

JASON MORPHEW

My Youth

I walked with a zombie
who followed commands
on an island
of revolutionary slaves
who were always writing
true songs
and apologizing for them.
Every saint was black and gay
full of arrows.
Births were mourned
deaths celebrated.
One god at a time came down.
Rich whites suffered
while fingering keyboards.
Nothing good or beautiful
mindlessness spreading
electroshock therapy prescribed.
White boys either stalked
the edge of alcoholism
or begged white girls
not to love them.
The only store with anything
white boys wanted
was called *Nigger Liquor*.
I walked with a transgender zombie.
Long flowing auburn hair
caressed its neatly groomed beard.
I don't know if the zombie ever found a way
to stuff itself inside the trembling
neglected women who squeezed so tightly
their eyes closed when they pleaded
for it to enter in.

What I know is I walked with it
I knocked on nearby doors
and asked the poor if they knew it.
I wore pleated slacks and penny loafers
to walk with it and ask.
What impressed the islanders
about the zombie was that it kept living
after being killed. That's what a zombie is.
It lives on but it's different. It doesn't speak.
It watches. It's got a god inside.
The bloated islanders dying young
thought following the zombie
would make them zombies too.
They were in the zombie's entourage
hoping it was contagious.
The island was full of huge hospitals
named for black gay saints
no one knew were black or gay.
The saints made sure every patient died.
When I was twenty and left the island
the ferry captain told me
Better doctors are required.