

Which, Too/Split Flash: *Break*

(For Sarah or Abigail both of whom participated in the 1712 New York Slave Revolt, one of whom was pregnant, captured, imprisoned in the City Hall dungeon until she gave birth then hung on the Commons.)

In a pinched and dank corner cell at the corner of Wall and Broad, beneath rulings and arches: four dials on a clock, beneath arguments and archives: petit juries and supreme courts, beneath criers and bailiffs: peals and flutters, beneath bells and constables and birds and cupolas, beneath perches and deputies: whipping posts and small talk, beneath windows and guilt: wainscot and lawyers, beneath deep thought and bench wigs: warrants and decorum, beneath two floors and black robes: conviction and handwringing, beneath plaintiffs and gavels: punishment and appeal, beneath charge and indictment a hung head's arrest, beneath a trial and its rumors before acquittal and pardon there's a case and its verdict/no interrogation or constitution before a judge and one's peers, between wrongdoing and wrong done and who's right and what's wrong, beneath sentences and pillory, evidence and stairwells:: The City Hall dungeon, where in darkness lies a woman with child. So, no question of where the labor. But when labor/what labor—slave? slave—who labor even in labor. Sarah? Abigail? Which is dying to lie on her left side—*shackled to staples with staples affixed to history: stone slaves once quarried to build a wall boiled down to a street.* Which one's water break? Which one gush or trickle: damp to the woolsey, sweet to the nose? How hard? When tender? Abdomen. When hard? How tender? Uterus. Ache—how dull? *Shackled to the... stapled to the... bolted to the agony: stone slaves once used to build...pressure: pelvis: how long? When is during between? What is between (en) during? The stench of a Necessary tub? Contractions? Waves: water's pushy guests. 45 seconds (or so). Which one's still talking? Maybe one... shackled to the... stapled to the... bolted to the... memory: stone slaves once used... Maybe 15 minutes later. Maybe one. Maybe a minute (or) two later. or half a minute longer. stretch marks. silence. Which one's stomach's a punch? Clenched. A fist. Breathe. Into the lower back, into the ache. Knowing you got not even a sip of say-so over your captors' shoe music echoing on the floor above you *shackled to the ...stapled to the...bolted to these echoes.**

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