

The Aching Poem

Book

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The Aching Poem

by

Hatty Nestor

*If I didn't define myself for
myself, I would be crunched into
other people's fantasies for me
and eaten alive.*

- Audre Lorde

My Archive Fever

Whoever you are
If you read this
I want you to know
I wrote into the body, not about the body. I wrote
into its presence, it's overwhelming hold on me,
not its lingering demise.

~

I wrote into my long archive of
The Ache, of its temporal
disturbance.

I feel afraid of what I've done; of
what my pleasure signifies, of who I want to expel.

I like to imagine being plunged face down on a slab
being knocked and thrust into the tree; to dis-identify
with when this *actually happened - thinking* of an
ending before the beginning

what is too long for it to be *over*. To see the body as
punctuation, an
ending time of now.

Her Fresh Trimmings

Some days I like to wrestle my waist
Back and forth like mutter of lamb
Corsets contain the chest and
stomach, quite nicely Harder to manipulate
I squish the little rolls back,
uncooked sausage. Desperately wanting to
overflow from the constraint I take myself out for
dinner

The waiter serves me pate
A mashed-up body
Don't question which corset exploded
On the body of a pig
many pigs in corsets (how revealing)
To make this
Fresh trimmings, *I laugh to the waiter* One
roll on my
stomach, one roll in my mouth A
strange marriage

The Ache's life doesn't have the
same life that I do but I intend to tell
her story¹

In dreams,
where I try to puncture,
or escape

I meet The Ache

I greet her, at the
dead sea

We both float
and laugh,
Featherlike

She's Aching, The Ache

eyes black, tar-
like, ebony
piercingly
uncanny
through her body
squelches,
like mud.

Tears of a thick dark
substance, choler?
Saturnine, pockets of pain

When I look closely at her forehead
a few little scars,
teeth all gone, lugubriousness!
Stuck upright in the floor
like pins -

needles!

Upon waking
I read melancholia was
originally diagnosed as an
excess of black bile in the
spine

As I turn over I notice a yellow
long line in my sheets Snake like,
the length of my body
Celestial fluid protrudes from my
lumbar

The Ache, is now sitting with her

fragmented

A few relapses and I'm already
finished - real life rag. When the
waiver of capacity (to feel) wavers
with the tree slumping. It began very
suddenly. I'd forgotten what time it
was I had no written a map?
Constellations expected, of
course. No arch more narrative but
spider web, prosaic. She bows her
head. The Ache sings:

*painting with the blood of my hand, just put it
through the window, you have a ring you are
married
A wedding ring of elements*

The Inflammatory orchestra

Four signs of chronic inflammation:

Redness heat swelling pain

Nerves are much like sirens, violins -

Fight or flight not so much

But a constant, *not now ever*-present loop

- a misfiring, outdated musket

Peel back your skin and see
the position string Pluck it /
hear the ring of tomorrow -
end

They say inflammation is a response to potential
harm a
sign of
healing
Yet this the inflammatory choir

Is a pizzicato than lingers dawn til dusk

Repetition of song, granted.

Night Thoughts

I had begun to worry that my dreams were uninterrupted; tepid and full of monotony, with pleasant scene of baking, cleaning and domesticity. *What a treat.* I note on my calender time seems to elude itself. If I imagine living in other people's suffering it alleviates the strangeness of my present. The task is to reckon and remain.

The Ache

In the black of night, I built a house for The Ache of many walls, yet each wall started to sweat and suddenly disintegrate, submerged in what-could-have-been - what a shame - the memory and imagination are dependent upon belief and I believe that she was there, I peer to the moon and howl and ask if The Ache is dead and the quiet voice answers that you *killed her*. I punish myself by burning just the end of my fingertip on my cigarette wondering what it was all for. The problem with this house is that I could not go inside - The Ache was not there - she was and is a thick ephemera that slipped between the cracks of consciousness, in the emergence of feeling, twilight.

In a recent email from a friend, she had described psychiatric units like abattoirs. Places where bodies are taken to be consumed, sanctioned - written off. I couldn't help dreaming that The Ache might go through a process of killing, slaughtering, and removal.

*I came to find a sense of place / each word as
purpose / the body as kindness / yet the pain had
prevailed / store in tenderness, becoming*

Antigone's Resurrection

Revival is empowerment

Antigone told me

behind a silver lining -

the confession booth

one thousand

flowers bloom

purchased a double rope

strung it up

too short

there is no such thing as out

Antigone whispered

these flowers bloom so fast their state is always

wilt. Instead, devour the rope into many threads

to make a maze in your mind

woven by time

body shrinks

they can take even this

to peel a grape and leave it bare

Antigone muttered: our future is a dark stain

where a weed might grow

even this little weed means nothing these

days: a blemish much of nothing

between feelings

thoughts

I am too haunted by this psychic life

Yet -

I am too young to sell my reality
there is dignity in surmounting to failure

Antigone whispered ~

That evening, after burning flowers

I look up in horror to see Antigone's face in the mirror

Antigone's burial, awake

Song for everybody

To be recited at dawn and dusk

I'm here for the duration of my

present For the whole evening

I witnessed myself

Who / I said

I stayed until / no more / I could

Be better

Feel better / better feel / feel better

live

here

To be recited at dawn and dusk

I'm here for the duration of my

present For the whole evening

I witness myself

Who / I said

I stayed until / no more / I could

live

Here

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The production of the body

At the clinic, the doctor tells me
Young woman -
You are made to produce another
but your body cannot bear the weight

I am no longer
A blip in history, an accident
In the airless space
His small thumb pressing against my
forehead a blessing?

This always-already landscape of overexertion is behind
us: girls dying in bathrooms, on the motorway, fainting
in hair salons, midwives collapsing in staff rooms. To
produce another, we must maintain the production of
the self, else the four elements dwindle.

We are urged on. Urged. Through the blight of
sisterly kindness, of reason, submerged into a cold
soup of forgotten luck.

Rat's Fate

Spent the evening inside the palm of a
rat Who told me to be born from rape Is
not a curse
Nor fate -

I flounder in the cracks of rat's
palm Suffocated by indentation
only to prematurely
crawl out of the palm, tiny
The sedimented act of my
becoming Eroded

such selves I no longer know
nor see

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A survival response is a fight or flight, an internal red alert for *this is danger*. The hyper arousal fires through the body and palpitations begin, nerves tingle, and the throat close up. For years on end, I am told that to be in this state can rupture the nervous system, the adrenal glands overworked, and frayed.

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If you read this

The Ache has not stopped

What a shame,

Have a drink!

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Notes

1 Denise Riley's book titled *Am I that Name* (1988) investigates a similar trajectory of self hood. The book questions the origins of naming and recognition – in asking if the name one has been prescribed defines their authentic self(?)

Riley undoes the act of naming through querying her subjectivity. *Am I that Name* unsettles the very nature of recognition and the authority of another to name/another; a name may have been given to you, but that does not mean you identify with it.