

Amputation, A Poem by Anne-Marie Macloughlin

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Amputation, A Poem by Anne-Marie MacLoughlin
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Amputation

Extension malfunction, missing the sign
No bolt of lightning
Telling me regeneration is coming
Reassuring me it's ok

Try again, another extension cord
Here's hoping this will work
Because it has to
13% power, not acceptable

Rectangle of information
Losing its lifeblood
Its presence dimming
And my mood with it

Full evening of work and social gathering after
Conversations I need to have
Via this little attachment
That I am so attached to

So snug in my palm,
How natural it feels
Comforts and assures me
With one tap

Smile/frown/cry
At the touch of a button
That makes no sound
And no physical presence

Just a smooth pane of glass
Reflecting me back to myself
The modern Narcissus
Gazing into a pool of data

I flirt and engage
With no fear, this is who I am
No really! Isn't it?
We are all filtered and modified

The new reality, a portable record of self
Sitting on the counter, naked and injured
It not me, but it feels the same
We are both oral and literal

Visual and aural
Aren't we?
I type "Phone not working late for work"
No guilt, this is important

Not much to say
But important to say it anyway
Or else I dim too
My presence unnoticed

Without this, the virtual me
Do I even register?
How else do I make myself known?
If not in the cybersphere

Defined by the content
And the messages implied
By tiny yellow faces, a sound bite
Of profound frivolity

I have relevance and status here
Acknowledged and "liked"
Mini me, my extra self
That I can't stop looking at

Floating in the non-tangible world
Of virtual relationships
And liaisons of the utmost importance
Aren't they all?

I look at the shiny face again
11% left, I'm losing it
OMG ! ☹️
I'm almost dead.

But it's not too late
For replacement versus resurrection

For the small fee of \$400
I think about it for a while

I need it, no is not an option
The sales people vicious in their smugness
Smiling emojis
Holding onto their sense of identity

In their hand for all to see
“I am better than you”
“Look what I can do”
“You want me”

My phone/me, now a hostage
To the negotiation
“Can’t you fix it?”
I plead, frustration stoking the furnace

Of irrationality and fear
Anxiety clamps my neck with a soggy paw
It’s dead, they say
What phone do you want?

I argue tooth and nail
It’s under warranty
Fix it!
And me

I am a desperate mark
Primed for exploitation
And commission drives the deal
For the unfeeling drone at the desk

As she smiles with dead eyes
Give me the money
And you’ll get your life back
Is the message I receive

As I leave the store
My dying self in my hand
I read the screen, “5%”
I am almost gone.

Inspired by a personal experience. The enforced disconnection was more traumatic than I would have anticipated. The lesson I took from this was that we need to contextualize our use of devices. We are being gaslit into the attachment by employers and educational institutions, making our participation mandatory. It is important, therefore, to be mindful of becoming the servomechanism – a slave to the machine or else suffer from the digital amputation of a different sort when the devices refuse to comply.