

Ming Joi

when they say "look at god" like she just passed in front of us
we make direct eye contact
though i don't know it's an eye i'm looking at-
from this angle
her face looks wide and i cannot focus
nostrils are stretched past recognition
and i do not see the fibonacci sequence,

no symmetry when looking straight on like this.

but the frame widens
pulls back to a fuller picture:
a topographic map

i can examine every hill and valley,
mountain range of cheekbones dipping into under eye
the heat brings out pores in a line from her cheeks to her nose
and if i blink, i think i'll miss her
this may be the moment of resurrection we've all been waiting for.

today,
god looks a lot like a black woman.
today, i see her smile in the back of a laugh
a glimpse of gold fillings catching the sunlight.
she carries two babies on her hips
plays the role of father
son, and holy,
be thy name.

do i kneel for her and pray?
does she need a hand?
cobalt blue paints her fingernails

i have never seen an ocean that color
but mother be their ocean
and baby feeds on mountain peaks
and the grocery bags that hang from her wrists

a fruit-bearing tree, after all
islands of her body create sanctuary
she carries them to comfort
and cradles them like northern winds,
they don't know of any other god

**if the only evidence of black womanhood
were an abstract painting**, its beauty
would need no explanation. still,
visitors would question its creation
asking: what came first —
the (black) woman or the world?

in knowing they invented each other,
the answer would reveal itself as a line,
a circle, as the *earth wrapped in sunset*¹,
as the *rebirth of light*², as *stars and their display*³.

the answer would call itself
*score for sustained blackness*⁴
but feature no black paint.

the answer would be *spring flowers
in washington*⁵, a teaching tool for colors.
the answer would be glitter. the answer
would be awestruck with complexity.

would claim *untitled*⁶
and say: you can not name me
nor any of my multiplicities

the answer would reach beyond
the stretcher, beyond the walls, and
say: I am here too, meditate with me
take a moment, stop, and look closely

¹ Alma Thomas, *Snoopy Sees Earth Wrapped in Sunset*, 1970

² Mildred Thompson, *Rebirth of Light*, 1983

³ Alma Thomas, *Stars and their Display*, 1972

⁴ Jennie C. Jones, *Score for Sustained Blackness*, 2014

⁵ Alma Thomas, *Spring Flowers in Washington*, 1969

⁶ Howardena Pindell, *Untitled #98*, 1978