Her Phantom Happiness Lyrics
Dec. 9th, Pickman, 8pm

Her Phantom Happiness, text by Georgia Douglass Johnson

I. The Heart of a Woman
The heart of a woman goes forth with the dawn,
As a lone bird, soft winging, so restlessly on,
Afar o’er life’s turrets and vales does it roam
In the wake of those echoes the heart calls home.

The heart of a woman falls back with the night,
And enters some alien cage in its plight,
And tries to forget
it has dreamed of the stars
While it breaks, breaks, breaks on the sheltering bars.

II. Foredoom
Her life was dwarfed, and wed to blight,
Her very days were shades of night,
Her every dream was born entombed,
Her soul, a bud, — that never bloomed.

III. Quest
The phantom happiness I sought
   O’er every crag and moor;
I paused at every postern gate,
   And knocked at every door;

In vain I searched the land and sea,
   E’en to the inmost core,
The curtains of eternal night
   Descend — my search is o’er.
How Could I Know, text by Crystal Williams

How could I know?
What did I know?
What could I have said?

I do not know.

I cannot hold,
oh, you,
my heart implodes,
It cannot hold
I cannot hold
A black hole,
As if dead I cannot sleep

I dare not dream
I cannot dream
I can not hold,

Oh, you, you and we and you and we
What have we done?
Oh, Lord, I weep,
Oh, Lord, I weep, and do not sleep.
To Curse or Not to Curse, text: The Holy Bible

Genesis 8:21

... and the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake [...] neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.

Malachi 1: 2

If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the Lord of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessing; yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart.

perdue, text by Maram al-Masri

L'exode 1
Ils immigrent
sans bagages
sans visa
sans billets d'avion
d'agiter leur mains avec un mouchoir blanc
ou de promettre à leurs chers de revenir
sans valise
sans Brosse à dents ni pâte à raser
sans savon ni parfum.

Exodus 1
They immigrate
without luggage
without visas
without plane tickets
to wipe their hands with a white tissue
or to promise their return to their loved ones
without bags
without toothbrushes or razors
Without soap or perfume.

Ils immigrent

des fois avec des papiers officiels
qui disent leur nom
leur âge
leur lieu de naissance
leur lieu de résidence
et des fois sans
car ils ont été brûlés avec leurs murs
enterrés avec leur maison
noyés avec leurs bateaux

They immigrate
sometimes without official papers
that have their name
their age
their birthplace
their place of residence
and sometimes without
because they’ve been burned with their walls
buried with their homes
drowned with their boats
Ils immigrent

avec leur coeurs troués
Par les balles de la peur
leur peau abîmée
comme les feuilles des passeports mouillés

Ils immigrent

avec sur leur dos
leurs enfants
leurs vieillards
et leur soucis
Dans leur poche
la place laissée vide
par la clef de leur maison
perdue
*

L'exode 2
Les ombres
passent
comme des nuages
comme des âmes
comme des idées
comme la sueur de la fatigue ouvrière
comme les ombre fatiguées des immigrés
qui voient les corps passer
sans qu'elles les attrapent
Ils laissent
leurs empreintes
sur le visage de l'humanité
mémoires de vie

La terre.
Les herbes
L'eau
les rivières
les rochers
les montagnes.
les chansons et la poésie
même le ciment froid
de l'histoire
gardent

They immigrate

with their hearts pierced
by bullets of fear
their skin damaged
like the pages of their wet passports

They immigrate

carrying their children
their elderly
and their worries
on their back
In their pocket,
an empty place
from the (absent) key to their
lost home
*

Exodus 2
The shadows
pass
like clouds
like souls
like ideas
like the sweat of a tired working woman
like immigrants’ exhausted shadows
that see bodies pass by
without grasping them
They leave
their imprint
on the face of humanity
memories of life

The earth.
The grass
the water
the rivers
the rocks
the mountains.
songs and poetry
even the cold cement
of history
keeps
for ages
the discrete odor
of their hope.

In Between the Moon and Us, text by Enzo Silon Surin

I am no longer good at rememb’ring how long it has been since
I first held the notion of how your hand
shaping and bending a prism of light would look in my hand, as you twirled the
air and wrapp’ed around your hair like one orbiting a wound or erasing
fine lines of something broken or breaking.
Here on the cusp of a world teeming with gloom, youbloom
as if making a room for me,
as if to turn all my hurts into a prep for belonging.
I hope you do not mistake my musing for a rouse.
It’s just that the wrongs you right tell a story about us falling and the ground
catching us and we, getting back up, as if we have known the risk
tamp’ring with a universe in this way our entire lives,
as if ev’rything that is lovely about this twinkling might disappear &
as if this light between us is how one falls in love.

Sonnet LXXXI, text by Anthony R. Green

He hurts – my unrequited lover hurts
My heart myopic burns within my chest
His feelings win – my feelings he deserts
Destroys my interests – shatters all the rest
He still remains as beauty to my want
A want for something more – for something real
I yearn to stray from longing – elude taunt
To kneel before perfection that I feel
And even though I know he will not sway
I’ll follow him with wind and batt’ring ram
And though I know he’ll never walk my way
I’ll stay with him – for that is who I am
So hurt me unrequited lover – sting
To my strong thirst you do quench everything
Three Adinkra Miniatures for Violin & Soprano

I. Sankofa
II. Funtumfunefu Denkyemfunefu
III. Nkyinkyim

Shot Glass: Saint Marsha (Pay It No Mind), text by Elizabeth A. Baker

More than the Stonewall Riots
more than Andy Warhol less than resign’d to Gay Rights
higher ignorant insults from the streets
The esteem’d mayor of Christopher Street Saint Marsha Pay it no mind
Paid the price
clothes, coins, flow’rs
Off’rings to appease Neptune clothes, coins flow’rs
Off’rings for Father’s forgiveness
Candles in synagogues, churches of ev’ry denomination
Prostrate on the floor she PRAYED for us
Her wishes for our happy lives, for our freedom
Floating as smoke ablaze as the flames of her candles

More than the Stonewall Riots
more than Andy Warhol more than a starving queen on the street in need of a dollar
she pray’d for us,
she made off’rings for us
she gave us her all and when we fell to that crippling disease
That Death Sentence
Wrapp’d up in Four Letters
she embrac’d us when others
Abandon’d us out of fear

Street Saint Marsha Pay it no mind
Paid the price

I can see him in the water,
clothes, coins, flow’rs
Salvation lingering under darken’d waves
Deliver us from this perpetual state of poverty, misery, endur’d bigotry
  clothes, coins, flow’rs
Deliver us from this perpetual state heartache, lies, hunger,
Deliver us from this perpetual state hopelessness, sex, for survival
  clothes, coins, flow’rs
Deliver us from this perpetual state of fear that we won’t see tomorrow’s sunrise

Ah! Heal us from disease that wastes our bodies and steals our joy for life

More than the Stonewall Riots
more than Andy Warhol she who would feed the hungry queens
she who would give her last dollar, her last bag of chips, her last piece of candy
She who told us to “STAND STRAIGHT, AND HOLD YOUR HEAD HIGH”

Saint Marsha Pay it no mind
Paid the price
  clothes, coins, flow’rs

Aims for those on the other side whose Visages slowly ripply
Rip, rip, glisten and fade into Waves
Made by clothes, coins, flow’rs
consum’d by the waves
a Solemn mystery of hate
a Crime unsolved due to injustice, Prejudice, Inequity, Discrimination
and now Divine and now Divine ashes are mix’d with clothes, coins, flow’rs

Martyr Marsha Pay her no mind
Paid the price for living Her truth
  Pav’d the way for us to Stand straight Head high
We’re FREE
and now we remember to LIVE for Marsha.
... all that is good … , text by Phillis Wheatley, Harriet Jacobs, Sojourner Truth

I. Phillis Wheatley, 11 March 1774, Letter to Reverend Samson Occum

.... for in every human Breast, [there is] implanted a Principle, which we call Love of Freedom; it is impatient of Oppression, and pants for Deliverance; and ... I will assert, that the same Principle lives in us.

How well the Cry for Liberty, and the reverse Disposition for the exercise of oppressive Power over others agree, – I humbly think it does not require the Penetration of a Philosopher to determine.


Do not say the [former] slaves take no interest in each other. Like other people, some of them are designedly selfish, some are ignorantly selfish. With the light and instruction you give them, you will see this selfishness disappear. Trust them, make them free, and give them the responsibility of caring for themselves, and they will soon learn to help each other. Some of them have been so degraded by slavery that they do not know the usages of civilized life: they know little else than the handle of the hoe, the plough, the cotton pad, and the overseer’s lash. Have patience with them. You have helped to make them what they are; teach them civilization. You owe it to them, and you will find them as apt to learn as any other people that come to you stupid from oppression.

III. Sojourner Truth, New Year’s Day “Letter” (greeting) published in the newspaper The Chicago Inter Ocean, 26 December 1880

We talk of a beginning, but there is no beginning but the beginning of a wrong. All that has a beginning will have an ending[, ... ] and all that is good is without end.