

todd, forgotten son

by Rucker Manley

the cur in the weeds roils,
abandoned in a tenement house
in dougherty county. only side/eye/d love now
for the boy with ornette coleman in his mind.

my uncle todd is coming on fifty; these days
i think of him more than ever as I watch my grandfather
age out of everything but the hate and desperation
in his failing knees and sinew

who will unfold majesty now for todd?
who will plop him in the front passenger seat
over to his boyhood home when it's sold or better,
cut down for firewood

he can't go to his brothers
any more than he could when they twisted gran's
tender care for a boyling who forgot to bathe
into preference, stolen love and attention

this hate for todd boiled my father's bootleather heart

i remember watching mom last holiday
hand him a pack of shoddily wrapped tighty-whities
with no bow, making jokes about him soiling them
as she says he is wont

in so many epics
sweet joseph dies at the bottom of the pit
while his brothers insist he never existed—
like todd, he beg/et/s messiah only in his heart

there is noone who will save us
no potiphar or wife or jailer or famine

i am afraid to watch what is coming for todd
i am afraid it is coming for me