

Rita Taryan

Dusky Spells

Blue eyes, blue hands,
blueness in the cloud shrinking into that room
sighing limp from the corners and
stuffed into my womb
where steel blooms and
dyes birth blue with pain
coming dusky again and again.

Her lips and fingers fly,
settle on the walls like cold moths
fan my tomb and prepare to die;
dropping one by one like dried leaves of overgrowth
I lie beneath and catch her limbs fall
gasping wind of wings, fainting snow outside,
the dusk again nestles to my side.

Blue toes, blue heels,
ride and scratch my back
cradled in my arms, a new planet reels
blameless, first smile eats my mortal sack.
blinded and breathless, her death and mine begin,
as the rainbow wears its husky shroud;
my baby cannot see the descent of that dusty cloud.

Shame and Retribution, but for Interruptions

Cannot complete
Cannot complete
my own face in her eyes:
The interruptions of my breaths
and intrusive robustness of love
make it impossible
to finish
to finish
confession as still-life in my womb
as my portrait, post-partum,
past terminology
whispered in her ears.

And if the end
And if the end
were permitted to be in her wan, conclusive hands
not allowing the gall of my own health to remain
painted on as the garish, maternal, waxing smile, then
finally
finally
I could cry and save face with God again,

and die before my sick child dies
dies.

The Mean Child

plays with sinewy dedication
lively haunting games that insinuate life
from outside the room, a mother hears (her sense acutely tuned)
shallow breaths, choking, silent cries, and a tiny voice pitching in retch
panicked again, she goes to lift the mean child from the bottom of its grave
where it gives a gaping, November, toothy gaze and smirk up to love
suffering like wry reminiscence of summer
oh, why can't the sick child play otherwise?

lies still when it should roll,
crawls when it should walk,
rocks to comfort itself,
from outside Eden, Eve's sickle hurts
from plagues in the playground, from harvesting snakes, and with strained
arms
cast to save the child's grinding jaw from the clay-dry earth,
from sandbox ridicule,
and from its own natural pitiless bias to death and goring of maternity.

outside the classroom, listens in palely against the wooden grain
while other children run,
gobble kindness,
raise their arms, sanguine shoots, and get picked to play again
games of taking turns breathing deeply like balloons climbing the sky,
of scooping and mixing flavours of health, strawberry strength with
chocolate chip cheeks,
of balancing pleasant thoughts with flexible limbs
on bright balls and normal futures
God! other mothers chat on and on the phone at home about their compliant
days.

sleeps with twilight's ashen friends,
who come and go like nurses to the sickbed
beside herself with desperation, the mother continues to pump
for her weak child too mean to clutch
swill collects between disheartened breasts
and flows forcibly along the surface of their bodies
eyes rolled back into its head, today's Halloween trick
brittle declining branches slapped between extremes
embrace mother! please obey mother! be good and do not faint again!