

Re/VERB Episode 1

Ciona Rouse: I'm Ciona Rouse.

Kendra DeColo: I'm Kendra DeColo.

CR: And this is ReVerb.

KD: A Third Man Books production.

CR: A podcast where music, literature, and pop culture converge.

KD: This is our very first episode. I'm so excited to be here talking about poetry with one of my favorite people. I'm going to introduce my amazing cohost, Ciona Rouse. Ciona Rouse is the author of *VantaBlack*, published by Third Man Books in 2017. Ciona is a foundational member of the Nashville literary community; she organizes readings and events throughout the city, she mentors younger poets, she's constantly involved in helping other people find their voice, and she's just an inspiration. I'm so excited to be here having these conversations with you and our literary heroes.

CR: Thanks Kendra. And Kendra DeColo, my friend and cohost, is a literary superhero for sure. She's the author of two phenomenal collections. *Thieves in the Afterlife* was published by Saturnalia and then *My Dinner With Ron Jeremy* was published here at Third Man Books, so we're both a part of the Third Man fam. Kendra is incredibly humble and gracious, a beautiful mother and teacher, but also is able to just slice and dice with her poetry, which is what I love and what inspires me about her work.

KD: In this first episode we're talking with Hanif Abdurraqib. Hanif is a poet, essayist, and cultural critic from Columbus, Ohio. His first collection of poems, *The Crown Ain't Worth Much*, was released in 2016 and was nominated for the Hurston Wright Legacy Award. His first collection of essays, *They Can't Kill Us Until They Kill Us*, was released in 2017 by Two Dollar Radio. It's gone on to receive tons of awards. I can't even keep track of them. He's

just someone who you immediately feel comfortable with and it's just such a pleasure to have him on this show.

CR: I think I first heard of him, actually, through a workshop that you were teaching, Kendra. And then I got all of the information and found his book and just really love his work.

KD: Yes, and he's just doing so much. He's all over the place now. It's just so exciting to see his future books coming out. He has two forthcoming on Random House. He has a biography of A Tribe Called Quest that he's finishing up.

CR: I mean gosh he's just so cool.

KD: He does so much. So one of the questions that we ask our guests, or are going to be asking our guests, is: who is your pop culture patron saint? It's a question that I think about a lot so I wanted to ask you, Ciona, who is your pop culture patron saint right now?

CR: I mean it almost feels cliché to say Beyoncé, but it's always Beyoncé.

KD: How could that be cliché?

CR: I mean sometimes people call me Cioncé, so that is a thing. But I often think about her Sasha Fierce persona, about just not caring about what people think or what I even think I should be doing, but really just breaking out with my voice and being bold about it.

KD: I love it.

CR: It's always Beyoncé. What about you?

KD: I feel like every time I'm working on a series of poems I have a pop culture figure in mind. So in the past it's been Rodney Dangerfield.

CR: Nice.

KD: But right now it's strangely Courtney Love, which is not someone I'm actually striving to be like, but I feel really interested in her and kind of giving myself permission to be messy. I feel like Courtney does that for me.

CR: I love it, she's kind of danger, but also delight.

KD: Yeah, a kind of delight. Kind of a bruised delight.

CR: A bruised delight, that's perfect.

KD: Well I'm excited to hear Hanif's answer to this question. And why don't we bring him out? Let's bring out Hanif. We're going to hear him start with a poem.

Hanif Abdurraqib: "None of my black friends want to listen to Don't Stop Believin'"

But we all know what it is when the street / light comes on & I don't mean to romanticize darkness but I do perhaps mean to say I want to dance in the moments before the sunset lets me out of its clutches & fear carves a crib into the pit of some mother's stomach. The news says that soon it's going to feel like summer all year long & then what will we make of winter & the way nighttime gallops in before our bodies are ready to lay down with each other & I know. I hear you thinking there he goes again. But let me promise you that this time it really is just about a song & the coins rattling in my pocket & the way they beg to be pushed into a jukebox when the sky is a color that demands singing & nothing else. But if you will indulge me – since you are still here – I will say the words hold on to that feeling & the wind might blow the shadow of someone you miss through your outstretched fingers. I don't know anymore what it is we are all reaching for, but here we are & somewhere along the line we learned the difference between the gospel that will keep us out of hell & the shit they play to wake up the polo shirts in suburban pews & I say we & you already know I mean those of us who have reached for a song & pulled back a coffin & we don't sing our gospel in bars. We don't sing where we sin. We don't lock arms and wake up a hood that

ain't ours, where they call the cops if a leaf rattles outside a window past midnight & this is why I hang back under the flickering street / light & listen to the hum of rusting air conditioners buzzing in late November & maybe all the songs we don't want to sing out loud anymore are about someone on a porch, wringing their hands together & hoping a person who shares their blood cuts through the night & walks into their arms.

KD: Well one question that we usually start with is: what is the poem that brought you into poetry, or the poet?

HA: Ooh that's a great question, because I have the perfect answer for it. I got into poetry a lot later than my peers, and so the poem that I think allowed me to begin taking poetry seriously and pursuing it was "We Should Make a Documentary About Spades" by Terrance Hayes. It felt like a poem that was speaking to a world that I lived in, and a world that I had language for so I didn't have to kind of feel like I was an outsider trying to write my way into something already existing. So yeah, definitely that poem.

KD: Did you read it – well that was published in *Poetry Magazine*? And it's also in –

HA: It's also in *Vinyl*. I think it's been published in both *Poetry Magazine* and *Vinyl*, which is very weird. It's definitely in both. I read it first in *Vinyl*, which is one of the first two journals I read. *Vinyl* and *Muzzle* were the first two journals I ever read. I didn't even know poetry journals were a thing until I read those two.

KD: And how did you come across *Vinyl*?

HA: I had seen Terrance Hayes read in Columbus around 2011, and I just did the thing where I went home and Googled "Terrance Hayes poems". And perhaps he read that poem during the reading, and so I had remembered some lines from it so I just punched that into Google as well and it came up on *Vinyl*. And I was like, "Oh this is a cool journal" and while I was on *Vinyl* I had read a poem by someone who I don't recall now, and I wanted to find more

of their poems and that led me to *Muzzle*. And I was like, “Oh these two journals are great.” And they are, they still are. *Muzzle* was the first journal I got rejected from, and *Vinyl* was the first journal – well, one of the first journals – I got published in.

CR: Aw, nice.

KD: *Vinyl* was one of my first journals too.

HA: It’s such a great journal.

KD: Phillip B. Williams...

HA: Yeah I feel like anytime Phillip B. Williams takes a poem it feels really rewarding. He has such a discerning eye.

KD: Yeah, I’m thinking also about how so many of the poets I love came to poetry through Terrance’s work, too – that he is a poet who gives people permission to write about what they actually love and not write about something they think should be in a poem.

HA: Right.

KD: Or I feel like that’s the permission he gave me.

HA: Yeah, and I think my personal cannon has, thankfully – and I don’t want to say thankfully as if Terrance is bad – evolved and fleshed out more. I was just thinking – I was rereading Adrian Matejka’s book that came out this year, *Map To The Stars*, and thinking about how what I often find myself reaching for is already existing in his work, right, when he archives the suburbs in a way that is, well, like an outsider but also insider in a way that’s really interesting to me.

CR: Yeah. What is your reading life like?

HA: I try to read a book of poems a week... So to work on the essay book, to work on *They Can’t Kill Us*, I was revisiting a ton of non-fiction and a ton of old music journalism. I was reading Ellen Willis and Greil Marcus, and of course Lester Bangs. I reread and reread and

reread his book. So for a few months I was really outside of poetry, and it was really refreshing for me, around March of this year, to get into a groove where I was reading poetry again. I was just talking to someone about how next year I hope to become a better international reader of poetry. My reading life is right now, at least in poems, is very, I'd say North American. I mean, yeah, it's not just American it's North American but not much else. And I've been thinking about how to branch out. I did a reading this year with a poet named Raymond Antrobus, who is brilliant and really generous, and I heard him talk about how not reading internationally is just not an option. There that's just what people do. And I think it's easy for me and other people in the United States to build a cannon that is only within our territory.

CR: Right.

HA: So I try to read a book of poems a week, which is kind of easy because I'm often on planes or, you know, waiting for things to happen, or in hotel rooms or places where I don't know people. It's good to have those travel companions. Was that the actual question?

CR: Yeah I was just curious.

HA: 'Cause I didn't know if by reading life you meant something else.

CR: No, no, you mentioned Adrian's book and I was like, "Oh I wonder what you're reading or what your discipline in reading is." I find that I set reading goals more than I set writing goals.

HA: Oh yeah, absolutely. I mean, I read twice as much as I write. I think that's advice I learned early on that served me well. I mean Adrian's book meant so much to me this year. I also love the poet Angela Veronica Wong, a lot of people don't know her work and I've been obsessed with it for a very long time. She had a book come out this year called *Elsa: An*

Unauthorized Biography, and it's just weird and great and I wish I could buy it for everyone in the world because it's just... It's my favorite book.

KD: This is kind of connected – I was thinking a lot when I was revisiting your poetry collections and reading *They Can't Kill Us Until They Kill Us* just how fandom fuels your work, or it feels like fandom is the heart of your poems and your essays, and I wanted to just ask how – well first question is: is there (and I think I know the answer from reading your work) a song or band, or kind of your first love or first obsession, that brought you into music writing and the feeling of fandom?

HA: Ooh. I mean there are several. I think the band that I can kind of – it's so weird talking about this now that they're Dad Rock/Stadium Rock dudes – but I think the band I felt I could claim as my own, my own path to fandom, was Fall Out Boy. And it's tough because there's no context for that now, now that they're so different, but, I mean, I say that and mean – I saw their very first show ever. Like, 2002.

KD: Where they found their name.

HA: Right. Yeah. They didn't have a name.

KD: That's so crazy.

HA: When I first saw them they were named by some bro in the audience. And I got to see them when they were a band that was formed out of the ashes of Chicago hardcore, when a lot of those bands – you know, Chicago hardcore kind of fell apart – and the pieces of that scene formed all of these bands, and they were the one that kind of ascended, in part because they sounded different from everyone else, right? And I get that that's hard to process for people now, because now they sound like whatever, you know, they're not as distinct.

KD: Because they created a sound that other people would latch on to.

HA: Right. Those early shows... If you saw them from, like, 2002 to 2004, particularly if you saw them in Chicago, on any given night you could see one of the greatest live performances from a band that had no idea what it was doing. And so I think they really gave me an entry point into my own fandom and my own way to chase after writing about fandom and writing about music in the same way that – there's this great essay in Lester Bangs' book about seeing The Clash play for the first time, and spending time with The Clash. He does this long profile on The Clash, and so much of it is about permission, and I think that everyone has to have that doorway or permission through a band or a poem or a book, or whatever.

KD: I'm thinking about people's relationship to your work, how you're experiencing fandom around this book that you've just written, and you've tweeted some things about how people will come up to you and feel so understood by your writing, and you've created this space for people's collective grief. I love the way you write about the bands you love and the artists that you love and how they've done that for us, too, and I think it's just a really cool thing that you're now, as a writer, doing that.

HA: Yeah it's one of those weird cycle things.

KD: I guess that's not a question it's just – that's my interview style: you know how you did that? That was really cool. It's like Chris Farley style.

HA: That's a great reference. That's a great pop culture reference.

CR: I'm trying to think of a way to continue the Chris Farley conversation. But you did start writing... well when did you start writing music journalism? When did you get into that? How did that happen?

HA: 2008 – 2009. I was writing a lot of stuff for not a lot of money that I didn't care about, and a lot of album reviews. Because at that point – I think album reviews have changed, well

we don't have to get into it, but I think it's less needed, places need less of them. But in that era, places needed a ton of them, you know? You could get, like, a hundred bucks to do an album.

KD: When did Pitchfork start?

HA: Oh Pitchfork is from I think the 90s? 80s?

KD: Ok. Just curious.

CR: Well why do you think it's less needed now?

HA: The straightforward album review is something that happens on Twitter. It's something that happens on social media spaces. So listeners are less reliant on going to a place and saying, "How many stars does something got?" and I think there's something about the decline in print magazines. You know, I grew up on *The Source* and I remember wanting to grab *The Source* and tear up the album review section and see how many mics – they did a mic rating system, you got five mics, it's a classic – and so that was really thrilling for me. And I think that thrill is less existent when it's on the Internet. I remember holding the physical thing in your hand. And also the album review thing – well, a funny thing, on Friday, Big Sean and Metro Boomin released a mixtape and I got up in the morning and just skimmed – Big Sean was trending and I could just click on his name and skim through all the hilarious jokes that people had about how bad it was. And that served a purpose for me that a straightforward critical album review might not. I do still think there needs to be critical discussion about music, obviously, but I think the entry point into that has shifted, and I think the entry point into it should maybe shift. You know, the discussion that I want to have critically about music – I want to write about music as if I'm in a bar talking to my pals about what an album has done for me, and what an album could do for them. And I say this as someone who still appreciates the art of the album review. I've written a few this year.

You know, if an album really, really moves me, I will reach out to a place and ask if I can review it. I reviewed the new LCD Soundsystem album, and I loved reviewing it, but it wasn't just me reviewing that album, it was me talking about David Bowie and loss and what it is like to return to a place that you once left for good, or you thought you left for good.

That was rambling and I'm sorry.

KD: No, no, that's exactly what I love about the collection, is that it made me listen to artists who maybe I'd written off or who I'd heard and didn't connect with and now, having that feeling of you were telling me about it in a bar, I think, "Ok, this meant something" and I think about how much fandom is context, or loving something is about the central detail of where you were when you interacted with it, and so the writing around it that you do feels like you're creating context for people, or you're simulating that context for them.

HA: That's really kind.

KD: Well your work is kindness – well I love your essay on kindness – but I do feel like there is a kindness behind wanting to share something that you love in a way that's not, I don't know... there's a selflessness to it. Again, not a question. And I think about – maybe to connect it to poems and the poetry world, but I feel like poetry reviews are kind of in that realm right now too, because poetry is so... If you're going to write a review about something, it doesn't make sense to write about something you dislike because poetry's not getting a lot of attention, and I wonder if that's going to shift that that it seems like poets are getting more public space.

HA: I mean I think so. I do worry about the poet's ability to take criticism, which isn't to say poets can't take criticism, but because the poetry space has been one for so long of just...

You don't really often see a poetry book just trashed in a review, because it's so often that if I'm going to write about this thing I'm going to write about it because I love it, so I think it's

created this kind of economy of the Feel Good you know, so I do worry about what it could be like if there's a hard... But what I would like to see more is poets reviewing poets, because I think that poets reviewing poets means that even if someone does take a critical eye to a book it will be done, I think, I hope, or I would imagine it would be done, with a gentleness, or a nuanced kind of love.

KD: Well it's funny, when I've written book reviews on poetry collections, the audience I have in mind is just other poets. I've never written a review thinking that someone whose never read a book of poems is going to read this and this will be their gateway, which is funny because that's such a cool thing to be able to do, and I never thought about it in those terms.

HA: I kind of think that should be – but also, I don't know, I don't read a ton of reviews, but *The Crown Ain't Worth Much* was reviewed fairly well across – it did fine. There was one review, and I won't say where, where it was clear that the person didn't know poems or hadn't read a lot of poems. There's an erasure poem in the book and the comment in the review was, "Well there's a poem where the words are missing and it feels like the words are draft." And, like, no, you know. And that's fine, but... I worry about handing over poetry reviews to folks who maybe just don't read a lot of poems.

KD: Right. That's really interesting.

HA: That's just a concern.

KD: But in some ways just the idea of people who aren't used to poetry reviewing poetry is just so cool. Let them figure it out.

CR: Yeah I think so too. Let them be messy and not know.

HA: And hopefully it finds works to find its way to something.

CR: Like how hot yoga leads to real yoga. Not that hot yoga isn't real.

HA: Is it not?

KD: I have no problem trashing hot yoga.

HA: Is hot yoga bad?

CR: I mean, it's not bad. I kind of feel like it's the gateway yoga.

HA: Hot yoga's gateway yoga?

CR: I think it is.

HA: It seems so intense, 'cause it's, like, a million degrees, right? I don't want a gateway like that.

CR: Yeah, yeah, but what happens is you warm up your body so much that you're able to do things your body isn't able to do in regular yoga.

KD: Interesting.

HA: Oh.

CR: Because it's warmed up more. So it's actually not great. This isn't a yoga podcast...

HA: It's not? I came here to discuss yoga.

CR: It's not great for your body because it does warm it up so much more, but it's a great way to enter into yoga and kind of sweat it out, and then you get to learn more about it.

HA: I had no idea hot yoga is a gateway. It seems so excruciating.

CR: I consider it a gateway yoga. So anyway, that's my yoga talk for the day. So, did we talk about a gateway song, then? Well, we talked Fall Out Boy.

HA: Well there are several – I had several entry points into music that were defined not solely by myself before them, like Whitney Houston and Miriam Makeba, and through my parents and my siblings. I'm the youngest so I got a lot of residual music that was just playing in my house.

KD: How many siblings do you have?

HA: Three brothers. So I got to grow up around a wide range of music and I got to grow up in a time when I think a lot of genres and things were colliding and leaps were happening. I was a kid when grunge happened, and I was a kid when grunge died and become something else. I was young when the Riot Girl wave of music was happening and Liz Phair and Hole and... yeah.

KD: That reminds me of talking about mean reviews – I just read the meanest Liz Phair review of her last album I don't know if you saw it.

HA: No.

KD: It basically insinuated the album was like a 'wiping the slate clean' album, an album that you make when you want to get people to completely forget about you so then you can come back and surprise them.

HA: Oh no, not Liz.

KD: It made me so upset because I love her.

HA: Do you love all of her stuff or do you just love *Exile in Guyville*?

KD: And I loved the one before that. I like that kind of whole era, with Supernova. I really started getting into that idea – to put energy into making something that you can start over from, to have people completely lose faith in you.

CR: If that was her goal, then that's a great review, right?

KD: That's probably not what she was going for.

HA: We were talking last night about artists who have pivoted and she's tried a lot of things and it just hasn't worked out for her since the 90s really. Well she had that bad hit, I forget, I think it was a self-titled album where on the cover she was naked with a guitar, just an acoustic guitar, and I was like, "Oh. This is a different Liz Phair." *Exile in Guyville* is a classic though. One of my top 25 albums easily.

KD: What are your top 5?

HA: Oh I don't know.

KD: Right now. Like today.

HA: Today? I think, well, I think the best album of all time for me – I have a hard time arguing against *London Calling* by The Clash. I think that's a hard number 1 for me always. Today... I would say *Paid In Full* by Eric B. and Rakim, just because it's been in my head a lot and I've been thinking about it and raving it a lot. *Instinctive Travels* by A Tribe Called Quest. You know, I've really been diving super heavy into old Motown singles. So I'm just going to say, I'm going to put this as one album, everything Martha and the Vandellas made in their Motown era, as one block. I've been finding some really great B-sides and singles, so all Martha and the Vandellas things, and then if I had to pick one more – Hole's *Live Through This* today because I've been really fascinated by – I just read a thing about Courtney Love and I've been really diving back into her career trajectory.

KD: What has been making you think about her?

HA: Well what a weird – I hate using the word tragic because she's still living and creating, but I think she put out a really good album in 2013 or so that no one really listened to, and I think it's just because maybe her time is over as a musician. She was also on the Fall Out Boy comeback album. It was very weird. But I've been thinking a lot about what we'll make of these artists from the 90s. And I started thinking about her after Chris Cornell died, and I started thinking about the legacy of these 90s artists who kind of defined the era but haven't been able to find a home beyond the era, like a Sonic home, or 'men in rock music self-destruction' can kind of be romanticized and women don't always have that luxury. So I think about Courtney Love a lot in that, you know, she hasn't really been afforded the luxury of romantics with what people view as self-destructive behavior.

KD: What do you think that's about? Is that about her being a mother too?

HA: Yeah, I think motherhood's kind of weaponized in that way, and in a way that fatherhood is not always. And I think of – and, you know, I'm not a parent, so – someone like Future, who I also enjoy, but with a lot of his behavior, you don't really see his children or his fatherhood really of weaponized against him often. It began, I think, early this year or late last year, it started to pick up traction, but it doesn't stick to him in the way you see it stick to other folks.

KD: I was also thinking about how when I look at documentaries about Kurt Cobain, she's always peripheral to the story, or she's looked at as someone who destroyed him and that whole narrative, but when I see clips from that time, I'm just always amazed by how smart she is, I'm just like, "She was so fucking smart." Like she was really smart person, and that's never a part of the narrative around her.

HA: And really gifted. I mean Hole... it's the Yoko effect, it's the thing of, like, "look at this woman destroying this genius," or "look at this woman who's irreversibly changing this genius." I call it the Yoko effect but I'm sure it happened years before Yoko. And I think Yoko Ono is the most notable one, because people still are like, "Yoko Ono broke up the Beatles and ruined this thing."

CR: Right.

KD: It's almost like an Oedipal complex, right? It's like, "Mom, how dare you take my –"

CR: Well then you have this death, too. I mean even I hear Courtney Love and I think of Kurt Cobain and I think of her, you know, going through that tragedy. And I think of Michelle Williams, you know, we don't talk about her without talking about Heath Ledger. We almost always do that to the woman when there's death involved.

HA: Yeah, I think people are always inextricably linked to their ghosts, but I do think that with Courtney Love, it's such a central point of her narrative, and I think it's a little heartbreak, perhaps, because she's made such great stuff outside of that.

CR: I'd love to hear you talk about legacy a little bit more with your writing. Do you think about your legacy when you're writing?

HA: My own?

CR: Yeah, I mean do you think of it as writing to the future, or kind of saying who we are now to the future, or are you just really super present?

HA: No, I mean I never think about legacy. I hope to be lucky enough to write things for a very long time, and I don't know if I am writing towards the future as much as I am trying to make sense of a present so I can live long enough to see a future, right? I think without writing I would be... well without my writing in particular I would be so... unable to carry on in the present state of the world. And I know that people hear that and probably think that I'm talking since November, but I'm talking since forever, right?

KD: Now more than ever.

HA: Right, now more than ever, I mean like always. And so I'm not writing to define a future as much as I am writing my way to a place where I can comfortably live to see a future. And I hope that whatever gets defined from that is what it is, but I tend not to think about legacy at all. And I don't think it's wrong for writers to do that, but I tend to just imagine that every chance I get to write a thing that comes out of me and doesn't drive me off the deep end of whatever is a fortune, a real fortune.

KD: In terms of the legacy of the artists you're writing about, you have this kind of power to reshape... I'm just imagining a piece you'd write on Courtney Love – what an impact that would have to kind of reclaim her or to reshape the way we talk about her.

HA: Yeah, I was thinking about writing a piece about *Live Through This* a few years ago when it had its twentieth anniversary, but I just couldn't – I think an important thing is knowing when you are not the person, you know? And I remember starting to write this piece and running into walls and running into walls, and I think sometimes you run into a wall and you can get through it. You can run into several walls and find a new way in. But sometimes it's good to be honest and say, "I'm not the person. I'm running into these walls repeatedly because I'm not the person who should write this piece."

KD: Can I ask what the walls are?

HA: Yeah, I mean, for me, because I have – with Courtney Love particularly – such interest in unraveling gender differences, I want to do that, but the reality is I'm coming at from a place where I'm still going to have several blindspots there. That doesn't mean it's impossible for me to write it but it means that, I'd keep running into those walls and I'd wonder if someone could do it better. The question I always ask myself is, "Am I the person I want to read on this?" And with that piece, I knew several peers of mine who I would rather read on Courtney Love. I remember this year thinking about Britney Spears – I think about Britney Spears all the time – and it was the tenth anniversary of the album *Blackout* which is, to me, the best Britney Spears album because it's weird, and it's that era where she was just wild'n out, and I love it. It's really an honest, brilliant album. And I was like, "I want to write about *Blackout*" but then I had a moment where I was like, "I would rather read someone like Kelsey McKinney on *Blackout* or Molly Lambert..." Which doesn't mean I don't write the thing, it just means that maybe I journal the thing, or maybe I put it in a Word file and don't open it. Maybe the world doesn't need to read the thing.

KD: So when I was reading *They Can't Kill Us Until They Kill Us* I was loving the gathering of artists that you brought together, and I'm wondering how you choose who you write about?

I'm also thinking about your Twitter feed, which is this living document of your music writing and your tastes, and there are people you write about on Twitter who didn't necessarily make it into the book.

HA: Right, well like whom?

KD: Oh I had a person, why can't I think of it?

HA: I'm sure there are several.

KD: Yeah, um... it will come to me.

HA: Well the book uses music as an entry point for other narratives I'm pulling together and so I had to think about who best served the book's arc, right? And I had to think, also, about who was unexplored or underexplored by me, and what risks I wanted to take. And I wanted to think about fun. I wrote the thing about Rick Flair in the book because I thought it would be fun. I don't love professional wrestling a whole lot, but I found Rick Flair to be so fascinating that I wanted to connect him with rap music. A lot of these things were me trying to make the most difficult throw I could make, and trying to fit these things in a small space, throwing a hundred threads into the center of the room and trying to see if I could connect each one. It worked sometimes and sometimes it didn't, but this book was written largely in... well I exiled myself in Provincetown last winter, and Provincetown in the winter is fascinating because no one is there. I mean, you're from Boston so, you know.

KD: Yeah my family lives in Provincetown.

HA: Do they really?

KD: Yeah, I grew up there.

HA: Have you been in the winter?

KD: Oh yeah of course.

HA: It's great but also kind of sad.

KD: Yeah, I mean I think it's so beautiful, I love it, but –

HA: I loved it, I don't know why because I was sad.

KD: I was actually going to ask you what made you go there to work on the book.

HA: I was sad, I was going through a lot, and I wanted to work on the book. I knew I couldn't do it in my apartment in New Haven, which is where I was living at the time, and I wanted to go to a place where I would not see anyone if I didn't want to. I knew that Provincetown in the winter is really desolate. You know, stuff's not open. The town drunks are there and there are bartenders who serve them, and one of the bookstores is open, and I think Tim's is open, and everything is open weird hours, and there's a Stop'N'Shop, but in the winter it closes at two or three, so if you don't go in the afternoon you're just screwed.

KD: They end up having movie night at some of the hotels, too. That's what I love about it; they have these weird pop-up townie events.

HA: They had this movie night one of the nights I was there! But I love the silence of it. I love that I did not have to speak out loud to anyone if I didn't want to. And it allowed me to really... because I tend to, as you all are unfortunately finding out now, ramble and go off on these tangents when I speak out loud. But if I'm not speaking out loud there's just a backlog of all of that in my head, and it gave me a chance to really just throw out whatever I wanted to and then try to connect it later. And that's kind of how the book came to life.

CR: Well we're going to take a break, and be back in a few minutes.

HA: Cool.

BREAK

KD: So every episode we'll be giving you a writing challenge, and you're free to do this on your own, or if you'd like to share it with us at Third Man Books, please send your submission to tmbreverbpodcast@gmail.com. We're excited to read your poems and every

month we'll choose a few that we especially love and we'll post them on our website. This episode, your writing challenge is to take your favorite song and use it as the title of your poem, and write the poem in a place or setting where you wouldn't normally hear this song. So try and make it weird, make it strange, put it in a completely new context.

END BREAK

HA: "In Defense of Moist":

Sprawling river / peeling off the chest / a wet slap / endless summer / not quite drenched to the bone / yet still a burden / how it sits heavy on the tongue / after being spoken / leaving the mouth / a humid storm / becoming the definition of itself / inside you / heaviness in the prison of your chest / I am trying to pull my shirt over my head / after a full court game / in June / and I am thinking of how everyone I love / was once taken from the inside of another person / *moist* with what carried them / into the world / isn't that worth the smallest praise / I am closing my eyes / as the shirt's cotton clings to my back / and I am thinking that all wetness must have teeth / especially the wetness that grows from within / and spills out / or / chews its way through the skin / and falls onto another's skin / the night Michael Jackson died / everyone black / in Ohio / danced in a basement / until the walls were *moist* / until it rained indoors / and we saw our heroes / resurrected in the reflection / of our own drowning / I say *moist* / and do not first think about two naked bodies / the sound their skin might make / when they awkwardly press into each other / underneath a hungry sun / in an apartment with a broken air conditioner / I say *moist* / and first think of / the eager and swallowing mud / the bullet that burrowed into Sean's chest / on Livingston Ave / the country of dark red / that grew across his white tee / while his mother held / his paling face / I say *moist* / as in / *my homie's blood left the corner of my block moist* / or / *his mama had her hands moist with what once kept her baby alive* / or / *my eyes were moist*

*when I heard the o.g. say / "n*ggas gonna die every day" / and then he wiped blood off of his shoe*
/ and it felt like summer for ten years

KD: Can you talk about how that poem came into being?

HA: Yeah. I was at the Hurston Wright writer's workshop, and I know he keeps getting brought up it's like he's in the room, but I was working with Terrance Hayes and he commented on how so many of my poems at the time felt like they were reaching for the perfect word, or the clean word. Because my journalistic instincts lead me to edit, edit, edit or find the perfect fitting thing, he really challenged me to write a poem that used a word I was uncomfortable with, or to find comfort in an uncomfortable word, and to kind of use the word as a gateway to finding ease in uncomfortable language. And so that poem made sense to me. The word "moist" doesn't bother me a whole lot, but I understand that it bothers a ton of people, and so I wanted to find a way to write about it from various angles at once. And I do like that the word sounds the way it feels, in a way. And I think, what more can you ask out of language? The word sits in your mouth the way the feeling sits on your body.

KD: It almost mimics the action. And in that poem, there are so many things being pulled out of something else, and the word is pulled out of your mouth in an uncomfortable but beautiful way. That's really cool. So to kind of extend that question, how are you starting poems these days? I'd love to hear you talk about your process.

HA: I'm a super interested in... well my new work is different from *The Crown Ain't Worth Much* in a lot of ways. I'm writing a book about – well, it's kind of loosely based off the movie *The Prestige*, but not really. I'm writing a book about loneliness and distance and loss, and kind of an emotional homelessness, if you will. You know, physically moving back home

and still feeling distant from things you love, or feeling a relationship with heartbreak and not a wholeness. The movie *The Prestige* – have either of you seen it?

CR and KD: No.

HA: No? It's about magic but not really. It's about, I don't know, it's this weird but great Christopher Nolan movie.

KD: Who's in it?

HA: Hugh Jackman, Christian Bale, Michael Cane... Scarlett Johansson is very bad in it.

CR: Ooh, good cast.

KD: This movie does not pass the Bechdel test.

HA: No, it does not, it certainly does not.

CR: Wait she's a bad character or she's doesn't do well in it?

HA: No she doesn't do well in it. But Rebecca Hall does great in it. She's in it as well. It definitely does not pass the Bechdel test. Well... No, it does not. In the beginning, Michael Cane's character unravels the three parts of a magic trick, the pledge, the turn, and the prestige. The trick of the whole thing is that the prestige is the hardest part of a trick to pull off because it's where you have to make the thing you made disappear come back. And I was so fascinated with that, and so fascinated that there was not a language for that before the book was written that the movie is made off of.

KD: That's so interesting. And what a great frame.

HA: Yeah, the framing of that was so wild to me. So I'm writing a lot of poems about – well I think oftentimes when dudes write poems, or when dudes make the grand break-up art, it's so unfair, and it's so, "I'm fair to the other person", and it's often bitter. And I didn't want to do that at all, but I did want to... well I was listening to *808s and Heartbreak*, the Kanye West album, and I was so fascinated by – and perhaps this is a function of his ego – the

sadness of that album. It's so weighty and heavy, but it's not a weapon. It's not pointed directly at another person. We know the narrative so we know what he was sad about, but if I played that album for someone who never knew anything about him and said, "Can you pinpoint what he's sad about?" or "Can you pinpoint who he's upset at?" you wouldn't be able to, I think. And I was interested in that kind of aimless grief, and the mining of that kind of... I imagine it as writing a book as though you're in a room full of mirrors. Or writing about your grief as though you are the only one in conversation with it and there's no one outside. So right now, a lot of my poems are kind of rooted in this, um... the book is odd, *The Crown Ain't Worth Much* is narrated by the ghost of Marvin Gaye, and there are a lot of poems about Nikola Tesla, and it's fun, so right now I'm having a lot of fun because I am so tied to the idea of doing something vastly different. I wrote the great – well I don't mean great as in good I mean great as in large – book about the tediousness of black life and the large specter of black death. And I don't want to do that again, you know? Writing *The Crown Ain't Worth Much* took so much out of me. It was draining and really heartbreaking and really all consuming, which is how *Vintage Sadness* came about, the chapbook that came after. And now I want to kind of have fun again.

KD: So *Vintage Sadness* isn't going to be a part of the new manuscript?

HA: No. I like the poems in *Vintage Sadness* and they were cared for, it's not like I just scribbled them in a notebook and then put them in a chapbook, but all those began as writing exercises, with the exception of a couple, to get me pointed back towards writing about something that wasn't death. There's that ridiculous piece at the end of *Vintage Sadness* that's the email exchange. Stuff like that was just fun for me, so all of that stuff began as just writing exercises in notebooks and then fleshed out on the page and then edited down.

KD: So now... well when I hear you say that I think, "what poem isn't that?" What's the difference between starting with exercises and not? Is it just that you generate momentum and then you can find the language for what you need?

HA: Well with *Vintage Sadness* I started out after hearing the song "Too Close" by Next on the radio, and I was like, "how weird is it that I lived an entire portion of my life without realizing that this song is about having an erection on the dance floor?" And so I wrote a poem about that.

KD: It always made me so uncomfortable that that's what that was about.

HA: Yeah that song is wild.

KD: At middle school dances we'd be listening to it –

CR: Wait so you recognized that, though, when you heard it when you were younger?

KD: Oh yeah! "I'm dancing kind of close I can feel a little –" isn't it "I can feel a little bulge coming through"?

CR: I don't think I knew exactly what that meant.

HA: I mean I listen to that and I can't believe I wouldn't have known. It's pretty –

CR: Well now I know. But if you listen to Rumpshaker, "long sharp sword" was something else. I just didn't... know.

HA: All metaphors are bad.

CR: And my mom was like, "you can't listen to that" and threw away my tape.

KD: No!

HA: She threw away the cassette?

CR: Yeah! It was heartbreaking.

HA: Rumpshaker is also a jam. So I had this thing where I was like, "Why don't I write a bunch of poems based on songs I didn't know were about sex when I first heard them?" I

made a list of songs and just made lists of words, and at first that was going to be it, like, “maybe I won’t write the poems, I’ll just...” I hadn’t written in months, I was so depressed after writing *The Crown Ain’t Worth Much*. The book coming out and having that reception didn’t make me feel better. It still made me feel sad. So I had this ridiculous weird project where I was just accumulating words prompted by songs I didn’t know where about sex and then was like, “Oh these can become poems”, and then, “This can become a project.”

KD: Did using these songs as a frame kind of work as an intermediary or something?

HA: Oh yeah. I mean, I thought I would never write poems again after *The Crown Ain’t Worth Much*. I thought I would never be able to write a poem and I thought I would for sure never be able to write a poem about any minutia, or anything about the awkwardness of intimacy, or whatever. So I loved having that distance, or that bridge – the song was just like a bridge.

KD: How has writing about pop culture changed for you now? Is it still – well I hope and imagine it’s still informing what you’re doing?

HA: Oh yeah.

KD: How has its function changed in your poem-making?

HA: I think its function has changed in my poems, if nothing else, because I’m finding a different entryway, or using pop-culture differently... I’m using pop-culture instead of – well I feel like some of the time, in *Crown*, I use pop-culture to make people feel okay about the fact that they’re reading poems. I’m not that invested in that anymore. I’m more using pop-culture now to see what can be echoed, what I can get to come out of it. Why I’m so fascinated by *The Prestige* is because there are so many layers. You know, like, I get to study Nikola Tesla and try to wring out as much as I can from Nikola Tesla’s history while also

doing a deep-dive into Marvin Gaye's life, and finding out how to work Marvin Gaye into the poems.

CR: So you say you're having a lot of fun with this, and yet the theme is still...

HA: The theme is not overwhelmingly happy, but I'm having a really good time. I think it's because I'm removed from the point in my life in which I'm writing about. I'm removed from the grief, so I'm writing on it with much more clarity. I'm writing on it, I think, more honestly. I'm not writing about grief as an attempt to make myself feel better. I'm writing about grief as someone who has lived in and archived a lot of it, and has it in an internal box. I'm not trying to write my way out of it, which, you know, I don't think there's anything wrong with writing your way out of any emotion. But because I'm not writing out of it, because I found other ways out of it, I'm now looking at it as it lies in front of me, the project is fun. I'm picking through things and, again, trying to find out how I can connect it to the things I care about.

CR: We were talking earlier about how the essay that starts *They Can't Kill Us Until They Kill Us* about Chance is about all of this joy, and I think you say in there that it's one thing to be able to be good at what you do but then to have fun while you're doing it is –

HA: It's a different thing, yeah.

CR: You said it way more eloquently than I'm quoting it right now... We were saying that you're writing about Chance but it almost reads like it's an almost Artist Manifesto, a Poet Manifesto, so it's great to hear that you're experiencing that right now in your work.

HA: Yeah, this is my third prep-book project – well *Vintage Sadness* doesn't... it counts but it's not the same – but this is the first time I've had fun writing a book. This is the first time that I'm excited about the process. I have been excited about both books, but this is the first time I've been excited about the process. The process doesn't feel like it's grueling and

draining. It feels like when I get out of this process I will be able to live happily, where *Crown* was so devastating. And the process behind *They Can't Kill Us*, yes, I'm thrilled in celebrating *They Can't Kill Us* now – like, the way it's living in the world now – but the process behind it was just brutal. The months in between completion and release were really difficult. And I'm so proud of that book and it's doing things that I did not expect. Two Dollar Radio is a wonderful press, and I imagine they did not expect... maybe they did, I don't know – it's had an unexpected run, and I'm thankful for that. But yeah, this new poetry project is the first time I've been immersed in a book and felt excited while writing it.

CR: And now is Ohio showing up in this collection?

HA: Not as much. My original second collection was going to be this collection of work about Biggie in Ohio, and kind of threading together all of these things about Ohio and gentrification and Brooklyn, but I took some of those poems to people and they were like, “Ah, I don't know, you already wrote that book. You're writing the easy book.” I then set out on the path to write the hard book, to find something unfamiliar to me, or something that would be difficult for me to unlock and then chase after. And again, because I'm doing that I'm so excited, and I'm so happy with the writing of even bad drafts, because I think I'm getting closer and closer and closer to the hard thing. And when I throw away a draft – well I don't really throw away drafts – or when I decide that I've hit my final wall with a draft and set it aside, I still feel like in that process I've come closer to my unraveling of the hard book.

KD: It reminds me of how you write about Carly Rae Jepsen, how she's opening that harder door to get to all of those other feelings that we're not used to accessing.

HA: I think it's a good practice. I mean who knows? This project might be awful, but there's a lot of joy I'm getting out of writing it.

KD: What is joyful, or what part of the writing process is joyful to you?

HA: That's a good question. So I think the most joyful part of it for me, so far, has been finding a way to write about sadness that is reckoning with the promise of joy to come after, or finding a way to write about sadness that isn't just sadness. My whole thing going into this year was to stop imagining sadness as just sadness, right? Because that doesn't do a service to the emotion, or the full range of what it provides, or what it asks out of us. I imagine it exists for us to understand what's on the other side of it. And so what makes me so happy about this collection is that I find myself writing up a hill just to get a glimpse of what's on the other side of the thing. I'm writing towards the other side of sadness instead of standing atop the hill of sadness and looking in the other direction, looking right back down and saying, "Oh wow, that was sad."

KD: It just makes me think of how joy can be the more subversive thing, not just in the poem but in daily life, and how there's this expectation now, I feel like, to be sad, because things are fucking terrible right now. And there is this kind of, "We have to be sad, we have to express our reaction to what's happening as this deflatedness." To make an actual space for joy in our activism – and you talk about that in I think your second to last essay – that is actually the more defiant thing. So what else gives you joy in your daily life?

HA: There's this dog in my neighborhood... So I walk to the gym everyday when I'm home, when I'm in Columbus, though it's becoming perhaps untenable because it was, like, fifteen degrees yesterday, but my gym is so close. It's a twelve-minute walk from my apartment, so it just seems foolish to drive to workout. But I walk through a park and oftentimes when I do there's this same dog being walked by a person – it's an old golden retriever-type dog, I think it's a golden retriever mixed with something else – but the guy walks the dog without a leash 'cause the dog is just a super good dog, and every time it sees me it just bounds

towards me as though it knows who I am. And that brings me a lot of joy – to imagine that this dog may be looking as much forward to our interactions as I do. To this dog, I am an entire being that loves it as much as everyone else, and we rely on each other for small joy. There are birds outside my apartment that kind of circle for scraps of food around the dumpsters, and watching them be so generous with each other... they might be the same birds or they might be different birds, I imagine them as the same birds because they're so generous with each other, they don't fight over the food as much as they share it.

KD: I don't think I've ever seen that with sparrows or birds.

HA: Yeah they're definitely sparrows. And there's only three or four. They kind of just pick up the bread and when they've had their fill they go away. And I think that's really joyful, too. And I can see them from my desk, so when I'm working I can look out my window in the morning and there they are.

KD: I love that. In one of my old writing rooms I formed a relationship with a bird that would come to the fence by my window everyday. And how amazing it is, to have that.

CR: All I get are squirrels. And I don't like them. I have not found the joy in the squirrel.

HA: Oh no. Hard no to squirrels.

KD: What else? I love hearing your joy list.

CR: I know! I'm tearing up like I'm reading about Prince again, or something.

HA: Some days I bring my speakers into the bathroom when I shower, and I'll play through an album that I love – not a super long album, but an album that's twenty-eight to thirty minutes, something like Tegan and Sara's *The Con*, and I'll play it all the way through. And there's a joy in that because, the way my life is now, my phone goes off a lot, or my email goes off a lot, or people need things from me, and I'm interested in the spaces where I can have my own time. I turn off my phone thirty minutes before bed, and I love sleeping now. I

used to just go, go, go and not sleep a lot, because I think capitalism or whatever – we have this society where we value the hustle and people who work all day and sleep four hours a night. And I was doing it, I was working until 2am. And this year I was like, “Why would I do that when I could sleep?” So I really committed myself to getting 7 to 8 hours of sleep per night, and that’s a real joy for me. It’s a joy for me to be able to step away. And it’s a privilege, I do want to say that it is a privilege.

KD: Yeah I have nothing to share in this conversation. How many hours do you get?

CR: Oh, five to six. I know, it’s bad. I’m not a great sleeper.

HA: Well Kendra, you’re a parent. I am not a parent, I live alone, my life is set up to where I can control my own destiny as far as hours of sleep go. I started stepping away from my computer. If six o’clock rolls around and I’m still writing I’ll say, “I’m going to do one more paragraph and then I’m done.” Then I’ll step away from my computer.

KD: It’s like self-parenting.

HA: I’ve gotten really good at that. And there’s joy in that. I’m trying to talk to people on the phone more. Earlier this year I was with my old MTV boss and friend Jessica Hopper, and she was talking about how since the election and since stakes have been emotionally rising, she talked about how she made time to call people, just every now and then, just getting someone she cares about on the phone. So once or twice a month I’ll call a pal, because, and I’m sure you both know this, especially within the poetry community, we’re so spread out. Yes, my dear friends are in Columbus, but I also have dear friends in Chicago, or Los Angeles, or here. I’m bad at talking on the phone, I’m awful at it, but it is good to hear the voice of someone you care about.

CR: I loved hearing you talk about listening to an album straight through, which I think is somewhat of a lost art form these days with everyone playing music on their phone or doing it through Spotify.

HA: Yeah, like playlists. I love an album straight though. I do also love a good playlist, but I have a record player, and I love how difficult it used to be to skip songs. I grew up with cassettes; it was very tedious to skip a song. It wasn't a thing. You fast forward too far and you're just in the middle of a song. You just gotta rock with it. So I think because of the era I grew up in I'm very much committed to the album as a format. But, again, don't get me wrong, I love a good playlist. I love a well put-together playlist.

CR: Do you read a poetry collection straight through?

HA: On my first reading, yeah. Always.

KD: Really? Interesting.

HA: I always try to craft that way. I think *Crown* you have to read straight through because it's linear – the narrative is linear.

KD: And *They Can't Kill Us Until They Kill Us* has such an arc to it. I feel like with essay collections I can just pick and chose, but again, there's such an arc to it.

HA: Yes, the arc. I want to make books that are put together the way albums are put together. I want there to be a very clear, direct emotional arc. And I don't think that every writer has to do that, but I lay poems out and I hear them. I hear how they sound, the emotional tenor of them. You're like a band leader – all you're doing is putting the instruments in the right formation they have to be in order to make the whole collection sound as sharp as possible. I think that's just the way I structure my work. So I do read poetry collections all the way through, but honestly some don't even need to be. Some are just good no matter what. A book like Kaveh Akbar's *Calling A Wolf A Wolf* is structured so

that it's read from front to back very well. But then I think of something like *Beast Meridian* by Vanessa Angelica Villarreal – all the poems are just good, so you can just open to any page. Which isn't to say that all of Kaveh's poems aren't good, they are, but with Vanessa's book you can just open to any poem and feel like you've been there the whole time.

KD: I feel like *How To Be Drawn*, to go back to Terrance Hayes, is a book that does not need to be fully read. This is kind of related... I wanted to talk about the Tribe Called Quest project that you're working on. And I guess my question is: have you been spending more time with particular albums of theirs as you're working on the project, and has working closely with their music and their story influenced your poem making right now? I listen to *The Low End Theory* sometimes to think about the arc of a poetry collection because of how –

HA: It's shaped so beautifully.

KD: Yeah, exactly.

HA: Yeah, I think listening to their early stuff has made me think more about the poet as a band leader, and how every sound has a place. I have been spending time with their later stuff. I've been spending time with *Beats, Rhymes, and Life*, *The Love Movement* and the last album. *The Love Movement* is a really great album and I think it's underappreciated in their catalogue, and it's really seen as this project that's not as worthy as the others. Same with *Beats, Rhymes, and Life*. I loved *The Love Movement* when it came out. I absolutely loved it. And I still love it. And so I've been spending a lot of time with it, trying to figure out what it did for me that it didn't do for other people. I have to be honest with myself and question is it just a nostalgia of the summer of 1998? Or is it really working for me? And I've been spending time with the last album, which, to be frank, it's tough to say it hasn't aged well because it's still a very, very, very good album, but it came out the week of the election. And it's just perfect – it came out the Friday the week of the election and you have “Space

Program” and “We The People” back to back as the first two joints on the album, and it felt like these are the two perfect songs for the moment we’re in. And I remember hearing that album and thinking, “This is impossible and great.” It’s still impossible and great, but listening to it this year I thought it was such a moment – it had such a moment, and I don’t know if it will age as well in, say, ten years.

KD: I’m so excited for that project to come out.

HA: Me too. Hopefully it’s not bad.

KD: Oh it’s going to be so good.

CR: We always like to close our time with hearing what song you might dedicate to your writing life right now.

HA: What song would I dedicate to my writing life right now?

CR: Your late night dedication.

HA: Oh, gosh. This is fascinating. I would say Cat Power’s cover of The Velvet Underground’s “I Found a Reason”. It’s my favorite cover of any song ever, perhaps.

KD: Can I ask why that one?

HA: Well I’ve been thinking a lot about transformation – how to take a thing that is dear to you and transform it into something else, and I think that song does that. And I think it’s just a really subtle, short, sweet ode to living, and I think that is what my work is trying to do now, especially with the shortness. I’m trying to write shorter poems.

CR: Ooh nice. Are you playing more with line breaks?

HA: I am. I’m learning how to do line breaks very well, I think. I never know what I’m doing with line breaks.

CR: Well you have line breaks with the slashes in a lot of poems.

HA: I'm doing different things with line breaks, I feel really good about it. Because I came to poetry so late I feel like line breaks were a thing that I never really learned, and never really felt like I needed to learn, but I'm really focusing on line breaks now. I'm very excited.

CR: There's a lot that you can do with them. I can't wait to see your new work.

HA: Yeah, I'm excited. Some of it's going to be out in the world. Some of it's coming out very soon, I think, but I don't know if it's in print or in digital. Who knows? But, I have all these poems in the voice of Marvin Gaye's ghost, and I have a lot of poems about Nikola Tesla, and I have this piece that kind of combines those two worlds. This piece is coming out in *Winter Tangerine* and I hope that people are like, "Oh this makes sense". We'll see. So this poem is in the voice of Marvin Gaye's ghost:

The ghost of Marvin Gaye sits inside the shell of Nikola Tesla's machines and builds himself a proper coffin. Shit, where I'm from, all you had to do to make a man disappear is give him the love of a good woman, and a little temptation from a bad one, and that ain't a trick of nothing except two stars snapping their fingers together at the right rhythm and before you know it everybody gonna find themselves behind a new curtain. The first funeral is when you sweat through a suit onstage and the women don't even bother screaming. Everything that comes after that is just waiting. I seen the future too once and wasn't nothing there except the trail of broken hearts calling me *Daddy*. I seen progress and all I got is these empty rooms. Don't let all that beggin' fool you baby. I didn't never want forgiveness or any type of Heaven that didn't wash off with the sunrise. In a field somewhere, I imagine all the parts of myself I left behind writhing themselves back together and that's the trick. You make yourself a God to someone new every night and then before you know it you can write your own Bible. I was building a grave this whole time and you all were too drunk on the howling of naked skin to notice. It takes a man to go home and die. It takes a man to drain

the light from his mother's eyes while blood makes the outline of a small boy's hand on her Sunday dress. In this version of the gospel, the flood is already there. In this version, Noah opens the doors to the ark and begs the animals to come inside, but they shake their heads and march into the drowning one by one.

KD: Thank you so much.

HA: Thanks for having me.

CR: Of course. Yes, thank you. Thank you for listening to our first podcast. Do make sure to follow Hanif on Twitter @NifMuhammad , or on his website at Abdurraqib.com , where he posts where he is going to be next and all of the information on his books. You can also follow us at ThirdManBooks.com for more information about Hanif as well as this podcast.

KD: We would like to thank everyone who has made this podcast possible: Zack Eager, Edsel Holden, Kim Baugh, Cody Staszek, Robbie Plackemeier, Chet Weise, Ben Swank, and the entire family at Third Man Books and Third Man Records.

CR: Again, I'm Ciona Rouse.

KD: I'm Kendra DeColo.

CR: We'll talk to you next time. Bye!

KD: Bye!