

PERIGEE

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by

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PERIGEE

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Conversations with Anaïs

Session 1

Anaïs: We will escape the clinical, the scientific,
get beyond the physical body. Sex is
merely gestures empty of emotion, but
the erotic is infused with the most essential
aphrodisiac, poetry.

Amanda: Let's talk about a symbiosis through language.
Let's talk about poetry.

Anaïs: Without the orgasm experienced together, there is no union,
no absolute communion between two bodies, and we must
escape the body through the body.

Amanda: But the body isn't enough and words fail; can transcendence come?

Session 2

Anaïs: I postpone death by living, by suffering, by error,
by risking, by giving, by losing.

Amanda: But in your stories Anaïs, the women
like you end up with revelatory orgasms, while the women like me find themselves
back at “Go” without the hope of Cabiria
or coked up with sliced vaginas.

Anaïs: Is it my fault that you are Matilde, who only wanted to heighten her value
by her resistance? Did you know
the only abnormality is the incapacity to love?
What I cannot love, I overlook. Why can you not do the same?

Amanda: I am not the frigid virgin, the egoist of your tale secretly
desiring to be taken by force? No. My love is a pistol,
my sex a pink Dahlia. My value manifests in the plot
not some happy ending.

Session 3

Amanda: And the sex with your father . . .

Anaïs: I stopped loving my father a long time ago. What remained
was the slavery to a pattern.

Session 4

Amanda: Sometimes, I wonder—

Anaïs: We travel, some of us forever, to seek other states, other lives,
other souls . . . Know, that in another woman you are only
seeking yourself.

Session 5

Amanda: I wrote a poem about our love; we shall become a lotus
of ligaments: pink tendrils, sacrosanct filaments,
your sex, my sex blossoming in the bed.

Anaïs: Do you know, dreams pass into the reality of action? From the actions stems the
dream again; and this interdependence
produces the highest form of living. Dreams
are necessary to life.

Amanda: And what of nightmares?

*

Session 6

Anaïs: —And the day came when the risk to remain tight in a bud
was more painful than the risk it took to blossom.

In the Dark

Amid the sheets of a half-empty bed, inside
the deepest blues and blacks of what
is termed a bleak mid-winter, one questions the value
of one's existence. I know this, having dwelt many months in that dark
country. Throughout the greater part of my meager youthful years
a recurring inquiry manifests in every dream with undaunted insistency,
with urgent need of address: what are you afraid of?

Sometimes in daylight I find myself content in his arms, or euphoric over the phone
his voice licking the curve of my ear, or in the library enclosed
by a recorded history of tongues I imagine him coming
there and the ecstasy of his body inside mine.
But in the moment, when we two alone, the universe dissolving
into an uncolored periphery, reach undeniable recognition
of the other's lengthy looks and lustful longings,
haphephobia takes hold. A fracture between my hopeful fantasies
and true self becomes evident—I retreat.

And in the dark sleeves of the evening's overcoat, I lie
in the unrest of a dream world, where my unconscious
fear lines the inside of the black. I close the door
on everything I love; I run away onto the highway of oncoming cars
to avoid his touch; I cast my body off of cliffs
into bottomless brine just to not consummate my love

—I cannot take the risk,
frightened, I would rather fail at *living* again
and again than fall even once.

In Bed

There is nothing— to speak into empty space simply breath building forms,
 those skeletons of dreams, bones without marrow—There remains a face-
 less void which refuses to shut up, a space which suffocates the illusion
 of a body.
 The gap is wider than one would wish, be- comes a gap- ing wound, wholly
 vacuous. Virginity wanting not simple sex, but proximity, unspeakable
 [intimacy], and untold [truth], cannot be helped,
 neither satisfied, nor sufficiently quartered in corners of sheets, so to enfold, so to
 hide away. Walter
 A. Davis says, “Contra Lacan, *relating* then becomes the mutual
 effort to open the wound in the other and sustain that condition as that which enables us to relate most
 deeply to one another when we make love” But instead of opening wounds,
 I open boxes, black 30 gallon kitchen bags, wash laundry, dry, fold, repeat,
 cut off hair, bathe body, dry, again, wrapped in fresh linens, I lie down
 absolved of dust— memory intact.
 I return to “Desire is a displacement of the terror of humiliation
 and cruelty” I remain in a shallow tomb.

Lament of an Oleander

Do not depend on me to care —
 seek after the honey
 locust, her body
 cascading
 from deciduous bough,
 she appears
 created for delectable consumption,
 but leave always
 the oleander out of it. When
 admiring the rosebay depend
 on a vengeful
 nature
 to poison your plumbing.
 For I am entirely fancy, rosier
 than the fruit of a perilous
 Eden. My folds
 are for my own delight. I exist
 solely to please
 myself. Alone,
 among clusters, I prepare
 my potion, a sauce which surfeits
 my passion for retribution. Why
 should you seek me out: sniffing
 ‘round underbrush?
 As has always been, my skin blushes
 and blossoms without
 need of your caress.
 My quiver though curved is full
 of milky shafts which want for nothing.
 Do you not see,
 I am unerring as Artemis?

Nopales

Uno

The pain never goes away;
memory breathes
chlorophyll into every vein. Once
the needle has transferred in
to new skin, each touch
will cause throbbing roses
to spring from fingers.

I am five-years-old grimacing,
pretending not to cry
as I hold the utensils
at Abuelita's table. Who
taught me not to cry?

Dos

Dormant for an age,
blossoming subterfuge of gold
and chartreuse, green blushing
lightly as your spindles
strike from inside.

I am twelve and hateful
of all those girls who
taught me that girl friends
cannot be trusted.

Tres

Furious rose fruit,
tuna, bane of all
passion, I know, you
were the cause of my woe.
You and I are
of the same *mantilla*.

I am nineteen,
slapping my father again
and again and again
and I am scared of my own hands,
which I no longer feel
in this cold climate.

Cuatro

Grocery store : Index
of my personal triumphs
and failures. *Nopal (n)*:

I am disappointing
her—always
disappointing.

I am disappointing
someone, or
everyone, at all times
disappointing.

I am disappointed
in myself. I am
disappointing myself.

I never
bite into them, but taste
always the bitterness
at the very sight of them.

Lay

I would gladly lick you
lay in your lap and
brush my body against yours
playfully as she does.

I can listen, give loving
devotion, but not obedience—
Be your pet.
Would you be mine?

A Cartography of Rome

Place yourself
 inside me. Use your mouth
 to map a course. Follow through
 with tongue retracing the line, teeth
 marking starts, stops, detours
 along the way. If you are lost,
 wander—With wanderlust explore—
 heavy hands surveying each hill and valley. Begin:
Quirinal, a shoulder's length : *Viminal*, her very likeness
Capitoline, western curve, my breast : *Esquiline*, her more comely eastern sister
 slanted bones of *Palatine*,
Caelian femora *Aventine*
 and *Chianti*, so succulent
 a valley, wine of the vulva. Press on
 until you feel firm in your knowledge
 of this terrain. Once you have found the path, extend
 your search into the cavern; bury your body in mine: come
 and go, in and out, over and over, often, again, don't
 stop until you reach the summit—pen a key.
 Know your place. Then rest, here
 along the borders, until you find yourself
 restless once more.

Leave the page wet with ink.

The Dish

I disgust myself— cringing at the way
so much is attracted to my surface

and I am made to suit other's cravings. Pale white face
of an hour poorly spent, stained red with a mess of remnants, but no one cares

to know the content of my character. They merely dress me up to sneak a lick or impolite fingering of my vestige.

[illegible]

Mermayde

Who would have her otherwise?
 A feminine impulse to marry
 the breaker or dig deeper until
 the dagger breaks off
 into flesh—the price
 for a woman's soul is an open wound, lost
 heart, heavy blood flow; it is a lie
 to say otherwise.

Profess what you will, but *love*
 is not enough, because she wants
 to be seen from the inside, found
 irresistible in every respect even
 under bad lighting, she wants that
 4th grade romance to come to fruition
 in her latest affair, to fall
 for the antithesis of her father, continually
 be proven wrong at the declaration
 of each fear when all alarms signal disaster.

More than sex, she desires a transmigration
 of souls; one body in another, knowledge of flesh
 reaching back to a beginning, ripening garden
 of desires, but she needs
 more than a man, more than the ocean, must
 have her own soul that begins in salt,
 sand, sea breeze. Boundless—she is set
 aside for freedom. Sing Selkie,
 lovely Ningyo, her Siren call is not made
 to save, but insists on ritual surrender.

Dearest

Whatever is in you, my love, made manifest—The known world
of bodies : the one in my bed, at the center of a room with an open door, adjacent to an uncovered pane
of glass through which light pools, runs over your every curve, falling off the edge,
saturating the sheets with an excess of energy. Heat taking hold of skin, convection occurs.
Feeling arises as you, a force, acts upon me, rather my nervous system.
Coulomb repulsion caused by electrons between *matter*, a quite nearly perfect vacuum. Electrostatic
repulsion deforms the surface of interacting objects, skin; you touch me.
Undone in union, made unbound, desires on the outskirts of time we are engaged in recycling
love stories, appropriating broken parts to new locations, examining particular clouds
in creation divinely formed out of chaos, I find all the mysteries of this universe resound
in every atom of your beating chest, my breath, your breath,
one breath, yet not.

Midnight Monographs

1. On the Therapist's Couch

I dreamed of daddy
 trying to kill me
 a pistol pressed against
 his palm, trigger happy, grinning
 slyly, the kiss of death
 prancing along the ridge of his teeth. There
 was no reason, only bullets and a short stint
 of heartbreak, before the morning
 bell called to me.

I woke unmoved breathing inside a body bag of blankets.

2. In a Letter to a Father

A shot is fired, and I wake.
 A dagger digs deeper into my side, and I wake.
 Your hands are wringing out
 the air from my neck . . . I
 can hear a ringing in my ears . . . I . . . I . . . i . . .
 and I wake.

Undaunted you'll try again in daylight.

With empty amber-green bottles, prescription
 pills, a bowie knife, and a shot-
 gun. You return imbued
 with rage your alcoholic mind pivots.
 Now! Again! You desire to die
 but not alone

3. Inside the Cells

Every so often
 I weep in the shower; I
 fall into fits; I dream; bleed
 into background, blackout
 in time, but never die.

But I'm not becoming you; am I? No, I'm not ill; am I? No

Meanwhile in Jodhpur

I envisioned you in Mehrangarh
 walled inside the Maharaja's room,
 my rapacious eye never departing
 from the contours of your form; I felt
 the once whitewashed walls drenched
 in shades of blue, accoutred
 with rubies and brushstrokes of scarlet, carved
 columns gold leafed, a russet hued umbrella
 residing between— there
 we lost our balance.

Walls contracting, a world in flux
 we strove to master this archaic dance, some
 foreign steps we were made to practice. Taught
 to follow our teachers' textbooks, doctors'
 charts, mothers' sensibilities, my father's shame,
 friends' delights and diatribes,
 those many dialogues, this
 waltz is not our own, neither
 yours, nor mine, not
 our own.

As we moved, amid scenes
 of rustic life—those rural landscapes—
 partitioned by paisley
 along the edges of ceiling, twisting
 in the colored light of stained
 glass and slits in rust
 colored panels, your presence
 called forth loudest cries from
 my mouth, from my lungs, from somewhere
 else, I cannot say. Your name
 never reaching my tongue.
 My name never reaching yours.
 Solely stops, glides, fricatives, nasals,
 phonemes, sounds meaning
 just as much. An unconscious act,
 our mutual recognition
 that language is not enough.

Slivers

Swallow the sun in small doses.
It will open chords
in the throat, warm
the body, and teach you
what love is like: fragrant spice,
pale sweetness that burns
the face and heals the whole, tender
thread reluctant to give way.

Concentric Configuration Series: Routine Exercises

Unfold a lotus blossom;
brush each finger over every edge of tissue,
pulling petals back into parchment.

Peel the rind from an orange;
bite into its pith, attentively sucking its juice, while
walking through the marketplace.

Scrape away dead bark;
touch with diffident palms coursing sap
uncovering a half life.

Now allow me this —
my hand in yours, mouths
agape, and no words.

Dandelion

To linger
 at intervals atop
 your frame: exposed,
 sun kissed, consistently
 under the power of your
 is to understand the subtle
 -ties of spring. To stay
 upon that stem, mis-
 laid amid your down
 feeling filaments,
 a hue softer
 than
 saffron,
 with
 a
 milky
 sap
 pouring
 out
 yielding,
 yet
 not
 yielding,
 is
 all—

caress,

suspended

-y tuft

Riding on the back of Elul

I never think of the dead
I have known as they were
at the beginning; when passing
the cemetery cicadas swing on
nodes of songs their ancestors sang
on dancing blades, before graves
made a place—marked
grounds for mourners to wonder
after Nature's acumen,
What became of man after the Fall—
the trees wept golden leaves
until they were bare.

The Fine Lady

I witness
the tender pressure
of my own mouth
as my ungloved hand
glosses red
across my lips, recalling
those men I never kissed.
I wonder what
kind of woman I am.

Drunk, the Lake

How sweet are the revels of wine
and moonlight, the palate can only hold so much—
An unassuming ascension into the night sky,
darling astronaut wrapped in a silk frock and kitten heels, golden
spools unraveling down your back—Halley's comet—you were
spinning across the water; you dazzled, us
watching from the shore.

You were not prepared
for the heavens to crack, moon to waver, your star
to wash away at such a tender touch from your hand, first,
feet following in disbelief. A gentle gliding into dark waters,
your streaming threads becoming one with the stars. Such quiet
as you descended with head tilted back, facing
the mirroring wonders, your coral lips opening
as if to sing. Then the strange dance began—

your body waking from this dream
stupor. The shock. The gasp. The eyes turning
to milk glass on your dead doll face
as you were drug out the lake.

And so many watched
as some young man tried
to resuscitate your body, but *you* were gone. The silence
followed by screaming, I remember.

Undone

Claddagh on the wrong hand, heart pointing
toward some foreign moon,
symbol of a girl without promise—

Blackness
bears no significance,
like a blank canvas. Ochre
belongs only to eye of dying
swan, travelling alone,

over countenance of white dwarf. Severed
knot of a sailor's brow, hold fast these
whiskers of misfortune.

Elegía para Bernarda

La muerte pierde
su peso
a compás lento
el canto se convierte
en cuento.

Mexicana
de la tierra,
columna
de grietas secretas.

Mi muralla de los lamentos
en la que entrego
mis oraciones hasta
el cielo.

Dame tu llanto;
gritaré en la calle
un gemido que hiera
al cielo
marcando el espacio
por el cual viajas.

Frecuentemente, en el futuro
cuando te recuerdo
tu sonrisa picará
el aire con lenguas
de fuego.

Elegy for Bernarda

Death loses
her weight
in slow time
the song converts
into a tale.

Mexican woman
of the land,
column
of secret crevices.

My Wailing Wall
in which I give
my prayers up
to heaven.

Give me your cry;
I will yell in the way
a wail that wounds
Heaven
marking space
by which you travel.

Frequently, in the future
when I remember you
your laughter will sting
the air with tongues
of fire.

– 1 (Or The Year I Went On Vacation)

—It's a miracle you haven't lost your mind

I took the red-eye—bouts of insomnia stalked my days and nights upon arrival hours slipping off the face of a clock whole days abscond from the calendar from dreams to nightmares in lucid waking words escape me nothing matters but writing myself reminders to breathe to force feed my body the carbs some calories collected works of Emily Dickinson crying in bed wail under showerhead bemoaning a loss of sense no reason lost psyche I am lost in recollection hold it together or the crack along the glass will shatter the whole illusion of weight confounds my body so heavy I cannot stop a force in motion forgets the rules of physics but nonetheless follows to the extent of a violent edge shouting shot gun shells fall to the floor laughter I forget the kind sirens come in and out parade of shoes pressed into our carpet twenty questions on repeat legal pads Daddy you are dead to me I wish to say but you are not—

mind in cessation : body left behind
Fracture. Departure. Return date unknown.

Dream of the hereafter—sound of a train arriving, life in retrospect, endless horizon, no luggage compartment . . . Drone of loaded promises. Oh my 20mg serotonin engine that could regulate rainclouds how did I get here? Oh yes, I remember now—I passed through hell.

Cation

Like the plaid skirted schoolgirl of 1994—
 Catholic, I want to believe
 each mystery, the knowing,
 the unknowing of forgiveness
 of sins and the forgetfulness found
 through reconciliation in the mind
 of G-d, the heart of man, the womb
 of woman, this is how—

The promising young physicist who does not trust
 but knows the Octet rule is beyond dispute,
 I long to accept that atoms can win or lose a few
 electrons and live on, build up energies,
 find each other and bond— this
 is how the world was made.

Like the dead man, swimming
 one hundred eighty-two
 and eighty-eight hundredths of a centimeter
 into soil, who finds in death no need
 to come up for air, I want not to want
 the way I do now— this is how.
 The world was made.

Beveled rose
 cradling the love light
 leave your door ajar sometime
 when I draw near. Make me
 your vassal; I will be
 the tabernacle
 for your tabernacle.

Full flame of sacrifice
 opening the box,
 this is how the world was made.

Unrequited Generator (in Two Parts)

1.

You look at me the way adults look at fat-faced children,
 the way children look at newborn kittens. At close range
 through the space between our two coffee cups, I look
 at you, wanting you to kiss me, wanting to find your hands
 up my dress on my thighs, and moving toward my . . . O! I want you
 to pull over right now, and *kiss by kiss you can course my small infinite*—We stop!
 You sit still, close your eyes, recite Neruda, propose
 that the soul is actually just another word for a life force of love. Now
 you stand apart, wanting to talk about the possibility of living together
 as friends, while I burn 100 love sonnets up
 and down your driveway as you calmly smoke
 your cigarette, so close to me
 that I can smell your freshly laundered shirt, the soap
 you've washed from your skin.

This will never work.

2.

I look at you the way adults look at fat-faced children,
 the way children look at newborn kittens. From across the table
 you look at me as if I am wholly unrecognizable. We talk about Andrade; I translate
 erotic verse for you. You *like that*, but then leave rather abruptly. Claiming to be busy,
 you'll stay away for weeks. Because I am a good friend,
 I'll wish you *happy birthday* over the phone. Ten feet away,
 standing in the same river I see you with your arms around a girl. I look back
 to the source of the water so you won't see me.
 You don't see me. Did you ever see me. Why
 do I feel ashamed.

Saturno Negro

Dear God! His blood is everywhere,
but on the frame,
that encases the nightmare —
Curators would remind us, “Only
pigment on canvas.” But it is
more; this is reality —

A patriarchal hunger, *el inocente*
devorado, madness
of war, precursor
to Guernica, the psychic apparatus —

Two bestial eyes, two black holes, and blood.
One body swallowed by another
each stroke shrouded
en oscuridad.

No Names

Projected onto your lips is my desire to know
 how it would feel to touch you in such a way
 that the friction between us would mean more
 than the event itself. What would it signify if
 I said, I love you? How would it change if I follow-
 up with a kiss? Does it make a difference
 if I allow you to enter my body, in the same way
 your words & expressions, the sights, sounds, and scent of you have
 long since done: your stirrings consuming my thoughts and dreams?

You seem to think it does, you who have *slept* with so many
 others for whom you claimed to care, but I
 say, It is a matter of semantics. I say,
 It is the same sounds given voice, reiterated to the masses,
 but never meaning the same thing twice. You say that
 I say so because I am, Inexperienced. I say that you say so
 because, We are experienced at different things.
 I say, The price paid defines the palette. You say, What the hell
 is that supposed to mean?

We are silent for a long while. Our waitress pours into your cup
 another *California Chardonnay*, as you look down and tear apart your napkin.
 I sip on the last of my *chateau-neuf-du-pape* and place my hand over the glass
 as she passes. I feel remorse. I think I know what to say, but I say,
 Nothing—turn away. We remain seated for another half hour as you run
 your index finger along the rim of your glass making an endless circle.
 —stop short.

Imaginary Postcards Toward Ginsberg

Allotted a soul, we dwell in
boxes wrapped in skeins; we wander
to what purpose? If
I stay in one location or roam
about someone else's country-side, still
I remain the same mass. Ginsberg types

a prophetic address to
the chaos of minds within
a universe of bodies. Inside
9 rue Gît-le-Coeur ink spells
out that tenements and temples are not
so very different, ever-crumbling,

Allen provides them frames —
syntax, structure, some sense; thus
sharpening each verdant blade.

Instant Film
(for Eric)

>Click< And we're caught. Framed:
white bordering the world beyond
our fingers, arms, lips—Smile.
We belong close together
in this moment before deterioration
creeps in, before a greater love enters
either's life. I love you,
Thank you, I want to be near you—
so much goes without saying. In bed
your cat nuzzling against my cheek, mewling.
You're breathing in and out reassuringly present
atop the couch, under covers, so near I
could place my hand on yours. I would
undress for you sometime, let you take
photos of me nude, if you would
only allow me back into your bed fully clothed,
with you beside. I will wrap my arms around you
without a promise or the pretense of a future
together, because your generosity, sincerity, open me
to negotiations over *who I am* and *who I want*
to be. In your eyes I am broken and lovely,
worthy—

Cat (a poem for Alabama)

Danger, I do not mind.
You know this—
Our violence is
but a playful intimacy
between friends.
Trouble, we two
know its pleasures. Dark
lovely, the coffee stain
on your pitch clouded night
of a coat is, to me, the sole
remainder of the ancient's table
from which you feasted
so many lifetimes ago
or the Tiger's eye left
to mark the wondrous
ferocity of the huntress
underneath. I know this—
We are wild things,
creatures of sharp teeth
and unyielding surprise.
For my part I will make
my singular tongue
serve us both, as your chrysoberyl
puts their talismans to shame.

Lose

I know what it is to lose something.
 a dream : a grain of salt in the sea can never be recovered
 as its original state has passed on— its context
 change d. My life is empty of a natural desire for what even animals want—a home
 since my sense says, There is no such thing. A deficiency, their couple
 will come a- part, the struc- ture collapse, the toys taken a way,
 children left.

I know what it is to lose someone:
 by a call to greatness, by one/death 's own hand, by a life spent
 in a *chosen* confinement inside destiny's vestibule, or I know not, but stood
 witness to, with no words and an empty stare, a grave half-empty. A grave half-full.
 A heart born to be broken and mended and broken.

I know what it is to lose sleep at night on the edge of a bed not my own.
 Rest- less in this frozen carriage, cold skin aching to be touched: close
 to knowing what some few have had. What so many call *love* is only
 Eros' child come forward to play in the dim lit hours made for undressing.
 This night I cannot wait for you, by this time you are in different to me.

From Above

I love him naked on the ground,
 flesh all flushed a ruddy pigment
 of roses, reds, and pinks.
 An unclipped auburn brush,
 branches twisting wildly
 in many directions—
 he is the Russian lotus,
 each appendage coiling,
 he is the silken summer pear,
 each curvature aflame.
 I wander amid his fiery thicket,
 over his linen trunk,
 through his winding straits,
 my eyes unable to disengage
 from his every wonder.

Here you are grasping
 at your golden muse,
 her dark waters,
 their maple crests.
 A black swan,
 her sable tuft hovering
 on the surface,
 an onyx face
 indwelling mystery—
 she is wind, water, wildlife,
 a landscape of austerity
 shifting into warmth.
 Between you two
 convection is occurring.

Still you are mine,
 the pair of you.
 I own your passion;
 your heat, your cold
 coalesce into mine.
 The volition of your ecstasy
 within this frame
 belongs to me
 for as long as my gaze
 rests upon you,
 I partake of your union,
 formation, and fracture.

Spending nights with Goya

You know the night—
mares that trod through muddied embankments
sounding foreign calls, muffled, amid the walls.
Hear them whinnying?

White clouds of heavy breath from the cold
wet nostrils, dark eyes, dark lids;
they are the unseen; they are
driving us—

Mad, you will brush hair of their mothers
along the ashen parapet to draw
them near and soothe them,
but they refuse to trust.

So you thrash
layers of pigment to make a border
between yourself and the sound.
Drown out the echoes with liquid lights
and darks. Still they persist,

until you give them faces,
and name them—
maniacal glares of men
who too held a vacancy in their casings,
an empty tomb, a body
housing naught.

Epitafio para Cenizas

Déjame a viento, y
cantaré en tonos atezados
una canción de cuna del lado distante
del cielo—un mensaje que necesita
quebrar a la botella del cuerpo para ser
dado a la luz:

una cosa segura, un amor perfecto,
lo inevitable, el eterno,
un corazón intacto,
una razón *porque*
—no existen

donde estás.

Epitaph for Ashes

Leave me to wind, and
I will sing in swarthy tones
a lullaby from the far side
of heaven—a message that needs
to break the bottle of the body to be
brought to light:

a sure thing, a perfect love,
the inevitable, the eternal,
an unbroken heart,
a reason *why*
—do not exist

where you are.

Birdhouse

A grackle sitting on the clothesline,
plumage gleaming, with onyx
stones for eyes, arranging feathers—
a long-suffering fellow.
His song eroded by evolution.
He perches on silence.

Canary, yellow inside
your gelded cage—
persistently you call out,
but I am too embarrassed
to answer
or face you.

Standing alongside the tracks
one perceives the openness
of a barley field
and the melancholic vicissitude
of American railway steel.

Yen

“You can sleep in my bed,” you say—now
... you are asleep. I can feel you stiffen below
the covers, each part of your body firm, naked
beneath cotton. You tug at the corners
of pillowcases and moan. I want to touch
what I cannot see. Turning on
to you, into you, under you, while over you
hangs a language I can only appreciate as art
composed of soft strokes, India ink, on a yellowed sheet
of ideograms—relic from home. Distance
I understand, proximity I now appropriate. Your grip
loosening, shifting hands I will
guide to my waistline. Come
here to rest, sighing now. I
close my eyes in your arms. Tonight
we share the same dream.

P.S.

So many times confessions sprung up to
a dry throat, a dead end, a pen
in an inkpot wed to its place;
I clung to your side, my equal;
I clung to your words, and I stood silent;
I clung to the edge in suspense of a fall.

Cantos de Amor

Inhabit the hour of our breathing.
Living and dying are markers
of stone. Salted by the breeze,
they stand with but a short distance
between: a patch of grass
among the plains, some strange tree
amidst a wood, single dune resting on shoreline;
this is life. Two crests of water,
never touching, yet we are one,
and we are not one.
The journey of our lives is cast—
a tempest amid the waves.

Node

Uncompromising

grasp on my life, a heart
beating back against
the brutality of the first false fist
I wrestled against
it. Threw out my unfolding hands.

I hate your hold on me;

I cannot escape
no matter whose arms
I am in.

The love of men,
I cannot trust. My own desires
are the cruelest betrayal.

You will revisit my mirror

every morning Father, begging
forgiveness for the sadness,
the trauma of being
told that I am so much more,
but being made less. In your eyes,
crestfallen, the troughs are full.

Canción de cuna de mi casa

Duérmete mi niña.

Looking back
to the pillow en una cama
de corrientes rojas. I should have
expected—color de sangre, color
of menses, símbolo
de amor oscuro, fleck on the edge
of an arrowhead—impending pesadilla
of my childhood. “Papá herido,
Rain frightens me; you are the weather maker
of our disquieted home.” I am held hostage
in your arms. I am made witness to
your inclement systems: lluvia,
trueno y relámpagos.

Duérmete mi amor.

Madre de tierra, madre mía
built to house all sorrows,
built to spill. Me susurró
el secreto de la Llorona—“Debe
saber la verdad; she drowned them
in her own tears, the woes
of their father, las lágrimas del valle.
She became the river where so many lost
their lives and are losing still. “

Porque estás chiquita,

“Porque era la primogénita
y una mujer, no sería yo
la que fue escogida. I would be
devoured whole, would
bide my time, would build an empire
in the belly of Saturno. Wait
in the library with a hammer and chisel. I will
break the wall; I am the wall;
are you the cornerstone?”

duérmete mi amor.

Lullaby of my home

Sleep my girl.

Looking back
to the pillow of a bed
of red currents. I should have
expected—color of blood, color
of menses, symbol
of dark love, fleck on the edge
of an arrowhead—impending nightmare
of my childhood. “Torn Father,
rain frightens me; you are the weather maker
of our disquieted home.” I am held hostage
in your arms. I am made witness to
your inclement systems: rain,
thunder and lightening.

Sleep my love.

Earth Mother, my Mother
built to house all sorrows,
built to spill. To me you will whisper
the secret of *la Llorona*—“You should
know the truth; she drowned them
in her own tears, the woes
of their father, the cries of the valley.
She became the river where so many lost
their lives and are losing still. “

Because you are small,

“Because I was the firstborn
and a woman, it would not be I
who was chosen. I would be
devoured whole, would
bide my time, would build an empire
in the belly of Saturn. Wait
in the library with a hammer and chisel. I will
break the wall; I am the wall;
are you the cornerstone?”

sleep my love.

En la frontera

Rolled out over the blacktop,
on the signage, up above
in lights, or painted
sobre los labios de una chica,
puta por fuerza, is
a *Bienvenido* for every pinche
extranjero, each foreign fucker
with a five dollar bill—Americano,
of course. Why are you so *easy*
for everyone but the native?

Matamoros, Tamaulipas Méjico—
cuidad de los sueños de mi niñez,
de siestas durante de la semana, rezos
todos los domingos y pan dulce
de recuerdo. Orgullosa tierra
del Charro bravo y revolucionario,
sacerdote, artista—Mariano.
También, putrid place of sweat bathed, blood
soaked Maquiladora,

No eres D.F.,
ni eres Nueva York.
You are *day old bread* with fresh butter
spread thick by a dirty knife. You are the crossing
more flee from, than run to, but dream
of it, ese Río Grande encrespándose
que se hace la Muerte
o Dios o Satanás.
El Juez. El Jurado.

La Gente.
En el barrio the men
and women, en las calles
los viejitos, wipe clean la mala
sangre from the cleft wood,
brush into pans las botellas quebradas.
Recycling. La oscuridad dócil
de una sola noche fría
es justicia para cada casa
en la que vivimos.

On the border

Rolled out over the blacktop,
 on the signage, up above
 in lights, or painted
 atop the lips of a young woman,
 forced labor whore, is
 a *Welcome* for every fucking
 foreigner, each foreign fucker
 with a five dollar bill—American,
 of course. Why are you so *easy*
 for everyone but the native?

Matamoros, Tamaulipas Mexico—
 city of my childhood dreams,
 of afternoon naps throughout the week, prayers
 every Sunday and sweet bread
 of recollection. Proud land
 of the brave horseman and revolutionary,
 priest, artist—Mariano.
 Also, putrid place of sweat bathed, blood
 soaked production line,

You are not Mexico City,
 neither are you New York.
 You are *day old bread* with fresh butter
 spread thick by a dirty knife. You are the crossing
 more flee from, than run to, but dream
 of it, the Río Grande surging
 that acts as Death
 or God or Satan.
 Judge. Jury.

The people.
 In the neighborhood the men
 and women, in the street
 the elderly, wipe clean the bad
 blood from the cleft wood,
 brush into pans the broken bottles.
 Recycling. The docile darkness
 of a cold night alone
 is justice for each home
 in which we live.

Present tense

Not the pawn, but the rook,
marble castle in a variegated field.
Not the Queen, but the Ace
at the kitchen table, up the sleeve
in a game of 21.

Hers is the madness
to be devoutly longed for,
a curio. Reckless,

she knows this; there
will be empty rooms to haunt
in an open laid plan. In her
a coronary compulsion to own, to beat
out rhythms on the staircase
and along the bannister

of a life always moving
in pasos lentos.

Bitch

Tethered to a fence on South Congress
a young Labrador/Retriever mix: dark coat, black button
nose, with beady eyes sounds muted barks, whining
at passersby. She awkwardly dances next to a cardboard scrap
reading “Good dog. Needs home” on which she has pissed, still
a puppy, though large, she waits impatiently for love.

This is how I will say goodbye to you—with arms and hands,
and lips softly pressed, carefully negotiating the space
of neck and ear. We will hold on too long. Thinking,
“I will learn to live without you,” but saying, “Come home
safely,” I will let go. You will return, reach home, but not mine.

The Wound

Redress

in the lighted bathroom cold
water still running
in the sink, pulling my lids back
tight with fingers of ice as I stare
into the mirror. Reflection (n):
return from a surface transformed. Where
are you at four in the morning?
Between some strange thighs
of a woman, you are still learning,
I suspect. Nipples stiffened to the touch
of a frosty tile floor upon my feet as I leave
the rug behind me to wander across the dark,
along the hazy edge of reason, unlocking doors, teetering
on dewy grass, still barefoot and breathing in shallow notes,
my message suspended quelled by the fog.
Why not me? And, why you?

Set

*The heart is deceitful above all things,
and incurable; who can know it? — Jeremiah 17:9*

You are earth and sea, stardust and tears, and I hoped to hold all this
in my head—to break open my huntress heart, hand over
the chaste mouth and pomegranate sex of my maidenhood
to my beloved—man whose mind I have coursed,
while traversing valley and mountain range and the worst
silence I had ever known, finding solace in your speech, succor
in your embrace—Your freedom a trapping pit.

But I am always myself, this rough country, this feral beast, this no man's
land that winnows away my game for me. What sort of woman am I,
I lost count, holding back the heavy reigns of a dying tongue,
to save you from my incendiary wilderness—to spare myself
the thunderbolt of your brow, the storm clouds of your eyes.

It was you I wanted in my bed:
sleeping (arm around my waist, breath on my neck), or erect
(between my thighs, face to face pressing hard
into orgasm after orgasm), or restless
(with distant eyes and tongue aflame), or not at all
like these, but in any way that would permit me, at least, to be near you
for unrepentant hours of raining fire.

But I fear my nature: would demand too much, give
too much, devour you, and die at the loss. My would-be-lover,
but you were not, and our hour was spent acting
as angels, companions of the field. Orion,
I am your Artemis. I stand now with empty bow
and blood at my feet, I name you
among the constellations.

VITA

Amanda Rose Perez was born in Brownsville, Texas, on January 3, 1985.

After completing a high school curriculum in Austin, Texas, in May 2003, she attended Texas State University. She received the degree of Bachelor of Arts as with a double major in English and Modern Language (Spanish) from Texas State in May 2008. While pursuing a Masters degree in Creative Writing – Poetry at Texas State, she has been employed as the Delta Gamma house director.

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