICLE, BOOKS 6–8—Agnes Borinsky, 2017

WHEELCHAIR—Will Arbery, 2018

THE IMMEASURABLE WANT OF LIGHT—Daaimah Mubashshir, 2018

BOUQUET—Mariana Valencia, 2019

MORE STUPIDS—Emmy Bright (forthcoming)

For more information about **3 Hole Press**, visit 3holepress.org

PRAISE FOR THE IMMEASURABLE WANT OF LIGHT

When you see the quote “she’s ahead of her time” it means that everyone else needs catching up. Do yourself a favor, catch up; be here now, and you will need not look back. Here lies Black.

—Raja Feather Kelly

As a photographer, I am drawn to Mubashshir's ability to create images with her words. Images that cling to you, so vivid and visceral that you will want to read slowly and savor every word.

—Kelli Connell

What unites these wild permutations about blackness is a fundamental question that has always been relevant and will likely remain so: from where is value derived?

—Stephen Christensen

This collection of plays is a testimony to and an expression of life in the Black body and psyche. The work dares to meet the subject matter where it is, allowing it to tell the truth, shame the devil, and put a self congratulatory industry on notice. The time for niceties has come and gone. If theatre is to be revolutionary, it cannot be lukewarm, it must bring the fire. That is what Daaimah Mubashshir has done.

—Stacey Rose

a pageant/poem. luxuriant. o please
stage this blaze faceted jewel.

—Honor Moore

\$15.00

ISBN 978-0-9982763-3-5

51500 >



Drama \$15

ISBN: 978-0-9982763-3-5

9 780998 276335

3 Hole Press is a small press for performance works
in printed formats. We publish titles that expand our
understanding of being together. 3holepress.org