

# Summer (Somewhere) in the City

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Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies  
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## Abstract

This (found) poem in three acts creates a conversation between Stuart Hall and Danez Smith, situated in the larger context of the long struggle for Black livingness. First comes the warning, descriptions of the violent now; HERE. Act II is a re-reading or re-writing of the secret codes of slavery and anti-Black violence, a play and exchange between realities and imaginaries, the tensions in Black social life; WHERE. The closing act insists that we dream of something different, a nod to a life Stuart Hall tried to write into existence, a life that his work is still writing; SOMEWHERE. By putting Stuart Hall in posthumous conversation with Danez Smith, I perform the kind of imaginary geographic maneuvering that characterizes Hall's study, expanding the transatlantic and cross-generational capacity of cultural studies. Such a study, in a world where the African diaspora has been made commodity, is critical to the making of a world where Black(s) live(s) (matter).

## Keywords

writing as method of inquiry, methods of inquiry, Stuart Hall, Danez Smith, found poem

## Act I: HERE

*We are, comrades, in deep trouble.  
crises left unattended—like wounds not dressed—fester and  
infect the body politic  
that world of laws rendered us into dark  
matter.*

*the whole tempo of political struggle suddenly and sharply  
moves into a higher register  
the grinding noise of a social and political crisis  
if you press your ear to the dirt  
you can hear it hum*

*violence between black people and the police has become a  
way of life in the cities.  
what was I before? a boy? a son? a warning? a myth?  
now, everywhere  
I am is the center of everything.*

*policed like a colony population  
most of us settle on alive  
south of somewhere worse*

*the lesson of the black experience  
eruptions of unconscious violence  
some boys  
waded here through their own blood  
the old world  
keeps choking them*

*time and time again  
the body politic*

*the backbone of England  
like wounds not dressed—fester and infect  
somewhere, a sun*

## Act II: WHERE

*Let us, however, start with “the streets”  
a flock of boys  
who never got to grow up, blooming into forever,*

*what is happening on the streets  
dancing between the storm  
we’re all here to dance*

*Anyone with their ears and eyes half open must know by now  
none of these great gifts of the Divine to The Nation could save  
black people  
It can't happen here.  
I am sure there are other heres. a somewhere for every kind  
of somebody*

*In these areas, the black population have long ago been  
abandoned  
no need for geography  
walk around your block*

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jump  
in the air & stay there

*I do not mean to invoke some ideal period  
our social, political and community life  
has been directly assaulted, broken up and destroyed*  
this is how we are born  
laws rendered us into dark  
matter

*is it a surprise that such people feel  
they are an alien wedge*  
how could I ever explain to you  
there is no language for officer or law, no color to call white.

*This is not the voice of street subversives or doped-up rastas*  
everything is a sanctuary & nothing is a gun

*would a black person spend more than five minutes in police  
company?*  
*made to bear the brunt of*  
*scandalous apologetics*  
trust  
the trip will kill you.  
This is how we are born

### Act III: SOMEWHERE

do you know what it's like to live someplace that loves you  
back?  
*sweetness and light*

grow wings & fly above your city  
point to whatever you please  
& call it church, home, or sweet love  
*fed and sustained*  
*happy and content*

*Can it possibly have happened?*  
by a death we didn't deserve  
we are  
alive someplace better

someone prayed we'd rest in peace & here we are

*harmonious*

in peace      whole      all summer

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### Author's Note

*Text by Hall comes from his article "Summer in the city" (1981) and is written in italics. Text by Smith comes from their poem "summer, somewhere" (2016) and is written in Roman.*

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### Author Biography

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