

WHAT WOULD I HAVE SUNG

What would I have sung

Had I been free?

Masterpieces

I would have let the world see.

If they'd let me

Keep my voice

They wouldn't've

Had a choice.

To see me

But not to hear me.

SURNAME

This surname is not my given name.
As in, not gifted to me.
Rather, imposed.
Inflicted.

King. Queen. Ebony court.
Crowned me...

...I can't recall my name.

Inheritance annexed. Paradise purloined.
And my angel of agency - a passerby, a lilt, a whisper -
Reigned for an instant
Then offered herself to the sea so as to not bear witness to my dethroning.

I was a glorious birth; I was a profound loss.
The scene: An unsound libra scale
Manipulated to ensure unequivocal midnight.
De facto and de jure - this surname is the slave master's.
The weight of it is mine.

Ink dried. She. He. We. I. Cried.
Wrested from my mother's bosom.
Stolen from my father's safeguard.
As had been the babies before me and those before them and those before them.

This surname
Should only ever be pronounced as an enunciated gasp -
An inaudible scream.
A child is born in an era that her ancestors could not see.
Her birthright?
To be property.

What's in a name?
All things and no things
Enduring history. Unending abyss of...

Trespass

Pillage

Conquest

Erasure

Violence

SILENCE.

This surname

Is

Not

Mine.

It belongs to him as I did. As I do.

This immortal kiss from a branding iron this tumor that will not perish but shall have everlasting life this flesh...NO.

This soul wound.

I sustain his name and

Her. Our. My

back

breaks.

He and he before him and he before him walk upright.

For his crimes, I inherit a life of compulsory dishonesty.

I sign a check...

I falsely confirm a white lie.

I address an envelope...

I perpetuate a white lie.

I am introduced...

I surrender to a white lie.

I introduce myself...

I deliver rescue breaths to a white lie.

This surname

Is.

Not.

Mine.

I will not tell lies.

I will not tell lies.

I will not tell lies.

This dishonesty; this deceit. Death by a thousand paper white lies.

He has stolen my ancestors' thunder for generations -
For centuries.
The falsetto notes of my grief-song harmonize with Gil's:
Who will pay reparations on my soul?
And hers before me and hers before her and hers before her.

What's in a name? Translation: What did the thunder say?

...I can't recall my name.

That which we call slavery by any other name would smell as rancid.

Rose.

Cotton.

Cane.

It is of no consequence for there are no consequences.
He is passively glorified for that which I actively am.
As she endured before me and she before her and she before her.

Who am I?
And who is my sister?
And who is my mother?
And who was my grandmother?

...We can't recall our name.

So, I weep.
Then I pray.
Then I stand.
Then I shout.

I WILL NOT TELL LIES.
I WILL NOT TELL LIES.
I WILL NOT TELL LIES.

Then I reintroduce myself.

SETTLE THE SCORE

Verse 1:

Black keys always not quite
In the context of white
Some flat; some sharp -
Always off the mark
What if we organize?

Verse 2:

What if we let the stave spill off the page?
Let's improv like the jazz age
Strict time? For what?
Let Duke and Dizzy cut up
What if we galvanize?

Chorus:

What if we
Stage a mutiny?
Y'all can all watch me
Rewrite this melody
Remix this symphony
Upright history

MIDNIGHT MUSINGS

Under cover of darkness an imaginary line
Promises just one thing
We will run out of time
Since we only exist tonight this is a perilous climb
The higher and higher we go; the harder to rewind
Heartbeat's undecided like syncopated rhyme
Is the love truly real if it only lasts for tonight?

We were soulmates for the night
Our love now in custody of the tide
Midnight musings with a man who ain't mine

Already undressed my soul but cannot hold my hand
Footprints reclaimed by sea; they have no domain on land
You slip through my fingers like a million grains of sand
I panic and try to hold but I know now that I can't
Time to give up the fight, the defendant's on remand
Sunrise, heartless judge; lifts the cover of darkness and...

We were soulmates for the night
Our love now in custody of the tide
Midnight musings with a man who ain't mine

This man was never mine but yet, my heart still bled
Dove into love headfirst but I never learned to tread
Ain't that what you told me
I was the one was what you said
Memories of promises still linger my head
What am I to do with a soul that's full of lead?
What am I to do with a heart pronounced dead?

We were soulmates for the night
Our love now in custody of the tide
Midnight musings with a man who ain't mine

UNSUNG (FOR NINA SIMONE)

Verse 1:

Eyes on her
She takes the stage
Soul on fire, truth ablaze
Called dangerous
With misplaced rage
Our voice, our queen, won't be encaged

Chorus:

Today, the one
Tomorrow, unwelcome
Today, the one
Tomorrow, unsung

Black is the color of my people's name, pain...

Verse 2:

Paradise lost
Quickly as it came
Dream deferred, dying flame
Remain on script
Rules never change
Sworn enemy known by a different name

Chorus:

Today, the one
Tomorrow, unwelcome
Today, the one
Tomorrow, unsung

Black is the color of my people's name, pain...

Verse 3:

No ceremony
When she fell from grace
Tossed aside, another black face
What should be home
Is a hostile place
Your courage won't be in vain

Final chorus with climax note:

Today, the one
Tomorrow, unwelcome
Today, the one
Tomorrow, unsung

Today, the one
Tomorrow, unwelcome
Today, the one
Tomorrow, unsung

Today, the one
Tomorrow, unwelcome
Today, the one
Tomorrow, unsung

Black is the color of my people's name, pain, RAGE.