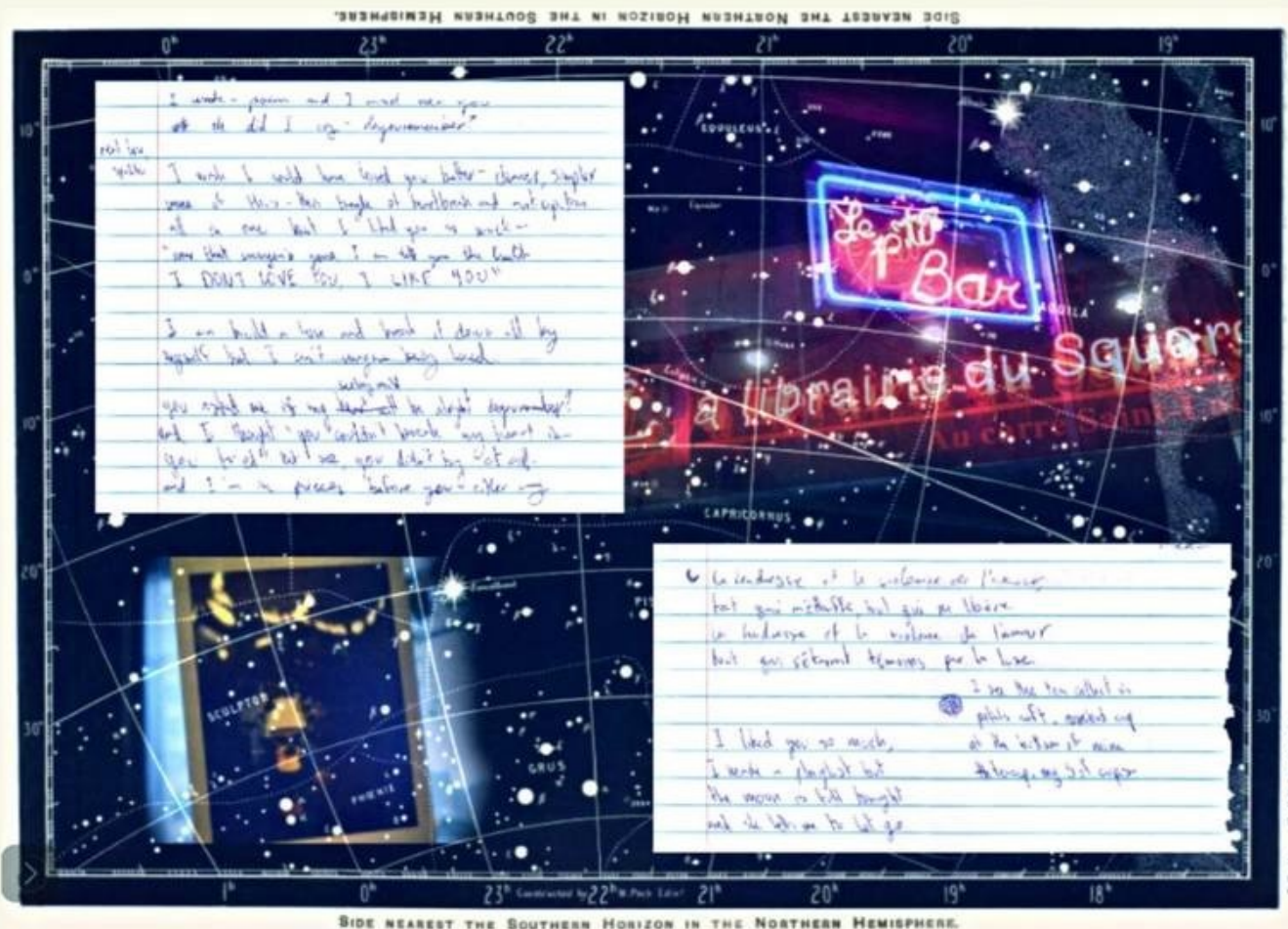


# JUSTE MILIEU





Nazil Abbaspour



Manon Scialfa

This Bitter Earth, This Bitter Earth

And I'll eat you alive if you let me.  
He tells me I know nothing about making a man stay,  
Everything about a marble-stone love that will never kiss back.  
When your bones snap  
And you snarl your teeth at another,  
She'll tell you just how porous she can be.  
You're just lipstick now,  
A burgundy lover on lips—  
The very same I take off at night;  
No longer necessary,  
You stain, nonetheless.  
If tomorrow was more about the circumstances of a mindful "forever"  
Would you tear it off as if it were a useless limb?  
Paralyzed.  
Bitter.  
Because I was able to walk away.  
You—always trying to find me in others  
Growing to resent their pieces,  
For my name was pressed on their tongues.  
Panting into your ears about some drunken martyr  
Who deceived your eyes—wearing a cross close to the chest?  
So, pray to me,  
Your dirty iteration of glory,  
Your patron saint of hedonism.

Cristina Chaidez



Belle Dorcas



### GUY ON A MOTORBIKE

leather jacket,  
leather boots,  
leather gloves,  
leather saddle -

at least one cow  
was harmed  
in the writing  
of this poem

### CROW WOMAN

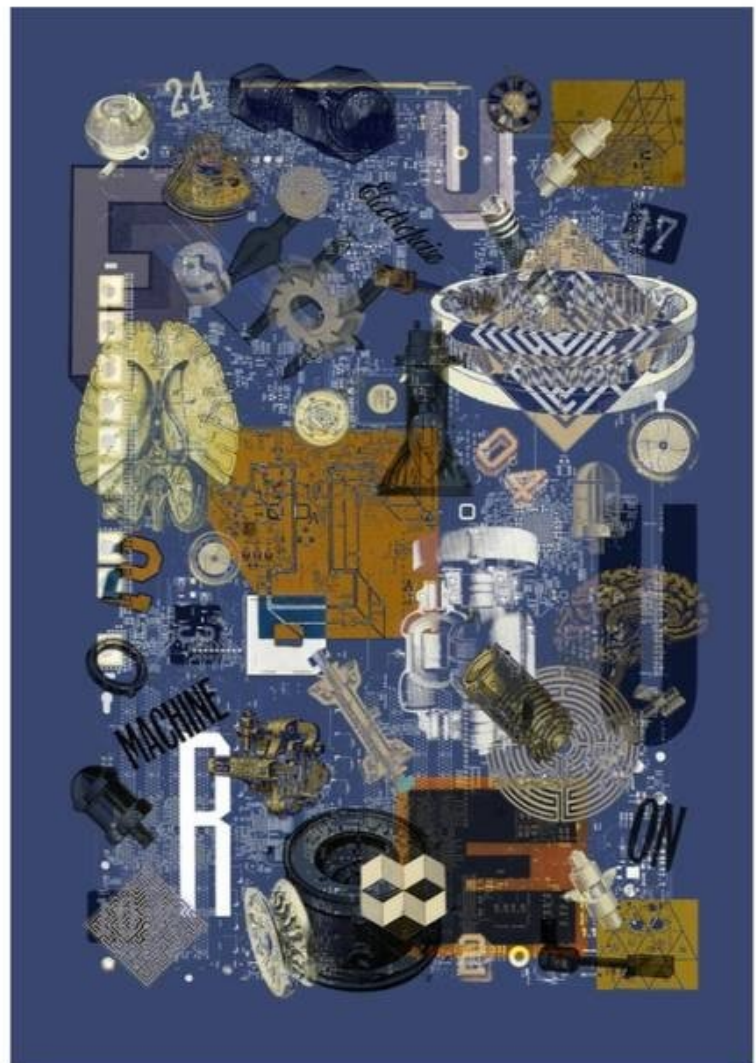
She dresses in black always  
and flaps her arms  
like she's about to fly.  
Her voice is a cackle,  
the closest thing human to a caw.  
And, through either instinct  
or ghoulishness,  
she can often be seen  
by somebody's sick-bed,  
just waiting for the occupant to die.  
Some say she feasts on the corpse.  
Others that she's just a lonely old woman.  
When the gossipy hens  
are done with crow woman,  
they move on to the nest builders, the warblers,  
the pigeons, the vultures and the coots,  
some of the other birdlife in the neighborhood.

### WOLF SPOOR

You know the way...bless the prints  
in the mud that tell their own story,  
a run to the horizon. Paws and claws,  
properly used, tell the truth of the den,  
the sniffing, the listening, the path of  
the eye, the kindness among its own,  
the trembling creature brought to bay.  
Yes, the killing leaves me cold.  
But the trail art warms me.

### PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Fourth grade,  
teacher asks,  
"What do you want to be  
when you grow up?"  
Someone says cop.  
Another, fireman.  
There are a half dozen nurses  
and three doctors.  
A lawyer.  
A pro footballer.  
No one says, poet.  
No one says, trophy wife.  
No one says, beach bum.  
No one says, escort.  
We four, at the back,  
hold our tongues.





We

All

Learn

to

deal

with

our

MADNESS

in

various

ways