

## Mandy Gutmann-Gonzalez

Winner of the 2018 *Boulevard*  
Poetry Contest for Emerging Poets

### *The Bunker in Berlin-Mitte*

I.

*Bind yourself to the guide, comply  
with manual or lose yourself]*

—I trespassed the design.

It was a laboratory to mold a mind.

Iron fingers through concrete  
never quite

like being held.

I become a different volume  
within its walls. Walls begin us

—sand to sift through,

sea to flood—once

with water mixed, a liquid brain  
begins to form. Ascending

each flight of stairs

it hardens like a bell. We, the nebula gel  
wedged between what can become

and can't.

Instead of windows, blown up photographs  
of galaxies, white holes in a dark cone,

just energy battling on

our bodies which vibrate with light  
they yield to: collapse

of stars, retreat—

was the building a mothership?

Walls this thick turn air a tomb.

This place will shovel your mind,  
chip away, rock

on rock! At birth, you woke: sharp gem on  
skin, a person amplified

through speakers, projected  
into sound.

II.

No way around what happened here.  
1942: blast of bombs interrupts the building  
of a wall. Once complete, people stamped  
to it. Less than one square meter per  
person, stench of urine, fight for margin, worry  
for those who stayed, for those who went.  
Time's revolving door: 1945, seized  
by the Red Army to keep prisoners of war.  
History has a taste for both irony and iron,  
people shackled to their point  
of salvation. 1949: textile warehouse,  
those treated as things replaced by actual things,  
cloth upon cloth, sure to shush  
the nightmare. Pattern of behavior becomes  
visual neurosis. Red fixation, thread-fetish  
to bind it all together. Design we have seen before,  
stamp we have seen, for animals are stamped  
to mark possession. I saw the stamp design,  
it punched addresses to characterize the animals.  
There's no ornament without norm, no fashion  
without dictated dimension. 1957 blasts a hole  
through the wall to let in Cuban imports: soft flesh  
of bananas packed inside their threaded  
rinds. The free market has its heyday, purchases  
enter easy through a wall thought impenetrable.  
1992: techno takeover. Black walls exert  
a black hole's magnetic pull. Wax, whips,  
leather: name your fetish. Candles make oxygen  
visible, a flame's snuffing marking boundaries  
of the breathable. History's senselessness has people  
stunned. Without speaking, the hive moves  
to techno's steady drone. Stripped to light

and sound, something's made possible  
in the brain, a fetal zone in the wake of shared pain.  
2003: walls painted white to house a private  
art collection. Consider places with a had had—  
hospital, prison, school, swimming pool—a different  
function:

*Interviewer:* But Mr. Boros, why the bunker?

*Mr. Boros:* Since a young teenager I would prefer  
the ads than the actual film. It was the most  
impossible.

*Interviewer:* I mean, Mr. Boros, what is it like to live  
in a penthouse on top of an ex-nazi monument?

*Mr. Boros:* We often buy pieces that are not exactly  
to our liking. One can perhaps not solve problems,  
but one is able to exchange problems with other  
problems.

*Interviewer:* But Mr. Boros, why—?

*Mr. Boros:* It was the most impossible.

### III.

No, there is no space outside contamination,  
that is what touching does. In fear, the mind goes  
blank or very clear. The mind grows very dear.  
Climb any flight of stairs, ascend into a lung,  
a breath machine with inhales and exhales piled  
on every rung. The air of those who came before,  
a gauze caress that wraps around, scream without  
egress. Is this place salvation or burial? The bunker  
was meant for things to be (among other things)  
among other things. Meant for things to be

herded into: civilians, prisoners of war, bananas  
in their crates, textiles, fetish gear. Each looking  
for the difference it would make to penetrate  
a stone. They spoke of angels for they were scared.  
They spoke of angels for they couldn't speak  
of bread. Here's another collection, bone shine.  
How many bones came in alive, were taken out—?  
Specters hover here, crying without exit. No matter what,  
phantoms all fit, threaded like a mesh. Stained  
walls, chipped black paint, bullet holes, tissue  
terror: it remains. Air more solid than walls.  
Can't stop it. Can. I'm trying to explain the difficulty  
of carrying a brain inside a brain.

No, I didn't want this shape, this clamping  
down, my mind inside the clothespin clasp  
of another mind, a moth pinned to a hunk  
of wall. I didn't want this shape, this flotsam  
brain. History, you are a thing laboring  
before me, an enormous cicada  
I can never quite reach but which I encounter  
repeatedly through the ruins of your stripping.  
And so I clamber around your abandoned  
shells, sometimes still soft, stiffening.  
And so the brains nest awkwardly  
inside each other like mismatched Russian dolls.  
Picture this: a bunker is a kind of bunk bed.  
That is the first image. Take it and repeat it,  
a bunker on a bunker on a bunker. Repeat  
the years. Repeat the years until you can't  
tell them apart. 2003, 1992, 1957, 1949,  
1945, 1942. I don't think this building  
experiences time the way you do.

## *Carnecitas*

During breaks, guys echo to  
and fro, lubricating chains to “off” the sounds  
of bodies. But I know now the music it makes:  
my knife inside your life, the wet-resistant feel  
of the cleaving flesh. I’d be lying if I said this smells  
of death, coppery scent, forget. Chlorine creeps forth  
to clean the commotion. These beasts are obedient:  
when the chains halt they too make a standstill.  
Surrounded by four immobile guests, I remove  
surgical gloves to bolster my hands back to breath.  
I affix my hair to air, trap loose strands under  
the net. This is the job: waiting for the revving  
of chains which ignite at any second. Tell me when  
is human? Come, animals, one by one into the Ark,  
heart of the factory. Like veins inside a body, wires  
guide your travel, clinging to your puppet shoulders  
while my fingers meddle a knife inside your necks.  
Sacks of blood, you hide at turns, wires change  
your course, and you shiver, forced by propulsion.  
I see your faces, waning in your twisted fates.  
My job: deep cut from neck to navel. Only by  
pressing your esophagus can I release the final  
breath. Talk my ear off as I cut you. I converse  
so you feel comfortable, think you know me.  
My cleaning swipe: blade on apron. Little makes noise  
beside the creak and blow of fans. Can I pass  
as any animal? Such a devil in the detail.  
Days enter and exit in chains. Historically, “beast”  
consists of whoever is beaten down harder. I’m host  
to your lurches, no way around what I made you.

## Noise Prophets

1.

Beyond the domestic barrier of drapes, a hand washes another in the dark, flies grope blindly over walls. They curl up pristine on the red velveteen, wings gleaming at the edge where the witch is seized by glitch. *Almost at odds with morning, which is which.* Body, yet sleeping, speaks. *Una mano lava la otra y las dos lavan la cara*, the dream inside the dream. So there, blind-eyed, with fevered tongue, all she sees is blood, sunk as she is sunk.

2.

Heap on the ground.  
Swan heap, mangled leg of swan, with portent on the hind, heap of wrangled wings, damp pages, dictionary heap, mud-encrusted, caked with spent words (the more spent the louder, each time calling up each other time).  
This is the meaning of Natural, bejeweled and spent.

Swan, you won't hesitate to eat a girl drawn to your pink, pink tongue. Swan, you will. Swan, you will hesitate to eat a girl caught in the flowing ta-da! of her dress looking over her shoulder at the lawn's erotic blades a patch of white in one corner and further still a patch of red with a black center which is the eye the maddened bull's-eye of the swan. A swan will recognize itself in the eyes of a girl, will see its awkward lump infinitely small inside the eyes, for it

is the rage, for rage, it looks like a swan.  
She wants an eye like that to look  
deep into the planet; wants to x-ray earth  
and writhing worms, already so transparent  
and pure, sacks of water advancing through  
the terrain. She wants a pink, pink tongue  
to fuck the world with. She wants swan  
to be her familiar; inside her chest this desire  
grows into the gown she will later inhabit,  
she wants mangled leg of swan,  
the fat and feathered ass, demented neck  
rolling in the mud, the face peering  
over the shoulder as if about to be murdered,  
as if it weren't just a day facing opposite  
itself, the leash at the neck—

\*

Leda and the swan go  
way back, are childhood buds.  
They used to tiptoe  
together. Now they're in a clearing  
and the swan's face is pressed upon the earth  
and Leda is fucking the swan from behind  
with her cock. If they believed  
in virginity—but they don't.

As she enters the swan, the swan, seized  
by trust and terror in equal  
measure, says the following words:

*Kill me! Kill me!  
I want to die the way copper dies  
fired up and exquisite  
handing over my mind*

3.

Court Examination

*Essex county court archives, Salem—Witchcraft Vol. 2 no. 113*

Are we sure this is a woman?

Say: ah

The evidence does endanger a hundred times

Sarah Ingrsol's distribution:

She came to us

a handful of sand burning

She said, What.

Said, Go ahead, what is broken in others in me sea-going

We sat in view of her hand suspecting she had planted it

on that book, she said never

handled a thing but a deformed candle

She opened the pane like a page

casually distorted

the sun into a blinding square

Then we asked her what she was

She replied that she had, because she infects the heat: ah

We told her to take her tongue and hold it together

She thus adjusted throughout time and rose

Said, I go about it unsafe and then some

We asked why she did not sheath [ilegible wurds] or [the kniffe]?

She said: ah.

4.

We are the ones who awoke inside a snowdrift and couldn't find our eyes

We are the ones who traverse the snowdrift while blood traverses us

We are the ones who wrote "dear earth" on the roof of the hospital

We are the ones who said it into our hands

We are the ones who walked around naked in our living rooms like a sign  
of intelligence

We are the ones who touched the elegies with wet fingers after a swim

We are the ones laughing hysterically now

We are the ones made of rage and ash



We are the ones coming out of the woodwork like demented termites  
We are the error in the wallpaper  
We are the landscape behind the men with guns  
We are the ones freaking out in the foliage  
We are the mountain haunting your rearview mirror, the background that  
keeps coming  
We are too old to make sense to you  
We are the ones taken for dead or for granted  
We are the ones who were parched and drowned in turn  
We are the ones who were drowned and came back  
We are the ones opening our eyes underwater as we speak  
We are the ones consumed by fire when we were already fire  
You are the ones who made the oceans boil  
You are the ones who recognize space with cartography  
We are the ones who recognize space with our lungs  
We are the ones who never existed to begin with  
Who called us? What is this world we've woken to?  
Here and there, the earth in tatters.  
Hello earth! Hello earth!

5.

Court Examination

*Rebecca Eames: examined before Salem Majestrats: Aug'st 19: 1692*

Q: so? A: your own demon is sanctioned: Q: & that the devil appeared to you like a colt very ugly: the first: time. A: a ragged girl: I did it by sticking of pins. Q: but did you afflict Swan? A: yes: but I am sorry for it: Q: where had you your spear? A: examine my feet if you will: I had nothing but an all: Q: but was it with yo'r body or spirit you came to hurt these birds: A: with my spirit: Q: can you ask them forgiveness? A: I will fall down on my knees: Q: who was with you when you afflicted Swan? A: I was usually with myself and the selves that hang around it: sometimes numerous: always wild: Q: the woman of the house had a pin stuck into her foot: but: she said she did not do it: you? A: Neither: unless I were the malicious floorboard and she bare-treading: Q: are you not capable of such transformations? A: doth not the devil too threaten: [to tare] you [in peices]?