

## Poetry Selections

Aklilu Dunlap\*

### a brother's pantoum

one in four women is raped in her life time.

do we hate our mothers that much?

who is next?

sister? wife, daughter? friend?

do we hate our mothers that much?

she turns sixteen today.

sister? wife, daughter? friend?

at three, she proved that mud was indeed edible.

she turns sixteen today.

at six, she created the common bad hair cut.

at three, she proved that mud was indeed edible.

she redesigned the circuitry on the new stereo by ten.

at six, she created the common bad hair cut.

by twelve, she planned her exploration of the *sarengetti*.

she redesigned the circuitry on the new stereo by ten.

if she could only redesign the safety feature on the window.

by twelve, she planned her exploration of the *sarengetti*.

now, she can't even explore the yard after dark.

if she could only redesign the safety feature on the window.

at thirteen, she discovered the telephone.

now, she can't even explore the yard after dark.

her freedom spans the reach to the phone.

at thirteen, she discovered the telephone.

yell, "fire," and run!

her freedom spans the reach to the phone.

one in four women is raped in her life time.

yell, "fire," and run!

who is next?

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**ask the freak (in his shadow, bonus zimunya)**

ask the freak.

he'll tell you;

he'll know.

ask him.

ask him

who knows that a good queer  
is a dead queer.<sup>1</sup>

he knows;

ask him.

ask him

who knows what sounds like  
"flap-flap"  
is really the sound  
of a fag's skull  
smashing against the pavement.<sup>2</sup>

he knows;

ask him.

ask him

who knows what reeks in the night air  
comes from the flames  
shooting out  
of the nigger-dyke's house,  
where skin-headed boys gather.<sup>3</sup>

he knows;

ask him.

then ask yourself why.

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1. The number of hate crimes perpetrated against any one minority group in the United States is highest against gay men and lesbians, "one of the most despised and persecuted minority groups." Note, *Sex, Lies and Civil Rights: A Critical History of the Massachusetts Gay Civil Rights Bill*, 26 HARV. C.R.-C.L. L. REV. 549, 555 (1991).

2. In Colorado, the only state in the country that prohibits laws, gay bashers struck Mark O'Connel, a gay man, twice in the face as he was leaving a bar. Dirk Johnson, *Colorado Homosexuals Feel Betrayed*, N.Y. TIMES, Nov. 8, 1992, at A38; Julie Nichols, YLD Studies Anti-Gay Violence, YOUNG LAWYERS DIVISION, 14 BARRISTER, Summer 1987, 19. They knocked him to the pavement, causing his skull to hit the concrete so hard that people across the street heard the impact. *Id.*

3. Subsequent to the proposal of Measure 9, a proposed law to render void and preclude from enactment any law or bill that includes gays and lesbians within its ambit of protection, the number of hate crimes perpetrated against gay men and lesbians multiplied. One incident involved an African-American lesbian and a white gay man who were burned to death in Salem, Oregon when a home-made bomb thrown in the middle of the night by skinheads who shouted "Nigger dyke" and "Fag-got" set their home afire. Donna Minkowitz, *Immodest Proposals*, VILLAGE VOICE, Oct. 13, 1992, at 33.

**in the way of the gods**

faith belongs to the blind.  
i read the word to know the truth  
only to find great works of fiction.  
they with paged palms, versed fingers,  
move among us, speaking in the way of the gods.  
"faith comes from the word,"  
echoes their incessant call.  
i read the word, sifting impurities  
only to end up with cold stones  
to nibble on. divine sustenance  
is a meager diet.  
i say faith is for the blind,  
and seeing, i stand apart,  
in the way of the gods.

**hate for profit: sestina on bowers<sup>1</sup>**

mine is the "infamous crime against nature."<sup>2</sup>  
 from which even the shame of rape turns its violent head.<sup>3</sup>  
 so issues this assessment from the mouth of justice.<sup>4</sup>  
 who, as a man — a virtual stranger to the oppression of rape,  
 summons the expertise to expound upon its nature with full force.  
 less he forget: whereas my lips mouthed "welcome," she did not give consent.

divided, alienated, we climb the common wall of consent  
 to compare the wounds inflicted by nature.  
 she, the "weaker" of the species, is slave to force,  
 i, "deviant," "diseased," wear upon my forehead,  
 the mark that disdainfully relegates me to the foot of rape  
 incest, pedophilia — the dark curiosities of justice.

masculine is the script of justice,  
 the logic of those that give little weight to the force of consent.  
 odd that they focus on the actor than the act, on the victim than the rape.  
 pick your choice, nurture or nature,  
 like the bowers of discipline hanging over the head,  
 ours succumbs to the pull of their manipulative force.

the hate of my oppressor has ancient roots,<sup>5</sup> diabolical force.  
 it sells for profit: from judeo standards to christian justice,<sup>6</sup>  
 from the crown of david to the crest upon caesar's head,  
 for the love of god, and with his consent,  
 until every breath is purged from human nature  
 that dares commingle with the likes of rape.

my love, likened to rape,  
 reduced to the brute force  
 of contempt and disrespect for human nature,  
 lies pinned beneath the heel of justice.  
 i claw at the pivoting morality wedged between two consent-  
 ing adults, who, despite the gravity of hate, muster the courage to raise their heads.

like bowers of discipline, their eyes loom over our heads:  
 as if to say, our love is the spawn of rape,  
 as if to say, deviance deserves no consent.  
 just what form lurks behind the force  
 of such hate? what shape leaps from the arms of justice  
 to curl its tentacles over the gills of nature?

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1. A reference to *Bowers v. Hardwick*, 478 U.S. 186, 197 (1986) (Burger, J., concurring), the landmark case in which the U.S. Supreme Court upheld a Georgia statute that proscribed only sodomy between men, reasoning that there is no right of privacy in the federal constitution to engage in homosexual sodomy.

2. *Id.*

3. *Id.*

4. *Id.*

5. *Id.* at 196.

6. *Id.*

it is, and can only be, the cowardly force  
that, not recognizing this love, likens it to rape.  
mine is not a crime, but a tribute to nature.

