

little Black Book

Onyx

ONYX

BLACK

MAGAZINE

OF VISUAL

AND LITERARY

ARTS...

## Letter From the Editors

We would like to thank you for embarking on this literary and artistic journey--which is Onyx, Spring 2001. In this issue, we have collected an array of new talent, in order to illustrate the complexity of the African Diaspora. Our "Little Black Book" showcases the artistic diversity within our magnificent, beautiful, black, outta sight community, while providing an outlet for the issues within our hearts. Such works include Akilah Cobham's *Untitled* poem, which won our literary favor this semester. Other works like *Miseducation*, *The Day I Met Abandonment on a Burgundy Couch*, and Dominique Gautier's *Untitled* drawing; show that black art comes in many styles and formats.

As Co-Editors, we implore you to explore every piece within this magazine and find one that inspires you, perhaps it will be Eshena Davis's "Exposure" photograph. We hope these pieces will fuel your imagination to create your own concepts of art on the blank pages we have allocated to you.

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\*Tribute to Vision and Tradition

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## Miseducation

First off you all will have to forgive me; I have a lot of shit on my mind that I need to get out...so here goes...

This is something I've been thinking about for a long time now. My MISEDUCATION. See I was brought to believe that black people were one people, with the same struggles, same heartaches, and same celebrations. Hell, I even believed we were supposed to support each other, have each other's back. But being here, I've realized just HOW miseducated I am...

Miseducated to believe TUFTS really wanted me, and HBCU's were only for people who couldn't get into anything better. DAMN was I wrong!

Miseducated to believe BLACK MEN were better than the childish, "wanna be a thug but I'm in college" and "keeping the good girls on a string while I fuck the hoes" fools they act like

Miseducated to believe BLACK people at WHITE universities actually wanted to be a COMMUNITY

Miseducated to think doing the "RIGHT" thing would make me happy, let alone get me anywhere

Miseducated to feel good at the site of intelligent, motivated black people...shit that AINT enough if they don't use that intelligence and motivation to make change

So now the question is how do I re-educate myself..

Re-educate to believe it isn't WHERE you are, but what you DO once you're there

Re-educate to believe that black people at a white university  
react differently to their situation

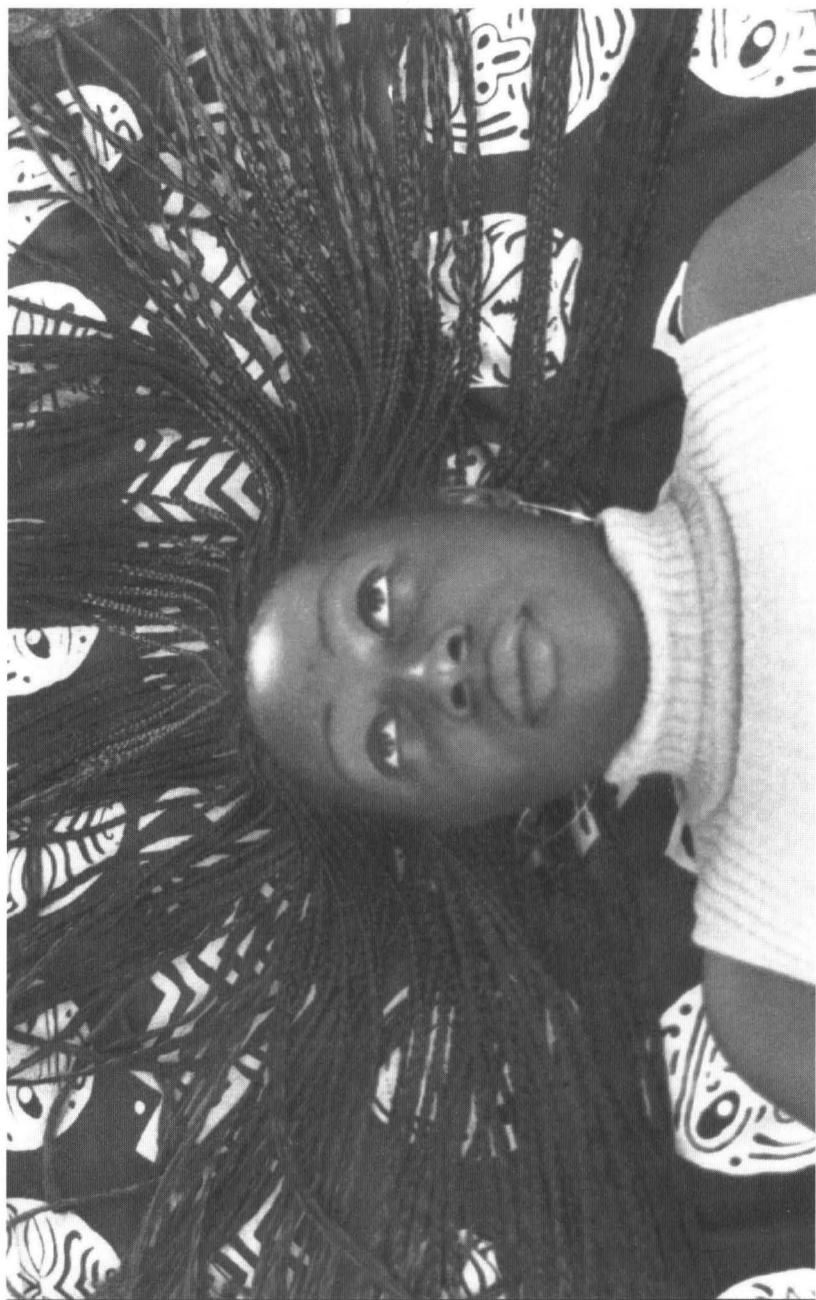
Re-educate to realize that there are black **KINGS** out  
there who know how to treat a black **QUEEN** when they  
see one

Re-educate to think doing what my soul tells me to do is  
the **RIGHT** thing and then I will always be happy

Re-educate to feel black people make changes in the minds  
of people everyday just by how they think and act

Now I'm, wondering am I the only miseducated one out there,  
if so please disregard these written words, but if not,  
what will it take for **YOU** to be re-educated?

*Ola J. Friday*



"I Stopped Combing My  
Mind So My Thoughts Could  
Lock" Saul Williams

Devon M. Taylor

## Mango Chutney and Kool-Aid

Thank God for white boys and boy bands.  
That kind of vapid happiness cannot be taught.  
Guys named Brandon and Kyle sing about those things  
that white girls expect and black girls want but never get.

I confess,  
I almost bought Kool-Aid the other day.  
I picked up something red and "juicy" but,  
the package was too slick for my touch and I slowly  
put it back, snug between two others-  
purposefully separating myself from any and all traces of  
Ghetto-fabulousness.

I'd like to think my tastes are more refined.  
Cranberry Juice, chilled in a wine glass with a squeeze of lime  
or a drop of vodka, anything with a recognizable label.  
But, when I am around them,  
yes them...  
I try so hard to appear non-threatening, putting off all the  
"Ethnic" vibes I can muster.

(Laughing to myself)  
I sing along to the latest blanché anthem,  
saying:  
Bye bye bye  
to all the pretenses...  
To the absolutes and the extremes  
that could never describe me.

I am, without a doubt, as black as they come,  
And just how black is that?  
Black enough to know that I exist outside of a box  
wallpapered in lies and images that are  
too big-lipped, and wide-nosed to be anything but animal?

Well, here is my Statement of Purpose:  
I can't sing  
so I write.

Thank God for white boy bands, who sing what I can only  
drop one by one on the page. I am my mother grandmother  
great-grandmother great great-grandmother. I am 1/16 Carib.  
I am 1/16 white. Colonized and colonizer together in my  
blood. First Nations victim escaping my red blood but filled  
to the brim with black white and ochre. I am island and  
mainland and dirt, sinking beneath my own indigenous feet. I  
am a memory - a history of struggle that will live like a genie  
on velvet couches in the forefront of your mind and my legs  
are still chained and my toes are so cold  
coaled  
kohled

Natasha Marin





*"Hangin' in the Tree"*

*Jihan Grant*

## Memiors of Georgietta Merrinwether

My life is waterproof and I don't need no umbrella.  
I walk here and see there,  
Yet my education neva get wet.  
I neva had much of it and I neva used it.  
I fill a burden on ma back, and a monki on ma hip.  
So many bills, not enough wuk.  
I cant help but wonder where I'ma headin,  
Where I'ma goin,  
What I'ma doin?  
I didn't go no red school hause t'day.  
I ain't fit fa na lernin, ain't fit fa no teechin.  
Alls I fit fa is wukin, cussin, cleenin, pressin, spankin, raisin.  
My chillens'll do fine in school.  
Dems comes home and dem say "momma gues what lern't t'day"  
I act like I knows what dem talking bout, so dem rat on.  
"One day," dem say, "we's gon' take Big Momma," dat's me, "fa  
New York City."  
Lawdy, I's waiting fa da day, I's gon kick my heels up.  
And I's know I don did a good job raising my chillens  
Cause when I lose my mine and the Lawd ain't seen fit to  
call me home yet,  
Theys gon take curofme  
I just sit there'n stare inna space and wunda about the  
sunshine.  
Lawd knows I is...

Connell Cloyd



"Daddy in Jamaica" Shushamma Mignott

## Three Fifths

circa the chaos of voting poll debacles  
we're living in the aftermath under new regimes vice grip  
the sound seeped through sealed lips, lips in malay but gave way as a  
whisper leaked  
the sound never echoed off the walls of the Grand Canyon  
never was shouted from the peak of the Colorado Rockies  
never tickled the earlobes of Mount Rushmore  
never tangoed with the winds of the Atlantic  
never soaked in the banks of the Mississippi  
never reached the capitol subsequently never leaked to the masses  
see I, heard the word through underground storm tunnels that  
massa wanna count his slaves as three fifth  
he wanna count his slaves by three fifths  
so a  
they a  
gonna breathe=== air into the lungs of an electoral infant college his  
instincts to spawn cotton  
knowledge  
now slave owner, whip lasher, womb raper, males can cast votes  
for their property the bodies they owned  
fast forward the pendulum to the new millennium and nothing changing  
institutions of the past haunt the present burning incense of segre-  
gation degradation nothing  
changing  
in Florida  
nothing changing  
sunshine state eclipsed  
nothing changing  
formally 9,904 voices silenced black voices silenced black windpipes  
strangled  
throw out those cards they've been tainted by brown fingertip residue  
throw out those cards lower that field cry a few octaves  
and this was bias not error don't toss me a fallacy prime rib and  
expect me to glutton wipe my  
mouth clean then sit content  
your breaking the same treaties you made with yourself didn't mean to  
choke on that scripture bone choke on that bible  
cause those constitutional words mean less then nothing  
those words are stuffing down your throat so choke liar choke  
see the good ole boys got plans they be reminiscing of times past  
where lynching was the justice and the branding irons were not just for  
cattle

times when leather burned bare skin and tree branches came with nooses  
their aiming for somewhere in the longitude of as close as possible  
the good ole boys stroll down memory lane holding hands with the grand dragon  
so why not make old times now resurrect old "I" crooked letter-crooked letter  
Nostradamus predicted the marathon would be ending in a photo finish  
and all Junior needed was a little divine intervention  
a little push forward  
a little gust of wind on his back  
a little bit of helping hands  
a little downhill slope  
a little steroids for stamina  
a little bias call from the home field advantage referee  
a little bit of southern hospitality  
cause rules were made to be bent or even snapped in half or even snapped in half  
henceforth the church is burning who oversaw these proceedings  
black church was a polling booth  
but physical road blocks denied entry, sorry, no voices can pass through here this wall is made  
of solid snuff solid muffle solid silence this wall is voice proof  
add some layers, in black counties police wanna see some ID, see some ID make sure your  
registration fits protocol  
still more layers, in black counties police wanna single out, wanna single out black males the  
villain wears black so criminal background checks to spotlight  
let me find out who has rights  
still more layers throw out those cards one in eleven in the subculture section throw out those  
cards four times that off the whites throw out those cards due to Jurassic counting machines  
probably been around since three fifths throw out those cards  
And the icing, the elephant men hired a firm to cleanse the voting polls of felons search the  
data bases  
resulting in a whitewashing pointed the finger at 8000 non-felons 8000 more voices strangled the  
firm said it was a glitch  
yeah it was a glitch the glitch was dark skin  
now mix that and we got mud pie we got layers of sediment baking  
but no one brought a magnifying glass

and they forgot to wash behind the ears now dirt is showing blatant  
accumulation  
layer after layer can't be washed away tainted jumping rope with  
forever  
blatant still backs keep turning and backs keep turning  
and crosses keep burning and crosses keep burning  
tens of thousands of voices silenced now where's democracy where's  
lady liberty  
is she hiding on the lap of the Supreme Court  
or is she, under the round table  
or in a, back alley  
or on a, dark street corner  
or is she, in the crust around your mouth  
or in the, tears of childless parents  
or in the, saliva vapors riding on the words of politicians  
or did we, leave her back in the sixties  
or is she, marching on Washington,  
or is she, in Karl Marx's theory  
or is she, coming from that soap box street preacher  
or is she, living in the suburbs of academia  
or in the, letters on the page on the 6pm news  
or did she, die when the assassins bullets struck our heroes  
or is she, playing ring games with our children  
or is she, only in our silverscreen fantasies  
or is she floating face down in a river of lies  
I saw liberty on a milk carton she's been missing for four hundred  
years  
and last I heard, she was lynched  
we sent out search parties to comb the bayou for the body  
searched every inch realized that liberty never existed how can we  
have a funeral for someone  
that never fully lived, for, us?  
"we went from Nigga  
to Negro  
to Colored  
to Black  
to African American  
then right back to Nigga"  
and ninety percent of Niggas voted for Gore  
some one please tell me, what's, three fifths of that?

Chimua Thelwell



*"Sunrise at the  
Grand Canyon"*

*Jihan Grant*

## Epiphany

I used to wander the solar deserts  
Not exactly aimlessly  
But still-with no map.

At times, I would stand in the center of the galaxies  
And feel my smallness as infinite waves of  
Silver sands gently licked my toes

I would bathe in the moon's purple glow  
Wrap myself in the ebony layers of the night sky,  
Lay my head upon a star,  
And close my eyes until the new dawn.

Centuries passed, and one day  
From heaven's mountaintops  
I discovered that the Earth had no core  
Rivers flowed, seasons changed,  
Yet it hung from invisible celestial threads  
Like a forgotten doughnut

Suddenly  
Gravity ceased  
And I was catapulted towards the center  
The universe trembled upon impact  
As an object falling from above struck its surface

I felt an unfamiliar tightness in my chest  
As I realized how close I had come to being struck  
For the Book of Destiny had fallen at my feet.

As I stared at the cover  
The winds changed and the pages fluttered open  
Not wanting to be caught reading God's diary  
I looked up to find that  
The rivers now flowed in the opposite direction  
Black had become white  
And the needle of the compass  
pointed in a southern direction

Shocked, I stopped breathing  
Or maybe I took my first breath  
As I stared helplessly at the embodiment of  
love.



There we remained  
Drinking in the sight of one another  
Until feeling drowned, I lowered my gaze  
For I had read the chapter of my soul in his eyes

Flustered and confused I asked loudly  
"Who are you?"  
I heard the smile spread across his lips  
And felt his voice from within  
The sound seemed to engulf my body  
As it traveled along the length of my spinal cord  
I felt his voice from within  
I felt his voice from within, answering

"I am your soul's forgotten half.  
I am all that you will allow me to be.  
I am the gypsy who has swam infinite oceans  
And you are the wanderer who has left footprints  
upon the eternities.  
I am the sea.  
You are the land.  
The time has reached for us to become mermaids."

No, I shook my head in disbelief  
For I had traveled from Neptune to New York  
And never known the likes of him  
Yet, I couldn't escape his echo reverberating from  
within  
"I am all that you will allow me to be."

The solar winds changed  
I looked down and discovered that I no longer had  
legs  
Since his arrival, they had been replaced by fins  
Glanced across the distance to find that the  
center of the earth  
Had been filled with glowing, golden iridescence  
I became warm and realized that his glow filled a  
place  
That I hadn't known was empty.  
He filled a place that I hadn't known was empty.

He heard the smile spread across my lips  
And felt my voice from within  
As I whispered,  
"Please teach me how to swim and I will teach you  
to walk."

Candace Gomez

**From: "chris martin" <allgood\*\*@\*\*\*\*\*.com>**

To: tufluc@hotmail.com

Date: Tue, 30 Jan 2001 04:29:25

Cre,

... This whole deal is just crazy. But anyways, i was on a bus up to Boston and something reminded me of the movie Slam that you made me watch and this kinda like flowed. I can't tell you how much that book that you gave me has helped...Being at home I have had a lot of time to myself to write and I think you would dig this one. Or at least I hope you will...

The rhythm flows like the blood of my brothers and sisters with the force of that mighty river Nile. I dare the pigmently challenged to walk to the bus stop in my Tims, forget about a mile. It's sad that with strength of that river flows distrust, hate and resentment. But what can you expect for 4 hundred years of mistreatment. As a people we raise up, we hear thugs rap of their road to becoming CEOs. Somewhat remnant of the songs of our ancestors "Wade in the Water", to freedom it flows. Gang wars over blocks merely 21st century tribal warfare, my people unite we have a common enemy more dangerous, and generational; welfare. Before they called us field hands and niggas while we toiled and broke our backs, now they call us forwards, and wide receivers while we earn them rings and cadilacs. My people keep your eyes open and as we have been warned always watch your back. But be sure to keep an eye on the glass ceiling, with any luck we'll find a crack. In short, for those that don't know, don't care or can't see, the time will come that in the true sense of the word, we will be free...

Chris

*SHIT (Some How In Time)*  
Hereafter infinity, a negative 8 sideways

Flowers from beneath, tags attached to my toes  
Given a Cain I became Able, out of a garden I a Rose  
From under A dam, in the Eve of sin I sprouted, I suppose  
19 years of film, colored; none of my true colors ever ex-  
posed  
While the mystery of history painted perfect pictures in  
which I never  
posed

So I never got the picture  
I failed to find my frame of mind  
But keep in brain  
My minds been framed

They call me son  
cuz I am Sam's sun  
Europeans just gave me a different name  
See, strength lies in length of woolly hair will remain  
Untamed,  
This Negro ran through the underground railroad  
Conditioned, my thoughts-derailed and trained  
I take it to heart when I LOCALLY EXPRESS  
From my chest  
While you simply say it, in vein

Up the sun came  
And in both antennae's it was mourning  
Starless stars of ebony had fallen  
Sky blew and dust flew  
The earth began yawning  
In the midst of rapid eye movement, I noticed it was dawn  
I never paid the child of destiny's bills  
Yet the creator kept calling

Skeptical of gospel,  
I questioned what was said.  
It seems as though Truth lies  
Maybe in Death's bed  
Maybe in the Holy Books  
In between the lines I never read  
Maybe in his-story  
So time began to fall in food  
For thought I was fed

Death wished it was fiction  
Sorry, wishings out of your jurisdiction.  
They said with such conviction  
Without diction  
Dijja and Eternity revealed the affliction  
Not the Bubonic  
Blacks were plagued with cataracts of the third  
Eye heard  
From the unspoken word of a bird

We're three-fifths with eyes five-fifths pink  
The world is cold  
Degrees of freedom: 666 below to zeroes that link

Afraid of the light  
I played the role of a mole  
Becoming Invisible  
Man, I heard freedom ring  
My ears released on parole  
Couldn't tell time but time could tell:  
Emancipation from mental enslavement and jail  
Would prevail from euphonious sounds of my liberty bell.

Without a rear  
View mirror I tried to reflect  
But you can't face water  
When rain continues to linger  
I attempted to travel time  
But its big hand gave me the finger

The Fallen Angel with one wing began to sing  
"Get this money is the motto  
Whether it's with balls, bones,  
Or bullets that are hollow"  
I said, Nah son we got 12 eyes  
We can watch without Movados  
We can live today and see tomorrow  
We can not follow  
We can still win Allah's lotto."

Then with this fortune of so many  
Perhaps with the right penny  
We may flip ahead, and continue to make cents  
Of thoughts dense, of thoughts past tense  
Nymphomaniacs never tired of insomnia  
Fuck the dream of a picket fence  
Hence, I have finally found my defense  
Against the hands of time that never rinse

On the court I felt Smooth  
Yet he felt he was losing his soul  
I said check under your feet  
And there is where he found the hole.

22 days later I arrived face to face with Ilen  
We dropped turds and spilled words  
Without a porta potty or pen  
He said "we gotta struggle son"  
So in a cipher, 6 brothers huddle  
12 tears and no bucket, we said fuck it  
6 hearts poured into 1 puddle

Presently upon a white donut, I sit  
Moving the bowels of my mind  
Can't believe all this SHIT,  
Must have happened Some How In Time.

Michael McLeod

# Tribute to Vision and Tradition

~Untitled~

Of sordid cloth, stained in raped blood was how I was conceived.  
For hundreds of years I was tainted so.

Coming out into America tasting the salty limbs of mahogany  
Africa smothered in European sweat

I choke on the putrid taste, but I swallow the must and  
concede to the woman I am

Or am I?

Freed, I raised a solid clenched fist, I screamed Black power!

Black woman!-But no still no voice?

No longer fighting the man, it is my dashiki wearing, pick carrying,  
brother who drives me down

Fist after swooping fist, blow after bruising blow,

telling me I aint a woman,

But aint I?

Liberated, I met a bitter world inundated with crack pipes and  
heroin

I caught my baby sucking from a pipe once.

On the other occasion she was licking the back of  
a molded rind of a banana peel-her mamma couldn't even feed  
her.

I looked down, my body scraped, scared, a tattered brown

Lost in a crude world and forgetful of where I came from

But you found me my sister and you accepted all that I was

You were then and are now the rod that keeps my balance

Without you I could not have discovered the woman I am

I am!

Sister, now take my hand and follow me throughout this world.

There will be times when I do not know what is right-but I will  
look to you

For your wisdom, virtue and faith.

Keep my vision clear and steadfast to your heart

Together let us moan for mother mahogany.

Let us fight the fight for all the sisters raped and beaten.

Together may we inspire others to find such a special bond.

Only a phenomenal sister like you understands pain, understands  
the roots of pain and understands the path of healing

With you, my sister, I was not-just a blurred image of the past

Now that we have each other let there be no hindrance in how  
we see each other

For I AM in your eyes and in mine

One Love!

Akilah A. Cobham

*Impressions In Art*



*"Exposure"*

*Esther Davis*

**Death, I Live**  
(as told to Alwin A.D. Jones)

I would Scream, but Thunder.  
I would Cry, but Clouds.  
I would Fight, but Earth.  
I would Sleep, but Water.

The world's a place reeking of Macbeths,  
Hamlet, Ophelias, Portias & Calibans.  
But there is no Shakespeare.

And I...

I...

I am just the actor,  
out of work.

I am not your God  
nor am I the Red Horned Adversary.

Nor am I a carrion.

Nor am I a panther, pregnant with cunning.

Nor am I among the seers.

I am not Amos.

I am not Hosea.

And I am not Isaiah.

I am not among the see-ers, though I look  
at mountains and see great breasts  
waiting to suckle a new god.

A new god figmented by my imagination,

or that of My Queen-

a god of swirling colors,

a distorted rainbow with deliberate purpose.

Why?

Because the God of Jews is not my God.

Nor is the God of the Christians my God...

I have locked myself away from the god's eyes.

I have locked myself away in the castle I took from  
Rupuntzel.

I have locked myself away.

And I shave my head everyday so I have no hair for any-  
one to climb.

I pricked my finger on that Witch's Spinning Wheel,  
but sleepless Sleep refused to sleep with sleepy me.

And there are no mirrors to say that I am Male Beauty.

My Queen has come, On the breath of the new god,

My Queen has come, riding on the breath of color's swirling.

She has kissed me on my lips and I cannot awake,  
yet my eyes are open in delirium

Should God have wiped Eden out of the minds of  
humanity?  
Should God have created a Tree of Knowledge?  
Should God have killed the Red, Horned Adversary?

Is it God created man in His image?  
Is it Men created gods in their image?

Shouldn't we all say thanks to Eve?

My Queen has come.  
And she listens as words flow in confusing swirls of color.  
My Queen has come.  
And she has placed her lips against mine, Male Beauty's.  
She said that I was cold, so she called Babylon.  
but Babylon only pulled batons in a moment of  
future digression.

With my finger nail I etched a request onto a mud tablet.  
And I threw it through her god's cloudy bedroom window.  
A white carrion crow returned with a message stapled to it's  
ankle,

Sorry we are out to lunch

Unsigned.

My Queen never got the message.  
I wanted her god to tell her that I love her.  
I wanted her god to tell her that I am in love with her,

because

thunder has stolen my voice;  
clouds has snatched my tears;  
earth has captured my strength;  
water has borrowed, without recompense, my peace

and Pen gives me my sole release\*\*\*-(is this the right soul/  
sole)

into her arms.

Alwin A.D. Jones





"Untitled"

Dominique Gautier

## Sword Play

Fog drifts  
Breath freezes  
Horses charge  
Hooves thunder  
Nostrils flare  
Eyes focus  
Muscles tense  
Lances thrust  
Armor dents  
Shield shatters

I turn my horse towards my foe and curse the loss of shield.  
He rolls onto his feet to watch his horse sprint to the field.

Heels dig  
Horse charges  
Lance downward  
Steel glimmers  
Gallant turns  
Pivot's sword  
Gelding yells  
Rider falls

Upon me my black stallion falls and pain shoots through my leg.

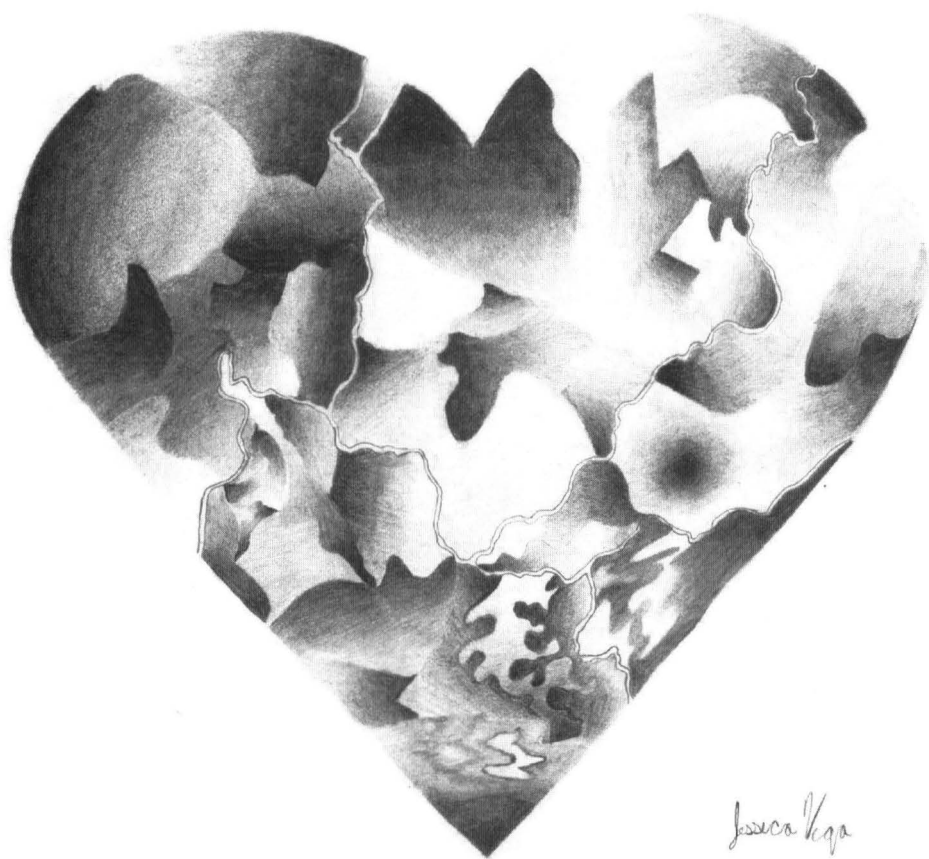
I swim in an abyss of pain and try to clear my head.

Pain hinders  
Knight stands  
Blade lunges  
Sword deflects  
Gauntlet swings  
Iron clangs  
Second strike  
Hands vibrate  
Quick attack  
Slow parry

He is a master of the sword, and so we dance this art.  
Are those the drumbeats of my men, or the fear in my  
heart?

Blade chips  
Arms tire  
Grip loosens  
Sword falters  
Platemail parts  
Flesh opens  
Blood splatters  
Vision blurs  
Victor kneels

*Infiniti*



*Jessica Vega*

*"Jad-ed Love"*

*Jessica Vega*

*Spring '01*

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## Angel In Disguise

You came into my world so suddenly yet calm  
Like the ocean at sunrise, I did not see you coming  
Your smile is like no other I have known, your kisses like  
exotic fruit...sweet and supple

You say you are my one true love, come only for me

Yet I wonder if we are truly meant to be  
Are you my angel in disguise sent from above?

My friends say you are no angel

They say you will rape and ravage me

That you will rip my children from my womb and breast

And devour my brothers and sisters, father and mother...

my country

Beware my angel for they say they will hunt you relentlessly  
until you are no longer

They call it compassion but I call it murder... murder...murder

Talk of 12 million murdered and more waiting... waiting... waiting

Am I next my angel, what of your promises and love sonnets?

The long days and nights I laid in your arms

I tell them it cannot be because I have seen your heart  
and felt your pain

Still they continue to lie, weaving false tales of anger and  
despair

They say you are not who I think you are,  
That you are of a warped variety, a dis-ease of the soul,  
mind and ...body  
They bloody my ears with the raw sound of laughter, saying  
don't you know your angel?  
Your angel has cheated on you... he has cheated you,  
Your angel sent from above has 60 million lovers, who call him  
by another name,  
Auto... Immuno... Deficiency... Syndrome...

Speechless, I knew not what to say, I had been  
cheated...but never will I be defeated...

Dedicated to those gone and those LIVING with HIV and  
AIDS

Ola J. Friday



"Night At The Savoy"

Candice Mosley

## The Day I Met Abandonment On A Burgundy Couch

It was Teen Tuesday at the New York Hospital Gynecology Clinic. I quietly walked in and waited for the familiar faces behind the reception desk to recognize me. I went down the line and greeted them all with warm, suffocating hugs and kisses to the cheek. My mother had been working there for over 20 years, and whenever I had a day off from school I would run little errands at the hospital. I had on her pure white lab coat with the foundation-tainted collar. Over the squeals of all my self-appointed aunts I heard a voice giggle "Aye yo look at Dougie Howser over there." It came from the burgundy couches of the waiting area. A pregnant girl, no more than sixteen years old, was pointing in my direction and nudging her friend next seat. I caught her eye and for a quick second I challenged her stare but I was defeated. She had one of those looks where you just knew she lived in some kind of hell. She had been burned so badly by the fire she called her life that she was now numb to the world.

I sat down and began to put the clinic code on the pink appointment slips. I only dared to look at her from the corner of my eye. Her overwhelmingly round belly tested the elasticity of a FILA t-shirt. She wore forest-green sweat pants that at one time or another matched her faded shirt. A small round bump interrupted the circumference of her stomach, it was her outty. Her hair was unkempt and the ends revealed the orangeness of a past highlighting mistake. She wore a hairstyle that didn't fit. It was parted into two and the top half was pulled into a ponytail. It looked more like a stub than any tail I'd seen. The bottom half was down but the tips clumped together under the weight of excess hair grease.

She walked to the water fountain to get some water. Her walk was full of nothing: Her legs swaggered with indifference, and there was no consistent rhythm to her stroll. I watched her arms and it seemed as though she couldn't make up her mind. Did she want them on her hips? Of course she would look more intimidating to the rest of the teens or did she simply want to let them hang loose. She would look as if she didn't care and had no reason to fear



any of them. Her feet hit the floor clumsily, understandably so, since her young body never expected to bear this burden. Finally she reached the fountain, bent over and began to drink. Slurping noises ruined the melody of the cool, running water. A few drops fell as she raised her hand to wipe them from her chin.

After waiting at least an hour on the burgundy couches her leg began to pick up the rhythm of anxiety. Two pieces of dry, pink, flesh ceased to spit out insults as she and her friend sat silently. I watched her hands pull at random pieces of thread, fix strands of hair and then she began to rub her stomach. She clumsily went over her belly, it was clear she didn't possess the gentle caress of a soon-to-be mother. Her feelings trickled down into her coarse hands and leaked into the womb where I envisioned the unwanted child drowning in the mother's desire for detachment. I pictured it unfed and hungry for a love of which he would forever be starved.

Her eyes searched the room for something or someone that wasn't there. All I saw were two cloudy ovals flooded with ignorance and indifference. Deep within her pupils a false sense of invincibility protected her from the reality of the more complex world outside of her sixteen-year-old bubble. Every other second I saw her roll her eyes with unnecessary attitude. Maybe she was trying to get the pain out or simply keep a little love in. Another hug from one of my "aunties" interrupted my disgust and the girl loudly whined "I neva get hugs like dat!" My mother quickly walked over and gave her one.

I no longer looked out of the corner of my eye. I stared directly at them. She stood there waiting for it as my mom approached her with open arms. I swear she looked over my shoulders and her eyes shouted "I just took one of ya hugs, and whatcha gonna do about it?" Her hands fell awkwardly around my mother's waist and there was an uncomfortable distance between the two bodies. When was the last time this girl had been hugged? She probably didn't know the answer to that question either. Mommy rubbed her back and said, "You feel better, baby?"

For the first time since she had entered the clinic, the attitude disappeared. During that brief encounter she hadn't rolled her eyes once. Instead her eyelids closed slowly and gently, reluctant to open again. Once they opened she knew the hug was over and the rare, unconditional love she had stumbled upon would remain out of her grasp. She stood there for a minute with her arms crossed over her belly, intentionally stuck in the moment. Then the light hit her eyes and they glazed over once again.

She knew the way the world saw her and she blamed the accident growing inside of her stomach. The girl sat down and took her place among the pack of pregnant teens who sat there squabbling. Once in a while a friend nudged her and chimed in a slow "yeah girl" followed by a quiet drawn out laugh. She stared at her stomach and almost smiled but she caught herself. Nurse Timberlake called out "Leana Johnson" and yelled it a second time before the girl got up. Leana looked back at her friends and said "Aye yo dat's me. Lemme go get this thing checked out. Watch my stuff." She did her empty walk across the waiting area to the nurse and went into an examination room around the corner.

*Shantell D. Richardson*

## Untitled

*Cries*

She flushed the toilet  
Its sensitive head washed and drowning  
Liquid, not quite water  
Crashing on white porcelain  
Whirling counter-clockwise  
Into the bottomless pit of sess-  
A new home, her old womb.

*Cries*

To her dismay, it's still there  
Battered and bruised  
But living a life  
That it's had for less than  
Five bloody broken minutes  
The fingers of its shivering hand, the same

*Cries*

She should have known:  
Babies don't go down easily  
If the cord is still attached.

*Cries*

She flushed the toilet  
Its defenseless body washed and drowning  
The golden wand with rubber end  
In mama's hand

*Plunge, flush, breath, push, plunge, flush!*

I can see the head!

    Money  
the chest!!

    Education  
The arms and legs!!!

    Status and no Common Sense  
It floats dead.

Tears-

Her toilet white skin  
Washed and drowning  
In salty discharge  
She should have known:  
If the cord is still attached  
Babies don't go down easily  
When their souls are in torment  
Babies don't go down easily  
And her mind will never rest.

Valerie Jeanette Rock



"Untitled"

Kelechi Ajumwa

## Untitled for Love 6

Sometimes,  
sometimes with a thought of you,  
I can feel you thinking about me.  
I can feel you wish you were holding me.  
I can feel you wish you had my eyes to look into.  
I can feel you, in the dark,  
thinking about the time I touched your cheek  
and it sparked and we both saw and both laughed.

These times,  
I wanna hold you tighter,  
tighter than I hold life,  
for I think,  
"what are eyes if they are not yours  
and what are my hands if not to hold  
you or this pen to write about you?"

These times, I close my eyes  
as my mind simulates your touch-  
I take the fingers of my left hand  
And touch my right palm, tracing my lifelines...  
I stop  
for I can never quite succeed.

Every time that I feel these times,  
I feel like I walked into your embrace  
and fell in love with your eyes.

I fell to sleep under the warmth of your eyes.

I don't wish to walk out of your embrace  
nor do I wish to wake up  
for all else is winter compared to you.

All else is winter without you.

Without you, my love is trapped under ice,  
silent,

shivering,  
needing you, needing your fingers,  
needing your eyes  
to release it.

Without you,  
my today and my yesterday resemble the faces of strangers  
while I was drunk  
and my tomorrow can only come if my tomorrow  
can always persuade you to come with it,  
tomorrow  
to hold and be with me.

*Alwin A.D. Jones*

## Untitled

So you say you don't have much to say  
I wonder about that  
So you say you don't have much inspiration  
I wonder about that  
Because if you could see what I see. When I am looking at  
you, not looking at  
me. Then the words would come out and stumble over each  
other impossible would be their attempts to capture that  
which is what I see.  
And that is the reason I dislike poetry.  
It is an injustice to the heart,  
An injustice to the mind,  
A cruel trickery  
Though I must admit it has been mastered by Free-Prisoner  
and Infiniti.  
But I like to take my time to describe what it is that I  
feel for you.  
Cause I have taken the time to figure out what it is that I  
feel for you.  
And this has come off to sudden,  
then damn how slow do you want me to go?  
Not saying that I would move on  
but just that my heart doesn't like to be torn.  
To see you during the day,  
and never fall asleep with you at night,  
To never be allowed to make love to your eyes and to your  
mind.  
And oh what the hell let me just say it  
and to make love to your thighs.  
Cause I do see you as a whole  
but I am upset that I only have  
half of you.  
Selfish is my love, girl you know that.  
It was written in the stars.  
Just like you and I are the perfect match.  
And upon those stars I wish  
and hope that you could be a fact.  
Then I would please your mind,  
body and soul  
inspire your heart  
and make your mouth lose control.  
Now how is that for a  
LOVE JONES POEM?

Kelechi Ajumwa

## Untitled

maybe it was  
just a physical thing for us-  
you missed your girl  
and I missed my man  
you were there  
to hold and caress me  
when i had no one else  
and i was  
the same for you  
you needed someone  
to lie in your arms  
and make you  
feel like a man  
and i needed to feel protected

we used each other

i used you  
to fill the void  
of that man who  
i didn't want to miss  
and you used me  
to forget about  
that woman of past;  
to wash her away  
from your mind  
so why are we both  
so surprised  
to find that  
our arms are wrapped  
around another  
instead of each other?

Jamaire



## Speaking the Poem

I cried a poem on the morning they told me I was not black. That I was not saturated in the ideology of a black nation, a black world, and that my hair was too straight.

I cried a poem on the afternoon, when I heard what had happened to Diallo and I wanted to march, wanted to shout, wanted to protest, but they told me I had missed my time, and that this wasn't the sixties, and that the best thing I could do for my people is to go to my semi-productive English literature class and get that over-rated A plus on my paper, and leave my ivy tower with a "good" education. And by the way, sister girl, do something to that wild head.

I cried a poem on the evening, when I finished reading, "The Street," because I let the novel get to me, and it shouldn't have. Even though it was dirty and depressing, and filled with the hopelessness of Harlem life, and the characters were real, so real that I feared them to the point of tears, I should have dried my eyes.

I cried a poem, when I discovered that nothing shocked me anymore, not a lynching, not a dragging, not a bombing, not a poem about black, brown, and yellow people on the verge of suicide, or mass genocide, or committing homicides.

I cried a poem, because I jus got so damn tired of talking, tired of thinking about the state of this race, and caring so damn much, and crying so damn much onto black sheets of paper-lined with years and years of ig-nor-rance.

I cried a poem, because for so long, no one taught me how to speak the poem, to live the poem, to say that poem out loud, or silently. Life was too busy for poetry, for rhymes that didn't always make sense, for spurts of emotion, for the kind of poems that would turn women into righteous sisters, niggazz into black men.

The poem that would warm cold-hearted pimps who pushed girls young enough to be their daughters, sisters. Poems, so contagious that they would be censored by the mainstream, but whispered in dorms rooms, hummed silently between classes, and inscribed on diplomas. Poems so right on, so hot, so black that they would extend far beyond the month of February.

I cried a poem once, because I was lost and confused, and didn't know that poetry could be like guns and camouflage, or hell-fighter bands on Sunday. But now I live the poem, and I make revolution through the words that I choose.

*Jamila M. Moore*



*"Loisaida"*

*Esthera Davis*

*let the ink flow...*

i start to think  
and then i sink  
like i was ink  
into the paper  
like i was ink  
- Rakim

i write my rhymes on graph paper  
to plot the plan...

