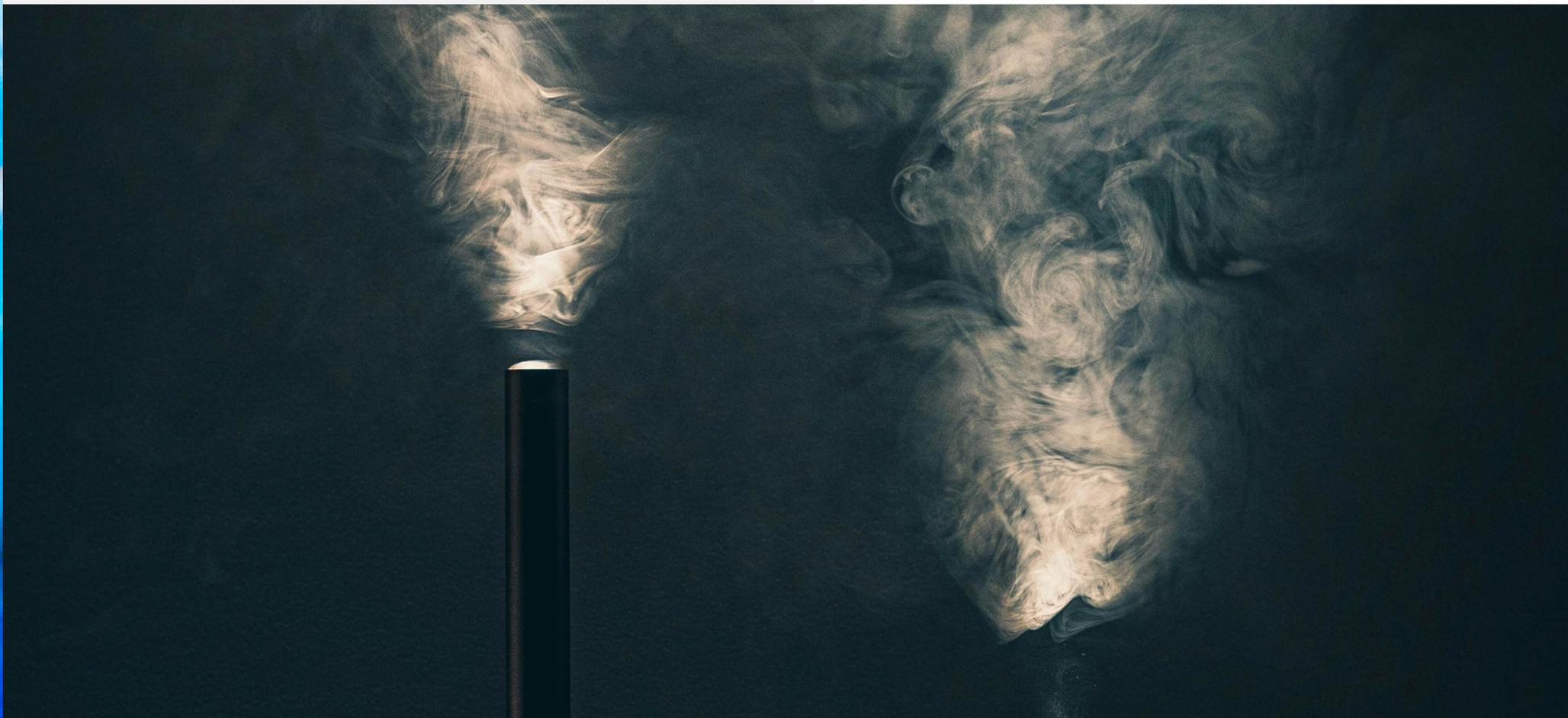


Say What Now?!

New-muh-tol-O-Gs of This and That

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Theology

Call

Spirit,
Of joy and pain
sunshine and rain,
Shout out to Frankie Beverly¹
for composing so cleverly
We multitask emotions
in dominoes-down display
of devotion
You are this and that,
both/and – and
Not bound by binary or
predicated upon polarity
Such *theology* is broad,
big, boundless
as its divinity is dynamic,
ever evolving
You create, give us ear
You speak, we hear
Sojourning with us, sacred
conversation
Ancestral rumination
as ageless revelation
Altar to air pissivity and
consternation

Keeping the we in check,
accountability
Freedom to laugh, ebullient
possibilities
Room to cry ugly
snotty tears
because fear of terror
right now is really
real
Today is yesterday,
no promise of tomorrow
Borrowing from the present
of the past –
To heal future's sorrow
Yet You are here, been there
and done that
Dwelling in us, hovering
over us,
Shadowing with we,
encircling around us
Spirit, careening high
and brooding low
whether we shuffle along
fast or slow...

Response

Spirit-ed Ones,
You are configured complex
Complicated and simple,
Down to the detailed dimple
I in you, you reflecting me
Your grace and poise on Monday
Well Tuesday we'll just wait and see
Created from dust, not diamonds or Dior
That's what I get, playing from below
Fashioned of ground, grit, murky mud
Breathed with holy breath
– and still a hot mess
Perdition proclivities, talking that ish tendencies
Double for the trouble, DuBois declared and decreed
I can't help it –
Loving you summons Me to Me
Human and divine
Hell-fire-filled and kind,
Hustlin' to the sublime
Hesitant to give the last dime
Parent that I am – forever, and ever – mine.

Cosmology

Call

Spirit,
Of joy –
Snow day, cold
caressing cocoa
Chromatic blandness
– after autumn’s
cinematic
extravaganza
Deer peeps from
skeleton woods
Wolves searching for
fodder and food
No longer able to “bear” –
some sleep through it all
Snoozing and slumbering
waiting nature’s call
The world more than
hu(man) play
Sibling hum(an)imals have
words to say
Growls, howls,
Garks, chirps, tweets
This *cosmology* sounds
so sweet
Sun wooing skin of
every race
Moon guiding dark’s devil’s
food space
Wind, yes you know this
one well
Imagine the stories this

You can tell
We’ve misused and abused –
planet here and
product there
Scriptures say care
and share
Tilling and plowing,
Farming and sowing
All kind for creation to grow
Fruit overflowing from copse
of trees,
Peas Oscar the Grouch
greener than green
Chicken, pork, lamb, beef
Eeek! Yum! Yuk!
Some season to salt and eat
Mountains, valleys,
rivers, beaches
Noodling in nature – ocean
air teaches
You say breathe in evergreen
– breath out of lungs
Release to openness a
seething sorrow’s song
Spirit, of joy
Cerulean water between
tired toes
Wonder how long
Armstrong’s wonderful world
will last...
Do You really know?

Response

Spirit-ed Ones,
Of earth, land, air, sea
Morosely melodious manifestations of Me
Crafted in images unimagined before
Not made to attend to just self –
what a bore
Appetizers of apathy and antipathy unintended
Soups of service, salads summoning serenity
Yours was to reflect feasting from divinity
Main courses kind to kangaroos
and delivering the disabled
Make room for all –
this is the world’s table
Dessert to sweeten difficult days
A port of promise, a pinot of possibility
Dine!
Enjoy!
Be sound stewards of employ
Employ restraint with remaining resources
Leave enough for the least
– and last to enjoy
Leftovers eat better the next day
Let’em cook I hear GloRilla say
Cook to cure howling hungering pain
Cook to kill capitalistic power’s gain
When enough is enough –
– ENOUGH is ENOUGH
Being your Maker –
so airplane turbulence tough.

Biology

Call

Spirit,
Of rain and rheumatoid
Whose physical make-up is beyond
mental take-up
Created beings of bodies, bottoms,
and brains
Yet what was given is not of You.
Or is it????
Non-flesh fashioning flesh
Creator and cosmos in tango of
complexity
Untouchable while touching
Unfeeling while keeping us
all in our feelings
Non-tactile teasing minds
and emotions
Indescribable
but summoning words of worship
You're beyond comprehension,
Another dimension
Can't really say what you are,
just feel and know
WindofwonderBreezeof
beautyBreathoflife –
blow, blow, blow...swoosh...
Resuscitating our dead places
Healing world strife
How to picture you justly
How to frame your frame
Mother, Father, Grandma, Griot
Counselor, Coach, Cactus, Cow
Coffee at daybreak,

tea to noon,
cold beer at sundown
What are you?
When are you?
And Where?
Perhaps let the questions
shower over us...
My mental metes and bounds
– bounded
My imposing imagination – impotent
Let the I AM be,
let You reveal You
We see when we need to see,
hear in time to hear
Yellow yummy of daffodils in spring,
Whirling wet snow in winter
Cooing babies,
playground noises,
singing swaying seniors
Puppy barks,
scary howls
marveling at midnight moons
Sleeping the day off,
eating,
drinking,
laughing,
crying
Sighing.
Stillness.
Hush, and quiet
It's all You. Revealing You. Doing You.
Be-ing You.

Response

Spirited Ones,
Psychology cannot dim
My pneumatology to *biology*
Of divine dust you are –
Granite, marble, lime, and
sandstone
Beautifully measured down
to the bone
Chiseled chests,
buxom breasts,
feet and ears
Arms for heartbeat hugging
and holding,
Eyes to gush forth tears
Able-bodied, wheel-chair bound
Semi-heart ears, but no
auditory sound
Seeingless eyes,
yet still with vision
Systems of circular, neuro,
and digest
Endocrine glands,
spinal chords,
arteries,
vein

A labyrinth of substance, a
corporeal maze
So fearfully and wonderfully –
Intricately, insanely made
Tho not disease, disorder,
or distemper free
Age quicksands;
time fries, flies, and flees
Joy in still living;
pain of what this being
used – to be
No ADA accommodations
nostalgia's reeling ruminations
Born tight and taut traveling to –
flabby, sagging
Glory of youth to grind of gray
Some sojourn long –
for a few a short stay
Answering the cackling,
calming, cruel
Kind call of death is every
entity's turn
Babies unborn before born
In all manifestations the body is –
a lesson to learn.

Sociology

Call

Spirit,
Of pain
So much, too much
Slaps, rapes, incest—shhhh
Hurts to write, stings to say
War, bombs, famine each
day
Kids can't be kids
No space to be and play
Another death by cop
Fists turned to gunshots
Summer used to be fun
Now peppered with more
guns
We love each other—most
times
See about kin and
community
Protesting with prayers
Praying with our feet

Because all deserve to eat
Still rather be selfish—not
deal with this “ish”
Sociology is people
People are a mess—YEP
Messy
Broken, bruised, battered
Blessed, blooming,
bargaining
Hard to go along to get along
Would rather be left—ALONE
Community calls
Communion beckons
 Conflict brews
 —hot. HOT. HOT!
 Capitalism like cars off
 a bridge
 Colonialism lurking as
 a lover long gone
You made us—why?

Response

Spirit-ed Ones,
I see this un-
 social synergy
It's hard to play
What's game for some
 is life for another
There is beauty of this
complexity
Sameness is the blah of
sugarless candy
Yet institutions D-I-E to kill
D-E-I
The “I” is the issue, not the
“we”
Wanting more and more
When enough is enough
Pull away from table—you're
overstuffed
Share.
Lend.
Give.
Sprinkled with a little love...
His having won't lessen you
Her full being is a rainbow in

the sky
Their playing small makes
for microcosm
Go big like Times Square
 Brush reds with blues
 Shimmy greens with
 purple
 Mesh blacks with whites
 Add yellows to turquoise
Stay home?
Why be bland?
Color the world
Let personalities paint one
another
You don't have to agree
 -Just see...again
See each for all they be
 -For all they could be
 -For what the
 neighborhood
Was meant to be.

Musicology

Call

Spirit,
Of sunshine
We sing with our bodies
Arms of Aretha, Eyes of Ella
Mouths of Marvin and
Megan Thee
Swaying hips to hip hop –
can't stop, won't stop
Feet to the beat of Stevie
Wonder and Nicks
Hands clapping,
snapping, tapping
to hymns and four-
part harmony
Musicology making love
to our ears
Orgasm of O'Jays and Oak
Ridge Boys
Climax of country
western –
oh, oh, ohhhhhh

The aftermath of Mozart and
Rachmaninov
Pass me a cigarette, Luther,
my dear
No BB the thrill is still
here – Whew!
Round 2 with The Beatles,
Sheboozy on tap
Come through GloRilla
My Memphis homie
– no cap
Drumming and humming
Washboards and whistling
Beating and conjuring
Shouting and shoutin'!!
Silence.
We don't need no music
We are the music.

Response

Spirit-ed Ones,
Nothing wrong with
a little ecstasy
Bible says David
danced naked
Help yourself –
at home
Songs ease the
tornadic mind
A chord to bring you back
to yourself
Organ B-flat – church is over!
When what I created lets
chaos reign
a smooth cup of
jazz quench your
parched pain

Let Bocelli hold your tears
Remember persons with
broken ears
Make sounds so sweet
for them to hear
Music will do –
what you let it do
Soothe, suckle, satisfy
Excite, even antagonize
Appreciate the artist
Honor artistry
Allow sonorous offerings
To give you a glimpse
of me
What's on your
playlist today?

Pedagogy

Call

Spirit,
Of sunshine and pain
Shows before the course
begins
Syllabus rep is spirit-led,
course fed
Book selection, paper
topic reflection
Songs,
 movies,
 music,
 poetry,
 lit
Grades and groups
Rubrics and rules
In-person is online –
 effort to make it all
 flow fine
Please don't let the Zoom
room go –
 BOOM!
All the pre is spirit-driven –
 Professor to
 student given
You,
Signaling as class begins

Song to set the
centering mood
This *pedagogy* is of the body
Students sigh –
 term turns
Turns to a weary
road midway
See their exhaustion –
 feel mine too
Half is half
 – half is not done
Spirit,
I need a little more from you
We feel there's too much to
do
Rest calls –
 break beckons
Catch my breath for just
a second
This mountain of mid
hard to meander
Come Spirit,
 breathe pause,
 blow sleep,
 brush hush on us.

Response

Spirit-ed Ones,
Time and time again
Your Spirit shouts –
 as the course begins
 to end
Email hell, project haze
Conversation heaven;
teaching (a)maze
Last call or not at all
Applaud colleagues for
taking the mic
Give yourself a pat –
 it will be alright
Closing words, final thoughts
Did you leave with more than
you brought?
It is finished
The end
Closure of class –
 but not the last
 of learning

Suspire. Hush.
Grades submitted
Term ovuh –
 semester ends
Here rest and
reflection blend
What went well?
 That did.
 This flunnnnkkkked!
How's your family?
Remember that
unexpected stump
Thank you, spirit.
Thank you, Spirit.
Forward new ideas –
 till we begin
Again.

Play-ology

Call

Spirit,
Of rain and joy
Joy to Sadness, "Wherever
I go, you too"
H/t – Inside Out 2³
Truth is can't trust
 all triumph no trial
Here's my *PLAY-ology*
 blackwomanmagic style
Not an athlete
 But talk WNBA trash
Fouls,
 steals,
 3pointers
Rookies who didn't
 – Last!
Running for exercise – nope
Sneakerhead tho' through
 and thru
 A'ja A'Ones
 Vapormax Plus
 Lebron XVI-
 Harlem Fashion
 Collabs
 Nike D8s
Deez feet look and
feel great
 Add-dee-das
 in hot red, teal,
 and pink

S/o to SportsMommas
that can't let go
 Shoes are the cure
 (so I say) –
 for what is
 no more
What a shoe won't do
Maybe a book will
 Dare not go down this
 rabbit hole
Spirit,
Come get me
Peace book-buying storm
 Be still!!!!

Response

Spirit-ed One,
Fearfully and playfully made
Enjoy your life
Rain, heat, or shade
Poise and performance time will come
Until then...
Play on
 Pray on
 Play on
 Pray on
 Chile', if you don't go outside
 AND
PLLLAAAAYYYYYYYYYYYYY!!!!
 (Before I get my switch...)

Me-ology

Call

Spirit,
Of pain in sunshine
Joy in rain,
My Maternal One
MightyBreastedOne
Most times you let me
 just be me
 most times
Sometimes I feel free
Pining for what I can't see
Where cerulean sea
caresses aqua sky
 where released
 balloons reveal tiny
 specks
 where the rainbow
 just keeps going
 where I can't outrun
 the buxom moon
 that's what I
 stretch and stretch
 to...
There's a fire burning, red
ravaging, reeling in me
Burn, baby, burn!
a more that won't quit
a next refusing to shut up

Me-ology says
grateful – indeed
 thankful – absolutely
 accomplished – certainly
 Around the corner?
 New wood?
 New fruit?
Thank you.
I appreciate you.
 When and where can I
 say...
 What occasion?
 Who will see my
 raised, jerking,
 pick me hand?
This duplexity of good,
but longing
Double-dutching towards
the not yet
Need not lend to duplicity
 (Did I just say that out
 loud?)
Grateful
 And still grinding...
Until you say otherwise
I am the Me
You created and call –
 To be.

Response

Spirit-ed One,
MotherScholar
WifeOrphan-Adjacent
AuntieNiecey
WondererofWords
You....
"Buck-ing" the system,
 in waters of neverseenhuh before
 flowing and floating
Pushing through "Crowd-ed" rooms –
 space is free(dom)
Battling with swords of imposter fake
and facade
Fighting the finality of "firsts" –
 in Fannie Lou fashion and fire
Daring to "wish you would"
 Tho' sons gone,
 grown,
 grown-ish
Your Granny's Mississippi steel
 in your back
Tough and tender
 like the hymns she taught you
Who knew maternal suicide could be
 life-giving?
We see you,
 womanist,
 sorta feminist,
 coloring your ways
Something about the regal
royal of purple
We see you.

We made you.
We are your Root.
Bloom and blossom.
Flower and flourish
We don't change –
 so you evolve,
 innovate,
 emerge
When life's winter has worn you
Summer's people cruel
through and through
Let our spring –
 of resurrected reimagination
Keep you from fall-ing –
 'cause
Some folk got tortoise moves
 –with snail minds
But you, "Good Dr."
Tell your story, not your business
Leave the stench of their busyness
Run with our ruach
Bask in our breath
Pneuma can be anew in you
 Pneuma shimmies so to renew
Joy is the breath of pain
Sunshine suspires even in rain.
Thus says Spirit –
To Spirited-Ones
Thus says Spirited-Ones –
To Spirit.

Notes & Bibliography

¹ Frankie Beverly, "Joy and Pain," by Frankie Beverly and Maze, track 5 of *Joy and Pain*, Capitol Records, 1980.

² W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Vintage Books, 1990), 8.

³ Kelsey Mann, *Inside Out 2*, (2024, Pixar Animation Studios, Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures).

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Stephanie Buckhanon Crowder is a versatile speaker, noted author, and sojourner of pop culture and the public square. She is Professor of New Testament and Culture and former Vice President of Academic Affairs/Academic Dean at Chicago Theological Seminary. Her newest book is *Are You for Real?: Imposter Syndrome, the Bible, and Society*. She is a married clergywoman and #WomanistMomma of two adult sons.



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