Reading *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* in Bed, and:
Paramour, and: Black Woman

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READING *THE MARRIAGE OF HEAVEN AND HELL* IN BED

Together, like it's a duet or two-man play. You do your Milton voice that sounds like Heston's Moses and you say Blake sounds like that. I wax falsetto, using two

half notes: Genius, Harvest, Folly, Lions. I claim the mouth of water, you the brick brothel. We settle into Hell's big brick house typeset in its chambers: eagles, lions.

You get the vipers and the dragon-man. We both get the desire, cloud, and fire. When we've both had enough Maker's to fire kindling with our mouths, I say, pretend we're man

and wife, pretend we live together in my Eden Avenue apartment here in Cincinnati. Say we're growing old here. I'm Blake's Raven and you are dawning in

the red wheat hardened in the fields. When, all the sudden, you aren't smart enough to read another section, your pale face is all covers. I turn the light off, squint to read

the frost's small cuts on the bare window's page, thinking of how *luciferous* means light, how dawn should beg forgiveness with the light on its back.

Dawn, an apologetic page.

New powder snow fills the rim of angels.
I wonder when the weatherman will say
it'll melt, when you'll wake up, and if I'll say,
you won't believe what happened to the angels.

PARAMOUR

She's kept and loves it: how we say a man
keeps a mistress instead of has a mistress
because keep means possession, hold, and grip.
Position. She loves that he left in a serein
tonight—fine rain and not a single cloud—
that the light bulb in the lamp beside
her bed is dying, that it buzzes as
an insect does, the flashing filament
the thorax, shell the exoskeleton.

She loves the dog that's hollering outside,
how it could be where she stood earlier,
next to a bird that must've hit the ground
like a bare backdoor—such aimless force, its head
sits perpendicular to its broad chest.
The dog must have its hungry face in it.

She thinks of what it must be like to bark
and grumble in your throat, to make a sound
of such alarm for both pleasure and pain
people stand back. She hopes to make a noise
next time he comes over in the afternoon
on a day warm enough for open windows,

When somebody will hear her, stop, and think
a mother tongue of glossolalia,
the devil's got up in her something fierce.

BLACK WOMAN

Find Kirsten, your old American Girl.
Bind her with butcher's twine. Say it's
her fault that all black dolls were ugly.
You wished your hair would fall like that.
Then put her in the trunk and sit
on it. Smoke swishers. Stomp them out.

Swing by the Metro Mart to get
some Chester Fried Chicken and ask
the guy, *Yo, where the 40s at?*
so he can tell you how the law
won't give you more than 36
and you can say, *Well, fuck the man.*

Today you're feeling petulant
and someone catcalled you with *Girl,*
you got some fat steak when your ass
is grown, and he was black and that's
as bad as when the white guy thought
it fine to say he likes it native.

Feel sated. Keep it hood and ride
dirty. Say, *Officer, I'm sorry*
but I'm just going to have to play
it louder now. Go on and claim
your stake. If you want harder, you
should have to ask for it by name.