

Rhizomes: Cultural Studies in Emerging Knowledge

Issue 29 (2016) » DOI: 10.20415/rhiz/o29.e09

Black Friday

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Poet's Statement

My aim in "Black Friday" is to elegize Mr. Jdimytai Damour—a young Haitian-American Wal-Mart contractor who in 2008 was trampled to death by a mob of Long Island shoppers the morning after Thanksgiving—while considering American consumption from a first-person plural perspective. To explore and embody my own drowning in it rather than pretend I'm above or outside it. To consider my responsibility, our collective American responsibility, for the systemic exploitation and destruction of working class, women's, and black and brown bodies.

» [read poem \(PDF\)](#)

BLACK FRIDAY

for Jdimytai Damour, 1974-2008

The hand scrawled sign on the glass door says

Blitz Line Starts Here!

Marching through
pulse pulse crowd
Black Friday

Get out of the way
Are you on line?
what have we done?

Trampolining
Were we ever?
Made hungry

we became—

bombarded with orders to buy, sir, were we not?

an it

a surge

some tornado

deciding

its own direction

Midnight wolves

hounds and hunters

rattle the walls!

Torch, lynch, and jeer!

Tell them we were a meteor
with no more determination
stepping backwards off the canyon ledge
thousands of years in the future
whispering wherever we go from here
we go hurled at the mercy of unwillingly
here for ourselves falling

without sweetness

the neighbor's boy fishing the old dog from the pool

the freezing smoking ice

we were not anything

more material

than half willing, half hateful

whispering wherever we go from here we go hurled so willingly—
here for ourselves

Stompers and stumblers moving with the avalanche the motion of falling forward
becoming the mouth to avoid being eaten Swim with the wave Don't turn to face it
and if someone's leash gets caught on a rock What held us down was us and each of us
kicking our own way out felt the hand on our foot only later we admit was his

Blitz Line Starts Here!

The thousands of pounds careening into you
was people, not metal, not the struck girl's
two hundred foot flight, but both of you
landed, later someone rolled
both of you over

nothing could be
everything's been done

Blitz Line Starts Here!

Reports	6'5 270	by sheer size qualified
like a football player	Welcome to Wal-Mart	man the door
guard the line	not the usual type	not a regular day
Welcome to Wal-Mart	the old white greeter	too broke to retire
Welcome to Wal-Mart	guard the door	man the line

Black Friday	contract labor	needed that day
big day, big man	only today	pat on the back
more bull	to keep us cows	in line
us herd	crowding	the narrow chute

*Our sales news is overshadowed by the tragic incident
at our Valley Stream store
We consider Mr. Jdimytai Damour
part of the extended Wal-Mart family
and are saddened by his death*

Your father tells reporters you were a good son
Your mother, home in Haiti, came as soon as she heard

Jdimytai, they said
hardworking, a good son, loved movies and anime
wrote poetry

Temporary employee

post-mortem promotion

an extended member
of the family

No benefits
but that's no different, no union, no
surprise, no one noticed
someone take
the hinges off the doors

no one said
if they did, anyway

Blitz Line Starts Here!

so what / we say / who pushed / we pushed / who of we pushed / us pushed / we pushed forced
forward / moving with / what wouldn't stop coming / blanketing all in its way / bending metal /
bowing metal / out of the way / shattering glass / not without / precision / removing hinges / try to
swim to / the waterfall / won't let you / the shy that acts brash / smacks your wrist / snaps back /
we say it was not us / who, then? / don't get fresh now / please exit the store / we don't answer /
a man has died / we stood outside all night / they told us to come / buy / what's this got to do
with us / here now / they say we cannot buy / leave everything behind / go back outside /
he isn't family / he was / not buying / won't bring him back / in the face of great misfortune /
we've been instructed to buy / solutions / the nation's way / mourn / we celebrate / breathing /
nothing is optional / eat / we have no choice / we are just / hosts / starving / we are / our worms /
demanding / always eating / we / always starving / Jdimytai / don't keep us from our food / we beg /
Jdimytai / they won't listen / feed us / Jdimytai / we froth / we fed / we'll feed on you

Blitz Line Starts Here!

It's the most wonderful time—

Out of the red, into
our one good black, though no less sinister
than our black plague, blackmail, some fever, black
balling, some disease, explain away somehow
this mercilessness: some other country, maybe?
Bloodline craving, want masked as need, need
and out drops the bottom, no
money, never no credit, no, Christmas
is never cancelled, we need, we need, we'll stand
all night laughing in front of Wal-Mart, huddled
for warmth, someone selling hot dogs,
hot chocolate, but when the sun comes up
or maybe just before, as 5am ticks closer

something changes, we who've known
and never known hunger
call it that, pressing close to one another
up against the doors, the weight of we
heaving, shattering glass, trampling a man to—

Blitz Line Starts Here!

Jdimytai Damour