

Sister

A shallow shell of soil
contours skeleton rock,
loam packed
with two firm hands
against the unruly globe.
Ever-gnawing tubers
grasp teeth and pull,
drawing the earth's
strings tight, fibrous
and matted. El mundo
es encordado como
un charango, y how
the wind must whistle!

It would only take the tip
of a young girl's finger
for it all to break apart.

untitled #1

Here is a portrait of a long pink curtain,
situating itself carelessly next to a local girl
who is chewing sugarcane. It chooses a casual
pose, leaning half its cotton candy weight against

the doorframe, passing its gaze beyond the observer
at — what? It stretches towards its bottom, reaching
tangled tassles towards the black pile of fabric
sleeping on the pressed clay, on which also sits

a wooden bench. This is the curtain's home, where
it reclines when the wind is still, and dances when
the trees are singing. It recognizes the sound
of each scooter as it passes, and knows its owner

and its destination. It has a purpose and a place.
Every day, it says to the bright tin roof, to the dirt lawn,
to the local girl,
and to her family: "Love until your feet bleed,

in the starlit coalhouse, in the chalk mist
schoolhouse, in every crease and fold of this
calloused and brittle, majestic little kingdom."

Haiti, 2010

A common academic assumption, as it goes,
seems to be that a scholar of humanities will also be
an artifact of her field of research:
a subject, and its direct object. The queer theorist
is, often, queer, and the non-European ethnic scholar
speaks with the appropriate accent.
One ought to be a Mobius strip.

But here is a poor woman in Haiti, walking somewhere —
can you imagine where? for what? —
and here we are, looking at her.

What shall we say,
then? That she looks good in yellow? She does.
That her life is hard? It is. That she is different,
somehow, from whatever we are?

A human being walks slowly from point to point
for a lifetime, forming tiny line segments in a kind of
spherical geometry, on top of mud and between houses
made from it. A parent is dead. A child is lovely. There are
irrational connections between emotions and reality.

Again: an illustrator, endeavoring upon a subject,
first draws circles, triangles, ratios.

And then it is finished.

Saint

I spy with my humble little eye
the twinkling city of a city's poor,
where the hungry splash in like water—
from the depths of San Salvador.

I spy with my little eye
ten thousand gleaming booths.
Metal houses pressed together
each covered by the others' roofs.

Here in one is a game of find:
a basket, a bottle, a blanket scattered;
four white holes, a sense of longing,
a plaid umbrella, memories of laughter.

Seven have lived here, two have died,
a sheer blue curtain has covered all.
Can you spot the memories of laughter?
The prayers that still rattle between the walls?

I spy with my little eye
something old and something holy;
a comfort to the son of man
and a reminder for his body.

GO

and they all come thumping down
bare heels on soft dirt *th tht hth th*
each feeling the pliability of the earth
th tht hth th each thinking the cold
heavy sun rays were milk and wondering
how they were still breathing and faster
they came running down the hill
to where someday the well will be
full of clean water *th tht hth th* each
child screaming hey tall man hey hey
hey man haha stepping accidentally
on rare grasses startled at the wax
the gripping squeak as they press against
them and jump further down towards
one another playing impromptu games
you hit me i hit you uncontrolled bodies
and the tall man with the camera
who came with the other men
who promise water
from the ground
he turns around
they are all grinning
the dust flies towards him and
the camera clicks
they all fly
with the coffee
sunshine
cocoa dust
right past
him