

A Roman Holiday¹

Claude McKay

'Tis but a modern Roman holiday;
Each state invokes its soul of basest passion,
Each vies with each to find the ugliest way
To torture Negroes in the fiercest fashion.

5 Black Southern men, like hogs await your doom!
White wretches hunt and haul you from your huts,
They squeeze the babies out your women's womb,
They cut your members off, rip out your guts!

It is a Roman holiday, and worse:

10 It is the mad beast risen from his lair,
The dead accusing years' eternal curse,
Reeking of vengeance, in fulfilment here.
Bravo Democracy! Hail greatest Power
That saved sick Europe in her darkest hour!

Editorial Notes

1. **Roman Holiday**: "an occasion on which enjoyment or profit is derived from the suffering or discomfiture of others" (OED)

McKay, Claude. "A Roman Holiday." *The Liberator* (July, 1919): 21.