

“Burn”

Life is slow
here in a border town
where lazy palms
scantly twitch in dead breezes—
dry and pollen-choked.
Everywhere.
Nowhere.
Cattle,
brown against my hand
and an expanse of cloudless blue,
meander aimlessly,
chewing cud
that never quite hits the spot.
Their eyes, like minds—
blank—
close to things made new
by the blessing of the sun,
cast downward
upon cracks and clods of grey clay
underfoot,
where a fire burns beneath the ground.
Life is slow
here in a border town,
where—in-kind—
like a shadow
I wait for a shift,

the balm of a breeze
to kiss the delicate yellow from the retama
and pave my road.

Everywhere.

Nowhere.

Noon rages overhead

(Devil's at the crossroads)

as flames whip and lick the sky,

beckoning

just beyond the watery promise

of the horizon.

So, I close my eyes

here in this border town—

everywhere,

nowhere—

seeing white and the blood

that courses through my veins,

dig my toes into the ground, and slowly

burn.

“*Cajeta* (Gimme Some Sweet!)”

“Gimme some sweet!”

we scream

blessed by your MAD words

BAD words

GLAD words

SAD

letting them scorch palates

y quemar nuestros labios

like Holy Wafers

in the Devil’s mouth.

Give us a taste

of life

your *loco*—

salty and caramel-kissed—

with every candy-flip of the page

forming crystalizations

of lithium-pink

opiate rock (candy)

on dripping tips of *lenguas*

(so ready)

that hunger for the taste

of sweet poets’ milk

melting rains of *cajeta*

upon wanting chins and souls

under hot breaths of your WICKED verse.

“Gimme some sweet!”

gritamos

longing for a fix—

ecstatic

spasmodic

orgasms—

of your word-sugar

(tus palabras dulces)

their velvet, fatal stabs

to the heart

(mi corazón)

and the backs of throats

(releasing bad blood and MAD words)

like glistening Astro Pops

sharpened and honed

by the spit and rolling tongues

of PrOphETS—

their anointing mouths

and bleeding pens

working their *brujería*—

confectionate necromancies—

upon lifeless eardrums

y animas

that languished bitterly

in reductive states

of silent subtraction.

C'mon...

Gimme some sweet!

(Some candied teats to suckle)

Gimme some sweet!

(Sticky trickles of sanctified honey-nectar)

Gimme some sweet!

(El fuego...la alma en mi sangre)

Gimme some sweet!

(Good, proper skull-fucks that inject your Truths)

Gimme some sweet!

(A case of “the sugars” that never felt so good)

Ándale! Dame tu dulce

y no me dejáis aquí estropeado!

(Don't leave me here CRASHING)

“Coda-Switch”

O, viejas de negro!

How you line the front pews
at Catholic masses
like pushers sitting on street curbs,
rolling rosary beads—
like pills of black-tar heroin—
between jonesing fingers,
craving your next fixes of salvation,
visiones de Dios.

Such beastly things
behind those lifeless veils of pitch!

Those guttural mumbles
under *respiraciones y lenguas*,
drunk with righteousness,
acid and rank
with the smell of death
and the sour of Communal wine.

Spells of atonement, maybe?

Curses of chastity?

Oraciones por mi?

Oh, I think not! (*Creo que no!*)

Why shouldn't our ecstasies—
in all their corporal glory—compare?
Aren't Heaven's truths just as easily scried
amongst kaleidoscopes
of gas-streaked street puddles...

...the glorious freckles of smooth, bare backs and shoulders...
the shapes left behind in dampened sheets the morning after?

O, divine geomancies!

How I love

(need)

our alchemy—the transmutations
of magnificent bodies of light
and living streams that shimmer hot and wet,
setting skin and lips

(nuestra piel y labios)

aflame.

All that is good is gold,

but nothing gold can stay*

for even the most treasured of God's sparrows

fall from flight,

silently screaming,

impaling

upon the holy stabs of His Electric Crown of Thorns.

So, let's dwell on patches of fragrant grasses

and sip (not sin) from our gardens' springs

O, sacred elixir!

partaking of flesh and blood—

our Eucharist—

devouring, 'til all is gone,

shining, *brillante*,

against shadows of cold piety

cast by dark, ringless Brides of the Lord,

before the hues of the day bleed away

into pale shades that
powder and crumble to dust
under the gravity of God's thumb
(love).

Amen.

*Line taken from Robert Frost's "Nothing Gold Can Stay" (1923).

“Digging for Lost Temples”

Thumbing through *The Borderlands*, I can't help but feel not “brown” enough. I'm Mexican Lite. Got a case of the “coconuts”. There are no rageful battle-cries inflaming this breast. No bitterness lingering on the tip of the tongue (the back of hands and the starch of white collars taste just the same no matter the bearer's color). No tortured soul, longing for identity and re-appropriation. There's just me and this suit of rosy-beige meat that touts my value best in the dead of winter.

“If you're not pissed, you aren't paying attention,” some people used to say. Others, “We're nothing but second-class citizens—wetbacks—to them!” (My back dried three generations ago) Then, there is all this talk of The Wall, as if one had actually never existed before in the first place. How funny people are when the invisible begin to reflect the Spectrum of Things in the cruel clarity of daylight—ancient atrocities shining, unforgivingly, like newly minted coins under brusque fluorescents. When did symbols become more real than the things they represented? (Maybe around the same time ‘detention centers’ and ‘concentration camps’ meant different things?) “Better them than me,” I would think to myself. “Everyone's got to hate someone, right?”

Call it apathy. Detachment. Indifference. Call it what you like, but don't let an absence of tears convey a treason of the flesh. I know where I come from and where my people have been. I am one of the many brown bodies that was piled in heaps, used as target practice by Texas Rangers that stood proudly before them, posing for photographs. I swung low from sturdy boughs in the Southwest, proving Strange Fruit —plucked in all its hues and flavors—tastes coppery and bitter in Life's maw. I starved outside with the rest of the dogs, staring into diner windows—mind, body, and spirit consumed—barred from entry, wanting for crumbs. The narrative's my own, but the story remains the same.

I'm no one's *machisto*, gangbanger, Latin lover, wetback, or Spic. I am no one's pimp, *Sancho*, *caballero*, or *maricon*. I can't roll my Rs, I hate tequila, and I don't code switch. Sheepskins—paid by my own coin—adorn my walls, not holographic portraits of The Last Supper or La Santa Muerte adorned with plastic red roses from the dollar store. I am not “spicy” like something that is novelly consumed. And I—a being, self-determined, not cast from a vulgar mold—respect God's will as much as he respects mine (which doesn't say much).

The blood of peasants and slaves, warriors and kings run through our veins. Our ears once heard gods' whispers through the rustling of leaves in the breeze and the trickling of streams over time-smoothed stones. We rode the winds--the sun kissing our backs (not breaking them)--as we flew through fields of pale azure upon Serpent's wings, over treetops and verdant expanses. We ate our enemies' courage and drank victor's wine with lips, stained red, from their skulls. (So, step back with your ‘tallboys’ and that Four Lokos jive!) This is what lies beneath the skin. Melanin be damned! We are the sons and daughters of Earth and Sky, Aztec Temples of Sun and Moon,

buried beneath blanched soil, crowned by cathedrals—papal tiaras anointed by brown blood that pepper the land like so many gravestones. Remember?

Remember!

So, I pray to the Archangel Anzaldúa to help me find my lost sovereignty—my words wafting up into the clouds on velvety ropes smoke of sandalwood incense and braided sweetgrass. Tears of honey fall from Heaven upon my skin, feeding cuts and scrapes no one (not even I) can see. Unfolding her rainbow-hued wings, like Hebe on Olympus, she descends with arms outstretched and an angelic smile. Face-to-face, she pulls me close, blesses my forehead with champurrado-scented kisses then tugs at my ear and says with the fire of cinnamon on her tongue, “*Huerco*, just love the skin you’re in!”