

2016

De Soto Leaves a Negro

Ashley Jones

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.library.uab.edu/pms>



Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#), and the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Jones, Ashley (2016) "De Soto Leaves a Negro," *PoemMemoirStory*. Vol. 15, Article 10.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.library.uab.edu/pms/vol15/iss2016/10>

This content has been accepted for inclusion by an authorized administrator of the UAB Digital Commons, and is provided as a free open access item. All inquiries regarding this item or the UAB Digital Commons should be directed to the [UAB Libraries Office of Scholarly Communication](#).

DE SOTO LEAVES A NEGRO

"After twenty-five days had been passed at the capital of Coosa, De Soto marched in the direction of the Tallapoosa, leaving behind a Christian negro, too sick to travel, whom the Indians desired to retain among them on account of his singular hair and sable complexion. He recovered, and was doubtless the distant ancestor of the dark-colored savages seen in that region in more modern times."

—*History of Alabama, and Incidentally of Georgia and Mississippi*, Albert James Pickett

A gift of sick skin.
A sac of black and bronze.
You are presented
alongside two swine,
a few discs of bacon
and fatback—
a body is a body is a body.

The armada strode like God
across the water—
America, a jungle promising gold.
You will leave this cavalry
at Tallapoosa.
You will watch them march
with destiny in their heels,
and you will heal
among these brown people.

Years from now,
your sons will walk, darkly,
along these banks,
their skin beating
with the sickness
of the chain and the whip.

They will look upon
their beating skin
and hear you singing—
their eyes will swirl
with pride, riverside.