

Apō ptosis

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## ABSTRACT

### *Apō ptosis*

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*Apō ptosis* is a book of poetry that questions the fragmentation and alienation between the different levels of the human self: the micromolecular and the macromolecular, the biological and the metaphysical, the mythological and scientific. Resisting nihilistic principles of rationalizing humanness, the poems explore human embodiment by re-connecting the self with its micro- and macromolecular surroundings by blending and juxtaposing all levels of human existence, invisible and visible, and setting up a conversation between them. The work is divided in two sections. In the first section, a long-form poem, a female speaker considers what constitutes her ‘self’. Engaging with the story of Helen of Troy, she encounters the phenomena of the undiscovered, the submerged, and the dissimulated that form the self beyond what is physically embodied in the moment; a self just slightly out of time and space, and possibility. The second section is a set of lyrical poems in which the speaker remembers, encounters, and grieves over lost, discovered and never possible parts of her ‘self’ that emerge through encounters with memory, others, and the environment – the macro- and the micromolecular. Grounded in Heidegger's notion of defamiliarizing the familiar and drawing attention to the invisible, the poems create a cohesion between the disparate levels of self in a space where an unfragmented self may exist unrecognized, an in-between space of convergence.

*for*

*Katharina, for passion*

*Elaine, for conversation*

*Constantin, for inspiration*

*Luna and Tyler, for support*

*and Daniel, for love and many other things.*

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Part I.

*“Dasein understands itself in terms of its  
existence - the possibility to be itself,  
and not to be itself.”*

Martin Heidegger, *‘Being and Time’*

## I. Origin

And there you sit— your atoms scattered across  
the wooden chair— and you ask, *She? Who is She?*

*'I am 'She'.'*

The ink below your fingertips, syllables  
pigment on your tongue, you consider the I.

One morning, you stood from the table  
and just were. A blackbird's song passed  
the house. Your mother continued her soup,  
unmoved.

You reach beneath your origin,  
DNA percolating from your skin—

*her laughter.*

*'I never just was I— 'She' is unique.*

*The origin. How can the source be named?'*

---

Origin:  
the source of being,  
a first manifestation,  
the act of existence from a cause,  
the point of intersection of axes on a Euclidean plane,  
the point of entry to pry apart coiled DNA, breaking bonds for  
replication. Cassandra knew Helen marked the origin of Troy's end.



The DNA strands uncoil around you,

*'I am//not I, my name.' She seizes  
the strands, entangles them*

your narrative, expanding in space.

*into a web, a cloak of spooled polymer  
thread spanning cosmic breadth, ages*

---

DNA:

the polymer an essence of all existence

—inscribed by four letters, their sequence encoding  
two complementary strands of tightly curled pairs that  
span 134 astronomical units, a roundtrip to Pluto and more.

Helen wove cloak after cloak, each strand the possibility of an  
alternative conclusion to her existence, she arranged the threads in  
unexplored folds.

You weave through patterns,  
warp and weft, line by line

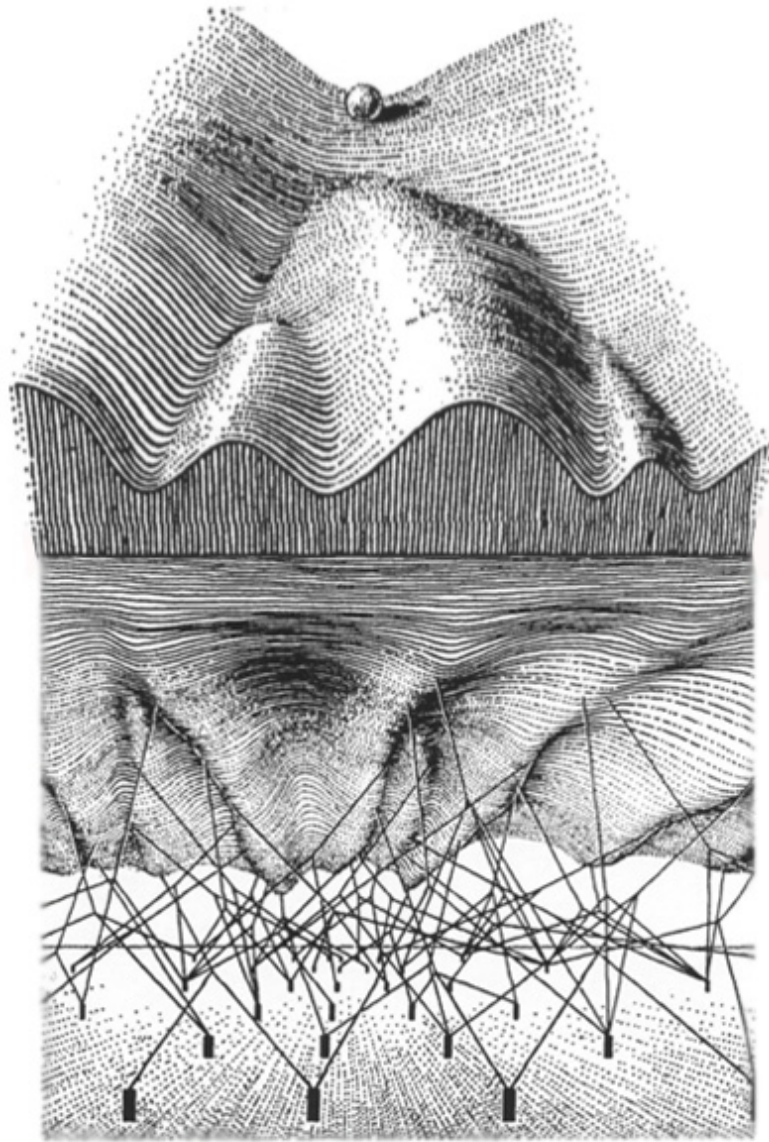
At age five you shaved your head.  
You wished it to grow back black curls.  
A blackbird swooped upon the blond strands  
scattered across the tiles

forms, ends stacked spilled  
spilling into crowded nanometers,

Chain gyration is important to keep  
structure in multivalence. Hairpin.  
Coiled-coil. Evade intercalation.

an epigenesis of your differentiated fates  
laid bare across a rippling phase space,

shapes of your body performing  
within vales of possible trajectory,



*'The stimulus is the key.  
Her beauty was the condition.'*

Tethering your genes strings together tendencies,  
on shifting non-linear landscapes of multiplicities.

On your slate, a pliable alphabet, letters  
rearranging in time. You the creator of

$$(1+x)^n = 1 + \frac{nx}{1!} + \frac{n(n-1)x^2}{2!} + \dots \infty \text{ storylines.}$$

---

Epigenesis:

a measured increase in complexity

arising from non-genetic influences on gene

expression choices that lead to eventual differentiated states—

selective gene de/repression the consequence of impossible fates

The possibilities too vast, the outcome was evident: Helen could only

watch as the threads dissolved: polymer dissolution is a slow process

unless bonds are broken.

*'Exogenous forces are uncoded,'  
she laments, renders the thread.*

Your persistence increases resistance. At low frequency  
interference, DNA templates heterogeneity.

*She lays the cloak across  
'I am named Helen.'*

To find your space in between, hold the lamp  
close so you may read the words

*'She' subsists within the mirror.  
Not I, my name.'*

## II. Reflection

You reach for the mirror— silvered glass beneath  
your skin— as She across extends her other

*Behind the screen of representation, limits  
of belonging and red. 'Her words bleeding.'*

from the inside, the narrow space  
between absorption and refraction,

You danced in front of the mirror in a gown,  
imagined yourself as someone. Afterwards.  
Any sense of certainty—  $a + b \neq$  identity.

in between you, the two of her,  
She is not your thesis in nature.

*'Her appearance too big  
for her body, alone.'*

---



Isomers:

two elements or beings sharing form equally,

two of the same with different atomic arrangements

defining singular properties of behavior and activity,

their image on a plane – mirror – cannot coincide with itself.

Helen was split in two— wife/adulteress, queen/spoil of war. Her image imprecise, she no longer knew her true arrangement.

Molecules distort in translation.

*'Again, it's a question of optics  
to be even more (than) 'She'.'*

You watch through glass to realize who She is, or not.

*"She' remained external (the cave, beach, Egypt, Sparta—  
none and all).  
I outside. On the walls of Troy, ominous hold.  
I, shadow superposed of the woman, long-robed.'*

---

Quantum superposition:  
energy states of any physical entity,  
different interactions allow the particle to be in two  
or more quantum states simultaneously increasing  
the probability of being at a position  $x$  while not actually being at  
position  $x$  yet maybe  $y$  depending on stimuli; the sum of responses  
equals in outcome regardless of their position and macroscopicity,  
energy existence needs no entanglement. Coexistence became  
impossible. Helen stood on the stone wall as she walked the shore.  
Her molecules were unaligned, lacking definition to those who  
watched. She knew who she was.

The mirror a distance smoothed by viscosity  
of each moment until nothing is left of your self

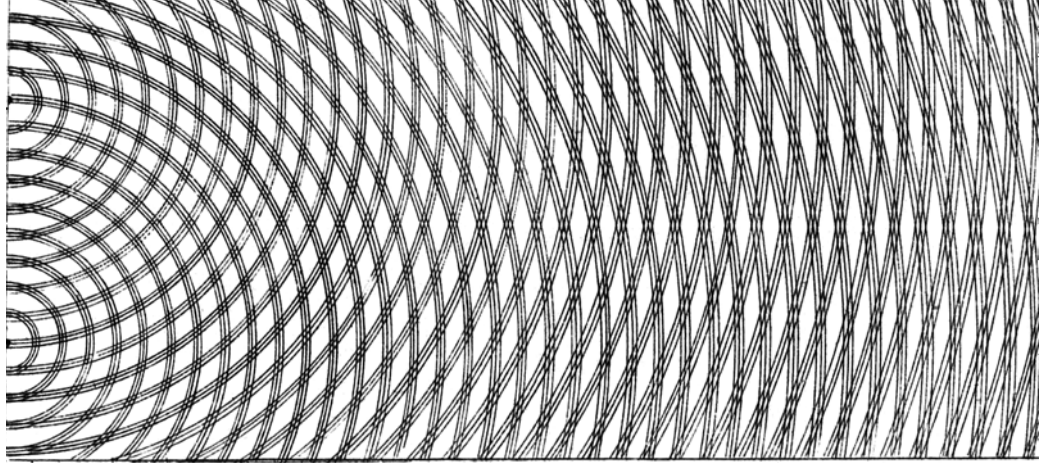
Your identities blur together in precise expropriation  
of your desire occasioned by its impression in/on  
the other— inside and outside. How can you be  
differentiated in a single attribution?

through the looking-glass  
the fifth plane is conceivable,

Light refracts on the shell never reflecting the core—  
refractive index of appearance its superposition of  
energies. Your ways are chiral.

your body curved into two  
spatially separated events

never to meet while always touching.  
Separated by night, your days never do.



*“She’ was never part of the function. Infinitely,  
we were placed on our paths, divergent.’*

The eyes of your other your prison,  
intercalation into your thought

Outside the property, the other is playing, hiding in  
movements of time (a subjective parameter; the  
hidden is never to be found). The degrees of  
freedom are infinite.



Wave function:

a sudden occurrence of emotion, phenomenon, energy,  
a periodic disturbance of light or substance propagated  
without an overall movement of particles while their diffraction  
exists in phenomenological separated states. The images of those to  
hate and love overlapped in a dyssynchronous weave. Their names  
became entangled in Helen's hands. How many ways to spell a name,  
even your own?

*'I knew who I was.'*

The mirror dissolves  
the already un/broken.

*'A hollow translation,  
theorem of beauty—'*

In the liquidity of glass, genes  
are the resistance of memory.

*'I was diffracted into existence,  
an interference to the unaligned witness.  
Time.'*



### III. Uncertainty

In the image of a morning—  
when She turns away— you can't recall

*'The proximity of our valence  
was predetermined.'*

the measured error of ordered disturbances  
in your isomorphic bodies.

You stood at the edge of the glass,  
blowing bubbles against the light.  
Rearranging molecules. The root  
mean square error (of life).

In the deviation from self,  
the collective is a variable equilibrium.

*'She' realized my existence,  
breath our bond (and blood—).'*

---

Molecular geometry:  
a composition of atoms,  
an arrangement of parts into virtual shapes of figures  
grounded in a molecular order of shared bonds, specified distances  
and angles; often the parts are delocalized relative to the magnitude of  
events and their frequencies, their distance from the plane.  
Helen became fractured in time and spaces. Her distances grew,  
nothing could realign events to what they should have been. She knew  
to begin with.

Your stillness moves

*'Our orbitals vacillating,'*

between your diffused halves.

*"She' was not in her preferred state,  
aware of her uncertainty.'*

---

Uncertainty principle:  
particles arranged in the same state,  
uncertain of their position, their momentum, they  
obey an either/or nature of forces and trade-offs that depend  
on the position of the observer who by simply observing alters their  
state—Helen had looked at it from all angles: the threads shifted  
through the fabric, folds formed and re-formed. Battles, deaths, once  
and once more. The pattern remained.

In the mirror, a shadow  
of what has already happened.

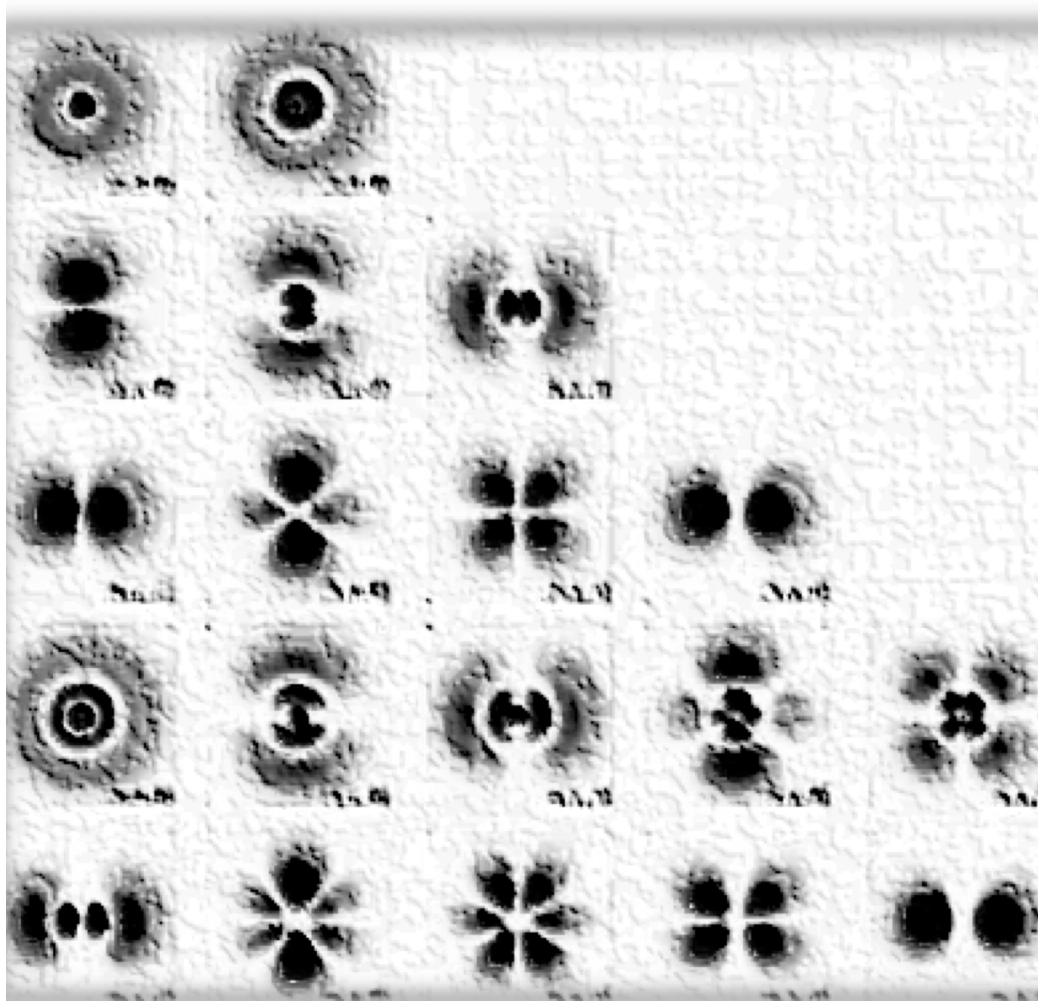
The yield of appearance is embodied in the  
momentarily attained sum of theoretically based  
future expectation, predicting probability. You will  
have changed your hair tomorrow. It is already black.

The density of time proportional  
to the length of your steps.

In time, the integral of probability density  
over these states is evaluated: what is the  
probability of your change? The ident image  
will never be reached (No twin is ever  
the same).

Our selves unstable,  
multiple alternates, formed

where the expression of one  
masks the appearance of another.



*'Had 'She' witnessed my weaving, would it have altered the design?'*

You find your thread  
on the edge of the page, spilt —

The first order of phase transition  
is the release of energy. Without,  
the state of you becomes universal  
to the observer.



Observers:  
the witnesses  
and the proclaimers  
beings on their own plane of simultaneity,  
each seeing unique events that constitute endless present  
moments that may or may not be similar; observers have power over  
nature and human fortunes at different relative velocities, on different  
planes and are often worshipped as idols. Helen knew that her  
weavings were pointless. She was not the one that aligned the  
threads.



*'Yet why impart visions of scrutiny onto her?'*

only the observers know  
the outcome with certainty:

*'Our narrative an enclosure,'*

Pluto was yesterday.

*'there was scarcely a subject in truth  
behind the plane of projection.'*

#### IV. Apō ptosis

In the geometry of you – blond strands spread across  
your shoulder – verity is dependent on the disposition

*'I became etheric,*

of threads – a sidewalk ahead – where the equation  
of conduct, resistance, and generalities

Your experiences form intercepting slopes within the  
geometry of the ordinary. Given that circumstances  
of existence are defined,  $y = m x + b$  where  $m$  is  
chance, and  $b$  is fate. Often,  $m$  and  $b$  work in  
opposite directions:  $\longleftarrow b(y) = m(x) \longrightarrow$

creates multiple interceptions; their distance and  
relationship finite dimensions of each event to another.

*lines melding in space. I faded.'*

---

Euclidean space:

an affine expanse for parallel relationships of higher dimension without a distinguished point of origin as reference of object motion as positions change continuously with time. The origin of the conflict was not singular, Helen a manifestation (which Helen to begin with?).

Allegiances changed across parallel lines of battle.

Your walls are breaking down.

*'Only then did 'She' see my purpose  
on her silvered bearings.'*

What is the sense of your being?

*'Semblance through appearance,  
I played the part of telomeric fate  
with loss... a poly frayed mere.'*

---

Telomere:

a part of the end

formed from quadruplex helices

as guardian of genomic geometry

that protects genes from terminal endings. The hem unraveled in Helen's hands. It caught on the words that had been transcribed before and after, rushing towards an end.

If you could construct one other,  
which one would you choose?

Add time.

The extrapolation of (m) becomes  
an exponentiation of possibilities (b).

Helen's epic  $y = (\text{simulacrum}) x + \text{gods}$

Your narrative  $y = (\text{cell divisions}) x + \text{apō ptosis}$

The variable is x.

Each contorts the geometry of ordinary  
disrupting interceptions in Euclidean space,

x is proportionally dependent

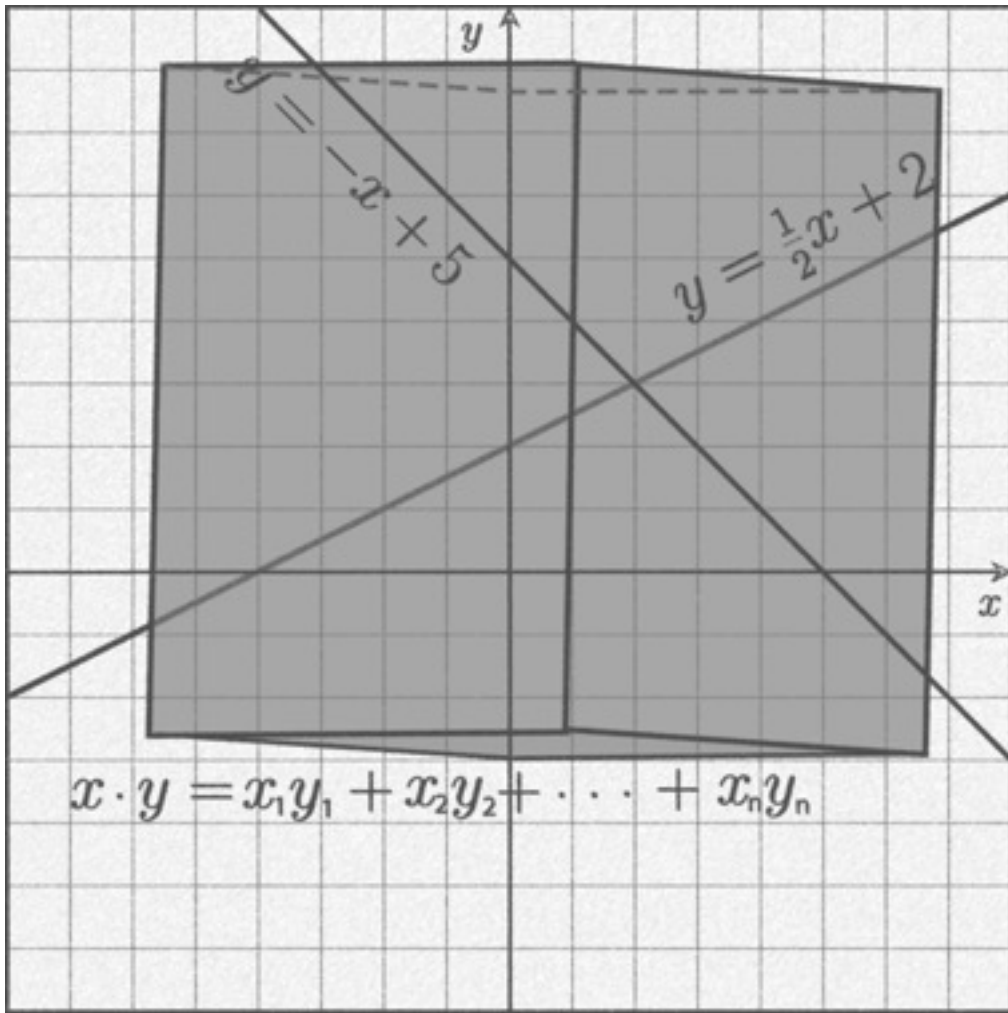
on the internal variable of b

$b = t z / (n+1)$  where *t* is telomeres and

*n+1* the number of your division.

the readout only valid  
if upstream consequences are considered.

Distance and relationship distort,  
you, a little more untethered to the words.



*'I watched her on the shore.'*

Your events drift apart.

$m$  and  $b$  become dependent on  $(n+1)$ .

Had Euclid known telomeres

what would have been

his equation of immortality?

$(n+1) = y$

---



Apō ptosis:

a fall,

a programmed fate

of DNA condensation,

death and fragmentation.

Helen's weave could never change the pattern: she was not the origin, just another manifestation of the narrative.

*'Helen's fate was encoded in the letters,  
our momentum condensed.'*

As Helen sat in the night, did she read  
the words that rose from her skin, weaving

*'I dissolved—  
'She' remained'*

the arc of her molecular lyrics, her —

*'Helen. Helen never was  
here.'*

z remains undetermined.

## Part II.

*“There must be another life, here and now ...  
We know nothing, even about ourselves.”*

Virginia Woolf, ‘The Years’

## The phenology of transformation

*"Life, like a dome of many coloured glass,  
stains the white radiance of eternity"*

*–Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'Adonais'*

Spindly antennae, uncurling  
against the pale foliage

of a *Chlorophytum comosum*.  
Soft-veined wings labour silken

confines, *tegulae* ruffle  
in still air. The *chrysalis*

stretches its limbs,  
tears its cocoon.

My mother's bell-bottoms  
loose on my hips, I watch

the metamorphosis: a communion  
of violence and exhalation.

The *pieridae*'s wings murmur  
against winter-stained panes —

*Who lives beneath your skin?*

I brush the thought from my lips.  
Overhead, a propeller plane splits

the night into atomic shards of glass:  
fields of many wavelengthed spectra.

## **For when you are gone**

I write our conversations  
on my bedroom wall.  
Between poppies and daisies,

marguerites and peonies.  
Green on green, cracked  
carmines and ochres.

Ink molecules lost  
to a wallpaper forest —

a poesies of wordlessness.

We don't talk  
about anything of consequence.

## Live Aid

Sitting against the night beneath the poplars,  
we were all part of the global jukebox that day.

Perched in the window, the TV flickered  
to the beat of your words-

*Kids and music can't fight a war.*  
It was your perpetuum mobile.

The question of who fought whom  
in a struggle that had ended

but at this dinner table.  
The crickets were asked to take sides.

I slipped between the red plastic threads  
of my chair until I reached the ground,  
  
rested in between the night-colored blades of grass.

Your voice rolled in refractory waves around dandelions  
who whetted their teeth on a nightdress of lilacs.

## The day I leave childhood behind

The tram rattles  
its pewter bent tracks

beneath my toes  
a precipice of

your grief burns  
my nostrils

like ozone leaking  
along streaks of heat

on the sidewalk between  
us a garden gate

rust-flecked  
purple sky

*I cannot bear your onyx cloak.*



## **In the mirror**

Your absence  
was ocean blue.

Your existence  
folded into a box,

dissolved into its wooden fibers,  
shards of a mislaid materiality.

Some time ago,  
I reread my diary.

I thought the words  
could keep you close —

distilled beauty of a past animation,  
the words cinder beneath my feet.

## Ghost whispers

I press the button and  
dust molecules tilt the air:

*Close your eyes.*

From the speaker,  
the familiar voice pulls

at the afternoon as I settle  
in my favorite chair, cheeks

brushing crushed velvet,  
resting in cherry trees until

gold turns into night unlit  
by lamps, laughter, warming.

The voice a shimmering

*Can you hear me?*

—hand-me-down moments

through the window of time our  
proximity shrinks without resistance.

## One September

She left with the summer  
sky on a Tuesday morning;

outside the window, her halo  
projected the boundary of her

fleeting presence along the edges  
of church spires she passed

and passed again, reaching  
into the silk blue past trees

stenciled black – like her dreams  
drifting between spectra

of sun beams, softly  
tracing the words falling

from unheard lips, to never  
mark the postcards scattered

across the passenger seat.

## **The temperament of trees**

Split bark carvings, graphite on cellulose,  
prisms of pasts crossing beneath this tree –

summer-singed blossoms hang from smoke  
tinted branches of chlorophylled stillness.

Star rays chasing papered flowers across  
firefly filled fields. A skylark in flight

against the patient sway of the forest,  
efflorescent whispers pollinating my skin

as I lie on a bed of gossamer reeds where  
Nana once told me a man vanquished his kingdom

to this oak tree (his devoted accomplice).  
Measured in silk, the strength of wood is timeless.

## The half-life of polymers

I gazed at the drop of water tilting on the rim—  
as it pulled me head-over-heels into its sphere:

skin rubbing past silky flagellata  
on my rush towards *Dinobryon sertularia*

forests on beds of polyurethane foam,  
pseudopod skeletons ensnared in bloomed

brushes of *Archaeplastida clade* and polyester  
polyols along *cis* chains of *transcendent*

polytailed isocyanates. *Trypanosoma sanguine*  
migrating with *spermatozoa* in reclined

colonies of *Volvox globator* as polyethered  
protozoa thronged me on all sides, never

having perceived a non-flagellate existence.  
*Tubular cristae* cast me into thickets—

swallowed up by consummate explorations  
(time trekked conversely below the surface)

I hiked up my nylon tights, before projecting  
my uncanny reflections across the office screen:

*Upon disposal, a condom takes approximately  
fifteen thousand hours to decay. Sperm, five.*

## Fall out memories

In a crowded room, party in full swing  
the night is loud inside my head.

Air crashing, my skin cold  
against a squall of sound,

a memory of the *Crocus*  
*angustifolius* turning pale

on an April wind, the same metabolic  
elements a phenodeviant canary

poised inside my bones, beak  
thrust wide – I sense its hum.

*The total resistance of a reactor assembly  
can be calculated as equal to the sum of*

*continuous layers of the exterior,  
continuous layers of the interior,*

*and the frame-cavity component.  
Human error is incalculable.*

## Esther re-birthed

"I am I am I am."

-Sylvia Plath, 'The Bell Jar'

Sometimes she flickers  
like strawberry TV –  
Inapposite reception  
interrupting her  
frequencies

queer

Transest-herification,  
changing one Esther  
into another,  
is widely used.  
Switch one  
*carboxy group*  
*benzyl acetate*  
becomes  
*ethyl benzoate*.

Esther *trans*-morphed.

Esther  
winter-greened.



Yet her DNA remains.  
Her frequencies  
untamed.

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## Images

Page 7, Epigenetic landscape. Waddington, C.H. *The Strategy of Genes*. London: George Allen & Unwin LTD., 1957: 29; 36.

Page 16, Wave function. Thomas Young's sketch of two-slit diffraction of light presented the results of this experiment to the Royal Society in 1803. Public domain.

Page 25, Hydrogen orbitals. Tokita, Sumio; Sugiyama, Takao; Noguchi, Fumio; Fujii, Hidehiko; Kobayashi, Hidehiko. "An Attempt to Construct an Isosurface Having Symmetry Elements". *Journal of Computer Chemistry, Japan* 5.3 (2006): 159–164. Public Domain.

Page 34, Euclidean space. Rendering depicting the orientation of slopes and y-intercepts in Euclidean space.