

. Conditions for a Southern Gothic

- Rickey Laurentiis (bio)

Therefore, my head was kingless. I was a head alone, moaning in a wet black field. I was like any of those deserter slaves whose graves are just the pikes raised for their heads, reshackled, blue and plain as fear. All night I whistled at a sky that mocked me, that fluently changed its grammar as if to match desire in my eye. *My freedom is possible*, it said. As if my torn-off head in that bed swamped and overwhelming then with water had one wish, and it did: to think stranger stuff, to break that boring need to always have a shadow trail its maker, such that:

1. 1. The shadow snaps, rising to kiss the head;
2. 2. The kiss lands, the head flies up in airy revolt;
3. 3. Cracked from the head come the crows of its thinking;
4. 4. Three crows move in minstrelsy against the night;
5. 5. And the head still singing: *Last night, a Negro was axed . . .*

Who among us were made to scratch a myth? Speak. If God made us in his image, it was the first failure of the imagination. **[End Page 522]**

Rickey Laurentiis

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