poor banished child of eve

joanna climaxus
Poor Banished Child of Eve

Joanna Climaxus
Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy, hail, our life, our sweetness and our hope. To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve: to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this vale of tears. Turn then, most gracious Advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us, and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus, O merciful, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary! // i want it ruinous // crowded & polluted bc im sick of silence & purity y todo lo que no me explica bien // a language dies without guttural cries // a story dies then de-composes // a myth // bloats with mood & decays in situ // while in loving memory // a church of carved figures jostle for space & sense // the corpse tryna revive itself in metaphor is a failure to poem // this is my body // full of nooks for shame, water // the body wears a tattered syntax // unraveling from what tried to weave itself from womb // this is my blood // a mouth // full of it // i cut out my own tongue biblically // bc the story i want to tell is a secret // it has neither origin nor end // in the helixed twining of sex & death // i seek females who can wreck the infinite // following julia in her essay of the same name // who & where does she consider // her origins? // in the same vein i wonder what pierces an animal architecture? // is the infinite a frame? // are all memories of space & lancet shame? // of the virgin & her ways to be otherwise // from the pure to the pollute // where or who begins you // where you search—in a bible, for example, or its apocrypha—far more sexy a concept than it is in reality // apocrypha were not divinely “inspired,” according to the church, so were cut out of the biblical canon // good to read for history but not so much as moral guide // of “spurious origin” // contaminant stories // judith who beheadd a king who threatened her people // susanna who rejected two bitter lechers & did not die & did not get blamed // bel & the dragon slain by eating straw with nails // animal-idol who bursts like tiamat bursts from the wind // this is my body // creator-goddess burst animal-subject burst // a babylon beginning is a woman crawling out from this // in 1546, the council of trent moved to keep apocrypha in all the catholic bibles // deemed the books indisputably divine // for reasons god only knows // once again sown in the folds of the old testament // like secrets sown in for devotional purposes // like going home // this is my blood // this is my disturbed sense of body, gloria’s // ambivalence from the clash of voices [which] results in
mental and emotional states of perplexity. Internal strife results in insecurity and indecisiveness. The mestiza’s dual or multiple personality is plagued by psychic restlessness...Rigidity means death...
The new mestiza copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity // & secrets sown in for devotion i muse whether one can become a psychic mestiza by cultural baptism? // become a real american by way of drowning // in amniotic fluid? // for the sake of the canon? or its apocrypha? // what church builds around its figures //////////////////////////////////////////////////
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in an arbitrary beginning there was my inconsequential visit to an abbey in richardton, nd, to visit an acquaintance who’d befriended the brothers there // id been mopping at my job & he asked if he might help me, so long as we’d go to an all-night diner afterward to continue chatting about the varieties of religious experience // he wasn’t old enough to drink // he’d been about to become a preacher (bless his heart) but left the baptists to break his heart in safety up north // djuna’s way of saying what it is to throw away faith then have the gesture go unnoticed // unearthed apocalypse // a midwestern defense pretends that nothing ever happens // he had a voice like hot mush with cinnamon // he sang hymns at the end of the day // at the diner, between multiple cups of coffee, i recited him lines of tessa’s poem // To wonder—if I have been destroyed from the inside by beauty. If I am what spring. / Has left behind. Let no man question this perfect sadness, lest he grow wings, and fly // he wrote me down a robert penn warren poem from memory // i didn’t know what he wanted until i got a letter on the same yellow paper weeks afterward, in perfect cursive, saying something about how it was good we were apart because he wouldn’t be able to stop himself from expressing his love // i refused to understand this // while the trip, as i think about it now, was an endeavor to understand genealogical attachment // to absent fathers // to mothers i made out of devastated women—whether i knew them or i read them or i loved them it’s hard to relate to them now it’s hard bc // If you are a gymnosophist you can do without clothes, and if you are gimp-legged you will know more wind between the knees than another; still it is confusion; God’s chosen walk close to the wall // as djuna kept hers close around her //
& now im talking like i have a grip & a gimp // one memory grafts onto another & i blame the simultaneity of mood // first as i experienced the moment & then the mood as it possesses other moments, so that, for example, devastation disguises itself in an abbey or acquaintance left behind // the mood seeks its origin story // & in the process the wrecked & the wreckers blur together //////////& metaphors do not hinge on history///////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////

///////// as in this beginning the abbey stood in the snow like a gulag // imposing on a barren space that did not ask it to stay // barbarism // in my mind the gulag/abbey stands for now-flaccid powers // some imprisoned devotees // as i remember/imagine either one, one gray building slips into the other // & i visit them like an anthropologist visits ruins, nods to them // as an unmoored conspirator // As she is roaming the hills // katie describes this mood in which // the image of a place hits the interpreting subject like a tactile event, drawing her into an interpretive space in which “meaning” lies as much in the objects and spaces of observation as in the body and mind of the observer. The “self,” like the ruin itself, is divided between a wandering self, homeless in the temporality of the present, and a nostalgically remembered but unattainable center of stability and selfhood // when i arrive at the abbey // an archangelic weather falls in my eyes as i apply a dead color of lipstick my grandma might've wore // i never saw her wear makeup // even so, her lipsticks lay stale on a mirrored tray in her bathroom, among pearls & rings & black hills gold crucifixes & vials of dirt—from rome!—or other vials that were maybe from jerusalem, maybe from pilgrims who had gotten them from bishops, who gave them to passers-by and priests, who gave them to their devoutest parishioners or the loudest rosary-reciters, one of whom was my grandmother // (also on the tray: an always-full bottle of listerine) // down the hallway, wedding photos of her 15 kids hung like stations of the cross, a room-sized rosary over the two twin beds in her bedroom at the end of it // what giant woman wore it // who can measure herself against a grandmother who devoted her body to cyclical destruction & her mind to crying out to what did not respond? // only by a similar valence, understanding space as a womb // laced with veiny viscera /////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////

// touched by the outside /////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////
She left for good one time but came back. No one said anything about it, reads the caption beneath a portrait of a bescarved elderly woman tagged to the church bulletin in the chapel of the abbey // next to other portraits made by the same passer-by/pilgrim, who, so enamored of the people who withstood the weathering of winter & the pain of children bleeding out the numbers of their small towns, decided to paint those who stayed // that paint enlivens? // like the photos hanging in grandma’s house of all her children who left // a photo kills? // the house was devout, but it was not a church // the church is a woman exiled from her body to become the borders of another’s // her house was evacuated as her body & the town, where three churches anchored the ~200 person populous // memory working to gather the cause of its pain // describing the work buildings do to gather us, christian says // A building is not merely a building but a shared spatial experience—a locality—that embodies and shapes the values of its environment and of culture as a whole. This is not merely a matter of identity in the sense of the development of local characteristics, but also of equality in fostering opportunity to play a part in a greater context // religious orbit around stickleback’s bar, an axis for the churches in town // so from this i became an inebriated angel // or failed altar girl, since i fainted after kneeling too long during prayers for the eucharist & never again // confessing my fantasy of fucking leo dicaprio while making out with my bff to the pleated wall of the confessional room // the priest told me to say the rosary before school, before volleyball practice, after confession & before i lost my father’s features & became a beautiful girl, lest thy holy mother abandon thee // i traded grace for survival, i let her abandon me //

hail mary, full of grace, like most women i have known, taught me shame, i.e., cross yr legs! wear a bra! throw thyself upon a sword before the soldiers come to rape thee, blessed art thou // among women i know myself by listening to secrets // a church is a woman crumbling of her own accord // i am 28 now, but am already feeling the effects of this fixation on the finite, trying to love a wild body ive spent my whole life trying to tame, not close to mastering the requisite forgiveness in order to do so // pray for me, sinner, always embarrassed by how hungry i
am // now and at the hour of my death, says one holy mother i read to be rid of it // She
died a famous woman    denying / her wounds / denying / her wounds
came    from the same source as her power // adrienne’s amen // the question
to be or not lies like a bed of tulips growing on the wrong side of my mother’s house,
which suffer the same fate as the weeds // sometimes even beauty can’t save you // a
church is a woman who has forgotten this // in the bath & far from danger, i cry as a
reminder of the soggy luck i’m having // protected from wanting // remembering the
man, j, who i waited for in front of the abbey a decade ago // i barely knew the guy // i
suppose like most men i have known he served as a means to the divine // some
deification of what is bound to disappoint with silence // some versicle telling me to
trust this silence more than i dare to love myself // some advice to martyr myself for
silence so as not to be raped by its injustice // raped anyway // but i did not sleep with j
nor fall in love // i just wanted to see the abbey, some point of interest in a place id
spent my whole life thinking was empty & boring [[[ ]]] eager to be proven wrong //
like a sensible woman // there is nothing to confess here // a church is not a woman //
a church is a limpid metaphor for shelter ///////////////////////////////////////////////////
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// i drove across the asphalt aorta that cuts across nd, whose demarcation is more
religious than cardiac // does the fear of god steer the wheel? // we are split, but not
necessarily driven by love or fear // the heart beats & i seek hunger’s end // or origin //
the way an arctic explorer measures sastrugi with a long gaze over helplessness // so does
the nd driver // & as we fixate on the horizontal blur of air & devotion & highway i have
to wonder // who are we trying to save? who gets rescued? // One of the
penalties of an ecological education // says aldo // is that one
lives in a world of wounds // while karl adds // the bourgeoise
has played a most revolutionary role in history...has
stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honored and
looked up to with reverent awe // maybe the blue collar progeny of
homesteaders resisting the idealism of back-to-the-landers, who understand faith to mean
to stay put despite your desire to flee // who misunderstand the land they stand on as
belonging to them bc divine right bc in word & deed bc that’s how it is bc where else can we
go // a world of wounds is one you keep poking holes in as you come & go // maybe my
written imposition on an origin story // even my own origin // is a colonizing desire? // story of endless space & silent screams // long-suffering // do the dead speak to me when god cannot? // there are nails in the straw i want to eat // this is my body // i try to put the reverent back in irreverent but it might be too late // this is my blood

my fury of windshield wipers trying to find a familiar gravity in a blizzard, toward a destination that exists only in my mind // long ago, j, shaken, met me at the abbey in a crumpled red dodge, totaled, he said, because someone had broadsided him just minutes ago // the sky was bloodless, but he was fine // what? i said // then why are you here? // (what did you answer?) // id used the word “cavalier,” which j brought up six years later, asking if id meant it as a compliment // i doubt it // he was desperate, maybe, a stubborn person, i thought god—even when in pain they keep their eyes on a made-up prize

a memory submits to its expression // the way a caribou submits itself as prey when it cannot out-stare the hunter // or does it gnaw, then resurface during the hour of our poem world without end? // i don’t know // the abbey is a space of re-memory & forms a lone shape against the sheet of dakota landscape, out-sizing the trees // the memory like saudade, a feeling of stepping into a house that has once been lived-in but has not changed hands, has only been abandoned for reasons apparent to no one but those who left it // history hangs // a sacred space is one that hurts because of it // In the ruin, history itself is brought into the present as a narrative text // katie tells me // Luminous fragments of things in decay mimetically demonstrate a partially excluded but re-membered real. Wrecked material becomes a sign, at once, of the power of a history on a place and of the transitoriness of history itself. It fashions itself into an allegorical image—a representation attracted to the fragmentary, the imperfect, the incomplete, the decayed // & i mourn old beliefs & they form nimbus haloes in my body // every time i exhale, a daydreaming child calls out their forms from where she lies on the lawn // a coven of potato bugs, a fleet of ocean-liners, a parliament of tiffany lamps or murmuration of loch ness emerging out through my mouth and into the cold air, which threatens to evangelize the clouds into the shapes of penitent souls // the science of condensation tells me that reality (utterance) will always disappoint me // i love the angels of dreams & loathe it when their expression can’t measure up //
maimonides describes this disappointment with the real, & the purpose of simile in alleviating it, by saying // ‘I am like a pelican of the wilderness.;’ the author does not compare himself to the pelican in point of wings or feathers, but in sadness...Thus it is the function of the intellect to distinguish what is true from what is false...for the eye can only perceive a corporeal object // & god, that incorporeal idea, exists beyond nested layers of holy space ((((((.))))) // within them, memory changes with mood, objects & their significance with mood // as in grandma’s house, the wooden knickknack of prayer hands—shelved next to a brass wreath with a clock in the middle // hands fallen & split when she died // i kept the halves // each hand showed where they’d been glued together // in the guest bedroom a glass music box of fake irises lit up at the tips, with a side-spray of plastic baby’s breath blushing to the tune of ave maria // on a hook in the mudroom, the woolen hat with the ear flaps grandpa wore to church each week // the house 80 degrees & reeking of yeast & klub // a deck of saint & martyr cards // i prayed hardest to the cards with gilded edges, uninterested in the rummi game my little brother & grandma played in front of the miniature mustard-color television & its days of our lives, its wheel of fortune // the gathering of objects like a church & a psyche // Objects that have decayed into fragments and traces draw together a transient past with the very desire to remember. Concrete and embodying absence, they are confined to a context of strict immanence, limited to the representation of ghostly apparitions. Yet they haunt. They become not a symbol of loss but the embodiment of the process of remembering itself; the ruined place itself remembers and grows lonely // as katie again describes /////////////// in my daydreamt abbey, i do not speak // i try to tamp down doubt, to blur my sins or pass them off as alms // we go in through the sacristy door, open just in case someone might need to get in from the cold // i cross myself and j does the same // we genuflect at the edge of the pew // we walk along the back wall & i drag my fingers along the ribs // i avoid the eyes of christ in his painted stations, his passion, other pictures of he & mary with their glowing, thorny hearts, both ripping at their chests to show off the heart’s bloody crown, images where i first learned to enjoy another’s suffering // if it meant the end of my own // how i
learned to suffer by watching others first // how i learned walls are built to hold in pain & keep out demons // how a damp interior can mean alive or dead though either way it is decomposing, either way it is moss & mold sopping the drip of another world that should not pass through it

in my daydreamt abbey i compare the manmade cornices with the snow-made ones outside & think i prefer ephemeral shelves to those which hold agony in triumph // intaglio of thine own sin? // next to these, stained-glass specters of mary, holy mother // her eyes eternally downcast // & the apostles // their eyes forever upturned // enact their limitations by seeking power in each other // they beat their breasts while robes billow around their knees // a historically blue sky drives in the rays of neon sun like nails behind them // a variety of a religious experience in material form // personifications of abstract law and order into which the natural world falls apart—the sky-sphere, the ocean-sphere, the earth-sphere, and the like // william haunts my image of the place // even now we may speak of the smile of the morning, the kiss of the breeze, or the bite of the cold, without really meaning that these phenomena of nature actually wear a human face // anthropomorphic windows the height of tall orders and as broad as shame // virgin mary quite contrary // as j made his way to the tabernacle // as all lovers lead to conspiratorial conversation // i knelt before her image in the abbey // i remember i asked myself // what i wanted from her // MARY TELL ME, i said to her, & i thought i have never been rewarded for my vulnerability // mary tell me // if anyone had ever asked how you felt // or if you’d always been an icon, madonna // the one they run to // the mama bird // the speak & say // this is my body // so when they say you were born pure // when they say you gave birth to the purest // when they call you virgin // did you mean to hide it or was it no one asked? // how you were somehow spared the sins of your father // stayed pure despite this contact with the air outside? // were they too concerned with their own origins & ends to question // your description of a dark divine? // this is my blood // or was it that someone was always there to speak for you? // jump in, take what you said & mangle it // take it for their own & deny you spit // did your story decompose in favor of its retelling // by those who were afraid to understand you?
mary, mary, i asked the statue // two millennia later we can’t agree if life begins post-
coitus but no one doubts a pregnant girl had sex, mary mary // no one believes you
won’t inherit what your daddy did // what salvation exists for us then? // there is
nothing clean // if you were anything like me // when the angel gabriel came to yr room,
you couldn’t turn him away // so, mary, tell me // if you were ashamed // if you had to
convince them // if you were afraid the space around you would not hold // apocrypha
spilling out between yr legs // go on, tell me // a church is a woman with catacombs &
putrefaction cellars // a language dies without guttural cries // & i knew it wasn’t that
you regretted it // you locked packed away the phonemes of yr needy & inarticulate
tongue bc you had to // silence as virtue? // silence as given? // silence as holy? // faith
failed you when you gave the angel masculine attributes // to deliver the perfect
message: the Annunciation to the Virgin Mary transforms the
Word into a flesh that is living, thinking and divine. On its
own, language is a chattering noise, hollow and empty; it
means nothing until it is embodied, made flesh // imperfect, michel,
by the flesh made simple, sexed & identifiable // when is language ever chatter // or
silence nothing // but pregnant // the church is a woman who vomits her voice into the
maws of others // the mama bird // the speak & say // while my inner world a dire wolf
// i make a church out of tongues // swallow my apocrypha // try not to immortalize
the impasive // words as weapons against the silence used against me // both my silence
& my opacity hold me up on a litter doomed for a landfill // the woman “telling the
truth about her life” is mostly martyrdom // a language decomposing before it delivers
its message // upholding a metaphor despite the live word contradicting it //
degraded // the body a cliche // when the angel gabriel came to yr room u couldn’t turn him away // mary i imagine his
hair was swathed grassland his shoulders cusps of tigris/euphrates fallen ice eyes his voice
an egyptian desert thrumming against yr solitude // whose wilderness meant the end of
u // smelling of a long journey from heaven // sunburnt skin // ud seen him stroking
the violin for u at a bar where u were a little drunk & swaying to the gypsy tunes //
staring into u while rubbing the high note closest to the crux of the violin’s neck &
body // what seduction when he, taller than u by a head, looked down at u desirous &
not disdainfully // of course u took him home // u stalked his hidden body, hunted
through his robe // who saw through yrs // pulled you close to take it off, saying mary,
mary, mary in yr ear // who lay yr hungry body down to smooth yr sutures with his
tongue // satisfaction through another's hunger, a glacier smoothing history out from under u // & u laughed bc u told him never say make love ni hacer amor // since in the future the suture heals, gloria says // Because the future depends on the breaking down of paradigms, it depends on the straddling of two or more cultures. By creating a new mythos, that is, a change in the way we perceive reality, the way we see ourselves, and the ways we behave, la mestiza creates a new consciousness. The work of the mestiza consciousness is to break down the subject-object duality that keeps her a prisoner and to show in the flesh and through the images in her work how duality is transcended // who seemed to know u on the inside, moaning there, there & then open, open, open, & then let me fuck u gimme that ass // tru luv to know u deeper // shoving his cock in at the same time his tongue lapped the roof of yr mouth in a post-sea voyage vertiginous, pre-star of bethlehem circuitry // a riptide? // daring u to drown in it, how it matched yr body's tidal change // his hair in yr eyes, burnt straw with nails // squeezing yr wrists behind yr back to steady yr body how it wanted, so much, to be part of his // u so wet // the scratch of his pubes on yrs // to eat his puffy lips // i wanna milk u dry // deeper // human breathing evolved from a fish gasping when it washed up on shore // i wanna feel u drip // the blue shout when you shut yr eyes // twice? three times? a holy seven? // cum for me // a prayer is just an intelligible moan // fuck // clinging until he came, & then after he came // god don’t let go, etc. // sweat like rainwater in the pleats of bamboo fences, clear beads holding the image of all around them, like eyes when the body is still interlocked with another but is no longer desperate to connect // a drip a fall from grace // yr inexact kiss // yr begging bowl waiting to be filled again // yr question to detach or to keep him inside u forever bc god knows there is no grave deep enough for two // but desire to possess // cooled into charity, that we should all be so lucky // mercy // what giant woman wore it // she left for good one time but came back ////////////////////////////////////////////////////////// mary only coming u came to understand god, creating god // sighing all the same // & then u opened yr eyes to the things of the world around u // shelves of stacks of indigo tunics, indigo scarves, indigo pants & capes (his mother a textile artisan who only liked one color) some wooden traveling trunks with actual intaglio // u glanced out thru a concrete window where the jacaranda began to interfere with the indigo curtains, the ratted blue plastic scratched off the glass, everything is blue, a radio blaring meatloaf from downstairs everything i do i do it for you, suicide shower on & the steam rises over the dividing wall like
penance, an apology for what it is, a tentative breath through the cracks of the walls keeping it in // like the mountains hold the neblina like a woman about to give birth holds her belly by the bottom like a desperate dam // & the family gritan y cantan y los vecinos gritan back y cantan, one belches // cops across the roof in that deserted spot where they smoked joints & didn’t care u could see a kid or two knocking on yr door & they laughed as they ran away to the roof stairs // bulldozers churn up the sidewalk // the downstairs drunk tosses a bottle at the wall // taxi buzz & bus fuzz chokes up the air yes even in yr bedroom // the troubadours who were yr cuates come for gabriel & his magic tunes & a toquelin // sellers with fruit carts & jewelry carts & meat carts & whatnot // bored ladies watch novelas at intolerable volumes // the bar blaring, caged white pigeons & uncaged gray ones & a specific rain came & in that one real instant u remembered u belonged to joseph // oh, joseph // oh, betrothed // o beloved o sweet loving o gone one // oh, no // here is where the lie took hold ////////////////////////////////////////////////// you wrecked the infinite //////////////////////////////////// the madonna broke into fear that this one joy would be snatched & made into a story of virtue or moral turpitude ////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////// at the end of a dream is a smiting trip down & the wisest long for a self still falling //

a plural personality // gloria says // she operates in a pluralistic mode—nothing is thrust out, the good, the bad, and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned. Not only does she sustain contradictions, she turns the ambivalence into something else // into fear, perhaps, or outrage? // I WAITED FOR YOU i bet u said to absence LOOK AT WHAT YOU MADE ME DO // now that desecrated sacrament now that banishment from eden, now there will be no return for u & yr hunger was the issue // tattered syntax // i bet u cried in front of gabriel—he may have touched the elbow you were cupping with yr palm as u rocked yr water out, tryna open u again—i bet he felt bad & u felt bad for making him feel bad—i bet he soothed u & u felt a clarity previously disguised as the sin u must work tirelessly to purge // a growling kitten needing to be pet ///////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////// ///////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////// ///////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////////// did u then apologize to the angel for having loved u? // did u wonder which god watched as u loved back? // did u grieve for silence standing in for love? // for the splinter that escaped your broken throat? // no—to love is to exchange your tongue for another’s // even if you have to cut it out // fraying // love interrupts faith & does not care who & where you are, although what you are is born from this interruption // eve born from interruption, she having ate what a snake had to offer, loving that snake //
psychic split // the tree of knowledge // so hungry // waiting on god or adam or j to answer you // how dare they leave u to rot without company? // so lonely like some dank pair of winter boots // I DIDN'T ASK TO BE LEFT ALONE, i bet u said, I ASKED THAT IT BE POSSIBLE NOT TO NEED YOU // mary, that is how i know u lied to us // bc the angel left u there alone, and u were afraid // blamed for a heavy nothing // if u were anything like me, the fear of god was no match for that humiliation // the failure to accept air as spiritual comfort & not confinement // anything to save yrself then, anything to keep yrself in good graces so u would not have to live with yrself as a species born of error or a rib // like a sensible woman // survival depends on lies // a church is a woman who graffiti's her devastation // i graffiti my devastation // make up innocent stories to smother the ones i am guilty about // hope there’s meaning in the revision of the memory // the demiurge & demon come to damage the babyish story i lay out for it, writing that as testament instead of truth // is the human a beast who accepts this? // Can we say that the only true [hu]man is the [hu]man who chooses to stand up and confront the risk of the destruction of [her] humanity? // michel confirms my question // Yes—and [s]he becomes so primally human that [i] call [her] the archangel, in the sense of the original meaning of arch—origin, beginnings // i kneel before thee in the abbey as the anthropologist in the mining town // In the image of a trembling space—a reality that exceeds the constraints of history is born of the very remembering of unfulfilled possibilities. The arresting image provokes the participation of an audience as if collective survival depends on the contagious spread of a melancholic poetics of place // do you see what i mean, my wandering nephilim? // histories of the blood bloom // my abbey an arena for loathsome confession, as i confuse the telling of a secret for jurisprudence // origins put back in for devotional purposes // holy mom, pray for me // to thee do i cry, to u i send up my sighs // i caught up with j (nice young man) at the altar // how would it be if i came to u and said, i am with child // j did not get the joke // what? how could that be? // we breathed in catholic smoke, the farrago of damascus rose & frankincense, long settled into the stones choked by stained windows, to be close to what was lost, the way a mother might go to her dead son’s closet to breathe in the clothes he left behind // an abandoned house embraces new inhabitants with an old reach //
Notes on quoted (bolded; italicized) text, in order of appearance:

(apologies to any secular scholar who has to share a space with god in this piece)

from the Hail Holy Queen Catholic Prayer
from Julia Kristeva’s “Females Who Can Wreck the Infinite”
from Gloria Anzaldúa’s Borderlands/La Frontera
from Djuna Barnes’ Nightwood
from Kathleen Stewart’s A Space on the Side of the Road (references omitted)
from Christian Norberg-Schulz, Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture
from “Power” by Adrienne Rich, Dream of a Common Language
from Aldo Leopold’s A Sand County Almanac
from Karl Marx’s Communist Manifesto
from Djuna Barnes’ Nightwood
from “Bridal” by Tessa Rumsey, The Return Message
from Kathleen Stewart’s A Space on the Side of the Road (references omitted)
from Moses Maimonides’ The Guide for the Perplexed
from Kathleen Stewart’s A Space on the Side of the Road
from William James’ Varieties of Religious Experience

quote is Virginia Woolf, “a feminist is any woman who tells the truth about her life”
from Michel Serres’ Angels, a Modern Myth
from Gloria Anzaldúa’s Borderlands/La Frontera
from Gloria Anzaldúa’s Borderlands/La Frontera
from Michel Serres’ Angels, a Modern Myth (my translations in brackets: from “man,” “he,” and “this book,” to human, she, and i, respectively)

from Kathleen Stewart’s A Space on the Side of the Road
about the author:

Joanna Climaxus is a pseudonym used by M. J. Gette, who is a poet attached to the pseudonymous as a means to explore affectual, rather than factual, truths.

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