KALEHUA KIM

Hā

When I was born I was a girl

I was a girl with a cord wrapped around my neck I had a cord wrapped around my neck and no breath I had no breath because until that moment, no one had hit me No one had hit me and it took time to unravel the cord It took time to unravel the cord but I feel its weight every day every day there is a weight, although its source changes the source changes because matter changes matter changes by transforming molecules molecules are in constant motion the constant motion of children, whose voices echo children's voices echo across canyons, leap from cliffs we leap from cliffs when we stretch to seek balance we stretch, balancing the past behind us and the future ahead the past of us and the future crawls across an x axis crawling across an x axis is only one way to look at time the only way to look at time is to refuse to see time to refuse time is to refuse everything you ever felt wrapped around your neck unwrap the cord around your neck unwrap the time it takes to catch your breath catch your breath catch your breath that is your voice

2023 JAMES JAMES WELCH PRIZE VENNERS

J. K. TSOSIE

Brown Anthropocene

part i:

i don't know why i deny myself tenderness. so, i lay the lavender on my bedroom shelf he gathered with calloused hands i trace with my fingers

their wandering boundaries.

he is wilderness, the sacred loam untilled new mexican landscape *big bluestem, wolftail, & sand lovegrass* virgin earth caressed only by soft female rain

níłtsą bi'áád.

his eyebrows thick midnight briar his eyes quiet flickering summer monsoon his mouth a desert prayer

that created the universe itself.

so, i give in i give way into his constellation blue room, blue bodies, & blue haematoxylin-stained

nucleus.

part ii:

we are slow the weight of our bodies pinning time in place

my skin against yours, brown nahasdzáán my mother's mother

my home.

the lineation of stone compressed over time

i am reinvented —auxochromic an incantation

the absorption & reflection of light.

your skin against mine, brown like piñon husk

Art by Lehuauakea

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maternal cord caressing

our histories meet.

i am reinvented —as revelation two lost ends

fastened together now, whole finally knowing itself.

yours, brown mine, brown.

a geography of flesh & tributaries of perseverance fill to the brim silver canyons of wounds left

by conquests past

we are brown anthropocene.