Etta James at the Audubon Ballroom

Someone knocks over a chair (drunk one)
Fight ready, but this vivid sound stops
fists—who let them big black birds
In? Again. This night. What

Flight. Fight. Let’s try dancing the blues
to SMITHEREENS. Rustle up those moans and sighs
for the good working Henrys of this world

ready ready ready to block & hustle.
Shit and cuss you out, some where back stage—the money scatters.

Your skin beams sweetness while your voice screams
Where’s the fucking fun house?
Your chest blossoms possibilities/ hips thick enough to swing
Which way and oh my
There he stands
In suit sharp as steel and shoes patent leather,
squarish frames/ that wise guy demeanor, the tipped chapeau

You’ve picked up the high heel shoe you threwed down
Then repaired your make up for that second set
The one that promises a better crowd.
Another chair tips back as smoke swarms the littered stage
You’re too young for this mess and he’ll never grow old.

Patricia Spears Jones
October 25th
@ 12:15
Done 202/Meh 7

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If the dress shoes his may is pitch like hell,
And if this seems like make baking, so be it.

Each act alone represents society.
Every time they claim that these are acts of individuals, not of
society.

And fuck you.

There are really, really, really, really women.

The same wool suits and striped ties
I can hear them say. I mean they actually Lynch'd that boy.

But let’s not talk about me.

There are men engaged by change.

We are always to blame.

Gay, black, Latino, Chinese, Japanese, Arab, or Jewish.

And people say.

The talking head is not real, In fact, there is no playing field.

A nurse on her way to work at a clinic.

A detective at his window above to eat dinner with his family.

A black man in Texas, A white man in Wyoming.

Is destroyed in the wake.

Weather or scum is the reason their colorance.

Glare at the glare grow stronger.

Decisions are built to withstand the inevitable.

What I know about America is that hatred.

I grew up and grew away in the 60’s.

Because the bikers were the company of men.

My studies are frightfully spooked.

My Matthew Shepard Poem
and his family

I saw Julian Bond in 1965 at a SNCC rally, just outside this shack on the side of town where I was not supposed to be.

It was even poorer than where I lived. I was curious. Everyone was curious. This was about organizing. But were we ready? As ready as Black folk in West Memphis, Marianna, Helena. Up and down the Delta. Was it so bad that there could be no turning back?

In a mythic retelling, I could say I joined SNCC, attended every meeting, rallied all my friends, marched every march.

But mothers have eyes and ears everywhere in small towns and mine found out. She wanted change as bad as she wanted the schools integrated, hot running water in our house, a car loan paid off, and a husband who did more than scream at her daily before he went to wherever he worked. But first things first. I, eldest daughter. She, working mother.

No contest. At home I had to watch my brother and sister. Tend to the house falling down. Some of my classmates marched to the center of the city, were jailed. A boycott began. It seemed as fit failed, this boycott.

But downtown was dying since Black folk weren't buying. The Chamber of Commerce refused to say it was so.

It seemed as if nothing changed. For a while, I stood on the sidelines as those becoming mythic figures of history crashed by. Until the day Arkansas state troopers stood in the front of my mother's house, high-powered rifles aimed at the people on my street-my childhood in gun sight. This after our neighbors—a father and two sons were arrested by the corrupt sheriff, taken to jail, then released to the waiting
Klan: They got us alive, but only after broken collarbones, broken legs, hemorrhages, bruises, contusions, stomped-on dreams.
I see my mother, who until that day could not say shit, go up to one of the troopers and politely, quietly demand: “Sir, see these children. Please lower your rifle.”
He did.

Later that night, every house in my neighborhood stood ready. The only lights visible were streetlamps. My brother and a friend sat on our front porch, loaded shotguns in their laps. Waiting, waiting for any white man to come down Division Street. Inside our house, my mother prayed, and I started this poem that only begins to grasp my mother’s feat, our family’s ordinary courage.

It’s hard to see children in T-shirts that read “Any Means Necessary” and know that they have not sat as my brother sat on a porch with a rifle waiting, just waiting to kill any white man fool enough to be a member of the Klan.

So, yes, we did not all meet the fire hoses in Birmingham, or face down Chicago police in a battle for the hearts and minds of suburbanites fearful that Fred Hampton, George Jackson, even the dead Martin Luther King would disturb their manicured lawns.
“Glad all over” bubbles up, the secret joy beneath grim turbulence of a decade now known as much for the pursuit of pleasure as for political assassination, a war broadcast nightly, lawless police, ritual murder and hard, harsh truths. Getting harder.
We waited and waited. Stoned for Sly. Southern sons and daughters of the Rainbow Tribe. Under Georgia Tech’ Big Tit’s Big Tit. Sucking in the marijuana, blowing out the heat.

Former debs with shag cuts and torn jeans their good old boy friends who used to hunt and fish, now glitter-rocked, ready with red painted nails and the latest Mott the Hoople tape on their dashboards. Rebel boys back from ‘Nam who used to party with the brothers on the DMZ—that is, when they were not beating the shit out of each other before the VC struck up yet another victorious attack.

Sly’s the perfect foil for this crowd. “Sex Machine” and “Don’t Call Me Nigger, Whitey” are our anthems of choice. “I want to take you higher” just seems like dessert. And of course, Sly is late. Real late. Sly may not even be in the vicinity. Like the airport.

Then the house lights actually dim. The band comes out ragged. Like every musician from Provence to Paducah, they have to play, but their bodies droop. Their songs droop. And Sly appears indeed to be stoned. By this time the audience could care less. The show would’ve gone on. We could sing this shit. We could take the stage and trash it. We could suck beers and colas till the aluminum disappeared.

This is the end of the mighty rainbow. The brothers in huge Afros, amulets and attitudes stalk the round of the Big Tit, checking, checking everybody out. And blond boys with open paisley shirts parade their chest hair.
and tight pants so many peacocks, while we girls
just catch the magnificent promenade.
Between the air outside and the air in here,
there are worlds galore. And we want it all.

The Rainbow Tribe picks up the mess of miscegenation,
our cluttered history, and walks outside.
Into the Georgia night. Fucked up and full of spleen.
*Ripped off*, someone yells.
But we all had a good time. Really.
Waiting for the California soul sound
to wash over us like an ocean wave,
like something we’ve dreamed about but
could not hear. Like a song of peace.

Sly Stone under the Big Tit, pretty in that messy-colored California
way.
Making music happen while the lights in his eyes dimmed.

And we too wanted to make something work that couldn’t.
The sex machine switched off.
The highs were plummeting.
An avalanche of choices awaiting all of us.

But all we wanted was to party. To mess around with the mess
around.
To shift ourselves out of the Georgia sun-stoked days
and turn into each other’s arms as Family,
and loving always loving the way we thought the world should be.