

Zhang Er

Translated by Bill Ransom with the author

Mother Event

— *for YuRan*

Mother now

dizzying sensation of sitting on high—

so small, so soft

flesh

a bite in the mouth

a belly of water

~

to begin

they peel out the sterile plastic pipette

from its paper wrapper

in a single motion—

(like stripping chicken from its skin)

no wasted movement

float

roof, pillar, sheep and cows

sink from the waterbed

natural

not yet flooded with

spirit or mood

they repeatedly change the paper pads

rewrite the sky-blue

the language of perfection:

separate out this distinct contour you

slippery in a sheet of cream

freshly minted nailtips:

one, two, three, four, five

light

panorama

all blue:

sofa, gowns, gloves, mattress pad, blankets, tiny terry-cloth hat

sets off

a bit of flesh

(blue)

eyes (blue)

~

who let them

take you away—
 Draw blood
 Tap spine
 Stick electrodes to chest
 Seal into the glass incubator
 Bloody stains on tiny feet!

Hold it up
against the skin
(a clutter of tubes, wires, monitors)
suck eyes of the breasts throbbing tight
refuse the fake
 loud cry
 violent shake
 (it can cough, too!)—
 return me my flesh!

~

he says—
“I saw the hair first, black hair”
 “blood”
blood?
 “screams” and “cries”
Cries? Screams?

~

let's go home
OK
leave this place full of hands
 too bright too noisy
whether rain or heat
 we have a window, with shades
 bassinette blankets turn off the light

~

it can cry without tears
(like a bomb already set, but with an erratic timer)
hungry cry
wet cry
tired cry
sleepy cry
delighted
(when lacking means of expression it doesn't smile)
dressing cry
full diaper cry cry cry
belly down cry
held up against the chest

these I
one, two, three, four, five
 six, seven
all pretty orchids
 go to heaven

~

The expression of no “I”
how can that be called an expression
 is the loveliest expression
 is the only possible expression

~

in the past did I, too, enjoy
 this endless
hold, pat, embrace, carry, rock, hug, piggyback
clean, wash, rub, brush, comb, stroke, kiss, smooch
smile, breastfeed, sing—
 always a good mood no temper
 always keep up even when tired, sleepy, exhausted, bored and can’t stand one
second more?

Don’t recall drinking your milk
 “till you’re a year and a half”
don’t remember eating my doody
 “all over your face”
remember the accidents at night
 “don’t remember your teething history”
fat belly, small eyes, thick voice, big girl
(do you remember now?)
so later on it grew into beauty itself—
 oval face, willowy waist, long legs, delicate ankles

these victories forgotten
 allow us
 to grow up without turning back
 temperamental and with no patience?

Achievements left you
 are not you
 only suspicions—
you did hold me tight
 (even if I don’t remember and cried my best)
you held me in good spirits
didn’t toss me into the river

mom

~

these crystallized
tears
and
all
that love!

Has nothing to do with your personal story
the manifestation of life reduces to purity —
all there is worth measuring is
body weight
why you only like blue
how many oz. of mashed fruit you ate today?

~

one two three four five
climb the slope where the tigers live (of course not to hunt, PC)
don't see tiger slinking around
so plant this watermelon (Hey, Hey)
melon grows no melon seeds
becomes a turtle in the reeds (Hey, Hey)!

Hmmmm, BaoBao
sleep
sleep
BaoBao

~

lack of any rhythm
is it the rhythm?

Salty sweet bitter spice
become superfluous:
double-fold eyelids sticky with
rice flakes and mashed peas
draw mom's tongue:
squeaks Hey, Hey
don't scratch your eyes

~

this love
tears
and
a bundle
that can't
be
separated!

Hands that hold you tight
throw you down the river
now
or later

you assume
she will recognize you?
on the road?

Girls
born
die
born again...

why not
eternally
the daughter?

You
what right do you have to rob me
one hour
of every three?

Cry
you still cry
why can't I?

~

(the weight of this curve on my shoulder
soft)
your forehead
shines
compare it to what?

A leopard cub
prickly claws
two bloody scratches...

~

days not needing sugar
are not bitter
days of milk
white and pink
a chin dripping drool
no one can compare to you
embrace you embrace self
newborn: pooched belly, crossed legs, tender thoughts, impossible feeling

Dig a big hole
bury you my body
and
this memory: the story of mother and child

flesh-and-blood

their positions and personal pronouns

surprising water rises

all drown

drown

because it is not possible