

A . M . G W Y N N

Blood and Water

I.

He traces the angles of the room—
blood and flesh.

She bends to wipe his boot. His tags chime
the hour of leaving.

Come home to me

This house, and everything in it suspended
within the silence—*her mouth is a country.*

II.

One land patch resembles another
when the road is long enough—wound out past
the ghostly plumes of industry in the ash of a high noon.
The click of magazines keep time,
lifted from a dry well—spit from the heave and buckle.
Years spin themselves out attempting reasons,
measuring flesh as real as the dust,
shaken from the shell of an empty boot.

III.

Her eyes map the grain
patterns in windows.
Years of dread threaten
to finally unravel
with every knock, motor or ring.

IV.

He stands above her, the words catching behind slackened teeth:
this was the sum of all my days.
She thought she would know what to say, and what not.
Nothing enough, just the deep sigh of “oh” -
he is helpless to explain and reaches out to stroke
the knowing into the strands of her hair, hiding himself
behind the safe lines of her face, as he tries to re-lace
his boots, walk back across a thousand days,
and return to her all that was taken.

V.

In the first hours, eyes and voices strain.
She waits.
He watches
for the first lip of light
at the window.
She traces the unhealed
scars with her eyes,
pauses for muscle
twitch or tremor.
Nothing. Save the wave settling
across his forehead in dark heat
from the farthest edge
of the bed, where he seeks
to relearn the side he sleeps on.

VI.

The two aren't certain
they breathe
or are suspended
like balloons full of dead air.
He starts at a dog growl.
Moves to the window,
his adrenaline flash
hours later—sparks still tremble
in the curtains and the hem
of her summer dress.
She doesn't ask him to remove
his boots in the house.
She knows they are anchors
that tether him from the slip
of hands
that once knew what to do,
other than open, close, open.
She thinks of mountains.
It can take a lifetime to move them.
If between then and now
life unravels or lets go...
Some things take a very long time to make.
Continents, rivers, the hum
of a peaceful heart.

A.M. GWYNN writes short fiction and poetry. Her recent work will be featured in a forthcoming issue of *Fiction Southeast*, *O-Dark-Thirty*, and *Consequence Magazine*. Her work has also appeared in *Grey Sparrow Journal*, *Sleet Magazine*, and several other literary venues. A.M. Gwynn is from Seattle, WA and resides in Germany.