

## Exemplar Poetry – “A Poem for My Librarian, Mrs. Long.”

Giovanni, Nikki. “A Poem for My Librarian, Mrs. Long.” *Acolytes*. New York: William Morrow, 2007. (2007)

A Poem for My Librarian, Mrs. Long  
(You never know what troubled little girl needs a book)

At a time when there was not tv before 3:00 P.M.  
And on Sunday none until 5:00  
We sat on the front porches watching  
The jfg sign go on and off greeting  
The neighbors, discussion the political  
Situation congratulating the preacher  
On his sermon  
There was always the radio which brought us  
Songs from wlac in nashville and what we would now call  
Easy listening or smooth jazz but when I listened  
Late at night with my portable (that I was so proud of)  
Tucked under my pillow  
I heard nat king cole and matt dennis, june christy and ella fitzgerald  
And sometimes sarah vaughan sing black coffee  
Which I now drink  
It was just called music

There was a bookstore uptown on gay street  
Which I visited and inhaled that wonderful odor  
Of new books  
Even today I read hardcover as a preference paperback only  
As a last resort

And up the hill on vine street  
(The main black corridor) sat our carnegie library  
Mrs. Long always glad to see you  
The stereoscope always ready to show you faraway  
Places to dream about

Mrs. Long asking what are you looking for today  
When I wanted Leaves of Grass or alfred north whitehead  
She would go to the big library uptown and I now know  
Hat in hand to ask to borrow so that I might borrow

Probably they said something humiliating since southern  
Whites like to humiliate southern blacks

But she nonetheless brought the books  
Back and I held them to my chest  
Close to my heart  
And happily skipped back to grandmother's house  
Where I would sit on the front porch  
In a gray glider and dream of a world  
Far away

I love the world where I was  
I was safe and warm and grandmother gave me neck kissed  
When I was on my way to bed

But there was a world  
Somewhere  
Out there  
And Mrs. Long opened that wardrobe  
But no lions or witches scared me  
I went through  
Knowing there would be  
Spring