

Excerpt from *CANCERous*

Matilde Sanchez

La même question revient encore et encore dans la poésie de Matilde Sanchez selon son manuscrit CANCERigène. Sanchez écrit de la poésie qui confronte le corps malade au discours médical sur le corps. À travers les passages réguliers des infirmières, les notes des médecins et les perceptions craintives, ces poèmes rappellent au lecteur les détails qui tissent le quotidien, les couleurs qui font toujours référence aux règles, aux lèvres, aux ventres et aux bouches qui se transforment en Judas, quand des mots violents alimentent un discours adjectival. Alors que la tentative d'expiration exige de l'oxygène et de réapprendre à s'oxygéner, la maladie se répand et coagule, forçant le corps à s'épancher dans des poches secrètes et cachées du langage. L'homme très amaigri seulement représente le corps malade, mais il redéfinit les questions / prière / poumons qui s'infiltrèrent dans les mots infectés.

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Colour Organ

Every cycle has its end
damp spread: a strategic
coup d'état.

A whistle cry at midnight
the eagle on its prey:
salute, then undress.

Red stop in two evolutions from
maroon mammal to red reptile
snake skin: the favourite

Code RED: some quick rules –
no lights, no perfumed soaps,
NO BRIGHT COLOURS, NO FLOWERS.

Blues are holy – ok.
Green too nostalgic – no.
Yellow too suspect – never.

Taste the heat: colour spread
Not a prism, but ribs of white light
An expandable cage of

Translucent scales
molted for the colour organ
Another cavity created for disease

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Nurse's Notes:

Cycle 1

- Visualize spokes around a wheel.
- The blood's redness drained white.
- Don't worry. The heart still knows how to work.

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Thrown

webbed in this perfect pull
heaped as proof of a day's work
(just above the belly)

button puncture,
the mouth rabid with
a Judas kiss:
 cracks the lips

kissed rabid
along the mouth
along the belly
 mouth rabid

with Judas
cracking on the lips

salts copper skin green
metallic veins bauble blue
melting belly button
(petal to puse)
pass through noon

her mudflat lips
Judased

rabid words
fuel the | heaped | | spun | | buttoned |

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Nurse's Notes:

Cycle 2

- The body is fooled into a rare type of gestation.
- Morning sickness spins her mouth raw.
- The spokes fall away.

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ivory old – older than the blood
on the pyramids
these wailing walls
lines as lives
broken and expanded
by cycles of fire
in folds of flesh
brick by brick
one breath
she breathes in a thousand years
etched in these walls
with teeth and tears –
facts that carve bodies

in one breath
she draws as much blood as a syringe
enough blood
to sail these prayer flags

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Breathe

heavy
azzurro-blue-leaves-quilted-together
heavy
for bedtime.

These leaves fall heavy. They sink in air.
It's hard to breathe in and out.
In.

Out.

Collapse the chest around the lungs
a radical compensation
for life
stumbling blue
lung-leaves cradled to feel the illness
that exhausts normal function.

Take the quilt off.
It's too heavy. I know you're cold.

An attempt to exhale
we breathe together with
quilted chests to push
the used air out
out of the lungs
past the tumor

a breached
breath

the cancer

tries to inhale

wants the lungs

a trophy.

Fear pulls at the fingertips –

cuts them into exact |cubes| with fierce edges

that cannot breathe and cannot be quilted

and cannot warm scars into feeling flesh.

This aged body understands oxygen –

how it hurts the blood, but makes it red.

Air makes you old in the living but keeps you alive

when you think you're dead.

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Colour Organ II

Snowflake skin rolls out

into a paper thin evening

that melts white.

Lightning needles the thighs together

a fear of

ignites sequin knees

to puppet

this body of parts

sewn together with lighting threads

Choose between colours of

yellow, pink or red

Three colours c.l.o.t.t.e.d.

disease as suicide (red)

disease as alternate life (pink)

disease as gestation (yellow)

A whistle cry at midnight – the trill of dread

marks the assembly of teeth, lips, ears and tongues

all life
lives
between closed eyes and burnt lungs.
Blue veins behind
a veil of buds knotted and kinked
lips eroded into
 mud flats

cracked open to appreciate the afterglow
of radioactive isotopes

The Bone Scan Man says the

 narrow marrow sample is undiseased for now.

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Break out

"... sickness is the means by which an organism frees itself of foreign matter; so one must help it to be sick, to have its whole sickness and break out with it, for that is its progress." R.M. Rilke

Fear beads necklace
ornaments at the nape of sickness
leech blushed skin

Blood streamers
clot around
her stomach spun raw
bleeds into a cracked floor.

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"Why aren't these lines filled out?"
words are ghosts caught in viles

between skin and hospital gowns

pinned to cardboard for show and tell

"If you don't complete the form, how are we supposed to help you?"

look between the walls

into petri dish eyes

listen for a pulse

"We are trying to make you well again. Please, give us all your
information this time. I am your oncologist. I want to help you."

look at this body of parts

a flesh and bone suspension

green and pulsing in front of you

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The way white

and fear blend

g=e=l

into snow flesh

frozen

awake

removed

then hanged in public galleries

one thing gone missing

but not knowing what -

ghosts with cold hands

expose ribs of morning

worse than salt water

on mudflat lips

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bloody

Mother of Pearl

vacant

 sea shell

flecks of opal blue

bloom rain wire

a teeming tongue

wraps sweet around

secret pulses of double

helix coils

shell threads spiral

sew you up

sutures spoiled by rain water

stitches along an IV jugular

 dissolve into spokes of rust ash

 a poisonous core

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Nurse's Notes:

Cycle 8

- dimpled skin moulds, reprint her
- a type of birthing after illness
- the bone scan man holds her hand
 (she says he has hands of flint)
- she wears perfume behind her knees
 to remind her of Dandelions