

Stitched poems
v.le givens
ancestral reflections.

Dear reader,

This here excerpted text fragments a series of flash fiction story poems on impressions of my people and their material culture.

Five years ago I found a quilt hand sewn by the palms of my great grandmother and aunt. And from that quilt received dreams mixed with day time wonderings on the dead and how their life informs the living.

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This time about the recollections
recalling my Mother

My mother steeped hair in her
tea. My mother boiled finger nails
in her rice. Momma scalped her
head annually

My mother
My momma
My mom

hid dolls in her closet the ones
she'd find on the playground
forgotten by forgetful children

Mother ate leeches every
new moon

My momma
My mommy
My mom.

Mother boiled unborn babies for breakfast 'nd called them poached eggs. Momma baked butterfly wings in her bread. Mother mixed mucus in her oatmeal to line the lining of her stomach. Mother kept garlic in the window.

Momma stored a plat of hair from great great great great grandmother in a block of ice in the cellar. My mother keeps the cellar very cold 'nd no one was allowed to enter

Momma used berries from
the garden in the graveyard
as blush across her cheeks
'nd kept the seeds to
exfoliate

My mother loved house
flies but despised spiders
hiding in the corners quiet
distant 'nd dangled

Mother sprinkled flour tween
her bed sheets
Mother polished her teeth with
a rabbits foot. Mommy
polished her teeth with a foot

My momma collected
rain water in March – June
'nd December

Mother candle gazed
before bed said it
strengthened her eyes to
seeing even while closed,
Momma didn't say much.

My momma never
had a period, period.

My mother met the other
mothers by the river twice a
year to pray for the unrested
soles it is there that they'd
wash each others hair hands
'nd feet

Momma couldn't swim but
insisted on teaching me by
throwing me in the salt of the
Atlantic.

She 'nd I don't speak of such
teachings
It's best that way

My mother slept so deep 'nd snored so hard that her
bed rattled the room

My mother had a boyfriend

My mother had a girlfriend too

My mother kept several weapons throughout
the house in the event the dead began to rise

Momma was a believer in much most refused to
believe..

Momma?

(Wake)

Inside the quilts lived stitched lines and lives of refashioned things, fragmented parts made whole pieces of what was into something new. Treacherous cotton picked and hummed over with prayers and wishes that when the bulb returned it'd be less of an unpleasant thing. That through some magic of invention and bulk of a machine the plants parts would spin until spun into another. Some bulbs made pillow cases catching dreams of the resting, tears of the weeping, drool from those recuperating from exhaustion. Some bulbs made braziers to hold the changing forms of women who mended and managed and worried and laughed and fed and baked and gathered stones by the river for the dead.

Some of the bunches of blooming white blossoms formed the soles of socks of men that'd seen the darkness of night nights and weeping willows, swaying unforgiving in the wind, and if by some miracle they had survived they'd be warmed by brightness of day light, near blue rivers glittering in gold shine from the glowing hole in the sky. A hole much like the butt of the needle that fashioned the patches and parts together.

The finest bundles made lace linings for gowns and fancy napkins for fancy dinners and fancy curtains for the window. The very cotton, that held so many hostage to the field, would somehow be made new, into a something other, into a something of pleasantness. Despite the hard labor and tilling toiling, low back and hurried hands. These things amongst others were in the quilts, suspended and held frozen like, kept, passed on and over.

Nd' he say

Many find it hard to believe that there exists a world within this one, places in places placed to keep things in place. The most of many who can't perceive to believe it are the very ones who cling to it the most. It's the none believers the ones who pretend to disbelieve the ones who pretend to ignore what they see. The ones who pretend to ignore what they hear. The ones who pretend to ignore the felt feelings of those who call out for recognition and reconciliation from the other side, them the ones we must keep an eye on. Cause they most likely to snap, from repression and depression, living life in lie.

You see the under world aint really all that far from here. It not too deep. Don't have to go digging 'nd prying in places neath the soil It truly here. A majestic veiled place in pure sight of those who keep they eyes open But most folk round here. Most folk. Keep they eyes sewed shut.

And don't know that they been closed off to what ache to reach 'nd speak

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Nothing ever dies. No, nothing ever dies Lord, just

reconfigures itself, rearranges itself into a something other. Transformed. the body. The body. The body in box in the ground, is a gift giving back, to, from whence it all has come that it may return, transformed and renewed.

'nd we are grateful 'nd saddened only because we mourn, 'nd must so that this loved ones soul travel safely through life's eternal bed sheet stretched across the ether. The black man is a beautiful thing.

We shall save a plate for you brother father son.

From 'nd to the earth that holds us From 'nd to the
wind that listens

To the waters that cleanse

'nd all elements of life, one from another. 'nd so it is

Who are the Ancestors

They be the salt of the earth/Traverse dimensions folded onto itself/They are the reason you cant recall, what had you leave the room in the first place/They jolt you out of your sleep and/Caress you back into the slumber./Them/They/Those ones whose/Presence shadows this dimension. The ones buried in the grave rotting at the stem/They ain't dead, jus't living another sort of way. /They who feed and nourish the root of ancient trees/The ones sprinkling whispers, embedded secrets on the tongue./Stirring static ants in the TV, in the radio box waves of jitter jatter Twisted tongue/and when they speak./No one seems to listen/But all can hear them/And if they aren't heard then they are surely felt/And if they aren't felt then they are surely seen/Seen sitting/On the sill, sitting at the seal/And yet and still/Waiting to be acknowledged /They wait/In patience /Patiently/Awaiting to be acknowledged for. /The recognition of them /Will save us all /Help us all in the recollection of what so often / Goes forgotten/Forget , forgot, recall./They are the

ones in quiet corners/The shadows/who are they/Them the ones coursing through/The veins /DNA /Mutter mutter/Light foot upon the door/Steps and who are they/Lies riddles in truth/Mystic mystery /Gothic legends /The what that was the when/Stars and fresh rain/Pine needle and the black cat bone /Rocking chair, clothes line /Paper clip chicken feather /Dry grass basket /Horn bill of the carcass/living sacrifice /the dead/They libation liquid /Palm oil upon hand /They be the salt of the earth /And crystals of the deep/They aint dead, just living in a different kind of way/They be yo people. /And mine/From ancient times/The way back when /Before the after ginning/The middle place lingering /And rightfully so /For they have a something for us. /Something to teach and tell us /And if we cant hear them /Then we shall surely see them /And if we can see them we shall/Surely feel them /And if they cant be felt / And if they cant be seen /And if they cant be heard /Then who is truly dead. /Cause they are speaking /They are moving /They are vis-i-bi-ly seen /Raise rise from being dead. /Awaken your inner senses for /They have a something for the each of us. / and they will find a way to get our attention /A way to make their presence known.

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