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Poetry Collection | Excerpts from The Complicated Lives of Islands

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Author
Magano, Thato

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Thato Magano

Little Boy Dying

on the path, seen without
at the door, hearing the words
on the ledger, spoken into the
listening to loud speaker in
history move the courtyard, his
through his body, fingers pointed
towards the beyond trying to
a little black boy say what his
wails in his mouth can’t
stroller articulate

he hears his he pushes his
grandfather’s cry stroller into the l
and joins his ight of the
grandmothers wailing, his sister
in wailing. his sister
stretches out her afternoon away
hand to him from the darkness
while his brother of the door and
can’t bear to look him the boy is silent
in the face

his body already i think they both
knows the thing know how they
that speaks in the are prisoners of
time, and
stairs above him i memory, and
n master’s office. affect, and
his father doesn’t wishing
know how to help wishing not to be
him stop wailing here at this
while honoring moment and
his people and t wanting, at the
eaching him least, for the other
about their to know where he
histories comes from

his tears purge
what his heart has
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 photographs 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.