POETRY

my spine's topography.

by Caroline Kuba

"The contrast" (mixed media on canvas 2019) by Ipung Purnomo

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There is sea-glass on the walls of my family’s cabin in the mountains, inherited from my grandma, living deep in the glacier glazed woods.

She still sets out the dishes a former lover from the shore served her in the morning, on a tablet by the Seine.

Her skin, cracked like a Spanish mosaic, tanned from the sun that changes its light from coast to coast.

But her mind, still wide awake, clear, rich and nurtured, well-wandered and certain of its step.

Decades spent, tightrope walking the meridians,
whilst mapping the freckles of the skin she brushed along the way.

Leaving Familiar faces wherever the rain falls,
Their ink blotched letters still reversing the flow of time.

Whispering their limerick into my ears, dripping like dew from her spiderweb lips,
leaving me longing for tongues that twist so different from mine.

Telling me to breach out of my cul-de-sac swampland, onto streets, so bewilderingly unknown, that I can hardly differentiate their letters from their sketch-work.

Foreign figures teaching me how to paint self-portraits.

Brotherhood of blood and blisters with scars like friendship-bracelets.

My spine, forever straightened by the hands I’ve held before,
for hearing their echo in my bones gives me roots, gives me water,
gives me the chance to sprout a crown, to rise far enough,
to see above the surface,
to see above myself.

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