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Issue 18 Winter 2016
LIGHTING OUR DARKNESS

Unborn & Other Poems

Maria Takolander

Unborn

1. Morning Sickness

I had lost myself in a novel by Marie Darrieussecq
in which a woman grows bacon skin—broken by
hair that claws with its roots, coarser than on her
pudenda—and teats like gelatinous melanomas.
I saw her fretting and muddying the earth until her

rear end let forth a litter of mutant-lets, pink and coarse as tongues and slippery. Their lids were serene, as if eyes did not exist, and their ears were closed to the sound of their own not screaming. It was then I felt the tide come in, bearing silt stirred from the fetid sea floor, old with starfish and eel bones. The moon, for nine months, did not care to claim it again.

2. Ultrasound

I had read that some women feed life with scratched hunks of earth that gravel their teeth, with the residue of fire that sludges their gums, and with the odourless powder their grandmothers used to stiffen petticoats of crinoline. I imagine the starch creaming my throat grey, and to us you look colourless as if you were made that way. Still emerging from yourself, the bud of your nose alone makes the universe less impossible. You do not know that we are here, but this is how we watch you: on a black-and-white plasma screen suspended on a wall—the happy technician flicking us between dimensions like Dr Who—and as if from an infinite distance.

3. Foetal movement

In my guidebook to pregnancy, a pencil illustration offers me a profile of myself: armless and headless, legs to mid-thigh, only my reproductive organs and waste channels sketched in. My abdomen encases an upside-down foetus above the bulbous and textured outline of my rectal cavity, the muscular, smudged passage of my vagina and my clear urinary tract. The caption announces that by the end of the seventh month the foetus can respond to taste, light and sound, and it can cry. As I watch you shadow box with sourness, radiance and din, the sources of which you must fear like a medieval Christian, you make of my belly a theatre for unseen marionettes and for pain that has no origin—except for the life I have given.