

Editor's Notes

It's a great pleasure to feature a selection of poems by Pimone Triplett in this issue of *Folio*.

Lyrical rich and saturated with history, Triplett's poetry is widely admired for its meditative range and formal innovation. As poet and critic David St. John observes, Triplett's sumptuously layered narratives display an "enviable intellectual ease" in their bridging of continental and historical divides; hers is a unique vision that travels "from Beato Angelico to Robert Schumann with passion and vision, from Bangkok to rural America with a truly natural eloquence."

In "Family Spirits, with Voice of One Child Miscarried," Triplett's exploration of maternal inheritance is set against the backdrop of a visit to Thailand, a land the poet encounters as familiar homeland and global port of call. The occasion of a grandfather's funeral sparks a dialogue with the spirit of a miscarried child whom the poet invites into "the house of our name, /a tourist destination." Here, ancestral past—the family's "legendary general/father-spawn" wreathed in incense—coexists with more temporal realities: "World/Bank posters" are up for sale and servants hum "to pop tunes a-tonal, suffering the street's/traffic blather." The poet's meditations on family history and the formal beauty of traditional funeral rites are held in counterpoint with the voice of the child's spirit, which enters the poem through the traditional Thai poetic form, *khap yanii*. Its broken lines and powerful internal rhyme scheme mirror the unsettling wisdom offered by this "stroke//of soul, joke that still lives//like a fugitive." The mother's lament for her lost child builds forcefully toward a lushly descriptive reflection on the mysteries of incarnation:

Once I stood by a river watching
the skin come off. Membrane of how

we wanted you, which was not enough
to keep you from turning back.

Behind, along the path the snake had come,
dirt, combed loosely,
showing its tracks for a while.

However complex Triplett's choice of subject matter may be in a given poem, her attention to detail is uncannily precise and painterly, her language both colloquial and refreshingly inventive. In one poem, a newborn son is described as "new-flanged, /out of the balm and starry/mic-mac, out of ducal/mansions and astral melt" ("Birth Event"); in another, the unsettling continuities of family life animate the poet's thoughts on her child's inheritance:

Yours to inherit,

the dark halls elephantine chariots
of kings, the silver headdress sown mother-of-pearl,

gold stupas holding up the temple by teardrop.
Regarding this minute, this space

you're bred into, you have to take it, back room and all, past
minaret plate glass and tea sets,

lacquered trays and teak barges
pleated in filigree, flesh of your flesh."

("Three Plays on Display)

In their awareness of the connections between the individual body and the body politic, Triplett's poems reveal a deep social conscience. This is particularly evident in "Motherland," an ambitious and affecting sequence that pays tribute to Robert Hayden's "Middle Passage" in both its structure and approach to the dismal realities of child prostitution in Thailand. With starkly rendered historical detail and fervent compassion, Triplett traces a chronology of exploitation from its earliest origins in colonial trade to contemporary incarnations facilitated by soldiers' R&R and internet sales that reveal "the body wholly body, spirit eaten out." Because her pregnancy coincided with the onset of the Iraq war, Triplett

observes that she found herself paying special attention to “awful flaws and joyful recoveries” and describes her understanding of the choice of motherhood as a “profoundly hopeful gesture of maternal activism.”

Pimone Triplett has published three books of poems: *Rumor* (2009), *The Price of Light* (2005), and *Ruining the Picture* (1998). She is also a coeditor, with Dan Tobin, of the essay anthology, *Poet's Work, Poet's Play* (2008). Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in such journals as *American Poetry Review*, *Iowa Review*, *Denver Quarterly*, *Ploughshares*, *Poetry*, and many other journals. Pimone Triplett's poems have also been featured in many anthologies, including *Legitimate Dangers*, *Asian American Poets*, the Next Generation, and W.W. Norton's *Contemporary Voices from the East*. An Associate Professor at the University of Washington, Pimone Triplett is the current director of the MFA Program in Creative Writing. She lives in Seattle with her husband and son.