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Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies

Title

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Journal

Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies, 41(1)

ISSN

0041-5715

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Publication Date

2018

DOI

10.5070/F7411042315

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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

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.

