

the 51st (dream) state

Conceived and written by Sekou Sundiata
Directed by Christopher McElroen
Original Sound Score by Graham Haynes
Vocal Arrangements by Richard Harper
Choreography by David Thomson
Projections by Sage Marie Carter

Performed by

Poet

Sekou Sundiata

Vocalists

Ronnell Bey

La Tanya Hall

Samita Sinha

Bora Yoon

Trumpet

Eddie Allen

Drums

Chris Eddleton

Bass

Calvin Jones

Keyboards and Laptop

Adam Klipple

Guitar

Bill White

Dancer

David Thomson

Additional original music composed by:

Bill Toles

Sekou Sundiata

Design & Production:

Troy Hourie, Set Design

Roderick Murray, Lighting Design

Liz Prince, Costume Design

Lucas Indelicato, Sound Design

Eddie Allen, Music Director

La Tanya Hall, Vocal Director

Vincent DeMarco / KelVin Productions, LLC, Production Supervisor

Christopher Ericson, Sound Engineer

Kelly Varley, Production Stage Manager

Katea Stitt, Company Manager

Executive Producer: dance & be still arts
Sekou Sundiata, Artistic Director

Producer: MultiArts Projects & Productions/MAPP
Ann Rosenthal and Cathy Zimmerman, Co-Directors and Producers
Jordana Phokompe, Associate Producer

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Sekou Sundiata is a poet who writes for print, performance, music and theater. He has been a Sundance Institute Screenwriting Fellow, a Columbia University Revson Fellow, a Master Artist-in-Residence at the Atlantic Center for the Arts (Florida), the first Writer-in-Residence at the New School University, and he is currently a Lambent Fellowship in the Arts Fellow. He was featured in the Bill Moyers' PBS series on poetry, *The Language of Life*, and as part of Russell Simmons' *Def Poetry Jam* on HBO. Sundiata is currently a professor at Eugene Lang College in New York City.

He has written and performed in highly acclaimed performance theater works *The Circle Unbroken is a Hard Bop*, which toured nationally and received three AUDELCO Awards and a BESSIE Award; *The Mystery of Love*, commissioned and produced by New Voices/New Visions at HARLEM STAGE / Aaron Davis Hall in New York City and the American Music Theater Festival in Philadelphia; and *Udu*, a music theater work produced by 651 ARTS in Brooklyn and presented by the International Festival of Arts and Ideas in New Haven, the Walker Art Center and Penumbra Theater in Minneapolis, Flynn Center in Burlington, VT, the Hopkins Center at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire, and Miami-Dade Community College in Florida.

blessing the boats, Sundiata's first solo theater piece, opened in November 2002 at HARLEM STAGE / Aaron Davis Hall, NYC and has since been presented in more than 30 cities in the U.S., Scotland and Australia. In March 2005, Sundiata produced *The Gift of Life Concert*, an organ donation public awareness event at the Apollo Theater that kicked off a three-week run of *blessing the boats* at the Apollo Theater SoundStage. These projects were produced in partnership with the Apollo Theater Foundation, the National Kidney Foundation and the New York Organ Donor Network with support from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Sundiata's first recording, the GRAMMY nominated *The Blue Oneness of Dreams* (Mouth Almighty/Mercury), and its successor, *longstoryshort* (Righteous Babe Records), are both rich with the sounds of blues, funk, jazz and African and Afro-Caribbean percussion. He has toured internationally with his band; in 2001, they performed in 23 cities in the United States and Canada as part of Ani DiFranco's "Rhythm and News Tour."

Performers:

Eddie Allen (Trumpet and Music Director) studied music at the Wisconsin Conservatory of Music in Milwaukee, the University of Wisconsin in Green Bay and William Paterson University of New Jersey where he received a Bachelor of Music degree. Allen has worked with such jazz greats as: Art Blakey, Billy Harper, Randy Weston, Dizzy Gillespie, Henry Threadgill, Bobby Watson, Jon Faddis, Benny Carter, Panama Francis, Joe Henderson and Steve Turre. He has recorded and performed with, as well as composed for: Louis Hayes, Lester Bowie, Jack McDuff, Etta Jones & Houston Person, Mongo Santamaria, Chico Freeman, Charli Persip, Vanessa Rubin and Muhal Richard Abrams. Allen currently leads a quartet, a quintet, a Latin/Brazilian project, large ensemble which brings together acoustic and electronic instruments and as well as a big band.

Ronnell Bey (Vocals) Off-Broadway credits include: *Running Man*, (Music-Theatre Group) *Eli's Comin'* (Vineyard-OBIE Award). She has performed at Brooklyn Academy of Music, The Fez, The New School with Sekou Sundiata and Joe's Pub with La Chanche. Regional credits include: *Ain't Misbehavin'* (Madison Rep.), *Best of Both Worlds* (New York, NY) *The Life and Life of*

Bumpy Johnson by Amri Baraka (San Diego Rep.), *All Night Strut* (Michigan/California). Bey's television appearances include: *Rosie O'Donnell X-Mas Special* and *The Tony Awards* (with Broadway Inspirational Voices).

Chris Eddleton (Drums) has performed at Central Park Summerstage with the Brazilian percussionist Cyro Baptista's band Beat the Donkey and Greg Tate's free jazz group Burnt Sugar. For ten years he has been the house drummer for the jazz-hip hop open-mic show *All That*, which included an appearance on BET's *Planet Groove*. Eddleton also appeared on *The Chris Rock Show* with Def-Jam recording artist Saul Williams. Other musicians he has shared the stage with are Brazilian trumpeter Claudio Roditi, Latin jazz pianist Hilton Ruiz, and N'Dea Davenport of the Brand New Heavies. In the U.S., Eddleton has toured in *Brown Butterfly*, and performed at the Monterey Jazz Festival. Internationally, he has played throughout Europe with World Village recording artist Marta Topferova and with Saul Williams. He has toured to Russia, Uzbekistan and Kyrgistan (AK4/Adam Klipple Quintet) and played in Turkey (Brazil & Co., Boys Choir of Harlem), Hong Kong (Massa), and Okinawa (Too the Limit).

La Tanya Hall (Vocals and Vocal Director) tours/special appearances with: Diana Ross, Julio Iglesias, Bobby McFerrin, Harry Belafonte, Aretha Franklin, Gloria Gaynor and Jon Secada. Hall's television performances include: *100 Center Street* (A&E), *Law & Order* (NBC), *The Sopranos* (HBO), *Now and Again* (CBS), *One Life to Live* (ABC), *The Chris Rock Show* (HBO), *An Evening with Harry Belafonte & Friends* (PBS). Her work on film can be seen in: *The Devil and Daniel Webster*. Hall's theatrical credits include: *A Christmas Carol*, *Stormy Weather*, *Dreamgirls*, *Storyville*, *What the World Needs Now*, *Promises and Promises*. Hall is also an in-demand session and jingle singer, vocal arranger and director.

Calvin Jones (Bass) a graduate of the University of Miami (FL), has performed, recorded and toured with Ronny Jordan, James McBride, Steve Coleman, Craig Harris, Cassandra Wilson, Greg Osby, Eartha Kitt, Alex Bugnon, Carla Cook, Chico Freeman, Donald Byrd, Patti Austin, James 'Blood' Ulmer, Max Roach, Pharoah Sanders, Andrew Hill, Ray Anderson and Jon Hendricks. He has also performed on Broadway and toured with *Bring N' Da Noise*, *Bring N' Da Funk*; *Ain't Nothin' But the Blues*; and *All Shook Up*. Jones has performed in 39 states and 25 countries.

Adam Klipple (Keyboards) leads two ensembles: AK4 and Drive-By Leslie. His piano quartet, the AK4, not only plays derangements of traditional standards, but also forays into Brazilian, Latin, West African, funk and pop. The AK4 was recognized as a Jazz Ambassador in 2003, and was sponsored by the Kennedy Center and the U.S. Department of State on a six-week tour of Russia and Central Asia. Drive-By Leslie, his Hammond organ quartet, delivers riotous funk-jazz-dance music. In addition to his personal endeavors, Kipple is involved in stage and recording projects with Craig Harris, Joe Bowie and Defunkt, Jay Rodriguez, and Michael Ray and the Cosmic Krewe. His credits also include performances with the Sun Ra Arkestra, Marc Ribot, John Medeski, Kurt Rosenwinkle, Dave Fiuczynski, David Gilmore, Josh Roseman, Peter Apfelbaum, Rachel Z, Alfonzo Blackwell, and Smokey Robinson. He has appeared at such renowned venues as the Blue Note, Iridium, Blues Alley and the Knitting Factory, and at international jazz festivals such as: the Umbria Jazz Festival, the JVC Jazz Festival, the Moers Jazz Festival, the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, the Free Jazz Festival in Rio de Janeiro, the JazzNOJazz Festival in Zurich, the Akbank Jazz Festival in Turkey and the Poretta Soul Festival.

Samita Sinha (Vocals) though trained foremost in classical Hindustani music, Sinha's repertoire spans a range of styles in several different languages. She experiments in synthesizing

elements of Hindustani music with jazz, electronic music, and theater, creating new sonic intersections by bringing the precision and detail of the classical Indian vocal tradition to various contexts. Sinha began training in Indian classical music at age ten in Flushing, the same time she started playing piano and singing in choral and jazz ensembles and musicals. In 2002 she was awarded the Fulbright Scholarship to study in the guru-student tradition in India with Dr. Alka Deo Marulkar. During this time Sinha developed a unique vocal and compositional style drawing from the various musical and linguistic idioms she knows (Hindi, Urdu, Braj, Mandarin, English, and vocal sound painting), and performed this music throughout India and the Middle East. At present her main projects include KAASH—a music collective she leads—and Sunny Jain Collective. (www.samitasinha.com)

Bill White (Guitar) is a native New Yorker, received his bachelor's degree from SUNY-Old Westbury. He has performed, toured, and recorded with Cecil Bridgewater, Miriam Makeba, Chaka Khan, Hall & Oates, Me'shell Ndege'Ocello, Patti Austin, Taylor Dane, Miki Howard, Jean Carn, Bernie Worrell, Melba Moore, Craig Harris and his own Bill White 350 Project, which has 3 cds on the market. White scored the music for the off-Broadway play, *Sacrifice to Eros*. White performed on Broadway with *Bring N' Da Noise*, *Bring N' Da Funk*, and was featured on Bill Moyers' PBS special *The Language of Life* with Sekou Sundiata.

Bora Yoon (Vocals, Violin and Electronics) is a musical architect and multi-instrumentalist with a twisted penchant for the iconoclastic. She has collaborated with site-specific choreographer Noemie Lafrance, media philosopher DJ Spooky—premiering Subliminal Strings in Paris at Festival Sons D'Hiver— members of Meredith Monk's vocal ensemble, multimedia artist Emile Bennett (DCA, STEIM) and NY Fringe. From the Guggenheim to the airwaves of MTV Networks, she has performed her original work nationally and internationally, garnering awards from the John Lennon Songwriting Contest, Billboard, and the Arion Music Award committee. Recent projects include the live acoustic sound design of AGORA II in the historic 55,000 sq. ft empty McCarren Pool, and the sonic curation of the experimental music/film SummerScreen series.

Designers & Collaborators:

Christopher McElroen (Director) is the Co-Founder of the Classical Theater of Harlem (CTH) where he has produced 27 productions in six seasons yielding 12 AUDELCO Awards, five OBIE Awards, 2006 Lucille Lortel Award, 2004 Drama Desk Award and CTH being named "1 of 8 theaters in America to Watch" by the Drama League. As a director, he has helmed numerous productions at CTH including *Waiting for Godot* with Wendell Pierce, *The Cherry Orchard* with Earle Hyman and *The Blacks: A Clown Show* (four OBIE Awards and named one of the best Off-Broadway productions of the 2003 season by *The New York Times*).

Graham Haynes (Composer) Cornetist /composer Graham Haynes was born in 1960 and raised in the New York suburb of Hollis, Queens. His father, Roy Haynes, revolutionized modern jazz drumming. Haynes studied at Queens College and formed his own ensemble, Graham Haynes and No Image in the late 1980s. He has recorded seven cds of his own music as well as with Steve Coleman, Cassandra Wilson, Lonnie Plaxico, George Russell, Jaki Byard, Vernon Reid, Bill Laswell, Brandon Ross, and D.J. Logic. Haynes served as music director of Tracie

Morris' *Afrofuturistic* (2003) which was presented at The Kitchen. Other multimedia projects include *A Cruel New World* (2003), a collaboration with Donald Byrd and Spectrum Dance Company; *Electric Church* (2000), an event he produced and curated; and *Sights and Sounds* (2000), an exhibition at the Bronx River Arts Center. Haynes has twice been nominated for the Alpert Award in the Arts and has been awarded grants by the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts, and Meet the Composer. He has also been a lecturer at New York University on the subject of Music and Trance.

Richard Harper (Vocal Arranger), a multi-instrumentalist, has recorded on piano, trombone, baritone horn, and voice with artists such as Makanda Ken McIntyre, James Jabbo Ware, Assai String Quartet, Jack Walrath, Miles Griffith, Fred Ho, and Bill Laswell. Over the years he has been privileged to work with Frank Foster, Sam Rivers, Bill Barron, Diedre Murray, Carlos Garnet, Lena Horne, Smokey Robinson, the Jivin' Lindy Hoppers, Craig Harris, Sekou Sundiata, and many others. He has served as the musical director for the Charles Moore Dance Theater, Pepsi Bethel Authentic Jazz Dance, and numerous original productions including *Udu*, *You Don't Miss Your Water*, and *A Winter's Tale*. His compositions and arrangements have been featured Off-Broadway, *Late Great Ladies of Blues and Jazz* and on television *Dance In America*, *City of Acapella*. He is co-composer and arranger of *Spiritual Journey*, a musical that has successfully run at the Apollo Theater and his most recent musical, *Worksong*, has had several New York stagings. Dr. Harper holds a PhD in Ethnomusicology and Composition from the Union Institute and University, and teaches at New School University.

David Thomson (Choreographer and Dancer) began dancing at Haverford/Bryn Mawr Colleges and later received a BA in Liberal Arts from SUNY Purchase. He has worked as a collaborative artist in widely diverse landscapes of music, dance, theater and performance with such artists as Kevin Wynn, Mel Wong, Bebe Miller (founding company member), Remy Charlip, David Roussève, Jane Comfort, Susan Rethorst, Iréne Hultman, Michael Dinnwiddie, Michel Laub/Remote Control, Laurie Anderson, Tracie Morris and Trisha Brown (1987-93) among many others. He has performed downtown, Off-Broadway and in London's West End with the acclaimed a cappella performance group Hot Mouth, of which he is a founding member. Thomson has been on the faculties of Sarah Lawrence College, Movement Research, NYU (Experimental Theater Wing) as well as having taught both nationally and internationally. His collaborative work, *TheForestProject*, has been produced by The Kitchen. In 2001, he received a New York Dance and Performance (BESSIE) Award for Sustained Achievement in Performance. Most recently, he has worked with Ralph Lemon (*Geography Trilogy: Parts 2 & 3*), Dean Moss/Laylah Ali (*Figures on a Field*) and Bebe Miller (*Landing/Place*). He serves on the board of Dance Theater Workshop. These performances are dedicated to his mother, Pearlina.

Sage Marie Carter (Projections Designer) theater credits include: *Moonlight and Magnolias* (Manhattan Theater Club, Alliance Theater), *Nightmaze* (US tour), *Never Sang for My Father* (Steppenwolf), *Dirty Tricks* (Public Theater), *Loves & Hours* (Old Globe), *blessing the boats* (US tour), *Miss Saigon* (current US tour), *Oo Bla Dee* (Oregon Shakespeare Festival), *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (Broadway, RSC London, Steppenwolf), *The Cripple of Inishmaan* (Public Theater), *Missing Footage* (Helen Hayes PAC), *Having Our Say* (Broadway, McCarter Theatre, and national tour), *Cakewalk* (A.R.T.), and *Techno Sacre* (Guggenheim Works & Process). She has created projections for television, chamber music, opera, dance, street art, fine art installations, sporting events, stand-up comedy, and rock concerts. Carter is currently living in Brooklyn, NY working as a designer, programmer, and consultant.

Troy Hourie (Set Designer) Off-Broadway includes: *Temporary Help* (Revelation Theatre, 2003 Drama Desk Nomination); *Throw Pitchfork* (NYTW), *Tartuffe* (Acting Company); Eduardo Machado's *Havana is Waiting* (Cherry Lane Theatre), and *The Passion of Frida Kahlo* (Directors Company/ Arclight) and Classical Theatre of Harlem (2005 Audelco Award, 2001 and 2004 Nominations). Other NYC credits include: The Zipper Theatre, Theatreworks USA, The Culture Project, INTAR, and numerous shows at Juilliard Drama School. Regional includes: The Guthrie, New York Stage and Film, Westport Country Playhouse, Williamstown Theatre Festival, Berkshire Theatre Festival, Bay Street Theatre, Children's Theatre Minneapolis, Syracuse Stage, Pioneer Theatre, Alabama Shakespeare Festival, The Asolo, and GeVa Theatre. Opera includes: Sarasota Opera, Music Academy of the West, Pine Mountain Music Festival, and Juilliard Opera. Recent/Upcoming includes: *Driving Miss Daisy* (Syracuse Stage), *Quartet* (Bay Street Theatre), *King Lear* and *Waiting for Godot* (Classical Theatre Harlem), *Esoterica* (DR2, NYC) and *The Cherry Orchard* (Chautauqua Theatre Company). Troy attended the Bregenz Opera Festival on a 2005 Ford Foundation Travel Grant.

Roderick Murray's (Lighting Designer) lighting designs have been seen nationally and internationally since 1992 on the works of Kimberly Bartosik, Ralph Lemon, Benjamin Millepied, Wally Cardona, Yanira Castro, Paradigm Co., Luca Veggetti, Papatian, Hot Mouth, Ricochet Co., Dusan Tynek, ABT Studio Company, Risa Jaroslow and Dancers, Bill Young and Dancers, Donna Uchizono, Kriota Willburg among many others. He received a 2001 BESSIE Award for his work for Wally Cardona's *Trance Territory*. Murray recently was the lighting designer for Ralph Lemon's *Come home Charley Patton* and Wally Cordona's *Everywhere* both performed at the BAM Harvey. Prior to dedicating himself full time to design he performed for nine years with the award winning Circus Amok.

Liz Prince (Costume Designer) has designed costumes for dance and theater projects for over twenty years. Productions include works by: Bill T. Jones, Doug Varone, Neil Greenberg, Trey McIntyre, Mark Dendy, Mikhail Baryshnikov's White Oak Dance Project, Arthur Aviles, Jane Comfort, Ralph Lemon, Lenora Champagne, Lawrence Goldhuber, Pilobolus, Bebe Miller and Sarah East Johnson. Prince's costumes have been exhibited at The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Snug Harbor Cultural Center and Cleveland Center for Contemporary Art. She received a 1990 BESSIE for costume design.

Lucas Indelicato (Sound Designer) recent credits include: Associate for the 2005 Lincoln Center Festival and Designer for Ralph Lemon's *Tree* and *Come home Charley Patton*. As an Engineer Lucas tours the world with Meredith Monk.

Production:

Vincent J. DeMarco, KelVin Productions (Production Supervisor) credits include: *Fantasy Traveller US Tour* (National Blacklight Theatre Prague) *Cookin'* (Richard Frankel Productions), *Millennium World Peace Summit for Religious Leaders* (United Nations), *Seaside Summer/MLK* Concert Series. DeMarco was the Associate Production Manager at the NYSF/Public Theater 2000-2004. He is a Managing Partner of KelVin Productions, LLC with John Finen and Kelly Cobb.

Christopher Ericson (Sound Engineer) Christopher Thomas Ericson born and raised in Dearborn, Michigan, received his bachelor of arts in technical theatre from Western Michigan University. Now, after recently completing his Masters of Fine Arts in Sound Design and Audio

Technology from University of Illinois, Christopher has designed sound for Mikel Rouse's *End of Cinematics*, *Music for Minorities*, and *Failing Kansas*. Other recent design credits include *The Baseball Music Project*, featuring baseball hall of fame inductee Dave Winfield, and assistant sound designer to Lucas Indelicato on Ralph Lemon's *Come Home Charley Patton*. Christopher has also worked with many other artists such as Phillip Glass, Ravi Shankar, Emmylou Harris, Herbie Hancock, Slipknot, Slayer, Sevendust, Saliva, Andrea Zonn, and Allison Brown. Recently leaving Krannert Center for the Performing Arts as an Audio Assistant, Christopher and his wife have moved to the Chicago area.

Kelly Varley (Production Stage Manager) has been working as a production stage manager for over a decade, in New York and throughout the United States. Since 1997, she has been Technical Advisor for the Circle in the Square Theater School, and helped to create their theater outreach program for New York City youth. Recent productions include *New Works Then Series* (*The Public*), *Dames At Sea* (Jean Cocteau Rep), and *Matt and Ben* (PS 122).

Katea Stitt (Company Manager) began her career as a performing arts producer in 1987. In 1994 she launched her own company, Anyanwu Management, to offer production, tour and artist management services to individuals, ensembles and organizations. Now in its twelfth year, the company's clients have included Ntozake Shange, Lester Bowie, The Ethnic Heritage Ensemble, Dianne McIntyre, Judith Jackson, Sekou Sundiata, Defunkt, Washington Performing Arts Society, District Curators and the Rhythm and Blues Foundation. She has performed tour and road management for ensembles in many parts of the world including the United States, several countries in Western and Eastern Europe, Turkey and Pakistan. Currently, she is the Road Manager for renowned vocal ensemble Sweet Honey In The Rock. From 1999 until 2004, Stitt was the Coordinator of and an oral historian for the Smithsonian Institution's Jazz Oral History Program. She is a producer for Pacifica Radio and hosts an eclectic weekly Jazz and World music program on Washington, DC Pacifica radio affiliate WPFW. Stitt is a co-chair of Black Voices for Peace.

MultiArts Projects & Productions (MAPP) is a N.Y.C.-based arts organization dedicated to producing and sustaining performing artists as they develop multidisciplinary projects that raise questions about the complexities of our time. MAPP works in close collaboration with artists, arts organizations and other arts professionals to provide a holistic set of production and touring services tailored to the specific nature and needs of each project. MAPP was founded in 1994 by Executive Director, Ann Rosenthal, and since 1998 has been co-directed by Rosenthal and Cathy Zimmerman. MAPP has managed, produced and toured music, dance and theater projects by more than 50 artists from fifteen countries.

Suggested reading list by Sekou Sundiata:

- “The American Soul: Rediscovering the Wisdom of the Founders” by Jacob Needleman (Penguin Tarcher)
- “The Declaration of Independence”
- “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” Frederick Douglas
- “Letter from Birmingham City Jail” Martin Luther King, Jr.
- “The Case for Contamination.” Kwame Anthony Appiah. *New York Times Magazine*. 1/1/06
- “The American Empire; The Burden”. Michael Ignatieff. *New York Times Magazine*. 1/5/03
- “Uses of Disaster: Notes on Bad Weather and Good Government”. Rebecca Solmit. *Harper’s Magazine* 9/19/05

Selected poems from *the 51st (dream) state* by Sekou Sundiata:

Poem # 1

Back in the 20th century, when I was a schoolboy, Geography was one of my favorite subjects. I enjoyed thinking about where my room, and our apartment stood in relation to other rooms and other apartments in other countries... to the mountains and the rivers and the great oceans. I could spend ours staring at maps. I could even draw the map of the United States from memory. I felt as if I had some special knowledge of how it felt for Florida to sit up under Georgia, to stretch out into the Gulf of Mexico, the Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean Sea.

I used to look for the Mason Dixon Line when my family drove south in the black Buick Special that my father loved so well. I wanted to know exactly where the grey areas of the North turned into the murderous black and white Southern rule of law. I even wrote a character named Mason Dixon into one of my stories. His job was to stop you at the Line and search your car for weapons.

And, when we studied the 48 states, we followed the national debate about whether or not Alaska should become the 49th state. And I felt proud when Hawaii became the 50th state. I felt like we were growing, getting bigger and better. Then the question was: What would be the next state? Some people said the Philippines and some said Puerto Rico. And Gilbert said his father said, *que me maten, primero*. And the teacher said we had to go into it with our eyes open because there would be no turning back because the decision would create a permanent state. But nobody, in those days, dreamed the next state would be war... not until now.

Poem # 2

Donny Hathaway was explaining
For All We Know *on the radio*
and all the trouble in the world
came down
to the essential energies
swirling like tea leaves
in the bottom of a cup

In the early days of the Aftermath
I was in hiding
from the lost army of protest
calling from the 20th century
for something boisterous and skinny
on the page

I began my heresy
with the scratch and whisper
of Number 2 lead
spelling out the opening line
from instinct to hand to eye
earth water fire air

Later that morning
I gathered myself
in a thin rush hour to Manhattan
The inbound train stalled in a tunnel
and we sat in abeyance
by consensus it seemed
no one spoke or complained
I drifted off into the commuter's dream

The George Washington Bridge crumbles
into the Hudson River
The city buckles
from the Cloisters to South Ferry
and collapses eye-to-eye
with its forgotten under-life
I follow horse trails
through secret pathways
indigenous ghost caves
and African Burial Grounds
A quaquanco echoes down the streets
the Untouchables and Enchanters doo wop
and doo-rag in a spot of starlight
like they don't know they're dead
as if to say See that star, see that light?
This is what we always wanted to be

The rivers come crashing
through the river walls
and the fish begin their tales
Por El Dia de Recuerdo,
when the voice of God
which once said Transcend!
and then said Expand!
is now saying Wow!
in an American Creole
both mystical and clear
through history's anesthesia

I came to my feet at the Wall Street station
and walked towards the door
like a reluctant witness to the witness stand

The crater recalled a lonely planet
A pockmarked moon of ridges
and man-sized valleys, earthmovers,
dump trucks and cranes
A priest kneels in the powdered ash
The rescue stops
for the holy ghost and the angel of death
to cross paths
Someone calls for the jaws of life: earth water fire air
The Ellington blue sky pours over the harbor
The burning isms curl black smoke
into its soft watercolors

I stood citizen-to-citizen with the crowd
three rows deep
A man flipped through the Daily News
matching pictures to the scene
A couple in a doorway argued hip hop
versus R & B in times like these
they look up from their ideologies to agree
Mercury must be retrograde

A woman to my right worried a flag
the size of a handkerchief
the kind you get at the fairgrounds
And Little Emmett Till came to me
A face that long ago cured
my schoolboy faith
in that lyric
So that I could not longer sing
With the voice of praise
As if it was my own
O beautiful for spacious skies

I walked the Avenue of the Americas
past the photocopy gallery
of the missing and the dead
mounted on buildings, in store windows
and lobbies, posted on barricades
along the streets
I searched for familiar faces
and I found a few
but the names were wrong
yet I knew them all
by their fictions

The lighthearted Capricorn

from Seven Hills
playing with her cat on a Crate & Barrel sofa

The Hindu newlyweds who immigrated
from India to be in the "Empire State"

Nestor, the brother of Milagros,
menacing the lens, ringside at the gym

A Miss Trinidad look alike
caught in a calypso on Eastern Parkway

And a pensive man in one of his moods
red black and blue at the root

I could see my own anonymous face in that show
pasted above a word or two about my love
of swimming in the ocean
and my weakness for sentimental ballads
where what's missing and gone
is half the song

I drowned in a flood of burning jet fuel
Down was looking like up when I jumped with my brains on fire
I ran from the falling towers and wandered for days
I followed horse trails through secret pathways
A priest kneels in the powdered ash
The holy ghost and the angel of death cross paths
Someone calls for the jaws of life: earth water fire air

Poem # 3

A citizen walks into a Citizenship looking for directions as the drama opens in a New American Theater with on a view from the 9th Ward that looks out on Speed, an ancient word for a future that is Always Now, a millennium already old and half done. These are the rules to engage this space

Characters enter and exit at will, drawing blood over Reality versus Faith. The fighting is dark and sustained, when the mood is absorbed the Republic moves on to standing ovations

A poet addresses the podium, calibrates her papers and speaks her words into the room where against all gravity they float: *The Scale of Empire*. War she says, but what she means is Wars, but doesn't seem to matter which one. The audience clears its throat and checks its pockets

Underground ciphers script the streets with graffiti forecasts and prophetic proverbs on tee shirts and jittery beats under singing up high in the mix, coming from the wings on wings

What is Life?

Life is what we are thinking about all day

The water is rising

The sky over the harbor turns to beauty from time to time from Lower Manhattan to the Verazzano Bridge, and the air in September is brushed lightly with memorials to forgetting, though far away a car is torn apart on a busy street and another bomber petitions eternity

Special forces with special powers return home.

The word on the street says the CIA antennae sits on top of the old Williamsburg Bank, calls dropping from cell phones as soon as you get anywhere near as if Jihad is taking calls in the mosque between Nevins and Hoyt

Who said who to who said who to who?

Prayer after prayer bears witness by listening for a call back

Peace and whatnot to the indigenous people of the Salvation Army

Amen to the sinners coming to the House of the Lord for the sweet hour of power

Inshallah to the believers handcuffed in front of the halal store

There are books on the subject coming out everyday. The latest one says to lose your soul is a special kind of death. It never leaves the body, it takes refuge in the sympathetic nerves, in the possibility of remembering its warrior status. Turn a page and there it is: *One eye sees, the other eye feels*, a knowledge of Self and Others.

A wave of mixed messages

A tapping through the wires

It doesn't come quietly in the morning. It doesn't come storming at night.

Decrease by increase by degrees

It comes flipping and spinning and insinuating

My left. Your right.

My left. Your right.

My left. Your right.

My. Your. My. Your. My. Your. My

Left. Right.

Left. Right.

Left. Right.

Left Right Left Right Left Right Left Right Left Right Left Right