

ENVIABLE CROWS AND UNNAMEABLE WEEDS, FREEDOM COWS, AND DEATH BOUQUETS

Adjua Gargi Nzinga Greaves

While the human is at the top of the food chain and has no natural predators, he is actually at the bottom of the chain (or rather [at the outermost margin of] the net) of Interbeing and his species preys most viciously and relentlessly upon itself. If the human understands that we are homo sapiens, merely a particular sort of creature on a globe rife with others, if the human understands that our species is a global parasite, she may be on her way to understanding that the autonomous floral, fungal, and animal beings around us do no work for us at all, neither intellectual nor aesthetic, and that any labor we are receiving the fruits of is the result of theft, illusion, and ignorance. Ultimately, we are a suicidal species unwilling to transcend the brittle comforts of our narcissism to accept that our way of life is not sustainable and thus cosmically and existentially ignoble. No beings on earth labor on our behalf and yet everywhere we see potential employees, servants, slaves, and devices.

I. Crows: The Kool Kids of the Animal Kingdom

- A. Crown Heights / Crow Hill
- B. Disney's Racist Crows
- C. Intelligence of

II. Weeds

- A. Apothecary underfoot
 - 1. The White Man's Footprint

III. Cows

A. American Exceptionalism

1. “When a farm animal, like the bull found today in Prospect Park, is found loose in New York City, what you are witnessing is an individual who was so determined to live that they summoned every ounce of courage they could muster to make a dash for freedom. These animals escape from the city’s 100+ live markets, essentially ‘storefront slaughterhouses,’ where they are crammed into filthy backrooms and made to watch as their peers struggle and fight as their throats are slit. The stress and fear that these smart, emotional animals experience is unimaginable. If you were disturbed by what you saw today and were rooting for the life of this brave individual to be spared, please consider honoring the lives of the 10 billion animals who are slaughtered each year in equally horrific conditions by the meat industry by decreasing or eliminating meat entirely from your diet.”¹

2. “Yesterday, a steer managed to escape a slaughterhouse in Queens, experiencing a few moments of blessed freedom running through the CUNY College campus in Jamaica. The steer was eventually caught, but while it was expected he’d soon become someone’s dinner, he actually got the happiest ending he could get—a lifetime residency at an upstate animal sanctuary, and dinner fed to him by the one and only Jon Stewart. OH TO BE A BRAVE BRAVE BOVINE. Indeed, a spokesperson tells us the steer was taken to Animal Care & Control of Brooklyn after his run for freedom, and the agency handed him over to Stewart and his wife Tracey, who took the big dude to Farm Sanctuary’s New York Shelter in Watkins Glen. The Stewarts have been partnering with the sanctuary since October, much to the

(1) Rebecca Fishbein, “[UPDATES] Escaped Cow On The Loose Around Prospect Park,” Gothamist, Oct 17, 2017. http://gothamist.com/2017/10/17/escaped_cow.php

apparent benefit of The Steer That Was Nearly A Snack. The sanctuary named him Frank, after the prisoner Frank Lee Morris who escaped from Alcatraz in 1962.”²

IV. Flowers

A. Carolyn

1. It is important to me that you know a fierce and delicate friend was murdered 28 days ago and that the ensuing grief looks like softness on me. I was told this impossible truth over the phone as I stood naked in the bathroom.³

2. It is important to me that you know I have never felt this quiet a rage before. Sublimated for sustainability — it has settled into my perfumed skin, it has spread trails of lace across my body, blushed my cheeks and lips, opened my heart to the exquisite Is-ness of life. It is important to me that you know I have never been this angry before. Nor have I ever been this beautiful.⁴

B. Oneika

1. Lately, I think about Nicki Minaj at least once a day, and recently it feels like at least once every waking hour. This is because there are flowers and plant matter all over my life right now and I experience her as a sort of florxal deity even tho she is also just a regular mortal human. This because her physical beauty is intentional and excruciating in its accomplishments. One of my favorite things about Nicki Minaj is the particular way she is beautiful. Another is that while her stage name is Nicki Minaj, her real name is so close to that. Her real name is Onika Maraj. In my mind she is Orchid Mirage.⁵

(2) Rebecca Fishbein, “Photos, Video: Jon & Tracey Stewart Save Runaway Steer From Slaughter,” Gothamist, Apr 2, 2016. http://gothamist.com/2016/04/02/photos_video_jon_tracey_stewart_sav.php#photo-1

(3) Excerpt from Adjua Gargi Nzinga Greaves: *Writing like a flower* (2016) performed for “It’s After the End of the World, Don’t You Know That Yet?: Writing in the Shadow of Human Extinction The Poetry Project,” Oct 24, 2016

(4) *ibid.*

(5) *ibid.*

C. Roselle

1. About a year into psychoanalysis I began to enter the room wearing Rose oil perfume and my analyst wanted to insist my mother had entered the room.

2. There is a town in New Jersey named like my mother. And a midcentury politician. And her. Detached from her, I love the name because of the femme-on-femme of Rose modified by a feminine French suffix.

3. Though it feels as if the first plant I ever knew the name of was variegated philodendron, there is almost no way this could be true. Almost. Certainly I already knew TK, regardless, it was the otherness of variegated philodendron's scientific precision and proximally familiar phonemes that brought the encounter's impact to bear, to live undisturbed in my memory after having heard it from my mother's mouth at some point after The Separation. At some point after she and I left him behind at 670 Riverside Drive/ TKCOORDINATES and began (pretended) to live alone together at 167 Sands Street TKCOORDINATES as if there was a way to separate. As if once made relations(-hips) can be undone. As if there even was a coming together in the first place. As if oneness was not eternal. As if human marriage was not merely a cosmic blip. As if new life could be unmade.

Variegated philodendron she said and probably with softness. Softness that was missing from so many other elsewhere of our bridge and of that time. Variegated philodendron she said and I think I logged the white lines as variegated and the being itself as Philodendron. An element of this moment that stands out to me all these TKMOONCOUNT later is that I who do not easily recall or consider my Mother's particularities do so with ease in this moment. And so it has become that these days under this TKMOONCOUNT of my life on earth I am finally able to begin writing about creature and verdure because I have brought myself to a cafe and a seat was open in front of a

variegated philodendron and I am the sort of homo sapien so concerned by my species' confusion about interbeing that I have begun to wonder whether the plants are summoning me into sustainable modes of being so that I might live and allow them to flourish and tell the other humans of this.

D. Daphne

1. Soft sound for a serious thing to be treated with softness
 - a) Thimali calls me "petal"

V. Red-Blooded American Soil

A. America ≠ The United States of America

2. The Open Veins of Latin America

B. I DESPISE THIS NATION I REVERE THIS LAND

1. Haunted Native American Burial Ground

2. Forget the people here. Take care of the soil. It has seen too much.

Future Biblio Hibernation:

- The Secret Lives of Plants: A fascinating account of the physical, emotional, and spiritual relations between plants and man.
- Animal Vegetable Mineral: Ethics and Objects
- In the Company of Crows and Ravens
- The Idea of Nature in Disney Animation
- Plant-Thinking: A Philosophy of Vegetal Life
- Plant Spirit Medicine: The Healing Power of Plants
- The Tree: A Natural History of What Trees Are, How they Live, and Why They Matter
- Black Nature: Four Centuries of African American Nature Poetry
- The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness

Two years ago now, on the day Autumn turned to Winter, my grandmother Leonie Belle Leader died at 101 years old. Sixty-seven years after her birth I, too, was born in the Americas into a black female body and slowly decided that I would like to live for 100 years precisely. On the most intentional days I wake up in my bed beneath a skylight and begin the next portion of what I intend to be a life of 36,525 days. Today is the 13,633rd of these future days.

“Herbs work hard as houseplants. They’re not content to be merely decorative, like a fern or an ivy. In addition to good looks, herbs give you flavor, fragrance, or both.”⁶

Dolce & Gabbana and a bag made of iguana.⁷

White bodied in a black/brown room : human on a globe with other life ::

It is given by Olodumare to everything - gods, ancestors, spirits, humans, animals, plants, rocks, rivers, and voiced words such as songs, prayers, praises, curses, or even everyday conversation. Existence, according to Yoruba thought, is dependent upon it.⁸

“What violence to interbeing is the ‘human’ classification? Where in how we love flora, beast animal, story self—where within our flights from chaos—rise the scaffolds of our monsterring? Does thriving demand predation? Can atemporal language return us to the void? Which humans are animals? Who is endangered by the wild? Were we ever able to ask nature for consent? At what cost do we forge safety from the void?”⁹

(6) Judy Pray, *Garden Wisdom and Know-How: Everything You Need to Know to Grow, Plant and Harvest* (Emmaus, PA: Rodale Press Black Dog and Leventhal Publishers, 2018:10)

(7) Leikeli47, “Bags,” *Wash & Set* (New York: RCA Hardcover LLC, 2017)

(8) “Ase (Yoruba),” Wikipedia, last modified January 3, 2018, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ase_\(Yoruba\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ase_(Yoruba))

(9) Adjua Gargi Nzinga Greaves, “Of Humans and Monsterring” (2016)

Environmental activists are fond of saying “There is no away” when people talk about the supposed margins of our society where refuse is stored and processed. And in the same way that it is not possible to throw something away because all aspects of our home planet are interconnected, the same could be said for Selfhood. To do unprovoked mortal violence to another human being diminishes the quality of one’s own existence regardless of whether this calculus is understood by the oppressor.

- ❑ www.theoffingmag.com/here-you-are/the-understory/

Anti-blackness is anti-environmental. Relational violence is existential theft and has no future. I despise this country and I revere this land.

Mise en Mort, french because it must be both alluring and brutalist.

- ❑ www.businessinsider.com/plants-know-they-are-being-eaten-2014-10
- ❑ www.nytimes.com/2009/12/22/science/22angi.html
- ❑ www.living-foods.com/articles/fruitforeating.html
- ❑ www.reanimationlibrary.org/pages/wprwilson

A young white gardener I adore often despite myself says things like pinch the plant back so it has to try harder, and I remember this when he is defending Russell Crowe’s right to choke, spit, and call Azaelia Banks a nigger. When I am actively angry I am. In these moments, I am fighting for my life and I recently like to imagine a human arguing with a plant or a non human.

The primary resource I currently manifest from my proximity to plantlife is how ethnobotanical studies tell the whole devastating truth of human whackness and soooo fast.

- ❑ www.blackyouthproject.com/three-ways-black-veganism-challenges-white-supremacy-unlike-conventional-veganism/

A cow escapes a slaughterhouse and is rewarded for having bested us, is sent to roam free in a sanctuary because USers are so enthralled by the glamour of Exceptionalism that they cannot see the TK . Like the escaped. I won't eat anything with a face. I don't eat anything that had parents. Plants aren't smart enough to feel pain.

Regarding a weed is such a privilege. The slowsilent hustlebustle of industry at the margin. Though I know few latinate classification names of plants this early on in my study of them, sometimes I see

*My dreams give me wings, I reached the stars last night
 My imagination is now real life
 No more stressing, just success and switching new addresses
 Agent Provocateur and Donna Karen dresses
 You losing ground throwing dirt
 Even when I ain't have shit
 I always knew my worth, and I still kept God first
 Played the back of the church, ski mask under my hijab
 As I pray to Jesus for a few early releases and*

[Chorus]

*I had to get up, get on my grind and go get mine
 But I'll be right back (I'll be right back)
 I'll be right back (I'll be right back)
 (Sing it now, sing it now)*

[Bridge]

*Don't take it the wrong way, I just wanna be great I'm running
 my own race...¹⁰*

A headline shows progress in space exploration and every cell in my body shouts THIS SPECIES HAS NO BUSINESS TK Of Crows among Weeds, Freedom Cows, and Death Bouquets

(10) Leikeli47, "Bags," Wash & Set (New York: RCA Hardcover LLC, 2017)

I accept that my species is dying and needs to.
We must reintegrate our brittle selfhood with the Void.
I am the most frightened when I am feeling depressed.
I am the most pitiable when I am feeling afraid.
Crows serving Cosmic Chic all dressed in black black black.
Every plant is a black woman: useful, silenced, infinite,
mortal.
My burger-loving species won't kill cows that flee the
slaughterhouse.
The freest floral being is the one that is newest and

It's less that they are doing labor for me but rather the clearer I get about Interbeing the more regarding nonhuman existence reminds me and affirms my emerging understanding about what it means to live on earth. Bound to this dank little garden hurtling through the Void. We're so lucky. It's so embarrassing to see the way we shit on this palace and our palace kin.

When asked what is the intellectual aesthetic work plants and non-human animals do for us [homo sapiens]? we might turn to a passage like

“just a reminder that if you're not flourishing, maybe the sun is blocked or you're not getting enough water. maybe the soil lacks nutrients. don't blame yourself. i tell you and i tell myself: failure to thrive is not a plant's fault.”¹¹

(11) FB Post by Christina Olivares' Facebook page. Accessed December 14, 2017.
<https://www.facebook.com/christinaolivares>