

spacecraftprojects

we are all astronauts

transmissions
nourbese philip & j. okot bitek

If/Shall

if either

if either of the parties

if any goods

if the commander of a ship of war

if either of the parties

if either

if any gun

if any moor

if any vessel

if any vessel of the united states

if any american vessel

if any vessel of either of the parties

if we

if any ship of war

if a ship of war

if there shall

merchants shall

all goods shall

no examination shall

unless it shall

goods on board shall

no other person whatever shall

no vessel shall

who shall

if any american citizen shall

no will shall
the consul shall
and if there shall
the effects shall
the party shall
the property shall

if a will shall

the consuls of the united states of america shall
they shall
they shall
if any citizens of the united states shall
the consul shall
unless he shall
any redress shall

if any difference shall

peace and harmony shall
a friendly application shall
that application shall
no appeal shall
no appeal shall

and if a war shall

nine months shall

otherwise shall

the citizens of the united states shall

the treaty shall

it shall

if/once we were

any moor any of us with our heads in our laps drags his talons slowly ever
& seemingly deliciously over
dry mounds in piles & piles of skin

scraps of skin dead skins of any moor any of us with our heads in our laps
dead white
& sometimes grey flakes
in a heap in piles & piles mounds even on the carpeted floor beneath his right leg

once & only once

once & once again

with

his c a r v e n o u s voice over
e

once again again

v

e

r

y

t

h

I

once again again again

n

& g
e v e r y o n e o n c e

we were are we are we are we are people

J. OTOK BITEK

Note from M. Nourbese Philip

In 2015 I collaborated with the scholar Omar Berrada at the annual Tamaas workshop in Paris, France. We were exploring issues of racism in Morocco, particularly in the wake of sub-Saharan Africans attempting to cross to Europe from Morocco. As part of our exploration Omar brought to my attention The Treaty of Peace and Friendship With Morocco, signed in 1787, between the United States of America and Morocco. If/Shell is based on this Treaty. I presented the first draft of this poem at our presentation at the end of the workshop. The treaty has been in existence for 232 years and remains the “longest unbroken treaty relationship in United States history.”