

**Emmett Till (1941-1955): A Beginner's ABC**

A = Acid, corrosive—like a steaming iron battering a face.

B = *Blasé*, the unflinching, bleach-blached jurors,  
declaring assassins equivalent to saints.

C = *Clarity*—in deep-sixing the corpse, despite clownish confusion  
bout how best to weight it down.

D = Dispossessed of breath,  
i.e. that child disposed of  
in Tallahatchie River murk.

E = *Etiquette* flouted:  
Why'd the black boy dare brook  
lookin bold-face at the chalk-face cashier,  
then cakewalk out the store's door,  
as if swaggering, niggerish—  
with sugary bubble gum and licorice?

F = Fisherman, whose dragnet hooked Till;  
i.e., dickered with, picked up,  
his crooked and pickled cadaver,  
out a liquid, tricklin grave.

G = Gun-point: Levelled at Till,  
so he'd not tussle,  
as he got muscled outta bed, hustled away,  
to be taught Southern *Chivalry* by pistol-whip and grown men's fists.

H = *Homicide*, the decisive and grimy *Crime!*  
But that “Mississippi peach” had felt her ego bruise  
due to Till's brazenly unsubmissive purchase  
of pink bubble gum and black licorice,  
his clunking of coins into her clerk's till,  
his too casual, even dismissive,  
“See ya!”

I = *Incorrigible*—those sick pix of the dead *ado's*  
swelled-up, hellish, blowfish-type face—  
his Frankenstein-monster, bust-open-watermelon face—  
the preface to Baquiat's exploded, Baconian Negro heads;  
incorrigible also be those draconian mirrors  
where Till nods, grins, at me,  
winks, “I be yo destiny—  
G.E.C.—  
in a white cop's bull's-eye.”

J = “Just sayin’”: Yep, it be like *Germ Warfare*  
to digest such details,  
such *Disgust*.

K = Ku Klux Klan (of course), them white sheets  
swishin neath the judge's Gestapo-black robes,  
them white dunce-caps of the S.S.-hissin jurors,  
them white, newsreel lights of the circus  
Big Top struck invisible  
in the risible, kangaroo courtroom.

L = *Lechery*, the insidious, invidious urges  
 always latent (if not blatant)—  
 i.e., that recidivist vestige of Negroes groaning  
 to embed emselves in bedded white (alleged) ladies  
 (since the *Slave Trade*, *Civil War*, *Segregation*);  
 that *Lust* now embodied nascently  
 in a coloured kid cashing in on candy,  
 who forgot to say “Ma’am,”  
 forgot to be *piccolo ma buono*  
 (small, but good),  
 forgot about his phallus,  
 ebon and (allegedly) elephantine,  
 looming too-large (horse-like) in a hysteric’s  
 nightmarish—whorish and horsing about—  
 galloping *imagination*....

M = Mammals, what otherwise avian poets  
 must incarnate as—  
 to exchange pinions for penis,  
 vulture beak for vagina lips,  
 plus feathers for (pubic) hair,  
 a breast for two breasts,  
 nested eggs for a fetus-in-the-womb,  
 Milton for Sade,  
 and blood for ink and wine and tears.

N = *News*, i.e., the rustling of mussed up pages,  
 the hustling of photos of trussed up suspects,  
 the professional, high-brow quotations—  
 snippets from snappy lawyers—  
 the untellable exposés  
 (issued *via Insinuation*)  
 of a snippy black boy’s (supposed) white-hussy-*Hunger*,  
 how he got lippy with her,  
 was leering or staring or ogling,  
 ogre-ish—  
 pondering, doubtless, her candy-pink pussy.

O = Open—casket, that is:  
 The flaunting of the *habeus corpus*  
 in haunting, corpulent and crapulent haberdashery,  
 plus dauntingly haphazard, un-made-up wounds,  
 as thousands of Negroes revered  
 Till’s wanton *Irreverence*,  
 his sauntering *Insouciance*,  
 his jaunty exit out that canteen,  
 his black hands treasuring pink gum  
 and chewy black licorice, jujubes,  
 with no thought about the pallid worker,  
 her rosy genitals,  
 as bestial as everyone’s....

P = Pummelling, what two-legged, cracker canines did to crumble, tumble, and traumatize Till, so the allegedly rude lad sustained a bleeding crotch; and his dented face fronted a plausible lobotomy; his belly swelled into a possible, shit pile; his teeth broke into pathetic smithereens....

Q = Questions? Well, all went unanswered: Why'd cameras show a preference for cream? Why'd black nylons accentuate white legs? Why'd her bright tresses dress up flashy mags? Why'd they snap the dreamy glimmering of her visage neath her lurching, sun-bonnet-o'er-brimming hair?

R = Rustics, just who the touchy, tough guys were: They who worshipped the ideal of the untouchable, quivering brightness of an ivory *Femininity*; who saluted vehemently the idea of a callous lasso— a noose— for the nigger bastard boy, who'd go piebald into the slough, with a 75-pound cotton gin holding down his bloat.

S = Stars—maggoty—in night's sable corpse.

T = Till, Louis, Emmett's papa, who Pound, Ezra, got attached to as a comrade detainee in U.S. Army-impounded Pisa; but who got dangled in Spring 45 for three rapes and 1 murder, all perpetrated while purportedly liberating some Italianess trio *ex* Mussolini: The minor tongue of Till's judge was no match for Pound's major sentence— his beatification of "St. Louis Till".

U = *Underplay*, which defined the defence strategy; so the lawyers vomited excusable *Wrath*: A rascally, uppity young'un— likely as low-down as his hanged-high sire— was "corrected" by a "Gentleman" genuflecting to his delectable "Lady". (If the killing weren't unrivalled *Chivalry*, then it executed *Natural Selection*, eh?)

V = *Verdict*, which sounded like jaws trundling gnawed bones. (See grimy jaws; hear putrid breaths.) It was a valentine for a wedded maiden, the flouncing tilt of her milky pelvis, and her black-trimmed, white-skin, pink-lined "purse", preserved gallantly from the jigaboo "pickpocket"— his would-be jiggling and daggering "digit".

W = *Woebegone*, which is Emmett Till's mama,  
 once the all-white jury whited out  
 her son's midnight maiming and murder.  
 Aye, she be woebegone, but warrior-fierce  
 and warrior-frank,  
 to insist on the wide-open casket,  
 to let the world espy her darling boy's  
 manhandled, bullet-cunted, Dixie-nixed,  
 now suddenly eminent remains.

X = X, Malcolm, his hates suddenly vindicated,  
 so he can channel *Vitriol* into the *Revolution*,  
 underway since Dien Bien Phu—  
 i.e. the (ex)termination of *White Supremacy*—  
 worldwide,  
 in our People-o-Colour, living-colour lifetimes.

Y = *Young*, I mean, just how young was Master Till  
 to nonchalantly shell out for bubble gum and licorice,  
 and not yield due *Gravitas*,  
 grave *Courtesy*,  
 to that pale, female clerk workin the register;  
 to be erroneous in not spontaneously mouthing "Ma'am."  
 His youth was the lethal prerequisite  
 to his being pounded into a puddle;  
 for he was too much a minor to suspect

the hopeless business that's *Salvation*;  
 that he might not be cowed—  
 or kowtow enow to Caucasians—  
 but prove flippant, insubordinate,  
 suggest full-on *Defiance*,  
 act the sassy, black-ass devil....  
 Thus, his correctors had the duty of *Chastisement*—  
 to dissect his insectile self;  
 to be unsqueamish at squashing  
 the ruddy-filled, puffed-up anaconda;  
 to perform sweetly bitter *Torture*,  
 so as to render the ferociously vulnerable youth  
 a picture-perfect mug,  
 glamorous in his candid, black-and-white horror.

Z = *Zero*, the shape of the open-top crown—  
 the halo, the laurels,  
 that be St. Emmett Till's residuals,  
 once his body vacated human *Definition*,  
 collapsed like a deflating *Zeppelin*,  
 or like a zeroing-in, but disintegrating *Zero*,  
 or like a bubble-gum balloon,  
 punctured, gone flat,  
 despite us survivors and our explosive cries,  
 the detonating echoes of a forever, rippling *O*—  
 orating our zero-sum hero—  
 that "nobody" no more taken for granted.

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