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Naos: An Introduction

José Ángel Araguz
Linfield College

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José Angel Araguz

Naos



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right hand pointing

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an introduction to an introduction

Once again, Anne Rice is at fault. The VHS copy I had of *Interview with the Vampire* came with an introduction by the author in which she spoke of the character Lestat in terms of persona: how he was her devil, her dark lover, her alter ego, and possibly her conscience. The character Naos is none of these things for me. But I have gone back to the memory often over the years, and thought of Anne breaking down a persona as a fulcrum to get at other facets of self. The word *naos* comes from the Greek, and means sanctuary, the innermost chamber of a temple. I came across the word in a dictionary of forgotten words, read it, put it in my pocket. I reached for this word when I found myself working on poems I wasn't sure were mine, poems that made me feel as though I had stumbled upon an innermost chamber of a thought. Which is where Naos lives. Not the brain, more like the mind, or a poem. Things that hold, only as long as we do.

José Angel Araguz, March 2014

Naos and the Philosopher

The fly lifts, flits from the yellowed head
of the magnolia, staggardly makes
it across to the book left open,
 lords from page to page,
unafraid of words bigger than him.

Naos and the Sea

He can only look so long at the sea from his shut window.

The soundless agitation too slow to be broken glass,
too slow to find a figure or a word in all those reckless
lines.

When he opens the window, it is only water out there.

That, and the sudden taste of salt from a dream.

Naos and the Spirit Picture

His face catches across the black and white photo.

This same house, blurred,
kin crowded around a young elm tree.

The faint gray of a girl
over the spot
where her body is buried.

He knows were he to hold it,
the paper fixed in the frame would be soft.

Should he stand out by the elm tree, he would look up and see stars.

Naos Explains Attraction

The heart has as many sides
as the eyes of a cat. That changing
light cannot be focused on
in the dark. There, they waver. Hold still.
A flicker decides, and takes you in.

Naos Explains Imagination

Kick an anthill: another begins to form.

A changing face: what you are made of
turned over, a toy in the hands.

Face as the earth: its shells and bones and teeth churn,
outwork the sun.

Face as the ocean: you would have the changes,
want this moment, and this.

Every child takes turns, plays the hero, plays the villain.

Naos Explains Love

Listening to the neighbors rumble and knock above,

one would think it came down to singing

the way wolves do,

the startled howl

answered by another,

and another

on into the night.

Naos Explains What Is Left

The moon tonight seems to be waiting
for answers. Drinking alone, I do
my part. The sun has turned away from
both of us. Light out
of a bottle leaves me like the moon.

Naos Explains Neglect

Cowboy rides off in his Cadillac.

Horse remains tethered in moonlight.

When Horse snorts, gleam of bone turns,

(rides off in)

(lac)

tethered in moonlight.

Naos Explains Night

You feel almost forgotten in the change.

The last of the light hiding behind the leaves and windows.

A thirst comes, a dark flavor in your mouth.

You do not want to drink, but rather to drink in a particular place.

Your reflection off a wine bottle, where it goes.

Naos Explains Remorse

How a couple talks over the years.

Mouths settle down into one long talk,

what each needs to be reassured of.

The weeks, years. What's read,

eaten. The children who went away.

Naos Explains Shame

The years, like desert dogs, keep running.

Every nerve, sand on your skin.

The wind tells stories, has studied flames, embers.

The brittle sounds: rocks, fingernails, the leather from a child's sandal.

Each fills the air, desperate to merge with the terrain.

Naos Explains Stubbornness

The couple who divorced for reasons of philosophy.

What that means. What reason, what logic. What argument.

For theoretical framework. For the contractual. For ink and paper.

From vow to disavowal. To the actual.

Paper bodies hurried apart by the wind.

Naos Explains the Unrequited

The young man running in the rain,
his key ring hard on his body,
his arms reaching out to the bus,
an elephant lumbering off
that will not wait to have his love.

Naos Explains Worry

There is no monster here, not even the eyelash of a god
could be found at your feet.

There is only the dying to this point.

The labyrinth you have tread without noticing,
wearyed with yes and no,
with waiting.

Now and then, you are aware of a spider,

in the corner of the ceiling,
stiff and swinging.

Naos to the Young Man

No one is looking,
but act as you will.

Be an ember. Close,
seethe. Think more on how
wind has you in mind.

When **José Angel Araguz** says he hails from Corpus Christi, Texas, he does not mean that he has left the city but more that he, like the icy pebbles that come and go during stormy days, keeps finding himself falling from the city. He has had work most recently in *Barrow Street*, *Slipstream*, and *American Tanka*. His chapbook, *The Wall*, is published by Tiger's Eye Press. He is presently pursuing a PhD in Creative Writing at the University of Cincinnati. He runs the poetry blog: The Friday Influence

