Nocturne Beginning with a Line by Derek Walcott

Gavin Gao

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Nocturne Beginning with a Line by Derek Walcott

This is the music of memory, water
entering the unfurnished room, & the limbs,
leaving the lips echoless. A single dim light
dangles from the ceiling
like a shadowy fig. The years sifted clean
in a stream dividing
the departed and those
who remain. Out in the garden, the moon hangs
its white fang on a branch. Someone, running,
always trips on the loose stone. Another lets
out a laugh the way a glass bell
shatters in the hands
of Silence. Look at us, each one
a shiny little impermanence
busy with our allotted task. We take turns
flipping over the hourglass. We carve
our names into the bare wall
and scrape them off with our fingertips.

Those who seek peace shall
have peace. Those who desire myths
shall have myths. Soon a small wave
will unclench its fist and give the storm
-tossed vessel back to the sand.
The untroubled blue
of the night sky will ink
through our skin. Tell me this
is how our flesh will be remembered.

Gavin Gao recently graduated with a BA in English Literature and Creative Writing from The University of Michigan Ann Arbor, where he had received two Avery Hopwood Awards and the Arthur Miller Arts Award for his writing. His work is forthcoming or has appeared in Poet Lore, HOUSEGUEST, The Rise Up Review, The Michigan Daily and elsewhere.