

On As a Child by Stevie Howell, from “I left nothing inside on purpose”

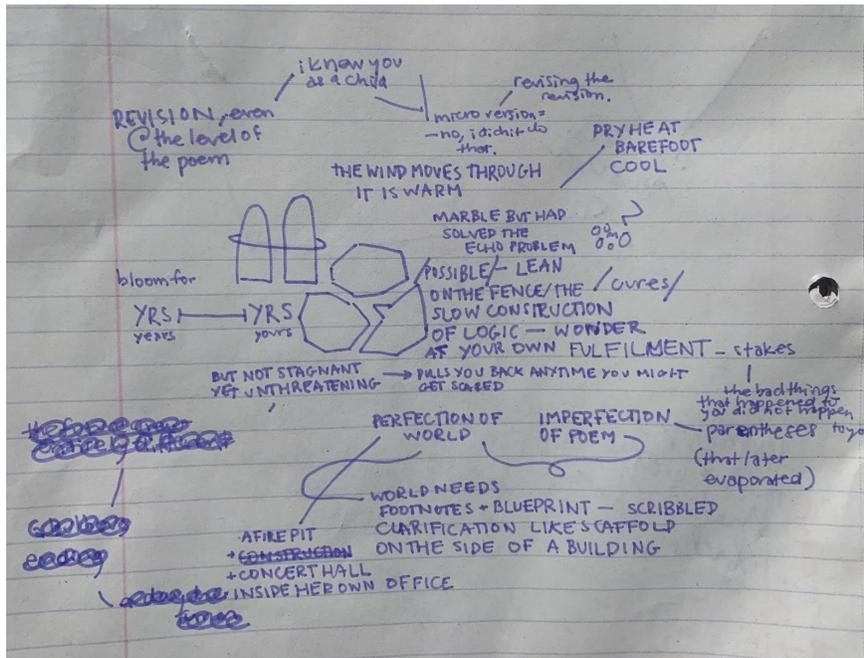


image description: the rough draft, written non-linearly in my mother's purple felt pen. some parts are scribbled out with little spirals. in the middle of the words are three polygons that fit into each other like tiles, and two tall, hill-like figures connected by an incomplete halo. refer to the accessibility text below for a read-through of the words.

(i knew you as a child. we were closer in age, in that place). LITTLE SHIFT. THAT - PLACE. AND SO, SOFT REVVING, IT BECOMES ONE. MATERIAL SECURITY FIRST -- (yr parents had just the right amount of money, & a space for you, & always left the light on) (mine did too) -- SO THE EASY WIND CAN CLATTER. (partially open / to the outside with shutters). EASY WARM. DRY HEAT. (marble [THAT] had solved the echo problem). BAREFOOT COOL. (there was never a blizzard / or a mirage)-- THIS PLACE ISN'T TRYING TO TRICK. ANYWHERE VERTIGO MIGHT EVER TEETER -- (almost motionless), (immediate & deep) -- IT RECALIBRATES. CUPS MORE FULLY. (almost motionless ... but not stagnant). (immediate & deep // yet unthreatening). TWICE, IT INDULGES ITSELF, LEANS ON THE FENCE IN ITALICS -- (& there were /cures/), (that was /possible/) -- HAS TO, FOR A SECOND, PRESS AT ITS OWN INCREDULITY. BECAUSE THIS PLACE, A SELF-PARENT, KNOWS THE STAKES OF ITS FILLING. [(in our village, the bad things that happened to you did not happen to you)]. IT KNOWS THE TIME [YOURS/YEARS, (yrs/yrs), (we were closer in age, in that place)]. SO: TIGHTENING-TIGHTENING. SO, QUICK REVISION AT EVERY UP-FILLING LAYER. THE POEM ITSELF IS A CORRECTION [(i knew you as a child)'S FIRST SHIFT], BUT IT ALSO COPY EDITS (that place) BY MAKING LITTLE DENTS IN ITSELF. PARENTHESES (that later evaporated). RE-ETCHING A STORY: (-- no, i didn't do that). BC A PLACE-PLACE (a fire pit & a concert hall) NEEDS A POEM WITH FOOTNOTES. BLUEPRINTS [BLUE PRINTS. (pictures i've seen of French & Greek islands)]. NEEDS TANGENT LINES TO MAKE A CIRCLE, (plaster) THICK, (tile work), SPIRAL OUT.

[accessibility text: i will begin with a line in the middle of the page, because it is the first one i wrote: "marble but had solved the echo problem," which is connected by a straight line to "dry heat barefoot cool." just above are the unconnected words "the wind moves through it is warm."

moving down the page, the next words say “possible” in between slashes to denote italics, then “lean on the fence / the slow construction of logic -- wonder at your own fulfilment - stakes -- the bad things that happened to you did not happen to you.” further down is “but not stagnant, yet unthreatening,” then a horizontal arrow to the line “pulls you back anytime you might get scared.” to the left of these sentences, and below the hill-like shapes, reads, “bloom for yrs (years) yrs (years).” yrs is a shorthand stevie howell uses in the poem and throughout her book to mean both of these words. they are connected here by a line that looks like a spectrum. below these words reads the phrase “perfection of world,” which draws a straight line to “a fire pit,” the word “construction,” crossed out, and “and concert hall inside her own office.” there are curved lines from “perfection of world” to “world needs footnotes and blueprint - scribbled clarification like scaffold on the side of a building” and “imperfection of poem,” the latter of which draws a straight line to “parentheses (that later evaporated).” above all of this are the following quotes, connected by straight lines: “revision, even @ the level of poem,” “i knew you as a child,” “micro-revision -- no, i didn’t do that,” “revising the revision.” finally, in the bottom left hand corner are three scribbled out thoughts connected by straight lines. the words in this draft are a mixture of lines from howell’s poem, and my own.]

*i am indebted to ava hofmann’s [visual essays](#), which showed me the beauty/logic in the way my own notes spin.*