

Ode to Tamoxifen

ANN TWEEDY

Tomorrow, I bid you farewell
in favor of your younger sister.

You have given me bloatedness
that goes on for weeks, uncertainty
about whether any period will come
at the end of it.
Weight gain around my middle,
lent my body an attachment
to that weight.

In the early days, you produced dizziness.
What's most frustrating

is what you took—the ability to remember
whether I'd said something before,
why I'd walked into a room, that I was boiling water,
or that I have a meeting
on any given morning. But it's a year since the radiation
stopped—a year and three months to be precise—
and so far you've kept cancer at bay. Or perhaps
cancer has been occupied elsewhere independently,
but anyway I can't quite hate you
because there's so much good you're capable of--
preventing breast cells from binding to estrogen
that feeds malignancy.

Also, I wanted to keep my breasts and you were most of the reason
I could without feeling completely foolish or wondering
if I still had a death wish.

If you haven't heard how it happened,
cancer came and asked me—at a time when I was already struggling
with the question—*Do you want to live?* and its presence
clarified and heightened the query in such a way
that I could finally see the answer. After surgery and radiation
you were there to help me prove my *yes*.

So I neither love nor hate you. Or I love and hate you simultaneously.
Either way, I'm glad to be trying something new even if it's only
a younger version of you, with an added ingredient—chlorine—
like from a pool. Chlorinated water, chlorinated estrogen disruptor,
may your sister make everything clearer—bright blue vision to the cement bottom,
may she let my mind be. There is so much that I have to do.