

## SOME THING FROM THE DARK TO SEE

At museum by a river  
at approach of winter solstice  
palpably cold where colored  
LED lights lead a way  
to bridge across gestational years.  
We women nourish children  
wait with overgenerous hips.

We see  
John Singer Sargent's patroness  
in dressing gown of brilliant scandalous red;  
as lithe The Dancer flares her skirt hem  
of coquettish verdigris;  
a legend terms display of Yuan block of nephrite jade  
"dragon's head with goat-like horns."  
Yet plain it is for us to see  
that it again is she  
displayed to overlording dynasty  
her slit between its horns: spread thighs,  
fixed-behind-her-back are hands;  
a wholly flattened face  
makes clear her use as  
offertory sacrifice.

No wonder elsewhere on display  
the elder of this jade collection,  
pre-Colombian goddess sits in solitary  
naked peace  
with dual-facing gaze.

## APPREHENSION

Above my home in Monticello Park  
stone-walled, in December ringed by  
babied fruit trees, drought loving weeds  
aircraft often fly in low approach to airport  
pattern, hum, descend.

I wonder sometimes what might be if  
unexpected happened: mechanics fail,  
unsecured projectile falls, gear landing  
short of its intended runway.

How would destruction feel?

What shape of fire? Crushed flesh of  
human bodies in debris?

No this does not happen.

Does my force of will, dread anticipation,  
heartfelt fervent prayer forestall these fears?

Or does nothing tactile come of  
surging apprehension?

Above a home in Gaza, Palestine  
wood-walled, ringed by  
razor wire, hostile settlers,  
in December aircraft often fly in  
low approach, surveillance first,  
bombs flatten, ordnance terrifies.

How does certain panic feel?

What shape escape? Where shelter? Blood  
of loved ones stains debris.

No this must not happen.

But does. Many dollars taxed and taken  
every other week my reluctant payment  
routinely manufactures distant death.

Or does something evil come from  
self defensive breadth of ignorance?

## BANKRUPT

In front of DC Freedom Marchers 1963, we all know this,  
the “Dream” speech of the Reverend  
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. But in our nation’s capital  
King also called attention to our Founding Fathers’  
promissory note — to Negro people too —  
a guarantee: “unalienable rights”  
the original right to Life (“I can’t breathe”)  
to Liberty, Pursuit of Happiness (when Black lives also matter).  
Dr. King proposed that black folks got a bum deal,  
a bad check was returned marked “insufficient funds.”  
But he rejected the idea of bankruptcy at that bank of justice.

King spoke instead of sunlit paths, rock solid brotherhood,  
inevitable the coming end of separate, shameful treatment.  
Some loved this Reverend’s courage, faith, his optimism, hope.  
But others killed him, shot down King’s body  
and along with him, his dream.

We must be high, or tranquilized, by drug of gradualism  
this Doctor warned against, since half a century more has passed.  
King’s name commemorated as a banking holiday, but his spirit is defiled.  
Banks celebrate by cashing on injustice:  
fees mount on cascading insufficient funds, missed payment deadlines,  
fees mount for using unemployment compensation debit cards,  
equal credit feigned with paycheck loans, and subprime mortgages  
whose calculus of astronomic interest means to target  
lender’s poorly schooled but needy customers of color.  
Bad check’s responsibility rests and foreclosures fall entirely  
on folks too small to win, been poor for generations  
since dragged here chained and forced to work for free.

King penned with eloquence from behind steel bars in Birmingham.  
But not a single banker fraudster, white-collar felon, goes to jail  
While debtors go direct to private prisons’ profitable production lines.  
Too big to fail. Those bankers hoard the bonuses and bailouts.  
Justice? No (that’s for “just us” well-compensated chiefs).  
The general account went bankrupt in grand larceny  
rich CEOs so blithely called a “credit crunch” in 2009.  
Terribly sorry for your loss. Get over it. Get lost.

Now, for all of us, for black and white alike  
our master, mighty dollar, reigns shameless king.  
*[When performed with music, instrumental solos here, then this variation ends the song]*

No, not Dr. King but Dollar King, our shameless master,  
reigns over black and white alike.

BEGINS WITH “I”

Question 1: Which Middle Eastern country sent its gunships to attack & meant to sink U.S.S. Liberty, June 1967? Killed 34 American sailors? Though its leaders claimed this was a tragic accident, deliberate intent was proved. Investigation gagged by Pentagon, ignored by Congress all these years, eyewitness tale redacted by the book-reviewing press.

Hint: the name begins with “I” (no, not Iraq)

Question 2: Which Middle Eastern country has both nuclear reactors and an estimated 24 nuke warheads plus planes and missiles to deliver, thanks to U.S. aid? This country is suspected of first use of mass destructive weapons like white phosphorus shells, flechette darts, clustered mini land mines. When its forces strike, claiming self-defense, never does it heed U.N.'s or anyone's calls to cease.

Hint: the name begins with “I” (no, not Iran)

Question 3: Which leader with a conscience used his stature and position to personally look at history, then write a book with title meant to prod our brains to wonder? Whose story has been told? Whose silenced? His reward was being banned from democratic people's big convention, in defiance of tradition.

Hint: His initials are JC (no, not Jesus Christ)

Question 4, all: Who has obligation as a voter citizen to think about, investigate, control, how tax dollars are expended? Weapons sold and used? To scrutinize the news? (so-called fake and true) which facts are told? which masquerade, or tweet from corporate shells? which—not facts at all, unfit to print—prod bigot thrills?

Hint: begins with “I” (real change)

SNOOZE ALARM: FALLOUT SECRET  
WOMEN AND CHILDREN FIRST

It's 1955, shoot 'em ups galore at Los Alamos  
Nevada Testing Site officials  
counting on a bed of sleeping sheep  
those for-your-eyes-only experts in the know  
don't say nothin' but: not to worry, rural folks  
(they aimed blast clouds away from cities, as best they could)  
no news no feed but cheerios  
for pregnant mamas living near  
the night and dayglowing Utah bedrock  
bearing – ever since those special sun-ups  
filled with lethal mushroom clouds – invisible  
killer particles and silence

Lucky clockworks counting decades later  
'til official word's released: those radioactive-pastured  
Utah ewes dropped dead from man-made-god-like  
causes, not natural. Ditto for the stillbirths,  
Mormon youngsters sickened, died of cancers.

It's half a century later, now, long past time to wake,  
alarming voices say to listen to  
what is **not** said, what **is** revealed and when,  
about the mushroom-clouded videocam  
recordings March 14, 2011 Fukushima Japan  
Tune eyes and ears to siren songs of bluefin,  
salmon, disintegrating starfish, beaching whales.

Future generations sounding  
prayerful incantations for renewable  
power from the sun and wind,  
a birthright: truthful, loving, clean, and  
peaceful world where human  
animal vegetal and mineral  
are recognized as one

## WORK SONG CADENCE: PRISON INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX

You see me as a dark skinned convict  
in a Texas prison film captured 1966  
by Rangers' eager use of force of law  
by folklorists learning cadence of our songs

In vivid monochrome, brutality lights my day.  
We are shunted to hard labor site, sometimes chained,  
herded to perch on tractor trailer rails, this day a forest  
We get down to work on foot, dark gang of inmates  
overlorded by white marksmen on horseback  
leading packs of dogs, all braying intimidations.

Lean muscular dark bodies stretch  
stark contrast to our captors' saddle-seated cowboy statuesque  
Our tight formation quickly fells one after another tree.  
With felon frames arrayed four fellas to each tree,  
we swing dull axes, one apiece as tools for task of alternating strokes

*Let your hammer ring  
Won't you help me holler*

Timed survival sings from work song's cadence.  
Any man who trips on pace learns agony, an often fatal beating.

Other times, as one we chop through brush  
our flesh machine builds Texas roads with hoes alone

*We can form a line  
Still have so terrible long to go*

Clearly y'all can see conflicted legacy  
of slavers' notions knotted into DNA.

Which one is your daddy? One posed with firearm enforcing laws  
that populate more unpaid labor force  
inhumane field conditions  
Who's my papa? Physically survived by working superhuman feats  
chanting perfect polyrhythmic prayers  
dawn up 'til violence silenced down