



ADRIENNEQ&AGRUBER



POEMS

Q & A

ADRIENNE GRUBER

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QUESTIONS

We split a self in such a way that there isn't enough
for either of us.

The first lesson of motherhood:
pretend you are brave until
you are brave.

Fact: death too is in the egg.

Try to remember
the seductive sea if you can.

For each night is a long drink
in a short glass and birth is
but a sleep and a forgetting.

Fact: the body is dumb, the body is meat.

I had no force left in me
but a voice in my head:

to have a child is to give
fate a hostage.

Once she was born
I was never not afraid.

Q: Here, put this baby in your shirt.

A: I really don't feel like being pregnant with your doll right now.

Q: Just do it. Then I'll give you sips of water until you give birth.

A: Okay, I guess.

Q: That's it, drink the water. Oh look, the baby's out.

A: That was easy.

NOT TRYING

We made love before his stitches came out.

We came before his wounds had time to heal, before his cells multiplied and layered and stitched together, before the tiny rivets in his torso dried up, before he could bend and contort, before flesh was remade flesh.

We joined and twinned and twinned again, sinking into each other, boots into wet earth.

We smeared a salty rub in rock, spun tales and drew pictures on cliffs that our waves crashed against.

We bore claws and teeth.

We made spit pacts and blood oaths and pinky swears.

We moulded casts of our genitals to show our children, moistened riverbanks until the red earth grew shadows and it poured.

We promised it wouldn't hurt if we held still.

We unmade the bed against the surgeon's advice.

We made sure he could still heal—the waves, unless there is weather, are calm, roll a body gently.

We unmade dirty deeds and made them dirty again.

OVULATORY LINEAGE

Like Matryoshka dolls
we incubate. Mom and I,
1948.

WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOU'RE EXPECTING (100 YEARS AGO)

Longings

We do not approve of the common practice
of humouring her every whim and fancy.

Mustard, pepper, hot sauces, spices will engender
a love for stimulants in the infant.

The use of flesh food is to be condemned as harmful
to the digestion or interests of the child.

Excessive use of tea and coffee stamp the progeny
with vicious tendencies and even fatal disease.

Self-denial, the subordination of desire and convenience,
must result in good to the mother and the child.

Those in whom longings are the most imperious are those
of an impulsive disposition and without self-control.

Exercise

Washerwomen work up to the day of confinement,
then resume their occupation the next day.

The exercise afforded by household duties
constitutes the best conditioning of the trunk and limbs.

If on a journey, an Indian woman will deliver her child, then
promptly mount her pony and proceed to her destination.

When long walks cannot be taken,
carriage riding may be substituted.

The ease with which the Negro women of the South
give birth has long been remarked upon.

High-class women maintain high-class idleness.
Bad bodily conditions arise from indolence.

A lazy woman bears a long,
painful childbirth.

Bathing

Have no fear that the bath will disturb
the contents of the womb.

Special attention must be given to local cleanliness.
Increased blood supply of female parts increases localized secretions.

The best means for flushing is the siphon or fountain syringe.
For further directions, see appendix.

A little soap should be used. If there is an abundance of leucorrhea,
consider special remedies.

These baths are the most valuable additional means
of facilitating the exit of the infant.

The temperature should not deviate from that of the body.
A hot or a cold douche might occasion a miscarriage.

Sex

Indulgence results in the transmission of libidinous tendencies to the child.

It is a well-established fact that the propensity to abortion is induced by sexual appetite.

The practice of continence during pregnancy is enforced in the harems of the East.

Abortion is practised among women who desire to remain special favourites of the common husband.

Continence during gestation ensures the pains of childbirth are greatly mitigated.

A woman's sexual nature should find expression in motherhood, not the grosser forms of sexual activity.

The females of most animals resist advances of the males during this period. They are less perverted than humans.

Influence

Every Breeder knows that disease
and vicious tendencies are transmissible.

Moral as well as mental qualities are passed down,
which we know from the criminal class.

If a man expends a thousand dollars for a fine horse,
he inquires with great care into the ancestry of the animal.

Family susceptibility to scrofula, consumption, insanity, or epilepsy
should be considered by a young man seeking a wife.

The habit or vice of the parent becomes an
irresistible urge in the offspring.

A state of anxiety long maintained during pregnancy
produces idiocy in the child.

PLAYA DEL CARMEN, QUINTANA ROO

Ten days after our wedding we recline
at El Fogon, swill cocktails with four shots
of tequila. Our food comes and we're brined—
Dennis performs looping gestures, parrots
his drunk sperm. We stagger to the hotel,
pass out on towel swans entwined. Hijacked
with headaches, our dehydrated tongues swell.
Fuck tipsy and frenetic, the odds stacked
in our favour—I'm ovulating. Dazed,
we fly across three countries, bodies sour.
At the Houston airport, an egg, unfazed,
lobs along my Fallopian tube. Hours
pass as a slightly headachy sperm fights,
swims forward with all its hungover might.