

# Gunpowder and Sky

(after Aimee Mann)

E. Kristin Anderson

I wonder if I should have told you that when I took  
my first breath that I did not consent.

And I carry my birth certificate with me because  
I can't think of a good place to leave it.

At one p.m. I look up at the Texas sky and feel a love so rich  
and so deep that I know it loves me back.

Love is loud. Love of country is louder. It howls in a way  
that I never could and I know how to howl.

I'm reminded of seventh grade, how deeply I learned  
that love is not a mirror.

I am empty of that town and its empty cold  
and every day I wake up and I cannot be empty of you.

Mirrors can both reveal and deceive—a warped reciprocity.  
I don't wear that stars and stripes scarf anymore.

It's getting so hot out and I don't know if that's the sun  
or the fever of my own fear. But here I am.

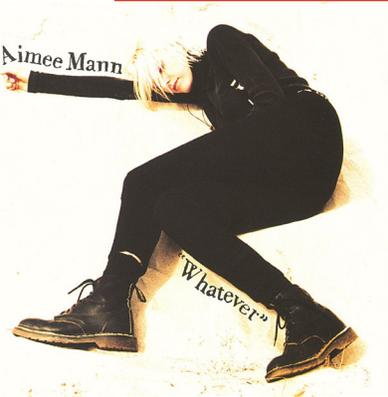
I open my throat and breathe in  
the gunpowder that sweeps the air of the South like rain.

Inside of me somewhere was a mother's love.  
I believe it was in my gallbladder, removed a year ago.

I look up at the sky at five p.m. and I tell you that I put distance  
between us for our own safety.

And when July comes and we all love America  
we forget that we are supposed to love each other, too.

You'd wash your hands but there is no river. We lit it on fire ages ago.  
What would it take to close your mouth like a book?



Aimee Mann

"4<sup>th</sup> of July"

Whatever

05/1993

Imago Records

One day when you're older you'll wake up  
and nothing will be different because how could it?

I still don't know if the primroses were plucked bare  
by a child or washed out in a storm. I loved them like sisters.

No man is an island, but I am a woman, alone.  
I collect verse after verse. I put them in a mattress.

I think that God is a lie and I pray anyway.  
God, I am so tired. God, let all four seasons move me.

My summer smells of sulfur and blackberries and sweat.  
And I waste it all. I watch June slip by.

I count the primroses grow back as I walk home.  
They're rising from the ditch. Pink and wild.

On the fourth I'll stay in and whisper to my cat that firecrackers  
can't hurt him. Whisper to myself that I'm still alive.

We say the same things over and over like a refrain  
and it's easier to block your phone number.

I wonder if I should have told you—when I came  
into this truth that I did not consent.