

Monsters, or, Non-Objects

by Edith Lyre

Q: Why didn't you make it larger so that it would loom over the observer?

A: I was not making a monument.

Q: Then why didn't you make it smaller so that the observer could see over the top?

A: I was not making an object.

— Tony Smith in Robert Morris's "Notes on Sculpture, Part 2"

1.

Forget the city. Forget the whole year.

Retain shape, stay alive. At the expense,

If it's asked, the expense of memory.

Remember the long walk home to Omelas.

Abandon the extras, hurl their questions

With them to the same rain. (All cold's the same.)

Let no bloodline (the poet's hope) survive

Your words' original contribution.

Back to the children's-howl of the suburbs.

Remember the small step away, defect.

Shone from the bacterial colony.

Year you lost your bacterianity.

A city that's better off forgotten.

Not knowing's not safe for abandoned germs,

Through teeth, I mean I'm not your enemy.

Unless. Am I? You've made me fear you. Just—

Tell me.

Am I supposed to destroy you or not?

2.

Remember the pattern, says Fingernail.

You will see it again. She taps the graph.

Dots fall from the brackets. Mother — You may

Call me Mother, says Fingernail, or God —

Mother — Nothing but eyes. Hands full of dots. —

Or Mother's God, may I let these points fall?

There's nothing in your hands, Fingernail notes.

Yes and may I drop it? Her notepad fills.

Handwriting like water dragons in flight.

She repeats her notes onto the window:

This young man shall be alone forever,

God, postscript in the third person, willing.

Remember, says Fingernail, the pattern.

Like a mortal, she takes the door. Nothing

Too sudden or startling. God, I panic,

God flown, I mean like I saw the notepad...

You were supposed to destroy me.

3.

To quote an Australian artist, a
Feminist, and at last a Hellenist:
There's no such thing as Australian art,
Nor a woman, and there is no Helen.

Are dead bodies objects? There's no such thing,
Protest the germs, as a dead body nor
Any body outside the colony.
There's no such thing as them, the dead.

He was not a monster, not at first, no
At first he was a monument. To what
There's no chance I could remember. A way,
A step too far, toward the dotted graph.

The unforeseeable pattern. Living
Fucking bodies' queer mark across tarmac
Skin. Run. Here there be monst— here let's be friends.
Sit. Stay. Faggots, trannies, all freaks welcome.

We promise we won't destroy you.

4.

Like trying to seal the ocean in a gut,
The void of space in an eyeball, drainage
To cleanse the vile fields, shores flown black against
Pressure, upstream from the Halls of Exo.

Exo, I love you. Exo, I miss you.
Exo-anatomy's not new, not fresh,
Only forgotten — on purpose at that.
Lost or let fall in the hells of eros.

Cassandra's EMDR therapist
Tells her grow up, get over Mycenae.
Lived in reverse, a flinch looks like a nod.
From outside: Hell. The sea. All one rhythm.

The dead, of course, swallow the colony,
Tarmac admits the ex-monsters' queer mark,
Skin regrown from Living Tissue, freakish
Nails against the chalkboard of memory.

I can't forget you, but I can destroy you.