

## A Quiet Revolution

I do not weep but brawl like a tiger  
lily in a dress. An American thing, a *tomboy*

some days. A *nanrenpo* in China. I am a child, running  
a gummed up operation, a human, not an *event*,

for an *event* is fixity; not an *episode*, for *episode*  
is television, crackling like static under a sheet

of glass cut wrong. My hips whisk together  
days cupped between God's channels.

I flutter within a pocket novel. Two lifetimes  
crowded in one. A pair of pages, pressing

a lily in the middle. I suspect God  
must have flipped a coin somewhere

between heaven and a fever dream,  
because the truth was never more

a she than a he. Because  
where she begins is not

where I end. Believe me when I say,  
*I'm so scared of being buried as a girl forever.*

Carve out my breasts, my hips. Round my hair  
like a lotus tip. Let my gravestone forge

and forget that, in history, we're merely  
footnotes inscribed in all languages

except our own.

## Lineage

In my dream my mother is tethered  
to fingertips picking  
silk cocoons. Wombs unspun  
from our becoming.

Number of times  
Grandmother had a miscarriage: three.

*Is that really yours?* they asked  
before buying my mother  
and her existence. I exist  
because Grandmother did not believe  
four was bad luck. I exist  
because Mother's crutch against slurs  
was her lip's red Lancôme gloss.

Blood disperses in water;  
it transcends the Pearl River Delta,  
the Florida coast; we flow backwards  
to our beginnings, our belly eels tied.

A twitch upon each thread  
yanks us home. Our bodies are  
like trouts in a market stall,  
sliced into silk wings,  
splayed in two.



## Girl, Boy, Child

Cripple the waves, and know  
I am wanted, I am wanted, I am wanted —

Girl waits in the blue room,  
modeling for her brother,  
like a water lily propped up  
on a porcelain plate.  
History undresses her,  
so Girl lies savagely still.  
But her mind is free:  
she wishes herself  
to any place but now,  
to any time but here.

— I will be your  
Blue. The Delphinium of your eye. The light on  
your flesh: our now-words, our after-  
    (graves, your)  
words, our before-  
words, your —

Boy-painting-window,  
discolored,  
disfigured. Boy is born  
in a rapeseed field.  
Boy drifts on a *sanban*,  
lost in his father's sound.  
Boy cloaks his sighs,  
and wins a doll  
from grief's lottery.

— (son)shine and water,  
    sun(flower) and air.  
                    Suspended —

Child stares  
through window blinds, hands  
swollen fast. Let Child

become an arc of stone.  
Let their skin knit  
itself to an hour's silk,  
sprouting from a dying canvas.

— I possess myself,  
my quivers like  
inked letters shiver, like  
twang on the glass rivers —

(Let Child kiss  
the water lilies afloat.)

— now and now and now.

## Dear Wonderland

This is fairy tale: a daughter forages  
for legacy in a kitchen,  
draws on a napkin corner, builds  
puzzles from distorted lines,  
her glinting mirror. This is history:  
she waits for her mother to scale  
the chimney, where her grandmother  
is tucked underneath,  
a hidden shadow. She builds aqueducts  
from flowers and limbs  
made from soldiers unframed. Made  
in China, for golden girls  
who shelter here to die.  
So she draws a line in the moat;  
a lawyer will show you  
not the painted corpse, but  
“There is nothing to spare.  
If you become something,  
Write this twice  
— thrice, even better —  
mostly love, and some hate,  
where jasmine flowers fell.  
find love for yourself,  
until the rain stops before hell.

and a son grows jasmines while buried  
in his father’s red kingdom,  
unassembled and reassembled, with  
a pall of god’s smoke against  
the walls hurling a key to his throat;  
there, he’s called a name inside  
too vulgar for children’s television today.  
Like the Romans do, so wishes he,  
but her knight never arrives.  
The rain falls on the Yangtze; boys  
who are too pretty, drained into  
a moat like his father’s heirlooms:  
write this again, and he can  
fix the crack in the temple;  
where the man himself lies,  
“If you become nothing,” he says,  
your bodies laid bare in the winter,  
there are monsters to love you.”  
Quick, so rewrite Paradise,  
until legacy begs to differ:  
Find a wonderland, a holy land,  
an infertile lotus threaded in ruin:

## Molting Child

i.

She sang your materials. He sang  
your ammunition. Shed your corpses.  
Smelt the iron. Breathe—

ii.

Puberty is how the pulsars shed their flame,  
how birds molt how  
humans melt & fold  
their origami bodies, where scars  
crease the marbled rivers, beat  
a tattoo across the skin of the land,  
where we cast the stones  
of childhood.

iii.

You will forget  
the boy who undresses into  
a girl each night. Not man  
enough, I disassemble  
my liver, my lover. Not woman enough,  
I am neither happy nor sad.

iv.

Let paper hearts beat against  
an illegal riot of gods  
who pray to fathers above all.

Let me draw a circle  
around a child,  
and call this enough.

## **Censored Fixed Up Darling**

I let you censor me with ecstasy,  
smothered by red ink,

my lips stretched too high:  
a smile taped happy  
with cotton and pride.

My dainty feet, upholstered in a bed.  
A silly nothing, you said, a hoot.

Anointed me like a queen,  
this stitched up fur,  
this bleeding machine —

a knot of white fire:  
a crown of silver linens  
plied from a casket.

Have some lilies, it's on the house,  
and sink those plastic tubes in me.

Oh, don't pretend to cry, dearies.  
I know you miss me,  
your ex-garterbelt darling,  
while I watch every color fashioned

and every sleep waking, our feet dripping  
whitely, as your man-machines beat  
each other to erase me.

Prepare your soul for rain;  
lost in a newspaper world —  
for even cardboard burns in flames.

You will find my corpus,  
my lineage, your lies,  
our lidless eyes,  
peeled back forever, alive, alive.