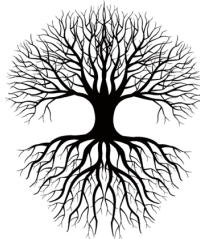


Sherese Francis

Sherese Francis is a Queens-based poet, editor, text artist, workshop facilitator, and literary curator of the mobile library project, J. Expressions. She has published work in journals and anthologies including Furious Flower, Obsidian Literary, The Operating System, Cosmonauts Avenue, No Dear, Apex Magazine, La Pluma Y La Tinta's New Voices Anthology, The Pierian Literary Review, Bone Bouquet, African Voices, Newtown Literary, and Free Verse. Additionally, she has published two chapbooks, Lucy's Bone Scrolls and Variations on Sett/ling Seed/ling. As a writer of Afro-Caribbean descent, her work explores the fluidity and technological aspects of language through an Afro-diasporic mythic lens. She hopes that being a part of Root Work Journal is an opportunity for communion with other visionaries.

To find out more about her work, visit futuristicallyancient.com.



To Be Gifted & Talented & BLack (Arkology from the Last Angels of History)

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"To Be Gifted & Talented & BLack (Arkology from the Last Angels of History)" is an autobiomythography response to Root Work Journal's call. It explores my journey through the educational system and that my greatest learning came after institutional schooling ended for me. Much of my process in this work uses etymology and wordplay, such as interplaying between the roots of ark/arch/archive. For me, wordplay is like speaking in tongues and is a form of remembering buried languages. Language is a form of coding and I want to imagine the possibilities of it beyond conventional ways. After reading works like Amiri Baraka's "Technology & Ethos" and Martin Heidegger's "The Question of Technology," the former thinking of technology through a black centric view and the latter from a white supremacist view, I wanted to write a poem reflecting on science and technology through the black body and earth and Afro-diasporic cultural mytho-history.

To Be Gifted & Talented & BLack (Arkology from the Last Angels of History)

After Sofia Samatar's Notes Toward a Theory of Quantum Blackness

I. *Dub Organizer*

Lift every voice and sing was my elementary school anthem

Dancing the electric slide in the school yard was my first lesson that invisible forces could move the body into an arkestra into a ring shout into spirit possession

I was selected to be the one to say goodbye in junior high because I had reached the top

What does the top mean in a system designed for your failure? A robot

They saw potential: The exceptional BLack The ad/minstrelization

The hypo/thesis of an American experiment: To be An orphan lost in whiteness

For every top there is hidden deep memory and the variables bubbling under the earth

Dark energy makes up most of the universe but white philosophy will tell you:

The further away from home, the greater the enlightenment

But the body wukkin up at the speed of light becomes energy En/arky The hips don't forget

High school looked like a prison A high school named after a merchant and diplomat

High school taught me that the body is slurred as a political negotiation as a commodity

Classical music played between classes as a signal to move

To walk stiff and up high with a load on the back

I desired the drums' unheard rhythms in my daydreams The wheels turning beneath the feet

The drums' sound traveling over a distance to commune with other traded bodies

A dig/it/al technology:

The cross reference

The simultaneous trading

The E/ducation that leads to returning

By the end

I find myself

Collapsing memory onto a com/puter ship

Remembering the motion of feet stamping together on the deck

Why was my presence a rarity in a specialized school? Why was I

Asked if my presence connected with the few others there who had my skin?

Chem was my highest grade

My libation was a scattering of seeds

II. Dub Shepherd

Some say it's mystic...

Jiggle-a-mesa-cara...

But you know it's there,

Yeah here there everywhere

Am I failure for never having left my BLack neighborhood?

Am I failure for returning after college to reelize its value?

I the Debtera

I the Data Thief

I the Re/storer
I the Dia/Gnawa

The Word is bond A ship of dem bones talking Marrow is the root of brain

Deep/pressin' seeds is es/sense in a sick system A dia/spora is a network of roots

Phantom limbs tuning one into fugitivity Maroon is the root of brave

*Yet yuh never know yuhr old philosophy, will fall to the ground
Yuh think that yuh much more smarter, smarter than I*

The quest/I/on digs a path: What is BLackness?

Is it A) a means to an end B) a human activity C) a sacrificial vessel D) a sprout of the ground
Or E) a Dr. Funkenstein experiment Hung up on dem bones Swift motioning the hips

Mother's hips
Hepi/cat
A BLack box of flight

Remembers Solitude Hung by Napoleon in Guadeloupe
Guadalupe is a hidden river of BLack Madonnas For every mountaintop there is a deep

Wade in the rivers of ancestors hanging on the walls

Remembering Mr. Lewin's assignment in BLack Media Studies:
Dumas and Pushkin had BLack BLOOD

See through a lens darkly Em/pty the mind and inside a path is clear A bringing forth
Unheard rhythms to BLOSSOM A dis ruption of normal The Dia/Gnawa

III. Dub Adventurer

An object in motion will remain in motion unless acted upon by an unbalanced force

Cy/maroonic Organism steers a revolution called Jes Grew
The bubbling of BLues' waves into mass

The words that manifest for science is not science itself

What chooses to pass through? How does presence comes out of which does not presence?

Is that a form of poetry? The com/puter ship that brings forth?

The stamping of feet together on the deck?

What does it mean to strum a song in a cemetery with a man named carpenter and have that turned into a myth about selling the soul to the devil at the crossroads?

What does it mean to return?

Is re/story a technology?

Is running back a technology?

A bringing forth The ire of Debtera with a message flowing through the desert

This body The highest sense of poetry Of knowledge The physics of bringing forth

BLooming BLossom of body and all of its knowing and revealing

This body A deep/pressin' technology

We are made in the image of Nub/ling Be hung by Nub/ling

By the knowledge of a hidden god to treasure in a song of running back to self

To be a revelator exiled on the islands of hep Learning patois and turning it into a true name

To tread wildly To what's hidden in danger A bringing forth Emancipation song

Re/turns a flashing glance:

BLackness as a technology of being BLackness as a bringing forth

iNK was the name of God iNK meant BLack

iNK in this skin I use to sow my name into the earth for a harvest I can see in the mist

And I plough this body for its returning To be out of this time

And into divine timing moving fast

So fast that to/morrow has passed back into this body

As a talisman called entelechy The patois of potential emancipated

The h/armonic working of enarkestra

Treading a path wildly like a Cy/morg navigating roots

Ashe/Terra/NTR ReTRNS

Marrow is the root of brain

Maroon is the root of brave