

On Becoming an Ancestor

Having passed through the rushes of giving birth,
I am an ancestor, renamed mother.
What story I tell of how I came here
Will become the backstory, the explanation.
The warnings I give, the worries I share
Will be called wisdom, or spawn laughter.
My failings are also my legacy. I am unready.
I hear my child cry. I can only give him milk.

Having passed through the rushes of giving birth,
I am an ancestor. I have failed already –
To make the world worthy of this fragment of God.
I have not tended our garden
Or remembered the old lullabies.
I have treated casually what I should have treasured
Because I did not understand treasure
Until I passed through the rushes of giving birth.

Having passed through the rushes of giving birth,
I am an ancestor. How can I be?
One of them who are exalted, who people the prayers,
Whose lives are stories – necklaces
Of colored macaroni and gemstones.
Survivors – they slogged through luck, good and bad,
Arriving, leaving, landing finally in graves
Whose exact whereabouts have been forgotten.

Having passed through the rushes of giving birth,
I am an ancestor, like those before me.
Though I stumble, though I wander,
Not knowing my place amongst the silhouettes.
Still, I move. I can't turn back or away.
The scraps we hold, telling and retelling are not the all,
They are both more and less –
Like me, like my child.