

War Poems

War // synonym for wretched woman,
who makes it all be turning.

I write it all as uncertain,
all this turning in words
that now mix and cross and spill
until I'm unsure what I write.

I don't know where to put the words,
but I will be better off than I was before.

After Transgressing the Real

In the War there was a woman,
pale and dark-eyed and naked
leaned against the wall,
crumbling
incoherencies
of angered sobs.

She commands
I look at her, I see her,
take in the real
of barren imagination);
look at how she is betrayed.
She begs me to put her in the lake
so she can be clean again.
I stare, just like she wants,
while she grips onto the nearest object –
a folding chair, a fire extinguisher,
and finds a spot to strike with it –
and for now the enemy is defeated.

In the War we are alone
weaving pine boughs and blossoms.
Sometimes I am permitted
to sit on the hill outside the door
and join colored threads of want
for the slate portrait of Iris
above her bed, for the goddess herself
to tell me where everyone has gone.

•

In the War, this time
I am without her orders. There is no we,
no one to collect the runes on the page
and check the windows for cracks;
no woman naked against the wall.

I went to the lake at the start, alone –
and no one was there but me.

•

In the afternoon I started, awake
from a day-nightmare
that she was in a rage again,
looking for me.

I wake up and there is a message unread
that reinstates the real,
that the nightmare doesn't end,
that it only moves behind the wall
and waits to be seen.

My Father Would Be Me

My mother asks me why I would rename myself;
why I'd take on the letters for someone else.
I told her that was my natural alternative
and she admits that was her first choice,
aside from God, if it were up to her.

But she's the only one certified to choose
and says my eyes are brown like hers
and when I say my eyes are
green
she says I'm wrong
because they are brown like hers.

•

Today we are finally together again,
deconstructing the nightmares of a life apart.
A girl sees us and asks if you're my father
and you say that's not true,
but she insists that we have the same eye color
and you say that's not true,
that your eyes are brown and mine are
green,
and you pause,
too hesitant to reveal the real,
and I turn to look to you and I think
maybe you should be my fading mother.

Absorption of A Letter

As I went on to dream it:
they took a bite from my swollen palm,
ripped it open and the black inside
fell into the other,
where I could see it clearly
for the first time.

What I had felt inside turned now
into a synthetic poly pillow,
a soft magnet, a soft conductor
only I must have spied;
and felt my heaviness again
with the sight.

I now had a fear of being seen and given
a meaning it and I should not have,
a meaning I had yet to unwind
from pure experience.

I dropped it as they bit the other palm,
opened it up with no pain.
And again the cushion fell
where only I would see it.

•

This material is my call and creation;
this static that hangs over and follows,
bright when it is dark and raining.

I cannot run from it;
I hold the kite string, even now
with open palms.

I continue to rock foundations when I sit
and skew level boards when I lean
and there is this dizziness that lingers

when we're all in the path of transmission.

•

I met my carrier of sleep
when I was young, looking at me
from the tops of trees
and holding me, and learning
how to be invasive black and polished glass
and when to come out from me again.

He spoke to me without words or play
and told me when to close my eyes,
with a weight that lingered.
And he put the black in my palms
and woke me up to the wrenching
of two worlds sharing a bodytool
that aches so silent
with everything inside at once.

After an Alternate Life

The poet with other lives stands
and finds another mother,
tries to find where the sound is touch,
where the tears will start.

•

I am hearing the end of silent memories.
There is a naked woman howling
and whipping her demons for bleeding.
I am hearing something steadfast
when the screaming continues to ring.

I am painting the slate for her,
I am wondering why no one comes for me.
Visibly I am using the smallest brush I can
to go over the shaking; prefer to weave
where we can't see the shaking.

At night I practice my intentions
to end all the sound, to be let go by Love
but still I hear the steps that pace.

•

I awoke from his death and found I had disappeared.
He pinned her to the counter and told her
he would murder her if he saw her break us again,
he would put away his last ten years to see her gone.
I watched the deathbed and forgot what happened next.

•

My untraumatized love asked me to forget
what I already could not remember
in an alternate life), if I was the Lover),
if I had it in my heart to love another war).

“Here, in the one life I am leading, I am,
as the Lover always is, alone before a hand that holds forth
the burning of a heart for me to eat again.”

•

Winding around it all, this memory of Love
I stare at silently until it breaks me away.
She stares back at me and asks for an apology for being,
she tells me if we all disappear it will be my fault.

“In the alternate life I am visiting early Spring again.
Nothing is revised. I am again without help.”

I write each moment down in a letter
to my future self, so that I will remember
what time has done to make Love expire.
I open this letter to find how I exist again.

•

I lay by the road and find there is no “ours”.
I drive up and down alone
and I’m told the tears should come
when I tell my untraumatized love I’m leaving, but
“I” come forward to gaze into the downpouring glass,
the black crystal in which I find the world
looking for “me”. I hide in my looking.”

•

Now when I lay down to dream the tears will come.
“When we sit down to dinner, I will put the looking-glass away,
I will put away watching for the furtive movement in the flesh
that betrays what I know is hidden there.”

•

“So I love what is “real”. How awkwardly we name it:
the “actual”, the “real”, the “authentic” —What is.”

I see her message in the dream and the real
and I know my mother is more in her mind
than she ever was and is still, crying for
the way I hurt her by turning away, crying for
the way she still looks for her Love.

She wasn't done making us disappear,
she will use all her words to make me look at her.

“I have come to it as if I could have been “away”,
flooded thru by the sorrow of the unlived, the unanswerd,
tho I knew not and had not the courage of asking
the question that calld for it,
the real I *did* see. The real so toucht me”

I ran from the words which might again break me.