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 upagainst the chest
up and down cry

~

when not crying
it (can) look at me
those eyelids
Open the door
let “me” in
eye of eyes
clarity of no distance hide me
is me! (is this mine!)

put this mirror down—can’t
little hands little feet a little bonnie
tight fists
stinky
won’t open up

it rains
hualahuala water
a little spider
slides down the hill

~

dark, wrinkled, fat and thick, powder soiled
once held to breasts, kissed and kissed again?
This perfection of mother’s bosom
would stand in lines
to join these faces on the bus?

don’t let them watch
watch you breaths shallow, light pink, eternal
cheeks of water
wild lilies spread from chest to
chubby legs’

Because you are not the same.

Not the same clean
not the same perception.

~

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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:
squeaksHey, 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