

IN MUTUAL SURVIVAL
SOLIDARITY

C R ~~O~~ S S R ~~O~~ A D S
S T I L L N E S S
R A G E



Our last time in NYC w/unofficial member Moor Mother Goddess



Written from Philadelphia in
parallel with Sondra Perry:
My Twilight Zone Thing
at Recess, New York City,
unusually 'blame it on El
Niño' warm December 2015.

Y O U

HAVE 4

M E ~~S~~ S

A ~~G~~ E S

METROPOLARRTY

METROPOLARITY

The manifestation of contrasting principles, tendencies, or lifestyles in an urban system and any reactions resulting from encounters between these forces.

METROPOLARITY

was born in the pixelated summer of 2012, desperate for a space where technology and community could intersect. We are a collective of speculative fiction writers/artists/activists based/raised in Philadelphia. We are poor & working class/low income, queer, trans, survivors, mothers, professionals, non-academics, glorious, amorphous border-walking space-dreaming city folk of the African/Caribbean/mestiza/European diasporas. We at METROPOLARITY believe that those without power must take advantage and control of the media outlets that we have access to. We choose science fiction as our prism to manifest world-paradigms necessary for our survival. We are destroyers and resurrectors. Walk with us.

@METROPOLARITY / METROPOLARITY.NET

Samuel Delany tribute anthology, *Stories for Chip*.

@ALEXSMI54827599 BUT FIND HIM ON FACEBOOK

MSG 3: M. 'Eighteen' Téllez: A hybrid mestiza cyborg, founding Metropolarity member, and Philadelphia native, Eighteen writes and performs speculative fiction about bodies/objectification, intimacy/class, neighborhood/land/community, and the violence in relying on binaries to order the world. Eighteen is frustrated/pissed with institutional distinction, white supremacy, and fixed rather than fluid treatment of language and identity. They consider the spoken and written word handy and inexpensive tools for deconstructing oppressive world-ordering narratives.

Among other works, Eighteen writes *All That's Left*, an episodic post-binary dystopian cyborg anime type jawn. It exists for free online with an accompanying audiobook version at CyborgMemoirs.com. Their work has been assigned alongside LeGuin and Butler in University of Penn English department classrooms and lord knows where else. They are a 2014 recipient of Leeway Foundation Art & Change Grant and featured reader in the 2015 Trans Literary Salon.

@CYBORGMEMOIRS

MSG 4: RAS MASHRAMANI CAME UP IN RENTAL UNITS, JERK CHICKEN PATTIES, AND SURVIVAL HORROR VIDEO GAMES. RAS MASHRAMANI PERFORMS EXTENSIVE AUTO-ARCHAEOLOGY ON A DAILY BASIS WITH THE HELP OF WIKIPEDIA AND TUMBLR. RAS MASHRAMANI BELIEVES IN HER OWN DNA AND DARKNESS. HER NAME IS A CELEBRATION, SHE IS A JOB WELL DONE.

You can find her work at rasmashramani.tumblr.com, here at metropolarity.net, the *Painted Bride Quarterly*, *Bedfellows Magazine*, and *Metropolarity's Journal of Speculative Vision and Critical Liberation Technologies*.

@ANTI_GYAL

MSG 1: Rasheedah Phillips is a public interest attorney, author, mother, Afrofuturist, and Aries living and working out of Philadelphia. In her writing, Phillips explores the fine line between fiction and reality, experiments with time order, reverses cause & effect, and turns black holes inside out to create worlds. She is also the creator of The AfroFuturist Affair, and a founding member of Metropolarity. She recently independently published her first speculative fiction collection, *Recurrence Plot (and Other Time Travel Tales)*, and an anthology of experimental essays from Black visionary writers called *Black Quantum Futurism: Theory & Practice Vol I*. Phillips was recently a 2015 artist-in-residence with West Philadelphia Neighborhood Time Exchange.

@AFROFUTURAFFAIR

MSG 2: Alex Smith: An anvil. A wild leaf, wafting to the grass on the tendrils of ghosts and the dreams of our fathers. A naked vein and the enmity of ether. A myth of the lamp of the universe; a light to guide you to it. All of these things we know, all of these things we seek, all are encompassed in spiritual vortex of the works of Alex Smith. His is the power to weave on the most dangerous loom.

Smith is a queer black activist, poet, dj, actor, musician, afro punk/afro-futurist chronicler of the naughty universe. Smith's work speaks to the edge, to the post-fringe dystopia slowly creeping upon us. Too cantankerous and flamboyant for the Saul Williams wanna-be/def poetry set, too tribal for academia, Smith paints viral inscriptions for an audience of armed pixie insurrectionists. He is the founder and curator of the queer-empowered Laser Life sci-fi reading series. Alex's short story collection, *Gang Stalk Oprah*, with its lines hashed like an SAT-word injected SEPTA bus graffiti, will kidnap you, convert you, shoot you in the leg and then set you free. Pick up his zines here and find him in the recently released



You have entered the
Latitude 40.7220556 and
Longitude -74.0045269 and
have reached Rasheedah of
Metropolarity with an urgent
message for you:

Unfortunately, I am afraid
that some of you will not
perceive the full contents
of this message because
the critical contents were
recorded in what will soon
become your future.

You are in a location
where time flows in a
linear direction, due to a
temporal-spatial imbalance
within your particular
region.

Therefore you can only
understand information
flowing in a forward, causal
direction. Messages coming
in from the future flow
backward into the past.

smuggling codeine into your room. wait a
few days for the staff to stop clocking
in and activate the fire alarm, gather
adderall and ambien for the ride, slip out
through the courtyard. jump the north wall
and find ridge avenue. at the first the
supermarket you find, hail a hack cab.
keep your bracelet and your hospital gown
close in case you have to elicit sympathy
or mercy, or at least so you can make a
good politically charged corpse. take the
hack down kelly drive until you hit the
martin luther king drive bridge - watch
for police activity along the waters,
and slip out the back of the buick. The
MLK bridge can get you back west, but
you can't even imagine what it might be
like around the universities. if your
house will be raided when you return, or
who has your laptop. bae hasn't been by
the hospital in a few days, gotta check
on her. you're sure everybody's running
around with important things to do now
that we've reached that tipping point
we've always hypothesized about. between
now and tomorrow you're gonna think long
and hard about where you're going, and who
you're going to be.

at all the bridges and passthroughs. and you've been keeping meticulous notes since then about escape routes and resource lists and other plans that lead you back across the river west. all the stuff you been writing in the notebook before this was gonna get this place shut down once you was out of here. since the first day here you been testing them, kind of like an independent quality assurance audit. like yesterday, the afternoon med techs gave you your maxi-pres too early, and you laid in the bed for three hours unable to remember any negative feelings or experiences and you couldn't remember what got you here, and no one called you for dinner or checked to see if you're dead or cutting yourself up. and you know they miss their rounds. so they couldn't ever be sure you're alive and not developing anorexia. they seem to know about the plot to expose them, so they're prolonging your internment purposely. and maybe while you're sedated at night they been slipping the book out of your arms and they tear out the useful pages. so remember the basic plan - black on black for the revolution: black sweatshirt and sweatpants. wear the black uggs julie left you when she got kicked out for

Outside of your spatial-temporal orientation, all modes and dimensions of time are constantly interacting with each other. Under ideal conditions, information should flow both ways at all times, and technically **does**. For instance, the whole of the body of knowledge that we call history is simply **us** constantly **injecting ourselves** into the past. **Our gaze upon history** shapes it, crystallizes it, collapses it upon a linear timeline.

Perhaps that is what we, in the future, are doing to you, in the present, which is why you cannot perceive or interpret the future information, except as déjà vu and as dreams that you forget upon waking, upon interaction with your frozen realities. You fail to see the portents because the future collapses upon interaction with the present. Most people therefore are adverse or simply unable to form any connection to their past or future selves, because they believe that the future has no bearing on their present actions, or that their present actions have no bearing upon the past.

There may be hope for some to disrupt the prison of the here-now, the linear spatial-orientation that disallows access to the past and future with the same privilege as that of the present. Your point within the present can itself be a reference point for determining what both the past and the future look like.

Here are some questions that may allow you to **orient yourself** into a temporal perspective that allows for backward time causality.

1. I notice coincidences and/or synchronicities:

- a. Never
- b. Sometimes
- c. Often

2. I've experienced time slowing down, stopping, or speeding up:

- a. Never
- b. Sometimes
- c. Often

hey, it's you again, 17 days into your fourth institutional mental health vacation and things have really taken a turn... you was up the earliest of all the patients this morning to avoid the group sleepwalk into the tv room for morning meds and vital sign check-ins. you turned the tv on trying to watch some music videos, but the 24 hour news channel told you there's a manhunt in the mountains of southern california for a law enforcement defector who murked a two officers and their children, and there's a manifesto somewhere but your device is behind the nurse's station, locked up so you can focus on your treatment and stabilization. and while the reporters speculated, there was the ticker reading off a laundry list of disorienting stories: pipe bomb attacks, mass suicides, sold out gun shops, the national guard, cyber wars, tent cities - you were not sure where you were this morning, honestly. the sun was barely out and it was just you and the phlebotomist, who didn't notice you or the headlines, just methodically set up for morning vitals. even as you tell it right now, the hospital feels separate from the all the checkpoints you know they're setting up

You have an
incoming call
from a patient
at Fairmount
Mental Health
System - -

To accept this
call from *RAS*
press 1 - -

To decline
press - -

BEEEEP

3. I am able to make time
slow down, stop, or speed
up:

- a. Never
- b. Sometimes
- c. Often

4. I have seen shifts in
reality:

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Yes or No
- d. Yes and No

5. I notice these shifts:

- a. Never
- b. Sometimes
- c. Often

6. I experience déjà vu:

- a. Never
- b. Sometimes
- c. Often



chemical sickness and food growing...

[sighs]

Not sure if some mercenary army might show up and disappear us all or what.

You know, I'm really sick too. In a lot of pain all the time.

[laughs]

I thought I was gonna be all official on this thing and talk about, like, the logistics of how we're surviving and all that...

[laughs]

I remember one time Ras said to me, "You better live your life now cause when the war comes you're gonna need all those memories to keep you warm." Really made me think about how I'm living my life at the time. And now, it's like... damn, it's really scary.

It's really scary.

But this is it.

**TRANSCRIPTION END
END OF PACKAGES**

MESSAGE LOADING...

[!]

**THIS MESSAGE CONTAINS
UNSUPPORTED SPATIAL,
TEMPORAL, AND SENSORY
FILE FORMATS**

LOAD ANYWAY?

**NO
YES**

TROPICAL GHOST

When none of us had a name
When the universe was rock and grain
The beast wore magic pelt
The trees were woven, stitched tight
into the veldt
And the darkness savored night
When God said let there be light
IT EXPLODED

When none of us had a name
When the beast and fowl were tamed
And the stars were drifting stone
And the nebulas churned chroma dance
on their own
Until the rivers get choked on
silicone ash
And the sinners all turn to glass
IT EXPLODED

I am light bent flowing home.

Everybody strapped up. You don't go anywhere alone. And we're all running up into the labs to get juiced up.

Not sure if you know this but Philly has hospitals _everywhere_. Had em, I mean. A lot of major ones gone but the big money ones owned by University of Penn and all that? They're still going for right now. It's fucked up. It is what it is. You do what you need to for safety. All those old hospitals and old money are only gonna matter for as long as there's electricity running to this part of the city. After that it's really gonna get live.

Maybe not. People talk shit on Philly like we're rude, we're angry, but I always said we're just a city with PTSD. Generations all the way back to before the white man came with his sickness and his god and his greed. And you know, now that the police can't do shit and the city can't do shit, the people -- we're out here finally doing what we need to.

There's a lot of people losing their lives right now. But it's not like how they always show in the movies, where people become shotgun cannibals and shit. That's that white man sickness story, you know. We wanna heal. We wanna do things our way. Good riddance to the bullshit. Fuck the police. Fuck the state. We're on this Zapatista shit now.

Not sure how we're gonna deal with like...

I'm just realizing you probably aren't gonna be able to load this message all the way. I heard the bandwidth up there is all being monitored, and haptic-enabled cybernetics are prohibited? I even heard all the food and drugs and like, the air in certain public spaces are drugged? I don't know how y'all are living up there. I guess when it comes to safe drinking water and food people ready to give up a lot of shit.

So, if you're not getting the haptic on this you can't tell -- I'm shaking my head right now. It's overcast. The air's really damp and kinda burns your eyes and you can't smell good of anything.

And uhh, what else is going on here...

I dunno -- I'm like, I hope y'all are even allowed to get transcriptions.

So wack... You can't just use words for everything anymore. You need to feel that shit.

Lot of us out here are cyberized cause it's the only way to deal with the pain anymore. Everything down here got contaminated in the floods. Everything is shut down. There's been riots. There's been... police manhunts. Lemme clarify that: police getting executed in the streets. City officials -- can't find them anywhere. Gangs out here doing landgrabs. Churches out here doing landgrabs.

We grinned at sin, mostly, spiraling through black ether as a bright yellow wave, crash landing on the roof or splashing into windows on wires, reeling off one-liners and brash talk that belied the danger in the situation. A flunky with bad breath and a ill-fitting suit would pull some kind of lever and these hired goons, probably deadbeat fathers with no pension or former mercenaries bored and ill-adapted to civilian life or meatheads spawned from some cult or hate group they'd been kicked out of, would all come trotting out, decorated with surplus pouches and clunky artillery hanging from the taut string of their utility belts. We waded across floors riddled with spent shell casings and turned these goons' guns into splinters. We jacked up men in suits, crashed through the skylight in the board rooms of these shadow corporations; we hemmed mobsters fat with the toxic nuclear steroid of the month to cement walls-guidos jacked up on superpowered drugs and contaminants, they all flinched and fired aimlessly at our swift, gliding rainbow of dizzy confusion. We bounced on drug tables and kicked over artifacts illegally procured from alien worlds in alternate universes. We burned these buildings down to the ground, a gleeful flick of a finger on a kerosene soaked hallway, swept away in the backdraft, watching the flames lick at our winged footies as we blasted

back into the night sky. We stood there defiantly in the streets as we razed villain enclaves or looked through high-tech binoculars from a few miles away as, one after the other, these towers of oppression fell from the lines the in sky, crumbling into a pit of ash and mold, just fragments of ideas left, just the rocks. We smiled wildly at the sight, some of us running up light posts and baying at the moon or waving flags bigger than our young bodies, bright crimson drapes of cloth swaying gently in the night breeze, emblazoned with our crests. Or some of us, we'd let loose in jetpacks and fireworks and let the lights entangle us in red stars and green lightning bolts and violet hearts.

"So don't just let us die out here."

On the train he sits and admires what seems like hordes of men that traipse from car to car, brandishing incense and oils and bootleg DVDs of *Our Idiot Brother* and *Think Like a Man*, goods all wrapped up in a khafeyah or in loose sheets from FINAL CALL newspapers and Wal-Mart circulars, then stuffed into a laundry basket and wheeled onto the next cart. They all went teeming by as passengers shifted their broken bodies in and out of his life, some hanging onto the ceiling straps like the Rolex-knockoffs on their wrists or the

Hi, this message is part of a routine relay for off-site Metropolarity archiving.

Uhhh...

[sighs]

I'm not really sure who's going to receive this. The location was previously negotiated but that's all. Uh, I'm not too sure how much I should be saying. We're a liberation technologies front, based in Philly. And um -- actually we're not even calling it Philly anymore since the floods and the pharmaceutical doping. We're not sure who even knows about what's happening here, since it seems like our outgoing messages are being shot down before they reach anyone. We don't receive any incoming, and intercepted messages seem to be all propaganda intended for, I dunno, some people not us.

So yeah.

What was I saying? Right. Greetings from Lenapehoking.

Center City and most of the old blocks between the Delaware and the Schuylkill aren't there anymore.

Probably don't even know what I'm talking about...

You know what?

YOU HAVE [1] NEW PACKAGE

SENDER IDENTIFICATION: MAGUS TÉLLEZ

TIMESTAMP: LOADING...

[!]

THE INFORMATION IS UNABLE TO LOAD...
FORMAT UNSUPPORTED

LOCATION: LOADING...

[!]

THE INFORMATION IS UNABLE TO LOAD...
UNABLE TO FIND LOCATION

HAPTIC: LOADING...

[!]

THE INFORMATION IS UNABLE TO LOAD...
HARDWARE UPDATE REQUIRED

AUDIO: LOADING...

TRANSCRIPTION IN PROGRESS

TRANSCRIPTION START

fake, now fraying Louis Vuitton handbags they bought a few days ago under the Girard Avenue el stop, others turbidly stuffed into seats trying desperately not to touch thigh to thigh or look each other in the eye.

A red dot. A yellow dot. "Here," it says to him. "Dream of this."

Was someone whispering? That man in the trench coat—long slender frame, shaky hands, standing there like an extra in a Marilyn Manson video that wandered onto the set of a made-for-TV Matrix sequel. Why is the man's neck craning like that, why is he looking out of the crowded subway car wildly every time it comes to a stop, scanning the passengers still on the platform in the seconds before take off? "Doors closing." the mechanical voice says. Kareem shrinks further into his seat, his eyes peeping out of the dark cave of his hoodie, still sizing up the man in the trench coat. Then their eyes lock and the man's jaw drops. His hands shake even more violently, eyes slowly growing wider.

Thump. Clattering sounds ring through out the forest. The three are running through the woods, cutting past trees and bursting through beasts, rainbow-colored blood coating their faces. The creatures' bones

grind underfoot as they race in a straight line towards the calamitous sounds. Reverberating voices, uproarious shouts, and through another thicket, a clearing, a rock circle, magnificent pink colored unicorns and black skinned cherubs, talking lizard men and aging dwarfs: it is the rising swell of a ritual that has enticed them.

The natives don't notice the presence of the RED, WHITE, and BLACK. Amidst the thrumming sound of drums, the pounding of taut animal hides on fashioned hollow, curved wooden spheres, they are approached by a girl. Her nose is a flat black pulp, her eyes thin tufts of what seem like shattered diamonds, her hair spindly and prehensile, her feet webbed and fingers amorphous sticks.

To RED she holds out her cupped hands as an ember grows to the point of a small, swelling star.

"Here." she says to him. "Dream of this." And the girl lets it go and they watch it rise, reaching a searing and unbearable light, an orb in the air pulsating. The ritual and dance clamor on. "This is the sufficient heat and light and death of the universe." The orb slowly fades. RED tilts his head to the side, staring quizzically at the girl. He expects her to move; she



through the basement of their domiciles, creating a fire chant from nothing, weaving their ancestors' ghosts as thread on a cosmic tapestry. I see them in their fields pick luscious fruit and give this fruit to those starving, see them resurrect bodies and bones with the power of thought. I see them cross miles of thorn and glass and heat, to cross what to them would be stars, galaxies of white dwarfs-which to us are but a day's journey-for love. I see them in their churches; in their schoolyards; in their prisons; in their offices; in their bazaars, and where all hope is lost, they grasp, they survive. They do this without the mystic enchantment of unicorn's horn; they do this without the healing power of a witch's tongue; without nano-machines and limbic data mods, without recurrence atomizers and warp shafts and tri-spiral hearts."

"Even still, they are not all on the list."

"Aye. But he is one of them."

just stares at him with a light smile, gives him an urging nod. "It's ok," she says. "Let it go."

WHITE and BLACK move with ghost-like grace into the crowd of glass gods, of shrieking myths and mer-folk and they kill them all. Bursts of living lights explode these creatures into fragments and a tapestry of blood paints the forest floor. As their weapons warp the air, the young girl clutches her hands close to her chest, steps back gasping. RED's once-curious dark black eyes narrow. He raises his cannons and fires.

EARTH.

The room heats up. Wild Jack is backing away, a terror in his eyes that I can't quite read. Is he shrinking from me? The light intensifies; there are colors and sounds then no color, no sound, just pure white. And, as swiftly as the light arrives, so does the pitch thick blackness of the dark.

I can hear a voice.

"Welcome."

It's her. It's the hologram from Angela's house. I can't see her, there's just darkness around. But her voice is a clear

tone, a sweet choppy timbre, calming.

"Do not be alarmed, my little Captain."

"Am I...floating?" I ask. My limbs don't feel like they've disappeared, but that they were simply never there in the first place.

"Sort of."

"What's happened to me?"

She pauses. Then says:

"Close your eyes little starry Captain, little man of cosmos, you're almost there, becoming." I feel something grip me, two pairs of hands. They are guiding me, softly floating me downwards. There in the darkness I can make out a table. It is suspended in the void.

She continues: "A lotus flower will appear at the crest of your every step, through cracks in the dust and piss strewn sidewalks and in the mire of the still damp tarmac leading to the place you call home. Light this stick," she says, handing me something. "It's a candle, and yes, though it's just a figment or a symbol of your dreams, it's something you can hold on to, it's something you can use to see in the dark. Can you see it? Behind

the flame? On another plane, a figure, spiraling coming closer now and standing grand in space and lacking light? Is it sentient? Is it you?"

"I don't know. Please, I don't know."

For a second I can see her, a reflection of light from somewhere sparkling off of the platinum of her dress. In that split second, I can see my own image. I am dressed in a sprawling, golden robe, adorned with a crown of jewels, my hands are glowing fissures of pure, crystal green light and I am floating in the vacuum of space.

GREEN, his steps giant but still subtle, displacing earth in a poetic fray, a path of lotuses in his wake, approaches BLACK, places his hands on BLACKS corrupting face.

"The objective," BLACK tries to remind his once-compatriot.

"There is no objective," GREEN assures him.

"Why?" BLACK asks through a mouth blackened with his thick, coarse blood.

"When I touch the boy, I see them. I see them in dance circles moving kinetically