

Cruz del Sur

by

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ABSTRACT

Cruz del Sur is an exploration of what it means to be an outsider: as a resident, as a foreigner, from the perspective of the human eye, or from the perspective of a camera lens. An unlikely blending of voices, these poems embark the reader on a journey across a continent, and also into an interior: a mystical quest.

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Part One

Not Far from Home

A life lived in silence
is not living if you are living alone.
Last night I had another dream about snorting cocaine.
Move with me: It glows like a pearl. I couldn't stop
my face fresh-pressed
—an average night: I desired
Bolivia, her legs open, if a dress held
I could pounce
but what she wanted
they made this into a movie
but I never returned, instead
was invited to an event
silent on the edge of the moon temple
with twenty strangers in the dark
a new direction: walk through my death
I shouted but it does no good
arrived a hand, elapsed
a series of births, a chant
with my thread
which body
against a wall
you touched me
but I couldn't linger;
you followed the lines of trucks
into hills shrouded by fog,
sunrise and cattle frenzies
through muck to your knees
not fenced along the river,
to uncover statues, the hueca
with seashells
through green ravines
clenched muscle,
body of a jaguar,
equal portions of rain.

Protest in Plaza De Mayo

-Buenos Aires, Argentina

I walk in the rain while trying to figure out
the map. There is a history that I don't know about yet.
Here—red tiles,
a photo—

steam rising from windowpanes,
inside buildings, inside machines,
from a vendor's wok as he caramelizes peanuts,

from the only woman without an umbrella:
homeless, crying with her baby—

now a photo
while conflicted
because I want to capture an event,

and seek loss;

she shrinks with the other homeless
into their caverns below the bridge

while people empty the skyscraper through a single set of doors,

off buses, on foot from the train station,
charging to the plaza, banging pots and pans,
hoisting flags, leaping to chant the anthem.

—towards me comes the mob

zoomed in at 20X: pearls of monster eyes,
red smoke into a windmill, the edge of a flag,

torch-lit—
a venom to collect and investigate
through blog content, the skin of an onion,
the cheer for farmers to win.

One Flock

-Plaza Dorrego. Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Four journalists down a knee to photograph tourists
where a police officer, standing on scaffolding,

distracted from his code, also with a camera: for usefulness:
stoop-sitters facing the brick,

into the crowd, into any owner, bricklayer or breach of space,
into a Milonga in the plaza Tango an extraordinary

floor to explore but not with dancing. Our speech.
A bottle of wine. Ourselves talk it right.

Dance continues to a follow
the same ordinary here. A street performer

lizard-licks the air; drops change to the ground.
A wall falls apart. Some brick breaks the window.

We see: tell police, look into their searchlights.

Box Collector

-The corner of Santa Cruz and Potosí. La Paz, Bolivia.

Give me a free
seated at eye-level
rush of torsos through crosswalk
without being bothered
you unzipping my jacket
like ice, or afraid, let me walk—
rubble-strewn grass patches,
three bamboo poles hold a tarp
sagging onto children's heads
beside the abandoned bus,
dogs asleep across mattresses,
some grass, oil barrels
burning garbage for warmth,
to boil bathwater,
light to see my face
strained from alcohol.

I never thought I could get here
without a beard,
looking for a flask,
shoe polish, hot sauce, hat.

If anybody needs to transport chickens,
there is space underneath.

How many do you think we can carry?

We don't know what to do with the wrecked bus.

Don't ask if anybody dies; a risk I take.

I would like to wear new shoes, an inch of rubber
and laces that don't get chewed by cats.

Visualize Ecuador

We are looking for incentives to increase participation.

First we should talk about what kind of project you are interested in—
social welfare or social justice?

A weaker agency is visualizing knowledge.

Results depend on public health: is it unintentional change?

Conclusion: we will use more volunteers.

I am aiming for an environmental resource, but you value stronger people.

Do you want to help us analyze short-term outcomes?

In the long-term we build beliefs about poverty.

Your decision will impact funding for one to three years.

Inca Pachacuti

I saw you in a dream,
you were golden and covered in a sheet of crystal,
splendid in the sun. We celebrated
after assembling in the center of the room
a pile of husks.

You held a mirror for us to see ourselves,

arriving at a compound, the caravan— barefooted
inside walls— shields
the pure light.

I saw you with a common name
exchanging tapestries, praised
for your incorruptibility
now inside the Qoricancha
where your flame, constantly tended
yields a disk.

I looked into the repository that holds the ashes
of your heart—

equal proportion,
crowded into the window for sun,
wrapped in three layers
with thirteen people
after I drink the chicha I offer the sun—
a few drops.

*

Our temple located where weather is dry for half the year.

Lightning and thunder and rain.

Forty one imaginary lines radiating through walls.

Lineages.

Predicted conditions a year in advance.

Massive amounts of silk.

Different colors for different levels. Salt, potatoes,
quinoa, corn...

Plantas y Blanco

-Baños, Ecuador

Fog is not something we pay for. Slugs
sprawl for sky
until each creature is a goo
moving up the light pole in lines.
Distance-points to a task, a postcard
among vines that stretch to the ceiling.

The caged parrot disappears into a haze,
into grayness of thirty-four hour fog
through the city, silent
where people say there are snakes;
it might be rain or it might be hail.

We stand together
afraid to walk, told beforehand
about how it drops onto fluttering bedsheets,
comes in like breath, the valley
like an open freezer
from snapped stems
chlorophyll swallowed.
Walk me through a net: particles
hover, sheets
overlap. I have solitude.

*

There are free morning massages,
free visit to the steam-bath machine.
We get to sit inside, our torsos locked inside a pair doors
as if window shutters. A high-pressure wand
spins circles around my body and spits out
eucalyptus water. We drink coffee and talk about
Chevron's lawsuit in Ecuador; one small paragraph
in the newspaper: a Federal judge has ruled against
Chevron's attempt to put a halt to the injunction—
I think this is a good thing. I read the article again
and realize it's a bad thing. After I explained to her

the situation: that Chevron bought Texaco
after Texaco invaded indigenous lands,
no break)

(cont.—

drilled for decades without cleaning up—
one-hundred foot oil deep pools
into water that people drank. People dying, displaced,
for the first time united and decided to sue. She thinks Chevron
shouldn't pay for something inherited, that they didn't know
somebody would remember, or speak, or care
or that this story would be reported on NPR.
Money has to move.

Rosa takes a squeegee and wipes down our legs.
She takes our orders. She is the same woman:
I saw the shadows of two bodies
dancing to Cumbia but not touching,
screamed lyrics while cleaning my room
until they realized I was there. Rosa recognizes me,
addresses me as señor musica, refills my Cafe
and leaves this stranger and I alone. Towards the skylight
a vapor—each particle a globe, glowing, dangling,
I can see her breathing the particles, the path
of her exhalation: a train burls into more of a flurry,
more chance that what she breathes
is what I breathe. If I stay silent
and imagine her voice as a radio broadcast
then I no longer want to leave. While direct light
breaks each molecule onto her skin, into a sun.
She reads the paper and I translate what she doesn't know

*Your quest got smaller. You won't need to clean their rooms.
Your twelve hours over.*

*

Buses pass twice daily.

This mountain could erupt at any time.

The only thing not covered in green is the river bed, pebbles, water almost green.

Bungie jumping costs sixty bucks.

Fried eggs and fresh fruit for breakfast; placemat and napkin.

Neon-crash of music on windows.

Road-tunnels unlit.
with break)

(cont.—

Machinery soaked in rain.

In minutes I can't see the other side of the road.

*

A son and father
climb until the waterfall is over their heads;
rocks too slick for them to climb.
Wherever he sticks his hand
earth falls, *la cascada de la Virgin del Agua*
where the waterfall
collides with rocks and turns to mist.

They collect the mist with water jugs.

*

While walking on the sidewalk I feel for you
every storefront: adventure shop,
dozens of dune-buggies,
six people who say they're raft guides,
playing chess.

We arrive from the ride with our rental bikes,
sweat in spandex, panting some
drink beer instead
because we didn't all go.

The amazon— reflections of rafters— before exploring
beauty of first light.

I climbed the wrong mountain.

Sun drawn overhead. Two men working with shovels. What they dig

they leave behind.

We study the bus wreckage; keep track of our direction.
Windshield impact, the blue silhouette of Jesus
and Christmas lights. There are no tires.
The forest burned down.
Inside the bus there is a cow.
break)

(cont.—with

To rush some wind around the edges of cloud,
smooth as a spaceship, or a twist of uranium, a human form
and a purple exit:

Radiograph. Skeleton, mountain of silver—
don't breathe, watch it ventilate. Small punch,
from pain the whispers—human

Doesn't equal but a shout—faster

milk delivery,
maintained conversation,
increments,

the possibility of the ravine

while in darkness a harmonica plays.

On the Edge of Rio Urubamba

Me with a flute and you with a tanpura and portable speaker,
your silk dress, makeup, forehead beads,
our feet stuck in muck—
the type of goop that clings to pelicans, wrings feathers
into trembling body
with only whites of the eyes
for two days open towards the sun.

You touch earth and then you sing—offering breath into the cloud
hanging heavy like eyebrows.
Just the shadow across your shoulder
lets us know that we should sit. The gods are here,
the gods are here, smile, say hello to the villager
with a heap of branches tied to his back,
towards you he smiles, stumbles, shoeless,
in sweat of confusion, the smile of a condor, sun around his body,
continue to sing for midday energy
is not happiness but is what you feel from his face
unable to hold back life, full of advice, a language
held inside his walk.

Believe me for a Long Time

-after Percy Fawcett

All visitors should greet me with a bow: whirl your hands
with the gigantic gesture of body while you walk.
You should follow me on this walk. It's been months
since we've had the chance to be alone
while we follow deer into the bog:
it feels like somebody has died here,
I sense through wet leaf
shaking limbs— an oozing embryo
around stones with the current of a creek
is the path we should follow
dressed in armor, in the company of natives who
cough. Any chance to swallow is taken advantage

in my leaping for the other side
for branches, or a vine, within inches of survival
my accordion music is Amazon silt
underwater: erupts around feet
like parachutes: play the game to count
spider bites. If you have more than three
then you are at risk
yet still standing with a face
while believing you're not allergic
with the cry of an animal for months
is a lot like being alone.

Regardless, we proceed into the jungle.
Six hundred miles on a raft
is not a sacrifice, straight-faced eagle wings
the rush into my face
we are alive and must continue
if we find where Faucet went,
more lives lost—
then we will build another expedition
they will build us a raft,
I will die in this forest among branches
and could have made an error,
if I want silence

there is an end to my want for silence.

Part Two

I like our Chances

With the airport closed,
the only way to cross this border
is to sneak onto a barge
across lake Titicaca.

We move as if moving through cake;
I am unwilling to wait for the driver
searching for a dock, with no more desire,
his body leaning across the rudder
stares into the sun.

I teach him to whistle, I teach him to film,
because there is no causata club
with my camera,
to be the first documentary
filmed in every country. My mom the gypsy
is somewhere in Africa.

She wired me money to film.
It will be about nods, about moods,
clues I give along the way
overtaken by ants
towards fresh bread
four directions
the villagers lead me;
they are poor listeners armed with rocks,
while houses burn, the airport
overtaken by fifty men wearing ponchos,
throwing garbage at parked planes,
they want to close the mine.

Lesser Town Towers

You soot-coughed, oil-splotched,
beneath blankets of haze condensed
from river traffic of steam ships
with churning rudders of the 19th century.
A robe hangs from your body,
stretched like a gob of glue
around a jutting knee-cap
while you harvested upon a pedestal
vision—became a crusade
from underneath the shrouds,
a banner to show the softness of four fingers
atop a heart: the enclosure of arm
around the golden scepter—
a polished cross, radius
of a compass, a friend, the center,
towards peripheries of what you hold
as a protector of your body,
extension of phantom limb
feeding first a fire, and then the eyes,
still black, not open anymore.

Mine Tour in Cerro Rico

-Potosí, Bolivia

The first Inca to find silver in Cerro Rico
dug trenches until an explosion from the sky shook the earth.
A voice said, this silver is to be saved for others.
So the Inca abandoned the mine
until the Spanish came.

I've come to meet the miners,
because I watched a film about child labor in this mine.

We climb a ladder, underneath is a 600 foot drop into caverns,

Our headlights bloom into a shrine for Tios—
the devil we worship before going underground,
a red pasty slop of fingers molded into the surface
with eyes blazed backwards,
charred and flaking along the lids,
horns in a parabola-like arch.

To bring us luck
we spill liquor, then take a swig,
drape the body in Coca leaves,
place a cigarette between the lips
and light it.

Was Tios painted in blood? How old is this layer of paint?
Who paints him and with what?

And then the museum, neither den nor bunker.
A space where 3 mines meet.
Ancient pottery, maps of the old city, illustrations of the reservoir
that was built on a whim for two hundred thousand people
who came to make Potosí one of the richest cities in the world.

A manikin as Diego Huallpa who first found the silver,
a manikin as Francisco Toledo who established la mita,
a manikin to represent the king of Spain:

plastic face with cobwebbed robe.
Crown is golden fabric. His glossy skin— (cont.—
no break) eyes like pennies,

a diorama of the city confirming segregation: two halves
of each wall, the miners in uniform, scuffed
dust that burns.

When the worker,
the one drilling,
soot lining the edges of his eyes and sweating into air,
particles on his face turned a pasty white.

He walks away from his cart
grabs my hands,
says he has six more hours
and needs a drink.

I confused his hands
with an electric drill.
And then he coughed out dust.

Make Your Claim

-La Paz, Bolivia.

I arrive after riding in a bus through the jungle at night
when the brakes went out,
when the driver threw branches under tires
to save it from the cliff.

I walked until daybreak to find a taxi.

*

Towards my feet oranges tumble.

*

They live in a grid
or a nuzzle of delicate couch that responds
with velvet-vapor,

the Sunday market
black potatoes;

metals sprawled on a blanket,

a corrugated storefront
swung open: a mountain of oranges
spilled into the street
and two girls of less than ten years
poke them with sticks.

Rotten, squashed by car-tire into relish,
elders collect by the basketful,
dump them into an overflowing garbage bin.

The man with one shoe finds a wall clock,
a dog licks away the pulp.

*

I grab her by the wrist to get to creek before it rises
to cross it with a horse.
break)

(cont.—with

A dresser drawer floats by,
the look that says *I'm broken*,

a truck approaches
with driver perched
inches away from the windshield—
oranges in his hands.

I Walked Away with this Object and it is Possible She Put a Spell on Me

-El Alto, Bolivia.

Can you track me down this woman? Her boiling pot of boiling chrome. Our seats were cinder blocks. She gave me a blessing. To tell a story. She used metal the color of chrome. I paid six bolivianos to have my fortune read.

I dipped the spoon into liquified metal, but waited too long; the metal solidifying onto the spoon. My fortune was a mishap; a stick of heavy cotton candy.

She stuck a miniature castle in my hands, dashed vials into my hands, put a metallic frog onto my feet, connected it to her waist by a chain, made me kiss a metal cross, offered a blessing, threw yellow liquids into the air, wrapped a golden cow in fake 100 dollar bills, wrapped the money into leather, stroked my body to find the wallet.

We Could be Dreaming

-Isla del Sol. Lake Titicaca

Morning in our eyes,
a mist from kicked-up waves, the photograph
from where we met on the island of sun—
sends signals towards other peaks from other times
over waving Bolivian flag at the bow of a boat
torn in half.

Five years of wind and daily crossings
from island to mainland
under sheer sun, a lake above the clouds,
mold formation of island
another birth—the depths of darkest blue: forbidden.

Give me ink swirls of evening,
dreaming pools,
let the trail
collect into insight from above;
walking in a loop
the parameter of this place,
if we sleep we will sleep on wooden beds.

Children: watch me read this book.

I was chosen to be a traveler, usually moving
faster than our boat: tomorrow there will be a bus.

The sunset reveals dimples of a sandstone block,
the legs carved into cubes
low like a table –
they must have surrounded it while sitting on their knees
for meals or a sacrifice or for being alone

to wait for a star—
to be contacted through the sound of a flute
awake in your bed with the thought that you must return
under moonlight to find rain
onto sandstone—
carries the surface away;
rehearse the night against a boat's metal hull,
whatever screaming babies are on vacation,
if you take this journey
we will be living between the lake and a land,
for many years I have thought
your language is important.
Do you swim across for six hours
become stranded? We are still searching,
a wind to bring it closer,
a blurred insight
fine-tuned throttles
so close to the sun.

Part Three

Love Poem

I sense you on the front porch,
toes against wooden slats
brush away a cough of dust: your intention
surrounds me, then continues reaching
into the forest of echos
and shakes leaves, attracts a bird's eye,
broken-apart by flecks of sunlight
where you flew, stuck in my mind,
in melodies,
enough to exist in the air, cheek against
the earth, voyaging towards an interior,
eventual equilibrium—
why you sing?

—come with me into the shade;
we will be trying to make sense of our walking
into another realm.

Where are you
moving stars?

We can edge for pristine views into the glacial lake
as our icon, a lake I want to drink.

We can drink echos, shadows and ice against doorframe

is my wish for you to experience this
while staring at the tip of my eyebrow

is not that I have tricked you, but our lives are brief,
we live like minnows

awake and watching lightning

is how to follow a chance
just living in your backyard

to wave in the morning

to go trampling through swamps

the place we go with guitars

the skin of your neck a lush kiss a cobra if you wish
we keep it back— no sound in this house

will outdo bedroom walls

is why we could cherish the morning, sprawled across an oak windowsill,
no blankets.

Whale Watching

-Puerto Lopez, Ecuador

They steep themselves in the bay
where there is refuge: boats return
one day done
in a colony of floating fog-horn.

The fishermen sniff their diesel, eat hunks of cheese.
Clouds reflect a greenness of the bay:
algae, sun-struck depths
where schools of fish swim into a froth.

At the shore there are children,
wives, vodka-bonfire
naked men and songs,
stray dog wearing a velvet sash.

Happiness is a Plate

The twin brothers shave their heads in the only toilet stall,
while Jennifer holds back vomit from eating her dinner too fast.
Ralph is content to be alone and petting the horse.
I close my eyes, imagine turning over every boulder on the mountainside.
I feel the heft of an egg with the unfortunate force of an exhale,
which is masculine, which wants to be an extension of your chest.

Thank-you for waking before sunrise,
your bare feet cross the balcony,
listening for the movement of eyelids,
unsure of what hour, sliding
under my door: that I could sleep
until the mountain holds the shadows of ravens
crumbled into the undersides of rocks.

On an island that rose from the waters of lake Titicaca
and birthed the Inca gods: the mothers we speak to.
I am looking into a mist that sparrows
dive into and drink, continue the accumulations until
their overlapping wings hum like fruit flies.

Documentary at Cuyubeno

-The Oriente. Ecuador

The shaman describes the the river as blooming black,
a bacterial harvest, silver-spotted toad eyes
from underwater a reflection like moons
while ants climb onto trees, into the water,
one hundred of them holding onto one floating leaf
across the path of a spider web;
the spider like a starfish
exoskeletal, coiled, magnetic
legs gnawing at limbs.

Stay quiet, he's speaking.

Yesterday we found two sloths dead.

Whatever is closest: it can pounce on your face from three feet away.

Camera flashes. A single-file line.

We celebrate the thunder with hand-clapping,

and now the spider is on her shirt.

The Atomic Priests

Steam unwinds off the rim of my coffee cup
but not enough to warm the room.

A choir gathers—women dressed in palm leaves.

My brother, infant-like, head turned upward, eyes buried in blue,
swallows grape-juice thinking it's wine.

He lets his coat fall to the floor.
He pretends to be rowing a boat:
arms into the rhythm of a hummingbird.
His feet stay planted.

Our choir stands in silence.

The candles we hold are electric.

*

From the hallway drifts a conversation
between a father and daughter
after he has taken her car keys.
Explain the bonfire.
“I don't remember.”
Explain the tire marks across our lawn.
“I don't remember.”

*

I worship on a bench low enough for me to kneel
between the space of the crowd's feet
at the mall, on the stoop of the dinosaur statue
during my blackout
there is a channel at church
they tell us to turn on
and the children learn to flip a switch
to order a package: we survive as a family.

*

We share this living room that has no curtains. Outside—
with break)
the car battery blew up.

(cont.—

Calm-down, we do not want to be turned into a tourist attraction.

At the end of a two minute silence
my breath becomes part of the steam: earth afire with acid.

*

Eyes turned down, my grandfather will be ready to dance again next year.

*

We are the guys—watching you walk
from the fishing boat to the conference room,

with our torches towards your window-glass. We are the guys

with my father as the owner. Because he has
a restaurant. This restaurant is now raided.

Late Night

-The corner of San Juan and Entre Rios. Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Lakes in your eyes
while crouched into the closet

and I am the only one to choose your shop,
refuge from my high-rise apartment.

Old man, you are a victim.
Walk around the varnished table, sit on a stool,
there is no space to order pizza;
my attention trained towards La Boca,
who battles River: a vantage point
gears and footstep
already small and unheated, so I see my breath,
a remainder of decision. My goal was:

it blew down.

Monasterio de San Francisco

-Lima, Peru

You won't want to be worn-out
inside their basement of bones—
so many skeletons
dug and stacked in numbered boxes;
sacred old skins, cell multiplication
during the breath and beating heart.
During the sermon, some can't help but shout in tongues
a groan as if beginning to vomit,
most in agreement that they just don't feel right
in an air of lost muscle, veins decomposed
like spider webs—so we found the artist, that dirty child
fond of bleaching skulls—
at an altar he filled with thirty.
His aunt gives him food and he sleeps in the church
surrounded by bones and he holds a Bible:
nursing himself towards dawn's seeping—
a wind through the brain is a knock, is heaving with fear on his knees,
listening for a voice he thought was a flurry of ants,
these souls not saved from disruption in a cavern
is a coffin, a place to place some flowers,
honor and sculpt them, feel for magnetic snowflakes
on the other side of the room. What is a relative?
Immune to most earthly frequencies, subtle
he mutters with open lips *we must use every bone*
and starts to stack the skulls into a pyramid
sitting in this room for two-hundred years
as a celebration for a new stage
not yet home.

Part Four

Chahuaytire

-Parque de las Papas, Peru

We have come to perform a ceremony
to honor earth in the most general way: two candles and a blanket
surrounded by six of us who hitchhiked in the bed of a grain truck
to spend a day at the foot of Lake Pumacocha.

During sunrise, we agree to be in prayer
towards the lake: fed by water
the grazing cattle fight their way through
a sucking sound, sputters of mud onto the frills of the dress
she throws like a cape
or a target for us to see—

lashes at the sides of snorting Llamas
with the reed-woven whip,
counting shadows take a field,
walking westward
across the plowed-up dirt.

Fruit-flies crawl across turds.

A calf suckles from the wrong mother's teat.

The girl has a potato in her pocket to eat.

*

Hello. Why are you crouched in the llama pen
eating mangos so quickly—using napkins to wipe your chins
and then burning them? You are a complete other,
having scrambled the hillside to avoid walking through my flock
you didn't see me hiding behind the boulder,
wearing my new dress, a sister's old dress,
because you stopped to stare at some clouds

pooling lower until they swallow you.
You may step into my house—
no break)
the one the stream runs against
on the edge of our community
where the foundation has crumbled,
half of the wall agape;
fallen bricks dammed the creek into a pool
where we get to take our weekly baths.
While swimming, I will practice my math.

(cont.—

I saw your group from a distance. You stopped walking many times.
The group of foreigners my mom said to stay with,
to offer them potatoes and a place to sleep.

The llamas are wandering into the abandoned goat pens
like into a maze: stones
pounded into blocks: each crafted to fit somewhere,
to keep the wall solid and stacked—
doesn't even get knocked down by the kick of the mule
that I dread the chore of pulling to his wooden pole and lock him up
while the llamas are lost and Omega, my favorite
pouts her half-hemisphere eyes
moist like the skin of a leach
slurping the dampness of fog and dawn
needing my body to walk around, finds its center
where I sit on my usual stone
and in my head I practice my math
with the flock: the young, the limping,
the first ones to rest on their chests under the sun.

*

The taxi's's headlights bring long shadows from pebbles
onto the trunk of a tree—

the only town where a Taxista will honk his horn
to sound-out a vacancy: an unexpected

but not necessarily dangerous sound. He tells me
not to swim in the lake. The flies

move with me at walking pace, in the field with the nodding mule,
whispering of tails of grass, a hulk of clouds

claiming the mountainside. A blotch of two miles: canyon-dwellers in terraced steepness
from above the parameters of each field: mounds of stone as fences to hold the herds in,

a sheep-horn she uses as the call: a hoot, the wall reverberates, sends ringing
the rocks, a tissue-paper tremble of algae on the surface, saw the space around it,

listen to what voices, mark the relic with a cave-wall signature
after her hands turn red from too much clapping, an ovation over what

shouts, trampled by us, by singing, by crevice-climbing goats
through binoculars, is a pearl in the clouds

where airplanes pass as reminders:
I have to believe you.

Getting Pitched as a Witch

I investigate a part of town around the bus station.
One woman cooks up soup in a metal pot that flexes under flame.

She sells it only if you pay with change.

That building she stands in front of: if the windows weren't tinted
we'd see her husband and his friends
so drunk one of them has spilled from his stool
and gargles down beer foam.

—while he was supposed to be watching his child.

An elderly woman walks off the bus, her face
tilted towards the ground. She talks to somebody we can't see—

Ceremony involving that pot of soup.

I wait for an authentic invitation to sit down, but instead I have to shout,
move closer to her face.

A man approaches, vomits, and then gets onto the bus.

A Stony Field

If you hiked to get here
and you are tired,
then you should imagine a spa:
the juice of a ram-horn
melted into the root system
wraps around pebbles
like your hands
a throbbing sensation
will rise, will hover
nagging this flower to sprout
strictly: only during sunlight
our destination is cold—
towards another milky lake.
You soak into my mattress
after being awarded a sweetness
like licking stamps is no desire—
your only option,
sneak into my dreams
as a lilac
white torches
need a spectator
invades. She thinks she's
invited, endless evenings
with a tucked-in shirt
procedurally: to say hello
I touch your back,
you touch me
with hummingbird wings,
sunshine through slats
disembodied
makes this flower
a gift to the panted-away
saliva: is it now algae
underneath the rocks.

Corpus Cristi

-Cusco, Peru

Litter carriers of San Cristobal have of the longest walks,
clothed in silver and jewel
carrying their litter towards a popular belief
in rows of three— their faces lug their lungs.
San Jeronimo sways forward and then backward
in the midst of hundreds of heads
mulling and mumbling.

Photographers, almost trampled, leap out of the way.

*

Around her neck she wears a poster that says she is deaf. She holds a bucket for your money.

They cannot see over my shoulders but I am unwilling to move.

Confetti, soggy napkins, feathers, cardboard sombreros.

Women on one side, men on the other
waving their ponchos as a display
with electricity: a sideways twist of jubilation.

Los Tigres de San Jeranamo, presente!

A toddler settles onto her grease-splotched cardboard mat
below the basin of french fries.

El Mercado del Sol, presente!

People arrive in the beds of potato trucks from the mountains.

Corazon de Vaca, ceviche, Cusceña beer, chicha, fermented grapes served hot.

A grease-particle shroud across her wool jacket.

Fifty men with matching ponchos.

Now the toddler has taken refuge between my legs.

*

We have you on camera. Tell your location and your name. Stop walking and turn left ninety degrees. Now you see us. Point which way the robbers went. We have every corner of Plaza de Armas under video surveillance. We will find your guitar.

*

We scamper in circles,
brilliant bobbing eagles stilled towards the mountain:
it is time to identify our locations through silence.
The golden alter, triple-layered,
is too wobbly for me to lay my offering
beside the candles—flowers from my garden—
some are brown, having been eaten by disease;
I no longer watered that patch, but I offer what I can
while I am so busy with being a father—my children
have their own parade, so I walk there right now
but must honor our saint. I will be this mob.

*

Beside me a photographer prods their faces: direct sunlight
down to a knee to shoot the congregation
who are walking single-file: armed with
tradition—their thoughts go to the gods
who have allowed them
to thrive on steamed corn. This year
the gods allow stones to be stacked at record speed
while photons charge the Idols' bodies into a brightness
they carry quickly into the church before sunset.
Our opportunity to communicate with this spirit
during one bright flash
while the dancers, draped in lush color, arms interwound,
spin into tighter circles. A band plays behind them.

It is time to make offerings of Coca leaves.

*

Within hearing distance of the father and his pre-teen daughters, Alvaro describes how he got a blow job from an American because American women are easier. He insisted on introducing me to the daughters of one of his friends, I turned him down. He insisted on taking a cab across the city to another festival where there is Chicha, but his friends and I turned him down.

*

We are in the church of Santa Clara
to see the last blessings, and then
we rush down the front steps
to see the Virgin Remedios be sent away.
To signal this, two men sound their Pitutos.

*

A friend's Advice: if he pisses, if he drinks his beer in three gulps, if he belittles his friend then you should do nothing but laugh and laugh.

Her face bobs above the meat-grill as it spits-out smoke.

The man with amputated legs plays a plastic keyboard.

A torn-up note, muddy streets, father roaming with the metal mining pans.
Towards the hills you send your invitation.

Donations Needed

-Cusco, Peru

Veronica arrived yesterday, barefoot,
after the police raided her house on a drug bust
and shot her father dead.
If you give me cash
I will buy her shoes.
New shoes cost one hundred soles.
If you do not trust me, then meet me
on Saturday morning at the used clothing market
where we can buy them together.
Or, if you show me four hundred soles,
I will show you a fabulously refurbished
German-made wheelchair: imported to Lima.
It only takes one day to drive to Lima,
in an air conditioned bus, in seats that recline like beds.
If you want to come along to retrieve the chair
it will be another day I can get donations.
We will make plans with your money.
I am leaving for Lima to buy the wheelchair.

*

Jose and I watch our handbags for thieves
who blend into the commotion; probably mothers
dragging around their daughters: leaving out
one stray hand for a wallet. We are never safe, surrounded by tarps
overflowing with blackened engine-bolts,
engine blocks,
washing machines,
hands and feet of broken Inca statues,
vintage pictures in picture frames,
handcrafted guitars.

I accidentally walk across the key-maker's tarp
onto her blue dress—interlocking icicles, frays of fabric
belong to this body, but she hasn't offered her eyes
into which I could send an apology

as if we were not animals
in a river of interest; (cont.—
no break)
darting for blankets
piled waist-high with used clothes.

Jose clings himself from behind
as neatly as a seatbelt around the shoulders and torso, guides me uphill
towards the nine ladies I am supposed to be following
into a vacant warehouse, a four story structure with caverns,
clogged by a hustle
one morning every week. Everybody is selling
children's shoes. The higher we climb,
the shoes become cheaper, different degrees of used.
Jose says that he will barter. He moves me out of the way.

*

Though historically important,
we do not recommend that tourists visit
what we deem to be the city's major risk zones
where residents hold-up buses
just to rob a handful of change.

*

Dear Samantha,
Javiar has died, no we need money. I can't find his parents, we need to buy a coffin.
Javiar has a brother here. Where are you in Cusco, can we meet? Your friends could
help... We need two hundred dollars for a coffin. Please respond.
-Jose

*

Children from the high-risk zones believe that judicial bias is a component of their
poverty.

*

There are hundreds of people

Jose will shake hands with today
and offer candy
while approaching the subject of abandoned children
like a professor keeping smile
protected from drug dealers,
floating punctually: each bench
break)
he visits only once, but he will find you
to offer this photograph as proof
is traces of their faces in smeared blue ink
displayed on his neckband
justifies my gift of 75 centavos
every time I see him—
he has had a rough time
getting shoes for these kids—
new shoes are signs in school
that a child is worthy, quick-witted, clean.

(cont.—no

*

I am a past addict, glue sniffer, gas fume sniffer,
stoop-sitter in fifth grade
when I was supposed to be at school.
Then a woman saw me on the street, and thought I looked beautiful,
and asked me to be her son.
I felt like a lump of clay.
The force of her hand
shaped me into submission.

I never sniffed glue. She took me in. I am on the street again.

I don't want the same thing to happen to the street children that happened to me.

We need money, we don't need more volunteers.

*

Jose won't accept our offer of used shoes. He gives our waitress
multiple glances—her curves, a lightning eye
burns up her body, asks her for water, food,
less rushed than usual
with a free cup of coffee

as our donation:
he can come here twice each day,
as long as he doesn't shake hands
with customers while they're eating
and I'm so busy serving people glasses of water
as a volunteer. Does he need more bibles?
Tell him the owner donates his profits to a different charity.

*

I don't like the distance between our giving and our children.

*

Smear your ink into our home—four clinics a week
just to show children how to brush their teeth;
A fourth grade girl named Jolenda will never get along
outside of this orphanage. She has the habit
of pulling on children's pony tails. Today she
brought her toddler sister to school
because Jolenda is babysitting,
eating her own boogers
while she tries to lay in your lap. As a welcome
she will bite your nose.

*

Jolanda's shoes will express that she is not new
to the orphanage plan of labeling every clothing article
with her initials, sharing a bed, a breakfast bowl, competition
for who gets to play outside
instead of looking for coins to fund the meals, the house's rent.
We have no electricity. The trek uphill
will make you lose your breath. Journey with me
to our house for breakfast,
and you receive a great thank-you: our children
will wake to dance. Some of you
will prefer to take a cab, even if traveling alone
and paying double fare. Are these shoes in your price range?
There is a chance I will answer my email.

*

Victory will be eventual.

Our city's profits in each of the eight sections
satisfy each resident's lifestyle needs:

- 1) Urban people are less vulnerable to poverty.
- 2) The armed forces are up to date.
- 3) Some families are given plots to grow their corn.

*

We got ourselves into a pickle with Jose.

He stood really close to me. I reacted with escape and avoidance.

He reminded me about how sad Javier would be if I didn't buy him a wheelchair.

I felt ashamed and began to promise something I couldn't give.

He looked upset and disappointed.

I paid him ten soles so that he would leave.

Last week I received another email that said Javier had died and needed a coffin.

It all seems fishy. He very well might be telling the truth.

You went together to buy shoes, which is a good sign—
founded on something solid and real.

*

You will go to Lima to buy a wheelchair,

and if you return, I will embrace you with open arms

along with those from the community who agree:

wheelchairs don't really cost four-hundred dollars in Peru.

To Ensure Good Fortune

I wear the robe big enough to drape an army, their bodies hidden, as soft as reeds. My flesh, like a psychic's globe, emits a constant light. I shine for you to see the houses, built by us, still standing, roofless. Wives, when it is raining, try to fit themselves underneath my gown. There is no space.

I founded your city with nothing more than a chalice, and six candles still lit from the fire I gathered from a thunder-struck tree. The lightning was a sign: a city must be started. I planted my scepter and said the commands of a spirit, brought an earthquake, sent most of my scouts to Cusco to make the announcement.

All citizens take pride in my gown: seaweed green and stiff as stone, feather-like etchings unfurl light, languid flower blossoms seeping into fabric, causing confusion about your origins: you grow into my gown but I can no longer move you.

Quoricancha

-Cusco, Peru

Don't worry, I am not one of those neighbors
who eats at brick-oven pizza places. I have my own stove and enough firewood

for a bonfire. My neighbors' mud-brick huts are painted white and there is no rule
saying I must do the same. I wear leather. The rest of my clothing is the color of rust.

Their white is whiter than these parades that will be daily
church-bells and fireworks, a snorting mule, makeshift chariots

blending my building with those of my neighbors: volunteers arrived when I wasn't there,
painted my building white.

*

While looking for petroglyphs
I am turning into rock,
into your hands
colder and stiffer:
we could be swallowing sky
while sleeping
surrounded by a marshmallow rock,
blackness of two more burrows
where a granite quarry
into the hillside, the earth, into a womb—
follow the path and it will take you
carved into the cave-wall,
into blackness.

Above us in a courtyard, the children shout.

*

The photo on my mantle—
where a sun-flares engulfs Inkil Chumpi's silhouette;
sprouts across a rupture of ravines
onto the hillside
where there is an alter,

a feather she examines
while the river remained in flood
no break)

(cont.—

washed away six cattle
and could not wait for sunset to swallow the town:

we needed a bridge to escape the flood.

*

Sunlight reaches through my porthole on the winter solstice, as well as on today.

I will blow specks of gold from my blowgun and make you a golden man.

While weeping, Inkil Chumpi filled the river that swallowed her lover
and our stranded town. She is now a hueca, introspective rock.

Slaves were used to get this gold.

No more discovery no more nourishing the stones.

Ink always dries.

Everything believable enough to be stable.

Part Five

Atacama

If you could imagine burning into the earth,
through shattered slabs of sand

we pry with shovels,
a heft of dust evidence for bones,

six graves found in one month
we refuse. One day with shovels

hovers across a flat-land sunset;

we are thankful for the filmmakers' jeeps,

his grave could be scattered anywhere—
my problem, or your interrogation?

I have so many blisters from this shovel

but never mind; we require blankets
if you film—

our warped views
a scratch of the earth

we will have no water

this valley for a month

sand drinks water,

a night with your telescope I will give you a kiss

through a chamber smooth like silk
a perspective we can borrow?

How do you block away blue moonlight?

—a gunshot, six men to one chamber,
somebody must be scapegoat,

I point to the universe with my shouts
so cold I search further
a star is a dot
with machinery: metal echos, a lens.

A Youth

-Plaza Miserere. Buenos Aires, Argentina

The start of night where children hunched around a tree
hold business cards, as bodies rise from subway tunnels,

while buses clog the road and break the throttles. Walkers
until the cross-walk is clear. I have a blade in my hand

as a tool: I race the break between a bus to flee
the place behind a tree. A duffle-bag is stashed,

holds food from a meat-truck: a leg of lamb.
The stray dog is waiting for me

to leave. I am bent on buses with a knife—slashing
at purses. I don't need space to hold

grime: a shot of knowing what to fear: thousands have
to back the walk with lamps—Along the lake to say

the footpaths are safe. You need this more than me.

We See Fallen Angels

As if all literature
were belonging to
the lords who I say are abundant, that are called
ruined records. They have flesh
intent to be religious—
to a degree that they are
a world I would
move up to
and say nothing. If you are wearing
human flesh—
written as a time manual
called the physical body,
it will look like a new Jesus—
above human, secret vehicle, what one would like to call
a condition of being lucky.

*

I stared into the sun on acid for most of the day.

This time it blinded me.

I believed our guru because my brother believed him.

We had nothing else to base our decisions on.

I do not agree that I am blind.

*

Give me your keys. Develop a narrower focusing intensity.
Wear the electrode cap until you feel confident that you are able to think like me
(an alternative to the meditation). I project myself unintentionally,
my brainwaves seeping like steam onto a mirror.
You have to learn how to collect this frequency
while seated around the unvarnished table we made from the pine tree I planted as a
child.

Put your face down. Smell the wood the way you smell your soup that is still too hot to eat.

(we start on the level of focus: feel the grains grow green from your breath)

Now you may wear the intensifying helmet (cont—
no break)

with the weight of danger: incorrect thinking will cause damage,
making you dumb like a lamb, or like an architect
who can't stop working on his model bridge.

*

Are you ready to enter a pact that does not require you to be a vegetarian, but recommends it?

Will you agree to give massages on the days we assign it as your task?

Joining and converting is a natural process.

Movement is necessary because we have to eat.

A river-path stranger is watching us.

*

I was a landscape painter,
was working on a midwestern scene
when the tornado touched down,
turned sideways, and disappeared.

I could not paint for days I was so overwhelmed with what I'd seen:
an overlap-squaller of water rupture onto glass, onto the tree-leaves, through the
branches, ripped off the branches and sent through windows, the shattering sound of all
the important porcelain. There was nothing to do but cringe. My wife was in the cellar. I
stayed in the house and stood my ground (hunched beneath the piano).

*

Meditate in one of our rooms filled with pillows stacked upon pillows. I do not want to discuss your quest. May your ego hover slowly like a balloon, may it take note from where it's being watched. May it self-destruct often into a languid pond animal, swimming towards your controlled environment. You will confront your fear of being left alone.

*

You have stepped onto the platform but wait for the wrong train
because you are damaged.

Please lay down onto the electromagnetic table and let me take a look:

A drop of your attention distilled into eyes:

stare at the table and breathe.

Imagine the edges of the table as a connected network of electric fences.

I control the electricity, and am angry: distilling images

(cont.—no

break)

you should be receiving into the brain—

reptilian urge to make yourself bleed.

Stick a knife somewhere. Sit down at the table and breathe,

feel yourself connected to a network of animals that will be shot if they shout;
as if pain were not shared.

*

Now, calm down there young lady, don't think

that my vision was one that you

couldn't have. I repeatedly practice focusing

on a child bending forks

who thinks he is chosen but isn't able to establish

his parents. Preaching is not something I am used to. In an ideal world

we wouldn't have to move.

Now give me your child

and it doesn't matter what happens to him

because he's in my arms.

I am sending the devil

the pain that he caused us

by delivering this alcohol

through his system.

He will be cured

after sleeping and after

being baptized again;

your child will leave Satan

drowned like a horsefly,

small and in retrospect

so stupid to worry about,

if the only problem is darkness

that we're standing in shade

away from the searchlight
that strangles your demons,
keeps children confused:
give them blindfolds,
let them rest in the rehabilitation room
sleeping, with numbers drawn across their backs.
We will not let them miss the reincarnation.

*

You are going to belong to the Serious Sect. During this time you will grow to understand that being manipulated is not always a bad thing. Being manipulated is based on the science of action: manipulation inspires us to move towards understanding cosmology as an escalator where all of the passengers will be delivered to the single source. Nobody steps on who thinks they're getting a free ride. Now open your eyes wide: snow is piling into pupils and you do your best to pretend not to care. You are not being manipulated, you are in a trance.

The Brothers and Sisters of Yesterday

I bring my eyes into the sky and follow the flight of birds and star signals
in order to bury our scepter of civilization into earth:
it was signaled that I would be founder. Wiracocha gave me a gown
and a patch of earth to build this city with perfect stones.
He sent the others running
and from the pattern of their paths I built a map —
where each family can find their altar: an epicenter from where my sword struck
if you walk in a radius you will find temples, victory barns, a flashlight in your face
and you must keep walking the fountain is yours, the water your tears
we drink and then we say hello to the visitor inside our breath
is not a wish, lasts for hours,
will help you find the stones for a sidewall
requiring the work of hundreds of men:
why our temples were once the temples of others
written on top of a code
after wandering ten years we deserve all virtues
to sit on a chair, no enemies yet
until the rainbows disappear;
we must build our homes together
clinging to the steepest parts of the hill.
We will be birds, seed-bearers, the carriers of souls,
if the human bodies decompose
we must watch from above.
After the lake recedes
we'll be standing on top of the earth.

Horses are Guardians

Twelve year-old Razzle-my-Tazzle
has just cured a woman's cancer
through almost-touch,
mane's clinging to human skin, her snort
emptied darkness
now diffusing—to be celebrated
as residual presence
to heal other animals, to keep us in packs,
to send salmon a shock-wave, body's electricity
flocks towards her hooves, above the surface
singing to anything alive.

We wait around a table, hoping for new knowledge
about a debated constellation: the figure of a sleeping priest

buried in blankets (each
believing it to be one of our own), even though

so many homeless, the park lawn filled with a family
who has taken to burning wood from park benches

to cook their food: a cauldron filled with chicken parts.

The Fox and the Condor

Not for you and not for me. We have touched the dome
that holds us onto an earth
divided; the sun, I follow breezes in dreams
while you continue walking
like an archeologist through the Atacama
who has six helpers with shovels for digging:
they want to get closer to the center,
which takes auburn away from the sunset,
neither close to the sky nor far from earth,
mother moon, I'm ready
as a razor blade into the sky.
I will make the humans migrate
instead of living in cliffs
waiting for my return.

They do not know that I have become bored
because I need to fly—
in the distance a searchlight
sweeps through desert,
exposes corpses preserved with lack of rain;
there are fingers like corn husks
scratching into the sand.

Maybe a star will call me
to drink from the lake between two clouds,
while in the distance, you train the humans for their expedition
more distant than dwellings
together for work
with the sky and with Mana Killa,
eyes will dominate the hills.

Echos in Pisac

-Sacred Valley, Peru

Nighttime, silhouetted buildings,
moon muddled in clouds,
flute, drums, harmony of voices
bending starlight

off pavement,
through darkness they move as choir,
vibrations on the window.

They arrive from mountains, across the spine
of that bird that lives in the landscape;
a temple along the rump of its eyes
from which fountains flow—

carries the ones who died building it.
This is present but not origin.

It sounds like worship.
I speak but don't understand
it is not this way.