

## Colony Collapse Disorder

When I lived in the city I knew where I was,  
what being there was. I knew I breathed  
under a film of constant light,  
that electricity was life. It moved  
in my body, which I knew was an atom of the city,  
and kept us twitching in unity. I felt  
information bloom in my blood. It sang  
in my cells as though it had always been there.  
I knew without it I had no structure.

To leave the city was to leave one's memory.  
Outside was a garden gone wild. Stars  
were night-flowers in a mossy dome, opening  
their dazzling mouths to amaze, spreading  
exponentially the further from the city I went.  
I knew nothing. What nothing meant. I feared  
the dark and the space between things: space  
needs filling. I'd cry for the city, its order.  
To be let back in was to regain the future.

Now I live elsewhere the systems reversed.  
The city is a picture from a book I once read  
and nothing to do with me. Life is a movement  
between dirt and sky. I see this clearly.  
The stars are generators. Without them we'd fail.  
Going back to the city is to speed myself up  
to a drawn out buzz that I know is killing me.  
Going anywhere other than elsewhere is rehearsing  
this end: the shut-down of travelling energy.

All those years living inside weakened me.  
Taken away from elsewhere I dim.  
Friends visit and tell me that elsewhere is death  
and the sky cannot feed me. Not indefinitely.  
Their eyes are blown bulbs. They rattle. I smell  
honey on their skin and know how it is.  
When they move I hear humming like a swarm at a distance.  
When they speak I hear their voices, and under  
the city quietly droning.

**Polly Atkin**