

MARTY McCONNELL

## The Sacrament of Penance

I come to claim the white boy who yesterday slaughtered nine Black worshippers at prayer. Because to deny him is to deny the ways he and I are the same, deny the hideous lineage that dogs us and feeds us. Gavel and spit. Rope and bumper and chain. I claim him but will not say his name. It slips down my throat like half-gone milk, slick and hard.

I come to claim the white father who gave his white boy a gun for turning 21. I claim him as my own dripping shadow, as my own burning sanctuary. I claim him with his wife, I put their names in a bucket and fill it with tar. I fill it with bleach. I fill it with salt and light it on fire. I put my name in there too, but always it comes back to me. Covered in asphalt. Covered in newsprint. Covered in grief.

I come to claim my gods who are your God who are all the winds that rise in arcing rage at what is taken, at what is taken, at what is never returned. I say wind but mean gale. I say gale but mean storm. I say storm but mean bloodsquall, I mean what is brewing will boil. It will bitter. It will burn, and burn, and these white tears kerosene on the blaze.

# Actual Rapture

Day with rejoicing. Day with the wind  
in its shoes. Day splintering winter  
behind the heels of joggers.  
Day with seeds. Day without rot.  
Day hungry for lemons. Day starved  
for bright. Day thirsty for reservoir hips.  
Day reservoir for sorrow. Day hold sorrow  
like a grandfather's basement grenade. Willow-  
scaling day. Wave-chasing day. Day  
even the moon can't abandon. Day tuned  
to the samurai channel. Day the mushrooms  
bloom. Cicada-hum day. Comet-miss-us  
day. Day of automatic altars. Day we tip  
our faces up to swallow clouds.  
Day we become our own species.  
Day we assume the posture of funk  
and play the banjo loud. Day we shutter  
the homicide shop and museum  
the epileptic streets. Day worth its weight  
in pigment and ash. Blue day. Blues day.  
Day invented testimony. Day bastard chapel.  
Day mystic hymns. Day rivet the buildings. Day  
map the hood. Day weave no memory shroud. Day  
cover no forever face. Day put no pennies  
on no eyes in no fountains day of no wishes  
only spells. Day with no shouting. Day with no fire.  
Bright-lensed day. Day built for singing. Day  
nobody dies. Day nobody dies.