

MARITIME KEENING

By Ayaan Elokobi

Poetry Editor Hezekiah writes: *I just love this. And we get so few Cameroonian-Somali poets—across the Gulf to the Horn. ‘Maritime Keening’: Are we lamenting the dead or something lost to the past? I have no shame in exposing my ignorance: I am more routinely unaware of it. I did not know that ‘shingle’ was a term for a pebbled and stone-covered beach. Is ‘a duplicitous lover’ one who gives and takes like the tides of an ocean goddess. Or is it? The duality of the seas lapping the Continent from Guinea to Aden. Nori I have come to learn is a kind of seaweed. Did someone down here get stabbed by a fisherman’s spear? Or is it an allegory for love unrequited? Even the line breaks and the face of the verse trace and take the shape of the jagged edges of South Africa. (It occurs to me I have droned on—twice as many words as comprised in the poem.) Yours to discover.*

Maritime Keening

ocean godddess/
i swim through the slips / soul slicked / fate drips /
agonizing / antagonizing /
stifled as the shingle shifts /
walls grip / AS FLESH / drifts /
a duplicitous lover / sinks ships /
spiralling / drowning / *nori* crowning /
in seashells / sliced down /
to darkness /
trident / salt / water / lungs /
pining / breathe / her love /
i’m done /
done

THE POET SPEAKS... *I spent much of my young life never having seen the sea. The idea of it became like a romance, something I read about in books and heard tales of, and it grew in my imagination. When our family relocated to live close to the sea, I flung myself toward it. After learning to swim, I went to the ocean every day. I challenged myself to reach a rocky outcrop and once almost drowned doing so. The*

poem was a way of remembering my early fixation with the sea, with all of its romance and danger swirling in the words.

BIO: *Ayaan Elokobi is an unpublished poet (Until now. Eds.) with Somalian and Cameroonian roots. She is currently with no fixed abode, and writes wherever and whenever she can.*