

from *Gathering to Parturition*

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Tiré de '*Gathering to Parturition*'

Dans ces extraits d'une suite où séquence poétique et récit s'entrelacent, il s'agit des contes, des mémoires, des rêves, des visions qui in / forment une vie. Une femme des Caribbes qui habite Calgary est enceinte. Elle imagine ce qui est nécessaire pour former une vie. La première séquence établit, à la suite d'un appel téléphonique, une opposition entre la blancheur et le silence de l'hiver où la femme enceinte se tient en douleur et la couleur et la musique du paysage de son enfance. La deuxième séquence élabore le travail d'une fille guidée par sa mère dans la préparation d'un pain son levain dont sa famille possède le secret. Ce sont de telles histoires de famille que chaque fille doit refaire à son tour. Mais chaque mère doit raconter des histoires pour la fille car, 'Ma fille, vivre est rêver / faire soi-même dans une fiction / cette narration je commence / toi prise dans le paysage de ton moment / va redéfinir mes contes les muants / pour faire pousser les tiens.'

A wind whips up the trees on a world gone grey and flat
the sky dissolving the city snow-veiled muffled she
is practising silence already far up-river her boat
enters a wilderness of branches stark bending to what is /
Calgary peeled away and distant when the phone calls
its impossible message the world disintegrates forms
anew hands holding her belly she tries to run the
narrow passage ways of her house to make a circuit of
her pain then lay it down

she writes:

i have stopped plumbing depths and shoals
of meaning i no longer try to avoid

grey rocks swift currents eddies
of white winds sweeping down the Bow
i wear winter's light needing even this drifting
fading sun on my skin

When the phone rings i know i lift
the receiver to put you on again
in tropical rain green wind walking
with you and silence
There are books in my hands wooden skates
you carry a bright yellow case full of papers
and your name
You walk in such a quiet so much yourself to an end
that even an eight year old is freed into sound
into possibility
Your measured heels on pavement swish
swirl of the cream skirt which i admire
madly under a yellow umbrella your hair
whispers against the nape of your neck
black tan your colours rumble together
When the squall stops as suddenly as it had come
you fold the umbrella with deliberate grace
wet cloth flaps steel ribs steel you hold it
ivory knob down as if this were an episode
But it drip-drips as do the yellow poui we now pass
under and the red eaves of houses
We walk through the gutter's gurgle wet
rustle of the drenched
the shrieks of small boys black
gleaming in watery sun their stick boats thin clatter
before the corner parlour There mingled scents of
sweet cakes with pure country cocoa hard
cheese fresh ground mountain coffee in paper cones
follow us through damp air
On days like these the eyes of painted girls
in open sprawl on rusting signs are wet alive
speaking the nightmare language of butterfly on a pin
In such silence we are bound
i can hear you thinking your thoughts careen

off each other like marbles or else tentative
are feelers against a palm My maiden aunt
when such words had meaning
who could not / would not surrender the self would
trail her aggressive delicacy from convent corridor
to convent corridor finally to our back bedroom
Now the fashionable blouse hat tilted just so
are magnets and our silence is your armour
We are half way up Hermitage Road nearly home
when over the noise of water of living of our own
silent chatter the notes of steel drums float down
from near hills dropping into us note by note
as into a forest pool we stop stare at each other
we become translucent ear each note slow
visible in us each variation profound
You say amazed 'that was the valley into music'
i say nothing we have heard the first pan tune Out
of the monotonous centuries-long clatter of sticks
on bamboo out of forbidden ceremonies from the immemorial
goat skin garbage lids out of oildrums
a new an unimagined voice
On Hermitage Road everyone is smiling we smile too
resume our walk re-enter our silence ...

Now this call binds and gathers me to where you lie
pale as your sheets in this new silence
this shout into noon streets
deaf to cicadas to the singing tropical sun
and cornbirds even to green Mount St. Benedict
What notes drop now into your secret pool?
What order out of the clatter?
Only half an hour pronounced.... Oh! You must **speak**
Over the prairies over the laurentian shield
the towering cities over the grey Atlantic to blue
Caribbean my cry pounds against your shores i
who once wore you like a shirt
you must speak
i can no longer hear silence

No one is left who knew me when i could

Daughter to live is to dream the self
 to make a fiction
 this telling I begin
 you stranded in landscape of your time
 willl redefine shedding my tales
 to grow your own
 As I have lost our ancestors your
 daughters will lose me
 remembering only a gesture a few words
'what you don't want in your kitchen
will sit in your drawing room
 and a few recipes
 history in a pinch of salt
 a lower temperature a twist of
 wrist and girlchild as we move together
 on this swell of water
 this swimming and whirling
'the sea ain't got no backdoor
 and *'don't marry for colour marry where*
colour is else the race goin' lost in you

snow no longer falls skies slate-grey
 opening

All of us in this family know how to make
 float how to make bakes the real real thing
 and acra not even your father's mother make
 like this and pilau and calloo with crab
 barefoot rice rich black cake
 cassava pone (is true your Carib great aunt
 on your father's side teach your mother that)
 but the coconut icecream and five-fingers confetti
 buljol souse those are our things

Child this is the gospel on bakes

First strain sunlight through avocado leaves

then pour into a dim country kitchen through bare
windows on a wooden table freshly scrubbed
I'm warning you a lazy person is a nasty
person flurry of elbows
place a yellow oil cloth on this a bowl
a kneading board a dull knife spoons
then draw up an old chair with a cane seat on
the back of the chair have a grand-father carve flowers
birds the child likes to trace sweep of petals
curve of wings to tease a finger along
edges softened by age and numberless polishings
The initiate kneels on the seat
afterwards there will be a pattern of cane left
on her knees to trace
around her neck like a cape tie the huge blue apron
so that only her head and thin bare arms are visible
Place a five pound milk can painted green
with yellow trim and full of flour
before her a tall salt jar the salt clumping together
a small jar of nutmeg sugar in a green can
butter in a clay cooler a red enamelled
cup brimming with cold water
Have someone say 'be careful now
don't make a mess
The child takes one handfull of flour makes a hill
outside a humming bird whirrs sun gleams
on her hill she adds another handfull another and another
she makes a careful mountain then lightly walks
her fingers to the top she flattens the crest an old
voice in her ear *'don't you go making yourself out*
special now she watches as flour sifts down
sides of her mountain then scoops out a satisfactory
hollow she can see humming birds at red
hibiscus beyond a small boy barefeet
on the plum tree his voice shrilling king
of the mountain threatens old voice eggs him on
into the hollow daughter for each handful of flour
one pinch of salt a little sugar
as much butter as can be held in a nutshell

'Ready' she calls waits
 Even if she looks straight ahead she still sees
 from the corner of her eye lamps their bowls full
 gathering sunlight the way girls should
 waiting patiently for evening
 Behind her there is always some one preparing pastry
 on a grey marble-topped table
 the rolling pin presses dough thinner
 and thinner towards the round edge
 the maker pushing pastry to transparency
 ices the pin folds the pastry over butter
 begins again then finally the last stretching roll
 till it seems skin must break into a ragged O
 She is rigid with apprehension this is something
 to do with her with how daughters are made
 so she does not hear the voice over her shoulder say
 'drizzle this baking powder all over'
 handing her a spoon until she is tapped lightly
 starts to the chorus 'this child always dreaming yes
 but what you going to do with her'
 Her mother saying ever so carefully 'let her dream
 while she can' she begins to knead
 butter into the flour her mother sprinkles grated lemon
 peel and when she has crumbs she makes another hollow
 adds water while someone clucks warnings
 she begins to knead the whole together
 not forgetting the recurring dream in which she climbs
 through a forest of leaves she kneads stepping
 bravely from branch to branch miles above ground
 she kneads and kneads trying to make it smooth
 she finds a bird that talks
 and flies away just as she is beginning
 to understand she kneads and finally someone says
 'that's good enough' she kneads just a little more
 she is watching the bird which is flying
 straight into the sun
 where it lives bravely
 a rum bottle full of water is thrust into her hands
 which she must wash again then flour the bottle

to roll out her dough which she has made into a ball
outside the high-pitched yelling of small boys at cricket
she is better at cricket than at bakes
she will never be as good at bakes as her mother is
or her aunt or her great aunt or her grandmother
or even the kitchen maid who is smiling openly
because the child's bakes are not round
her mother says gently I'll show you a trick
she rolls the dough out for her again takes a glass
cuts out perfect rounds of bakes
together they lay them out on a baking sheet
we'll decorate yours with a fork dad will be proud
together they cover her bakes with a wet cloth
when the oven is ready her mother will test the heat
sprinkling water on a tin sheet