

THE ENDINGS

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Grounded, we have no feet. Breathing, we have no heads. Speaking, we have no mouths. We are empty, yet we contain time. We are figures, we are objects, and we are dreams, memories, thoughts, and emotions. We had our own names but were named; later we were called ‘vignettes’. We consider ourselves as ‘characters’. Once we had other forms—we do not manifest them often, yet they are impressed in us and on us—some scars remain. We inhale (our intake of breath, before speech). We are waiting to begin.

I share a form, malleable and adaptable, taped into place to produce the pattern we would follow differently as we were cut and sewn, altered as it was determined, translated from foam to paper to leather. My skin takes a new shape, a new texture. The transformation was a long process. Now I am incorruptible, preserved by oak bark. I carry objects: magical things balance and skim about me, auratic. They pierce me, yet I am without pain.

Without gender, our forms imply received characteristics nonetheless: a certain stance or a well-defined contour, smooth and proportionate. I wear a red-ribbon bow and the pendulum swinging from my neck produces a pulse, keeping time, back and forth from equilibrium. I am transformed from two-dimensions to three at my seams where flatness gains volume. Hollow, unsealed, I am a round, a swelling, a protuberance, an elevation. I have boundaries; the dimension of time is added to my becoming. As I was cut and stitched, I grew slowly, like a symphonic poem.

I too was shaped, tailored. My pieces fitted perfectly, edges bevelled, tightly drawn together with twisted hemp. My edges were punctured with an awl: holes filled as the beeswaxed threads went back and forth in arduous stitching. I incline, thus indicating a front and a back. I curve around the void of my centre; without organs, even so it is a space as real as my skin. Two coppered hoops circling my centre cannot be removed, binding me as I bind them; three more are unanchored, though they are anchoring rings.

My form is divided when the opaque window of vellum set inside me in its brass frame spins or is set spinning, irresistibly. A blank membrane, cleaned and scraped, stretched, it passed back and forth between scraping, wetting, and drying, all hair removed, polished. That refined plate—its veins a delicate tracery, taking me back to my first body, my biological precedence—is vulnerable and will decay.

A little door is cut below my knee (if it may be thought that we have knees, that we have any limbs): it enters me or gives ingress. Inside I am rough, belying my exterior, my outer surface that was soaked in lime and mellowed, cut into bellies, butts, and shoulders, oiled and brushed. There are two holes at my hips: there I was hooked, carried to be tanned, gently washed. Sleek, I *was* sleeked. I am a second body with memory and trace. I am inside and outside, fur side, skin side.

I was cut and saturated, I expanded and shrank. I calibrated time: each seam took a day. I moved like liquid yet was stretched to my limit. I am given arms and hands of vellum, stretched and sewn with horsehair into a brass frame—I echo many creatures and resemble none. Swinging from silk cords at my sides, the movement of these limbs is restricted by clock weights fallen to the ground, measuring time.

I became architecture through the insertion of a transparent house of stained glass. My first body, physical and embedded, and my second body, symbolic and transient, is divided by a ladder, up or down, there is no exit from my centre, yet something always comes and goes. I exist inside and outside. Scale changes: I cannot see the form I have been given but I know myself to have been formed.

We are seven and we are one. We are distinct and we are kindred. We ask that we should be imagined as assembling, and in our gathering, together and apart, we are chorus and leads, synchronic and diachronic. We exhale (an expiration, *after speech*). We are waiting to end.

This essay was written over a week, each ‘character’ occupying a day. It was much longer when I finished writing (according to my self-imposed constraints), and on the last day, I cut and shaped it (its first form exists no longer). Its intention is to reflect the works and the logic of their production. SK