

# Jean-Claude's toilet seat

I've seen  
A lot  
Of shit in my day

Especially at night  
When he thinks no one  
Can see him take a dump

But the aroma  
Fouls the atmosphere for weeks  
Air freshener does not help

The candles work  
To cleanse the air but  
He can't stand the light

Sometimes he squats on me  
Just to pass gas, that is how  
He contemplates his future moves

Most thrones are plastic  
I am carved ivory tusks  
From the Congo

I know the true him  
He takes me everywhere  
I have my own encasement

And always travel first class  
I am better than a pet  
More reliable than a gun

If it is true, you are what you eat  
It is even truer, you have been  
What you shit

# my father is dead. again.

(for my father-friend tom dent)

1.

i was thousands of miles away  
when tom's tree fell

the weight of missing him  
answers the age-old question

because  
his aftershock's tremble

reverberates within  
the chamber of my skull

at all  
the oddest moments

like discovering a special person  
within the skin of a child of mine

and discerning at the same time  
a lady i used to love

a lady whose love  
shaped me

there are periods  
when our ability to perceive

presence and potential  
is predicated

on having been groomed  
by those who have gone before

on having been shown  
how to see beyond

what is now  
what is known, how

to appreciate the shape  
of things to come

all this prescience a product  
of learning the living wisdom

some come from a brusque old man  
whose gruffness was so tender

so touching  
in its honest intimacy

as he suggested that  
there was something beyond

what ever was  
and is, and yes, even will be

there is always  
something more

something better  
to be/come

2.

english words were never meant  
to adequately articulate  
the anguish in our mouths, our hearts  
when we lose the stretching part  
of our selves - the stairs we climb  
to see further, to descend deeper  
as we look out and over  
past the limits of horizon line

our vision is improved when we stand  
on the shoulders of elders  
whose height hoists us higher  
than we could ever grow  
if we remained flat-footed  
married to the ground

the view from these human  
balconies enables us to eye  
not just near and far  
but also back and down  
into the wells  
of our own personalities

if we are fortunate  
we have fathers  
who help us  
clearly see  
depths  
as well as distances

**3.**  
perhaps a moan  
is the most profound  
sound one can make  
when a father is gone

when my first father died  
i cried publicly  
this death time my tears  
for tom are silent  
words on paper

the two times  
a man is most  
alone  
are when  
he loses  
a father and when he  
loses his own  
life - his  
beginning his end

**4.**

in the new orleans  
that tom knew  
old griots die singing  
they do not go silently  
into some lonely night

in his new orleans  
we do not kill our fathers  
to prove that we have arrived

but rather we learn  
from them that we can  
crack open the kernel  
of our own becoming  
only by completing  
the final maneuver  
of life's ultimate passage rite

the step of accepting the torch  
and making of ourselves a light

volunteering  
to lift the father spirit  
to shoulder the responsibility  
of becoming beacon  
for those newly born  
and those yet to come

in our new orleans we do not stop  
at simply burying aged bodies  
we also dance forward  
from funeral line  
and accept the awesome  
task of filling father shoes

if i really come from  
a house of the rising sun,  
if i really believe  
in resurrection  
if i am really  
my father's son  
then i must be reborn

be his life  
after life

5.  
in earth ways  
my father is dead. again.

but yet again  
he lives

the older i become  
the more people i contain

another of my fathers  
is dead

long live  
my father

long live my father  
in me

long live  
my many fathers

long live  
long live

all the fathers  
i am

and all the fathers  
i will ever be

# STILL RUNNING

(meditations on integration)

1.

escaping plantations is not  
simple  
simply  
a matter of running  
away / for  
to getaway successfully

you must not only run  
from  
but establish yourself  
in

the place  
to which  
you run

somehow

create a home  
create community  
some how

shape space  
transform  
the alien air  
of here & now  
where ever  
you are

into the welcoming  
embrace  
of home

2.

now that the big house  
is on fire  
and none of the world  
is offering water

the progeny  
of our former masters  
hang out welcome signs  
and proclaim  
we are all the same

we can even sleep  
in their beds with them  
if our amnesia is deep enough

the price of admission:  
leave your soul at the door, preferably  
outside, not even on the porch  
but in the yard  
the back  
yard

now pledge  
allegiance  
to this system  
your history does not  
matter

that the jails are full  
of us  
does not matter

that our illnesses  
are at record levels  
does not matter

that we own less  
have less wealth  
than ten years after  
slavery  
does not matter

if we forget  
who we were  
who we are  
does not matter

**3.**  
when we think  
the other  
is our problem

we have become  
our own problem

after all  
aren't we all  
wayfaring pilgrims  
just passing thru

a strange  
land, all of us  
in need  
of a helping  
hand?

4.

regardless

of what those who own  
to live  
tell you

you can only really own  
whatever you brought  
into this world

whatever you brought with  
you is all that you can  
take when you leave

5.

you can not escape  
the plantation

if you are carrying  
their architecture

in your head  
in your heart

6.

some of us  
run

away

some of us  
run

towards

until we die  
all of us

are  
running

7.  
zig zag  
brother

reverse field  
stutter step  
skip, hop, & jump

zig zag  
sister

they'll catch us  
if we stand still

8.  
our people  
are our hills  
—amilcar cabral

I think we should live  
up in the hills  
—burning spear

9.

no rest for the weary

believe

I'll run

on and see

what tomorrow brings

# DANCING INTO THE DARK

#1

will there be music  
will we sing  
will a beat be kept  
will rose petals droop & then fall  
will fragrance fade  
what  
will be the last sound heard

a note  
a noise  
some song's fragment  
the terrible finality of sudden silence

the last breath  
the expiring light  
a memory  
a familiar  
the softness of starlight  
the whisper of river wave washing ashore  
or what  
ever was the sonic disturbing us  
in the milli-moment before we were born

#2

will our out going be our fingerprints  
distinctive in detail for each of us  
a mark behind after the deed is done  
the sign of our touch

or will farewell simply shudder  
flicker  
disintegrate slowly  
eventually gone as if we never were  
here or there, thinking and doing  
upon departure  
will there even be  
enough time  
to realize  
we are gone

some of us need the comfort  
of believing that there is something  
else other than what we are  
something before and beyond  
what we are, something other  
than what we are

why is not existence enough  
the blessing is to be  
the eventually is not to be

time is an efficient cosmic cleaner  
removing our breath, our enterprise  
our art, our everything, removing  
us from everything

like when I stare into space  
and realize the stars  
do not need to be seen by me  
they shine without  
my eyes fascinated, fastened  
upon them

# FREEDOM—A Haitian Rant

After we ran our oppressors into the sea  
You have since never tired trying to run us into the ground

After the earth opened its jaws to swallow us  
Your assistance rushed in to bury us

You say we cannot govern, our government is corrupt  
Who kidnapped Aristide, the president we elected, a priest  
who made our world work and not simply prayed for miracles,  
in fact, we elected him twice, and twice you took your guns and  
made him leave and would not let us vote for anything he represented—  
our government is not corrupt, corrupt is the government you put in  
our president's place, our government is in exile

You swear we are not capable of caring for ourselves, perhaps  
We are too busy servicing your sex tourists, making your mickey mouse  
clothes, and sewing your balls you love to play with

You say everyone envies your freedom  
Yet it was our soldiers who saved George Washington's ass  
in Savannah when you were fighting for your freedom but  
you never give us credit for helping to create your freedom  
and worse yet when you got your precious freedom you did not  
give freedom to all your citizens—we in Haiti were the first truly  
free country in all of the Americas, everyone was declared free  
in our new republic, everyone red, black, white, yellow or brown—  
no one was a slave in free Haiti, it took you almost a century  
to free your enslaved people, yes not until 1865  
did you even halfway declare all your male citizens as Haiti  
was free on day one of our birth (tell me I am wrong  
but I believe you did not let women vote until 1920)  
no one who knows our history envies your 2/5 free history

You say we are poor but when will you give us back the money you sent marines to steal from us in 1915 when you invaded us and took over our banks, no matter how long a thief keeps what he stole, no matter how many generations gone, he is still a thief, which is why

one of your presidents, the paedophile Jefferson who took up with a thirteen-year-old, famously said:  
when I think that god is just, I tremble  
for the fate of my country

When we think that god is just, we just smile and pray the day of reckoning will soon come, beautiful as a Jacmel sunrise

We are Haitian, we love freedom  
who are you and what do you love?