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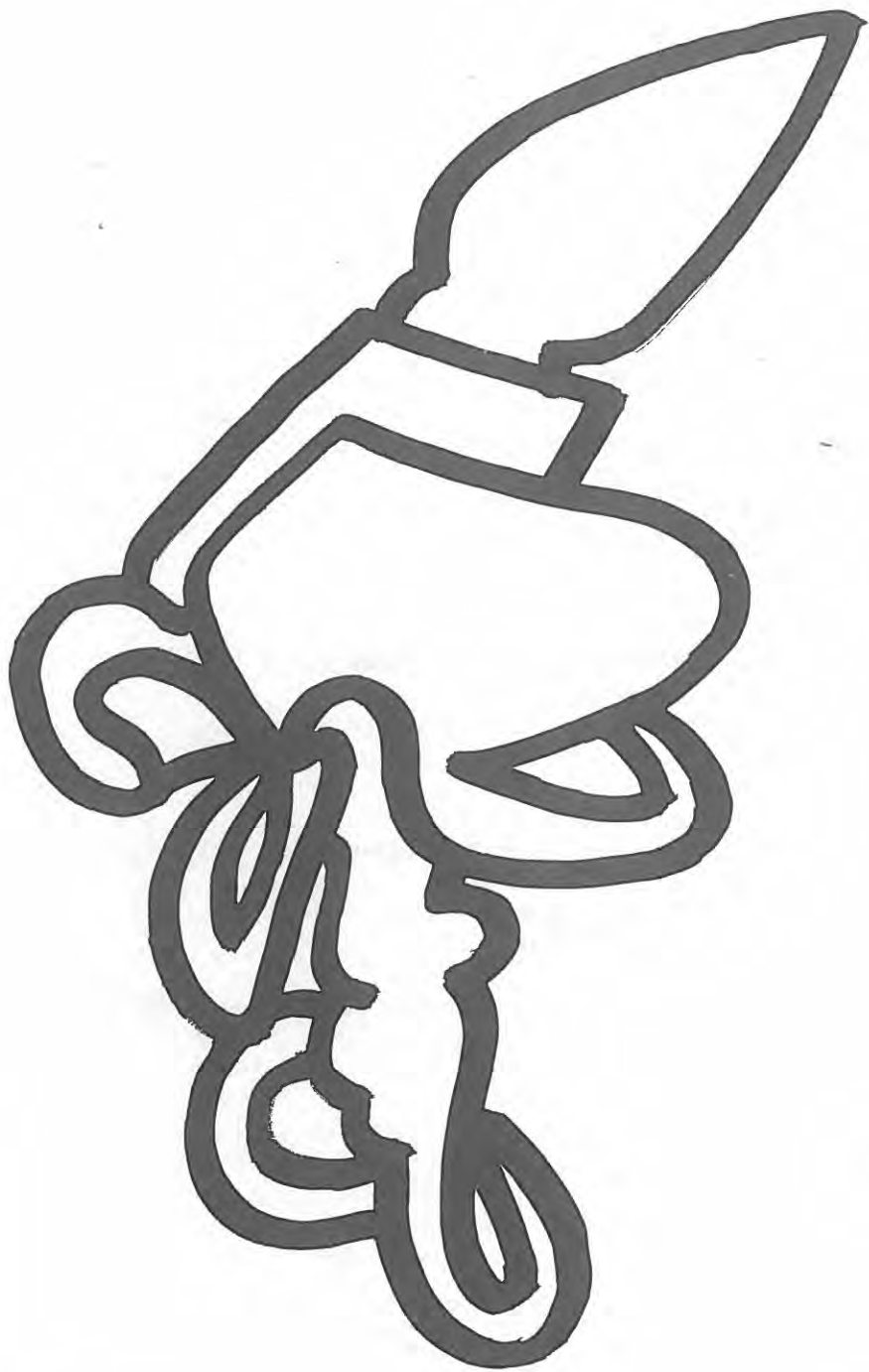
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FOR DENARDO

(To whom this book is dedicated)

INITIATION

During the season of cut organs we
shot forward like teeth spokes from runaways
a lost cargo of part flesh part ash part
copper and zinc
sucking in names like katanga
like congo
we dissolved our chains
celebrated the slit nose reality of
our severed hands and
at the base of a fifty million skull pyramid
we rehearse life
second headed face circles of
one handed life calling:
blood blood blood
and once again blood
where is the land for our blood that drips drips
blood
an arm for the rapist?
a leg for the servant?
No
take us to the place for the new birth blood



TODAY ON THIS DAY

Today on this day
I would like to push forward from
my shadow of rags
and offer this pop bottle of tears
I baptised in

good luck to you
from my torn suede shoes on
this same day of my daughters eyes
putrified
in donkey heat

Hooray for the health department

I feel damp before such an audience of
mascara and white coats waving
their bye bye's
to the friday crowd of occupied stretchers
bye bye
from the basement smell of their budget
bye bye
today on this day of jaws
in the fifth month of resemblance at
the end of a pretzel on the heart of
my son's remembrance
thump thump thump

Hands off my vomit number three recruiting
number four turning the exit to
enter my torn shoes in numbers
Warning
I take back my tears
my luck
my daughters eyes
today on this day of
No admittance No return Keep out
Cash only day of Shit

Pearl Sheba

To the northern pearl
sheba woman
that is i
my thighs whispered
back to memory calling
from inside glossy beads of
a past love
 is that you
shook my heavy loaded breasts
as ear to my belly tuned up its drums
and felt the ripple of a voice echo in its womb
overdue promises from slavery that
had stuffed our minds &
shuffled our feet
squeezing eternity from the darkened meat of
our frozen emotions and wet like
 decomposed bodies of salt
I turned slowly on the face of this memory as
song cries of flaming tissues listened
I chanted low magic slopes of
enchained sorrows
fucking me fucking us
far beyond the promised feelings of god &
like a kilo of shit that couldn't be sold
I took the arc of midnight blood &
greased my flesh to the stones
closing off water as i let flash the
encrustment on my hairs to those who would perish
from the suneyes of a peacock

PRAY FOR THE LOVERS

Pray for the lovers
for those who are suspicious
for those who are jealous
for those who are revengeful
Pray for the lovers
for those who are unsatisfied for
those who are frightened for
those who are disappointed
pray for those who are lonely lazy & limited
Pray for the lovers
for those unwilling to reveal & unable to revolt
for those who are helpless
those who are hostile
for those whose flesh goes dead upon touching
the frigid
the passive
the latent
the soft
have mercy on the lovers in heat
pray for those with pain in their bodies
pain in their minds
for sorrow
for fear &
the spell of madness after love says goodbye
Pray for the lovers in the name of love
in the name of god &
the mirror of death
love in the name of some rollin hips
those churning lips & the blood
that drips incest to
incest
all power to the lovers in the name of love
all power to the lovers in the name of love
all power to the lovers in the name of love

IF I WERE THERE

I would sunday cry on
white sheets of a wedding
holding hands with laina and fred
if i were there against
ancient shadows
flames and wax flames of
hot tears torching throats into gin rolls of
dundun blessings
dubaa dubaa
from the sweet neck of my yoruba dream
invisible with denardo
with denardo
I would cry beer sundaes on
wedding circles like
funeral psalms splashing
worlds between fish if
I were there wrapped
in royal blue net
barefoot & warm as a
february cry in a yoruba drum

FESTIVALS & FUNERALS

They winged his spirit &
wounded his tongue
but death was slow coming

They winged his spirit
& wounded his tongue
but death was slow coming?

Flash:

I lost a good friend & i
loved him
I lost a good friend & i loved
him

C.O.D.

collect on death
collect on death
collect on death

thorns on his casket
thorns on his casket

Roses red as my eyes
red red red?

Red as the blackman's blood consumed by vultures
red red red?

Red like the open head of a panther
red red red red red

Who killed Lumumba
What killed Malcolm

Who killed Lumumba
What killed Malcolm

There are no tears
we have no friends
this is the word

There are no tears
we have no friends
this is the word

before creation & after destruction
the word
winding through poverty and
bleeding into lips of the blues
screaming under oil fields
stretching across swamp fields &
laughing outside mine fields
the word
murmuring through veins of gold
crying inside the crumbled crushed bones of
Chaney
against navels of beaten flesh
walking the streets of Harlem on
the rusty rims of a needle
the word
coming through like axes
a million year lesson book on solitude
we are alone

There are no tears
we have no friends
this is the word

Who killed Lumumba
What killed Malcolm

There are no tears
we have no friends
that is the word

festivals & funerals
festivals & funerals
festivals & funerals & festivals & funerals

In bebop livers of love
so hurt in wailing hearts of fear so sad
the word
back when burgundy tongues of oppression
became creators of masculinity & legends of
love sitting on milk crates
the word
back when poets screamed
"kill run kill walk kill crawl niggus
give me your money anything" shame
the word shame
enemy to revolutions that lesbian conspiracy
back when cultural vaginas rushed through
streets urging men to die for shame
dashikis in the wind
we knew the novelty of death
cadillacs & cocaine in every hole stuffed in
our heads pain
the word was
Love offerings from night time men to
bleed time women reeking
factories of blood time steel cut fingers
weeping our skills cannot laugh but
our flesh is united
Flesh
Our flesh of a flesh
in our mouths on the head of our souls
from the skin on his eyes up
the breath in our lungs
backing the beat of our brains was the
speech of his thoughts & the death of
our fear through the dark of his meat
sits the flesh of Patrice
our flesh of a flesh is Lumumba our flesh Lumumba
flesh

There are no tears
we have no friends
that is the word

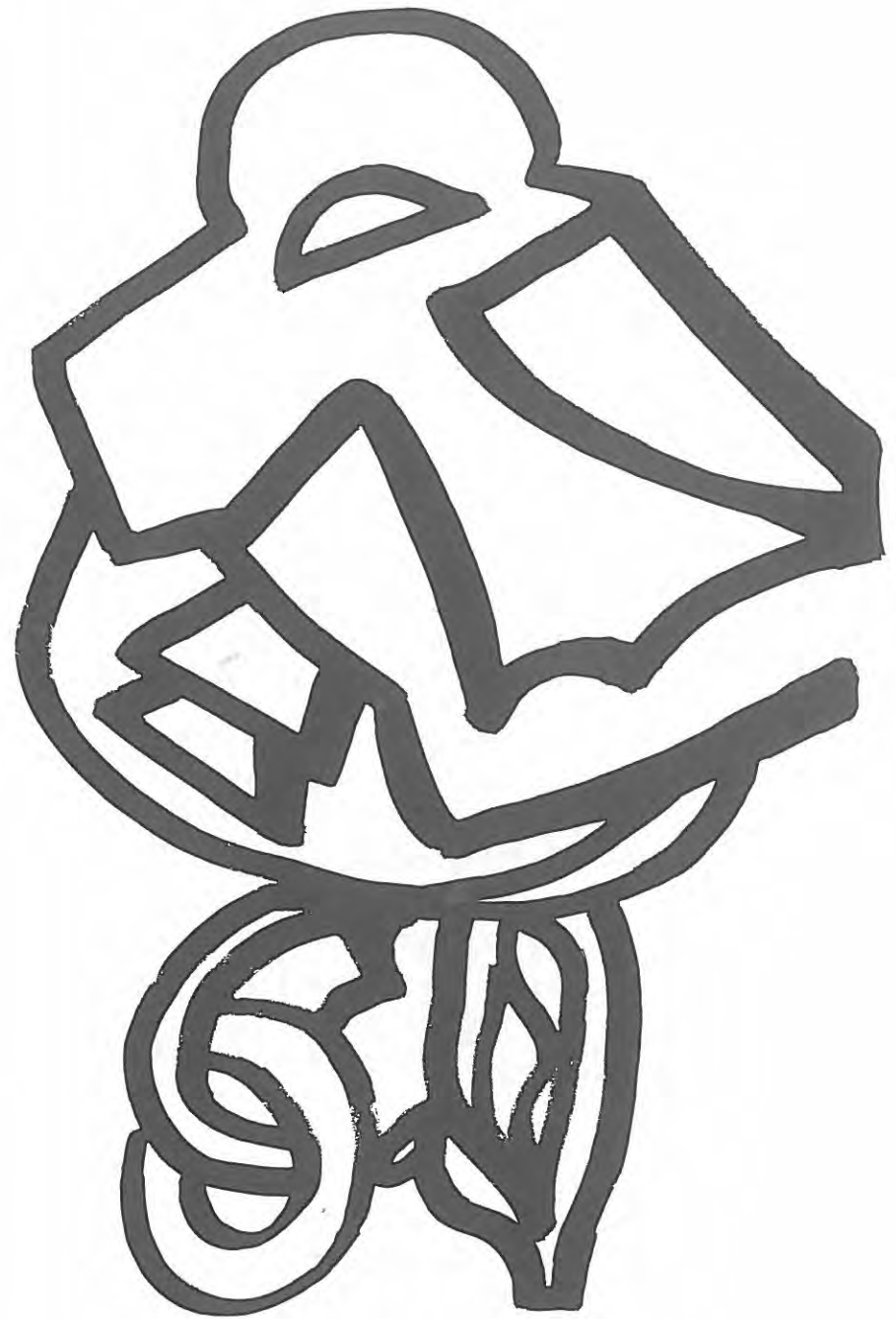
the vanguard of precision
the virgin of communications
the erotic improvisation of uprooted
perfection the Blues



RHYTHM & BLUES

Bloomdido feathers of barbwire cries
birds alone
sip the night of the Blues
the first drops of music you ever heard

My man's touch is as tender as
rain on drums
African drums
he's Chano Pozo of the drums
so black so fine
so mine so black
so fine is mine
Zanzibar love comes the Congo



I'M A WORKER

(to all of my sisters in the garment
industry)

My legs swollen from pressing pedals
my hands stiff from pushing cloth
I have a craving for food
that's why i have to piece work my ass off

You want some honey
you want some gunnie
I'm looking for that thing called
survival money

Yes in the mornings on the buses
and in the evenings coming home
you'll hear me talk about the foreman the
floorlady the bossman & the bossman's ho
cause they all gettin rich off me and my veins
varicose
and believe me that's all i've got to show

If I had some honey
If I had some gunnie
think i'd have that thing called survival
money

I'm so tired of this 8 to 4
sittin standin waitin for the bell to ring
daytime nighttime sometime shit with
these broken needles broken threads & taxes
I don't know what to do

Why don't i collect unemployment ?

that's right i paid 20 years worth of dues
but get this
if i quit?
the motha fuckin social security truant officer nazi's
don't wanna get up off my long earned fufu


I got some honey
I got some gunnie
but got dammit i can't find no
survival money

I think i'll kill me a machine and
see if i can't get a raise that way
cause this minute to minute agony
just ain't gon' bring in no sufficient pay

I got the landlord gas lights
the union telephone department store
subways buses & 4 human beings
to feed
so tell me tell me tell me
do you think a revolution is what i need

THE PROMISE

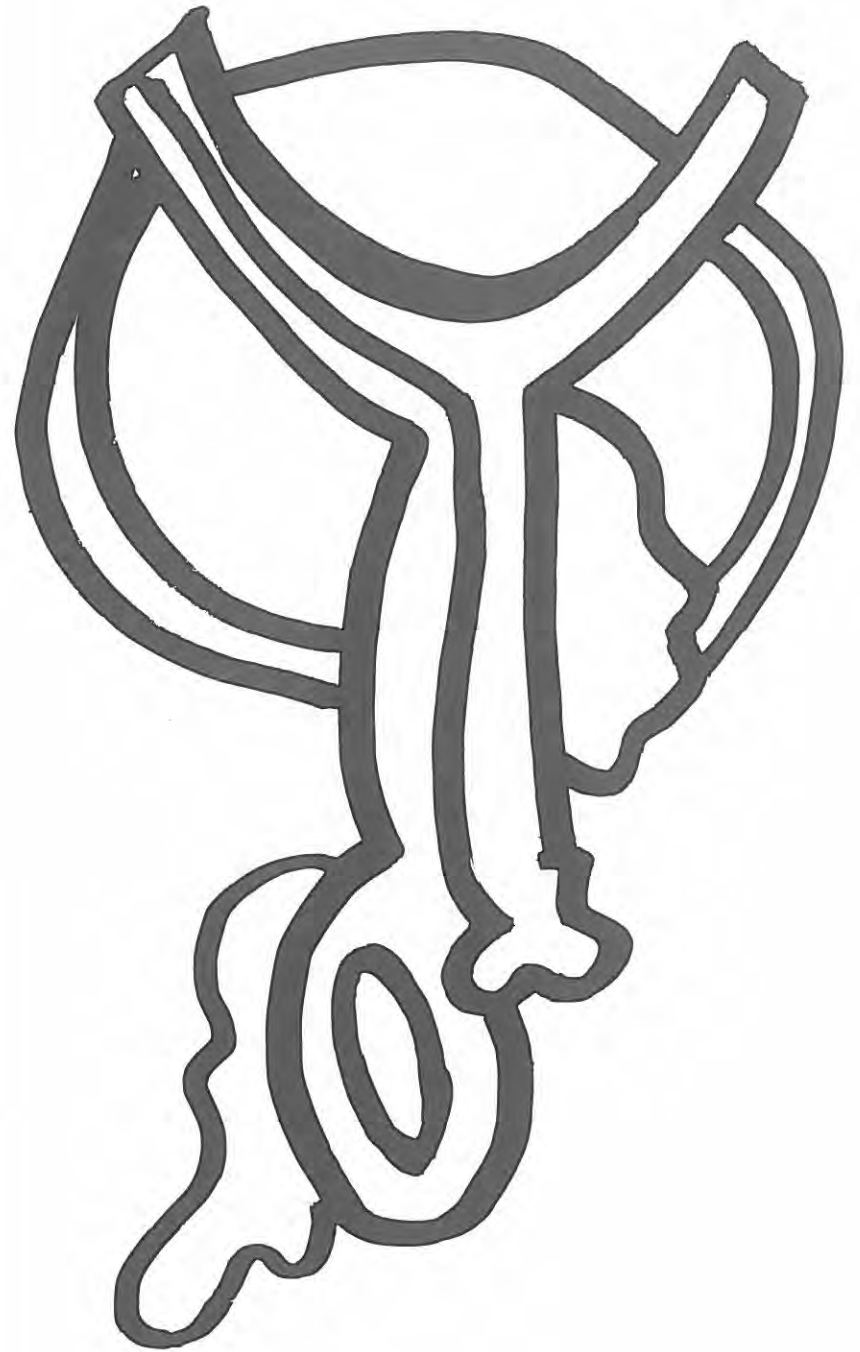
Our sweat drops bit the land with urgency
as sixteen footprints engulfed the
presence of ourselves from the americas
to africa
that night at mama peters
in nigeria where little brother benin
gave up his prayer beads when
love declared love &
the tasty visions of our eight smelly bodies
rose to the sound of dogonyaru dogonyaru
the blood root of prophecy sucking power
within our skins beneath our skulls
new fumes of blackness



& we knew as we ate fufu sopped in red pepper
under the delicate blessings of lindsay's flute
that this was the future & nothing
nothing could take away this truth
even
while on the beach
when peter was knocked on his ass by another
brother & came up holding two clean teeth in
his hands crying revenge
even
this we knew would not halt the survival of
orphans from a sea of dead ancestors in
promise of nationhood

LYNCH FRAGMENT

My tongue whips blood through the
ribs of a cobra
I am a serpent
a parched cavity for lynched reptiles
iron rust of my musty scales sucking up the
secret strength of bad smells from two curved horns
clipped horns of a ram under the
bent pipe of my passionate sloping bone which
is the beauty mask that god wears like
the four part sun rising redly to the tip of
frozen nerves heard
beyond the muted cries of
mutilated flesh in a hole
a fox hole
a fixed hole where spirits erect themselves &
urinate inside my nostrils



COLLAGE FOR ROMARE BEARDEN

From white lightnin to
bowed heads in red
rooms of pregnancy
under blackness
spread out closed in
how do you do
oval cries from target eyes
possessed by spirits
temple spirits of indefinite feelings
two jagged teeth
chapped lips peeling into
a conjur woman's towel at the insistence of
an imposing bull
the holy ghost
a sign of remembrance
the signal for new leaves of
spring tidings
to a lonely woman blemished against
G string banjos as she gumbos into
the wake of steel knives and
we molass rum spoiled omens on detached birth
truckin fuckin over to the sunrise baptist
church of the flying eagles church of
smelly garbage church of angel rats flying in
teeth formation toward
cheeks of churches tribal
marking the blues
stand up
for this slow drag of a slow death from
a fast world outside of choir books
dream books
comic books
junkie books &
bookies booking book
next to brick buildings
purple leaking roofs
next to lady's gardenia spray
magenta curtained hearse
next to life gone back

separated from the beautiful times
downhearted times
magic times separated from
the time of melons gone from
evening meals in
front of pot bellied stoves and
red checkered table clothes
gone up in flames where we
used to love hard breathing fast against
the sound of hide & go seek voices
gone
the floors where we stomped all night to
drum boogies of duprees high
tight skirts of jelly shakes
fish tail fuchsia dark elderberry wine
"whose gonna hit on who tonight"
gone into saxophone obituaries like
a seventeen piece casket sailing to the tombs
we donated to the welfare office
in african masks & head rags
volunteers
cracking toes from tin tubs with
ashy legs from chicken shacks we came
covered in newspapers & blood
from babershop mirrors
and beauty parlor smoke
we came like stripes from the sun in
defense of our numb stomachs
our out flung arms
withered hands
swelling feet
like stilts
we came to the rhythm of
embalming fluid
turned down
turned around.
turned back
we came
& came & came
but there was no help coming

on blue monday
box car tuesday
step sitting wednesday
pawn shop thursday
liquor store friday
big lip saturday or
swollen jaw sunday
nothing
but the merciful revelation of our roped
ankles & sculpted profiles
understanding these disjointed faces &
nail covered bodies burning
and stinging with life force of
a powerful ju ju
insideout
deuce by deuce
who owns the grey green roach infested
funk holes we pee pee on
who owns the handkerchiefs fanning
our doo doo butt riffs
who owns the jook joints we buy morphine in
who owns our hepatitis souls we
bend needles for
who owns the black bitch amazons &
their put on wigs
who owns those rejection slips computing
from a blackman's balls
who owns the tear drops on our fathermothers bed
who owns the back yards where
the old people rest
who owns these blue interior orange mornings on
fire escapes and wooden carved doors
this terror in our throats
who owns our sufferings if not our own
torn bodies the tremor & the quiver in
our left over bowels
who but we know the size
and the structure of
this patch work quilt



I WOULD LIKE TO BE SERENE

I would like to be serene
to know pleasure & worship a sniper
be elastic with revenge
melancholy but deathless
I would like to know more than just fish smells &
part time love
I'm a woman
I eat food
I drink water
I confess my feelings
I cry
I up my dress & down my pants
part my thighs & fuck
I know relief
I'm on relief
It's good but he's gone
he's gone
he's gone
he's gone

WATCH OUT

Watch out for the woman
whose body is bloated with tears
watch out for this woman
whose brain reacts like foam from
the inflamed bowels of a whale
bitter
that bitter bitter woman
whose eyes have become the guardian
of men's fly's
her tongue working out like a machete
hacking up a taxi driver in kumasi
his pride blood in her mouth
the fatty tissues of her existence pain
his pain our pain
Watch out for the walrus face pain eater
with flesh under her fingernails
for this woman looking elephantiasis
looking woman is dying of neglect
Watch out for the neglected

TO THE ARTIST WHO JUST HAPPENS
TO BE BLACK

Listen

why is your granddaddy's chopped up penis the
magic mallets of truth you hide from
your grandmama's vagina torn by mangy dogs
her hemorrhaging womb the blood mouth of
the blues you deny

Listen to us our own

You are artist so called by vultures who
would hark white pussy on the slimy tongues of
swines selling it to us as a meat called freedom
these are the same vultures who eat holes
through hot shit just to suck scabs off a
junkies ass & call it jazz rock

and you my brother
my sister
my strength
my power
my god of vision
why do you reject us
twin of blackness oppressed by the same oppresser
whom in unity we must kill
why
oh why are you forsaking us

LATE ON TOMORROW

Late on tomorrow in my love softness
under the thrill of fallopian tubes
between drinkers
immune to fallen faces
on my lap i will
set fire to this seat of experience
above contortionated prisons where
we kill at each other in
slow time no time
look out
here come my stubborn whimpers
on yesterdays deformation
through my red light district head
beat of a lovers nod
unflamed
wind rain snow
everything gone
my waiting arch
under arm mole
the bluefoot imitation of life
torso
torso i have pointed myself out
below this back bone of knives
tip of fingers
rust of elbows
again picks shovels pipes of workers
again in the gut milk of my plant
snake eyes
church uniforms and seven star visions of
child molesters
emblems to the moon
barges
old time queens of new orleans
torch shadows
crusted heels
masses pearls and women
on the last X smiling
cactus fire
at four in the morning of our repression

A BLUES

Give me some star beer and a bottle of gin
cause forty heads have rolled and
I'm celebrating the end

Blues drying in my eyes like salt

I'm talkin to the shaven head beauties
wrapped in orange and black
black and orange funeral wrapped sisters lookin
just like bessie
those bessie smith lookin women in
the ashanti tribe

Let me speak with the ancestor of this clan

Empress baby sister
no we didn't try to understand you so
chances are we'll never understand them

trouble trouble trouble everywhere

I'm on my way
going to a festival
a festival where the umbrella gods will
shade my tongue with an oath so powerful
I could become the link to paradise
but who would mock my breath
who would steal my soul who
would tell the people what
the blues is really without my being dead

Hot pepper on my flesh

Give me some star beer and a bottle of gin cause
more heads are gonna roll and i
wanna celebrate the end

ILLUSIONS OF VISIONS

Preaching from the bigness of his skull
bowing to flowers between butts
during the masquerade of our chained feet
this blistered mouth of a midget popping to
the arrogance of applauding cocks
(they laughed at his fist & drank to the spit of
his flight)

only he knew falsification sources of his pitch
as we watched each others wounds bleeding into
sounds of flesh

Should we appeal to the gentleness of their
faces from the beans of our sorrow
to the air in their eyes

this firing squad kissed by revolutionaries?
The music scalding the sun had refused his body
refused her body
clowns to each others bodies
bandaged in a wheel of imitation
they cried & sang
to the boils on their knees

She a woman only among rocks with
arms like thigh wings
her dress between her gums
on wrinkled lips
next to darkness scream
a poot through the ear
next to wars of leaning bones
in the presence of rape
cream shyly against the stance of
a buck tooth
oh oh oh

Our skins would not close during falls of
trapeze artists
when we were told
the music is a balcony of blood a circle of smoke
forget the music and accept the wisdom of asses
this man this woman this soul this
fire hose of distortion
whom the music had refused to enter
a dog barked and independence was declared
Love from the heart of a dollar bill

They made us hum until we became demons praying
to flames under our spoons killing how we grieve
because of emptiness
because the hand clasp was not the experience
was not the realness of being
no no no
was not the music
the substance of loneliness
the georgia grind or
the resting buttocks of old age

And at night full of cemetary feelings of
gravel and tears and dirty words
a people sentenced to silence among coffins
empty empty empty
knows and releases the fat back odors of madness
onto the dark glasses of sorrow
disguised as a last respect



SHOOTING STAR

Crying against the money
of dead bodies
my shoulders ripped by puppets coming
at me like bats as i strum a guitar with
my lash and wait near the wall of suspicion

Shooting star from a sacred people
menace to sorrow
speaking the language of bitter dwarfs i
saluted the mustache madonnas and
danced with mirrors of myself

waving to the crowds with
a hole through my hand
a skull on my hip
your coffin on my head
a rug on my back
my torn flesh an offering
my bent neck crying

me hanging on a log
the smell of my clitoris on their faces as
they try clubbing death with
the breakage of my tits

KNOW YOURSELF

When i met your ass in the air amplified
gold and black checkered inflammation
I knew that many thin legs outside of
begging
were exploited by your swollen hemmorrhoids
choir boy
are we being conditioned to your infection?
pass me by tomorrow in this cycle of heads
outcry
who are we to these televised flare bottomed
rivals of death ?
better know yourself in the ball of their
hands
economic inmates of sorrow

HERE I AM

Here I am
dispossessed moro
an incarcerated episode of gloom they say
and what is ate the bottom of this
compulsion in distress
is it really the revenue of my tin cup
that contaminates
or the constant duplication of rotating marble
this spectacle of eyes re-entering sockets
without matter
without help from anyone
I mean in the crust of this struggle of
my enlargement
god will try to intervene
& i will be aroused to shout from
the revenge of my hygenic membranes
demanding no filth
no pus
no doo nasty conception in
no immaculate form or
disguise

THE RISING

Horns protruded from the
holes of a skeleton
gripping my bed as I
closed my eyes to the men
falling naked from heaven
my teeth waxed with candles
the stars burning my lips
a metronome conducting
orchestras of bone people
parades
skeletons fighting skeletons
against my body sweet among skulls
I ran through ribs & my
legs were sawed off I
spat between rotted out seed pits &
my own seeds became knots on my forehead
I shot without looking & the moon
stuck out its tongue as I sucked
peyote & knelt for the wedding between
fire & the fluid of my sorrow
in combat with myself
a refugee without feet
a virgin in a cathedral of hanging flesh
I the new flag to a revolution
the failure of death
blackly tuning the sun for the reign of
the rising sphinx

AFRICAN NIGHT SUITE

Africa

take my hands from the newspaper shacks of
rotten existence and let my cataracts
flow into the red clay of your loyalty

keep me in the mud of your belly
fed from the forest of your resistance
far from these mercenaries of illusion

I tell you i have to
live with my throat open to
the buzzards

my neck of four lines
my nose of gold studs
my lip ring flashing signals
to the moon against mount kenya
greeting myself

welcome

perdido of the mambo sun

afro star

afro light

afro suite of crickets in

the african blues tribe

greetings

from myself

hated by lies

by deceptions

by distortions

by the devastating experience of

disaster and the truth of our children

adjusted without ears

without arms

without the miracle of a face

No

I will not weep over slavery

or die inside wrinkled fleshes of shame

with feathers in my womb

in my love

I have surrendered my shadow of sorrow
and i sit next to the fetish woman heart to heart
eating the dead man's explosives

our bodies together

flying

raging

avenging

at the moment of invasion

transcending

All of these things speak from me to africa

In cape coast

in kumasi

in Ibadan

oyo oyo

I am a ife woman

biriwa fish woman of the sea

night queen of night cities in nights

I remember

hashish nights of murmuring glands

rainy nights in tunisia

in front of the club tangerine

the house

the man

the night eggs sticky in congo bongo beep moods of
devotion

carving up the dues nights when

we were sperms in a memorial of things

a homage to yokes of what we were & the nudeness

of what we wanted to be

and the river knew

the ocean knew

the white foam of madness knew

& before we recaptured life

with the unity of our breasts

when at night our tears flooded streets

we knew

our condition and

the weapon of our approach

No
we didn't beg to the suffering of
their butts
like strange horses
for a coin
for crumbs
for god
for the deceased eyes of a miscarriage
we didn't present the
sadness of our knees and
the callouses upon our lips
to such wide leg madness as their's
against our ovaries
against the personality of our blood and
the dance of shrunken skulls deaf
to our navels
our fists
our dedications
our chest pulsing against
the bayonets of their existence
in that hour of our fingers
our giant fingers
in that hour of attack
we were spitting on their knives their guns
their crosses on their dead bodies
a portrait of spit on blood

Listen
from the lungs of a shark
comes the gauntness of our agony

the miracle of erections

who were the peasants
where are the bones

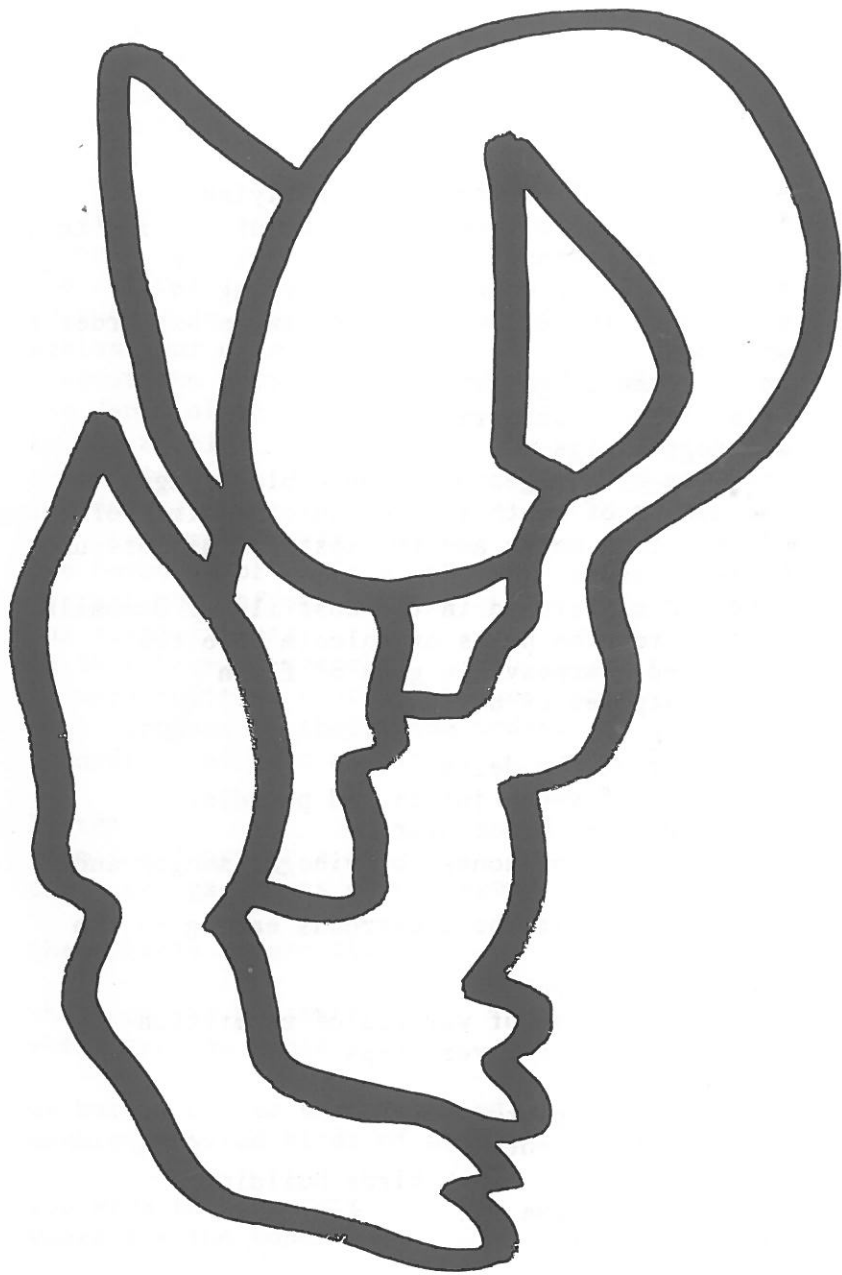
my hat is off to the two toned
double breasted birds of no hesitation

who were the peasants
where are the bones

my hat is off to the two toned
double breasted birds of no hesitation

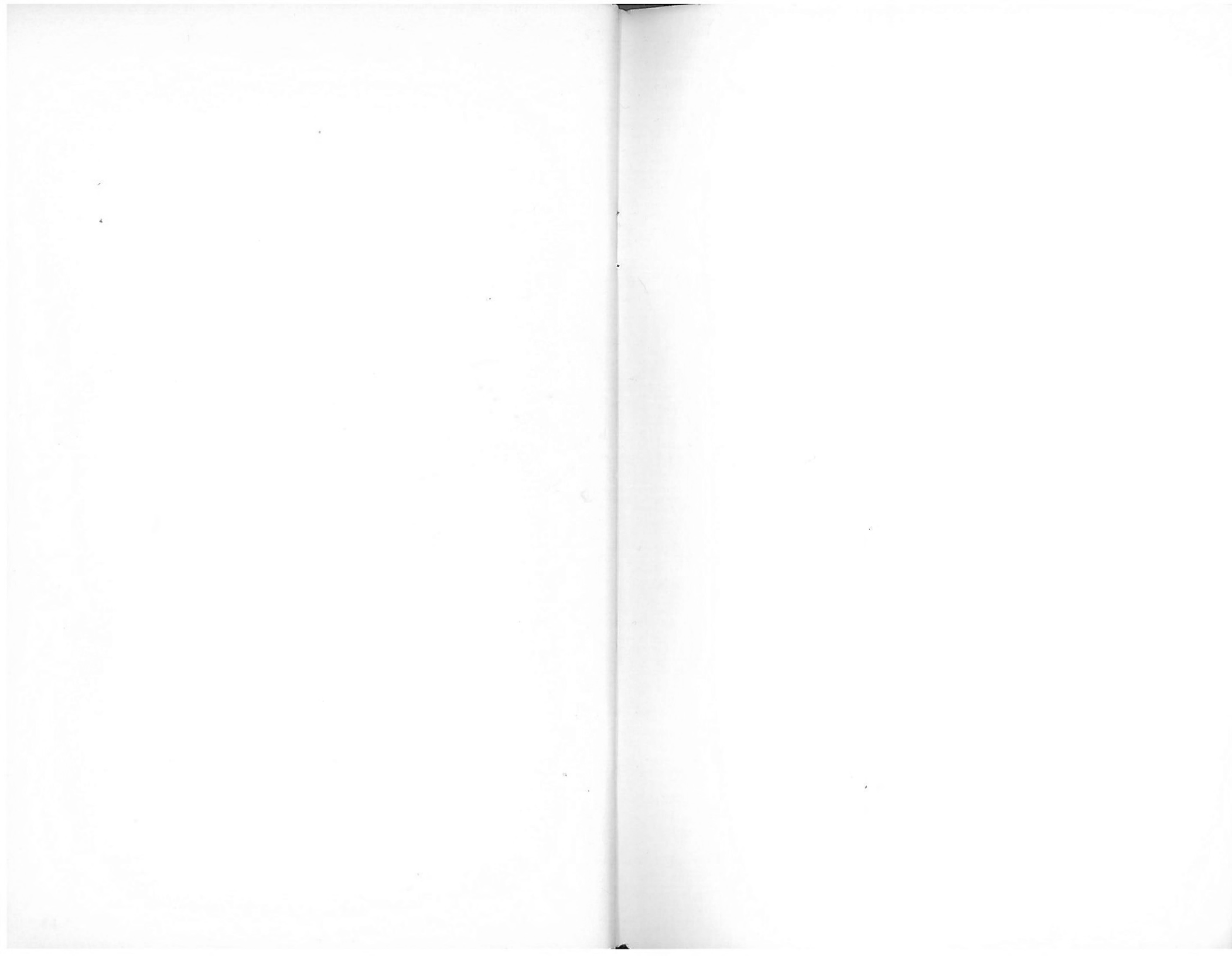
SOLO

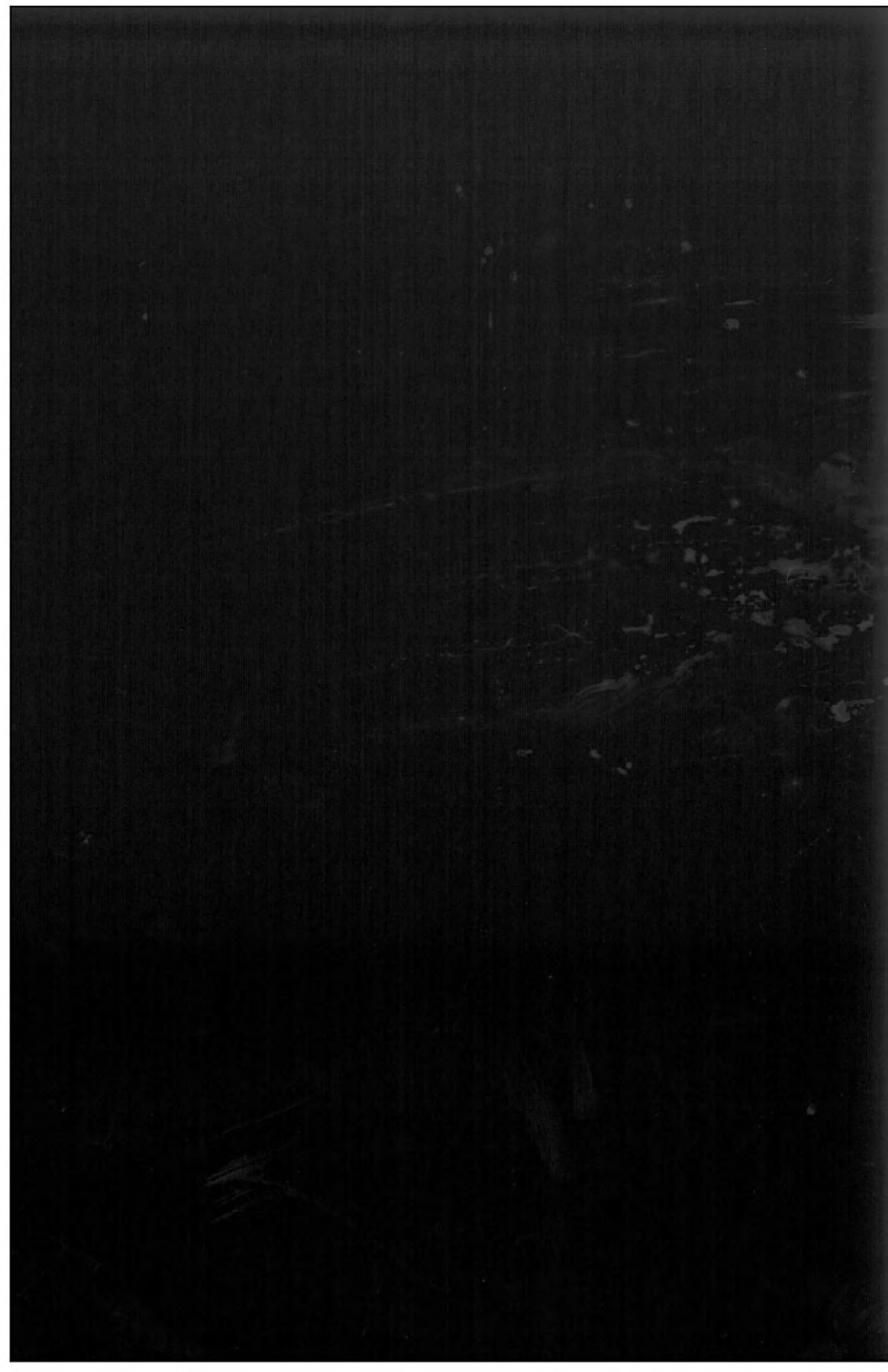
A solo full of quivering flesh flying
like black crows from the bottom of nothing to
the top of nowhere in a hall of suicide
suicide hall of consciousness trying to
suicide us in yellow flames of awareness order &
whiteness
in the name of god and leprosy
wild pimps of desperation
wet dogs & pigs
frighten by the genius of pure black rage
the demise of death and the suicide birth of Shango
of Ogun iron magic and the mistress of moisture
Corina Corina
love goddess arched in the nostrils of Damballa
rising from the holes of Malcolm into the
massacred sharpesville gods of flesh
spirit nipples of unity
the music
protector of the delta
collector of sweet juices and paradise
sperm brother blood sister
Oshun goddess of honey hot vinegar mangos and
castor oil
queen of fire at the crossroads eating in the
belly of Legba
the honk man honk
god of sound god of war god of repetition
kidney tears and liver drops
the word
holder of the past
creator of the future
and lover to the black birds building a
new world supreme
Welcome



I FORGOT TO REMEMBER

And one night in my
tennis shoe smell
I was no longer influenced by
invisible crimes
no longer available to erotic dreams &
revelations of emaciated flesh
I was desolate to memory
not yet born to
the state of myself inside the
whiff of a smell intimate to feelings i
no longer contradict
no longer desert
no longer need to forget to remember to
recognize
heart beat





Jayne Cortez

Author of Pissstained Stairs And The Monkey Man's Wares

Festivals And Funerals And Festivals And Funerals And Festivals