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.
Lost Women in an Apocalyptic World

**metropolis** | (μητρόπολις) | "mother city"

Colonnades of bodies flow up
the escalator, their documents their grave,
their acumen their heaven  the numbered
people the lettered lines
             strike red
as they consume everything, playing
tea party in a burning dollhouse.

The suited men play
apotheosis, destroyers of worlds,
dictators of all the terms.

**apocalypse** | (άποκάλυψις) | "revelation"

“We’re what’s left?”
she asks, before transplanting
saplets from a deserted Babylon,
from a world made for men.

The queen sits by the waters and casts
a stone across the lake. The stone skitters five times
before it drowns. She reclaims them, these
fishing lines, her biding time,
but the lake is clear: full of rock,
it holds no water.
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, and a son grows jasmines while buried in his father’s red kingdom, draws on a napkin corner, builds puzzles from distorted lines, unassembled and reassembled, with a pall of god’s smoke against her glinting mirror. This is history: she waits for her mother to scale the walls hurling a key to his throat; the chimney, where her grandmother is tucked underneath, there, he’s called a name inside too vulgar for children’s television today. Like the Romans do, so wishes he, a hidden shadow. She builds aqueducts from flowers and limbs but her knight never arrives. The rain falls on the Yangtze; boys made from soldiers unframed. Made in China, for golden girls who are too pretty, drained into a moat like his father’s heirlooms: who shelter here to die. So she draws a line in the moat; write this again, and he can fix the crack in the temple; a lawyer will show you not the painted corpse, but where the man himself lies, “If you become nothing,” he says, “There is nothing to spare. If you become something,” your bodies laid bare in the winter, there are monsters to love you.” Write this twice — thrice, even better — Quick, so rewrite Paradise, until legacy begs to differ: mostly love, and some hate, where jasmine flowers fell. Find a wonderland, a holy land, an infertile lotus threaded in ruin: find love for yourself, until the rain stops before hell.
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.