

IN UTERO

an ant is placed in my mother's womb
to move

new rhythms,
& i become kaleidoscopic,

a melanoid drum,
a fluttering against a colony's heartbeat.

her cervix crushes me
& i know

this is more than devotion
my ancestors fabled.

in my dreams
i am her legacy

or lapse in judgement, named
to bring forth a new charm.

i come into the world
loud, head first.

my inheritance hanging
in garlands from my wrists,

red ore encased
by a band of fluid too thick to unravel.

i shimmer.
i feel wet slick,

open & give what she kept inside,
a chance

to sprout
from my hands.

i must be good
if i am worthy of being loved that much.

i take a breath
& form cells into flesh.

i exhale & dwell
amongst these bones,

to find the place most possible
to evolve

(from the beginning).

CREATION STORY

somewhere undercover
a rupture of self,

or the sweetest rye
in the gardens

on the south side, remains
a project.

creation gathers
to feed us on the block

beneath watchtowers
that once stood tall & erect—

like an edifice
of equal parts maroon & shimmer.

like mother like daughter
to pursue

the place
where concrete cracks

& your older siblings say
the sidewalk spat you out

like a sacrifice.
kids know grief better.

if we review
impact in numbers:

one lived to be the only evidence
of ten conceived

by two lovers,
who went searching for light

or darker substances
in each other;

drifting their wonder
between an opening

already collecting
my breaths,

so I could become
the gift they left.

WARRIOR'S BLOOD

by nine years old i'm destined to be
the greatest warrior in the world.

at parent-teacher meetings
momma wears the pants

& the suit & brings home bread
with blades adorned.

she tells me stories of the men she's slain
on her path to motherhood

& i'm grateful. i learn quick,
like all the good daughters do—

keep my grades up & only speak
when spoken to

& shrink & shrink & shrink
until i start to like the feeling.

in love & war
i search for my father.

i make a shield from his absence
& begin to loathe his dna.

sometimes his ghost shows up
as a reminder

that even the bravest
soldiers die,
screaming their mother's names.

ancestry won't save you
on the frontlines

so i flaunt the gone-
blue-stink of him i keep preserved

in my mind. & with some time
he will begin to turn, crimson.

AFTER ASKING GOD WHY "GOOD" WOMEN EXIST

i search google for the definition *feminism*

a rootless tree

the only result to arc toward the girl

asking fragile questions that's it

when a piece of your body leaves

you longing for your lineage

searching for purpose

that begins

in a woman's bewildered screams

why did this happen

†

i wander a path & find eve unnamed

her hands bound with twine

her voice a rustling of wings

there are many ways to become undone

some more delightful than others

some wrapped in red just to unravel a resolve

before i understand

the impact of what eve unearthed

i see the blade next to her as she weeps

above the only fruit the tree could ever grow

i pity mary's sacrificial womb

maybe the gift of life was never his
to give

maybe it was hers

but what a terrible dream to defer
to peel back doubt like a supple rind

with no hesitation or fear
to say *here I am*

announcing relief to know the courage it takes
to step in

to seize the knife

to know true belief