

Wombs are Treacherous Things

My womb is dying. My womb is dying.
This refrain runs through my head
with each menstrual period now.
Predictable and familiar for so long,
my body has begun to bleed at unpredictable times
and in unfamiliar ways,
presaging the end of my fertility.
The words surprise me.
Their source is a mystery.
Is it grief?
Is it joy?

Oh, wombs are treacherous things.
Just ask my mother.
A womb is what defines a woman,
makes her desirable,
makes her valuable.
For, what is a woman,
who is a woman,
if she isn't someone's wife
and someone's mother?
I refuse to become a wife
or a mother
like her.
That troubles her,
frightens her.

Becky Lee

If I don't become someone's wife
I will always be
her child,
her responsibility,
her burden.
If I don't become someone's mother
I will never be
part of the sisterhood of suffering.

For wombs are treacherous things.
Hers was not strong enough to birth the baby
conceived in her conjugal bed.
It had to be cut open
and stitched shut.
And the baby that formed within it
was not perfect,
but a misshapen
and obdurate creature,
ungrateful for her sacrifice
and unwilling to emulate it.
So my mother reminds me.

Yes, wombs are treacherous things.
We cannot choose
the womb that bears us
or whom we harbour there.
We are defined
by the womb within us.
This ought to bind
mother and daughter.
It has driven us apart.
"Why can't you be like me?!"
"Why must I be like you?!"

My womb is dying. My womb is dying.
Painful reminder
of my mother,
resentful, demanding,
I rejoice
that it will soon be silent.
Last connection
with she who bore me,
I am saddened
that it will soon be still.