

TSPC, Finding A Way, April, 2024

The Word Made Flesh: Honoring what can not be spoken and must be heard

The earth is a living thing, the earth holds the bones of ancestors, the legacy of the past. The earth has its own myriad stories to tell, and among those is our own story, our human history.

Poetry, writing, is written in creation, in bodies: Evagrius wrote this: *Just as those who transmit letters to children inscribe them on tablets, so also Christ when he teaches his Wisdom to the rational beings inscribes them on the nature of flesh.* KG, 3. 57

If writing happens in earth and bodies, what does that invite us into with our human writing? How might our writing on tablets, our poetry, be part of this larger conversation, this larger text?

Three poems by Lucille Clifton

the earth is a living thing

is a black shambling bear
ruffling its wild back and tossing
mountains into the sea

is a black hawk circling
the burying ground circling the bones
picked clean and discarded

is a fish black blind in the belly of water
is a diamond blind in the black belly of coal

is a black and living thing
is a favorite child
of the universe
feel her rolling her hand
in its kinky hair
feel her brushing it clean

at the cemetery, walnut grove plantation, south carolina, 1989

among the rocks
at walnut grove
your silence drumming
in my bones,
tell me your names.

nobody mentioned slaves
and yet the curious tools
shine with your fingerprints.
nobody mentioned slaves
but somebody did this work
who had no guide, no stone,
who moulders under rock.

tell me your names,
tell me your bashful names
and I will testify.

*the inventory lists ten slaves
but only men were recognized.*

among the rocks
at walnut grove
some of these honored dead
were dark
some of these dark
were slaves
some of these slaves
were women

some of them did this honored work.
tell me your names
foremothers, brothers,
tell me your dishonored names.

here lies
here lies
here lies
here lies
Hear

it was a dream

in which my greater self
rose up before me
accusing me of my life
with her extra finger
whirling in a gyre of rage
at what my days had come to.
what,
i pleaded with her, could i do
oh what could i have done?
and she twisted her wild hair
and sparked her wild eyes
and screamed as long as
i could hear her
This. This. This.