

for this land is at best a myth, at worst—a slur. Even then, this mud is what spat me out like a common flea. This riverbed galvanized the torque in my wings. In a language I am thawed from, a single word stands for both—tongue and language. *Zubaan*. *Ya'allah*, I am already fossil, a yellowing flank planted in a desert of mayflies. All around me raindrops skip like drugged white spiders loosened from a heavenly cupboard. God occupies me as a shapeless hunger. A million forgeries to articulate the simple loss of each limb. The elm of my spine was sedated, abridged to obedience. I can tuck the pin Of a grenade between my teeth like a scared animal picking its blind infant. I am begging to the ones whose bootprints lick my back like tire tracks in a graying snow— Tell me when did the weight strapped to my chest decide to spell itself as a bomb instead of a child?

Aberrata/ Unmapped – I

in the library, i am teething on a coffee table book
about the jackhammered brothels of leningrad. all the tin
gods and straw dolls. puppets gutted to their ceramic bones.
next to me three middle-aged mexican students memorize
the newest echelons of the periodic table. ask me
to pronounce radioactive. i whisper: stepfather.

his hand is on my thigh and my throat is full of red sea.
the science of volcanoes is blueprinted in the stomach.
today, his blood won't clot in a river of molasses.
today, the basa fillet sizzled in lemongrass and cumin
like my ice-nuzzled cheek under his seething palm.

my slit is sorrow. his length is knife.
i stain his sheets. he prays between my thighs.

when the blood dries, it turns to the colour of my race.
white linen like saltwater. my mottling reminiscent of thumb-
pressed cocoa. the first time is fear. all the other times - forgetting.

at the poetry performance, someone sings - we are all one earthquake
away from being unwanted. refugees.
at the airport they ask - what is your middle name?
we halt and chew - second generation.

my body is a sequence of stigmata.
my heart is unpronounceable.

at angeline, the iraqi poet speaks of the hunger under the head-scarf.
on the tv 5 ex-jurors wear bands in support of a 14 year old who shot
a 12 year old coz boys shouldn't wear green prom dresses or high heels.
at the clinic, a transwoman shows me 6 stitches sleeping on her upper lip -
baby snake quivering in the sands. *i was just trying to walk home.*

i was just trying.

fuck those poems about fog and orchids.
fuck the portraits of lavender snow.

if there is something to say
i'd rather it be as hard
and as violent
as the world whose burning window
i am.

Aberrata/ Unmapped – II

What is the temperature in Providence right now? Skateboarder with the shiva-blue tattoo and a notebook solved et coagula. It is hard to undo the grayness from the tongue of this cold weather. It is hard to blossom wings out of a shadow. This time I remembered your birthday, didn't I? Water sign; the river turning into an ossuary of snakes. I am sorry we have come to be such widening absences to each other. I am reading a poem by Zaffar Kunial and that infallible blue jazz trumpeting behind "*Now we separate. / for the first time.*" Along the beach, I found a canary yellow rock hibernating inside the wet hollow of driftwood as if the seaweed had laid a secret egg.

x

Today I am menstrual and untouched : an errored autumn of atavisms. But it is winter where we are. Where we left ourselves be. Where your *Moab* corresponds to my *Yamuna*. The sky won't speak to the oaks anymore; all the clouds are gathered in a salmon pink cockscomb - the throat of thunder slowly bleached into a disappearing light. Once upon a time, our bodies stretched out against each other like tightropes meant for red-mud *malkhamb* gymnasts. Once upon a time our bodies weren't afraid of the taut truth; a long room full of nocturnal insects dithering on the dry, dark marble. Everything I am saying to anyone is an act of describing a house from the inside as someone takes a wrecking ball to it.

x

Hello, weird dirt heart. Hello, blackbird elegies. Hello, Time We Never Had. On 22nd when I write back, it is a graveyard kicking itself out from under a singing cathedral. *Subject Line: Help me! I think I am going to kill myself!* I know of that precise low in the ellipse of depression where all the feathers have fled the bone, where the skin is only alive with the sense of maggots. I write to you when skeletal and burning. Not for rebirth but for epitaph. Only you could care enough to throw a rose in the shower of soil drizzling over my uncoffined departure. And you do. Again and again.

x

This hurts more. Everything that has died inside me returns in an epiphany of ghosts. I am conditioned to be most pleasant to those whom I hate most. I nod and nod and nod as if that can eclipse the blasphemy of their shared histories or cure her verbal diarrhea. When I tell you, I am doing well all I mean is I want to quit myself without an aftermath.

x

Next : I want to go back to the place I erased with my own footsteps

relapse

The only possible return is inward, not backward.

(a fragment from Gustavo Pérez-Firmat's diary)

let us begin by blessing the mouth as its own massacre.
let us say i as girl am a hysterics of continuance

when continuance is bilked dry, is unwelcomed.
this blood i skulk is a river of glass wool -

whoever is touched is tendered into an arson.
in the psych ward, i am pigeonholing the vestiges

of a memory widened on the stirrups of DSM.
there are two kinds of remembrance - procedural

and volatile. i have watched women turn into lightning
rods - splintered auguries unwavering by brute force

of a scientific noumena. women limned in blue copperas,
misshapen waters - an oeuvre of bulletproof coda you can't

dismember with your blunt thrusts. here is a diagram for how
the brain occults its collapsing flames. here is the medicine

hissing more omen than any injury. i come to dig my own
cadaver exquisito from the whittling of these night-wounded

agoras. i come to sleep amidst a *mise-en-scène* of traumas
too ample to ever be absent. joy should be more than mere

compensation for muting your scars, should be more
than a succession of lacks deciding how the body can be

disclosed. Or where.

Remission

To get better does not mean it goes away.
No. It means you have finally learned how
to jamb a fist in the pacifist. Learned to digest
before it devours. Supersonic. Metabolic.
This browser-hatched brainstorm. To write,
to wreck, to retch, to requiem – the cortex
and vent; the sap of each syllable. To say,
suleiman; you are a dagger dancing on my
jugular. Each cell is coronated as carousel
of something tectonic. Something detonating
its headwound against the hospital bed. I,
hemorrhage in rabbit-sized lily ponds. Some
-thing flint-toothed is scratching at the ratchet
of a red-roomed stupor. When can we start looking
for survivors instead of heroes? Here, this body.
Hear, this body. Its electric blanket. Its box guitar.
Its scissored chords. I am 13 different kinds of
amnesia. All busted lips. A barstool turned crystal
-ball. A decade of curs locked up behind my eyes.
The technique sharpens its occam's razor on your
fingers. The technique is to lie down and pretend as
if you were lifeless. The technique is a paradox.
Self to save or spend. This. I don't need to pretend.

Fragments on MDD*

Post the electric fugue, the body returns as a corvus shadow - nickel thumbprints of stars pushing in the vortex of a November black - tongue coiled dark. *Hymn & howl.*

Is sadness an illness?

When the temperature cocks its trigger, the mercury jumps with its rabbit-knees. I could swallow all the silver fevering the steel. I could tell you of the way the sorrow slithers through each tissue in a reptilian noose.

I am an apostle of science. I am also its rodent labyrinth, its lip-synching crash test dummy. Magnetic prongs nettle me to a red hypnosis. I am rope burn and blue suede. An ignition through the textile of persona.

I am alive in the conflagrations of this psychosis / a purring silhouette of silk / sheared by a tinder-tongued *deja vu*.

Let's play hangman, says the spiralbound memento. Let's incant the dramaturgy. Let's push a storm of placebo down the brittle champagne flute of your trachea. Let's kiss each medicine cabinet on its unlocked mouth.

From this angle, the floor looks like a fibrous infection. It's limp grey is loudly contaminated. This is the architecture of an amygdala hijack. Teeth dug into the tapestry of the afghan, nails crafting little roses of anemic blood into the ashen oasis.

I am part ghost, part lighthouse, the darling glow of fuck-you gold. You are paltry in your coarse brass. You can keep barking your flat spleen. You came from an anatomy of rabid mouths, a gangling ego - a zealotry of those who are atlas-bound to the karma of a second brain weeping like a phantom limb.

Gladly, the experiment. Gladly the bastard courage of a fatherless daughter. Gladly, the hot needle, the ripe lemon; the earlobe blotted to ruby dust. The sharp treble juliennes each nerve. Skin now jeweled in the twin moons of grandmother's pearls. Something has to be split for something else to gush and shine.

Love begins as a single room. Love grows into a whole house. As much shoved to forget in the basement as in the attic. Heartache stacked like a broken stepladder. Tutored amnesia thickening the dust on each photograph.

We are a tilt of vine, sheaves of jade - I find your green pulse. My eye is tender to your small flame.

And yet, all cutting is not harvest.

The mind with its weather of a stockholmed Persephone.

When the heart has been robbed, every word sharpens itself to a weapon.

I offer you the myth of forgetting. Under the bed rocking itself into a secret exorcism.

I ask - Can I unoccur? And so you devour me to the aura of my bones. The skull fucked into an entropy of calypso moths.

Today I didn't hurt. Enough.

Today I did enough. Hurt

MDD : Major Depressive Disorder

Rx DSM

Age interrogates the refugee / ghosts buried in my bones
Consider genealogy / Consider the codes corseting the capsules
Consider this beautiful bomb ticking / at the wormhole in my skull

The center doesn't blur / me (anymore) / I trust
the impermanence of strangeness. / O memory, mother of mine –
you came light as sparrowwings / heavy as an elephant's bloated carcass
Through the flotsam, this rough wave of my rising, / sometimes
I escalate without shape – more smoke than song

A dream drills itself into the wetness of my brain. A precise intimacy
entering me like a trepanation. Consider these bodies mapped from
the *saudade* of a thousand burning roses. You drizzle anti-depressants.
You say a lifelong childhood. You array pills in pages full of dirty taxonomy.
You beat the molten gold into the sanguine iron of blackout cages.
I pet the animal through its bloodlust and gangrene.

I came here to unmap myself; to be galvanic
between diamonds and doldrums. I want to be something
beyond the pale gasp of comprehension; something
that demands hemorrhaging flashlights, helicopters hooting
at snowed pinnacles – a Smith-Rock anarchy of nomadic birds of prey.

The light you made wasn't always clean or safe.
Often, you peeled the plastic off the wired synapse,
a wild temperature drugging the vertebrae.
Sometimes you were bright - naked and fatal,
a single line of voltage slithering through deep, deep waters.

I was possessed by a language / as unfinished / as the depression of desire.

Consider it an addiction to tenderness.
Consider it the elegiac spine of a porcelain berry vine -
the blackish purple of each bruise. / Mouthfuls of dark fruit.