

Tessa Theocharous

## I AM SEVEN

I am seven  
I am catching caterpillars to keep in an old jam jar  
I feed them leaves but they don't turn into butterflies,  
Perhaps I chose the wrong ones

I am playing War and Peace  
I know that my outclassed stare will be enough to stop tanks  
in the street  
My papacy-red jacket bucks in hand-me-down creases  
As I march heart-first into a vagrant revolution  
Egon Schiele's painted women creep out of their frame at night, are  
pinning me with pythoness arms,  
My mouth is confessing  
I do not know what art is.

But I have seen heaven in a stiff cat, fur still warm  
Why is she being covered with dirt, to go to a special place they answer  
I know this will not happen to me, I am seven, I can somersault  
forwards *and* backwards, I have had inoculations, I have stopped war  
with my eyes,

I am silent at school  
The teacher will not say my last name  
A girl with blonde plaits brought a book of fairy tales  
My hands aren't allowed to touch the golden pages  
I see an army recruiting behind splintered desks  
A lesson in blood laps my exercise book

Long socks droop like stockings under my knees  
With the frailty of a Parisian whore-child  
I can take the world.

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