

COMING TO LIFE

It makes you desperate, turning
From a cartoon
Into a real-life girl

With animated locks
And a gigantic puffy heart. Life
Is your most elaborate costume yet,

A fairytale
You try to layer on
Without injuring yourself.

Happy or not, you are filling in.
The heart that tried
To keep you warm

Made you look old, rigid,
A powdery copy
Of a knowing smirk, afraid

Of the dragonfly
Beauty of the world:
The budding face

Of something other, the music
Of worlds coming together, the pearl
Of perfectly created spirit

In mountains, olives, the strange
Angelic rain
Of ever after. Welcome

To the neverending luxury
Of being, of being
Nothing, of being endlessly

Ready to be. Don't be afraid
Of being nothing. You *are*
Nothing. Nothing

Is what it takes to be.

NOTE: What language can speak a self into being? I borrowed a vocabulary—all words in the poem come from *Cosmo Girl*—developed to address girls in the process of becoming women. My most important borrowing was the pronoun “you,” the bossy, prophetic address in which women’s magazines instruct their readers. “You” gave me distance from which to could register the desperation and absurdity of becoming. But *Cosmo Girl* speaks with certainty that didn’t apply to my Escheresque state of self-creation.