

### Post-Colonial Brochure

Soon as you cross that clear, clear frontier by ferry  
you hear the domino commotion of porches  
beyond the yawns our past has made us master,  
the heart remaining after lamps have lured a mothy fleet  
to their electric sunset — my people carry a sabbath  
apathy in their walk, the languor of a long work  
week, a lizard asleep on the half-lowered lid  
of a jalousie all summer, the mossy gate and slow  
goats with their familiar bell collars,  
strolling goalless along the same street  
a creaky jitney journeys down for town now —  
where creoles twine like cornrows and pass  
a lazy laugh at all the slangs  
outlasting Latin.

**Caricabal**

— *for, and after, my grand fathers*

Salt-borne, land-bound, always arriving, I,  
a man-sized horizon, stood among those old colossi:  
Césaire, Glissant, and so on,  
a proselyte having traced with ink  
the great and pious weight of their dire tribe,  
our black, shackled ankles buried in the brighter  
beryl of the shallows, wherein  
the merest commotion of our soles  
raised the sand to make the mirror misty.

Adjacent, in the dream,  
shoulder to shoulder, we faced  
the star that still lit our little Antillia, a century on,  
while it lowered like a slow gavel  
on the sea's farther side, a deity undecided if the gift  
of its light had met as yet  
a land worthy of berthing.  
First, my forebears' bloody delivery. Now, the hope  
for new epiphanies to speed  
this present, pubescent scent, solid  
as a hollowed marlin hanged by the tail, blade down, fetid

in a fête of flies, or the critical gulls that perch  
on the crest of our pages  
with their mock pollock, shitting white graffiti  
between these words we have learned to wring  
like tears from basalt stone. This scenery  
has rendered them  
as much as they have rendered it: these spires  
they conspired, these bays they praised,  
the mangroves, revising waves  
above this grave, atolls and tombolos that tumbled

from their guts into the bassinet of books.  
In the dream, old and young, scribe  
and griot spanned the marathon  
limbo of the shore. Vomited up from the seabed,  
embedded then in the surface, nondescript  
niggers who sank to the benthos bobbed  
up and down like a djembe beaten  
to Mutabaruka's *paear*: how his island pronounces *pain*.  
Awoh, the sun's sum of pity almost coax  
Kamau forward, though those corpses made a mazy course  
for dorsal fins and thunder-thrown pirogues.

None of us juniors, none of our seniors in vigil

knew if the sun would wane, the archival ocean drain  
if we pulled the plugs of our cursive  
feet from the wheeze  
of shallow water. To forget is to abandon,  
and to abandon, doom, for true, but giants  
be clement with your softer-spoken  
sons, men of less insurgent verses,  
private griefs that teethe on reasons  
besides their flesh, besides the soured mammary  
of history. This, too, is liberty,  
(like our many mummies winked a while ago).

Permit us a vision: allow us to leaven  
another morning, when only chains  
of foam and lichen link our legs, only the rested  
heart of this sovereign  
quest, when I and I's islands have grown enough  
to show their asses to polemic fire  
and the judgement of those heavy rays,  
when, weaned, I can walk inland to write, in my own  
voice, my own time and innuendos,  
with no supposed oppressions, my own regatta of ghosts.

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*At the end of the small hours  
the restrained conflagration of the morne, like a sob gagged on the verge  
of a bloodthirsty burst, in quest of an ignition that slips away  
and ignores itself.*

— Aimé Césaire

*Filled with pity, this island, and pitiable  
It lives on words derived  
Like a halo of shipwrecked people  
Searching for rocks*

— Edouard Glissant