

Written by
Abbey IT-A

Based on

"Shadows are Telegrams Awaiting Reply: 30×30×30..."
By kqrî' kachâ seid'ou

"Fixing Shadows: Julius and I"
By Eric Gyamfi

&

"DIY: How to Murder Your Darlings in Your Mother's Kitchen"
By Abbey IT-A

First, over RED, we hear...

QUIET. The aftermath of a major BOOM, like a daytime dream behind shut eyes, so that when we open them

FADE IN:

EXT. LAKESIDE SCIENCE & TECH PARK B01/B02 - AUTUMN/WINTER

Everything is washed in blue; a massive glass window, fixed, like a storefront beckoning.

INT. KUNSTRAUM LAKESIDE - AUTUMN/WINTER

And now, we hear SOUNDS (metaphorical) that seem to herald menace but are not menacing themselves. Threatening, but not the threat in itself. Only a sudden and urgent disruption of a tale, or rather, how it is being told.

A movable wall partially obstructing the view.

A plot twist, looming. Or potholes, blooming...

ON THE FLOOR

Several square tiles removed and stacked. Black signposts arranged alongside; their dark surfaces seemingly unreadable.

We creep closer to inspect.

Raised dots? Words? Paragraphs? No, stanzas!

CUT TO BLACK.

"SHADOWS ARE TELEGRAMS AWAITING REPLY: 30×30×30... (2017)"

KARÎ' (V.O.)

This poem I wrote to be recited by a cyber-choir or polychoir-30 cyber-voices in unison - talking race to humans, to themselves, and to all others, accompanied by audio Morse Code translation at, tentatively, 30 w.p.m. The text must also be translated into Braille for visually impaired human readers.

Those with sight looking up, as if to feel or listen more closely. Some bowing and shutting their eyes instead.

INT. KUNSTRAUM LAKESIDE - CONTINUOUS

AT THE SPEAKER

Beep. Beep. Beep-Bee-Beep. The choir performing. A medley of demographics, call-and-response, and ad-lib, for texture. ~~Think Gã-Kpashim or Asante Nwomkoro.~~

KARÎ' (O.S.)

You know, I imagined these 30 stanzas as Lego blocks that readers can re-ar...

ABBEY

(interrupting excitedly)

Ah right!

What if we, in very literalist fashion, made the Braille translations into modular objects that readers could physically re-ar... (stressing the vowel)

KARÎ' (O.S.)

(amused)

...rearrange in their preferred order. Wow, IT-A. You read my mind!

And then, as if from our own conscience, we hear...

AT THE SPEAKER

POLYCHOIR-30 (V.O.)

(reciting)

were they white
would you stow them flat on brookes
sardine-packed on poo poo decks

A range of micro facial expressions: eyebrow raise there, lip press here, quick downward glance: "really?"

With hindsight of the 19th century, Foucault had described the boat or ship as a unique floating piece of space, of grave economic and cultural consequence – the “heterotopia par excellence.”

3

In the 21st century, however, has the commercial jet airliner, the Boeing or the Airbus, not supplanted the ship? If virtual space is to be reckoned with, has the Internet not presented an even more exciting trait of the heterotopia? And has AI not muddled those waters in its wake?

Ominous. But then, right on cue to lighten things up...

AT THE SPEAKER

POLYCHOIR-30 (V.O.)

(still reciting)

Were they white
Would they bleach their umber skins
Seeing see-saw smiles of blinkard stars

KARÎ' (O.S.)

Aha, and here I nod to Kobina Sekyi's 1915 satire; the one about Gold Coasters who had acquired... queer mannerisms.

ABBEY

(pensively)

Hm, to be observed and translated; lyricised. Visibility...

(audibly)

So, were they not white and were they not umber, would they be *blue* in m...

VOICE (O.S.)

Someone say blue?

We glide around the movable wall, following the voice.

On the other side stands ERIC.

CUT TO BLUE.

And over BLUE, the TITLE CARD:

"FIXING SHADOWS: JULIUS AND I (2018-)"

INT. KUNSTRAUM LAKESIDE - CONTINUOUS

ON THE WALL

A single-channel video screen standing on a mount, paired with headphones.

ERIC

I could tell you about when the relentless *surfacedness* of cyanotype blues caught my eye in 2016. Was it love at first sight? Absolutely.
(a beat)

But it also took time to connect several nodes that now seem... fated. From the quiet allure of Julius Eastman's portrait when I first chanced on it in December 2017, to WhatsApp VNs from friends in 2018, speculating on the found portrait and another of me. That same year, I could not tell you how, but Photoshop suddenly glitched and superimposed the two images, creating a new index, a new life: invocations, impressions, double-exposures, ghosts, shadows cast from sunr...

ABBEY (O.S.)

(interrupting, again)

...rays reaching across time to connect kindred spirits.

ERIC

(teasing)

Yes, as Abbey waxes poetic.

Abbey putting on a show of shyness, tucking away invisible hair behind an ear.

ABBEY

It's like sounds reducing steadily, without fading away completely, sotto voce, transmuting into photons, registering as pigment where the light won't go, fixing shadows...

ERIC

But wait, hold on. In this reiteration of the work, we have retranslated the prints into moving image for screen.

ABBEY

(suspicious)

Now, one would think it was AI.

Awkward silence. Uncanny, reaching 200%. Something is coming.

Curious that "Ominous" and "Monster" in English share a root. Something is coming; what in the...? This is etymology. We revert to older meanings that imply "significant," not just "bad" and listen for the quiet voices of some distant gods.

HEADPHONES

FRIEND #1 (V.O.)

...the looking down, to me, it seems to, possibly, be out of shyness; out of avoidance... um, out of some truth that wants to remain hidden...

FRIEND #2 (V.O.)

...doing a hairstyle or, like, not keeping your hair is an act of societal defiance, I guess you could put it... and then the second one is... Ooh, interesting...

Then a gentle tap on the shoulder.

We whip around to find Abbey standing right there.

5

ABBEY

It still completely gags me how much their speculations parallel those videos.

(pointing to movable wall)

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. KUNSTRAUM LAKESIDE - CONTINUOUS

AT THE MOVABLE WALL

A four-channel video installation is tucked within the structure's hollow gap; the glowing screens hiding behind the wall surface, their displays barely visible.

CUT TO BLACK.

And over BLACK, the TITLE CARD:

"DIY: HOW TO MURDER YOUR DARLINGS IN YOUR MOTHER'S KITCHEN (2021-)"

INT. KUNSTRAUM LAKESIDE - CONTINUOUS

THE HOLLOW GAP

The glow from the screens shifting continuously in the dark.

ABBEY (O.S.)

In 2021, I made a series of short videos to vent, basically. It follows a recurring character, shadowy, almost a silhouette, performing Black hair-care rituals, maintaining a darling in private, so to speak. With oils and butters, steam and masks; protective styles and smooth silks – the works.

We pan toward the four screens, to see...

OMITTED

OMITTED

OMITTED

OMITTED

Abbey, now supplying some of what we cannot see.

ABBEY

Well, a combination of grayscale and backlighting renders the skin black, literally, as if painted...

ERIC (O.S.)

This isn't like the *surfaceness* I described, is it?

KARÎ' (O.S.)

No, this is evidently more... contrived. If I didn't know better, IT-A, I'd say you were - what's the word - throwing shade.

Abbey, stunned, holding in a laugh, turning away and stepping out of frame.

We follow, tilting down to settle on four small gallery labels aligned with the screens.

ON THE WALL LABELS

The printed texts read:

"ANode to Edwin," (00:00:60)

"ANOrder to Emmanuel," (00:00:30)

"'ONe to George," (00:00:20)

"AN'd to James and all Their Horses and All Their Kinsmen." (00:00:10).

ABBEY (O.S.)

Each subsequent episode's runtime is drastically reduced, adopting excessive cuts and campy transitions... like something from COVID-era social media. Not so ahistorical.

(a beat)

As time is lost and the pace increases to a crescendo, the character appears with a pair of scissors. And then... murder!

INT. KUNSTRAUM LAKESIDE - CONTINUOUS

PULL BACK TO A WIDE SHOT

This is exhibition magic, but the looped SOUNDS continue while we...

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END