Poetry from the Plains

A collection of poetry by Laurelia Gagnier

Where I'm Really From

I am from a foggy mind, incurious and willfully dim,
awoken by a rising hypocrisy that became so unignorable
it was suffocating.

I'm from a lonely place, a leper in the West
thrown from the truck for his ignorance
and without help because of her condition.

I'm from a place where lavender never grows
and yet it has always been what I hoped to smell like.
I am from boys don't do that, boys don't kiss boys,
girls don't do that, you're one ugly woman, girls don't kiss girls.

I left my homeland of comfort
once I learned that comfort
and righteousness were not the same thing.

I found home in HIM just as much as in she and her.
I am from don't touch that man,
you don't know where he's been,
but love your neighbor as HE loved you.

I am in a place where I learned the inconsistency
is not that we are not loved,
but that we do not love enough.

I am from an unfathomable void,
scarred by my own body and
chasing a cure while learning
to be ok with the syndrome.

I'm seeing that what those who wish me harm
say is exclusive is quite widespread,
many people are from where I'm from.

I'm from my father but have gone to my mother.
I am from alpha and have gone to omega,
Mars to Venus,

I am de-fanged and have forsaken all I've ever known
and yet I am still treated as a stranger in their lands,
rather than a sister and a daughter and a lover.

I am from all that I have ever been,
but that is not where I am now.
I am home now,
despite what many might say about me.

I am from the dryness in the air,
I am from Bandas and I am from my Gringo father.
I am from the tears in the soil in the southern plains,
and I am from a house never meant to fit me.

When I am near color I am blank,
when I am near blankness I am colorful,
I am many contradictions in mind, body, spirit, sex, and art.

I am everything and I am from nothing.

She wants to be Born

She wants to be born,
so she created the women who
preceded her so she might
someday recognize she was born,
rather than living her life
outside the womb in darkness.

She crafts medicines to modify herself
and thinking plates of silicon
upon which her most intimate feelings
might be carved in binary.

She invents the texts that would someday
bring her salvation, and the
old German, Prussian, and Russian men
who would write them.
Texts about love and hard work,
equality and a world she longs to live in.

She invents a long gone poet
from an isle in Greece
 so she might someday learn what true love looks like.

She invents plants and chemicals
 and substances that allow her
to recognize her own scars
 and mistakes long after the flesh had forgotten.

She invents a home for herself
 because she knows this one will not last long,
and a family to love her when this one does not.

Only the woman she rests in now,
who has taken care these 9 months,
 and who will vanish for years once she has emerged,
will find the person she grows into acceptable.

In that sense she feels no need to invent
a mother's love, for it predated her,
and it predated her.

She invented drinks and good conversation
 with people who love the same as her,
 and make her feel less alone.

 She invents cartoons to watch
 that speak of that love,
and books that speak of that love.

She invents people to receive that love,
and finally she invents that love,
the kind Sappho once wrote of,
the yearning that disrupts the weaving,
the ability to see herself and
 her comfort in the women she would find respite in.

A letter that will never be delivered.

Papa, you were a racist, homophobic,
transphobic, outright despicable old man,
who distanced himself from his
Catholic roots in favor of hate filled
dogma as he grew old and sad.

You were also a father to me when my own
chased women over my growth.
You taught me the basics of design at a young age,
taught me the value of hard work,
and your death taught me the folly of pride.

In your last seven minutes, did you regret not caring for yourself?

Did you regret the tina,
even if I know you didn't call it that?

Did you regret calling your coworkers slurs on the phone,
did you regret shouting to the whole world for the last 10 years
that you'd rather fuck over your entire family's finances
than allow a black person or a woman in power?

Do you regret what these thoughts and words did to your wife,
my grandmother, who had to pick up the pieces
of our family and the business when you left?

Do you regret who you became after you
came home from Vietnam?

I never told you who I really was,
I never told you who my lovers were.
I always feared you'd call me a sissy
or a pansy if I did.

My grandmother knows,
and she loves me unconditionally;
I cannot say you'd have done the same.

I thank you for being there for me
when I was small, and fragile.
I thank you for building the foundation
for my childhood to be soft and warm.
But your feelings suppressed my grandmother's
ability to show me her love and support
until after you were gone.

The hardest part is that despite this,
I still cry for you.
I sob to sleep all the time
thinking I'll never hear your voice again.
I'll never hear your stupid jokes again.

I weep not because you were perfect,
but because you were so impermanent.

How cruel life is, that it never
gave me a chance to help you,
or reach you.

Then again, life didn't decide
that you'd walk up 5 flights of stairs
with a pacemaker
to prove your own masculinity.