

down the stair
unawares was underwriting
everything
the numbers
and the fix
that little spot
Algeria
on Sunset
... nothingness
I got us locked in
and was sort of asked
to leave
Nicely hammered very true
I stayed in my suit

and stood in the street
silent as a star fallen
dead of exposure

Suspended Sentence

Have we addressed my Scottish
accent in the middle of Baltimore?
That's nicely played,
fast-forward to the flashback
that wad of cash
drawn right on the stencil
genuine teenage
lust plus Peter
Hujar the poem floats past
us while I feign bitterness
and weight. Have you not heard
of induction? Forging
new values with the public
who seem to know it's all love
and not theory, all actual
withdrawal of soldiers bodies
and I, the song (a brise marine)
You'll see the earth smoke
I'll make
no noise
I'm a poet living
upstate
and working as a barber
I rework old railway songs
in a crooked nook
sweeping together

sworn paths
I drink Patrón
for the prettiest little
morning-after bottles
pencil in the track money
memorized per month
containment handed down
in part
from my betters
and mainly well
my old man

THRONES

For Phillis Wheatley: A book of verse uncovered in cornerstones of a Moorish castle, purple and gold, depicting souls in various stages of release, the pitch, anger and arc of the poems an unrhymed mirror to the long Atlantic.

For Jayne Cortez: An intertribal grand entry of poets in cedar bark jackets, split skirts and whalebones pinning them closed, a voice in praise and suspension of the drum.

For Amiri Baraka: The Pisan Cantos decoder ring dipped in black hills gold slipped onto the finger of Donyale Luna who is Cleopatra reborn sleeping soundly in bed.

For Bob Kaufman: A clamp for the mind, docking in a Persian house of ill repute, a striped gabardine diary and the American prison system picked open with an amethyst knife.

For Henry Dumas: A window open on the fog of New York, a studio with desk lamp and a shadow of his writing self pointing back at certain habits, taking off his coat to sit, spilling a little coffee, with all of eternity waiting enthralled.

For Bob Thompson: An all expense paid trip back to Rome on a riverboat tied with roses, its ballroom filled with golden ghouls and hugely debutant postures collapsed, the walls are wet with organ music.

For Alice Coltrane: A custom isolation booth the exact size of Stravinskys last silhouette, he stares out, he taps from behind the green glass.

For Stephen Jonas: Your favorite Eric Dolphy faded to a room of golden tasseled light, a couch of friends' faces smeared in a gleaming silver crown.