

House Maroon
Olivier Marboeuf

I sold
My clan
My mother
I sold
My father
I sold
My brothers
My sisters
I sold
My uncles
Some old aunts too
And their friends
Sitting on a terrace
Drinking herbal tea
Mysterious plants
I sold

And later
I complained
Because I wasn't
Paid enough
I told everyone
Who wanted to listen
That I'd been robbed
I didn't speak loudly
Or very often
But I said it
I swear to you

I sold
My ancestors
I sold
A culture
I sold
Rites
That I didn't know
Maybe it's my head
Maybe it's my skin

That made them think
I was unclear
Don't worry
Because more than anything
I love to go maroon
And conspire

And then
I complained
That it was poorly paid
Because of my head
And surely my skin
I called out
To all my community
I clearly said
I'd been robbed of all I had

I sold
Neighborhoods
In sordid *banlieues*
I sold
Islands
And I sold
Flames
A bit of violence
Just sweet enough
To the highest bidding
The most likeable
Of my dealers

I sold
Dignity
And I sold
Resistance
But also beautiful ideas
I sold
So many tears
Archives sparkling
Like nuggets of gold
Placed on the gaze
Of new kings

And later
Much later
When my skin
No longer provoked
Any form
Of desire
I denounced
What they'd done
In the salons
Of the high bourgeoisie
The sublime and wild matter
Which one day
They'd spirited away from me
Extractivism
Orientalism
The most vulgar exoticism
To everyone listening
I denounced
In my low voice
They stole
My beautiful treasure!

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Translation / adaptation : Liz Young & Olivier Marboeuf