

Two Landscapes

David Micah Greenberg

For Patrick Chamoiseau

Critical reading, the Caribbean passion for clarity, to see land, in a broken and stolen ocean, as a thinking bridge.

It is contrast and not lushness, that is the beauty of island thought, between land and sea, the maritime currents and immobile resistance, the blocked peripheries and the loud essential core which runs because it runs through lives.

As water makes masks

fixed to human faces against the spined shore

shielded like the sun on the horizon — shielded by its fall every day —

runners along the horizon, uneven white foreshortening

one wind-blown tree among the static copse

tendrilled black onto blue, always across the sea and not vertical

this five-petaled flower rolling like a wheel.

When the clouds became the sea color, moving slowly over the break in the trees

blocks of town — stationary, broken rings of heat

to burn away every character of every face that is not inscribed to its time.

For Sor Juana

Unlimited the power of the unbearable self, the owl and bat taken to body.

To aspire to a blamelessness and an unworthiness, to aspire to thorns.

To find poetry in the Bible, the piety and piercing of reading and writing.

To imitate the masters more firmly than the masters.

To read and not participate — a bitter release.

We are distinguished from animals by God, set among two tracks of stars. We pertain to the moss slope up rock and vine. We are terrified by our blood-bridge. A series of dark suns.

To break in desire, shells on magnetic shore. To be the worried field — broken birds, broken and strange.

To hate fluidly and not categorically. To be mad in an absurd grounding of sense on shore, a faith of familiarity. Power in eddies — ring-laid — river against ocean, dissimilar as siblings.

To be broken and no longer afraid.

Grounded in the sand barge, delivered from attention. A tent against burning sky.

The brutality of position and consolation of loneliness. As women must teach women, from the cloister to the mathematics of David's harp.

Who declares herself base and vile and is patient as life and unyielding as death.

