

ANTHROPOCENE AND OTHER POEMS

Anthropocene

I am sheepish now, coming to you, with the lump in my throat of swallowing
my childrens' danger.
You laugh while washing the dishes.
You tell me you have been swallowing and swallowing since your body pushed out your
first newborn, that your body regretted it immediately, wished it could swallow that baby
back up to somewhere safe, or, if not that, to somewhere at least gone.
But you have let them go: your son, to prison
(he always felt too hard for a boy his color).
Your daughter to drugs, french fries for her baby.
(she was, unfortunately, too beautiful)
You shake an ancient seed rattle over the grandbaby eating frenchfries.
She puts a hand on your forehead, to make the pain go away.
She swallows the soggy potato and steps out on the crumbling threshold.
You laugh, watching her in the sunshine, and sigh as you turn away.
I am welcome in your home, mortal and wounded, finally.

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Learning

1.

In kindergarten they teach you the primary colors, They teach you to sort things: this goes here, this goes here. They teach you to listen and use your inside voice. Inside you, tidal waves crash, honor and terror, love and destruction, but they teach you it wasn't because of the faint cry of a goose, high above the concrete play field, that you remembered the soldiers you haven't seen yet, and you won't win anything talking like that, raise your hand if you wish to speak, don't beat those strange fragile rhythms against the sky.

2.

The news they are reading isn't real. When the trees died and the earth began to shrug waves of us off, just little shudders, yet, but they felt them, the ones who were reading what wasn't real. And they got angry, because they were used to believing the ground was solid. They blamed the falling leaves and waves of people and the dark mysteries of women because they could feel that the ground was shifting and they had forgotten how fish slip through a stream how a flock of birds, aloft, touches down then rises, they had forgotten how to listen to the cry of a goose high above the concrete play field.

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Untitled, 2017

So maybe the solution is to let go of the linear quality of time.
So that a brown and shriveled leaf is not the ultimate truth
but just another aspect of the leaf. It is also the fresh and healthy bud.
So that the dead tree now is not more real than it was when it was green and alive
and I never even noticed it.
So that maybe that moment when laughter was like bells
and our cool dry skin brushed together
maybe that moment is also forever.

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Mother

Here I am, stirring the soup, stirring and stirring
Here I am, sweeping the floor, sweeping and sweeping

Is there another world where my voice cracks like birdsong?
Is there a place I can gather chalk drawings on the side of the mountain?
Where the earth smells like sweet grass and rain?
Where the tears can fall through me and I can bury them with dignity,
In an earth that remembers, what I mean is, is there another place I can pray?

Here I am, sweeping and sweeping
Teaching my son to dig for yellow clay in what is left
Of the creek. It's silent, and only with the ache of my heart can I pull
Stars from the washed out sky for his eyes. I scrub the stovetop.

Here I am, placing the brimming plates before them.
Birdsong caught in my throat. My bare feet stretch towards the earth below me.
I am praying as best as I can.