“My blackness is neither a tower, nor a cathedral
It thrusts into the red flesh of the sun
It thrusts into the burning flesh of the sky
It hollows through the dense dismay of its own
pillar of patience.” - Aimé Césaire, Cahier d’un Retour au Pays Natal (1947)

III

Excerpts from the Wickered Throne

I

There is a House in Ruins,
fenced, a relic nacido ayer.
Cada época, cambia su cara--
el tinte de las paredes.
Resuenan con odio, con
four centuries of controlled demolition.

from bread-basket
to open caskets,
tongue seemed incessant to mock.
Harking guerilla autopsies,
thick uranium acrylic covered-up
its stench.
Pigs gorge the
troughs of law.
Belch “Justified Homocide,”
Cada vez an inner city
wails a police siren.

What is the white moderate,
but a sympathetic coroner, that
performed the autopsy; whose authenticity
corroborates social fact:

What are the words,
“Calm down,” but

A war-clad boot, pressed against the
the Native Son
beseeched at gun-point
to turn the other cheek.
While
the earth underneath,
singed his flesh.
His fecund antennae,
picked the subterranean pitches,
of muffled spirituals, n’ strained spines.
Sepia ballrooms - clanks of stainless silverware.
A feigned smile.

II

History
--From Black Power,
to the CIA’s White Powder-- a
stained homage to narco-saints.
Through open-veined conspiracy,
    naked windows,
I watch America undress herself.
Expecting a swastika on her left breast, charred rope tucked ‘neath the blonde hair,
yanking my blue collar, I stutter at the culture shock.
The gashes n’ abrasions,
    varicose veins.
Only to stop, and find
her black skin,
*Una madrugada que brilla en su infancia*,
speaking in full-lipped trance. With her I watch the:

Sun as the cruelest seamstress,
    piecing in arthritic speed
the umbra of empire; the civilized it bleeds.
Celestial prayers underneath the night’s *hadith*. Constellations slant ‘gainst the walls, I against I.
    Roaches singe ‘gainst a stiffened lip.

She recounts the
ashened dreams,
    brooding at chained crossroads.
The makeshift tabernacles,
where barefoot children lined up. Hungry from the field.
Starry eyed
    constellations that
charted the drinking gourd.
Pedagogue of young gods,
    Who pleaded to Northern charity
to repent 249 years of unpaid labor,
and please,
fund her schools.

She broke down during the Nadir,
From brush arbor, to lynched martyrs. The Redemptionist South,
where Black Christ crucified and died under a Righteous Pilate,
charged to loiter the voting polls.
The vagrancy of a freeman, forever condemned to
soliciting this House’s city halls.
To petition his Humanity,

only to face imprisonment
--The loophole of the 13th amendment,
Where only darkened wrists seemed to fit.--
Convict-lease system brutalized his body.

And Jim Crow,
once perched at every Mom and Pop store,
spigot and lobby,
now nestles in the bosom of a soft crime,
re-sharpening its talons
at the bars of a prison cell.

III

There is a House in Ruins,
Creep through the back porch.
Hear the guttural cries of a democracy betrayed.
Raw flesh that if stripped away enough,
matches the whip-wielder’s godliness.

But
knock on its gold-studded front door.
Instead of floral wreaths,
an alarm sounds off.

That patience, after 4 hours of neglect,
finally bled out. And
riots screamed
to shatter the white-noise
of complacency.
(America’s interior décor.)

Where finally,
the ghetto reaches primetime television.
May 2nd, 1967 -
the Panthers storm the California State Assembly.
The headline reads:

“Grim-faced, in silent,
a file of
angry
young
Negros.”

And once more,
a specter haunts White America. The specter of
a 12 gauged resolve, of a latent revolt.

Of
Renaissance,
Not from white-patroned Harlemites,
But from brothers on the block. From
makeshifted pillars hoisting beggars.
From drug kingpins, perched at crooked alleys. He scours his sweet escape,
but the liquor pantries are laid bare.
Only to find, the Nation of Islam administer knowledge of self.

    From slavemaster to people’s psalms,
    asphalt cafes.
The Corner, their music, their Stonehedge, their Taj Mahal, their monument,
their testimonial… of struggle.
The epicenter of where
    the earth itself stood aloof
to an axis of revolution.
Too black, too strong…

An unfinished negritude
Of the inner colony,
Returning to its nativist land,
Re-awakened.

Midst of raucous screams,
    beaten inmates.
A silhouette spiffed in chained crossroads.
    Huey wipes his snub-nose,
from hustler and street-fighter,
from 11th grade illiteracy and teachers calling him brainless. He
Stays afloat through theft and fraud.
Well-versed in law,
leaving juries in shock, defending himself in courts.
    Spear and rifle, Huey stares solemnly into nightly prelude.
Mane of splintered hatred,
a cocked nationalism. High-pitching street incantations,
written in bedlam.
And finally, at the foot of his cell,
he sits at the Wickered Throne.

Second Reconstruction,
penned as the ghettos heaved.
    Pundits plagiarize the desecrated lives,
ghostwritten as pure hate.
When in reality,
Black beret’d scholars. Simply stormed a capital
that was never theirs.
    Teleprompters rewinded, as Bobby Seale busted out
Executive Mandate #1.

Finally, an indictment.

Law’s in session,
And brothers enter,
    Lil’ Bobby Hutton cries the preamble.
He’s more beautiful after death.
“’I ain’t fina spit this,” barreled throat trembling.
“In 3/5ths! Compromise the truth,”
for a bootlicker’s recluse.”
finishing his own epitaph,
“Peace is a struggling doctor,
And my black rage its patient!”

Johnathan Jackson, 19 and resolute,
struts with
a sawed-off attitude,
    “That’s right gentlemen,
we’re taking over now.”

George wipes the Blood in his Eye,
suffs the last cigarette on his old strip cell,
chuckling,
    “They will never find me amongst broken men.”
Cien años de Soledad, Brother
before the firing squad,
spitting on the Warden’s ashtray.

Across the Hall, Malcolm addresses
an Oxford intelligentsia,
making it plain...

Que eschuchen!
There is a House in Ruins,
rocked in black dialectic,
the Furnace sweltering with stuffed ballot-hymns,
copper pipes chinking,
asbestos collapses. Within its matrix, of
economic entrapment,
a pillar of faith,
disintegrates.

IV

And as a Mexican-American,
as we proceed,
our Great Migration, our Exodus,
the corpses of apartheid-style democracy
Enchinan mi piel.

This duality of cultural entitlement
and material underserved,
distorts my vision.
Un ilegal’s dream deferred.

In one glance,
I see the face of Latino America as
A baby girl. Light-brown complexion, gray and pink hoodie.
Haired tied neatly in a bun.
While hoisted by her father’s shoulders,
--still dusted by the day construction job. Bent downward--
she carries the American Flag,
cheeks jouncing with every step.

But this fleeting hope
clings to its detention center, praying south to its border fence.
Its House in Ruins, a relic nacido ayer.

Ceaseless forsake of rugged-faced gods,
banging against its iron mesh,

This brown-skinned piety,
Asks for so damn little.
Resamos y resamos,
por nuestros papeles,
y les vale pura madre.

Therefore
what’s left,
but a torn self
to witness,
pigeonholed to a callused existence,
its dark-skinned brother.

His soul
as vast as the world,
deeper than ancient rivers. Chest,
empowered to expand to infinity, forged by cosmic powers.
By this Harvest of Empire, to sow,
but never reap.

Returning to my nativist land, we’re
huddled in crackling bus stops.
We speak in disheveled sighs, cough our consensus.
Taking turns to close our eyes,
to imagine a world
that knows our names.