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Commentary

Kissing God Goodbye or Who's in Charge
Poem in the Face of Operation Rescue

June Jordan†

You mean to tell me on the 12th day or the 13th that the Lord which is to say some wiseass got more muscle than he reasonably can control or figure out/some accidental hard disc thunderbolt/some big mouth woman-hating/super heterosexual kind of guy guy he decided who could live and who would die?

And after he did what? created alleyways of death and acid rain and infant mortality rates and sons of the gun

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† June Jordan is a professor of African-American studies at the University of California, Berkeley. Her two most recent books are TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES, SELECTED WRITINGS (1994) and HARUKO/LOVE POEMS: NEW AND SELECTED LOVE POEMS (1994). To date, June Jordan has published twenty-one books. She is also a regular columnist for The Progressive. This poem is dedicated to Jennie Portnof.
and something called the kitchenette
and trailer trucks to kill and carry
beautiful trees out of their natural
habitat/Oh! Not that guy?

Was it that other guy
who invented a snake
an apple and a really
retarded scenario so that
down to this very day
it is not a lot of fun
to give birth to a son of a gun?

And wasn’t no woman in the picture
of the Lord?
He done the whole thing by himself?
The oceans and the skies
the fish that swim and the bird
that flies?
You sure he didn’t have some serious problems
of perspective
for example
coming up with mountains/valleys/rivers/rainbows
and no companionship/no coach/no
midwife/boyfriend/girlfriend/
no help whatsoever for a swollen
overactive
brain
unable to spell
sex

You mean to tell me that the planet
is the brainchild
of a single
male
head of household

And after everything he said and done
the floods/famines/plagues
and pestilence
the invention of the slave and the invention of the gun
the worship of war (especially whichever war
he won)
And after everything he thought about and made 2 million
megapronouncements about
(Like)
"Give not your strength to women"
"You shall not lie with a male as with a woman"
and
"An outsider shall not eat of a holy thing"
and
"If a woman conceives and bears a male child
then she shall be unclean
seven days . . . . But if she bears
a female child, then she shall be unclean
2 weeks . . . ."
and
"The leper who has the disease
shall wear torn clothes and let the hair
of his head hang loose
and he shall cover his upper lip
and cry, "Unclean,
unclean!"
and
"Behold, I have 2 daughters
who have not known man,
let me bring them out to you, and do
to them as you please"
and
"I will greatly multiply your pain
in childbearing;
in pain you shall bring forth children"
and
"Take your son, your only son Isaac,
whom you love,
and go to the land of Moriah, and offer
him there as a burnt offering"
and in the middle of this lunatic lottery
there was Ruth saying to Naomi;
"Entreat me not
to leave you or to return
from following you; for where you go
I will go
and where you lodge; your people
shall be my people.
And your God my God;
where you die I will die,
and there I will be buried. May the Lord do so to me
and more also
if even death parts me from you."
and
David wailing aloud at the death of Jonathan who loved him
"more than his own soul" and David
inconsolable in lamentation
saying
"... very pleasant have you been to me;
your love to me was wonderful,
passing the love of women"
and
"If I give away all I have, and if I deliver
my body to be burned,
but have not love,
I gain nothing . . . ."
and this chaos/this chaos
exploded tyrannical in scattershot scripture
(Like)
"... those who belong in Christ
Jesus have crucified the flesh
with its passions and desire"
and
"Cast out the slave and her son"
and
"If in spite of this you will not hearken
to me, then . . .
You shall eat the flesh of your sons,
and you shall eat the flesh
of your daughters. And I will
destroy your high places . . . I will
lay your cities waste . . . I will
devastate the land . . . And
as for those of yours that are left,
I will send faintness
into their hearts in the lands of their enemies
the sound of a driven leaf
shall put them to flight . . ."
etcetera etcetera
That guy?
That guy?
The ruler of all earth
and heaven too
The maker of all laws
and all taboo
The absolute supremacist
of power
the origin of the destiny
of molecules and Mars
The father and the son
The king and the prince
The prophet and the prophecy
The singer and the song
The man from whom
in whom
with whom
of whom
by whom
comes everything
without the womb
without that unclean
feminine
connection/
that guy?
The emperor of poverty
The czar of suffering
The wizard of disease
The joker of morality
The force of rape
The pioneer of slavery
The priest of sexuality
The host of violence
The Almighty fount of fear and trembling
That’s the guy?
You mean to tell me on the 12th day or the 13th
that the Lord
which is to say some wiseass
got more muscle than he
reasonably
can control or figure out/some
accidental hard disc
thunderbolt/some
big mouth
woman hating/super-
heterosexist heterosexual
kind of guy guy
he decided who could live and who would die?
And so
the names become
the names of the dead and the living
who love
Peter
John
Tede
Phil
Larry
Bob
Alan
Richard
Tom
Wayne
David
Jonathan
Bruce
Mike
Steve

And so
our names become
the names of the dead
and the living who love
Suzanne
Amy
Elizabeth
Margaret
Trude
Linda
Sara
Alexis
Frances
Nancy
Ruth
Naomi
Julie
Kate
Patricia

And out of that scriptural scattershot
our names become
the names of the dead

our names become
the names of the iniquitous
the names of the accursed
the names of the tribes of the abomination
because
my name is not Abraham
my name is not Moses/Leviticus/Solomon/Cain or Abel
my name is not Matthew/Luke/Saul or Paul
My name is not Adam

My name is female
my name is freedom
my name is the one who lives outside the tent of the father
my name is the one who is dark
my name is the one who fights for the end of the kingdom
my name is the one at home
my name is the one who bleeds
my name is the one with the womb
my name is female
my name is freedom
my name is the one the Bible despised
my name is the one astrology cannot predict
my name is the name I am learning to preach to the world
my name is the name that the law cannot invalidate
my name is the one who loves

and that guy
and that guy
you never even seen upclose

He cannot eat at my table
He cannot sleep in my bed
He cannot push me aside
He cannot make me commit or contemplate suicide
He cannot say my name
without shame
He cannot say my name
My name
My name is the name of the one who loves

And He
has no dominion over me
And his hate has no dominion over me

I am she who will be free

And that guy
better not try to tell anybody about who should live
and who should die
or why
His name is not holy
He is not my Lord
He is not my people
His name is not sacred
His name is not my name
His name is not the name of those who love the living
His name is not the name of those who love the living
and the dead
His name is not our name
who survive the death
of men and women whose beloved
breath
becomes (at last)
our own