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Gavin Gao

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# Nocturne Beginning with a Line by Derek Walcott

by Gavin Gao

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.*