

## *Spontaneous being* 02.02.2022, Maria Christoforidi

*Spontaneous Beings* imagines Mary Edmonia Wildfire Lewis<sup>1</sup> in a future perfect on the coast of Cornwall. Pondering her life and poisons, tasting the deep medicinal secrets Yemaya<sup>2</sup> brings to the surface.

1. Mary Edmonia Wildfire Lewis (July 1844 - September 1907) Edmonia Lewis was an American sculptor of Afro Caribbean and Native American (Mississauga Ojibwa) descent. Her work is known for incorporating themes relating to black and indigenous peoples of the Americas into Neoclassical-style sculpture. In recent historical accounts referring to her biography, historians often mention that Wildfire “was “telling white lies” “exaggerating” her heritage and upbringing with her mother’s tribe after being orphaned at 9. She was also accused of poisoning 2 white students when attending university, she was acquitted of the charges but received a grievous racially motivated beating at the same university. Moving to Rome in 1865, she became distinctive figure in Roman society. In 1901 she moved to London, settling first at 4a Earls Court Road, then moving to 154 Blythe Road in Brook Green, a terraced four-storey townhouse near Olympia. That is the time some daydreamers see her visiting Cornwall to receive messages through the seaweed.
2. Yemaya - Yemonja, also spelled Yemoja or Yemaja, is a Yoruban deity celebrated as the giver of life and as the metaphysical mother of all Orisha (deities) within the Yoruba spiritual pantheon. All of life comes from her deep nourishing waters. Yemonja’s name is derived from the Yoruba words Yeye or Iya (“mother”), omo (“child/children”), and eja (“fish”) and thus literally means “Mother whose children are the fish”. The number 7 belongs to her, representing the seven seas; her devotees wear seven silver bracelets, the colours blue and white, pearls, silver, conch shells, and doves. Offerings for her include molasses, coconut cakes, white flowers, and watermelon. She helps in matters of self-love, fertility, emotional wounds, trauma, and healing. Like the sea she can me calm, swaying and flowing but also can be tempestuous. If you disrespect her terrain, or hurt one of her children, her anger will rise. Wielding a broad blade, she’s known to “bathe in the blood of her enemies,” or manifest in the form of a tidal wave. Eventually, the practitioners, priests, and priestesses of Santería slowly syncretized the Goddess

of the Sea – Yemaya – with the image of Mother Mary. Radiantly rising from the sea, her dark skin shines under the moon.



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1.  
you see - brother Sunrise  
he raised me and I grew  
like a weed,  
despite those idiots

ask the Orisha for sea water  
carry the water from one mouth to another  
great river mouths so soft  
sea water is thicker than blood  
go on, ask for a bridge of water

2.  
under the spell of loneliness  
I am moved to the edge  
of the Atlantic  
later a billow of voices  
the secret dynamo to all poisons  
sings  
[redacted] we dance for you'  
an ancestry of viscera drying on the shingle  
an ancestry of *obeshas* interpreting the dead

Yemaya herself rips the  
dulce from its hiding place  
of heliocentric trinity  
she gesticulates something I don't understand

*nodosum spiralis*  
*digitata ulva intestinalis*  
*porphyra umbilicalis*

he said [redacted] still, I become a flame  
the sea has  
opened  
the salt will have ruined your phone  
she will have ridden on thick white smoke  
nothing else would undo  
hours and hours of need

she will not have taken anything  
poisons and beatings, she will have left them there to rot

I will have found hundreds of photos of you online  
will there have been bigotry on the beach?  
let them speak, let them call it Latin

o long lived knotted wrack not  
poison not revery but testament  
the sea is full of forest

'in the first movement we will have felt the calm,  
flowing ocean, stroking the shore



3.  
my hand floats in the water  
the saliva in your mouth comes to meet it  
I need to drink  
the sea carried in eyes of leather  
habituated to loss  
fixated on littoral desires  
I don't understand

she will have buried a sister in a shallow tropical sea  
'a wide sargasso sea'  
she will have pulled you in and pushed you out  
100ds of times

her rage a pearl you want so much you hide it  
you swallow it  
is that her likeness? is it a spirit ?  
petition her remind her, I live on land, I [REDACTED]  
some words hit like chisels and thus nocturnal selves splinter off

a me refusing to be my reflection  
an I sinks to the bottom

an I rises to the top  
a me floats away and reproduces                      effortlessly

in poems the sun will have set in the horizon,  
IRL it sets in the middle of your chest



4.  
'listen to things' wildfire and spontaneous beings made out of nothing  
my hungry heart opens my mouth and I chew  
a little  
it feels like – like biting my own cheek

chewing my own self

the seaweed brings news of those never consulted  
to those who don't care,

wait ...nobody knows how it feels

for seeing, they feel

white lies? she will have said what she had to say  
by noon she will have swapped a marble blanket for a seaweed mantle  
blithe dark gentle

5. we will be bones together Cleopatra



6.  
in big gulps



invisible meadows harvest the sun  
    beings Made Out of Nothing shivering  
        wringing like bells, broken and trusting the moon  
        the path is change  
    I open my eyes and see her  
        crouching on the cliff face  
charged terrifying her mouth  
open  
unmoving  
desirable and devouring

7.  
a void goddess of deep thermal language leaks out  
pierced by the pensive unknowability of the  
lovers or an entity of microbial underwater forests