

## **Breathing in the Future**

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## The Rocket's Red Glare

Bob and Doug rocket off on the SpaceX,  
T-minus 3:30.  
Shot not fired,  
going not once but twice,  
after hours  
of not going anywhere.  
Departure delayed.  
The whole world watching.  
Badass white woman astronaut crying  
tears of envy  
for breaths not taken  
in vacuum. In space, time extends life  
into eternity, human becoming vehicle becoming  
light, approaching futurity.  
Where even are they? Gods.

Rocket breathes oxygen in space  
while humans—Tony, Breonna, George—  
breathe their last on the pave.  
T-minus 38, T-minus 26, T-minus 42 years.  
Shots fired  
not just once or twice, but twenty times,  
months before 8 minutes and 46 seconds  
of not going anywhere.  
Injustice in delay.  
The whole world watching.  
Badass Black women crying  
tears in community  
for breaths not taken  
in air. In the protests ensuing, the rocket's red glare  
blasts off Black Lives Matter into the utopic futurity  
of right now.  
Who even are they? Gods.

State edifices collapse,  
crumble, returning to earth,  
just as Dragon returns to Earth:  
full of ease, grace, just  
detach,  
let it go.

Rockets jet off the earth,  
aflight. Here I come:  
God, an American, a modicum,  
progress achieved.  
Heroes leave this world behind.

## Abolition Repetition

Abolition is a repetition  
of contradictions. From slavery  
to segregation to policing, the opposition  
between Black resistance and Black oppression  
ever-present, ever-evolving.

Imprisoned,  
cotton-picked of old  
now radically transmuted  
into victorious secretly pink  
girlshorts—a scream,  
'SLEEP IN LATE'  
branded on rear. Two whole  
cents for waging labor hourly,  
blurring the lines  
between capitalism and slavery,  
skipping feudalism entirely,  
problematizing linearity  
in our theories of history.

'OOO: Objects, yes, Latourian  
objects *ACT!*  
Subjective objects objectify,  
agentic objects modify,  
up-end, transform,  
objects enact radical agency...  
etcetera, etcetera.'  
(Subtext: 'Black bodies do not.')

Black oppression is a repetition  
of iron chains  
becoming iron bars  
becoming iron laws  
becoming iron wares,  
Black oppression gone  
viral, gaseous, pervasive, in the air  
we breathe—or can't.

Five years behind steel bars  
for the wrong school district,  
Tanya McDowell.  
Eight steel bullets in a body  
because how dare you,  
Breonna Taylor.

'Form is content!' 'Techniques matter!'  
(Subtext: 'Black bodies are not; Black bodies do not.')

Foucauldian, Adornian post-isms fly  
in the face of Black lived experience  
and the constancy of white supremacy.  
From metal to vapor,  
to mediation from immediacy—  
or so goes the fantasy  
of linearity,  
where, now = lynchings + governmentality.

Abolition gifts a repetition  
that ain't half-bad—after all,  
radical revolutions always-already  
extrapolate half-lives into eternity  
in the Eighteenth Brumaire:  
"Bourgeois revolutions ... storm from success to success ...  
but they are short lived ...  
Proletarian revolutions, on the other hand ...  
criticize themselves constantly,  
interrupt themselves continually ...  
come back to the apparently  
accomplished in order to begin it afresh ...  
Until the situation has been created ...  
and the conditions themselves cry out:  
Here is Rhodes!"<sup>1</sup>  
(“Take it from me.”)

Abolition is a repetition  
of contradictions reemerging,  
ready for resolution.  
Abolition gifts a repetition,  
bringing back,  
bringing Black Revolution.

<sup>1</sup> K. Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. R. C. Tucker (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978), 595, 24.

## Trailer

On an icy morning,  
a trailer truck arrives,  
bearing gifts. My groceries!  
Finally.  
I have been waiting  
so long for this.

Through  
walled-in and walled-up sanitary storage containers,  
a naked-handed, naked-faced  
frontline worker deftly sifts,  
fetish in the chain to my commodities.  
Interminable waiting,  
then,  
bags and bags and bags of  
pandemic paranoia.

“You should ask for masks and gloves,”  
ever the helpful comrade, I said.  
“I have the gloves,” mumble,  
“don’t sign the receipt—germs,” he said,  
waving goodbye.

Three hundred dollars per person for groceries  
and the freezer won’t close.

Three hundred pounds per capita homeland GDP  
but the trailer wouldn’t open.

*Las hielera en el borde  
llena hasta el borde.  
El frigo, muy friyo,*

The icebox at the border  
fills to the brim.

39 dead bodies  
in a trailer free-zone.

From Vietnam to the UK,  
immigrants nearly made it.  
Abandoned by God.  
The driver forgot them,  
waving goodbye,  
blood on his hands.  
Blood in their pants,  
tomatoes of cans.

“I can’t breathe” —Eric Garner.

“I can’t breathe” —George Floyd.

“I can’t breathe” —Pham Ti Tra My,  
I was not meant for this,  
not meant for cold storage  
not meant for having papers  
not meant for making ends meet  
not meant for stacking upright  
not meant for defecation  
not meant for European Union

“I am sorry, Mom,”  
I was  
not meant for safe passage  
not meant for crossing borders  
not meant for making mincemeat  
not meant for seeing daylight  
not meant for asphyxiation  
not meant to be forgotten.

Walled-out and walled-up in a refrigerated trailer,  
stranded, laid to waste,  
thirty-nine backline workers perished,  
chained to the fetish of our commodities.  
Interminable waiting,  
then,  
bags and bags and bags of  
xenophobic paranoia.

## Hope in the Face of Optimism

Optimistic futurity with its racist overtones  
defers Black and Brown liberation endlessly.  
Racial liberation?  
Sure, next revolution.  
No, *next* revolution.  
Ok, definitely,  
*the very next* revolution.

Pessimistic presence says, no—  
here and now, no more waiting.  
Pessimists count the breaths until they run out,  
pessimists count the chokeholds—then and now—  
still state sanctioned.  
Where optimism effuses the transmutation of form,  
pessimism stresses the constancy of content.

Optimistic utopists wait:  
for contradictions to  
(un)furl, (un)ravel,  
(un)discombobulate, accelerate.  
It's all forthcoming,  
it's not for nothing,  
all the Black people dying.  
Take heart, it's a process,  
we're joining dots, making progress  
toward racially liberatory socialism,  
both Black-utopian and scientific.

See that production go  
up in Black fumes?  
That's how you know  
it's time.  
See all that gun manufacture?  
After the revolution,  
all those factories recyclically craft  
ecosustainable toys for healing  
the souls of Black children—  
shell-shocked from genocide,  
coked up from solitary,  
choked up from brutality.

But chill, no worries,  
utopia's 'round the block,  
dystopia's nearly run its clock,  
the only way it could have been!  
Crack open a cold one  
and absolve me of responsibility  
for bad-faith, -analysis, -consciousness, all.  
Bro. Sis. Folx.  
So glad we took the time to.  
Get all that production  
fired up in the air planet on the brink  
and, oh yeah, decolonization,  
that's a special issue—  
it's a process, dude, *longue durée*.  
I bet,  
in the year 6000,