

I am her

Anna Perronne, Stanford '25

That night, I wore my red dress;
velvet heels danced with the floor,
my flowing skirt revealed satin smooth skin—
teasing.
Corset strings stripped my breath
before he took the rest.

That night, I was red lips

My image caressed him,
eyes meeting, backs arching, bodies touching—
where the ocean meets the sky

The fibers of my heart melt with his glance,
my warmth becomes fire from the pressure of his touch,
the apple of my eye, the fruit of the tree;
I reach dainty fingers.
lips timidly grace his neck, hair concealing
our broad shoulders

Hypnotized,
his hungry eyes reflect mine.
I give into his strength,
our bodies the magnets—
and opposites attract.

Red fruit in my hands,
another heartbeat throbs in my chest,
consuming and overpowering.
Never have such frequencies changed the rhythm of my soul;
our melodies harmonize effortlessly.
Come closer, my dear

I am his and he is mine;
no longer “father” or “sir,”
flesh on flesh,
I am her.

Dawn breaks, clarity rises, red dress strewn across the room,
Eve remembers last night.
She possessed that forbidden fruit.
bed empty,
red lips gone.

Meet the piece: "I am her" is inspired by the character La Manuela from the novel "El Lugar Sin Límites" by José Donoso. La Manuela is a co-owner of a brothel and a transgender woman, but other characters (including her daughter and the narrator) reject her identity and consider her a man. In the novel, La Manuela exhibits her femininity by wearing a red Flamenco dress while performing on the dance floor, which allows the masculine men visiting the brothel to desire her. However, her desire for "the man" is never properly fulfilled. This poem describes La Manuela's fantasy: a perfect evening where her desire is satisfied. "I am her" tells of queer, mutual, genuine desire between "the man" and La Manuela through Biblical allusions to the forbidden fruit, images of magnets and music, and the idea of mirrors/reflections/water: common imagery in queer literature to denote queer love and desire. The poem explores the construction of gender by evoking the image of a woman in the reader's mind without explicitly assigning a gender to La Manuela, and it attempts to validate her identity by stressing her femininity through metonymy with her red lips. The poem follows La Manuela from the dance floor to her room to her bed, emphasizing the attraction and unity between the two lovers throughout the night. Queer desire, so often denied, is finally satisfied.

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