

# A COLLECTION OF OBJECTS



AKILAH  
OLIVER

# A COLLECTION OF OBJECTS

*tente • montréal – new york 2010*



Come, long live you ambassadors who subject the night to infancy,  
I have found Syria hiding in a chapbook whose name is undercover,

I have perpetrated everything anew, the fettered intrusions and catcalls,  
the complete set of encyclopedic freestyle strokes,

jasmine lifts its pretty party skirts on an avenue overrun with scamps,  
iced party glasses full with strategic lore,

shadow of an abandoned structure, itself a mere image of what it declares,  
a plasticine tree house frequently surprises snipers,

twenty two willful brushstrokes revamp papa's cooling board,  
a saving grace cobbled in leviathan lore, Catalina Island to dock,

nope Billy don't be a hero, get yourself to the prom on time, memory is young,  
wicked crushed silk hangs mystic-like in the gym, she's waiting to be kissed,

balding ticket man at tollbooth did not contrive a smile, exact change nods,  
revelatory with car exhaust, his calloused hand I imagine in mine,

Big Bear mountain, a road taken to Santa Claus' village, around,  
n' round the merry-go-round pretends to relapse, ferris wheel sings,



69 • NCP • JUN •

come visit us this afternoon you, ye who swill the day's fracas,  
our granary is full and we delight in you to make haste,

competing vocabularies laid out as in a retiring covenant,  
will not a complicated sentence embrace this preposterous dread,

all's quiet on the western front, public library way up the stroll,  
marching in pairs of two, all four then a golden fifth climbing the absolving hill,

shall we find some parents, patient, guilty, and appeasing,  
to play out our egos against their uncrushed advance,

darling if you have to go, go now, you'll be missed, but go this afternoon,  
tho' I love you, & have lost so many dears, a white night still astounds,

is there a prize in that cracker jack box for me,  
temperamental narratives of surprise, the Marlboro man dead of cancer,

he the great man, she the witty host serving up clever journal entries, lazy,  
drunken summonses, display woman's work!, unworthy of intellectual scrutiny,

negro lips on display at the local seven-eleven and west village bakery,  
o' my president, o' my country, o' my friend, we are visible beneath our sheets,

heat comes under the floor, yellow house, plastic coverings, floral want,  
if you get a new car for Christmas, a Cadillac preferred, you get a new you,

one memory serves as the surviving critical frame, horses, panting horses, shore,  
Acapulco, before xanax, before D.C., before distance, after,



anyhoo, you evil ole wino, sit yourself down for a hotdog, the mustard went bad,  
them local kids are putting on a version of Oklahoma tonight, we must attend,

Barstow is the dividing line, fried tortillas, Henry Miller on the floorboards,  
propane gas, Papa, don't put me out with no shoes on my feet, take me to L.A.,

promised the rose parade, you delivered every time, to the little girl,  
not limber enough for the junior high school chorus line,

you heard me singing about sorrow honey, all the infidels know that tune,  
sweet darkness left us naked at the dividing line, bathing in light,

pink ribbon tied on a tree, dresses the lonely sight in color, over on the stream,  
curtain lifts, 1927 shadows come apart, Vincent dons a wig, coughs,

Rufus, funky velvets, big brother, hold this band, if we knew what was hip,  
Barbie's sister rides a pink pony, avocado tree in backyard, silver poodle,

blind at birth, sight comes later, pink lips lap milk from hand, vacant,  
sugarcane in alley off 99<sup>th</sup> St., mirror asymmetry, “I” with “eye”,

heavy on my mind, the courtesan is a courier tonight, fickle fish,  
heathen feast outside Kiev, one collective farm, three decades gone,

iron curtain, iron the curtain, checkpoint Charlie Brown, strapped horsefly,  
between window and plastic insulator, miniature ballerina lives inside music box,

Mexico City bibliotheca refuge, where do they sale the sugar cakes, sugar,  
this little piggy went to market, fainted smelling pigs blood, commuter skin,

come, my intemperate placeholders, all three together in long strides, come,  
dear away sisters, an open table awaits, lispings twine the curtains,

dim walls, institutional floors, my people are not my people, this hand,  
extends the fire, the other the extension cord, the hidden one, the myth

my people are my people, an embellished caretaker hallucinates the stakes,  
celery to spice the dressing, three drops of red wine, to flavor the blow,

what would I not do for, would I do not for, love would love not if,  
were it love were it, would do for, I, what for love, love would I,

is there anything you forgot?, little woodpecker in my dreams,  
around the world in eighty springs, that I were at sea today,

yes sweet one, it has been a long hard winter, oh yes,  
wear those gentleman bones well, snow is melting, we'll go dancing,



did rest come in that dark night?, did I prepare the goodbye body?,  
little men in formation line cracked linoleum floor, a resuscitation,

I did believe it in my mind, socialism was righteous, one should not,  
be unkind, Mayakovsky in Leningrad, snaky interlopers line cobblestones.



Akilah Oliver is the author of *A Toast in the House of Friends* (Coffee House Press, 2009), and *the she said dialogues: flesh memory* (Smokeproof/Erudite Fangs, 1999, Winner of the PEN Beyond Margins Award). She lives and teaches in Brooklyn, NY.



Tente is a collapsible feminist poetry and poetics press.

For inquiries: [tentepress@gmail.com](mailto:tentepress@gmail.com).

4858, rue Jeanne-Mance  
Montréal, Québec  
H2V 4J7

Layout by Angela Carr.

Cover by Emily Beall and Kate Eichhorn.

This chapbook was produced in an edition of 100 copies,  
of which this is number .

ISBN 978-0-9864844-2-1

*A Collection of Objects* copyright © Akilah Oliver 2010



