I wish that you had been afraid of the sea, that you had kept a clear memory of its awful strength, that somehow you had remembered how it kept you from reaching out to touch the golden coast whenever you longed to go home.

And had they not taken and sealed the books, to put them so far beyond your sight and reach then you just might have had the chance to read of Homer and the creatures of the ocean deep who made hell the lives of men as they challenged
the water.

Maybe then, with fear and with knowing, taken together, you might perhaps have chosen to make this island place a lasting home, and to wait with the land so you could keep our company when it was our time to come down from heaven.

But no doubt that other things were meant to be and that not even our lion king, the man called Freeman Garvey with strong loins blazing fire, loins which took you to death’s door six times over, that he neither could inspire you to condemn the sea.

Then on that day, all the sinners who could stand to suffer more, they gathered and watched you sail, watched you work the cruel wind to make of us a tribe bereaved.
Zewa held her own,
a quiet mourning,
did not bawl down
her young belly,
did not then know
how very much

she would need you
to teach her
how to manage
the canepiece
and husband,
and the flock,
as well how
to get blood
from a stone.

She honored you
with anthems
at morning
and with vespers
at the dusk,
and made it so
that no man
could speak
your name
except with
an inclination
to worship,
her mother,
Annie, our queen
in Frederiksted
with her face
against the sun,
still remembering
the Mountain
called Misery
and all those
she left to its care.