

## AMANDA MOODY

# Feast

An orderly takes the  
un-touched tray away.  
Someone lifts her,  
turns her, sets her  
on a new sheet  
so tight, so clean  
she could eat off it.  
Her arms are  
wiped, her face,  
everything lotioned,  
everything cleared.  
She notes the latex hands,  
powder-white, bright as the  
cotton gloves those waiters wore,  
the ones she loved so much at L'Orangerie.

*In Buenos Aires—the girl whose high heel snapped  
on the cobblestones—she kept dancing long  
after we saw her feet were bleeding.*

She thinks:  
Even at the last  
the body was  
still the body,  
still refuge,  
still sound,  
still supple enough,  
climbing stairs,  
typing thank-you  
notes,

unbuttoning,  
threading gold wires  
through earlobes,  
sitting in springs,  
pressing knees  
under tables,  
fretting music on  
small, stringed  
instruments,  
hacking carcasses apart  
for stews, for molés,  
perfumed marrows  
and stock bones.  
The duck that flew  
over the lake  
floats in this bowl,  
buoyant in its own  
soul's broth.  
Where are its  
feathers now,  
once proof against  
all waters?

*In Chiapas, we slogged out of the rain into a  
village kitchen. I filled my mouth with flaky  
enchilada and found a young chicken's foot  
marching across my tongue. I spit it out.  
Hid it in a paper napkin. Pocketed it.*

She thinks:  
We dress the flesh  
to alter its flavor,  
to shame the delusion  
of its daily sameness  
and spite its long decline.  
We embalm it  
in fragrance, in  
fluoxetine, in  
tarragon and  
rosemary, in  
butter and ink,  
in applewood,  
corsetry, Nivea,  
telenovelas,

Epsom baths,  
the baffling smoke  
of other flesh. We  
stuff and stitch it up  
with every wile and care,  
and by this rendering  
keep it tender  
keep it salt  
keep it

fresh.

In charnel houses,  
long bones of uncles,  
aunts and other  
un-remembered kin  
vault dark arches  
at the smiling,  
un-mitigating  
sky.

In catacombs,  
crammed hostelries  
of dime-store saints sleep,  
gowned in kings' ransoms,  
their dreamless eyes  
planted with  
rubies.

We are always  
making  
heaven  
here,  
banking  
beauty  
against  
doubt,  
filling rooms  
with incense and hue,  
wrecked ambushes of cut flowers  
pitting their hopeless majesty against death  
even as they gasp  
in vases set on wooden tables and consoles  
and credenzas inlaid with

mother-of-pearl, with ivory, with ebony, with  
semiprecious gems of perished hardwoods,  
the un-skatable rink of all this itself a glittering  
marquetry made of death.

All this passes through her mind.

The insectile tickings of a darning egg and needle.  
The bottled pickles stacked up along her mother's shelf.  
The freak-show fetus silhouetted in a gaslit tent.  
The lemon zest preserved in sugar,  
how it stung and  
swooned along  
her tongue.

*I could eat you up!*

The crushed silk of her cheek remembers  
a boy-child's tender hand, still  
sticky, sweet with syrup,  
damning evidence  
of his crime: the  
furtive violation of  
a just-baked  
apple  
pie.

*Tell me one more delicious lie, let me taste—*

she puts his fingers in her mouth.

*See?  
All gone.*

**Amanda Moody** is an award-winning writer/performer best known for her multidisciplinary music/theater solo works, including *Serial Murderess*, *The Winchester Rosary*, and *D'Arc: woman on fire*. She also wrote the original libretti for *Bitter Harvest* (Berkeley Symphony Orchestra) and *Caliban Dreams* (West Edge Opera). Collaborators include director Melissa Weaver and composers Joël Lindheimer, Clark Suprynovicz, Kurt Rohde, and Jay Clويدt. Her poetry was recently published in Ireland's *The Moth*. The *D'Arc* soundtrack is on the MinMax label.