

Isla

In Los Angeles I grew up watching *The Three Stooges*,
The Little Rascals, *Speed Racer*, and the Godzilla movies,

those my mother called "*Los monstruos*," and though I didn't
yet speak English, I understood why such a creature would,

upon being woken up from its centuries-long slumber, rise
and destroy Tokyo's buildings, cars, people—I understood

by the age of twelve what it meant to be unwanted, exiled,
how you move from one country to another where nobody

wants you, nobody knows you, and I sat in front of the TV,
transfixed by the snow-fizz on our old black and white,

and when Godzilla bellows his eardrum-crushing growl,
I screamed back, this victory-holler from one so rejected

and cursed to another. When the monster whipped its tail
and destroyed, I threw a pillow across my room; each time

my mother stormed into the room and asked me what,
what I thought I was doing throwing things at the walls.

"¡Ese monstruo, esa isla!" she'd say. That monster, that island,
and I knew she wasn't talking about the movie. She meant

her country, mine, that island in the Caribbean we left behind,
itself a reptile-looking mass on each map, on my globe,

a crocodile-like creature rising again, eating us so completely.

for Jarret Keene