

Papilios of the Night

When I was a child, I thought my baby-self
a *crawling thing*.
At my first bleeding,
old cells discarded like soft toys,
I *ceased to feed*,
inclosed myself in the *small sepulchre* of library books,
scribbled poetry, New Order on repeat.

Under this foldage, I *acquired a new*
Conception and a second Birth,
changed my skin five or six times,
put on my *beautiful Attire*.
In the clubs and on the street, they remarked on my
wonderful Proportions; they called me *Nymph*.
And sometimes I objected and sometimes I did not.
In *Hideous aspect*, I thought myself full grown.

The *Tender shell* of academia
where someone told me there was nothing new in the world
while my mind learned all manner of beginnings.
From their canon we built *Monuments of Death*.
Robe rent, skin shrunk
back in *dry Parchment*,
I emerged entirely different yet all the same.

Swaddled again in *maternity's tomb*,
(*Tis the Male that gives the Egg its fecundity*)
I waited for the next *resurrection*
to revive in the *Form of a Bird*,
unfold to the Sun-Beams.
Nobody there but the self I was and that engendered.
I protected him from the weight and Injuries of the Air:
he span a Robe to secure himself from the Rain.

Now I *Agitate my body, till covered in sweat,*
I flush *Aurelia* again.
And I know I shall rise out of the grave of my old age
dancing, with *plumes* in my *coarsening hair.*
and in my *last form* I will learn
the language of the night, the *relation of All things,*
With expanded Wings, I shall commence an Inhabitant of the Air.



'Papilios of The Night', a poem by Becky Cherriman, on display at Room 700 as part of the *Bards, Idols and Liars* exhibition November 2017.

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