

**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