

Unmade

With thanks to the National Trust of Western Australia and Peninsula Farm, Maylands

a tour guide gestures to a brass four poster bed, that dismantled
into sections for boat transportation, the same way we must split
ourselves into simplified mouthfuls in order to be
remembered –

off-white linen is displayed unmade, yet still posed precisely
(as if slumber had only just departed) beyond a rose
coloured rope that prevents eyes from becoming hands,
stops dust turning sticky with curiosity.

this public memory; curated then tousled by professionals
who own refrigerators and washing machines,
who flush toilets during the night and complain
about the temperature of bathtubs, while they scroll
and screenshot photographs of the past.

I want to know what side Ann slept on. if bed pans
were billboards that clarified the realities of the body.
hand washed shame stains differently, like a knotted
rag that refuses to release what it knows.

in another suburb, the vintage brass bed I was conceived
upon remains pressed against a wall of my childhood
home. my current frame makes a mockery of heritage,
wearing a costume of wood, creaking like a warning.

neither of these are unmade in the mouths of
tour guides. my pillowcase is not a national treasure.
but perhaps, if I erected a story with enough absence
the significance would emerge slowly, like a stretch mark
that shows where the body came from, even

after the body has arrived.

I am told that a committee of experts argued about the disrespect
of displaying an unmade marriage bed. said, a woman like *her*
would never do that. would never rest on imperfection.
as if hospital corners are a lineage, or an inheritance, or
a good reason to be remembered;

not as a mother, not as a farmhand, not as an educator of children,
not as a grief that continued carrying others, not as miscarriage's
aftermath, not as a husband's footnote, not as curator of the
medicine chest, or consumer of lavender hysteria. not as
something more complex than a woman who found time
to fold then smooth the edges of herself.

let it be known, that I always slept on the side
nearest to the wall. to the left of my lover, heavy
on my stomach, breasts flattened by morning's breath.

let the tour guide announce,
some months sadness unmade her.
still, she rested upon what remained.
she demanded to be remembered not only
for her grief, but never without it.