

*the second i was born,*



*i was a walking  
eulogy.*

by

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*A letter for her.*

INT. (Classroom) - A performer wearing a traditional polish folk garment enters a room full of graduate art students. She sits down on a chair, and starts peeling potatoes.

A video with caption starts playing behind her.

(Enter stage right)



Julita Wójcik, *Peeling Potatoes*, Warsaw's Zachęta  
National Gallery, 2001

It was the second I was born,  
A baby's head under the hands who baptized me.  
Washed me in God's water  
And sent me out to the world,  
Starting at 0.  
Like a snail without its shell.

*Scrit scratch*

*Scrit scratch*

*Scrit scratch*

*Screeeeeeechhh*

The chalk stick's dusty residue,  
As the nuns taught me how to savour,  
The fruit of my flower,  
Written on the chalkboard,  
And reading it,  
like it's gospel.

The nuns never taught me  
That men can take ownership of their body  
But I can't.  
I want to touch my skin,  
Peel it,  
Nourish it,  
Unravel its tenderness,  
Feel it transpire.  
This heated flesh  
And bone,  
Is opaque,  
Under the guise of their preaching.

I only want you to see my whole self.

Yet, you only *see-through* me.

As a ghost,  
Floating,  
Drifting,  
Mummified  
Living, but not living,  
Nothing, but everything.

The church,  
Its stained windows with stories  
First preached then written,  
And rewritten,  
To judge  
Center,  
Control,  
Monitor.  
As soon as I walk in,  
I am judged,  
Controlled,  
Monitored.  
They don't see how I can simply be.  
Fucked under the altar with God watching me.  
Calling me the whore that I am,  
Or the whore that I will become.  
Maybe its the thrill of being watched,  
Or feeling like I'm *made to be watched*.

---

This past summer,  
I talked to my close friends about how I never  
properly cried after my grandmother died.  
She died four years ago.  
I told them,  
“I’d rather skip the grieving part”.  
To cheer me up,  
One of my friends,  
We’ll call her L ,  
L told me she saw an older lady the other day,  
Chasing after her unhinged granddaughter at the  
park,  
Laughing,  
Joyful.  
When L finished her story,  
I then, crouched over,  
Put my hands over my face,  
and broke down crying.

—

Polacks are typically very religious.  
Especially the women in my family.  
I am not.  
But I also am.  
In this refusal,  
And also feeling not to refuse,  
I think of my mother,  
And my mother’s mother,  
And my mother’s mother’s mother,  
And my mother’s mother of mothers’ mothers

*Our* mother.

The aging planets and birthing stars are my mother.

The craters on the moon from the impact of  
meteoroids are my mother.

The movement of the earth is my mother.

The Tatra mountains in my mother's village are my  
mother.

The clouds forming, unforming, attaching,  
detaching, become whole and unwhole, are my  
mother.

The chair that my mother was cradled in is my  
mother.

The warm orange light at dawn seeping through my  
window, reflecting into my studio walls, is my  
mother.

The freshly squeezed polish cheese molded carefully  
by hand is my mother.

I think of her.

Her mothering.

My mother once told me,

“Twój uśmiech to wiano na dobre życie”,

Which means

“Your smile is a dowry to live in this life”

I was twelve.

I never knew what she meant by that.

But now I think I hear her.



O Mamusia,  
Give me a sign,  
To step out of yearning,  
Weeping,  
Not grieve in a life longing to live,  
I don't want them to worship my body,  
I don't want them to worship the singular me,  
I want them to see *me*,  
I want them to see me dancing in the nightgown you  
would dress me as a child,  
I want them to see me  
Weaving itself,  
Not as "female",  
But divine *womanness*.

—

*Womanness* = everything = gaseous  
Transparency = Ghost  
Being a woman = transparent  
Being a woman = opaque  
Being online = anonymous  
Anonymous = o  
Mothering = presence  
Love = everything  
Grief = love  
Grief = time  
Time = energy  
Energy = exploitation  
Exploitation = burnout  
Burnout = (un)mothering  
(un)mothering = (un)love

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The more sleep I get, the more my back stiffens.  
Let me watch one more episode of TOWIE,  
Or hear my church choir sing,  
To feel something again.

This isn't perfect writing anymore.  
It's my depressed-adhd-insomniac talking.  
It's not "me".  
I'm sorry in advance.

My bed, is my altar,  
Open my laptop of a sitcom,  
Binging each depressive episode,  
Crack open a Zoloft with the boys.  
Yes, doctor  
Up my dosage to 30mg  
No, doctor, 40mg  
No, doctor, 50,  
No, doctor, 60,  
No, doctor, I need 80,  
Please, doctor,  
I don't want to ride the wave in this foggy ghost town  
alone,  
I'd rather drown in holy water! Lord, save me from  
my wrath!

*(The men who wrote the Lord's words don't want you  
to feel, girl)*

I don't ever recall not not feeling anyways.  
It was only a numbing sensation.  
Like how I felt after my grandmother died.  
In halt.  
Floating.  
Freezing the body before  
Burial.  
Can you put my body in the freezer?  
At least it'll make me feel closer to her.

*(Come to me, my love)*

Or, burn me. Spread me.  
It won't make a difference to me.  
This is my executive dysfunction talking.  
Again, I'm sorry in advance.

This is my deepest blue.  
I think I caught Blue-eye,  
Just like Maggie Nelson said.

—

[Video stops playing. Performer takes over]:

Why is it a struggle to peel these potatoes by hand?  
I can't do it like my mother did.  
I can feel her shame on my fingertips.  
They can see me losing a part of my "polishness."  
Each piece of my mother tongue,  
Peeling off of my skin.

Easy to slice, but at what price?  
Easy to slice, but at what price?  
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[Video starts playing. Performer stops speaking]:

I long for the day  
that I can strip,  
Bare, wet, naked.  
Cleansing my body covered in layers and  
Reaching an inch closer to my soul.  
And not fearing being watched.  
I long for a present-future  
To reclaim my “insanity”.

What you don't know  
Is that you'll never reach me.  
Only my fingers,  
Gently grasping me,  
Peeling me and,  
Becoming and,  
Revealing and,  
Slowly and,  
Loving,

**Soon.**

—

EXT. - Performer stops peeling potatoes. She exits stage left.

The second I leave this earth,  
Will the Tatra Mountains  
accept  
my motherless tongue?  
Or only tend to the wounds  
of my lost memory?  
Will she,  
treat me  
like an immigrant in  
my own country?

