

Surname

This surname is not my given name  
And therefore could not be gifted me  
Rather imposed  
Inflicted

King and queen and ebony court crowned me  
Agency - a passerby in a moment suspended  
Glorious birth, immediate loss  
Certification shows that this surname is  
His  
The slave master's  
The ink dried and  
I  
Was wrested from my mother's bosom  
Was stolen from my father's safeguard  
As had been the babies before me and before them and before them

A child is born in an era that her ancestors could not envision  
And yet -  
It is this baby's birthright to be  
To be -  
To be -  
Property  
Double consciousness  
Illusion of self-determination  
Confirmed lack thereof

What's in a name?  
All things and no things  
Enduring history, Unending abyss  
Filled with  
Trespass  
Pillage  
Conquest  
Erasure  
Violence

Silence

This surname  
Is only ever to be pronounced as an enunciated gasp  
An inaudible scream  
Because all of the letters are silent

Silence  
Silenced

This surname  
Is  
Not  
Mine  
It belongs to him as I did  
As I do  
The genius of this immortal scar from a branding iron  
This tumor that will not perish but shall have everlasting life  
Not flesh -  
Soul wound

I carry this name and  
My  
back  
breaks  
While he walks upright

The sentence for the crime of existence is a life of compulsory dishonesty. For example:

I write a check	I falsely confirm a white lie
I sign a letter	I perpetuate a white lie
I receive a public honor	I surrender to a white lie
I introduce myself	I deliver rescue breaths to a white lie

Death by a thousand white paper cuts

I will not tell lies.  
I will not tell lies.  
I will not tell lies.

But this is just a white lie

Which says that I am not  
Mine  
That me and she before me and she before her are property  
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?

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

Rose

Cotton

Cane

It's of no consequence for there are no consequences

He still is glorified for that which I earn

As she endured before me and she before her and she before her

Who am I?

And who are my parents?

And who is my brother?

And who was my grandmother?

I don't know their names and they don't know mine

And 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.