# **New Directions**

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Poems

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This poem is dedicated to Sisters with children who sometimes get so caught up in their cute smiling babies and their newness and forget the man who helped bring the baby into the world.

### She Cried in the Night

Quick, my love, quick With God's speed in haste Seek the medicine man! Plead you awaken-no time to waste Quick, my love, quick Our baby is sick [She cried in the night, all hours that passed My heart filled with fright, how long will she last? The medicine man will heal her right here in our nest He can't let her die, she still sucks at my breast.] He'll dance for her sake Awake, my love, awake! Brave warrior of mine, can't you hear? Your child is not well—she may die, I fear! Quick, my love, quick Our baby lies sick! [She cried in the night, all hours that passed My heart filled with fright, how long will she last? The medicine man will heal her right here in our nest He can't let her die, she still sucks at my breast.] I gave you a cry Which you dare to defy. Curse on your soul, you lay there asleep While your baby is crying, you don't hear a peep. I'll leave you alone Get the medicine man on my own. [She cried in the night, all hours that passed My heart filled with fright, how long will she last? The medicine man will heal her right here in our nest He can't let her die, she still sucks

She went fast as the night It was breaking daylight And she returned with the medicine man who took the child's hand Sang songs, rhythmic chants, danced with all his might Called to the spirit to set the child right [She cried in the night all hours that passed My heart filled with fright, how long will she last? The medicine man will heal her right here in our nest He can't let her die, she still sucks at my breast.] The medicine man stopped his song Said something here is wrong Your husband lay asleep all this time Did he partake too much of the palm wine? Her face looked of anger, angry words she said "Never mind him-he can drop dead!" [My baby she cried in the night, all hours that passed My heart filled with fright, how long will she last? He lay there asleep, right here in our nest You won't let my baby die, she still sucks at my breast.] Woman stop crying Your baby's not dying He went to the man and moved his head Women weep for your man he moved not his head Hang your head in shame-Your baby's tears had said That the man who lay beside you was dying instead! [My baby she cried, my husband is dead My baby's heart filled with fright, he lay still in bed Mercy on my soul, my man died right here in our nest My baby did not die, she still sucks at my breast.]

Zebraa'a Al Mahdi

29

## 30 One from the Fatherhood Series

my son took all my old posters from his wall.

3 years old and he wants no part of my collegeways.

new spaces replace the face of great blackpeople, strange designs where my blackpower fist use to hang—

and his mama tells me that this marks his first becoming . . .

Ahmos Zu-Bolton II

This poem was inspired by Howard University spirits.

## **Black Shells**

... remember when we used to let our jeans drag the earth long ...

during days that evolved sleepless we just had so much to discover about

each other, about ourselves and when sleep could no longer be

avoided how we sometimes shared the same bed or the floor

in a room where there was closeness. sunshine always means questing and familiar winding hills entrigue us to oooooooooo and ahhhhhhhhhh out creating our own rainbows through each

others joys and tears growing up is never so deliberate a

process

as it chases us and finds us afraid sometimes in quiet circles and bold sometimes in blazing reality touching our bond in my solitary mind is like listening to a shell tell of its

fullness yc hushhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh https://dh.howard.edu/newdirections/vol2/iss2/9

we have sat in, stood up, fallen out, gotten high, been low, worried, ignored, comforted, admonished, criticized, proselytized, and protected, but most of all we have loved . . .

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#### Peace Somewhere

In the darkness of night under the stars of my Homeland, I meditated and worshipped the Great One of Life. While ships anchored stealthily and rogues with shackles and chains crept in the sand to my chieftan's hut. And snatched the bravest tribesmen. You ask, how can we feel ourselves men? You say, we have no dignity! Let me recall again: In the bowels of that slave ship beaten . . . crowded . . . hungry locked in chains . . . my Brothers died. You robbed me of my past: birthright ... family ... home ... pride. I was taught that I was Black . . . ignorant . . . ugly . . . I felt so ashamed. Yet, I knew I was in a strange land and YOU were to blame. A past long ago erased . . . A culture now

obscured. In fear I became a slave; your oppression I endured. Today, I remember my mother's lullabye, my father's bravery and grace. No longer will I cry for I have peace . . .

> a soul . . . a race . . .

A color made by men who sought to conquer me, But a race made by God. My people, at last, are free.

Now,

you lay awake at night uncertain of your life. Your slave is revolting . . . rebelling; your country is torn with strife.

You pray, there must be peace somewhere? Ships land on the moon. You find no one there. Lord, how soon? How soon?

Come, white brother, Let me show you the peace you must attain: Retrace your footsteps through the past... Look at me again.

See ... The squalor in which I survived;
See ... The job I was denied;
See ... Your father rape his maid;
See ... The price Black Mothers paid.
There ... The spot my father died ... YOU, racist, called it "suicide."
See ... My children STILL in the dirt!
NOW \_\_\_\_\_ Erase all my hurt.
Remove the oppression, the degradation ... open every door.

Perhaps, then, we can ALL build a nation, and have peace forevermore.

Peola Spurlock

#### Poem on a New Year's Eve

Infinity doesn't interest me not altogether anymore

I crawl and kneel and grub about I beg and listen for

what can go away

(as easily as love) or perish like the children running hard on oneway streets/infinity doesn't interest me

## not anymore

not even repetition your/my/eyelid or the colorings of sunrise or all the sky excitement added up

is not enough

to satisfy this lusting adulation that I feel for your brown arm before it moves

MOVES CHANGES UP

the temporary sacred tales ago first bikeride round the house when you first saw a squat opossum carry babies on her back opossum up in the persimmon tree you reeling toward that natural first absurdity with so much wonder still it shakes your voice the temporary is the sacred takes me out and even the stars and even the snow and even the rain

unless these things submit to some disturbance some derangement such as when I yield myself/belonging to your unmistaken body and let the powerful lock up the canyon/mountain peaks the hidden rivers/waterfalls the deepdown minerals/the coalfield/ goldfields/ diamond mines close by the whoring ore hot at the center of the earth spinning fast as numbers I cannot imagine let the world blot obliterate remove socalled magnificence so-called almighty/fathomless and everlasting treasures/ wealth (whatever that may be)

do not amount to much

it is this time that matters

it is this history I care about

the one we make together awkward inconsistent as a lame cat on the loose or quick as kids freed by the bell or else as strictly once as only life must mean a once upon a time

I have rejected propaganda teaching me about the beautiful the truly rare (supposedly the soft push of the ocean at the hushpoint of the shore supposedly the soft push of the ocean at the hushpoint of the shore is beautiful for instance) but the truly rare can stay out there

I have rejected that abstraction that enormity unless I see a dog walk on the beach/ a bird seize sandflies or yourself approach me laughing out a sound to spoil the pretty picture make an uncontrolled heartbeating memory instead

I read the papers preaching on that oil and oxygen that redwoods and the evergreens that trees the waters and the atmosphere compile a final listing of the world in short supply

but all alive and all the lives persist perpetual in jeopardy persist as scarce as everyone of us as difficult to find or keep as irreplaceable as frail as every one of us

and as I watch your arm/your brown arm just before it moves

I know

all things are dear that disappear

all things are dear that disappear

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31