

Amanda Gunn

THINGS I DIDN'T DO WITH THIS BODY  
& THINGS I DID

I didn't bear a child with it, bear a drunk friend's arm around its shoulders, bear it over a fence in one go, bear it from Harlem to Wall Street by foot, run it until it vomited, run it until it vibrated with joy, lean it long against a redwood it had hiked to, lay it on the earth beneath the aurora borealis, march it white-laced until it wed, march it in Baltimore for a killed Black man, march it to war until it was dead, bear a lover eager on its spine, bear it back to its natal soil, bear it to the lake's center under the swift awesome power of its legs. Bear witness: I did not make its child. I didn't bear it to the home it asked me for. Instead, as if by stumbling, as if by walking backward even, as if the beginning & not the end held the drum & cymbal & jazz hands,

I bore three lovers in its mouth, bore a blow to its cheek, bore the snap & drag of the Atlantic at high tide, bared its breasts on that beach, scored its ankle with a knife twelve thin times, bored into the white underflesh of its thigh, bore its scars, bore tattoos to cover its scars, bore hot wax where it was tenderest, bore on its face a heavy, pretty face, bore smoke deep in its tissues, bore the soft, bore the love of its family, withheld from it embraces, withheld from it a decent meal, bore love for the boy who refused it, bore the death of the boy who didn't, bore the weight it made from the pills I had handed it, bore its joints' irreparable ache, bore the turned sweet smell beneath its breast, taught water to bear it so I could rest, bore its sloughings, bore its swellings, bore its manifold solitudes, and on the rare, keen nights it stayed with me, I bore its bright fragrant solitary intolerable pleasure.