"Whatever Happened to Black America?" Or: The Setzuan Invisibility of Black and Blues

Joanne Braxton
THE
WITCHDOCTOR
THEATRE
a jazz/poetry/drama group
available for bookings
“... the music and poetry of the 70's, the drama taking us into the 80's.”
E. Ethelbert Miller
critic

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WORDS FOR MARGARET WALKER ALEXANDER

Dear Margaret:

This issue of the Hoo-Doo Blackseries is dedicated to you and your peop
It is for you because as poet and educator and humanist you forge word-
struments that inspire, teach, and evoke celebration of the human.

It is for you because you have given us your life/work with consumate

integrity.

It is for you, Margaret, because your sensibility and vision are needful th
that will endure.

It is for your people, the writers you have touched, the young wordsha
you have helped to keep on keeping on, the many thousands gone who dwell w
in your soul, the millions here whom your words sustain, and those who will re
and come to know the poet’s love and the poet’s lore, and, of course, for the u
born who will take control.

With love,

Jerry W. Ward
Guest Editor
"WHATEVER HAPPENED TO BLACK AMERICA?" OR:
THE SETZUAN INVISIBILITY BLACK AND BLUES

I. WHATEVER HAPPENED TO BLACK AMERICA? OR:

this quiet province of schizophrenia
duple meter syncopated blues
symphonic renditions of misery
take me for granted.

"oh, why, why am i so black
so bllack and blue?"

II. THE SETZUAN INVISIBILITY BLACK AND BLUES

"They call me stormy Monday, but Tuesday's just as bad
They call me stormy Monday, but Tuesday's just as bad
Wednesday's worser, and Thursday's also sad."

hey, can you understand that?
i can understand that

bed blues
bad blues
sunday come down
funky blue sheet crazies
crazies kill with a raised leg blues

hey, the no more free milk blues
the after vietnam there is here blues
get me sometimes/shaking
sometimes
messing around dangerous/downtown

To ride the pale death stallion
or watch out
pegasus is an ash i shoot in my arms
pegasus is an ash i shoot in my arms
watch out!
watch out!

hey, can you understand that? duple? critical?
black feet slide to a survival beat
quiet transparent and cool
that’s the black and blues
toes falling
in every rhythm invisible

oh why, why, am i so, blues
bed blues
bad blues
bring the war on home/no more free mill

why am i so black and blues
sunday come down/blues
getting away/everyday blues
blues blues
getting away/blues

i hear you

getting away

Joanne M. Braxton
Jodi runs down the voodoo

let the day come

when my poems and my dreams
and the spirit and the flesh
are the same song
and the hours and the winged gnashings
and the loneliness are gone, gone
let me out of this body
let me rise
drop back skin and body and bone
let me pass need.

Joanne M. Braxton