

JANE SPRAGUE / Two Poems

Universal American Anthem

what of ourselves we put in
the possible

remains of democracy
Athenian re-imagining

a once that never was

our unimaginable present

fragments of nothing—mist
 droplets skim every skin

never anything other than this

atomic bodies floating in space
claim I I I again and again

while the whole world wastes
itself away

our fingers our hands

same webbing feel
teeth
sharp as piranha

our language cuts
flip side to head

your voice also mine
timbre of oboes
or keen for the dead
our wailing
unceasing
seizures
of dissonance and fear

reach nothing but the sky

Creon said to Antigone: Go to the dead and love them.

We forget I my our self
pinned to sky

the edge of everlasting
illusion

we break apart
and are breathed in
else where

as nothing in this closed system
world is ever *lost* or goes away

in relation we are unmade
rebordered new sense of self
enveloped by the whole ugly
mess of fucked into nothing
but the memory of you
I cannot staunch
as my twitching forelegs
bend backwards
expose their silver ligaments

to the diminishing
glint of your—

you and you and you

as if we could reach across
our scalpeled lines

the incisive I lets nothing in
forever and a day

mutual clasp fabricate
secure links to lines
between the space my heartbeats
make in air around
your vacant eyes

skyward
glassbottlebrown
no longer shiny

Bring Me Back
a body
or gun
smithereens it all
wheat-pasted rage
two-fisted rifle

my thumb works again and again

we I need not unordinary words
to speak the sound of erasure

calculus of mass decimation
primate—primal—us—and our
animal familiars

there are many ways of war

all of which we know
bedmate familiar

don't forget to write *whiteness*
when our shit is the plan

as if one genocide
so large
close
perpetually trumps all others

in memory and rage

Contains language appropriated from Thom Donovan's *The Hole* (Displaced Press 2012) and Susan Howe's "There Are Not Leaves Enough to Crown to Cover to Crown to Cover," *The Europe of Trusts* (New Directions 1990). "Bring Me Back," WK INTERACT, NY, NY, 2007.

Remains

Story—a not-story—I don't know how to tell

There is too muchness of story // story layered on story
tribes, not mine
who am I to speak

For the deaths of the graves of the cannonballs found in fields of the signs of slave
graveyards taken of the Army planted trees the spindly red pine groves too straight
tall trees too tall to grid hike or see

poverty in schools
on dirt roads and asphalt
insolvent institutions
the ruined land itself

shale to water to mystery to past
horn-toed feet to river paths ran hard and flat

made our tollroad state highways number seventeen or eightynine
and so on.

Signs // highway markers cite // celebrate ruin
conquest Coreogonel // Indian Princess // Indian Castle

Year 16xx burnt
Year 17xx tavern
Year 18xx cabin
axe

The buried past—X number of “slaves” // “men and women” // “buried” XX “rods” off
Ellis Hollow Road

under and are
owned land now

our general public's archive printed out in metal in ink
long gone now // stowed away or thrown
from behind the bordered lawn their posted

PRIVATE PROPERTY
KEEP OUT
VIOLATORS WILL BE
erased