

# WHO IS THERE TO EULOGIZE THE TREE

4

the mason–dixon<sup>1</sup>

—

you<sup>2</sup>

3

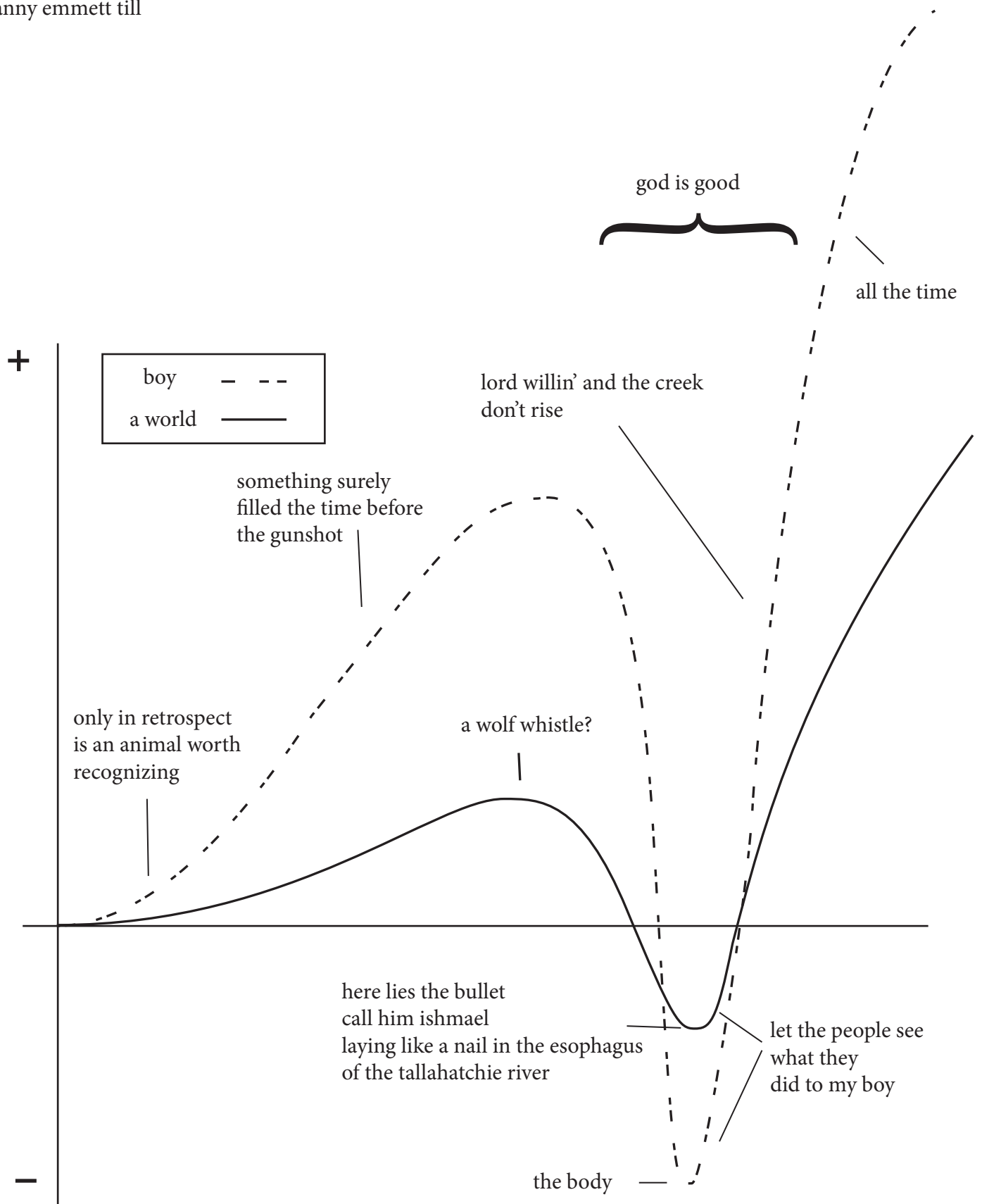
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<sup>1</sup> a shadow extended long enough becomes just  
the light

<sup>2</sup> you've never been tender. (moth wings. tobacco strung up to dry the color of a man). you can't walk to the car without stopping for your father to water the yard. he stares across it, bending over, thin as a country that lost half itself to civil war (a cancer sign), the other half to ashes. he plucks every weed as if they were his children—could be woven to a throne. you leave them be. whatever he believes, he believes. your whole theory of the sky would change if you crossed south of the equator. there, the north star evaporates. like the killing games children play—who would you murder first (or marry) if it meant meandering the stars close to home, keeping them from change? (you can try again to put hands to head to roots and stand, but every little sun is diamond-set into the back of your father's father's land). all that blood played across the innocence (some vote ignorance) of trees. they say yours are your father's eyes. he says look at steve, who is army green and bends to the wind like a galaxy. every night sleeping beside him in the ward, your father didn't know your name. your dream is to be terrible (a monster or a worm) and ratchet back history and only afterward, be good. you're american. you could have told him anything but of course you never did. your name unfurls from his name like onion skin. you've never seen your father cry. once, when his brother died, you think you see it. he waters the snow at the place he poured the urn—your father's brother is a tree—or it's a trick of the light. maybe fireworks.

<sup>3</sup> a crow's memory is generational

<sup>4</sup> a wilted kite



angles of incidence

the body is a haunt and non-euclidean  
parallel paths will meet

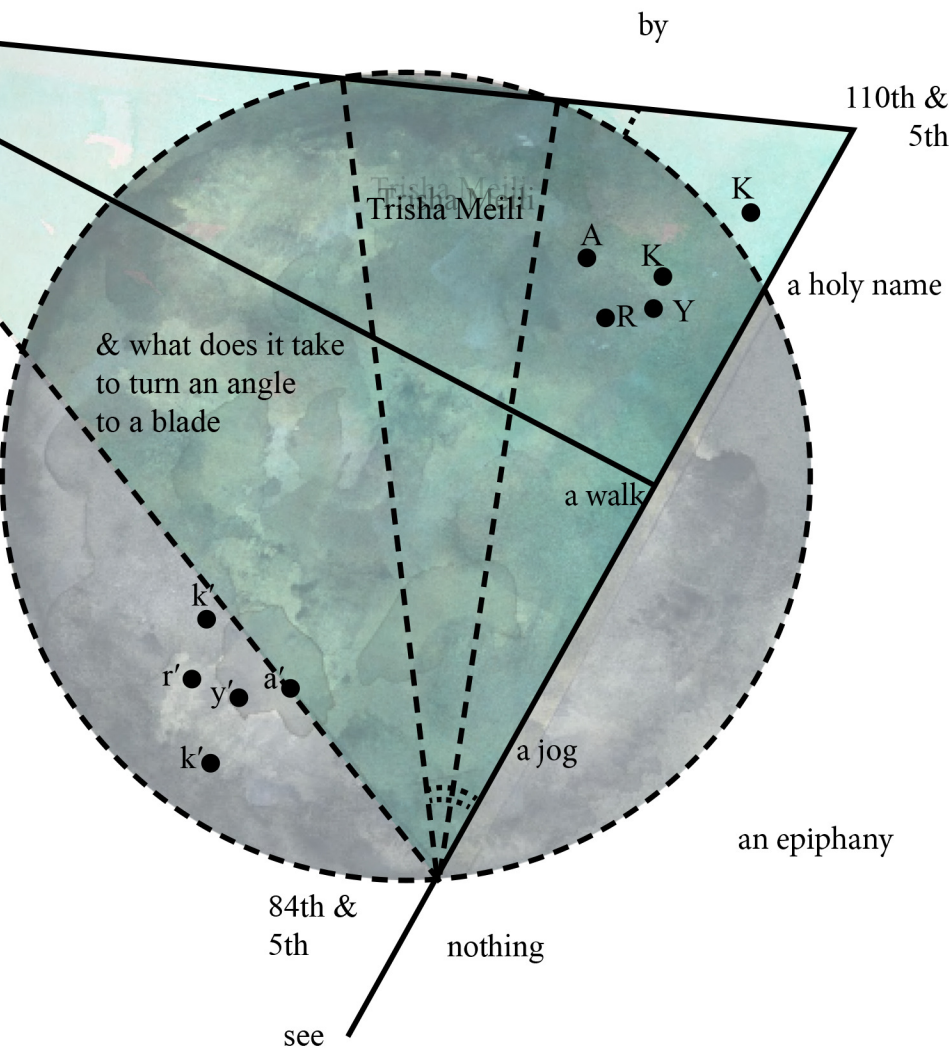
- Antron McCray ●
- Raymond Santana ● Kevin Richardson
- Yusef Salaam
- Korey Wise ●

is a tree growing down the block

is it the moon to you

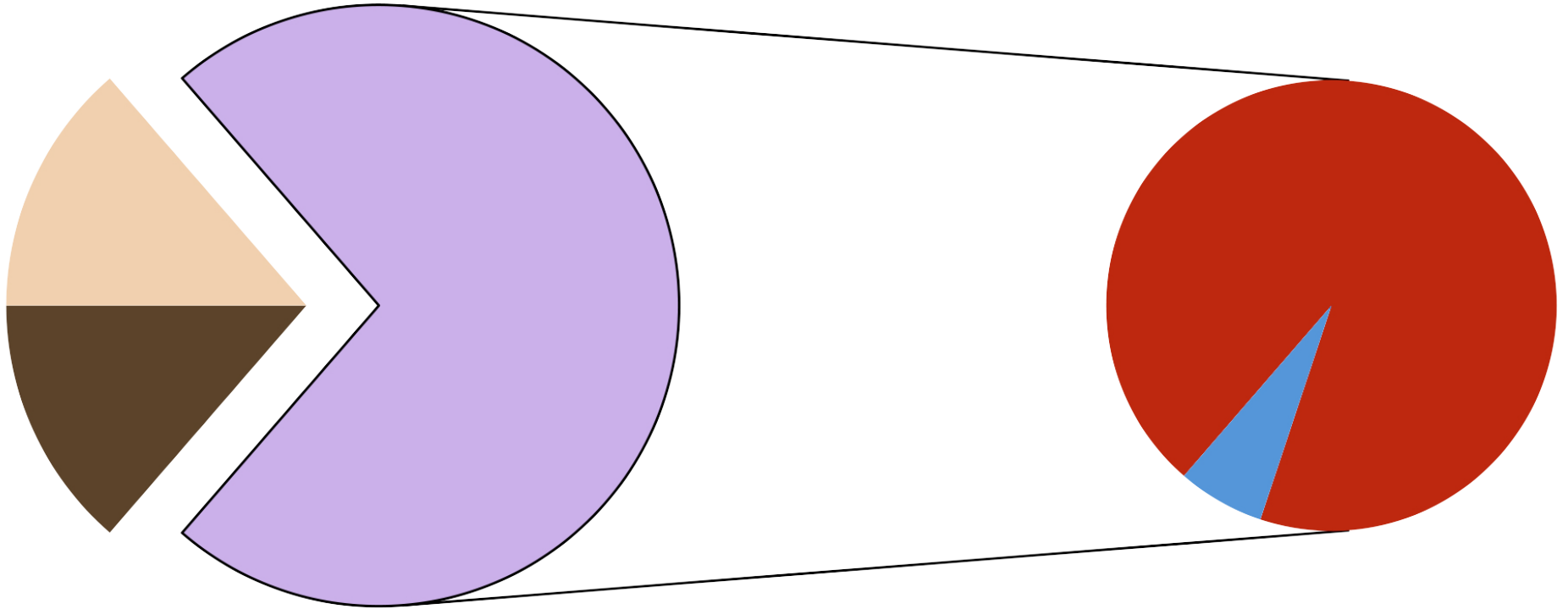
is the other side dark  
& small as the trouble it would take

& if you could  
what might you



sparrow's eye

**melting pot**



■ mom removed her makeup and made three dinners  
after the diner. she ate hers last just as we finished  
our plates and glasses. she is absent from photos  
(a note: daguerreotype was blurry and slow,  
and to stop their children who might die  
from the vagaries of victorian life, victorian  
mothers would hold their shoulders to keep them  
still for the whole of the long exposure.  
she would wear a black veil, blurred out  
of the photos or positioned behind a chair  
as if she wasn't there. they are called hidden  
mothers). once i snapped at her and she started  
to cry and even my quiet felt powerful  
in a way that made me want to cry myself,  
as if both our silences were my own.  
my tongue half a boy

with a man's shadow

■ my father played dominoes  
online, and if you're wondering  
at his skill, know that dad is black  
and only getting older. he'd become a celebrity  
in the leader boards, and then change  
his name. dozens of times, over and over  
he used the names of everyone he knew—no one  
wants to face a demigod. the story of america  
is a black body reinventing itself  
until it runs out of names.  
my father's father was a cop.  
brain cancer took him.  
that's the story of justice in america.  
dominoes is less a game of chance than honor.  
their faces are black and white  
and made from dice just like me  
and mine. eventually dad's name  
always betrayed him. they'd know  
the odds. to save time, he began  
to play as random words.  
he'd dash a career, from amateur  
to pro in the course of days. he ran out lives  
as quickly as patience. to some men, this is labor;  
inheritance ruins bones (american homes).  
some words sound feminine to strangers.  
my father, totally silent as he played,  
was the cypher of a man, and in these times  
they were silent back. until he was a sweet flavor  
or a tree. then my father was a bitch

■ i fell apart in public once.  
our anniversary.  
the waiter didn't notice, or pretended.  
the food was fine

■ when it comes to a woman undone,  
any number of suns might erupt. or none