

Bent, Spindled and Mutilated*

by Kevin McHugh

"I apologize for calling. I meant to talk to you in person yesterday to say we won't be needing you anymore"

I'd witnessed this scene before—
the lawful espials of someone *else*
deceived and cleaning out her desk,
rifling the now de-filed cabinets
for trinkets and personal effects,
then to be drummed unvoiced
to the door and dumped, leaving
Nothing in the wake of her passing.
There is no covert contrail
of eau de cologne or telltale musk
from face flushed and burning
or rapid, labored inhalations,
the thread of shallow breaths.

Still it comes as a shock, a betrayal
of naïvely unrequited loyalty so
that suddenly I am one
with other coin-tossed casualties
of Global aggregations in which
no one and nothing personal counts—
such liaisons being, after all, consensual.

None and never the less I am
branded by *my* innocent shame
more rightly borne by them
and left feeling as if *I* should be the one
to apologize for making love badly,
for performing poorly without the
requisite, corporate aphrodisiac.

We are not LinkedIn. We never were.
Your back was always turned,
your fingers forever crossed—
paramour not lover that you were—
consuming me in a loose consummation
that turns the tables and leaves me
here forlorn like the cuckold.

Was it *ever* good for you?

**This poem was recognized as one of two "highly commended" submissions to the Poetry Project of Poetry Ireland. See <http://thepoetryproject.ie/2013/11/OI/runners-up-with-poetryireland-ie-andthe-poetry-project/>*