

CYNTHIA CRUZ

## *Zero*

Birth is the first death.

Removed, like a blind wet seal, from that black gelatinous not-knowing.  
Not nothingness.

The emptiness that is not. Emptiness, not soundless, but underwater  
like an endless whir. The deep blue-black of the pre-verbal, the ooze and  
glut of not. Of not-knowing, of the language of drunken stupor.

I came into this world like everyone: animal, slick with shit and death  
and birth and brine and excess. Gelatinous.

Out of the gum, the yawn, a toothlessness.

Without words, before language.

The mouth, always hungry, always moving, teeth grinding, the mouth,  
always telling something, always, always eating. Its tiny white teeth, an  
animal's, grinding the meat, swallowing, and always taking more in.

Before fear before knowing, no knowledge, a song that never stops.

Like alcoholic stupor, an idiot's reverie, the body before, the mind still  
asleep in the sweet bruise of deep slumber.

Feeding, ever feeding, on more—the meat of knowledge, the meat of  
knowledge, grinding to get at the core of knowing, knowing, knowing.

This is where painting comes in—making without a body. Painting—  
bodyless and childlike, smearing the pink, chalk-like paint on the blank  
walls. Smearing and gumming, excretions of silver and gold glitter into  
the wet goo, into the bleed of brilliant white and black ointment.

Language-less, the body. Using the body as instrument, as means.  
Voiceless, soundless, without speech the mind finally quiets, returns to  
its mollusk-like slumber. Its animal.