

## Thato Magano

### *Little Boy Dying*

on the path,  
at the door,  
on the ledge,  
listening to  
history move  
through his body,  
a little black boy  
wails in his  
stroller

he hears his  
grandfather's cry  
and joins his  
grandmothers in  
wailing. his sister  
stretches out her  
hand to him  
while his brother  
can't bear to look him  
in the face

his body already  
knows the thing  
that speaks in the  
stairs above him i  
n master's office.  
his father doesn't  
know how to help  
him stop wailing  
while honoring  
his people and t  
eaching him  
about their  
histories

his tears purge  
what his heart has

seen without  
hearing the words  
spoken into the  
loud speaker in  
the courtyard, his  
fingers pointed  
towards the  
beyond trying to  
say what his  
mouth can't  
articulate

he pushes his  
stroller into the l  
ight of the  
afternoon away  
from the darkness  
of the door and  
the boy is silent

i think they both  
know how they  
are prisoners of  
time, and  
memory, and  
affect, and  
wishing

wishing not to be  
here at this  
moment and  
wanting, at the  
least, for the other  
to know where he  
comes from

*Missing Pearls*

my body wails into my ribs on the ferry to Gorée

grandmother's voice asks me to collect its scattered bones and  
return them home

there is a grand derelict  
building with dilapidated French  
doors and colonial patios  
overlooking the plateau used to  
mend the broken

grandmother slaps my face with the water at the  
edge of this building, she asks me what my fear is  
when she has done all that was needed for me to  
mold myself into her shape

grandfather asks me to make his unmaking disappear,  
he doesn't know how to say they've maimed his body and  
have taken from him the unknown things the gods trusted  
him with to will provenance

masters  
 voice  
 tugs  
 at the  
 strands  
 of my  
 hair  
 asking  
 me to  
 dare  
 him  
 with  
 visions  
 of  
 freedom

the boat sways higher because my  
 uncles hold it up, they want to make it  
 cross onto the island without  
 touching the water, trying to  
 save me from the  
 fate that met them before  
 on these waters,

they heed mothers bleeding tears  
 that are always hopeful that we make  
 the crossing, reminding us that they  
 lie awake with memories of their last  
 shouts of freedom when they flew off  
 boats in escape

the boat  
submerges in  
to the water  
to stitch my  
hairs together  
from masters  
pulling

mother once told me that her only expectation of me is to bring  
back her people to her,

and i,

so proud of myself,

i came back home with two hundred and five shells and pearls in  
a liter and a half bottle of Kiréne

i laid them out at her feet and told her that each one is for all the  
bones in the bodies that she's longing for

grandmother won't stop wailing because a pearl is missing

the rib my child, my rib is missing

she cries

even I  
have forgotten  
what a complete  
human body  
looks like  
without the  
mutilation of  
six hundred  
years of historical  
trauma

*The House of Métis*

in my father's house there's a  
chain in a cabinet whose strings  
tighten my feet from moving

the neck braces mutilate my  
throat when i look into the  
Atlantic

i want to scream, like the little  
boy, i want to purge my heart,  
but my eyes refuse to let my  
mouth open. they muffle my  
screams into dried sockets  
that hold their tears from the  
wooden floors refusing to make  
them shine

my grandmother says if i even  
let one escape, master will  
come pleasure himself so now  
i keep smiling and taking pho-  
tographs with my sunglasses  
on and i write on the walls  
stitching broken pieces to hold  
myself together

*The End of the World is Pleasure*

someone is calling my name at the

edge  
of  
the  
earth

my mother said i must never respond to these voices  
because, i will never come back to her,

if  
i  
do

i've resisted for so long, i lost my body

in her eyes

now in the  
water i can  
see what my  
face was meant  
to look like

when i put my foot in the water,  
the sky commands the

earth and a storm is brewing

the strikes of lightning charge into my veins and overwhelm my  
body, and my heart stops

for minutes i do not know how to count

my friend once told me that  
often while driving,  
they imagine what the impact of  
crashing against a wall would  
feel like on their body

i wake up in the deep of the

water and i scare myself

at how i delight at my

death every time

this happens

***Waste***

do you see this  
constellation  
of flesh and bone?

it is not a body to  
you because you  
have made it the  
stairs you walk on  
to enter your fanned  
room of tea cups. it bends  
to appease you while  
you throw it into  
the Atlantic as  
routinely as waste.

is this how  
your people have  
taught you to  
recycle?

*Legacies of Trauma*

I wrote your

name on Langue de Barbarie,

on the furthest West Point

of your peoples making.

I want to imagine that the

waters will wash it away

to meet the ones that have

gone before it, whispering

the names their children

have been made to forget

so that they can be

unclaimable no more.

