

Runagate, Runagate

By Robert Hayden

I.

Runs falls stumbles on from darkness into darkness
and the darkness thicketed with shapes of terror
and the hunters pursuing and the hounds pursuing
and the night cold and the night long and the river
to cross and the jack-muh-lanterns beckoning beckoning
and blackness ahead and when shall I reach that somewhere
morning and keep on going and never turn back and keep on going

Runagate

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Many thousands rise and go
many thousands crossing over

O mythic North
O star-shaped yonder Bible city

Some go weeping and some rejoicing
some in coffins and some in carriages
some in silks and some in shackles

Rise and go or fare you well

No more auction block for me
no more driver's lash for me

If you see my Pompey, 30 yrs of age,
new breeches, plain stockings, negro shoes;
if you see my Anna, likely young mulatto
branded E on the right cheek, R on the left,
catch them if you can and notify subscriber.
Catch them if you can, but it won't be easy.
They'll dart underground when you try to catch them,
plunge into quicksand, whirlpools, mazes,
turn into scorpions when you try to catch them.

And before I'll be a slave
I'll be buried in my grave

North star and bonanza gold
I'm bound for the freedom, freedom-bound
and oh Susyanna don't you cry for me

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II.

Rises from their anguish and their power,

Harriet Tubman,

woman of earth, whipscarred,
a summoning, a shining

Mean to be free

And this was the way of it, brethren brethren,
way we journeyed from Can't to Can.
Moon so bright and no place to hide,
the cry up and the patterrollers riding,
hound dogs belling in bladed air.
And fear starts a-murbling, Never make it,
we'll never make it. *Hush that now*,
and she's turned upon us, levelled pistol
glinting in the moonlight:
Dead folks can't jaybird-talk, she says;
you keep on going now or die, she says.

Wanted Harriet Tubman alias The General
alias Moses Stealer of Slaves

In league with Garrison Alcott Emerson
Garrett Douglas Thoreau John Brown

Armed and known to be Dangerous

Wanted Reward Dead or Alive

Tell me, Ezekiel, oh tell me do you see
mailed Jehovah coming to deliver me?

Hoot-owl calling in the ghosted air,
five times calling to the hants in the air.
Shadow of a face in the scary leaves,
shadow of a voice in the talking leaves:

Come ride-a my train

Yes, And: Poems of Inquiry and Fruition
Yona Harvey

*Oh that train, ghost-story train
through swamp and savanna movering movering,
over trestles of dew, through caves of the wish,
Midnight Special on a sabre track movering movering,
first stop Mercy and the last Hallelujah.*

Come ride-a my train*

Mean mean mean to be free.

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The following poems are from Clifton's book, *quilting: poems 1987-1990* (and *The Collected Poems of Lucille Clifton 1965-2010*)

eve's version

smooth talker
slides into my dreams
and fills them with apple
apple snug as my breast
in the palm of my hand
apple sleek apple sweet
and bright in my mouth

it is your own lush self
you hunger for
he whispers lucifer
honey-tongue

lucifer understanding at last

thy servant lord

bearer of lightning
and of lust

thrust between the
legs of the earth
into this garden

phallus and father
doing holy work

oh sweet delight
oh eden

if the angels
hear of this

there will be no peace
in heaven

Anodyne

by Yusef Komunyakaa

I love how it swells
into a temple where it is
held prisoner, where the god
of blame resides. I love
slopes & peaks, the secret
paths that make me selfish.
I love my crooked feet
shaped by vanity & work
shoes made to outlast
belief. The hardness
coupling milk it can't
fashion. I love the lips,
salt & honeycomb on the tongue.
The hair holding off rain
& snow. The white moons
on my fingernails. I love
how everything begs
blood into song & prayer
inside an egg. A ghost
hums through my bones
like Pan's midnight flute
shaping internal laws
beside a troubled river.
I love this body
made to weather the storm
in the brain, raised
out of the deep smell
of fish & water hyacinth,
out of rapture & the first
regret. I love my big hands.
I love it clear down to the soft
quick motor of each breath,
the liver's ten kinds of desire
& the kidney's lust for sugar.
This skin, this sac of dung
& joy, this spleen floating
like a compass needle inside
nighttime, always divining
West Africa's dusty horizon.
I love the birthmark
posed like a fighting cock
on my right shoulder blade.
I love this body, this

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solo & ragtime jubilee
behind the left nipple,
because I know I was born
to wear out at least
one hundred angels.

If You're Looking in the Woods for Legba
by Gary Copeland Lilley

The holly, dogwood (holly,
crucifixion) or huckleberry tree

(gaming and luck)
is where you go to meet

the big black man (a parade
of animals will precede)

who can teach you
what you want to know.

Have a rooster with you,
turn him loose in the woods (blood

the base of the tree).
You'll find some trouble there,

a storm or high winds
(the dark cloud is him),

continue the song (136th Psalm)
where every verse ends

with the same words (*for his mercy
endureth forever*). Leave a silver coin.

From the Adyton
by Raina Leon

nyx who stood at creation's dark dawn, blinking her eyes into a wind whisper, takes human form, fills the fleshy folds of it with languor. she widens the hips with death, shimmies her swagger so those who see long for an end that starts in her. from her ear lobes, she hangs pearls to counter the tacky tar allure of her eyes. her scent blooms in summer-sweated jasmine. she lives beyond ocean or light, beyond time's witness of dusty mounding into the body that entangles with body and dissembles some day after many days into dust. she sparked creation in dream and holds it thrumming to bleat. she perches maternal, at the edge of metaphoric devouring. her skin prickles with an ever-primed mother fury: don't. touch. my. baby. not his hair. not her body. not their anything. not them. what is not hers, that she has borne and not born? nothing can be touched and truly known. she most definitely is black, god and feared by gods, loved for her whole night in its schism memories.

Gods, Faiths, and Religions Mentioned

Bahá'í Faith

https://www.uri.org/kids/world-religions/bahai?campaignid=11754335235&adgroupid=116986029093&keyword=&device=c&gclid=Cj0KCQiA8vSOBhCkARIsAGdp6RQqooGfbI93WZ3khPAwNfKEex5zVep-oNd1EHaaLIJ6NoWkibHpl_oaArLAEALw_wcB

Adyton

<https://memim.com/adyton.html>

Nyx Goddess

<https://www.greeklegendsandmyths.com/nyx.html>

Legba

<https://www.nps.gov/afbg/learn/historyculture/legba.htm>

Santeria

<https://www.latinolife.co.uk/node/231>

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Santeria>

Yoruba

<https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/what-is-the-yoruba-religion.html>