

## Fracture Anthology

1.

I keep rewriting my mother like a blade  
With the authority  
To change

What it touches.

Its edges are a man's palms: earth-birthered and

Burning.

2.

In front of a shotgun  
House, a door centered and closed

Like a mouth. In south Houston,  
She ran away and was dragged back  
In a black haversack.

And the years too, trailing along, spilled  
Like ink onto paper,

Luminal white.

3.

The lancet cut the laurel leaves until it was stripped.  
Standing bare, the thunder broke its knees,

Gave it that little push. Its bow—

How we all give in, just a little.

4.

Think of God.

Then think of God with a rod,  
A birch with samaras. How he comes close  
To what you imagined him to be.  
But less fuggle. You know how he has us  
Bending?

Think of that,

But less that.

5.

A limb fought away from her. She fractals  
And says:

*Look at me, my edges,  
How the rind refuses to undress itself and  
Blossom from bone.*

They call this practice and separation.  
The way you come to be remembered.

6.

Anon and tense, a loose bruise  
In the shape of a body.  
A cleft cup

We kneel to drink from.

7.

Lyric is the attempt to stand still.

And I am trying to become  
The lyric  
And the body beside the lyric.

The empty space—

## Yours

Young— like the outside flame is young. He makes a clear canvas of the house. I wake to the sight of red, being pushed from a dream into a pool of mud. I wake to my newborn girl still asleep rubbed against my rib. Using my lipstick, my son reds what he sees, drawing on the mirror, his face graffitied into an effigy of me. It's his job to make his what once wasn't. He was told this.

Splashes on his clothes and the carpet. The ruin of the room, his confetti floor. There are even some blemishes on me and her like a thought left to be turned into a memory. I'd imagine her to be as skin protected underneath a sleeve. The fire only exists to illuminate us. This red is here so we can understand. I do not want him to know that being a boy means his hands can damage until they're bruised and soft.

I do not hit him. I take off his clothes. I wash his wrist, his entire arm, the blotches of red on his forehead, lips and cheek. They wash off with ease after the second rinse. His fingers wet.

## Joyce

She decides she's going to be an artist once a year. She finds the box in the garage where she placed all of her drawings of celebrities, her children, and baskets of purple fruit. She doesn't look at them, but sets them by her bedside. She sifts through a magazine considering what to draw next. Starts and quits drawing on three separate occasions. She leaves the woman half-drawn like the lipstick ad and the sea, these images taken by other people. She finds more pictures of her children. The ones with the deep browns and blacks so deep she is lost in their color. How they are without metaphor.

## Joshua

[to Joyce as Sister]

When I was young, you told me that your body was once made into a thing. Your brother took your body, made scraps of it hanging from a rope. Hung from a tree like a used tire. Wind blew through you and you swayed.

[to Joyce as Wife]

They say a woman's body belongs to her husband. Your husband made you cry when he stood you next to a plaque on a fireplace with the words inscribed "In this house we will serve God". If God could speak he would the way a boy does, hurriedly and intrepid, unaffected by his own sundial. I stood between you and him diverting his virile wind.

[to Joyce as Mother]

I recall the first time I made you cry. An adolescent who thought words were monotonous. I watched you become a willow, turning from the sun, protecting me from its rays and my own reflection on the lake.

[to Brianna as Niece]

Your mother named you at birth, and minutes later gave you away. For six months you were passed, a collection plate where the alms lessen after each row. But when we held you in our arms we refused to let go. The wind holds words and encloses them until they reach their home.

[to Maya as Woman]

The man who raped you was found dead. You said your voice had killed him, then left your body like a fever. *Words are things* you once said, and if that is so when you speak you are releasing an epithet of ammonia, more visible than the body.

[to Brianna as Daughter]

You cried the entire ride home. Moth-eyed in your pink dress. Tears clung onto my flesh like leeches. Our holy water reminding us how time splits us, where one side grows and the other dying slowly.

[to Joyce as Mother]

We are two palmate leaves hanging, silent, waiting for the sound of the wind to overcome us. And take us to a place where the trees are all hollow, graved, shrilling insides, where my silence heals you, and yours destroys me.

[to Joyce as Mother]

When you were pregnant with me the doctor fed you pills until your stomach would no longer grow. He tried to control that mortal process you created. But you said *no. There's a world within me and a door made of native rock. It is my door to open.*

[to Joyce as Mother]

Depression is my birthright. So I clung onto you and death like a shadow. I was not allowed to release you. Dragged me along like a wheelless wagon on concrete, and we created tiny sparks. I held on until I caught fire, then let you go.

## Superstition

The myths go like this: if your foot gets swept by a broom and you don't spit on the broom, you will go to jail. If a baby gets a haircut too soon, it will stunt their growth. If you move houses on the first of the month, you will be moving the rest of the year. If a child looks between their legs, it means their mother will become pregnant soon. If a person cleans on their birthday, they won't live to see their next. If the husband crosses over his pregnant wife in bed, he will get sick.

Each had their own story. And each story became mine.

One myth goes like this: you point out a star and it takes out your eye. When my grandmother was a girl, she saw a girl point up at night and a star pointed back. It left her eye red and swollen for ten days. I heard her say that the only real emotion is the desire to feel.

The myth goes: whenever two people touch your hair at once the older one will be unlucky.

They will say at first glance I thought you were a language to yourself. Because the only emotion to consider is *it hurts*.