

David Mills

Cameo's Larry Blackmon Encounters e.e. cummings' Spirit

e, I heard that as the ghost of funkiness
past you had your woes; heard that
your pops doomed through grooves
of love. But, now that you've taken on
some new roles—edWARDestlin Scrooge—I
must funk to you in a you you understand.
Stay with me now because styles change but style
doesn't. Like Devo, I wanted to don giant
diapers and flower pot hard hats, yet not be
instru*minstrel*.

I wanted to conjure a hard core electronic
funk, a *New Wave* with a cold sweat where
synthesizers dripped with B-52 *nigratude*:

Think of it as 'Whip It' on the one;
Duran Duran hot pants; Depeche
Mode *smelodies*. Think of it
as freeing your mind while your
own Private Idaho follows;
Dr. Funkenstein filling the Romeo
Void. A Psychedelic Fur sex
machine; think of it as hot
chocolate intellectual property;
or Charlie Brown's teacher playing
three guitars: *wah-wah, wah-wah,*
wah-wah. Think of it as Oingo

David Mills is the winner of the 2008 PALF Africana Poetry contest, judged by Quincy Troupe.

Boingo P-Funk.

Does P-(fun)k (me)an y(Our) urine smells?

Think of it as poetic body odor
where papa's got a brand new baguette.
Better yet, think of it as a secular
electric church where the minister's
name is Brownd, James Brownd:
So get on the good foot. *I)AM(b*. Think
trochee 'cause the upbeat won't work
for the downtrodden: *A-one-uh*,
A-two-uh, *A-three-uh*, *A-four-uh*.

How many guitar licks does it take to get to the center of the stinky
stank, stunk?

e, as the ghost of funkiness present you might lack a certain rhythmic jism
but don't try the Tiny Timming technique (i.e. no crutches for the funk)

Come to stink of it, you could have been stingier
with the N-word. So as a chocolate olive
branch, hit me with a literary re-mix
of my greatest hits.

,YOu mean your ha(test) grits?

e's strange and I like him.
But since you couldn't honor
me with a sonnet with SOME stank
on it, I'm gonna take life

from the top
in the key of honk.

e, once you are the ghost of funkiness yet to come, you
bet' not spread no vanilla jelly on my jam sessions

(Livid, e. begins to defunctorialize)

e? e? You cummings or goings? You can't speak? Forget YOU man.
But remember, my ear is a stadium packed with 30,000 screams.
So even when I sleep

that's how loud my life is:

oWwWwW!

Sealed With a Kiss

The warden cut out and discarded the bodies of our letters, pasted the opening and closing greeting together and gave them to us to prove we got something in the mail.

Sam Sewel, Robben Island Political Prisoner

I know your body does not have a throat,
lemon braids or pearls singing from its penis;

I know your body does not have both hips—
the spleen's ill-will and sadness—or its gall
bladder; I know your body does not have

a sphincter, fists, or kidneys bruised like beans;
I know now your body is just a skull,
which thinks and stumbles on twisted ankles.

You see the warden deemed you a nuisance,
and gouged your skin with scissors, over and over.

My hands will never know your heart's driving
hammer, your navel's gusty, piddling sway.

All I can fathom from your missive's body
is its head: "Dear Sam," and sprained ankles, "Yours since . . ."

Elmina

*“Ghana’s, Gold Coast has now virtually changed
into a pure slave coast.”*

Dutch West India Company Director Rademacher, 1730

My mouth is crowded by over three
 months of memories. How
did I end up cuffed, abducted,
 thrust through doors where
the darkness envies my skin

My life sandwiched
 between hundreds of mumbles,
walls and floors fashioned
 from minced seashells and spit.
The branding iron insists

all our shoulders must smoke and wilt.
 Since what cannot be stored in the blood must be
discarded from the body’s awful architecture,
 we have now, somehow, become Portuguese
feces rotting in this limestone

colon. Is this what happens
 to our bodies as, unknowingly, the heart
erects its own citadels of bitterness? Beyond
 the darkness, a harmattan winces,
delivering illegible messages.

Coffled, one morning, I am dragged to a door—which our
host insists resembles their language's little "n." Peering
out from under the archway of what had to be
a small, awful letter in their
alphabet, I witness the sky's

lonely yolk punishing the Gold
Coast; then like slippery, silver
question marks, tuna leap from the depths.
These denizens of the sea are convinced
that somewhere in the air is the answer

to why the fishermen have been missing;
they are convinced that, now, in order to
find grief, they must diligently seek it out:
the hook, the yank, the unknown. The ocean
salivates as we drift away. Why

is my heart being ferried
from its dark, throbbing harbor?
Spoon-fashion, I listen to
the surf
then I tuck a promise
within my ankle; I will return skipping
over the ocean's snowing,
broken
shoulders.