

PRECIOUS OKOYOMON EARTHSEED

ZOLLAMT^{MMK}

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22.08.-01.11.20

“The Destiny of Earthseed
is to take root among the stars”
— Octavia E. Butler, *Parable of the Sower*

In 1876, the United States government introduced the Japanese vine kudzu to Mississippi. The state was in danger of being lost entirely to widespread soil erosion brought about by the extensive cultivation of cotton by chattel slaves, and the vine—already notorious for the speed at which it grew—was deployed as a weapon intended to fortify the ground soil.

Instead, kudzu—now thousands of miles away from its home in Japan—became monstrous, consuming everything in its vicinity and earning the epithet “the vine that ate the south.” The word kudzu has meanwhile become a metonymy for the threat of invasive species everywhere. Its specific history as a failed remedy for the monumental toll slavery took on the ecological system of the American South has been largely forgotten. The story of kudzu is written in the same language that objectifies both human beings and nature and produces violence, oppression and individuation. To this day, kudzu remains a foundational substructure of the American South, which—if the plant were removed—would return to a state of erosion. However, in recent years its planting has been made criminal, “due to its capacity to *escape* cultivation.” Like *Blackness* itself, Kudzu is both indispensable to and irreconcilable with Western civilization.

In the work entitled *Resistance is an atmospheric condition*, consisting of a massive planting of the vine in the gallery, Precious Okoyomon allows this transhistorical realm into the museum. The exhibition space becomes a habitat of constant change—of adaptation, growth, death, difference, inseparability, and emergence—that finds new form in being-like subjects.

Six figures built up out of raw wool and dirt preside over the space. Collectively, they are entitled *Open circle Lived Relation* and embody processes of material decay and rebirth, rot and collapse.

The exhibition’s title is taken from a fictional religion in Octavia Butler’s books *Parable of the Sower* and *Parable of the Talents* whose central contention is that the Earth’s seed can be transplanted anywhere and will survive through adaptation. It asks us to consider a theology of mutation, flux, and motion.

Precious Okoyomon

Sky song

I am only a body of water
nourished by the wind
Love my only weapon

I found myself unlacing the monster
The umbilical cord returned back to its matrixial splendor
Everyone just wants the bread and the wine and the blood
transubstantiation
Recklessly descending on carcasses

I lay my skin out to dry
At the end of the dream
I was tormented

The jerky orgasms of hysterical life
Time passes very quickly and I feel like a cyclone

Life burst like an over ripe pomegranate
a whole day
I never have enough
It's never enough

always running short

Getting bored
Keeping up appearances

Try and make more room for laughter
I whisper my secrets Talk only of loving
We are two twined
tasting of wild rosemary and vinegar

To the point of ecstasy you cocoon inside of me with
fragrances
You laugh
I Sing
The references flare
On like cocooned palms

Hallelujah

Praise on praise on

Hallelujah

The mouth sings the hands the ass the feet the cunt
Your entire being liquefies into sounds the voices the
rhythm
Meet me inside of the chrysalis

At the peak of ascent
I burst like a cloud The juice runs down your mouth

The sky songs don't stop but i roll on

Anxious
heavy
Trekking thru the valley of fear
The tunnels of anguish and the fires of hell
Each one starts pulling
The devil's tail is in my mouth
fear pierces me

I dose into my daydream with rose petal eyelids
the day cums

Soft and velvety
Upon my tongue

Feathers falling down from the sky in red pussy sunsets
the desire of the drill of power

The sky is set with a statue of protest
The feet of the drowning things
the soil is perched

I am petty hushed up scandalous
Pretty unavoided guilt
Plz amend my hatred of the narrow thinking of my mind

At the end of the daydream I am frustrated on the bed
with my ass in the air
I know how to dispose of my aborted dreams

The boredom falls equally on all things
The stagnant unbroken brightness

Oh i see a butterfly

Sorcery lulls me into melancholy tenderness
My anger laps up with flames

I was awakened by the night

ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh

At the end of day break before the end of the world
Before all fathers
The mother with chapped lips and blisters
Tends to the rotting tree
The wind whistles it makes an odd noise like crackling

This is the disgrace

a colonial highway
Wind plucked and browned like twigs flying up into
smoke

Dried bitter leaves
Yearning rags
Everyone's desires go astray for this is a sea of garbage
The sea opens up into a foaming rage
For this is a pile of rotting muck

I compare my lust to a foolish forest
I wish it was in my power to show you
I discover myself a distant mirage
I am only waters of the sky
I declare my sins for there is nothing to say in my defense

Dance idols for i too am an apostolate
I have assigned god with my lazzines
my words

my gesture
obscene songs
I slow
Swallow a void of butterflies
Straight into the earth's breast

From staring too long at trees i have become a tree

Now my feet strong in the ground
My feet have dug into the ground i am venomous
I go where the water goes this is a madness of
remembering

This is a madness
I am unleashed

Do you know the rest ?
At the end of beginning
I choke on the wings of butterflies
angels guarding gates of the void

I have exhausted memories patience
Defied tired
I worship my perversity
It overwhelms me

Oh what impenetrable jungle !

Oh what horrible leaps !

Vroom vroom ugh

I charm the snakes

Vroom vroom ugh

I turn the rain back into waves

Vroom vroom ugh

Effort just to stay alive

Vroom vroom ugh

The promise times will never return
A cursed venereal sun
Pecked out by hummingbirds

Eternally renewed cross

I lay in my grave of animality

Legs parted standing stiff

Fear in the back of my throat

Fear in the trees

Fear in the ground

Fear in the sky

Piled up in anguish

May the stars find my confidence

Stuffing my throat with fangs

This is the end of the world

Begin again

Mourning in forgetfulness

Rotting in the sun's overhead pulse

Oh love of the world

I hate u

Resisting in vanity

Bathe me in blood

Emptied of anger

Emptied into the earth

Recoil and expand

The body convulses and resounds
It's all about perspective

Standing in the midnight sun

Rise

Sky licker

Rise

Hannah Black

“The kudzu is so far from home,” says Precious Okoyomon, a few days before the end of the world. That stupid world exuded a kind of glamor, an optical trick produced by constant movement. The world-shimmer sediments into just stuff. Stilled and trailing roots on the ground, the heaped remains are like a knot of wool, a handful of earth. Confronted again with physical being, with what I do and don’t have, maybe I seek out an avatar, or maybe I imagine that I have an inside.

The obliterated world seems full of little infinities, though in reality you only live once, and once, and once. “Constant apocalypses are happening,” says Precious. We think we know all about that. This is a few days before the crown of time closes around us. Constant faith. For weeks I don’t read, I don’t write. I begin this and put it aside.

In the museum, at first the ruined kudzu looks like a representation of an ecosystem, evoking intricate connections punctually overpowered by violence. The trees in planted forests can’t speak to each other like true forests do. They lack the technology, the ancient root system. But kudzu knows how to live homelessly. It was originally imported to the USA to heal soil bled dry by plantation agriculture. The dead world requires regular infusions from the realm of the living.

The living world looks like limbo to the dead world. The ruling dead believe that human capital is indifferent to whether it lives or dies. Desires in either direction read as pure spectacle. *I do mind dying*. But I must have become numb to some aspects of my intimacy with living and dying, because I feel shocked, at first, by the incarnation of the social in the form of a virus. By the absolute reality of flesh. By what I do and don’t have.

The kudzu in this exhibition was grown to order by a farmer just outside Frankfurt. It wears transatlantic drag. Precious, is it weird to be doing this show in Germany, where it seems like a lot of people feel untouched by disaster and therefore have a weird vampire curiosity about it? “It’s weird to have shows anywhere,” they say. This is a few days before everyone starts telling each other that there are no good decisions.

All living and non-living things spin on the wheel of fortune. Prophecy is without power while a million possible futures hang suspended in the air, like a stock-market-

dream. Meanwhile, the kudzu keeps growing in the dark of the shuttered museum. Left alone and undisturbed, it works patiently, out of necessity rather than hope. It expresses a kind of knowledge, no less here than anywhere. I still believe pity and fascination will be annihilated by revolution. I believe in the resurrection of the dead. Fake infinity aka value has to be reconsidered in terms of what we do and don’t have, through seasick darkness, through broken glass.

Precious, I recall, you made smaller versions of these dolls for the show we did together back in early 2018 ... some aspects unmentionable now ... I don’t deny I have regrets ... later the gallerist and I argued about fascism ... ironic because at the time I was thinking about blood and soil. Your girlfriend then was a farmer and once when we were all sitting on your bed under artificial clouds she told me the truth about soil. Soil is made of dead and rotten things that worms eat and shit out. I was shocked to hear this bad news about reality. That’s what everything comes from?! All the flowers, all the fruit, all the trees, all the people? My love and my hate? My days and my nights? For days I walked around confused that the basis of the world was worms and worm shit, until in gratitude I remembered rock. Finally touching solid ground, I stood with new purpose beneath a railway bridge, the train thundering above me like the absolute indifference of a god.

Your dolls, you told me, are based on childhood toys that your grandmother made for you out of sticks and hay. “I would destroy all my plastic dolls, but my grandma would remake these dolls for me so it didn’t matter if I destroyed them, because I could have a new one that was made of things around me.” Infinite creation! My heart breaks every hour on the hour. The life force strangles whatever it can get its hands on, with childlike powers of destruction, born without end. A virus is neither alive nor dead, like a doll. I am stranded in the place of my first pain. The kudzu grows in the empty museum; no one makes it do this. It does not need an audience. It repudiates the eye and the hand.

The wheel of fortune grinds down on me, so I tell myself a story about fate, or intention. What the world destroys, living hands reshape. What it eats alive it shits out as soil.

List of Works

*Resistance is an atmospheric
condition*, 2020
Kudzu plant
Variable dimensions

Open circle Lived Relation, 2020:

Angel of the void
Black raw lambswool, dirt, wire
112 × 126 × 136 cm,
plinth: 60 × 80 × 80 cm

Angel of death
Black raw lambswool, dirt, wire,
thread
150 × 94 × 105 cm,
plinth: 60 × 80 × 80 cm

Angel of dreams
Black raw lambswool, dirt, wire,
thread
165 × 85 × 86 cm,
plinth: 60 × 80 × 80 cm

Angel of light
Black raw lambswool, dirt, wire
160 × 126 × 126 cm,
plinth: 60 × 80 × 80 cm

Angel of the sun
Black raw lambswool, dirt, wire
170 × 100 × 126 cm,
plinth: 60 × 80 × 80 cm

Angel of the earth
Black raw lambswool, dirt, wire
158 × 110 × 100 cm,
plinth: 60 × 80 × 80 cm

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