

## **Belly – The Three Ways In Which It Lurches**

by Bridget Betzold

1)

America is calling from my belly  
like a wild horse, running in circles    trapped    she screams for mercy  
“shame on you” I whisper to her  
“shush, be quiet, be still, and do not fill me with lies anymore”

shame: what does it mean? what does it mean to those who stay in her  
grasp?  
to those who complain but stay put?  
(who are you fooling?)

she is galloping fast, bucking against my womb  
hurling her hooves into the hollows of my guts

“I captured you long ago,  
I figured you out as soon as I was old enough to mutter ‘hatred,’ for that is  
what you are and  
I want you to stay hidden, please, stop trying to escape”

but she is resisting me; she believes she must be free  
to roam the chasms of my lungs and the purple quarries of my veins

“NO!” my throat is dry, gasping, lava on my tongue is burning for this cry,  
“Hear me for

this is not what I thought would happen when I left you behind  
when I flew and swam from you”

yet she is deaf to my call and all the while she looks at me,  
stares with glittering and unbroken eyes

2)

she wants to know what I have to say about her, why I left her in the dust,  
quickly and without notice;

I cannot answer

because blood is gushing through my mouth, it's gathering at my teeth  
forcing unto me a blow of heat that screams of terror, and I wonder  
is this what it's like to be swallowed whole?

to be eaten alive?

to be sacrificed to the undying loom of a country that you cannot call home  
but to a country that stays in you, screams for an answer, for light to shine  
upon your discovery of a new world, a new home?

is this what it's like to be a citizen of a place that you do not respect?

I wish that in my belly, this sickness, this place, this question (her)  
will one day cease to bubble and grind inside of me

but this is not to be

she will not give in

she gallops in intricate patterns through my organs

and

my hands are starting to make work like she does

my mouth is beginning to utter the words that she speaks

and my feet cannot resist tapping to her rhythms

sickening!

blasphemy!

3)

-imperialism

-hatred

-poverty

-opposition

they are all America

they are all me

and I am all of them

(so who has shame now?)

“please, go away, do not stay, and do not haunt me, please”

I say

“will you not release me of your soil?”

“will you not spare me a chance to make things right?”

“No,” she says,

“you chose to hate me as I have hated others

and this

is your punishment:

can you feel that metallic pang in your head?

that's me, controlling you

telling you that you are, in fact, an American

and you have no other choice but to endure the headache

and to obey the dirt that once stood under your feet and

even though you do not live under my command anymore, I will not stop

hunting you

because you are my blood

and no one else's

and running away won't get you anywhere

you will know this, in time”

and this is how I know that she will  
never stop chasing me  
this is how I feel shame  
(because I am an American  
and blood is trickling down my wrists  
staining all who dare to say otherwise                      even me)