

Spencer Dew

the virgin and the moth

1: *after patient insistence and a brief run*

but the color was off on the printing, the layers, such that the whites of the beach and the beach ate away at the water.

local story of the virgin and the moth,
in multiple variants, some less sad

waxed paper napkins, the oblivion of strong drink, *decay*
February, defined by patience, by my waiting for her to bend to
as after a brief run. *This altitude*, she says, giddy, shaking to get
the lighter lit. *Yes*, for a final time, *but I want you to say please*.

like the egg of the Columbus story, but the feathers were here own embellishment

and prone to decay as it was left unglazed

the faint down along the sides of her face

2: *the throat of a sparrow*

according to the guidebook, the town was famous for the quality of its light
Here sanctified. Here buried. Here exhumed.

pastels of landscapes sold along the street, including scenes
of the street itself, with such pastels for sale
and beggars in blankets along the road that climbs to the gallery
a bronze marker for every bullet hole

People snap pictures of statues of saints and children, plaza to plaza, alleys in between, various meats grilled or roasted,
everything in public, she says, throwing a wine glass across the patio

In the third person, in the butter of dawn, as the guide keeps saying *revolution*,

and a food vendor works a bicycle bell, repeating the same inscrutable words

*blanketed against the dust, the dry chill
a sound like newsprint under fingers*

3: *ruins of mayonnaise*

She ran her fingers over her breast, watching herself in the mirror, first with the light on, then without. She focuses on a patch of skin above her nipple, pinching it back, picking at it.

People on the street wore paper masks, celebrating something with fires, more or less contained *emphatically intentional in their disregard*, or *this town full of elote and mayonnaise*, or, and finally: *disgusted with everything at this point*, she says, standing by the bed to unbuckle her shoe

Cigarettes coming to taste like coarse salt.
Cigarettes coming to taste like the folds of her, swollen.
Cigarettes coming to taste like onions, first roasted and then raw.
Cigarettes coming to taste like a plastic seal, some sanitary cover.
Cigarettes coming to act as masks, as shields.

with the back cover torn off, talking of architecture and

endless monuments, many with multiple names, such that the Plaza of the People was also the Plaza of Peace

roofs held down with rocks, an elbow-shaped segment of piping

4: *and had know somehow inside myself*

A deaf mute, but still only in Spanish. The throat of a sparrow, taking a diagonal path across the crowd. *As if speaking in hieroglyphs*, she says, studying the dark surface of the woodblock on the table rather than its bright prints pinned along the wall.

blue tiles along the terrace, dark beer
and still in the flattened vowels
of bodies of water, far away
deplore, I absolutely deplore

an advertisement for a beach resort on the side, a color photograph, the printing off, layers of color knocked a bit off center, a smiling face with the whites of the eyes smearing over the tan skin, the skin itself smearing over into the sky, waves crashing beside themselves, an umbrella

Sometimes the simplest way to say the thing, she says, and then her thought drifted away.

a wall of crutches, tiny pressed metal representations of limbs
pinned against the velvet of certain saints' shrines

filling another blue plastic water bottle with half-smoked cigarettes and tiny curls of yellow paper peeled from her
notepad

coming back hours later with a string of bus tickets back to the airport, all in my name.