

Amanda Gomez

Traveling Fathers

Their daughters are postboxes—
they accumulate heartbreak
like junk-mail.

They're always open –
packed with department store flyers, weekly
circulars, and doctors' ads for cosmetic surgeries.

They smell
like plastic, damp paper, and the saccharine scent
of that lick and stick envelope glue.

Their arms are always reaching –
red flags grasping towards the sky
where their traveling fathers

are seated. Chairs back and trays down
in a plane high up
checking their e-mail.

Shopping Spree: An Elegy

Laughing at a joke,
something most people do
a co-worker tells me:

You sound like a cheerleader.

Excuse me? I ask.

You know. You're just all bubbly and peppy, she says.

And it's not that she's calling me a cheerleader
but *cheerleader*

in that something in my laugh says
superficiality, shallowness, the fake
bitch that talks behind your back.

Some trope fashioned

from airbrushed movie actresses,
Playboy pics,
fucking teen girl trends in Abercrombie & Fitch ads,
or watching Jennifer Love Hewitt
being interviewed by Conan
encouraging women
to vajazzle their pussies.

It's like a sparkly secret in your pants, she says.

Her skin all clear and glittering
under studio lights.

She's all bronzer and waist

expanding the distance
between feminine expectancy
and reality.

So thinking of my co-worker's reaction –
the joke pandering insult,
she's not the only one, I'm sure, thinking:

Do I always need to worry about my looks
Will it always be like this?

Will I always have to _____?

I can relate.

Once I maxxed out Mastercard

with every shirt I tried on I thought: *Damn!*

I look really good.

When my parents asked

about the excess shopping bags

Come on, I said. *Haven't you ever felt the need to be liked?*

Like most parents they responded

with that cliff proverb:

If your friends jumped off a cliff,

would you do the same?

And if you were honest

you'd answer yes too

like I did.